

Interdisciplinary Efforts & Strategies to Counter Disinformation

A Roundtable Discussion

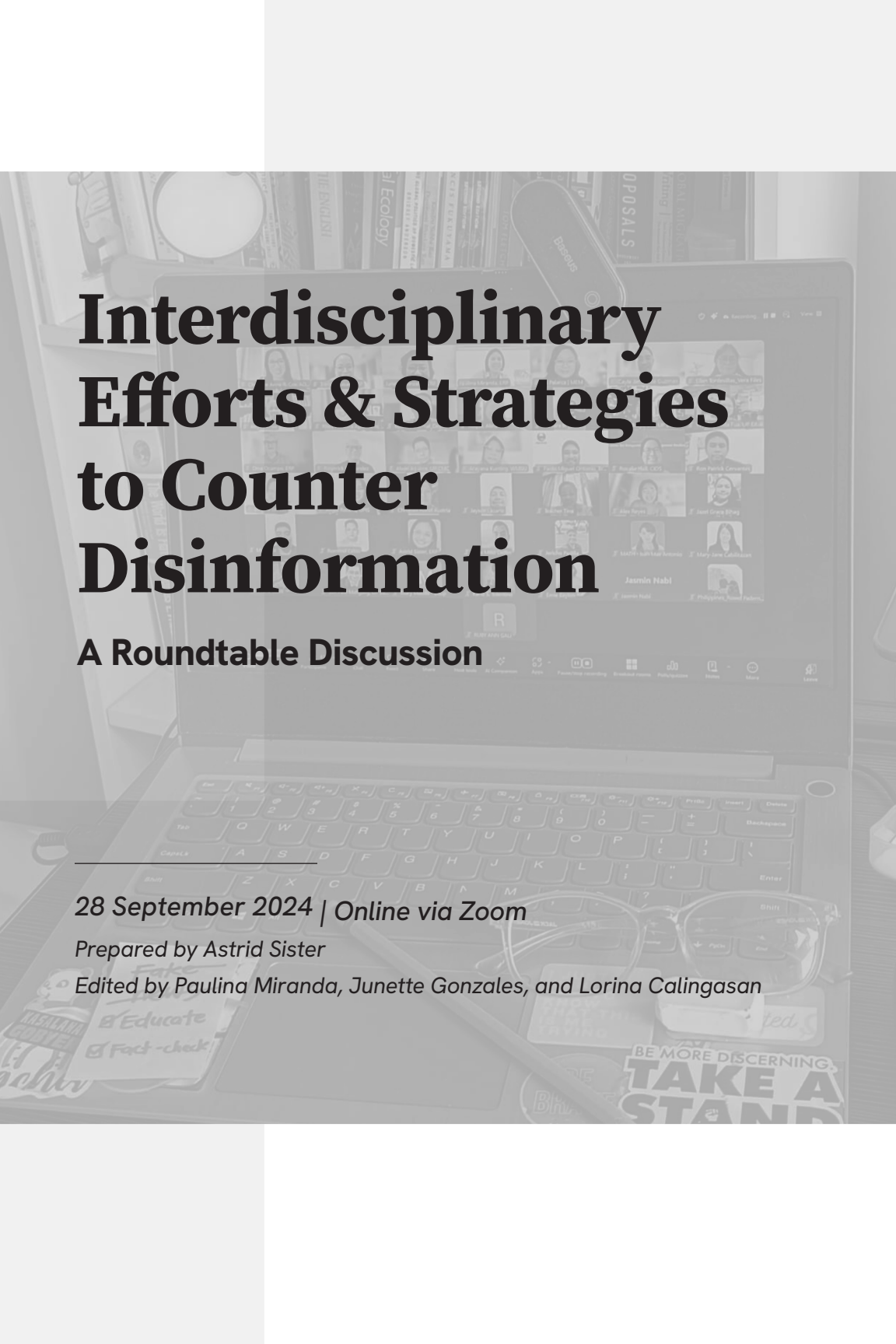
28 September 2024 | Online via Zoom

Prepared by Astrid Sister

Edited by Paulina Miranda, Junette Gonzales, and Lorina Calingasan



UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES
CENTER FOR
INTEGRATIVE AND
DEVELOPMENT
STUDIES



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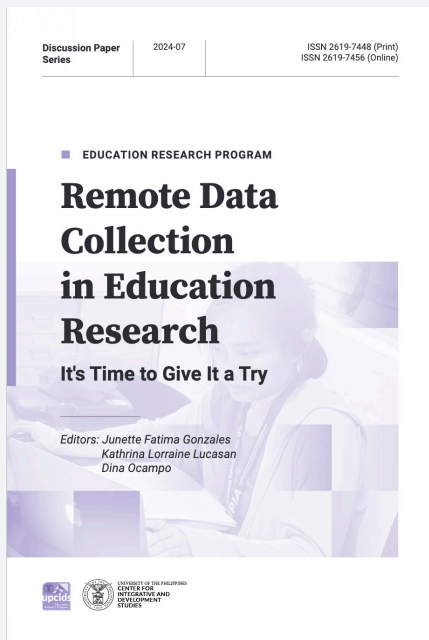
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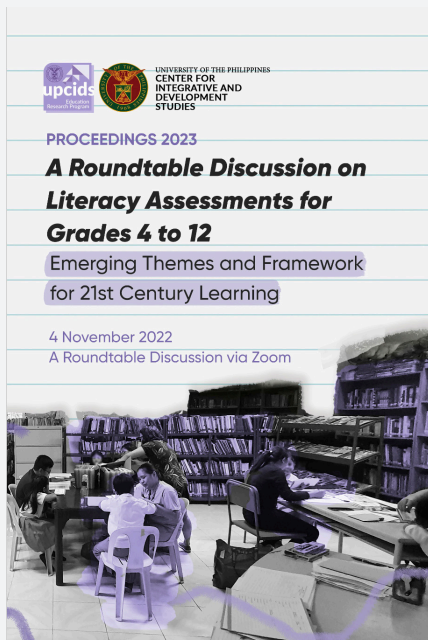
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Introduction

To deepen the education sector's role in addressing online disinformation, the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies – Education Research Program (ERP) convened a roundtable discussion with experts and practitioners from various fields, as well as key stakeholders across different levels of education governance. The event aimed to surface current initiatives and approaches to fighting disinformation across various disciplines, and explore how these can inform public policy, particularly in basic education. ERP facilitated the discussion as part of its ongoing commitment to develop and promote evidence-based strategies that empower educators and learners to critically evaluate online information.

Previously, ERP had conducted a series of workshops that introduced evidence-based strategies for assessing digital content, grounded in the Civic Online Reasoning framework developed by the Digital Inquiry Group or formerly known as Stanford History Education Group (SHEG). However, recognizing that disinformation is an interdisciplinary issue—and that existing local efforts to address it are often fragmented—ERP sought to bring together voices from different sectors in one discussion. Experts in library and information science, journalism, media and information literacy (MIL), fact-checking and communication research, shared their current best practices in 15-minute presentations. By giving the panelists an avenue for discussing what had worked for them in combating disinformation through their professional—and even personal—efforts, the less impactful effect of working in silos against disinformation was to be lessened.

