



The Awareness of Fake News Among Millennials in Brunei Darussalam: New and Traditional Media

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ABSTRACT

Fake news is one of the issues that present itself in this digital era. The existence of traditional media is monitored locally, where new media offers unfiltered information. The challenges that the news consumer would face were in question as if they would be able to differentiate fake news among the real news that they encounter. The objective of this study is to understand and to explore how fake news can affect the public, particularly the millennials in Brunei Darussalam while exploring how fake news are being identified in relation to media literacy. News platform preferences were also gathered. From the semi-structured, one-on-one interviews done with six participants comprises millennials in Brunei Darussalam uncovers that fake news is often being described as unverified news that are designed to mislead the receiver, often featuring exaggerated contents. Participants showcase news verification habits by either crosschecking the content with reliable sources or through inquiring the subject of the news itself. New media in the form of social media is highly being preferred as the participants' source of news. Traditional media are being less preferred due to the time and financial factors that the platform offer. The participants also raised concerns regarding receiving news in the digital landscape where the uncertainties towards AI-generated contents, questionable accuracy, rapid news traction being the leading themes. The findings highlight having prior experience with fake news will contribute to the increase digital literacy skills where it will influence the verification habits by the participants.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background Overview

Fake news has been a global issue in this modern era, where fast development of technologies with the help of major usage of social media by the population aid the spread of fake news even faster (Aïmeur et al., 2023). This study will explore the awareness on fake news among millennials in Brunei Darussalam, where the role of new media (e.g., social media, forums) and traditional media (e.g., newspaper, television, radio) were compared. This study will address content verification done by the millennials when receiving news on their preferred platform where new and traditional media will also be compared. This may provide an insight how media literacy will play a role when fake news is being consumed by the locals.

The spread of fake news is nowadays unprecedented especially with the raise and continuous usage of technology in this current era. Multiple studies have been done regarding this issue, where majority of it focusing on curbing and detection of fake news. One major method being studied on the detection of fake news are via supervised machine learning algorithm through textual analyzation to determine the validity of the information (Khanam et al., 2021). Another notable study done was by Sebastião (2019) where the researcher concluded that the subjects are less likely to believe in fake news after practicing meditations in regular basis, where this study also applied eye tracking tools to study on the subjects' attention.

Media landscape in Brunei can easily be grouped into traditional or old media and new media. Traditional media in general such as newspaper, radio and television have been used since the 20th century to disseminate news to the public (Allan, 2004). This phenomenon is similar to Brunei, where Radio and Television Brunei (RTB) started its operation in radio and television services to the people of Brunei Darussalam in 1957 and 1975 respectively ("Radio and Television Brunei : RTB - the History, the Present and the Introduction : A Brief History," 2000).

The advancement of technology on the other hand introduced a new platform for information dissemination. Social media nowadays is an important platform for the public where it became a source of information given the rapid dissemination that occurred with constant updates, although may results in false information being spread around unknowingly (Zhu et al., 2018).

Where the social media consumption in Brunei reached 66.3% of the total population (Kemp, 2024), it is important for the relevant authorities to increase media literacy within the country. A lot of efforts have been made, where in August 2024, the Ministry of Education announced on their efforts to improve digital literacy through making improvements in the information technology infrastructure, aligning with the nation's goal of becoming smart nation ("Minister Outlines Efforts to Improve Digital Literacy at ASEAN Meeting," 2024). However, the success of these efforts is yet to be known, especially in the current situation where technological advancements are in constant fashion and different ways to manipulate facts are evolving daily. This study will address content verification on social media by examining fake news awareness among millennials in Brunei Darussalam and provide an insight how media literacy as well as how other context may apply on how fake news are being consumed by the locals.

1.2 Problem Statement

With the high number of social media usage in Brunei with the total 66.3% social media users of the total population (Kemp, 2024), there are number of cases where fake news and scams are being spread around where the people in Brunei Darussalam lost BND\$2 million in total (Hj Abu Bakar, 2024). Where the traditional communication media such as newspaper and radio/television news are being monitored (Starrs, 2016), would the public prefer to receive their news via new media (i.e. social media, forums etc.) in contrast to the traditional media (i.e. newspaper, television news or radio) as the news that are being disseminated on new media platforms is less likely to be filtered, offering for a fast news travel and easy consumption (Veronika & Raharjo, 2021). Would they be able to differentiate between the authentic and illegitimate news. This research aims to understand and offer a solution for fake news and misinformation spread.

1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

The focus of this study is mainly to understand and to explore the effects of fake news that are being spread to the people. The study also aims to explore media literacy; the capability of the research participants to recognise the credibility of the news that they receive. To summarise, the research objectives are as follows:

- 1) To examine the news credibility through the lens of the public and the effectiveness of information.
- 2) To explore the news source preference of an individual and the influence of their decision.
- 3) To understand the challenges that are faced by the millennials when receiving and navigating digital news.

To reach the objectives, this study will be guided by these following questions:

- 1) How do the public understand and recognise the credibility of news, and how effective it is to make them trust the information?
- 2) What news platforms are being preferred by the millennials, and what factor influences their decisions?
- 3) What challenges do the millennials face when receiving and navigating digital news.

1.4 Research Significance

Previous research done on fake news have been providing important knowledge in the phenomenon, although the focus on cultural and geographical impacts may vary between one another (Dame Adjin-Tettey, 2022) (Guo, 2024) (Surjatmodjo et al., 2024). This study will help in the contribution of a greater understanding of fake news and its awareness specifically for millennials in Brunei Darussalam where this study will offer practical and policy implications that will be useful to the nation in order to curb the issue caused by the spread of fake news. This study will also be an additional insight to academics who are looking to study on this phenomenon especially in Brunei's context, where this field of study has not been studied.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Cognitive Theory of Media Literacy

Potter (2022) in their study found that media literacy can be defined by many things, depending on the scholars or the researchers themselves where the author analysed hundreds of manuscripts that features 'media literacy' as its focus. One of the definitions being used in the context of an individual skill is the mental capability that a person uses to carry out specific tasks that is relating to media use such as to create information and assessing the validity of news (Potter, 2022). Media literacy may also be referred to as digital literacy as the context and meaning of both phrases are seemingly equal (Park et al., 2021). Therefore, the terms can be used interchangeably as they carry the same meaning in this study.

