#IWASFAKE

Basic Remote Learning Course on "Dealing with Disinformation Amidst the Infodemic"

Welcome, students!

You are about to embark on a 4-week course about "Disinformation Amidst the Infodemic". This course is titled #IWASFAKE because it will teach you how to protect yourselves and your community from "fake news" especially in this difficult time of the coronavirus pandemic.

The course is designed to be used by students with minimal supervision. It contains four (4) modules meant to be studied in four weeks while following the prescribed sequencing (Module A to D). Each module has two lessons containing a brief discussion of concepts, case studies, and question prompts for self-reflection.

We recommend that you use a notebook or any writing pad as you go through the modules. Writing notes enhances your learning. Worksheets for each of the four modules are also available. Ask us or your teacher for these and other learning materials.
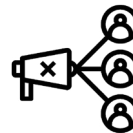
Enjoy, and together let's IWAS FAKE!

MODULE A

"Fake news" and the Infodemic

This module is first of four parts of the #IWASFAKE Basic Learning Course on "Dealing with Disinformation Amidst the Infodemic". This module contains two (2) lessons:

1. *In what ways are "fake news" and the coronavirus similar?*

2. *What is the 'Infodemic' and what makes it a big problem?*

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this module, the student will be able to...

- explain the similarities between "fake news" and the coronavirus
- recall local and global events related to the "fake news" phenomenon
- discuss the related phenomena of "fake news" and the infodemic
- classify different "fake news" about COVID-19 into its four themes

HEADS UP!

List down 3 things that "fake news" and coronavirus have in common. *Example: Both spread quickly and widely.*

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LESSON 1 | In what ways are "fake news" and the coronavirus similar?

It is obvious what makes **"fake news"** and the coronavirus somewhat similar: both spread quickly and widely. While they do not exactly spread the same way (i.e. "fake news" typically gets spread through social media while the coronavirus gets transmitted from person to person through close contact), in our present day, the **proliferation** of both "fake news" and the coronavirus results in big problems for everyone. What's even worse is when it's "fake news" about coronavirus that spreads and *infects* thousands of people.

For the next four weeks, your goal is to know everything you need to know about "fake news". Much like COVID-19, to defeat "fake news" means to prevent oneself from being infected by it. We are always reminded to put face masks on, observe physical distancing, disinfect our surroundings, and keep ourselves fit and healthy. As for "fake news", Out of The Box has created a 4-step strategy to avoid and protect oneself from it and we call it #IWASFAKE:

[I]kalma ang sarili

(Pause and calm down)

[W]ag basta maniniwala

(Be skeptical)

[A]lamin ang source at konteksto ng impormasyon

(Check the source and context of the information)

[S]alain bago i-share at Sitahin ang nagkakalat ng mali

(Filter what you share and call out disinformation)

The closest thing we can get to a vaccine for "fake news" is increasing our **immunity** against it. And so, practicing these four steps will go a long way in our fight against "fake news". But before you learn about each of these steps, it is crucial that you first *know the enemy* and know it very well.

What is "fake news" and how did it all begin?

The rise of "fake news" can be traced to the year 2016 when the United States and the Philippines both held their presidential elections. **Hoaxes**, **rumors**, false and misleading content dressed up to look like news articles about political candidates spread like wildfire on social media. This easily became one of the most discussed phenomena in the aftermath of the elections.

How did all these "fake news" spread so quickly and vastly? Did it affect the results of the elections, and how? What are its implications on the public's perceptions of the media, of the government, and of democracy?

These questions have led to countless research and investigations on "fake news" by the academe, governments, the tech industry, and civil society groups worldwide. From 2016 to today, we've seen some breakthroughs and some fallbacks in what has become a global combat against "fake news". Here are some headlines:

Revealed: 50 million Facebook profiles harvested for Cambridge Analytica in major data breach

The Guardian | March 17, 2018

Facebook takes down 200 pages, accounts, groups linked to Duterte campaign soc-med manager

GMA News Online | March 29, 2019

Jail time, up to P1-M fine await peddlers of fake COVID-19 news

CNN Philippines | March 25, 2020

Have you heard about these? While many of these events are significant, these are not nearly enough to show that we have already figured out the "fake news" dilemma. As if we thought things could not get any worse, in 2020, we face an unprecedented global crisis: the COVID-19 **pandemic**. This pandemic has revealed to us how far we still are in solving the "fake news" crisis.

LESSON 2 | What is the 'Infodemic' and what makes it a big problem?

"Fake news" about COVID-19 may be even more dangerous than COVID-19 itself. Why? Because the spread of false and inaccurate information about a highly contagious disease entails higher chances of misinformed people getting infected by it.

The World Health Organization (WHO) coined the term **Infodemic**, a combination of the words "information" and "pandemic" to describe our current world situation characterized by "an over-abundance of information – some accurate and some not – that makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it."

Four Themes of COVID-19 "Fake News"

In this lesson, we are going to look at some of the most common COVID-related "fake news" that are categorized into four main themes according to First Draft, the leading nonprofit organization conducting research on misinformation and disinformation.

1. WHERE IT CAME FROM

"Fake news" thrive in a situation where verified facts are lacking. Since we are naturally curious, we always try to fill in the gaps of our knowledge. We tend to make sense of every new piece of information we encounter based on what we already know. When news came out about this new strain of coronavirus in December, as reported by Chinese authorities to the World Health Organization (WHO), theories about where it came from quickly flooded social media. There are **conspiracy theorists** who claim that the coronavirus is a bioweapon concocted by the Chinese government to target the United States.