Each talk was followed by responses from select education stakeholder reactors, including a former classroom teacher, school principal, education technologist, and a curriculum expert from the Department of Education Central Office. These reactors reflected on how the education sector can effectively respond to and scale efforts against disinformation. With disinformation becoming ever more pervasive in the age of artificial intelligence, there is a need for concentrated efforts and a pro-active stance from the education sector involving teachers, professors, principals and education experts.

The outcomes of the roundtable discussion are hoped to inform concrete and actionable recommendations for education policies that respond to the challenges of the digital information landscape. These insights also aspire to contribute to the development of the concept of skeptical resilience—the ability to instinctively and critically assess the legitimacy and credibility of digital content, almost as a form of muscle memory. This concept, currently being explored by ERP, addresses common cognitive vulnerabilities such as confirmation bias, susceptibility to clickbait, and the uncritical acceptance of algorithm-driven content.

This RTD contributes to an evidence-based discourse and policy in a world where information travels fast. This kind of conversation about disinformation is crucial among advocates and academics, especially in the education sector. A total of 41 participants attended the discussion held online via Zoom, including the organizers, speakers, reactors, and participants.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

WELCOME REMARKS

After the singing of the Philippine National Anthem, University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) Executive Director Dr. Rosalie Arcala Hall welcomed the participants to the roundtable discussion.

Dr. Hall commended ERP's efforts to keep the discussion going on surfacing interdisciplinary strategies to counter disinformation. ERP belongs to the Education and Capacity Building Cluster of UP CIDS, the policy research arm of the UP system. At the core of UP CIDS' work is stakeholder engagement, multidisciplinary research, and other activities that contribute to national development, policy, and research.

INTRODUCTION TO ERP

Junette Fatima Gonzales, Senior Research Associate, added more background information about ERP. She mentioned that the Program is currently led by Co-Convenors Dr. Dina Ocampo and Dr. Lorina Calingasan, and supported by a team of junior and research associates.

