



FactShala Media Literacy Initiative in India: An Impact Evaluation

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Centre for Media Studies

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Internews is an international non-profit that supports independent media in 100 countries — from radio stations in refugee camps, to hyper-local news outlets, to filmmakers and technologists. We train journalists and digital rights activists, tackle disinformation, and offer business expertise to help media outlets thrive financially. For nearly 40 years, we have helped partners reach millions of people with trustworthy information that saves lives, improves livelihoods, and holds institutions accountable.

We commissioned this research as part of the 25 x 25 initiative, the organization's strategic commitment to increase robust evaluation of our work by delivering 25 research studies by 2025.

We have made this commitment because we want to know which of our approaches are most effective in order to bring them to scale, to strengthen our understanding of the impact for communities when their information environments improve over time, to make our contribution to the global evidence base and to hold ourselves accountable to the people we serve.

We will do this work alongside external research partners who share our vision to realize the potential of a digitally connected world: a world in which evidence-based information advances human progress, enables broad opportunity and accountability, and fuels vibrant civic debate. We know we will only achieve this through a deep understanding of the contexts we work in and a constant drive to learn and improve.

February 2022

Acknowledgments

This is to place in the record our deepest gratitude and thanks to all those who helped in conducting the study in stipulated timeframe while meeting all the standards and norms of social research.

We acknowledge the contribution of all the participants of the training program for graciously giving us the time for conducting in depth interviews in virtual and physical format despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

We thank all the trainers for passionately conducting trainings despite the pandemic. Their efforts helped trainees navigate online misinformation at a time when it was most needed.

We thank Google.org and the Google News Initiative for enabling the FactShala project with funding support. Centre for Media Studies (CMS) and Internews are grateful for the support and guidance by Joel Breakstone (Stanford History Education Group) in outlining the assessment exercise.

CMS acknowledges the strategic guidance and support received regularly from the Internews team, especially Aakanksha Sharma, Rosie Parkyn, Seila Sar & Surabhi Malik for the purpose of impact assessment.

CMS appreciates the Internews partner DataLEADS, especially Misthy Sablok, Sanskriti Girdhar, Shazia Salam, Surbhi Pandit Nangia & Syed Nazakat for providing the exhaustive database for different cohorts for conducting the survey and coordinating the training program.

The CMS team involved in the survey and research — Alok Srivastava, Anisur Rahman, Narendra Bhatt, Raj Kumar and all supervisors and investigators — meticulously carried out their responsibilities in a timely manner. Dr. P.N. Vasanti, Director General, provided continuous support in ensuring availability of human resources for undertaking the study.

CMS hopes that the findings of the Impact assessment will help in scaling up of the program in other states of the country.

Annu Anand

Project Director

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	5
Preface	10
Executive Summary	11
Context	11
Study Objectives	12
Study Design and Methodology	12
Key Findings	13
Conclusion	17
Chapter 1: Media Literacy in India: Context and Challenges	18
1.1 Online Media Access and Use	18
1.2 Online Misinformation & Disinformation	18
1.3 The Value of Media Literacy	20
Chapter 2: The FactShala Media Literacy Program	21
2.1. Aims of FactShala	21
2.2. FactShala Implementation	22
Chapter 3: About This Impact Evaluation	24
3.1. Questions and Objectives Guiding the Impact Evaluation	24
3.2. Evaluation Methodology and Components	24
3.3 Research Techniques and Tools	27
3.4 Data Collection and Analysis	28
3.5 Limitations of the Study	29
Chapter 4: Key Findings — Study Respondents Profile and Media Habits	30
4.1 Profile of Study Respondents	30
4.2 Media Habits	33
Chapter 5: Key Findings — Impact of FactShala Training	37
5.1. Awareness about Misinformation and Disinformation	37
5.2. Critical Thinking and Checking Evidence	39
5.3. Spotting and Verifying Misinformation and Disinformation	48
5.4. Ability to Protect Themselves	54
5.5. Curbing the Spread of Mis- and Disinformation	56
Chapter 6: FactShala Impact Stories	58
Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations	66
References	69
Glossary	72
Endnotes	73
Internews Theory of Change	74
Annexes	76