Additionally, media literacy is an important set of skill that a person living in this digital era to possess such skill as Dame Adjin-Tettey (2022) found that the more of the skill (which the author refer to as 'media information literacy') improves, the sharing of the fake news decreases, showing that the role of the user to make an informed decision before sharing the news based on the quality of information that they receive and about to share around. The researcher also suggested that media information literacy should be included as a school syllabus to meet the current standard ways of life that we are in (Dame Adjin-Tettey, 2022). Undoubtedly, the researcher's suggestion is greatly supported as in Brunei Darussalam's context as mentioned in the introduction, the Ministry of Education themselves have started on their project to increase the local's digital literacy by making a lot of advancements especially in the information technology infrastructure ("Minister Outlines Efforts to Improve Digital Literacy at ASEAN Meeting," 2024). The effort from the government agencies is highly required for the people to have this skill to navigate the current digital age. In addition, exposure to this knowledge from an early age where the Ministry of Education is to be part of, is an important tool to prepare the younger generation and the population as the whole to increase the digital literacy skill of the country.

Exposure to fake news can be a factor that can enhance digital literacy. Goodman & Ord (2025) in their study mentioned that the participants of their study showcase higher basic critical skill when combating digital fake news through informal learning to compare with formal learning. However, through formal learning in tertiary and higher education, allows the participants to be able to utilise a more cohesive methods of fake news assessment by applying cross-referencing when encountering fake news (Goodman & Ord, 2025).

2.2 Framing Theory

Framing theory which was developed by Goffman (1974) and later broadened by Entman (1993) is a theory explaining how the media is being shaped to influence the public by emphasizing the information that the media themselves wanted the public to think about. Framing theory influences the construction of fake news as what have had been done by several other studies.

A study by Illia et al. (2024) showcased that fake news relating to the business environment received more visibility to the viewers as the news are regularly being framed in on overly dramatized fashion, attracting more people to consume the news. Therefore, this highlights how framing theory plays a role in grabbing the consumers' attention by using over-exaggerated structures.

2.3 New Media as the Source of News

Despite the rise of new media where it introduces a lot of advantages to human's life such as instant information and entertainment platforms, it also introduced several issues. Misinformation, data collections for malicious or unauthorised reasons, and the increase of fake news sharing that may harm the trusts in science, media, or the reliable information itself that has been fabricated for personal or otherwise gain are among the issues found along with the existence of new media (Dhiman, 2023). Supported by this study, it suggested that fake news is one of the issues that should be addressed.

Additionally, the trusts on information being received through new media can also be questionable. In Indonesia, social media users have very little trust when receiving digital news on social media, as users showcase uncertainties towards the accuracy of the news that they receive (Veronika & Raharjo, 2021).

Another study by Gomez & Ramcharan (2022), mentioned that new media, particularly the social media offers an unfiltered information dissemination. Due to the unfiltered nature of the platform, news is often lacking in quality control and has the ability for the news to be sent around and reaching a high number of users (Gomez & Ramcharan, 2022). Due to this, the Southeast Asian region faced a problem to receive real and accurate information regarding the health-related news during the pandemic (Gomez & Ramcharan, 2022). This study, along with one done by Veronika & Raharjo (2021) supported one of the main concerns of this paper, as it highlighted how the news consumer will have their opinions being shaped around new media.

With the usage of social media as a general communication tool in the current era, a lot of its original function becoming vaster that it became a tool with a lot of functionalities. Journalism has been transformed greatly, where it reshapes and redefined the boundaries of journalism where user-generated contents and gatekeeping on news are no longer becoming a norm in the journalism world (Hermida, 2016).

In the view of journalists themselves, a study done by Thomas (2013) mentioned that the journalists utilise social media differently among one another where some may use the platform to read on what the public is talking about, to use it as a source of materials, and to share knowledge. The social media that they use are also expected to bring them updates with the current news that is going around, which stories usually raised in that platform before anywhere else (Thomas, 2013). The writer believes that this is true despite the study was done a decade ago, where the situation is still the same even in Brunei Darussalam in this current time. News that is published via social media will spread much faster than how it would be when compared with the traditional media such as newspaper where the process to produce one requires more time and efforts.

2.3.1 Online Discussion and Debate

The high number of social media usage all around the world allows its users to communicate in the virtual space. In one usage, social media is an important tool for businesses to relay and connect with their customers wholly, where it also gives the ability for the businesses to reach their potential new customers (Wibawa et al., 2022). This shows how much the current era, especially in the business world should be relying on social media usage as the coverage it can reach to, is vast without the geological restrictions.

The ability to communicate with different people with different backgrounds, beliefs and worldviews that social media offers also introduces online discussion and debates. Peer-to-peer communication that social media and instant messaging app (Facebook and WhatsApp) give increased the risk of misinformation spread, especially among the users who uses the platform to receive news, and for online discussion (Rossini et al., 2021). Rossini et al. (2021) also found that nearly half of their study participants are inclined to participate on sharing political misinformation on Facebook and WhatsApp intentionally (46% and 42% respectively). This shows that despite the focus of the study was on political misinformation, spreading of fake news by social media users will still happen regardless.

2.4 Traditional Media as the Source of News

According to Nguyen & Western (2006), despite traditional media and new media share the same characteristics, which providing entertainment contents on both communication media, traditional media tends to be more 'information-intensive' compared to the other. The preference of traditional media as the source of news and information have been depleting since the year 2000, where internet is becoming more of a required technology in every household (Nguyen & Western, 2006).

Even so, newspaper, television, and radio still have their own role in Brunei Darussalam where traditional media has been regulated by the government before any news are being disseminate, reducing the risk of the locals from consuming fake news as part of chapter 105 newspaper act. According to Abdullah (2019), traditional media is still mainly being used in Brunei Darussalam which encompasses from RTB, radio, and newspaper as a source of verification for the news received from social media in spite of the increasing usage of smartphone. Despite the study was done towards elderly population in Brunei Darussalam, it still showcases how traditional media still has its place in the world where digital contents are dominant. As mentioned previously, the journalism landscape in Brunei Darussalam, mainly the traditional media, are being monitored (Starrs, 2016). This allows for the news to easily be verifiable by the consumer by comparing the news that they received from the new media with the traditional media, highlighting the continuous importance of traditional media in the country.

Additionally, the effort of monitoring done by the local authorities in news dissemination can also be justified. The Information Department, Prime Minister's Office, formed in 1952 is a local department that publish Malay language newspaper called *Pelita Brunei*, releasing three times a week since 2010 (previously twice a week from 2008) (Omar, 2020). Moreover, the mission of the department is mentioned to encourage well-informed society by communicating with the public for official information to enhance the understanding as one of their objectives (Omar, 2020). Furthermore, according to Omar (2020), the Information Department Office is one of the entities that the public can utilise to verify the news that the consumers are receiving. This showcases another of the governmental efforts to curb the spread of fake news.