Gonzales added that ERP conducts research based on an eight-point research agenda, one of which is on skeptical resilience and disinformation studies. Aside from skeptical resilience and fighting fake news, other major research projects of the ERP are (1) the assessment and instruction of Filipino learners with a focus on multi-literacy and text assessments; and (2) the development of a psycho-linguistic analyzer called SukatWika for English, Filipino, Ilokano, and Sinugbuanong Binisaya texts.

DEFINING SKEPTICAL RESILIENCE

ERP has been conducting research on strategies to counter disinformation, focusing on the skills needed to properly evaluate and assess encountered information. Through workshops, ERP supports educators and teacher-practitioners in developing key skills for skeptical resilience.

Skeptical resilience is a frame of mind defined by the practices of not immediately believing everything read or seen on the Internet. This involves “critical ignoring,” or suspending judgment until evidence from more reliable sources is available. It also includes understanding who to trust and the reasons for that trust.

ERP is investigating skeptical resilience through the perspectives of the students, teachers, and education researchers. They aim to explore how various disciplines and other organizations approach the fight against disinformation, focusing on effective strategies, the process of learning, and the influence of algorithms. Mis-, dis-, and mal-information—along with truth decay, information disorder, or fake news—pose significant challenges today. ERP seeks to document initiatives to combat these issues and translate them into practical, actionable solutions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

The main objectives of the RTD is to share effective interventions from six resource speakers on identifying and combating disinformation across three major areas: Media and Information Literacy Education, Fact-Checking, and Research.

After the six speakers delivered their 15-minute presentation, three reactors from the education sector provided their insights as a starting point to spark further discussion on these efforts. The rest of the participants from the academe and education sector also utilized the Zoom chatbox and Padlet to share their thoughts and questions.

Expert Presentations

MEDIA & INFORMATION LITERACY EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM

The Role of Future Librarians in MIL

Rhea Rowena U. Apolinario is the current dean of the UP School of Library and Information Studies (SLIS). The UP SLIS is the pioneering library school and a recognized center of excellence in the Philippines. It embeds its efforts to combat disinformation within its academic curriculum, reinforcing the role of information literacy as an essential competency in the digital age. Recognizing the critical function of librarians in advancing media and information literacy, SLIS ensures that both undergraduate and graduate students engage with foundational concepts and practices that help counter the spread of false and misleading information.

For example, two courses integrate disinformation-related topics into the curriculum. *Information Literacy* (LIS 50), required for BLIS students since 2018 and also offered to graduate and non-LIS students, introduces core concepts of information and media literacy, with an emphasis on critical evaluation and designing context-specific projects. Meanwhile, *Information and Society* (LIS 10), a general education course, examines the nature and functions of information, including a module on “information disorder” that equips students to assess authenticity and accuracy. These courses highlight the broader commitment to cultivating information-literate individuals who are equipped to confront the challenges of disinformation in the digital age. Hence, the role of the libraries and librarians is to empower others by helping them develop information literacy skills, promoting information literacy, and supporting access to information and policy initiatives. Key strategies that librarians can employ include providing expert advice on integrating information literacy proficiencies into curriculum design, leading the development of discipline-based activities for information studies, and educating users on combating fake news. On a personal level, librarians can address the “infodemic” through information literacy, fact-checking practices, and narrowing ways of tracking rumors and listening to community discussions.

Since fake news affects a broad range of human rights—from health to non-discrimination—media and information literacy (MIL) offers a sustainable way to address the challenges of disinformation without compromising human rights. While no one is infallible, adopting critical approach and understanding how fake news is produced are important. Discussions and recommendations on addressing disinformation have long emphasized the importance of data and news literacy. Dr. Apolinario highlight the need to develop a comprehensive curriculum and implementing MIL in schools. Equally important, however, is ensuring that lifelong learning opportunities are available for individuals who cannot access MIL training through formal institutions. Libraries, with their extensive experience in informal and semi-formal education settings, are well-positioned equitable access to MIL, thereby supporting efforts to combat disinformation and promote informed communities.

A Critical Framework for Future Media Practitioners and Journalists

Virgilind “Jill” Palarca from the Media Educators of Mindanao (MEM) shared how they fight disinformation using the Conflict Sensitive Journalism (CSJ) framework in teaching media and information literacy.

MEM was established in 2013 by a network of college teachers inspired by the CSJ framework. In 2016, MIL was instituted as a core subject in Senior High School (SHS). However, teachers struggled with training and content. They observed that the curriculum focused more on media production and content creation than on critical analysis, even as fake news was beginning to emerge as a serious problem.

