
mLAC Journal for Arts, Commerce and Sciences (m-JACS)
Volume 4, No.5, June 2026, P 1-6
ISSN: 2584-1920 (Online)

INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION AMONG POST GRADUATION STUDENTS OF TUMKUR

Indudhar Kini^{1*}, Kokila M.S¹, Padmanabha K. V¹

¹Dept. of Journalism & Mass Communication, Tumkur University, B. H. Road, Tumkur-572103, India

Corresponding author email address: mr.indudhar@yahoo.com

Paper Received: 23.01.2026 | Revised: 28.04.2026 | Accepted: 29.05.2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59415/mjacs.363>

Abstract

The rapid growth of digital technologies and social media platforms has significantly transformed the way students access, evaluate, and share information. This study investigates the role of social media in promoting media literacy education among postgraduate students in Tumkur, Karnataka. Using a quantitative descriptive survey design, data were collected from 93 postgraduate students enrolled in Tumkur University and its affiliated colleges. The study examined social media usage patterns, awareness of media literacy concepts, verification practices, and perceptions regarding the effectiveness of social media as a tool for media literacy development. The findings reveal that most students have regular internet access and actively engage with social media platforms, particularly Instagram and WhatsApp, for entertainment, education, news consumption, and communication. While a majority of respondents were familiar with the concept of media literacy and acknowledged the potential of social media in enhancing critical evaluation skills, awareness of key concepts such as fake news, misinformation, media bias, and fact-checking remained moderate. The results further indicate inconsistent verification practices and continued exposure to misinformation, highlighting the need for structured educational interventions. The study concludes that social media can serve as an effective platform for media literacy education when supported by targeted training, institutional guidance, and curriculum integration. The findings offer valuable insights for educators and policymakers seeking to strengthen media literacy competencies among students in an increasingly digital information environment.

Keywords: Social Media, Media Literacy, Postgraduate Students, Digital Literacy, Critical Thinking, Fake News, Misinformation, Fact-Checking, Higher Education, Tumkur.

1. INTRODUCTION

The accelerated development of digital technology and social networking sites has shaped how people access, share, and interact with information. Social media, in specific, has become the prevalent communication medium, impacting education, culture, and social practices globally. For postgraduate students, social media is not just a means of networking and amusement but also a valuable platform of academic interaction, knowledge exchange, and critical thinking.

In the Indian context, particularly in semi-urban areas like Tumkur, the inclusion of social media in higher education poses vital questions about how it can be used to improve media literacy. According to NAMLE Media literacy is the ability to access, analyse, evaluate, create and act using all forms of communication. Media literacy is more than digital access; it involves the competencies to analyse, evaluate, and ethically interact with information. Since postgraduate students are a significant part of the future workforce and knowledge creators, it is important to know their social media usage patterns and how it influences their media literacy education.

The purpose of this research is to explore how social media enhances media literacy learning among postgraduate students of Tumkur. Focusing on this particular group, the study will try to explore the possibilities, challenges, and implications of applying social media as a teaching tool in developing media literacy.

Objectives of the study

1. To analyse the degree of social media usage among postgraduate students of Tumkur.
2. To examine the function of social media sites in acquiring media literacy competencies like critical thinking, information analysis, and ethical application of digital material.
3. To establish the advantages and disadvantages of incorporating social media in media literacy learning.
4. To examine the view of postgraduate students on the efficacy of social media as a platform to increase media literacy.
5. To give advice to educators and policymakers on how to enhance media literacy education using social media tools.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Livingstone (2004) stressed that media literacy encompasses more than technical competence but also calls for critical thinking and active engagement in media culture. Social media, being a participatory medium, presents new possibilities for building these abilities.

Jenkins et al. (2009) developed the theory of participatory culture, where social media enables students to co-create, share, and collaborate on knowledge, hence developing media literacy capabilities. Tess (2013) added that social media sites are being employed more in higher education for scholarly debate, peer-to-peer learning, and augmenting digital literacy, although issues related to distraction and misinformation persist.