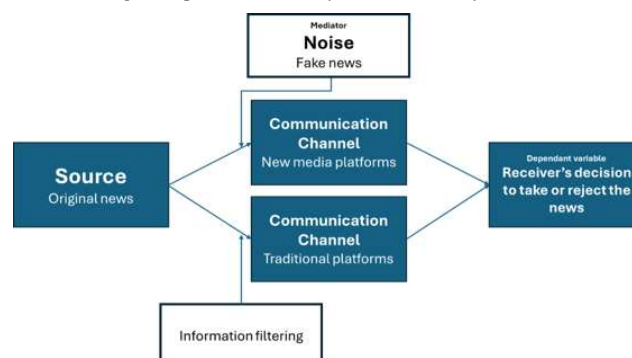
2.5 Fake News and Consumers' Evaluation

Fake news carries different meaning based on the situation, be it academic and real-life concept. According to Smith (2020), the term fake news can be traced back to the Greek history through the local lore *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*, where real information is deemed unreal or fake after the fake news being presented to the audience for the first 2 times. This shows that fake news may be not taken seriously depending on the context of the situation, where in the story relates to the socio-culture of the environment. Smith (2020) also presented the idea of fake news in the term of United States of America's politics, relating to the situation where President Donald Trump's statements will be taken as fake due to the difference in political ideology within the country, where political differences becoming one of the key factors to the spread of fake news.

Smith (2020) study on fake news in Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) managed to identify factors that influences fake news within the region, although a lot of countries were not present in their study, including Brunei Darussalam. The difference in culture may resulted in different outcome which should be covered. Being an association with 10 nations within the region with a very vast tradition and socio-culture where factors and influences might differ from nation to nation, having Brunei Darussalam as a separate study for their work may or may not resulted in different results as what were determined in their work. This will be an idea for this study where it will investigate the effect of fake news being spread in Brunei Darussalam for it to be analysed within the population's perception and behaviour. Additionally, the definitions of fake news that was provided in their study became a backbone to define fake news in this study. According to their study, fake news is being defined as an intentional spread of disinformation or misinformation to mislead the consumer (Smith, 2020). The content either be to harm or defame a person; where the contents are made up; manipulated graphical element accompanying the contents; and/or real content being shared with inaccurate context (Smith, 2020).

According to Damisa (2023), the term fake news should not be used in journalism context by trained journalist in which the term should be replaced with what the author believe should be replaced by false report and fake content. Damisa (2023) believes that the journalists that participated in their study mentioned that as the situation is fully fabricated and nothing has ever happened, which the researcher concluded that it should not be referred as news at all. Although the present study agrees with this statement, due to the nature of this study where the focus is mainly towards the public in Brunei Darussalam, the term should stay as it is considering the language barrier that it may face in Malay-speaking majority country. Although referring to Smith (2020), fake news may present in different context and definitions such as satire or parody, misleading imposter and fabricated contents, and false connection and context.

The spread of fake news in the digital space has always been closely related to the new media, where new



media can be a contributing factor into the speed of spread for the fake news. A study by Surjatmodjo et al. (2024) highlighted that fake news in digital environment can get disseminated faster than real news content,

at the rate of six times faster. The fast-spreading phenomenon of fake news in digital space can be contributed by emotions and the way the platforms handle their algorithm (Surjatmodjo et al., 2024). This highlights a crucial factor in this paper where it questions if the ability of fast-spreading news will be a factor to the participants' confidence when receiving the news on new media platforms.

This study adopts a conceptual framework (Figure 1) designed based on Shannon-Weaver model of Communication (Shannon & Weaver, 1949), where it assumes how fake news are being spread which modifies the original news coming from the source. It also shows how information is being filtered before being released to the public through traditional media ensuring the information the receiver gets are true. Apart from that, this conceptual framework showcases the importance of the receivers themselves when getting the news, which in this case, media literacy as the main concern. The contents of this framework as follow:

1. Original news (source) – The beginning of the information before it being spread. This source tends to be real news without any modifications.
2. Fake news (mediator; noise) – The representation of fake news as a noise showcases how an interference with the original news, thus modifying the reality of the source.
3. Information filtering – A process done to filter or verify the news.
4. New media platforms (Communication media) – Refers to digital communication media such as social media.
5. Traditional media platforms (Communication media) – Refers to newspaper, television or radio broadcasts.
6. Receiver's decision to take or reject the news (dependant variant) – The audience as the receiver to decide whether to accept or reject the information.

3. Methodology

This phenomenology study explored how information moves around within the virtual spaces through social media, where the millennials, particularly in Brunei Darussalam, will be selected as the main participants for this study to understand their perception, attitude and behaviours when receiving fake news that they have personally encountered. Traditional media will play a role in this study where the news that are released through official platforms are being filtered and verified beforehand.

Phenomenology approach allows for the researcher to gain understanding on the participants' personal experience regarding the subject in hand (Luthfiandana et al., 2024). This approach allows for the researcher to explore how fake news has affected the participants, being millennials, experiencing the spread of fake news especially in the digital era.

3.1 Participants

This study gathered six participants as the subjects for the interview. This number is derived from a study conducted by Morse (2000) where she suggested six as the minimum for phenomenological studies. Apart from that, Morse (2000) also suggested the number of subjects to be increased in the event of possibilities that the participants may become unwilling to cooperate with the talk on the topic, and thus the basis on why doubling the number of participants to 12 presents in this section.

The participants for this study were selected through convenience sampling. According to Stratton (2021), convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where the participants included in the study are self-selected due to their convenience participating in this research. Furthermore, due to the time limitations of this study, convenience sampling was used in recruiting the participants of this study.

Purposive sampling was also considered prior to the start of the study. According to Tongco (2007), purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where the participants included in the study must satisfy every requirement and removing randomised subjects. This ensures that the studies can be done without any participants' bias and contributes to effective and reliable information received (Tongco, 2007). As previously noted, purposive sampling was not being used for this study for the interest of the duration of the timeline.

All participants were among the millennial generation group born between 1981 and 1996 in order to fit with the primary criteria of this study. To further relate the participants with the study, all participants are local Bruneians where their experience in local digital landscape helped with understanding the phenomenon. In addition to that, all participants were either employed or self-employed giving them the ability to obtain their

news from sources requiring for financial costs such as newspaper or from the generally no-cost sources such as social media.