Tables

1	Quantitative respondent sample sizes	27
2	Stimuli-based questions — rubric grading criteria	29
3	Quantitative sample distribution by gender (#)	30
4	Educational level of quantitative research respondents (%)	32
5	Profile of qualitative research respondents (%)	32
6	Understanding of misinformation and disinformation in quasi-experimental study	37
7	Understanding of misinformation and disinformation in pre- and post-training assessments	38
8	Definitions of misinformation and disinformation emerging from IDIs	39
9	Behaviour in dealing with online information among treatment and control groups respondents (%)	40
10	Behaviour in dealing with online information among pre- and post- training assessment respondents (%)	41
11	Actions taken in relation to potentially useful messages by treatment and control group respondents (%)	42
12	Pre- and post-training actions taken in relation to potentially useful messages (%)	42
13	Pre- and post-training confidence levels in finding trustworthy sources of information (%)	44
14	Treatment and control group awareness of trusted sources for health and COVID-19 related information (%)	45
15	Change in treatment group respondents' skills after attending FactShala training (%)	48
16	Treatment and control group text message verification methods (%)	49
17	Pre- and post-training text message verification methods (%)	49
18	Treatment and control group audio/video verification methods (%)	51
19	Pre- and post-training audio/video verification methods (%)	51
20	Treatment and control group methods for verifying information (%)	53
21	Treatment and control group action taken to protect themselves from fraud and scams (%)	54
22	Response of the two stimulus questions on British Airways promotional offer (pre-training) and child's eye operation fundraising appeal (post-training)	55
23	Treatment and control group action taken to fight online misinformation and disinformation (%)	56

Figures

1	FactShala for a rural employment guarantee scheme beneficiaries in Tamil Nadu	11
2	Villagers attend FactShala in Jammu and Kashmir	13
3	Community radio listeners in Maharashtra gather for an in-person FactShala session	19
4	Tea garden workers in West Bengal attend FactShala in hybrid mode	21
5	Evaluation design	25
6	Research executives conducting IDIs with student and teachers in Haryana and Delhi (Credit: CMS)	25
7	FactShala sampling and training	26
8	Research sample strata	26
9	Sample distribution by location	31
10	Age of research respondents	31
11	Participants who had attended media literacy training before FactShala	33
12	Respondents' average time spent online each day	34
13	Treatment and control group respondents' main sources of online information (%)	34
14	Pre- and post-training assessment respondents' main sources of online information (%)	35
15	Confidence level in finding trustworthy sources of information among treatment and control group respondents (%)	44
16	Awareness of trusted sources for health and COVID-19 related information among pre- and post-training assessment respondents (%)	46
17	Response to stimulus questions provided by pre- and post-training assessment respondents	46
18	Pre-training assessment stimulus D (English)	47
19	Post-training assessment stimulus E (English)	47
20	Post-training assessment stimulus A (English)	50
21	Post-training assessment stimulus C (Hindi)	50
22	Pre-training assessment stimulus B (Hindi)	52
23	Pre- and post-training assessment responses to a sample WhatsApp message	53
24	Pre-training assessment stimulus C (English)	55

Figures (cont.)

25	Post-training assessment stimulus D (Hindi)	55
26	Community radio listeners in Maharashtra gather for an in-person FactShala session	57
27	FactShala for tribal girls in Jharkhand	59
28	Laxmi Munda, a tribal and FactShala community champion from Jharkhand	59
29	Karim City College in Jamshedpur, Jharkhand	60
30	Neha Tiwari, Assistant professor at Karim City College	61
31	Calcutta Muslim Orphanage, West Bengal hosts FactShala	62
32	Uzma Alam, Convener of the orphanage	62
33	Karishma Chaudhary, a radio Kamalvaani listener and FactShala trainee	63
34	Feedback about FactShala shared by a trainee	64
35	Tuhin Mandal, a misinformation warrior from West Bengal	64
36	Community champion Prashant Kumar from Uttar Pradesh	65
37	FactShala for villagers from Jammu and Kashmir	66
38	Young women from Chattisgarh attend FactShala online	67

Preface

Misinformation is an emerging problem in the media landscape dominated by digital and social media. More than 400 million Indians have access to the internet on digital devices like smartphones. Digital literacy and regulation, however, have yet to catch up with this massive growth. People with affordable phone and broadband connection have access to news and information flowing from different digital sources, but are not equipped to assess the veracity of claims usually made in these messages.