Kumar and Rani (2021) noted that social media and digital platforms have transformed communication and education in India, yet there are differences in terms of literacy and access between rural and urban communities. Das and Sahoo (2020) noted that Indian students employ social media for the most part for informal learning, which can be leveraged to increase media literacy if directed by systemic educational structures.

Fewer studies have addressed semi-urban settings such as Tumkur specifically. Nonetheless, in Nayak (2018)'s study on Karnataka students, social media was shown to improve collaborative learning and online awareness, although it suffers from issues of information overload and insufficient critical assessment skills.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative, descriptive survey to systematically investigate the usage patterns of social media and its role in media literacy education among postgraduate students of Tumkur. The research aimed to capture students' perceptions, behaviours, and attitudes through structured data collection and statistical analysis.

The target population comprised postgraduate students enrolled in Tumkur University and its affiliated colleges, including Sarvodaya College of Education, Siddhartha College, and others. A purposive sampling technique was adopted to ensure representation across diverse courses such as M. Sc, MA, MCom, Journalism, MSW, and Library Science. After excluding incomplete, duplicate, or ineligible responses through a systematic data cleaning process, the final sample consisted of 93 valid respondents (45 males, 46 females, and 2 who preferred not to disclose gender).

4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter presents and interprets the findings from the survey conducted among postgraduate students of Tumkur regarding the role of social media in media literacy education. The analysis is organized thematically in accordance with the main research objectives and the structure of the questionnaire.

The survey included a total of 93 valid respondents, comprising 45 males, 46 females, and 2 who preferred not to disclose their gender. Many students (61.29%) were in the 23–25 age group, followed by 32.26% of students between 20–22 years, with a smaller representation from older age brackets. The respondents represented Tumkur University and affiliated colleges such as Sarvodaya College of Education, Siddhartha College, etc. who were pursuing a range of postgraduate courses including M. Sc, MA, MCom, Journalism, MSW, and Library Science.

During the data cleaning process, responses that were duplicate, incomplete, or from ineligible participants were removed prior to analysis. This resulted in a final valid sample of 93 postgraduate students, ensuring that all findings are based on complete and relevant data.

Social Media Usage Patterns

Most of the surveyed postgraduate students currently have regular internet access (93%). This high percentage of internet connectivity demonstrates that social media is widely accessible to the student community, underpinning their ability to engage with digital platforms for diverse activities.

Students' daily usage of social media varies, but most fall into a moderate usage category. The dominant group (66.67%) spends between one and three hours per day, reflecting sustained but not excessive engagement with social platforms (Table 1.1). Only a small minority report very high usage (over five hours daily).

Instagram and WhatsApp are the leading platforms among Tumkur postgraduate students, followed by YouTube. Usage of Facebook, Telegram, and

Twitter is considerably lower, indicating a preference for instant messaging and visual content platforms. Respondents indicated multiple reasons for using social media, revealing its multifunctional role in student life. Entertainment is the top motivation (82.80%) closely followed by news/current affairs and educational use. Communication/Networking and content creation remain significant but secondary functions.

These results show that postgraduate students of Tumkur are both active and selective in their use of social media. High levels of access and moderate usage times suggest sustainable digital engagement. The predominance of platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp highlights preferences for interactive, mobile-friendly media. Importantly, social media serves not only as a source of entertainment, but also as a key channel and peer communication, student culture and its potential for supporting media literacy initiatives.

Table 1.1: Daily Social Media Usage Among Postgraduate Students (%)

Daily usage of social media	%
Less than 1 hour	15.04
1 to 3 hours	66.67
3 to 5 hours	10.74
5 to 7 hours	03.25
More than 7 hours	04.30

for accessing educational resources, news, suggesting its central role in contemporary

Awareness and Understanding of Media Literacy

The survey findings reveal varied familiarity with the concept of media literacy among postgraduate students of Tumkur. 62.37% of the respondents indicated that they have heard of the term "Media Literacy" before, while 22.58% of them were uncertain ("Maybe"), and 15% had not heard of it. This suggests a generally positive awareness, though some students remain unsure or unfamiliar with the concept.