Millennials refer to the population that was born between 1981 and 1996 (Dimock, 2019). This same definition is also supported by American Psychological Association (APA) where the year of birth was stated as such (Stringer, 2024). This population is chosen due to the exposure to technology from an early age and experiencing the rise of digital usage in the day-to-day settings. According to Kim (2018), millennials have an advantage when it comes to internet usage as well as access to technology where the personal use of technologies went into the workplace.

Millennials have the tendency to be addicted to social media (Grau et al., 2019). This gives another reference point on why this group of populations is the best pick for this study as due to their constant usage of social media, they might have the possibilities of encountering fake news throughout their time of using any social media platforms.

Being 1996 is the latest birth year for the population group, a wide majority of millennials are already working, especially in Brunei Darussalam where 18 is considered to be the starting of working population age (Department of Statistics, 2023). This information is important for this study as one of the criteria for the participants is to be employed. Being employed means having their own source of income, which will be part of research question where enquiring on their news sources, whether it to be coming from paid sources (newspaper) or simply within social media, where it can be assumed as free in most cases.

Furthermore, the participants were informed to speak casually throughout their interview sessions. This again allows the researcher to get the best quality of responses possible for this study. At the end of the interview sessions with, all participants were thanked for their time and effort and for being part of the study.

3.2 Methods

This qualitative study was conducted through a one-on-one, semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interviews are chosen for this study due to the flexibility it has. One-on-one interview was chosen as it limits the participants' opinions from being influenced by the presence of other people, ensuring receiving real responses. This interview also ensured to safeguard the privacy of the participants in an event of private and sensitive information being shared during the session. As how this type of interview may be done in an informal manner, it helped the interviewer to fully understand the underlying motivations based on the interviewees' choice, attitudes or behaviours that are rarely be able to be achievable when done using formal interviews (Adams, 2015). Informality in the interviews conducted allowed for a better and casual interaction between the researcher and the participants in order to get the best quality of responses possible for this study.

Interviews for this study were conducted via online video calls as the method was preferred by all of the participants involved in this study. The interview sessions lasted between 15-30 minutes each, where some technical issues affected one of the participants.

The interview questions were structured in a way to cover the area from the participants' own understanding of fake news, their personal experiences in encountering and disseminating fake news, opinions on the different news platform ranging from the traditional to the new media, and the way for the participants to verify the news in order to explore the digital literacy that the participants possess.

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews in six separate interview sessions for all six of the participants. The ideas that appeared during the interviews helped the researchers to ability to dig deep into the matter being discussed as this type of interview also allow the subjects to see the topic into a lot of different perspective, depending on their own views, showcasing how flexible this method of interview is (Longhurst, 2023). All the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Minor pauses of less than two seconds were noted down by ellipsis ("...") and '[pause]' was used for the pauses that are longer than two seconds. The transcriptions were reviewed twice in order to minimise errors, where validation of the transcriptions were done by going through both of the audio and transcript at the same time. In the Chapter 4: findings however, the extracts of the transcripts were changed in order to improve readability and clarity.

3.3 Analysis

The analysis was performed using NVivo 15, where thematic analysis was done and the responses gathered during the interviews were placed into categories to find the themes that emerged for the research. NVivo 15 was used for the analysis of this study as the software offers for a comprehensive way to easily view and

code the transcriptions. Content analysis was also conducted for the fake news that were mentioned by the participants. This is to ensure the validity of the data received throughout the interview.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Theme 1: The Understanding of Fake News

When asked about their own understanding on fake news, the participants described fake news mainly as a news that is either information that are unverified from one person to another, news that is mostly exaggerated in nature, news that is designed to mislead the consumer, and news that is untrue. Their definitions of fake news are based on what they have experienced when encountering fake news.

"So, when you say fake news, I imagine misleading information that is false, untrue, and sometimes exaggerated to make it sound interesting." – Participant 1

"Fake news is a news that is not true, which is spread by a lot of people, mainly the citizen over the internet." – Participant 2

"Back then, fake news is considered to be spreading news from mouth to mouth - people's perspective, which does not have any official statement. So, it is just spreading through whatever it is easy for people to converse." – Participant 3

"Fake news is like spreading misinformation and to deceive the readers or the viewers." – Participant 4

"Fake news is about misleading information." ... "Misleading? The news is untrue." – Participant 5

"Fake news usually right, news that are untrue, being made as true." ... "You can see that it is being exaggerated on something." – Participant 6

The participants' definition on fake news are also related with their experiences. Their encounters with fake news were mainly related to fake news to create public panic and lack of official communication. For example, Participant 1 and Participant 2 mentioned on their experiences on receiving news during the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic where it was exaggerated in nature.

"What I can recall, during the COVID-19 pandemic era, a lot of fake news were disseminated such as rising number of cases, death, and even vaccination news that was overly exaggerated." – Participant 1

"A lot of people believed that soon there will be lockdown, causing panic buying." – Participant 2

Participant 3 mentioned his experience in receiving fake news on food import through land borders that may resulted in fine. The same scenario was also presented by participant 5.

"Fake news I can remember from my head is the news about getting fine for bringing in food from outside which I thought was true. A lot of people thought it was real." – Participant 3

"Last time I encountered a news about coming from Miri, we can't bring food from out... from Miri. So, if we are being checked, we have to throw away the food." – Participant 5

Participant 6 shared his encounter with fake news relating to natural disaster. From his experience, the fake news uses imagery and statement with false information. The fake news showcases exaggeration in order to create public panic.

"Usually, it is a lot about weather. There was a video or radar image showing a storm or cyclone with 'a warning, tomorrow there will be storm in Brunei, the country is affected'. In fact, Brunei is not even affected." ... "Then there is a video where it is not even in Brunei, like a waterspout image being called as a storm – it was just a regular occurrence." – Participant 6

Lacking official communication also prevailed for the two other participants. Participant 4 believed that the absence of immediate response and transparency for an incident, particularly the 2024 Pulau Muara Besar fire incident that resulted in a lot of assumptions among the public. These assumptions became a fake news on its own.

"It is more to missing information or fake information being spread. I am not sure which one is correct." – Participant 4

Relating with the announcement of the passing of a royal member in 2020, Participant 5 recalled her experience of receiving fake news. It was mentioned on the requirement to wear white band on songkok for

Muslim male, white headscarf for Muslim female, and white armband for non-Muslim as part of the mourning attire protocol.