In 2018, MEM published a teaching guide for universities and colleges, incorporating the CSJ framework in media and communication subjects. Palarca defines MIL as a set of competencies that empower individuals to create and use media responsibly, contributing to their development as good citizens.

The CSJ Framework has three main objectives:

1. To promote ethical, accurate, and balanced reporting;
2. To minimize harm and prevent escalation of any conflict; and

3. To strengthen the media's role in fostering peace and understanding.

The framework is valuable for educators in Mindanao as it emphasizes peace promotion. It goes beyond reporting conflicts to analyzing them through a combination of principles and skills, including factual accuracy, contextual depth, balanced reporting, ethical responsibility, journalist training, resilience-building, audience engagement, and collaborative partnerships with civil society.

The CSJ Framework is already being implemented in universities and colleges. Although it was originally designed for media and communication subjects, Palarca emphasized that all students, regardless of their field of study, should adopt the mindset of journalist. This approach provides them with a critical and ethical framework to navigate and engage responsibly on social media.

FACT-CHECKING

A Regional and Multistakeholder Approach in Fact-Checking

Paolo Ordonio introduced the Break the Fake Movement, which is a civil society organization (CSO) established in 2018. Its mission is to implement an MIL strategy and support United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in promoting MIL competencies. The organization believes that fact-checking should be accessible to everyone, as it strengthens the critical-thinking skills of Filipinos and fellow citizens in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The year 2016 marked the peak of political disinformation in the Philippines. In 2017, the Break the Fake Movement emerged from funding provided by the US Embassy as a result of a hackathon aimed at generating creative solutions to combat disinformation in the country. Since then, the movement has focused on engaging the youth, recognizing their access to technology and their potential to exercise freedom of expression while creating meaningful content.

With a focus on four key programs, Break the Fake Movement has conducted many initiatives such as the following:

- **Media Civics Lab:** In response to the start of the infodemic in 2020, the CSO launched the Media Civics Lab in 2021. This initiative empowered 942 Sangguniang Kabataan leaders and provided grants to four local government units (LGUs) to fight disinformation during the pandemic. Their efforts continued through 2022 midterm elections, emphasizing democratic discourse among young voters. In 2023, they introduced the Media Civics Lab Fact-Checking Academy, extending their reach to nano- and micro-content creators and influencers to promote fact-checking as a tool against disinformation.
- **ASEAN Data Science Explorers:** This regional competition and data analytics program aims to equip underserved youth in the Philippines with data-driven skills and knowledge.
- **ASEAN Digital Literacy Programme (DLP):** The ASEAN Foundation engaged the Break the Fake Movement to implement the DLP, a program designed to combat mis-disinformation through digital literacy training for Filipinos. It has reached 28,350 beneficiaries and trained 59 accomplished master trainers. Trainers who serve as community mobilizers, teaching fact-checking to local communities.
- **Sustainability Initiatives:** The movement has developed a website as a free learning platform, providing open access to educational materials. They also created the official DLP website for ASEAN, with 20 out of 24 content developers being Filipino teachers contributing to the creation of learning resources. Additionally, they are working to translate the ASEAN Digital Literacy Toolkit, or DigiTalino, into Cebuano and Ilokano to make it more accessible.
- **Philippine Fact-Checking Summit:** The movement organized this summit to assess the state of disinformation in the country. The event highlighted the efforts and contributions of various individuals and sectors in addressing the challenges posed by disinformation.

When it comes to key insights, Ordonio emphasized that fact-checking is for everyone, which is why they capacitate individuals across various sectors—from the youth to government, as well as public and private organizations. He highlighted the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach in addressing

disinformation. Additionally, he noted the need to localize fact-checking materials to ensure they are more accessible and comprehensible to the intended audience/beneficiaries.

Fact-Checking of News in an Era of Social Media

VERA Files was founded in 2008 by six female journalists. VERA means “truth,” reflecting the organization’s purpose to promote excellence in journalism as a means to strengthen democracy in the Philippines. For VERA Files, democracy is governance by and for the people, which means citizens must have a platform to express their opinions on governance through the media—a practice known as accountability journalism.

Today, however, social media has surpassed television as a primary source of information and means of expression. According to a Reuters report, TikTok has emerged as a leading news source, while the use of Facebook and traditional media for news is declining. Ellen Tordesillas noted that TikTok appeals to people because of its short-form and visual content. For journalists, this shift presents a challenge because they act as the vital link between the government and the public. When social media becomes the sole source of information and news, people are more vulnerable to misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information. VERA Files avoids using the term “fake news” because it views the phrase as an oxymoron; news, by definition, should report factual information, so the term “fake news” is inherently contradictory.