Breaking news: China will admit coronavirus coming from its P4 lab

By GM35 - 2020-01-25 14:42   👁 240491   💬 2

The Chinese Communist Party will finally admit that the real source of the coronavirus is from "a lab in Wuhan" linked to its covert biological weapon programs.
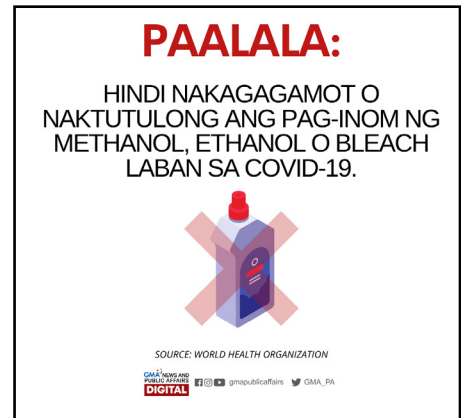
2. HOW IT SPREADS

Many false claims about the coronavirus bank on our sense of fear and confusion. This is especially true when it comes to information about how coronavirus spreads. The <u>WHO website</u> has devoted a section to countering such false claims like the chances of COVID-19 being spread on shoes and infecting individuals *(Yes it can, but it is very low)*; the transmission of COVID-19 through houseflies *(No, there's no evidence for it)*; and the transmission through 5G mobile networks *(No, virus cannot travel on radio waves and mobile networks!)*.

3. SYMPTOMS AND TREATMENT

Bad advice about treatment and cures are the most common and widely spread "fake news" about COVID-19, and it can have serious consequences. Not only does it prevent people from getting the proper care they need, it can cost lives too. <u>In Iran, 44 people died and hundreds were hospitalized after drinking home-made alcohol to protect themselves from the disease</u>. Every day, new speculations about home treatments like drinking hot water mixed with salt, symptom checks, and vaccines go viral online.


PAALALA:

HINDI NAKAGAGAMOT O NAKTUTULONG ANG PAG-INOM NG METHANOL, ETHANOL O BLEACH LABAN SA COVID-19.

SOURCE: WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

VOCABS

outbreak: a time when something suddenly begins, especially a disease or something else dangerous or unpleasant

**polarization** (political): a sharp division, as of a population or group, into opposing factions

Tweet your thoughts. Has any of your friends or family been a victim of "fake news" about COVID-19? How did they deal with it? Tweet us at @ootbmedialit and use the hashtag #IWASFAKE.

4. HOW WE ARE RESPONDING

As most people try to observe stay-at-home protocols, many rely on social media to get updated on how other people are doing. From photos or videos that show people panic buying to news about relief distribution or the transport situation, many of these are shared online without verification. As the government introduces new measures, loads of misrepresented pictures and rumors emerge. It is unfortunate to see an **outbreak** of political "fake news" in the midst of a health crisis. But this is something we expect in a **polarized** society such as ours. For instance, photos from the Independence Day rally held in UP Diliman amidst the COVID-19 lockdown were digitally altered to show that the protesters comprised a smaller crowd than the actual.
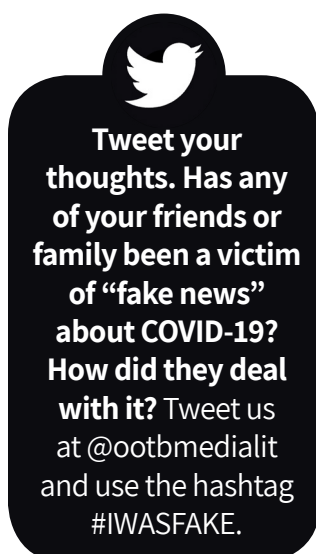
THIS IS THE END OF MODULE A. Are you ready to test your knowledge and practice your skills? Get from us or your teacher the Module A quiz and worksheets.
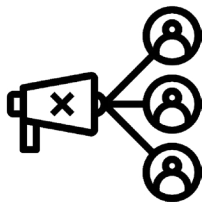
Misinformation & Disinformation

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this module, the student will be able to...

- explain the problem with the use of the term "fake news"
- compare and contrast misinformation and disinformation
- illustrate how networked disinformation operates in the country
- investigate the seven most common types of mis-/disinformation

HEADS UP!

Think of 3 common reasons why someone intends to spread "fake news". *Example: Someone wants to destroy another person's reputation.*

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LESSON 1 | What makes misinformation and disinformation better terms to use than "fake news"?

There's a reason why we have been using the term "fake news" inside quotation marks. It's because in spite of the popular use of the term, experts actually recommend the public NOT to use it. They argue that "if it's fake, it's not news" which means the words "fake" and "news" are not supposed to go together. Moreover, people's understanding and use of the term has become vague and varied through time. "Fake news" has been used to label many different kinds of content from simple lies to rumors to outdated information to **propaganda**.

Some "fake news" are not completely 'fake'; some are just misleading while some are genuine but used out of context. Also, most content that is deceptive in some way are not made to look like news at all (e.g. memes, tweets, videos, etc). To add to these, the term "fake news" has been **weaponized**; it has become a term used by politicians and other groups to attack and question the credibility of many professional news media around the world.

So, to avoid the confusion that comes with the use of the term "fake news", we recommend using the terms Misinformation and Disinformation. Collectively, Dr. Claire Wardle, co-founder and leader of First Draft, refers to these as the Information Disorder -- "the many ways our information environment is polluted."