The FactShala media literacy training program launched by Internews in collaboration with DataLEADS and with the support of Google.org and the Google News Initiative, is an effective mechanism for spreading media and information literacy and building resilience to misinformation within communities experiencing exponential growth in access to and use of the internet.

The findings of the impact assessment study of the FactShala training program highlights the importance and need of such training programs especially with the expansion of the social media penetrating into rural India day by day. The findings of the study indicate how the program has increased awareness of the participants related to the misinformation on digital platforms and how to identify and use it. It was found that participants of the training program developed critical thinking about online information they received and appreciate the need to check the same with trustworthy sources while exercising caution before sharing it with others. It shows that training is appropriate and effective way to enhance literacy related to social media.

The impactful outcome of the training program has resulted in recommendations relating to the need to scale up the training program all over the country by incorporating the new knowledge and lessons learned during this program. The study also suggests that the evaluation of any such initiative leads in modifying and improving advocacy strategies that can be implemented on large scale.

Dr. Vasanti Rao

Director General, Centre for Media Studies

Executive Summary

Context

Misinformation is false information that is not specifically designed to mislead people, whereas disinformation is deliberately misleading information.

The spread of both mis- and disinformation, especially via social media, is a common problem in India. Contributory factors include a lack of credible digital media literacy programs and loose regulation of social media platforms.

The FactShala media literacy training program aims to tackle this challenge. This initiative was launched by Internews in collaboration with DataLEADS and with the support of Google.org and the Google News Initiative.

From September 2020 to January 2021, 253 trainers delivered the FactShala training program to 23,347 adults in communities across India — primarily in Tier 2 and 3 cities with low literacy levels and in villages. The training was delivered in more than 10 languages and dialects, mainly through online sessions. Most participants were students, teachers, representatives from NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs), and self-employed people.

Figure 1. FactShala for a rural employment guarantee scheme beneficiaries in Tamil Nadu



The curriculum was designed based on the findings of an internet user study conducted at the beginning of the initiative. The curriculum comprised three modules: understanding the information ecosystem; developing critical thinking around information; and fact-checking and verifying information.

Study Objectives

Internews commissioned the Centre for Media Studies to conduct a comprehensive impact evaluation of the FactShala training in July and August 2021. This report outlines the findings of that study.

The key objectives of this study are to:

1. Assess how far FactShala improved trainees' awareness of and ability to identify online misinformation and disinformation.
2. Determine how far FactShala motivated trainees to share this knowledge with others.
3. Capture best practices in curbing misinformation and disinformation at the individual, organizational or community level.
4. Provide insights to help design or improve future training modules, curricula and capacity-building sessions.

Study Design and Methodology

The impact evaluation study used a mixed methods approach. It comprised three components:

1. Quantitative: A **quasi-experimental study** to assess trainees' knowledge retention and practices in handling online information several months after FactShala training, by comparing treatment and control groups (410 and 406 respondents, respectively).
2. Quantitative: **Pre- and post-training assessments** to assess trainees' immediate changes in knowledge and ability to critically analyze online information one week after FactShala training (assessing the same 206 respondents before and after the training using survey questionnaire and specific stimulus materials).
3. Qualitative: **In-depth interviews** (IDIs) with 76 training participants and 30 non-participants, and seven **key informant interviews** (KIIs) with trainers.

In addition, the research team developed rich individual stories based on the study to highlight FactShala's potential impact focusing on training participants' ability to use and share their learning to protect themselves and their community from misinformation and disinformation.

Quantitative data was collected through computer-assisted telephonic surveys and analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software. Responses to the stimuli-based questions were collected via a web link and assessed using rubric grading criteria. Qualitative data was analyzed against key parameters.



Figure 2.
Villagers attend
FactShala in
Jammu and
Kashmir

Key Findings

The respondents of the two quantitative components were aged 18–29, with an average age of 28. They were generally well-educated. In all the quantitative sample groups, a clear majority of both males and females had received at least a degree-level education and a small minority had been educated to class 12 or below. A small majority of the IDI respondents were male, and a large majority were from urban locations.

A minority of respondents in all the quantitative samples reported having attended media literacy training before the FactShala program — 23% of control group and pre- and post-training assessment respondents, and 8% of treatment group respondents.

On average, respondents across all quantitative samples reported spending 3.9 hours a day online, which is broadly in line with other studies conducted in India. Men generally reported spending more time online than women.