Fact-checking, as defined by Tordesillas, involves verifying the accuracy of statements in non-fictional texts. Tordesillas further emphasized that it applies only to non-fiction because fictional works do not need fact-checking. Based on her experience as a newspaper journalist since the 1970s, Tordesillas shared that fact-checking is the top requirement for a journalists, ensuring that news is verified before publication or broadcast. Traditionally, this process involved rigorous vetting by an editorial team. However, with the rise of social media, publishing has become more democratic, allowing anyone to disseminate information. This freedom, while empowering, comes with risks, as the absence of gatekeepers and verification processes shifts the burden of truth-checking to content creators.

Social media companies have also taken steps to address the issue. Facebook, for instance, has tapped two third-party fact-checkers in the Philippines: VERA Files and Rappler. Both organizations are signatories of the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN), underscoring their commitment to maintaining high standards of accuracy and integrity in journalism.

Disinformation is intentionally designed to mislead people, leading to poor judgment and decision-making while exerting a persistent influence on their reasoning. For example, Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) who contribute significantly to the country, are highly vulnerable to disinformation because they rely on social media for information. In 2022, VERA Files and the Third World Studies Center fact-checked Bongbong Marcos's claim of being an Oxford graduate. However, instead of focusing on the dishonesty of the claim, people reacted and reasoned differently to the facts presented. This illustrates one of the harmful impacts of disinformation: it can make people resistant to correction.

To address the toxicity of social media and prevent the spread falsehood, VERA Files has established specific criteria for selecting statements to fact-check:

1. The statement must be factual.
2. It must be relevant to social or political issues.
3. Fact-checking must be feasible within 24-48 hours.
4. The statement's virality should be assessed, ensuring it is not yet widely spread, so VERA Files does not inadvertently contribute to its dissemination.

Fact-checking is a form of accountability journalism that should be practiced not only by professional fact-checkers but by everyone. VERA Files believes that everyone can and should be a fact-checker to combat disinformation. They have conducted training sessions on fact-checking for OFWs in Europe, Singapore, and other countries. These efforts have yielded positive results, as OFWs in Europe have shown great interest in learning how to detect fake news.

Additionally, VERA Files conducts training in universities, especially for education majors. Tordesillas noted her positive experience with student-teachers who, when equipped with the right skills, delivered excellent presentations. She sees great potential in extending such training to future educators, believing it can help cascade fact-checking skills to more people in the long term.

RESEARCH

Developing a Framework for Critical Media Literacy Program for Broadcasters

Alwin Aguirre, a professor and chair of the Department of Broadcast Communication at the UP College of Mass Communication, discussed critical discourse theory in the context of social media. He introduced a recent initiative by the UP Diliman Broadcast Communication (BroadComm) Department, specifically the theoretical framework on the “Break and Make: Critical Media Literacy through Reflexive Media Making.” The program is still under development and aims to guide the education sector in implementing their own media literacy programs.

General media literacy models have been instrumental in helping individuals understand media literacy through various approaches:

1. Media arts education: focused on creative production
2. Media literacy movement: centered on reading and analyzing texts
3. Protectionist approach: viewing media as a potential danger
4. Critical media literacy: examining power imbalances and dynamics

The proposed program fuses many approaches in media literacy, recognizing that we live in a hypercomplex society that can only be understood through multidisciplinary perspectives. Two main drivers of this complexity are the continuous development of digital innovations (digitalization) and advancements in communication and media. Media encounters and “lived experiences” underscore that our lives are lived in media rather than with media.

The framework of the proposed program seeks to enhance critical thinking as well as media and digital literacy skills among faculty, students, and staff, particularly as creators and producers of media content. Its distinctive feature is the “reflexive media-making approach,” which employs a participatory approach and recognizes the co-constitutive relationship between human actors and technology. In research, reflexivity involves being conscious of one’s actions and understanding the philosophical and political foundations underlying media practices.

By embedding reflexive critical media literacy into the creative process, the program helps students critically examine the discourses behind their practices, learn through active engagement, and develop acuity, discernment, and insight (i.e., media savviness). Additionally, the framework accepts that human behavior and thinking evolves alongside constantly changing technologies and media within a hypercomplex world.

Ultimately, the program aims to help individuals see technology not only as a tool but as a medium of creative potential. This perspective encourages viewing social media as something that both reveals the world and deepens our understanding of ourselves.

Fighting Political Disinformation through Digital Vigilantism

Christine Cox presented a series of frameworks and a case study to address the “political disinformation virus”. She is currently a professor of the Department of Communication at the Ateneo de Manila University’s School of Social Sciences.