"In fairness if there were a lot of people sharing the information, there should be action taken by the authority. But only when a lot of people panicking, then they made an official statement from the authority." – Participant 5

4.2 Theme 2: News Verification Habits

The findings based on RQ1 on the way the participants verifying news suggest that the participants are heavily reliant on practicing various methods of verification in order to detect and verify the credibility of the news. The habits that the participants showcase are either by checking the sources of the news and assessing how the news are being presented.

All participants mentioned that they would check the credibility of the news. The method of verifying the news gathered from the participants are either from where the news is coming from, the profile of the news originated (based on news received on digital platforms), by crosschecking the news with any other reliable sources, and inquiring the origin of the news.

"Learning from my lesson, I confirm whether it is from a reliable source. Can I find the same information on multiple reliable platforms? And if I am not certain about it, just keep it to myself." ... "(...) a news outlet and see that it is from a verified account, then that is a trustworthy source." – Participant 1

"If corporate, they will do multiple check before they post on the platform. So maybe, from there, they can do fact-checking between this and tell us if the information is correct or not." – Participant 2

"I think, official Instagram account for anything." – Participant 3

"I will check credible journalists. Not just one. Maybe, like, if two or three people saying the same thing, then the news is not misleading." – Participant 4

"Luckily my friend who works somewhere there, I can ask them if the news is true." – Participant 5

"Like, let's just wait from the more reliable sources." – Participant 6

The way the news is being presented were also mentioned during the interview. Through this, the participants mentioned on exaggeration in the content namely on the headlines and the usage of imagery. Professionalism in the writing of the news were also mentioned. Majority of the participants mentioned in being cautious when finding mistakes within the news, making it a warning sign of the credibility of the news.

"How does it look professional? There is the headline, the title, the writer, proper layout, proper organization..." – Participant 1

"I don't remember what. So like, for us Bruneians, we know that the headline is not possible. The content does not make any sense." ... "If it was me, when reading news, I would read it once and that's it. If there are any mistakes, then I will know that the news should not be trusted." – Participant 2

"Flaws. Any flaws you can see. I don't know if people can see it. But from my eyes, you can see the different design." ... "There is always flaw at their post. Like there is always something. Like you realise it's different, for me personally." – Participant 3

"First thing I look at is how the wording is, how the sentence is formed. If it sounds like unprofessional or anything, I immediately thought that is a fake news." – Participant 4

"We can see sometimes that the date is inaccurate, usually from years back, like from the past. So, from there we can see the mistake." – Participant 6

4.3 Theme 3: Preference in New Media

The findings for RQ2 uncover that new media are being highly preferred than traditional media as their news platforms preference. Through the interview, the participants emphasised on the benefits of receiving their news through new media, especially through verified and official Instagram accounts. One participant also mentioned on receiving their news through Telegram, a peer-to-peer communication platform. Another participant mentioned to receive their daily news through another peer-to-peer communication platform, WhatsApp, and an online forum, Reddit.

"My sources are usually from social media since I heavily use it." – Participant 1

"WhatsApp and Reddit." – Participant 2

"Usually the easiest one, at this time, should be around Instagram." – Participant 3

"Twitter... There's more news there. There're more journalists talking there." – Participant 4

"The news usually from Instagram, I'm a heavy user there." – Participant 5

"Usually Instagram and Telegram, as they are more reliable." ... "where the government itself has their own official Telegram account." ... "Even Instagram, they have their own account. Follow them there. About road closure is there, power shortage, water shortage is there." – Participant 6

In addition to the high preference to the new media by the participants, radio as a source of news was also mentioned. The participants of this study mentioned to listen to the radio for news only when driving or in the car, and another to specifically mentioned to be rarely listening to the radio but staying tune if by chance to be playing at seven in the morning.

"Radio only in the car." – Participant 2

"Because when driving, when driving, like, or if for example I don't want to listen to music, I will just change it to the radio and hear what I can get from there." – Participant 3

"Radio, rarely. But like, if playing on the radio at 7 in the morning, I will listen to it." – Participant 5

"Radio is still ok a bit. If I'm on my way for work, I can turn the radio on and will still be listening to it." – Participant 6

4.4 Theme 4: Time and Financial Factors in Traditional Media

Time and financial factors play a large role in the participants' decision to rarely consuming their news through traditional media, covering the RQ2 section. Traditional media through television broadcasts are the mainly on time as their main factor. For newspaper on the other hand, the participants mostly relate their choice to not get their news through newspaper with financial factor and content availability on another platforms.

"Such as newspaper, I don't, um, get them on a daily because it does cost money, and compare that to social media, it's a free source" ... "I don't listen to the radio or watch TV for news broadcasts because I don't actually have the time to look forward to it." – Participant 1

"(on his reasoning for not purchasing newspapers) Because I have phone." ... "It's like wasteful." – Participant 2

"I rarely have time to just sit down and watch TV." – Participant 3

"I just don't feel like buying newspaper when you can access news digitally from Instagram." – Participant 4

It's already expensive, the price. The content is lesser to compare with before. And the news we can also get it from other places. Like sports, we can get it online and faster such as Sky Sports and ESPN." – Participant 5

4.5 Theme 5: Uncertainties Towards AI-generated contents

Four of the participants expressed their concern towards the possibilities of artificial intelligent contents that they are consuming. The participants acknowledged that Artificial Intelligent (AI) can be utilised in this era to create fake news in which making it more believable where it can imitate real life. A participant also highlighted how AI can be used to target specific individuals to diminish their images by manipulating their existing contents.

"Artificial Intelligence is evolving. More people are taking this opportunity to create fake news for the sake of (creating) content and audience mining. So, even the smartest people could also fall into the trap." ... "You could attack, or you could discriminate an influencer by manipulating the image because you have all of their pictures online." ... "You could also ask ChatGPT to create fake news just for the sake of it." – Participant 1

"If like, western media, I don't really know. Because they tend to manipulate the media. And nowadays with AI, I'm – I – I'm not really sure. AI is Scary." ... "It is already imitating real life. In the future, I don't know what will happen." – Participant 2

"AI generated too. Which is even more confusing to more people at this time." – Participant 3

"AI is on the rise at this time; people can make it." – Participant 6

4.6 Theme 6: Questionable Accuracy and Rapid News Traction

Peer-to-peer communication platform was not regarded as preferable by most of the participants. The speed of new media featured within peer-to-peer communication platform, can offer to disseminate news raised a concern to the participants of this study. The participants acknowledged that receiving fast news is an advantage, although the accuracy of the news became their main concern.