WhatsApp is the most used and most trusted online information source across all groups of respondents. Facebook and YouTube are the runners up and are used and trusted to varying degrees by specific types of respondents. Instagram, news apps and websites, and Twitter are used by smaller proportions of respondents.

To facilitate learning to enhance future FactShala training, this report presents the study's key findings against FactShala's expected learning outcomes.

Learning Outcome 1: Training participants are aware of the concept and extent of misinformation and disinformation, especially on social media.

The FactShala program generated significant awareness about mis- and disinformation among trainees.

Going beyond awareness, both the quasi-experimental study and the pre- and post-training assessments showed that respondents who had attended FactShala training had a clearer understanding of both terms, and how they differ.

In the quasi-experimental study, 69% of the treatment group (FactShala trainees) understood the definition of misinformation, compared to 34% of the control group. Similarly, 68% of the treatment group understood the definition of disinformation, compared to 44% of the control group.

In the pre- and post-training assessments, 55% of respondents understood the definition of misinformation after FactShala training, compared to 39% beforehand. These respondents' understanding of disinformation increased even more, from 47% to 65%.

The qualitative research echoes these findings. In the IDIs, FactShala trainees demonstrated clearer and more nuanced understanding of mis- and disinformation than other respondents.

Learning Outcome 2: Introduce critical thinking to training participants, to create discerning information users who can check supporting evidence.

FactShala-trained respondents demonstrated a greater ability to critically assess information than other respondents. After the training, around 70% of respondents stated that they would not automatically trust all online information and would question or check its authenticity.

Critical thinking

In the quasi-experimental study, only 3% of FactShala trained respondents reported automatically trusting information on social media (control group: 9%). And 74% of trained respondents stated they identified whether social media content is true or false (control group: 58%). They cited approaches including assessing whether a logo, image or link looks suspicious, or a claim is unsubstantiated.

In the post-training assessment, 68% of respondents said they identified whether social media content is true or false, compared to 59% before the training. After training, the percentage of respondents who reported taking online information at face value dropped from 10% to 4%.

Responses to sample social media messages (stimuli) demonstrated that FactShala trainees were better able to identify both disinformation and authoritative information sources than other respondents.

Assessments using stimuli-based questions also showed that, after training, respondents had significantly improved critical thinking and were able to verify the source of a social media post before believing, trusting or sharing it and they knew how to appropriately handle it (correct responses to stimuli-based questions increased from 7% to 46%).

Trustworthy sources of information

In the quasi-experimental study, 71% of the treatment group was extremely/very confident about being able to find trustworthy sources (control group: 54%). The pre- and post-training assessments found that respondents' confidence in this area increased from 50% to 81% after training. No trained respondents said they lacked confidence about this.

When asked about authoritative sources of COVID-19 information, almost twice as many treatment group respondents correctly cited the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW) (71% versus 36% of the control group). The pre- and post-training assessments found a 27-percentage point increase in awareness of this source after the training.

Insights from the qualitative research support the quantitative findings. In IDIs, most FactShala trained respondents were confident about finding trustworthy information, and they demonstrated greater knowledge in this area than the control group.

Learning Outcome 3: Training participants are able to spot misinformation and disinformation and verify information using one or more methods.

FactShala-trained respondents were better able than other respondents to identify various types of mis- and disinformation and knew more about how to check it. They also reported applying this knowledge more than other respondents.

Knowledge and capacity

In the quasi-experimental study, most treatment group respondents felt better able to identify and handle mis- and disinformation after the training. About two-thirds of respondents in this group said they would no longer accept online information as true without checking it and 61% felt able to identify misinformation and fake news.

Both quantitative research components found that respondents had significantly higher awareness of various appropriate methods to verify text messages, audio and video content after attending FactShala training.

In the quasi-experimental study:

- 34% of the treatment group mentioned using fact-checking sites to verify text messages, compared to 0% of the control group.
- 45% of the treatment group mentioned verifying audio/video content by looking for the story on other news websites, compared to 23% of the control group.

In the pre- and post-training assessments, only 14% of respondents could recall any fact-check websites before the training while 73% could do so afterwards. In the IDIs, FactShala trainees were also more able to name fact-checking sources such as Google tools.

Applying verification skills

In the quasi-experimental study, 87% of the treatment group said they had verified misinformation/fake news (control group: 36%). They reported having used methods including searching via reliable websites (65% versus 41% of the control group) and checking primary sources (45% versus 17%).