Disinformation vs Misinformation

You may have heard these terms used interchangeably to talk about the issue of the infodemic. However, it is important to be able to distinguish them to understand how they are created and how they spread differently.

VOCABS

propaganda: selective presentation of information, persuasive framing, and use of emotional appeal to forward a particular agenda (*white propaganda* uses accurate, albeit selectively presented, information, from accurately identified sources, whereas *black propaganda* uses inaccurate or deceptive information, in which the source of the information is obscured or misrepresented)

weaponization: (of "fake news") use of fake news by politicians to undermine independent media and trust in journalism; (of social media/internet) proliferation of large-scale propaganda and mass manipulation techniques disseminated through the Internet and social media

orchestrated: (adjective) with every detail very carefully planned, sometimes secretly

Tweet your thoughts. In the simplest way you can, as if you are talking to an 8-year-old, explain why using the terms mis-/disinformation is better than "fake news". Tweet us at @ootbmedialit and use the hashtag #IWASFAKE.

DISINFORMATION
When people intentionally create false or misleading information to make money, have political influence, damage someone's reputation, or maliciously cause trouble or harm.

MISINFORMATION
When people share disinformation without realizing that it is false or misleading, often because they are trying to help.

So, how does disinformation and misinformation differ? Just one thing: INTENT TO HARM. While misinformation and disinformation have more or less the same harmful effects, they are spread NOT for the same reasons. People who spread misinformation are those who are just misinformed; they have no intention to deceive or do harm to others. This makes them slightly less guilty compared to those who spread false or misleading information with clear intent to harm (i.e. disinformation).

Moreover, it is important to note that, unlike misinformation, disinformation operates in an **orchestrated manner**; meaning, there are organized, coordinated, and well-funded systems that run it. Political disinformation, to be exact, is run by professionals. It is a vast network that connects fake account operators to digital influencers all the way to the chief architects in the advertising and PR (public relations) industries. This shows that disinformation is a much more complex and grave problem than misinformation (i.e. making an honest mistake of sharing false information). Putting them both under the umbrella term "fake news" blurs this distinction, and does not help us in crafting the right solutions to our problems.
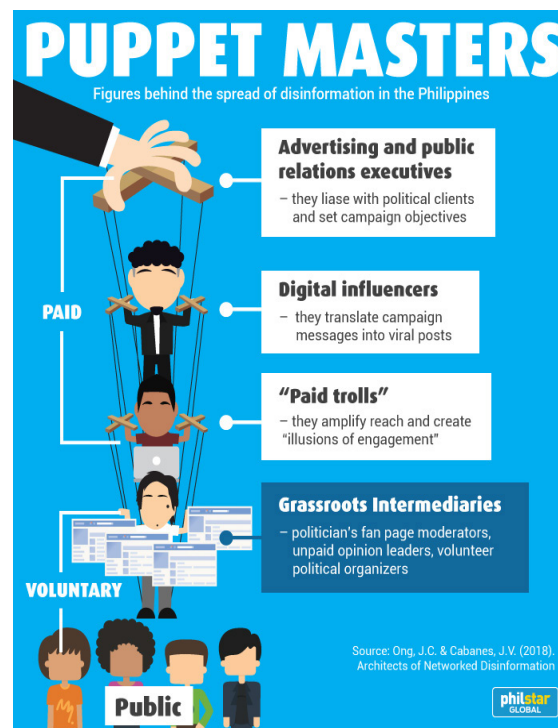

Image source: https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/02/12/1787103/ad-pr-execs-are-chief-architects-disinformation-philippines-study

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LESSON 2 | What are the seven types of mis-/disinformation?

Within the two (2) main categories of the Information Disorder (Misinformation and Disinformation), you will commonly find seven (7) specific types of content according to First Draft. This will help you understand the complexity of the online information environment. This will also show you that there is a wide spectrum that exists between what is true and what is false, between "fake" and "not fake".

The 7 Types of Mis-/Disinformation

1. SATIRE. Satire is a literary technique that employs humor, irony, or exaggeration to expose flaws and criticize individuals, governments, or society itself. Although satirical pieces are meant to be humorous, its greater purpose is often constructive social criticism. The problem is when satire is used to strategically spread **rumors** and **conspiracies**. When challenged, it can be simply shrugged off "as a joke", something not meant to be taken seriously. Furthermore, satire can also be dangerous when from its original source, it gets spread online and turned into screenshots or memes, losing its original context in the process .

The Adobo Chronicles
June 10 at 5:50 PM

ADOBOCHRONICLES.COM
IATF To Quarantine Filipinos Aged 21-59
MANILA, Philippines (The Adobo Chronicles, Manila Bureau) – Since the...

A satirical piece by AdoboChronicles, a Philippine satirical news website, makes the claim that the government has ordered Filipinos aged 21-59 to be quarantined. This is an example of a satirical piece of misinformation that has the potential to give the wrong information for those unaware of the satirical purpose of the article.

2. FALSE CONNECTION. Clickbaits are the best examples of the use of 'false connection' -- sensational language or imagery used to drive '**clicks**'. This is when you encounter a headline or an image designed to capture your attention, but when you click through it, the link leads you to a content that is of no value to you or content that sells you an item or service. We can't expect media organizations to stop using clickbait techniques, after all, they need clicks. Our task as readers is to be wary of them as they often trigger our emotion only to drive traffic on their websites.