"News spread fairly quick, but they're not accurate." ... "It's spread by multiple people, news can spread rapidly, but it doesn't have credibility." – Participant 1

"But if it's through WhatsApp, there are a lot of older people who are gullible. The people can easily be tricked to believe the news be it real or fake. So, I don't think news from WhatsApp can easily be trusted." – Participant 2

"Sometimes, you can get fast news from them. Like there wasn't any news statement, it's already out, it's already spreading in your group chat. You can get it early if it's true but not knowing if it's true or not." – Participant 3

"Peer-to-peer, not really. Because peer-to-peer is like being added-on with spice into the news. It's hard to believe." – Participant 5

4.7 Discussion

4.7.1 RQ1: How do the public understand and recognise the credibility of news, and how effective it is to make them trust the information?

RQ1 of this study aimed to explore how the millennials understand the term fake news based on their own understanding. The RQ1 also intended to see how the millennials assess the credibility of the news (in this case, fake news) that they encounter.

COVID-19 pandemic became a repeated topic and example being used by the participants of this study. As such, Participant 1 recalled her experience in encountering fake news on COVID-19 where rising number of cases, death, and vaccination fake news were disseminated in exaggerated fashion. Participant 2 also mentioned on a fake news of the same situation where he noted of a lockdown to be implemented in the country that caused panic buying among the people.

A news article by The Scoop was published in 2020 regarding a fake news spread during the COVID-19 pandemic. The article confirmed of the instances of fake news that are being published during the pandemic on new media platforms, specifically on WhatsApp and social media, were too high with an addition to the speed of how the news can be spread was also fast (Han, 2020). The article also mentioned that fake news spread during the dire time have the ability causing public confusion and panic (Han, 2020).

Moreover, the scenario of panic buying during the pandemic can be confirmed through a press release published by the Ministry of Finance and Economy. The ministry urged the public to avoid panic buying and hoarding of home necessities, including face mask and hand sanitiser following the announcement of the confirmed cases of COVID-19 on the 9th and 10th March 2020 (Ministry of Finance and Economy, 2020). The ministry also issued a statement on urging the public to consider the people who would need the necessities more to be given the priority and calling the action of panic buying and home necessities hoarding as 'irrational' (Ministry of Finance and Economy, 2020).

As both of these scenarios have showcased, the behaviour that was caused by the pandemic influences the spread of fake news. According to Gomez & Ramcharan (2022), the pandemic, specifically in the Southeast Asian region, affected the ability of the public to receive real and accurate information regarding the health-related news. They also noted that the main reason for this phenomenon was due to fact that the misinformation that being spread around was being done over social media, which lacks quality control and the ability of the news to reach broader community (Gomez & Ramcharan, 2022). This study aligns with the theoretical framework, derived from Shannon-Weaver model of Communication by Shannon & Weaver (1949), that acts as a noise to the information being spread, interfering with the dissemination of accurate information over the new media platforms.

The news on COVID-19 pandemic in Brunei Darussalam were delivered through a daily press conference. According to Ho (2022), Brunei Darussalam continued to do a streamed daily press conference to give an

update regarding the COVID-19 pandemic started from the first confirmed case, which was from the 9th of March 2020 until 1st of July 2020 for 54 continuous day which was chaired by the Minister of Health. The press conferences were aired on both television and social media, allowing for the public to be able to get a timely update during the pandemic (Wong et al., 2020). However, despite the daily update for the COVID-19 situation in the country, fake news still managed to be spread. This is again in relation to Gomez & Ramcharan (2022)'s study where they mentioned on the ability of the news to travel quickly without any filtration effort being made, resulting in the news being caught by a large number of people.

Participant 3 and 5 also mentioned on their experience on encountering the fake news regarding food import into Brunei Darussalam through land borders that may resulted in fine or having the food being confiscated. The news was confirmed by Brunei Darussalam Food Authority to be fake (@bdfa.brunei, 2024). Unfortunately, no other information was being presented by Brunei Darussalam Food Authority regarding the news apart from the mention of the news being fake.

Participant 5 also mentioned on a fake news relating attire protocol in relation to a passing of a royal member. It was announced to the people of the nation that a royal member passed away on the 24th of October 2020 and the nation were to observe a seven-days mourning period (Bandial, 2020). Within the fake news, it was mentioned that a white band surrounding the songkok should be worn for Muslim male, white headscarf for Muslim female, and white armband should be worn by non-Muslim during the whole seven-days mourning period. According to Participant 5's statement, this fake news made a lot of the local to be impulsive on purchasing white clothes for the occasion. Participant 5 also mentioned that official statement from the authority were only released after the effect has been taken place. Unfortunately, the original statement can no longer be found through any official government website on rejecting the fake news relating to this issue. However, a digital capture of the media release can be found on Reddit dated exactly within the timeframe of the event. The media release which was dated a day after the news of the passing of the royal member confirmed Participant 5's statement of delayed official communication regarding the fake news. In the media release, the Prime Minister Office announced that the attire for the mourning period is as usual, while also stating that the widespread information regarding the needs to wear white band surrounding the songkok for Muslim male, white headscarf for Muslim female, and white armband for non-Muslim is untrue (Prime Minister's Office, 2020). As the passing of the royal member was announced on the 24th of October 2020, and the media release was published on the 25th of October 2020, the timeline showcases a delay in the update for the authority to deny the fake news, thus allowing for the fake news to be spread even further and making the consumer to think that the fake news was real.

Additionally, Participant 4 used a fake news story regarding an incident that happened in Pulau Muara Besar as his example. Participant 4 also mentioned that there were a lot of missing information that resulted in a lot of fake news and misinformation being spread regarding the incident when the company related to the incident did not disclose the main cause of the incident. The researcher can confirm this incident through a newspaper article where it was mentioned that a fire incident did happen within the island ("Fire at Pulau Muara Besar," 2024). In the news article, there was indeed no mention of the cause of the incident ("Fire at Pulau Muara Besar," 2024).

In the examples mentioned by both Participant 5 and Participant 4, it was clear that lack of immediate official communication and the limited information given the public caused the spread of fake news within a real scenario. Participant 5's statement can be assumed that it has a logical ground. A study by Rich & Zaragoza (2020) mentioned that correcting fake news will immediately reduce the believability. Therefore, if only those fake news were to be immediately countered and corrected, the intensity of the fake news will not be severe.

To answer the RQ1 of this study, the understanding of the millennials and their ability to recognise fake news are highly depending on their experiences in encountering fake news. The participants defined fake news as misleading and false information and exaggerated content, which fit with how Smith (2020) defined fake news within their study. The way for the participants to verify news are by checking the sources of the news (both the source and other credible entities) and assessing how the news is being presented, be it through the headlines, images, and the contents.