Following a discussion on the different types of information disorder, Cox emphasized the necessity of media literacy to understand the type of information presented and to mitigate or stop harmful intent. She employed Derakshan and Wardle’s framework (2017) to analyze the components and processes involved in information disorder.

The case of Christine Dacera sparked conversations on victim-blaming, gender-stereotyping, and the justice system, amplified through digital vigilantism—a phenomenon where citizens collectively express outrage over citizens activities, often leading to mob mentality. Cox analyzed Facebook conversations about

Dacera and identified three types of contagion that placed her case in the spotlight:

1. Emotion contagion: Vilifying Dacera and other involved parties
2. Surveillance contagion: Turning individuals into “fact-checking” agents who named and shamed key players
3. Information contagion: Creating a misinformation circus online

Cox concluded that these contagions have three major consequences:

1. News framing and post-truth politics in echo chambers;
2. Symbolic violence and punitive justice such as bullying and harassment; and
3. Evolving political participation and activism of people on social media

To combat disinformation, Cox advocated for a multifaceted approach that includes:

1. Strengthening media and digital literacy
2. Supporting and promoting fact-checking and debunking efforts
3. Holding technology and platform accountable
4. Enacting legislation and policies addressing disinformation
5. Conducting targeted public awareness campaigns for diverse audiences, among many others

Inputs from Reactors

To gather perspectives from the education sector, three reactors were invited to share their insights regarding the six presentations.

MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY EDUCATION

Atty. Aimee “Mimi” Javilagon, a principal and teacher at San Pablo Elementary School, shared her insights on the first two presentations about MIL education. She recounted her firsthand experience during the initial stages of MIL implementation when she became an SHS teacher in 2016. Although she did not have the opportunity to teach the subject, she agreed with Palarca’s observation that the curriculum, being output- and performance-based, focused more on content creation than on evaluating content, particularly concerning fake news and disinformation. She commended the progress in the integration of critical thinking skills into MIL through fact-checking and information evaluation, especially in the context of Mindanao.

As a school principal, Javilagon noted that MIL is highly relevant but emphasized the need to adapt it for younger learners, as they are also engaged and exposed to various forms of media. She highlighted Apolinario’s point on the crucial role of librarians suggested that similar tasks related to information and the library management could be assigned to teachers, given the removal of librarian positions in public schools. For educators, the challenge is to establish a foundation for critical thinking as early as possible. Concepts from CSJ framework and fact-checking could be introduced to elementary students through classroom discussions on news and mock press conferences.

Finally, Javilagon stressed the importance of involving parents, guardians, families, and communities in media and information literacy efforts, as they play a vital role in shaping how children interact with media. One effective

strategy is educating parents on fact-checking and guiding their children's media consumption, ensuring that lessons on MIL are reinforced at home.

FACT-CHECKING

Jon Paul Maligalig, Assistant Professor at the UP College of Education (Edtech), shared that listening to fellow academics discuss these issues are both exciting and humbling for him. While he acknowledged the timeliness of the discussion, he emphasized that these conversations must also take place in the communities where fact-checking is most needed. He highlighted the importance of academics recognizing their privilege and engaging at the grassroots level to verify the truth.

RESEARCH

Rowel Padernal, Senior Education Program Specialist of the Department of Education (BCD), responded to the presentation on the framework for the critical media literacy program and digital vigilantism. He shared his experiences working with supervisors and master teachers who held specific political beliefs, some of whom denied or refused to teach data and facts about Martial Law. He also recounted dealing with a teacher who participated in spreading disinformation. For the Department of Education (DepEd), Padernal posed critical questions about fostering skeptical resilience within its ranks: What strategy is needed to make educators and education supervisors more receptive to the truth? How can division and school leadership be framed in the context of MIL?

Agreeing with Maligalig on the importance of opening this discourse to a wider audience, Padernal emphasized that the discussion must extend to the public and to DepEd itself. He highlighted the value of a holistic and reflexive approach—such as one proposed by Aguirre and the BroadComm department—as a potential strategy for DepEd to address and challenge negative political beliefs among its teachers and leaders.

Open Forum

INCORPORATING REFLEXIVITY IN ALL EDUCATION SECTORS

Aguirre recognized the difficulty dealing with disinformation in the basic education sector. He noted that teachers' political beliefs cannot be changed even in the face of information. However, the output of the proposed Critical Media Literacy Program's framework focused on how to impact education. He argued that because the framework primarily deals with higher education, significant changes can be made in the basic education sector.