3. MISLEADING CONTENT. What counts as 'misleading' can be varied and hard to define, but it usually involves omitting pieces of information to tell a story in a certain way (i.e. cropping photos to change its message, choosing statistics selectively). This is also called 'framing'. Even the most advanced technology cannot easily detect misleading use of information because it involves contextualization and nuance. Meaning, it requires our brains to analyze the whole story or the bigger picture to judge whether a content intentionally misleads or not.

4. IMPOSTER CONTENT. We always like to employ mental shortcuts to help us understand information. One very powerful shortcut is seeing a brand or person we already know and trust. When we get information coming from trusted brands or people, we are not as doubtful. But the problem is, it is very easy to make fake accounts and pretend to be someone else online. Imposter content is false or misleading content that claims to be from established brands, organizations, or personalities.
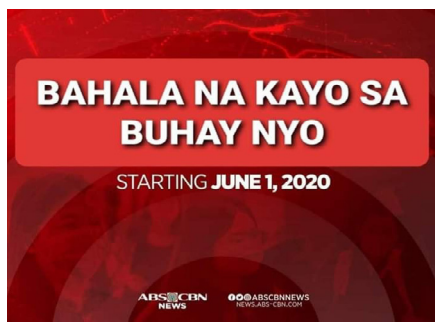

This is a news card from ABS-CBN's social media pages that was edited. It is an example of imposter content where the credibility of a news organization like ABS-CBN was used to spread misinformation.

5. FALSE CONTEXT. When genuine information is shared out of its original context such as when old news stories are re-shared in present time, it can be very dangerous. Sharing

An edited video clip makes the false claim that an OFW in Saudi Arabia was beheaded after testing positive for COVID-19. The original footage inserted was from a 2015 report by GMA, shared in false context by re-uploading the video with the title "OFW, pinugutan sa Saudi Arabia 24 Matapos mag Positive sa sakit na Cov…." The video has since garnered more than 200,000 views on YouTube.

information in its proper context is very important because the context (i.e. the time, place, situation) within which an event or news story existed helps explain the event. Sometimes, it is only a plain case of misinformation where a person mistakenly re-shares an old story. Other times, the purpose is more deliberate: to mislead the people by sharing information in a different context.

6. MANIPULATED CONTENT.
Manipulated content is genuine content that is altered or edited to change the message. It is not completely made-up or fabricated. Many people fall for this kind of manipulation because most of us only glance on images or captions while scrolling down our phones. As long as it fits a story and is good enough to 'look real', people may share it.
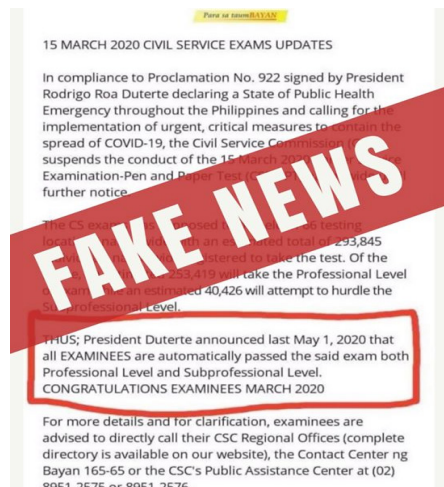
An edited screenshot of an advisory with the logo of the Civil Service Commission indicated that those who were scheduled to take the civil service exam (CSE) on March 15, 2020 are deemed "automatically passed" due to the COVID-19 crisis. The Civil Service made no such announcement.

7. FABRICATED CONTENT.

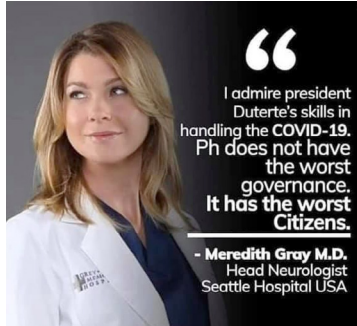Fabricated content is anything that is 100% false. This is the only type of content that we can really consider as purely 'fake'. Staged videos, made-up quotes, and fake websites fall under this category. 'Deepfakes' or 'synthetic media' are fabricated media produced using Artificial Intelligence (AI), which usually combine different elements of video and audio to create 'new' content that never actually happened.

"I really admire the Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte. He is very loyal to his country. I respect him for always prioritizing his citizens over anyone or anything. He is very brave and strong that he is even willing to eat volcanic ashes and shoot coronavirus for them. He is one of a kind and I support him very much. People call him here Duterte Oppa"

-Capt. Ri Jeong Yheok

I admire president Duterte's skills in handling the COVID-19. Ph does not have the worst governance. It has the worst Citizens.