Instances of the participants defining and verifying fake news are highly influenced by their prior related learning experience when encountering fake news throughout their life and thus affecting their digital and information literacy in the positive way at the same time. Rather than trusting the news, the participants relied on their past experiences on getting deceived into immediately believing the fake news. For instance, when asked about her method of verifying the news, participant 1 used the word 'learning from my lesson'

which indicates the presence of prior exposure to fake news which ultimately modifies her behaviour when consuming news. The same can be said with Participant 6, where his past experience in working for the meteorological department allowed him to recognise a false information regarding weather and natural disaster through the images that are being disseminated. Participant 2 on the other hand, mentioned that the public should be aware of the local's situation where context matters in an event of fake news, indicating the needs to be well informed as a defence mechanism against fake news.

Prior related learning experience can be further supported to a study by Goodman & Ord (2025). According to them, the people in the United Kingdom region mainly assess digital misinformation and fake news in three separate methods which are through both formal and informal learning and sense of self (Goodman & Ord, 2025). Within this study, the participants as repeatedly mentioned, relies on prior related learning experience to combat consuming fake news which the study by Goodman & Ord (2025) regards as an informal learning. The study also mentioned that informal learning contributes largely to the people's ability to critically question the content they are receiving (Goodman & Ord, 2025). Reflecting with the participants of this study, their definitions, examples, and ways to verify news are based on their experiences that made them learn.

The way for the participants to verify news is related to the conceptual framework developed for this study. In the framework, the receiver's decision to take or reject the news became a dependant variable. Their decision apart from their prior encounter with fake news, digital literacy is another factor in their way to make the assessment on the news. Based on Dame Adjin-Tetty (2022) mentioned in Chapter 2 of this paper, digital literacy is important for the decision to either consume or reject the news. Exhibited by the participants, digital literacy improves when they are being exposed to fake news prior to the study, showcasing how much digital literacy plays a role simply from encountering fake news.

In conclusion, the findings from the RQ1 showcase that the millennials within this study, have their understanding and recognition of the credibility of the fake news are connected by their experiences when encountering fake news. Their definitions of fake news are aligned with how it was generally being defined, along with how they are being presented within a study by Smith (2020). Their definitions of fake news highlight an increase (or presence) of digital literacy when their experiences are taken into account. Therefore, allowing for a connection between the relation of general understanding with a heightened digital literacy skill.

4.7.2 RQ2: What news platforms are being preferred by the millennials, and what factor influences their decisions?

The findings for RQ2 uncover that new media are being highly preferred than traditional media as their news platforms preference. The biases for receiving news from new media, especially from social media platforms, were influenced by the ease of access, time and financial factors. Despite that, peer-to-peer communication platform was not regarded as preferable by most of the participants.

Ease of access to news and information allows the consumers, specifically the participants of this study, to receive their information instantly. As mentioned by Participant 1, she mentioned to not having the time to look forward to listening to radio or watching news on television. Participant 2 mentioned that he has a mobile device that can receive news. Participant 3 mentioned on Instagram being the easiest platform for him to receive his news, thus further making new media as the preferred news consumption platform for the millennials as the theme for this study. Participant 4 also mentioned on Instagram allowing the same access to news as what newspaper is offering, eliminating his needs of newspaper. New media gives the users to consume news without the needs of waiting for the scheduled time as what both television and radio news broadcasts, or the requirement to spend their money as what newspapers usually do.

As for radio broadcast as a source of news platforms, three of the participants mentioned to listen to the radio when driving. This again related to the ease-of-use factor when it comes to the choices of the where the participants are getting their news from. Participant 2 mentioned to only have the accessibility to the radio in his car. Participant 3 and Participant 6 specifically mentioned to be listening to the radio when driving. As what was mentioned by Participant 3, he said to be listening to the radio when he is tired of listening to music. Participant 6 on the other hand said to be listening to the radio while on his way to work. Lastly, Participant 5 mentioned to be tune in when the news is playing on the radio at seven in the morning. From all the reasonings given by the participants, it showcases that accessibility became a main factor in their choice to be using the radio as their source of news. Not only that, Mohamad (2023) mentioned that the action of listening to the radio while driving is crucial as it prevents the driver from being unstimulated, which in turn making the drivers to be more focused while on the road.

A study by Guo (2024) indicates that users in the United States have a high preference for receiving their news via news applications on their mobile devices due to the ease of use. As both mobile applications and social media are related in terms of the platform use, the study by Guo (2024) is in one hand in line with the participants of this paper where they mentioned to use social media to receive their news due to the ease of access.

Speaking on financial as a factor for the preferred platform for receiving news, four of the participants mentioned money or the price of the newspaper being their main reasoning for not using newspaper as their news medium.

Participant 1 mentioned that since there are social media platforms that can offer her news, newspaper is no longer relevant as it costs her money in contrast to social media. Along with Participant 1, Participant 4 also expressed the same sentiment, where he also went on to be more specific by mentioning Instagram as his social media preference for news consumption platform. Participant 2 also mentioned to not receive their news via newspaper, stating that he has his own mobile device for his news while also maintaining that he feels that buying newspaper is wasteful. Participant 6 went on detailed why newspaper is not his preferred news platform in term of financial factor. Participant 6 mentioned that the price is still expensive when the content itself is diminishing in quantity compared to when he was still a regular consumer to the newspaper.

The financial factor played a large role in the reasonings to not consume their news through newspaper. A study in the United States of America mentioned that Americans would rather get their news through a free alternative despite already finding it on a paid platform when the content they are looking for is hidden behind a paywall (Tomasik & Lipka, 2025). Relating Tomasik & Lipka (2025)'s study with how the participants in this paper showcased, it is clear that financial is a strong factor in their reasonings to find their news on social media rather than newspaper. Having the requirement to purchase newspaper deters the participants of this study from getting their news from newspaper. Additionally, Participant 5 were also asked if she would subscribe to a paid online news platform, in which she stated that she would not. Her reasoning was also due to the availability of getting free news from local news outlet such as Pelita Brunei via their website. Therefore, this again confirmed the study by Tomasik & Lipka (2025) to be relatable with the millennials of this study.

4.7.3 RQ3: What challenges do the millennials face when receiving and navigating digital news

When asked about the challenges that they face when receiving and navigating digital news, four of the participants mentioned on their uncertainties when encountering digital content as they are becoming more cautious of AI-generated content. The concern on news being spread via peer-to-peer communication platform also prevailed among four of the participants as rapid news traction and questionable accuracy within the news became the factors within their reasonings.