When asked to rate their awareness of key media literacy-related concepts on a scale of 1 to 5, average scores hovered around a neutral level (**Fig 1.1**). Specifically, the mean ratings were 2.6 for fake news, 2.76 for misinformation, 2.91 for media bias, and 2.84 for fact-checking. These scores reflect moderate recognition, indicating that while students have some understanding of these critical concepts, there is ample room for deeper awareness and education.

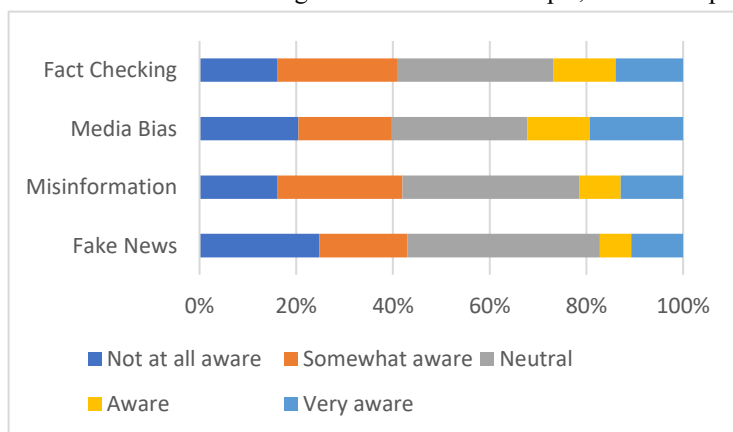


Fig: 1.1: Tumkur PG students' awareness of the concepts

Regarding students' perceptions of what media literacy means, respondents selected multiple applicable abilities. The majority (approximately 73%) identified the ability to analyse and evaluate media content as a key component. A slightly smaller proportion (68%) emphasized the ability to access and use media effectively, while 60% recognized the ability to create and share responsible content as important. Furthermore, 55% of them selected "All of the above," suggesting that many see media literacy as encompassing all these facets together: access, critical evaluation, and responsible content creation. Because respondents could select more than one option, these percentages reflect the prevalence of each perception rather than mutually exclusive categories.

Overall, these results indicate that while a significant portion of postgraduate students in Tumkur have at least a basic awareness of media literacy and its related concepts, their understanding is predominantly general and could benefit from structured educational efforts that deepen their comprehension and practical skills in navigating the modern

media landscape.

Role of Social Media in Media Literacy

The survey results indicate a mixed but generally positive perception of social media’s role in enhancing media literacy among postgraduate students. 60.22% of the respondents believe that social media platforms help them learn how to critically evaluate and understand media content, although a substantial number (27.96%) remain uncertain, and 11.83% disagree. This suggests that while social media is seen as a helpful tool by many, there is still some scepticism or lack of clarity among students.

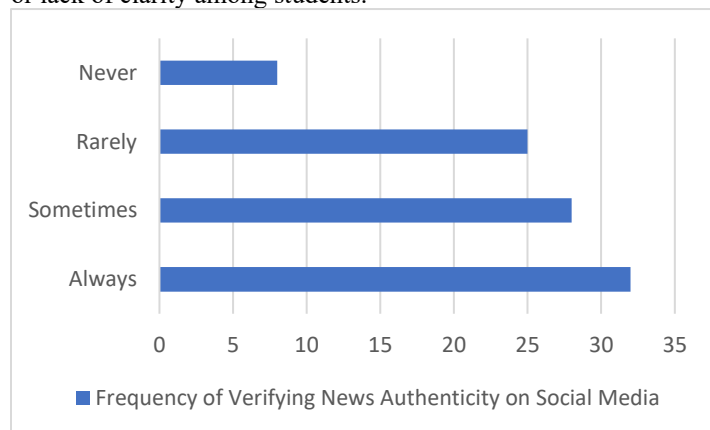


Fig. 1.1: Frequency of verifying news authenticity on social media

Regarding verification practices, students exhibit varied habits in checking the authenticity of news and information on social media (Fig 1.2): 32.41% always verify, 30.11% sometimes do, 26.88% rarely do, and 8.61% never do so. This distribution reflects a reasonable level of vigilance among users, though it also highlights the need for greater consistency in verification efforts.