- Meredith Gray M.D.
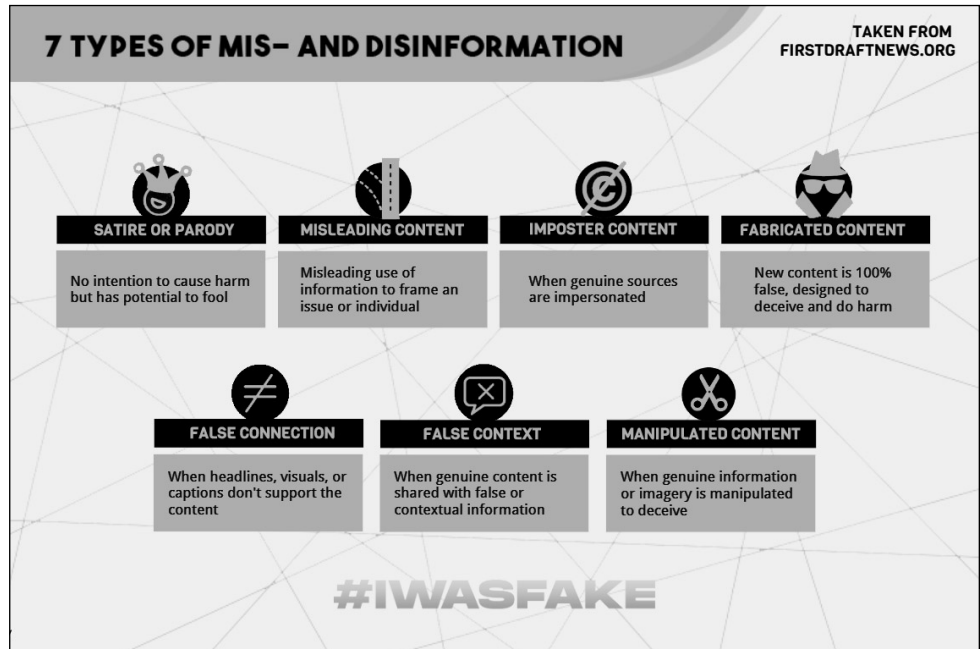Head Neurologist
Seattle Hospital USA

Various edited quote cards or graphics showing famous personalities and fictional characters praising President Duterte have been circulating online. These quotes are completely made up with no source or other news report verifying these personalities' statements.

VOCABS

spectrum: selective presentation of information, persuasive framing, and use of emotional appeal to f

Tweet your thoughts. Is there a way to prevent satirical content from being harmful? How?
Tweet us at @ootbmedialit and use the hashtag #IWASFAKE.

7 TYPES OF MIS- AND DISINFORMATION

TAKEN FROM FIRSTDRAFTNEWS.ORG

SATIRE OR PARODY
No intention to cause harm but has potential to fool

MISLEADING CONTENT
Misleading use of information to frame an issue or individual

IMPOSTER CONTENT
When genuine sources are impersonated

FABRICATED CONTENT
New content is 100% false, designed to deceive and do harm

FALSE CONNECTION
When headlines, visuals, or captions don't support the content

FALSE CONTEXT
When genuine content is shared with false or contextual information

MANIPULATED CONTENT
When genuine information or imagery is manipulated to deceive

#IWASFAKE

Since these seven (7) types exist in a **spectrum**, more than one type can apply to a specific piece of content. For example, a clickbait article that employs false connection may also be considered fabricated content if it is 100% false. Moreover, if it is created and uploaded by a fake account of an established brand, then you can also call it an imposter content.

THIS IS THE END OF MODULE B. Are you ready to test your knowledge and practice your skills? Get from us or your teacher the Module B quiz and worksheets.

Practicing Healthy Skepticism

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this module, the student will be able to...

- determine how personal biases influence one's perception of information
- identify the tell-tale signs present in most mis-/disinformation
- acknowledge one's emotional reactions to given issues
- foster healthy skepticism towards the self and the information environment
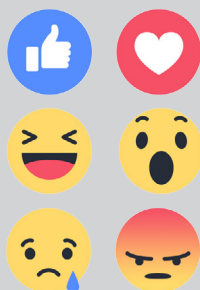

HEADS UP!

Read the following headlines. Imagine as if you're seeing them on your social media feed. What reactions would you give for each headline?

Lunas sa COVID, natagpuan na!!! ALAMIN DITO

5 Filipinos die of COVID-19 in Saudi Arabia; at least 119 infected

Pilipinas kulelat nga ba sa laban kontra COVID-19?

LESSON 1 | Why should we keep our emotions in check when we are online?

It can be hard to admit to oneself and to others when you have fallen for false information. This is especially true when you realize that it was because you did not put much thought to it. Instead, you were just fueled by your emotions. Misleading stories spread like wildfire because they prey heavily on our strong feelings of anger, fear, or joy. To avoid this, you must pause, slow down, and try to switch off your emotions.

The first step in #IWASFAKE is to pause and calm down: **[I]KALMA ANG SARILI**.

Studies show that people remember information better when they appeal to their emotions. These are stories that make people angry, scared, anxious, or those that make them jump for joy. One perfect example of misinformation that banked on people's fear is when social media

> I don't know kung ano ang gagamitin nila sa mass testing. Pero kung ano ang ipapainom nila, kung ano ipapagawa nila, **it's a trial and error. That's why it's mass testing.**
>
> DJ LOONYO

personality DJ Loonyo hinted about the alleged 'dangers' of coronavirus mass testing. Through a Facebook livestream, he expressed fears over what one might be asked to drink or ingest in a 'trial-and-error' process for mass testing. His statement went viral and drew flak for spreading fear and misinformation about COVID-19 testing, which does not require ingestion nor is a trial-and-error process.

Another example is this clickbait story from tabloid Abante Tonite about a bill making religious mementos in hospitals optional. Its misleading headline states, "Hindi lahat Katoliko! Krus sa mga ospital pinapatanggal". The story was shared on Facebook in multiple pages and groups, garnering "angry" reactions from many Facebook users. The headline purposefully misled the readers to think that the bill intends to ban religious mementos instead of simply making it optional.