First, efforts to combat disinformation must continue, helping teachers understand that there are multiple perspectives and ensuring that counter-discourse remain active. Over time, he believes they will become more reflexive about their beliefs. Second, teachers will likely become better at translating and communicating MIL principles and theories to younger learners.

Aguirre reiterated that the UP BroadComm department is designing the program to help students understand how technology influences their worldview and affects their behavior and decision-making. Essentially, the underlying philosophy of the framework and program is that "technologies we invent, re-invent us." He added that the department is also collaborating with colleagues in Mindanao and outside Metro Manila as part of its strategy to go beyond the confines of urban areas.

Maligalig suggested the contemporary use of social media to combat disinformation and promote community development beyond the scope of educators and the education sector. For example, the Film Board of Canada conducted an experiment in which they gave film cameras to two opposing sides of an issue regarding evacuation in a small island community. Both sides were represented, and films were shown to the entire community, sparking discussions on the truth behind and on the camera. Within a few weeks, the community developed a proposal for economic development to local authorities to prevent the evacuation. In the case of the Philippines, a multistakeholder approach could address these efforts holistically.

TIPS IN DEALING WITH POLITICAL SENSITIVITY

Tordesillas was enlightened with the insights on listening to the realities on the ground. Her concern is that they are preaching to the choir in their fact-checking training. She acknowledged that they still need to reach out to the 31 million voters in the 2022 elections. During their training for OFWs who are mostly pro-Duterte or pro-BBM, they would rather discuss neutral topics than politics. She asked for tips on how to effectively reach this population and address the values that drive resistance to fact-checking.

Palarca relayed that this is a continuous effort, given the challenge of changing people's mindsets. In the context of Mindanao, one helpful approach is to understand where the people are coming from, the reasons for their political beliefs, and the actors at play. These become the basis for their conversations and for maintaining respect with colleagues and teachers they engage with. This practice entails "conflict-transformation," ensuring that the trainings are relevant and valuable to them, so they package the trainings on MIL with Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION

According to Arayana "Ara" Kunting, a professor at the Western Mindanao State University, it was enlightening for her and her students working on social media research. Disinformation is psychologically and historically complex, so it is overwhelming for those in the academe and on the ground. What was particularly helpful was the selection criteria for fact-checking from VERA Files and the frameworks presented on MIL. However, she hopes that there will be a policy on strategies and mechanisms that would increase collaboration between the academe and other organizations in the fight against disinformation, especially to reach the people and communities.

Apolinario appreciated the inputs from different fields and education sectors. In response to Javilagon's comments, she mentioned that the removal of librarians in public school libraries was a result of rationalization. However, she pointed out that everybody, regardless of discipline, is doing something to fight disinformation. There is progress in raising the awareness of Filipinos about this problem, and the concerted efforts of different groups are slowly

helping this endeavor. She also agreed with Maligalig that teachers in higher education must be on the ground, which is done through their public service and extension work in communities.

The Philippines is the only country in Southeast Asia with MIL in the basic education curriculum with a rich, active, and vibrant civil society engagement on the matter. Ordonio corroborated the observation that awareness of MIL among people is increasing. However, the challenge is that many sectors are working in silos or with duplicating initiatives in an “echo chamber.” He stressed the need for collaboration at the grassroots level. Secondly, their interventions emphasize the ability to create and act on disinformation as the main goal, beyond fact-checking. This means understanding how the media works and its relationship to individualities and the psychology behind disinformation. Case-in-point: most people use media for entertainment, as reflected in a study that found Filipinos to be over-entertained but underinformed. He reiterated the need for coalition-building among CSOs and the academe and the localization of learning materials based on local language and culture. Lastly, he hopes for a policy that would institutionalize and localize these efforts of CSOs in MIL.

OTHER INSIGHTS AND QUESTIONS (SHARED VIA CHAT AND PADLET)

Using Chat and Padlet—online engagement tools provided during the event—other educators also provided learnings from the RTD, classroom insights, and questions that deepened the discussion.

One comment emphasized the hope for a deeper, more authentic, and evidence-based conversation among educators and the Department of Education (DepEd) on how to integrate media and information literacy (MIL) across all levels of the curriculum—including early childhood education (Yayi Fua, UP College of Education).

Another insight came from a basic education mathematics teacher (Angel Rocena, UP Integrated School), who reflected on the imbalance between media production and analysis in classroom activities. She noted that while students are often taught to “do” math and statistics (producer tasks), there is less focus on interpreting data presented in media (consumer tasks). She stressed that

the ability to critically assess statistical claims in the media is an essential yet often underemphasized skill—especially since most students will engage with statistics as consumers, not creators.