Exposure to fake news or misleading content is common, with 48.39% of the respondents encountering it sometimes, 22.58% frequently, and 19.35% rarely. Only 9.68% students reported never encountering such content. This underscores the prevalence of misinformation on social media and the ongoing challenge it poses

for users.

When asked about following accounts or pages that promote media literacy or fact-checking, 37.63% of the students affirmed following such pages, whereas 25.81% did not, 29.03% were unsure (“Maybe”), and 7.53% were not aware of such pages. This indicates awareness of media literacy resources exists but is unevenly distributed.

The Likert scale responses to statements about social media’s impact on media literacy reveal moderate to low agreement. On average, respondents disagree that social media has made them more aware of media bias (mean = 2.37) and that their critical thinking about media has improved due to social media (mean = 2.56). They neither agree nor disagree about having learned to verify sources (mean = 2.68) and about social media being part of media literacy education (mean = 2.9). These responses suggest ambivalence and point to room for improvement in how social media contributes to media literacy education.

Overall, while social media is recognized as a platform with potential to aid media literacy, these findings indicate a need for enhanced efforts to foster critical engagement, source verification, and awareness of media bias among students. Educational initiatives could leverage social media more effectively to close these gaps and promote informed consumption of information.

How can social media be better used to promote media literacy among students?

A significant proportion of postgraduate students expressed interest in further educational opportunities related to media literacy and safe social media usage. Specifically, 66.67% of the respondents indicated “Yes,” showing a clear willingness to participate in workshops or training sessions. Meanwhile, 22.59% of the students were uncertain or responded “Maybe,” suggesting openness but possibly needing more information or time to decide. Only 10.75% students responded “No,” indicating limited resistance to such initiatives.

These findings highlight a strong overall demand for media literacy education programs that can equip students with critical digital skills to navigate social media safely and effectively. This interest underscores the potential value and impact of organizing targeted workshops within the academic community.

This study surveyed postgraduate students of Tumkur to understand the role of social media in media literacy education. The findings illuminate the students’ social media usage patterns, their levels of awareness and understanding of media literacy concepts, and how social media platforms contribute to or hinder media literacy development.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Social Media Usage Patterns

The study found that most of the postgraduate students in Tumkur have regular internet access (93%) and engage

moderately with social media platforms, predominantly Instagram and WhatsApp. Most students spend between one to three hours daily on social media, aligning with global trends observed among young adults (Kutu & Kutu, 2022). The multifunctional use of these platforms - for entertainment, news, educational purposes, and communication - demonstrates their central role in students' academic and social lives. This suggests social media's presence as a viable medium to support educational strategies, especially for media literacy promotion.

2. Awareness and Understanding of Media Literacy

While over 60% of students have heard of media literacy, awareness of specific concepts like fake news, fact-checking, and media bias remains moderate, reflecting a global challenge in digital literacy education (NAMLE, 2023). Respondents perceive media literacy as encompassing the ability to access, analyse, evaluate, and responsibly create media content, which aligns well with established definitions emphasizing critical thinking and ethical interaction with information (NAMLE, 2023). The moderate awareness ratings signal the need for more structured and comprehensive educational efforts.

3. Role of Social Media in Acquiring Media Literacy Competencies

Most students (60%) believe social media platforms help them critically evaluate content; however, the mixed attitudes about improving critical thinking and source verification underscore the complex and ambivalent role social media plays in media literacy development (Livingstone et al., 2017). Notably, frequent exposure to fake news persists, underscoring the vulnerability of users to misinformation and the critical need for enhanced digital verification skills. These findings reflect those in other studies highlighting social media's dual function as both an educational tool and a source of misinformation (Pew Research Centre, 2020).

4. Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media in Media Literacy Education

Social media offers significant advantages: wide reach, interactive formats, and informal learning opportunities. However, disadvantages include misinformation prevalence and uneven user vigilance in verifying content authenticity. This dual nature suggests that effective media literacy education via social media must integrate content creation, critical analysis, and fact-checking, supported by institutional guidance (Hobbs, 2020). The inconsistent engagement with fact-checking pages among respondents further indicates room for improvement in promoting credible information sources.