VOCABS

confirmation bias: tendency to process information by looking for, or interpreting, information that is consistent with one's existing beliefs

emotional skepticism: being conscious about our emotional relationships to information, especially those that reinforces our worldview or taps into our deep-seated emotional responses

Tweet your thoughts. Everyone has a bias. What certain biases of yours do you think could affect your consumption of news and information?
Tweet us at @ ootbmedialit and use the hashtag #IWASFAKE.

Image source: https://www. inquirer.com/philly/opinion/ signe/20161202_Daily_Signe_ Cartoon_12_02_16.html

Confirmation Bias

Aside from our emotions, we also tend to accept information faster and easier when they confirm our existing views. This is called '**confirmation bias**'. The danger here is when we think something is true when we feel that it must be true. This is most applicable to misleading content -- information that has some amount of truth to it rather than being entirely made up. If an online post is 'partly true' and you are already convinced by half of it, you may disregard that that post is also 'partly false' or, at the very least, incomplete.

Cartoon by Signe Wilkinson. Courtesy of The Philadelphia Inquirer.

If we encounter a post online that feels right to us and triggers our emotion, our tendency is to share it with others. So, the very first step is crucial: pause, calm down, and recognize your emotional response. This is called '**emotional skepticism**' or questioning your own emotional reactions to the messages around you.

Bonus: Other Hidden Biases

Aside from confirmation bias, there are many other hidden biases that influence one's way of thinking. It is useful to be aware of these, too.

1. Implicit bias: we associate two different things, which in our minds, are usually linked

2. Sunk-cost fallacy: the more time or emotions we invest into something, the more we want to keep investing in it

3. Anchoring bias: the first piece of information we hear tends to have more influence on us

4. Bandwagon effect: if a lot of people act or think in a certain way, we tend to act or think the same

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LESSON 2 | How can we find a balance between trusting and doubting?

From the previous lesson, you learned about the importance of keeping your emotions and your own biases in check. This is very crucial because most false and misleading contents are designed to target people's emotions and hidden biases. Moreover, practicing self-reflection helps us avoid our own tendency to only see what we want to see. As we learn to be more aware of our emotions, we become better prepared to engage with the disinformation that surrounds us.

For this lesson, we continue with developing the attitude of maintaining healthy skepticism. This time, towards the infodemic. One of the main challenges presented by the infodemic is finding trustworthy sources amidst the information overload about the coronavirus pandemic. As a rule of thumb, keep in mind to always act with caution — the second step in #IWASFAKE: '**[W]AG BASTA MANINIWALA** (Be skeptical).

Healthy Skepticism vs Cynicism

To be skeptical means to have an attitude of doubt, to be always questioning. This is a really important skill to have in the time of the infodemic, but too much of it can be unhealthy too. It can quickly slide into **cynicism** which is an attitude of scorn, negativity, and general distrust in people's motives and integrity. When you see too much disinformation everywhere, it is easy to be disheartened and to develop hatred, and this is what we must strive to avoid. Remember that not all information is designed to deceive or manipulate. Our goal is to maintain the right amount of **skepticism** of the news we consume without sliding into the idea that good journalism does not exist.

Skeptics	Cynics
☐ are open-minded	☐ are close-minded
☐ challenge negative factors	☐ focus on the negative factors
☐ can be convinced by presenting evidence	☐ cannot be convinced by presenting evidence

How to Spot Potential Disinformation

One way to practice healthy skepticism is by being on the lookout for red flags or tell-tale signs. We do this a lot with COVID-19. If we want to know if someone might be infected by the coronavirus, we check for signs and symptoms like fever, fatigue, and dry cough. Like COVID-19, to detect disinformation involves looking for signs or red flags, too. These signs will help you act with more caution every time you go online.

VOCABS

cynicism: an attitude of scornful or jaded negativity, especially a general distrust based on a person's integrity or professed motives

skepticism: an attitude of doubt or a disposition to incredulity either in general or toward a particular object

Tweet your thoughts. Aside from the red flags listed here, what other reasons will make you doubtful of a certain piece of information? Tweet us at @ootbmedialit and use the hashtag #IWASFAKE.

It does not mean, however, that if you spot these signs in a particular material, it is already a piece of disinformation. Maintaining the right amount of skepticism means always keeping a room for error. Your gut feel may not be right all the time.

FAKE NEWS BINGO
MGA SIGNS NA DAPAT MONG PAGDUDAHAN ANG ISANG POST

|				
Binibigay ang gusto mong marinig	Edited photo	"Maniwala ka, totoo to!"	Tadtad ng emoji 😂🙈👏	Walang ibang nagre-report
Wrong grammar	Copy-paste lang sa chat	Hindi legit ang source	Naka-ALL CAPS	LIVE Video na walang details
Parang joke	'Di sinabi ang source	🤔	Quotes lang	Screen-shot lang
Walang 'About Us'	Madaming likes at shares	Luma pala	May mention ng DDS o Dilawan	OA
SHOCKING !!!!!	Pop-up ads	Mukhang meme	Walang details	Nakalink sa X-rated website

www.ootbmedialiteracy.org
#IWASFAKE

Another important strategy so that you can avoid cynicism is to learn to ask questions about ALL media messages, not just those with which you may disagree with. We must be aware of and open to questioning not only the biases of media producers but also our own biases. This way, we find the right balance between trusting and doubting.

THIS IS THE END OF MODULE C. Are you ready to test your knowledge and practice your skills? Get from us or your teacher the Module C quiz and worksheets.
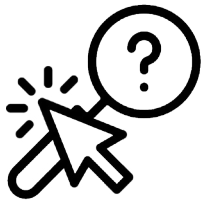
Basic Verification & Reporting

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this module, the student will be able to...