Development of AI in this may create an issue, as what the participants of this study suggested. According to Yessimova & Shevyakova (2024), the fast improvement within the AI technology have increased the deepfake usages to spread fake news. Manipulation of images and videos were mentioned where it can be used to destroy the images of public figures and celebrities (Yessimova & Shevyakova, 2024). In the case of participants of this study, Participant 1 mentioned that AI can be used to harm and discriminate influencers by using the images that are available on their page. Participant 2 mentioned on the manipulation of media through AI. Participant 3 stated that AI can be confusing to himself, indicating that the level of believability that AI-generated content can achieve. Lastly, Participant 6 mentioned on the availability of the technology to the public, making it possible for anyone to utilise the technology.

Touching on the subject of questionable accuracy of news that are being spread through the peer-to-peer communication platforms, four of the participants mentioned to have concerns regarding the possibility of receiving news from peer-to-peer communication platforms are inaccurate or even having it manipulated, be it from the source itself or at any point before the news reaches the receiver.

Participant 1 agrees that the news being spread on that platform is rapid. Therefore, she questioned the credibility of the news as the news itself is being spread by multiple people, suggesting the possibility of having the news being manipulated along the way. Participant 2 mentioned on the users of the platform, where he mentioned that there could potentially be older people who are gullible on the platform, saying that WhatsApp as a sole source of news should not be easily trusted. Participant 3 on the other hand mentioned on the rapid spread of unconfirmed news. Unconfirmed news from unofficial sources was Participant 3's main concern where he also mentioned that the consumers can easily get the news, in return to not going to have confidence if the news they are receiving to be real or fake. Lastly, Participant 5 also agreed on the major

idea being presented in this paragraph. Participant 5 mentioned that she has very little assurance of receiving news from peer-to-peer communication platforms as she believes that news from that platform can be altered, implying that exaggeration may be used to make news more engaging.

All of the factors relating to the concerns of the participants in this study to receive their news through new media, that includes news being spread at rapid pace, news accuracy is questionable as it may come from unreliable sources, as well as the concern of receiving AI-generated content that imitates real life based on fake news or misinformation, can be backed by multiple studies. These studies are related as how it was presented in the literature review section of this paper. According to Veronika & Raharjo (2021) based on their study in Indonesia, the consumers still question the accuracy of the news that they receive through social media. Their study reflects the participants of this paper, where uncertainties towards multiple factors were placed by the participants on the topic of receiving their news through new media platforms.

Another study by Surjatmodjo et al. (2024) highlighted that disinformation can get disseminated at the rate of six times faster to compare with real, authentic content, especially when emotions and the way the platforms handle their algorithm became part of the factors in the spread.

In conclusion, the findings from the RQ3 highlights the challenges that the millennials face when receiving news in the digital environment. AI became a factor where the technology can be used to defame other people. The speed of how news can be spread in the new media is also an issue where the authenticity of the news is unknown.

5. Conclusion

The objective of this study is to understand and explore the effects of fake news that can cause to the news consumers. Additionally, the study also aims to explore the participants' ability to identify fake news in relation to media literacy.

The findings from the semi-structured interviews conducted with six participants revealed six emerging themes through the data gathered that helped to understand how fake news are being presumed and verified by the millennials in Brunei Darussalam through their experiences in encountering it. The participants' understanding towards fake news are generally being defined as news that is unverified, exaggerated, designed to mislead the consumer, and contained untrue information. The definition of the fake news according to the participants are massively influenced by their experiences when encountering fake news. COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, and lacking official communication are the encounters that were faced by the participants, therefore shaping their understanding of fake news through personal experiences. The participants indicated various method as their news verification habits for their usage of detecting the news credibility that they encounter. The participants demonstrated the habit of checking the sources of the news and assessing how the news are being presented. When checking the sources of the news, the participants mentioned on crosschecking the news they received with the sources that they deemed as reliable while also inquiring the origin of the news. The news is also being analysed by the participants where they would see exaggeration in the headlines, and the usage of imagery is also a factor that leads them to question the credibility of the news. Solely on the contents, the participants mentioned to check on the professionalism aspect of the news where they would practice caution when seeing mistakes within the news. New media is the preferred news platform compared to traditional media with the advantage being mentioned as receiving news conveniently as opposed to the traditional media. Participants also mentioned to only consume their news through verified and official Instagram accounts, while another through Telegram in addition to the social media. WhatsApp, Reddit, and X (Twitter) were also highlighted as their new media platforms. Their choices were related to the time and financial factors within the traditional media where television broadcast requires the consumers to spend their time on, which the participants would not have the willing to do so. Newspaper on the other hand requires the consumers to spend their money, where according to the participants, such news could also be retrieved through other free alternatives. Concerns towards the news consumption that they get were also raised by the participants. Four of the participants highlighted that AI can be utilised to create a believable fake news where the news can be used to target individuals as a form of defamation. News disseminated through peer-to-peer communication platform is also a concern to the participants. From the findings, the participants agreed that receiving news through the peer-to-peer communication platform is fast, although the accuracy of the news is questionable to them.

This study contributes to the existing study on the awareness of fake news by offering a localised perspective on how millennials in Brunei Darussalam detect and engage with the fake news. This study highlights the influence of personal experience to shape their digital literacy skill to deter fake news. The preference of

media as a source of news platforms were also put into focus.

One limitation that this study introduced is the usage of convenience sampling. The sampling method may restrict the variety of the experiences that participants encountered. As this study also relies on the participants' experience and having it based on their own input, the data gathered may be dependable on the participants' memory and certain aspect of their story could be withheld by them.

Ultimately, the findings of this study suggest for both practical and policy implications that can be implemented in order to improve digital literacy and combat the issues raised from the spread of fake news in Brunei Darussalam. In practical implication, as suggested by the findings and a study by Goodman & Ord (2025), the people should be equipped with the proper digital literacy skills. As shown by the participants of this study, having prior experience showcases good digital literacy skills where application of verification methods was implemented by them. Goodman & Ord (2025) mentioned that formal learning in this area within the higher education highlights the ability of the participants of their study to apply critical thinking skill when verifying fake news. Hence, implementation of digital literacy skill in higher learning institution will vastly be helpful in this scenario. To add on, this practical implication is closely related to a policy implication. The Ministry of Education should add digital literacy as part of a syllabus starting in primary education to prepare the people with this skill from an early age. This in return will draw lesser audience to become a target of a fake news believer

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