A third comment, from a teacher who shared anonymous classroom experiences, highlighted the emotional and cognitive toll of disinformation on students—especially when it relates to sensitive issues like climate change, gender equality, and political movements. The teacher recounted how students struggled to distinguish between factual and misleading information on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and Instagram. Some students admitted to sharing misinformation unknowingly, which led to confusion, distrust in credible sources, and disengagement from meaningful discussions. The teacher emphasized the need for educators to transform these experiences into teachable moments—helping students build critical thinking skills, evaluate content, and become thoughtful participants in civic discourse.

Two key questions were also raised:

Does TikTok have third-party fact-checkers? Dina Ocampo (ERP Co-convenor) posed this question, and journalist Ellen Tordesillas responded that while TikTok has a global fact-checking program, it has not yet been implemented in the Philippines. This is significant, given the platform's popularity among young users.

“Everyone can and should be a fact-checker” is a powerful statement. But how do we get people to care enough to fact-check, especially when they feel that many issues don’t directly affect them? Yayi Fua (UP College of Education) raised this question. Tordesillas responded that the first step is cultivating a mindset of healthy skepticism—encouraging people to question what they encounter on social media rather than accept it at face value.

These comments and questions reflect the strong interest of educators in equipping students not only with technical skills, but also with the critical and ethical foundations needed to navigate a complex information landscape.

Synthesis

ERP Co-Convenor Lorina Calingasan gave a succinct synthesis of what was presented, particularly:

1. The integration of MIL in two subjects taught in UP SLIS and the role of librarians and libraries in promoting information literacy by curating reliable sources;
2. The CSJ framework that aims to promote peace and accurate reporting in conflict-ridden areas like Mindanao, and to serve as an instrumental tool in contracting disinformation in culturally-diverse and politically-charged environments;
3. Break the Fake Movement's milestones in empowering the youth through the launch of the ASEAN Digital Literacy Program, including the use of multistakeholder approach and the localization of fact-checking materials;
4. VERA Files focusing on importance of everyone engaging in fact-checking as a form of accountability journalism in light of the vulnerability of certain sectors (e.g., OFWs) to disinformation;
5. The UP College of Mass Communication's Break and Make program, which fuses critical discourse theory and media literacy. It encourages reflexive media-making and media literacy in education settings;
6. Cox' case study emphasizing that humans and algorithms contribute to the spread of disinformation, as well as netizens engage in digital vigilantism, which should be addressed by stronger media literacy, responsible journalism, platform accountability, and supportive legislation;
7. The need for parents to be educated on fact-checking and the need for MIL to be taught to young learners;
8. The need for librarians to be visible in basic education institutions;

9. The role of teachers and educational leadership in MIL in basic education; and
10. Reaching out to fact-checking communities, including the need for academics to go down to the ground to verifying the truth.

Closing

ERP Co-Convenor, Dina Ocampo, thanked the panel for their time and participation. She share how grateful she was that they are working in different spheres in society beyond the education sector. The fight against fake news, disinformation, and mal-information is formidable. One of the things that they must do is create cognitive dissonance among people so they can critically reflect. The struggle in the basic education sector is real because there are teachers who will not cascade lessons or materials even if indicated in the curriculum. This means that information will not reach the children. As schools can be a facilitating or hindering factor, there must be other ways to reach children with truthful information. Thus, the problem must be tackled from different spheres of society. This RTD is a learning opportunity for everyone, Ocampo reiterated. On behalf of ERP, she expressed their desire to use the experiences and share it to more people. She hoped they could work together and bring more people into the discussion.

CENTER FOR INTEGRATIVE AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Established in 1985 by University of the Philippines (UP) President Edgardo J. Angara, the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) is the policy research unit of the University that connects disciplines and scholars across the several units of the UP System. It is mandated to encourage collaborative and rigorous research addressing issues of national significance by supporting scholars and securing funding, enabling them to produce outputs and recommendations for public policy.

The UP CIDS currently has twelve research programs that are clustered under the areas of education and capacity building, development, and social, political, and cultural studies. It publishes policy briefs, monographs, webinar/conference/forum proceedings, and the Philippine Journal for Public Policy, all of which can be downloaded free from the UP CIDS website.

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The **Education Research Program (ERP)** conducts studies under three categories: Curriculum and Assessment; Instruction and Teacher Development and Governance; and Finance and School Improvement. It is based on its agenda, "Policy Investigations in Support of the Filipino Learner 2019-2024." To guide these investigations, ERP conducts research on disinformation studies and language and literacy, focusing specifically on multi-literacy assessments and text assessment. These projects are multi-year studies that use mixed methods, employing data derived from assessments and conversations with multiple stakeholders.

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