- evaluate the accuracy of an image post through Reverse Image Search
- verify an information by performing lateral reading
- demonstrate the ability to report mis-/disinformation on Facebook
- write a fact-check about a piece of mis-/disinformation
- appreciate journalists' discipline of verification
- commit to empathic conversation in correcting people's misinformation

HEADS UP!

List down 3 reasons why we badly need good journalism in the time of the infodemic. *Example: We need verified information about coronavirus.*

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LESSON 1 | What's good about having a journalist's mindset in the time of the infodemic?

What separates journalism from other forms of communication such as entertainment, propaganda, advertising, or fiction is its 'discipline of verification'. To verify means to "get it right" and this is the essence of doing journalism: to find and present "the facts" and to arrive at the truth based on the best obtainable information.

There is no perfect formula, but every journalist uses certain methods to assess and test information to "get it right". This involves working with as much data, asking various sides for comments, and disclosing as much as possible about their sources.

Debunking the Myth of Objectivity

The most common misunderstanding about journalists is that they are supposed to be **objective** or free of bias. This is not possible since journalism is a profession that involves making a lot of decisions in search for the truth. Instead, what must remain objective are their methods. What every good journalist strives for is to maintain a consistent method of verification, a transparent approach to evidence. In doing so, their personal biases would not undermine the accuracy of their work. The method is objective, not the journalist.

While not everyone can and wants to become an actual journalist, everyone will benefit from learning basic skills of verification both online and offline. This is very true today especially with just how much

VOCABS

objectivity: lack of bias and prejudice, seeing things the way they "really are"

User-Generated Content (UGC): refers to any digital content that is produced and shared by end users of an online service or website

trolls (internet): someone who makes intentionally inflammatory, rude, or upsetting statements online to elicit strong emotional responses from people or to steer the conversation to a different direction

bots: internet robots; software programs that perform automated, repetitive, pre-defined tasks

troll farm: an organized operation of many users who may work together in a "factory" or from different places across a distributed network to generate online traffic aimed at affecting public opinion, and to spread misinformation and disinformation

lateral reading: leaving a site to see what other digital sources say about it (as opposed to 'vertical reading' which is staying on a single webpage)

Image source: https://www.facebook.com/tarantadongkalbo/photos/a.1009500306112875/10259913 77797101

user-generated content (UGC) there is. Now, anyone can upload anything and describe it in any way they want.

So, on to the third step in #IWASFAKE. Like every good journalist, make sure that you check the source and context of every piece of information you encounter: **[A]lamin ang Source at Konteksto ng Impormasyon**.

Verifying User-Generated Content (UGC)

1. WHO'S BEHIND THE INFORMATION?

Recall the lesson on the 7 Types of Mis-/Disinformation (Module 2, Lesson 2.2). One of the types in the list is called Imposter Content, which is basically false and misleading content circulated by imposter accounts. To filter imposter content, you must always verify people's identity -- if they are who they say they are online. The most commonly faked accounts are those of journalists, news organizations, politicians, and celebrities.

Aside from imposter accounts, you should also be wary of **internet trolls** and **bots**. These are social media profiles that make rude and confrontational comments online with the goal of provoking strong emotional responses. Often, these accounts are fake and are produced in thousands to millions inside so-called '**troll farms**'. It is becoming more and more difficult to detect trolls as their profiles are created to be more unique and sophisticated. But one strategy that remains effective is to locate the original uploader of a content and evaluate whether a piece of false content is spread in a coordinated manner through trolls (i.e. Are the posts copy-pasted, or do they follow a certain script?)


#StarveTheTrolls. Courtesy of Tarantadong Kalbo FB page

2. IS THE CONTENT AUTHENTIC?

It is no secret anymore how easy it is to make a fake photo, video, tweet, or document. And yet, people are still so quick to fall for anything that captures their attention. Manipulated content (genuine information or imagery that is edited to deceive) and fabricated content (new content that is 100% false and designed to deceive and do harm) about coronavirus are uploaded in hundreds or even thousands online every day.

One important skill you must learn in testing the authenticity of an online content is using Reverse Image Search through Tineye.
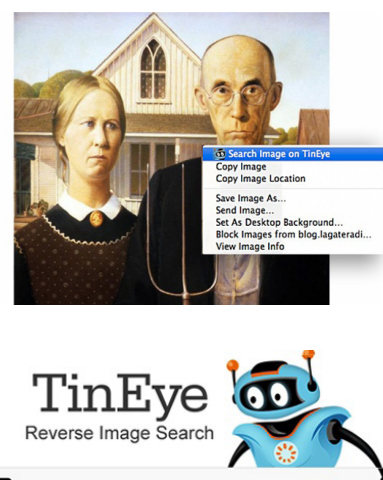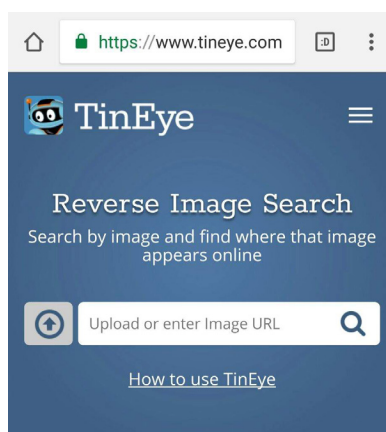
Tweet your thoughts. Aside from the red flags listed here, what other reasons will make you doubtful of a certain piece of information?
Tweet us at @ootbmedialit and use the hashtag #IWASFAKE.