5. Students' Views on Social Media's Efficacy

The variation in student responses regarding social media's efficacy in enhancing media literacy signals that while many see its potential, scepticism and uncertainty remain. These findings parallel other research documenting challenges in translating social media engagement into improved digital literacy skills (Livingstone et al., 2017). The moderate agreement levels on social media being part of formal media literacy education suggest an opportunity to better integrate social media literacy into academic curricula.

Recommendations for Educators and Policymakers

Students' strong interest in workshops and training programs highlights a clear demand for structured media literacy education tailored to social media usage. Educators should capitalize on students' preferred platforms to design engaging, interactive learning interventions that foster critical thinking, ethical content creation, and effective verification strategies. Collaborations with influencers and fact-checking organizations can amplify reach and credibility, enhancing the educational impact (NAMLE, 2023; Hobbs, 2020).

6. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the critical role social media plays in the media literacy landscape for postgraduate students in Tumkur. While social media is widely used and viewed as a potential resource for developing media literacy competencies, current awareness levels and critical engagement remain moderate, revealing significant space for educational enhancement.

By leveraging popular platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp, higher education institutions can implement targeted media literacy programs focusing on critical evaluation, digital ethics, and misinformation detection. The expressed willingness of students to participate in workshops creates a valuable opportunity to cultivate more discerning and responsible media users.

Future research should explore longitudinal impacts of such educational interventions and extend investigation across diverse academic disciplines and regions. Ultimately, integrating social media literacy within formal education and informal learning will be essential to prepare students for informed participation in today's complex information

environment.

7. STATEMENTS & DECLARATIONS:

Use of AI Statement

The authors declare that they have not used generative artificial intelligence, specifically ChatGPT in the writing of this manuscript and/or in the creation of images, graphics, tables, or their corresponding captions

Conflict of Interest and Declarations:

Authorship contribution statement: Indudhar Kini and Kokila M.S: Carrying the Experimental work, Data curation and writing the original manuscript and original draft. Padmanabha K. V: Supervision and review of the manuscript.

Acknowledgements: Nil

Compliance with Ethical Standards:

Conflict of Interest : The authors state that they don't have any conflict of interest.

Animal and Human Participants: Nil

Informed consent : Authors stated that there is no informed consent in the article.

Funding : Nil

Data availability: All the data included in this research article will be provided on request

8. REFERENCES

1. Hobbs, R. (2020). Media literacy in a digital age: Teaching, learning, and sharing creativity. Teachers College Press.
2. Jenkins, H., Purushotma, R., Weigel, M., Clinton, K., & Robison, A. J. (2009). Confronting the challenges of participatory culture. In *The MIT Press eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/8435.001.0001>
3. Kutu, O., & Kutu, O. (2022). Impact of Social Media Networks on Academic Performance of Library and Information Science Students. *International Journal of Library and Information Network Studies*, 8(2), 27-35.
4. Lalwani, E., Kumar, U., & Rani, N. M. (2020). THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF GENERATION -Z. *Palarch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 760-774.
5. Livingstone, S. (2004). Media literacy and the challenge of new information and communication technologies. *The Communication Review*, 7(1), 3-14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10714420490280152>
6. Livingstone, S., van Couvering, E., & Thumim, N. (2017). Children, internet and risk in comparative perspective. *Policy & Internet*, 9(2), 122-137. <https://doi.org/10.1002/poi3.160>
7. NAMLE (National Association for Media Literacy Education). (2023). Media Literacy Defined. <https://namle.org/resources/media-literacy-defined/>
8. Nayak, J. K. (2018). Relationship among smartphone usage, addiction, academic performance and the moderating role of gender: A study of higher education students in India. *Computers & Education*, 123, 164-173. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2018.05.007>
9. Pew Research Center. (2020). Many Americans say made-up news is a critical problem that needs to be fixed. <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2020/06/29/many-americans-say-made-up-news-is-a-critical-problem-that-needs-to-be-fixed/>
10. Subudhi, R., Das, S., & Sahu, S. (2020). Digital Escapism. *Horizon Journal of Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research*, 37-44.
11. Tess, P. A. (2013). The role of social media in higher education classes (real and virtual) – A literature review. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(5), A60-A68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2012.12.032>