Image source: https://chrome. google.com/webstore/detail/ tineye-reverse-image-sear/ haebnnbpedc bhciplfhjjkbafij pncjl

This technique allows you to check if an image is being recycled to support a new claim or event. By checking one or more image databases (with billions of images), you can track where an image has appeared elsewhere in the internet. Take note: If a reverse image search does not show you results, it does not automatically prove that the image is original; you still need to do additional checks.

3. WHAT DO OTHER SOURCES SAY?

Lateral reading is the process of finding multiple sources to either confirm or disprove a piece of information. When online, you do this by opening a new tab and searching for keywords to find out. This is opposed to 'vertical reading' which means staying on a webpage to look for information and evidence. When Googling, remember, the top result is not always the best and most credible result. Take the time to scan different results and open multiple tabs.

LESSON 2 | What should we do after verifying mis-/disinformation?

Verifying information can be a long and difficult process. It is not a simple yes/no action. It is not typical to get clear answers after simply running through three (3) quick checks. This should make you realize just how difficult and imperfect the job of a journalist is. However, you should always strive, like any good journalist, to only give out information that is verified and to catch information that is not. This is the last of the four steps of #IWASFAKE: **[S]ALAIN BAGO I-SHARE AT [S]ITAHIN ANG MGA NAGKAKALAT NG MALI**.

Reporting Mis-/Disinformation on Facebook

Facebook has made it easy for everyone to report content and content creators that we have verified to be deceiving and doing harm. Once reported, they are evaluated by Facebook against their Community Standards. In the last couple of years, Facebook has taken down hundreds of pages in the Philippines that they found to be performing "**coordinated inauthentic behavior**".

It only takes these four easy steps to report content deemed problematic on Facebook:

1. Click ⌄ next to the post in question

2. Click Report post

3. Click I think it shouldn't be on Facebook

4. Click It's a false news story

How to deal with difficult conversations

Aside from reporting content, it is also very easy to unfollow or block accounts on Facebook. This helps you maintain a safer space on the platform. But what if it's not trolls or strangers who spread disinformation on your feed but a friend or a relative of yours? How should you talk to them?

It may be tempting to just hit the block or unfollow button. However, in this case, ignoring the spread of false information from people you

VOCABS

"coordinated inauthentic behavior" or CIB (social media): a term coined by Facebook to refer to the use of multiple accounts or pages that hide the real identities of the people running them to mislead and/or influence people for political or financial gain

empathy: action of understanding; being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing feelings and thoughts of others

fact-checking: the process of checking that all the facts in a piece of writing, a news article, a speech, etc. are correct

Tweet your thoughts. Aside from those discussed in this course, what other ways do you think can we fix the infodemic?
Tweet us at @ootbmedialit and use the hashtag #IWASFAKE.

personally know is not the best idea. You need to try to talk to them while not making them feel bad or ashamed. The key is empathic conversation.

Empathy is shown through the language you use. Show concern and make it clear that you are on the same side. Here are some conversation templates you can try:

✓ Hi Tita, nakita ko po yung shinare ninyong post. Lumabas din po sa feed ko e. Feeling ko po yung gumawa nung post na yun nananakot lang. Di naman talaga totoo. Ito po nakita ko sa ibang website na iba yung sinasabi. Ingat po tayo lagi! :)

✗ Hi, Sir, nakakahiya po yung pinost niyo. Nagkakalat kayo ng fake news. Next time, sana vine-verify niyo muna bago kayo nagpo-post.

✗ BROOO, FAKE NEWS KA! Obvious na edited yung shinare mo hoy.

✓ Besh! Kamusta? Napansin ko pala yung pinost mo. Uy baka hindi pa confirmed yung balita ha. Di ko muna shinare, marami kasing mabilis maniwala hehe.

Join or Build Your Own Fact-Checking Communities

One final tip we have for you is to participate in existing **fact-checking** efforts. Several media organizations and civil society groups accept reports on disinformation and offer advanced training on how to verify online content. It will be a huge help to journalists when the general public does their part in monitoring the infodemic, instead of contributing to the information pollution. You can also start your own fact-checking communities within your school, neighborhood, organization, or family.

Combatting the infodemic should not end with just protecting ourselves. We must realize that what makes disinformation a global problem is the fact that we all have important roles to play in it. Remember, the closest thing we can get to a vaccine for disinformation is increasing the public's immunity against it.

THIS IS THE END OF MODULE D. Congratulations, you've reached the end of the course! Are you ready to test your knowledge and practice your skills? Get from us or your teacher the Module D quiz and worksheets.

#IWASFAKE

Basic Remote Learning Course on "Dealing with Disinformation Amidst the Infodemic"

This learning course is part of the #IWASFAKE Remote Learning Resources project developed by Out of The Box Media Literacy Initiative (OOTB) in response to the shift in remote learning of schools caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. OOTB is a SEC-registered non-government organization that works to mainstream media literacy in the Filipino culture through education. It was founded in 2014 by three alumni of the University of the Philippines Diliman. This project is made possible with the support of the US Embassy in Manila and TechCamp Taipei.

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Local Fact-checking Sites

VERA Files. https://verafiles.org/specials/fact-check

Rappler. https://rappler.com/section/newsbreak/fact-check

FactRakers.org. https://www.factrakers.org/

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