“I used my skills learned in the training program to verify the link of a Google form sent to me on WhatsApp for the verification of name in voter’s ID list.”

– FactShala trainee

Stimuli-based questions in the pre- and post-training assessments also indicated that respondents were better able to verify online content after the training. After attending FactShala training, around half of the respondents were able to list appropriate verification methods for these messages.

Learning Outcome 4: Training participants are able to protect themselves from harm caused by misinformation and disinformation.

FactShala-trained respondents demonstrated being significantly more able to protect themselves from negative impacts of inaccurate or fraudulent online information than other respondents. They were also much more likely to have put these skills into practice.

In the quasi-experimental study, 98% of respondents in the treatment group were confident they could protect themselves from online misinformation, disinformation, fraud and/or scams (control group: 69%). This was supported by the post-training assessment — after training, 96% of respondents were confident they could protect themselves from these problems.

A large majority (79%) of FactShala-trained respondents reported having taken steps to protect themselves. After the training, 53% of respondents had avoided clicking a suspicious link, 45% had carefully checked a link before clicking on it and 15% had reported misleading content to service providers. Before the training, no respondents had taken any of these steps.

In response to stimuli-based questions, 45% of respondents who had attended FactShala training could correctly list appropriate steps to take if they came across a potential online fraud/scam.

Learning Outcome 5: Training participants help to curb the spread of misinformation and disinformation, by reporting or deleting content, alerting others or sharing fact-checked information.

Both the quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that FactShala-trained respondents were more proactive than other respondents in taking steps to reduce the spread of misleading online content.

Trained respondents in the treatment group were more likely than those in the control group to only share verified information from credible or trusted sources. FactShala-trained respondents were also significantly more likely to take action against misleading content. Over half (57%) had warned others (control group: 25%), 48% had stopped others from sharing content (control group: 15%), and 24% had reported content to appropriate platforms (control group: 5%).

“I have checked information that was spreading a myth about COVID-19 and had become viral on our... WhatsApp group. It was found to be fake news and I posted the factual information after verification.”

– FactShala trainee

Only 22% of treatment group respondents reported taking no action against mis- and disinformation, compared with 59% of the control group.

Conclusion

The findings set out in this report suggest that the FactShala program is an effective mechanism for increasing media and information literacy and building resilience to mis- and disinformation within communities experiencing exponential growth in internet access. This is encouraging, not least because the program is short, is easily adapted for multiple languages and contexts, and can be delivered through a flexible train-the-trainer model which lends itself well to scaling across large geographies with diverse populations.

This study is intended as a contribution to the growing body of research to establish effective approaches to building media and information literacy globally, as well as a tool to aid the FactShala team in their efforts to improve and evolve the program. We recognize the need to replicate the research with a broader and more diverse sample of FactShala trainees, as well as continue to develop rigorous methods for testing the application of newly acquired information literacy skills on a sustained basis and in relation to a variety of evolving mis and disinformation challenges.

Chapter 1:

Media Literacy in India: Context and Challenges

1.1 Online Media Access and Use

The COVID-19 pandemic has made India a more virtually connected society. As per the IAMAI-Kantar ICUBE 2020 report titled Internet Adoption in India 2021, the country has over 622 million estimated active internet users and this is likely to reach 900 million by 2025. Over 323 million of these internet users are urban and 299 million live in rural areas (as of June 2021). Internet use continues to be male-dominated — over 57% of men and 43% of women in urban areas are active users, and these proportions are similar in rural areas. On average, people in India spend 1.8 hours every day online.

In their analysis of the media industry for the year 2020, KPMG has said that mobile phones continue to be the preferred mode of internet access in India (over 450 million own smartphones). Smartphone users spent 21% more time on digital apps during the lockdown spanning two months from 24 March 2020 to 30 May 2020, increasing their average phone time from 3.22 hours to 3.54 hours a day. Nearly 53% of the country's population is under 30, and two-thirds of its internet users are aged 12–29. Over 82% of India's active internet users spend considerable time on social media — more than 400 million people use WhatsApp, spending an average of 46 minutes a day on that single app.¹

1.2 Online Misinformation & Disinformation

Increasing reliance on the internet and social media as major information sources, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has amplified the circulation of unverified information — both unwitting (misinformation) and deliberate (disinformation). Misinformation is false information that is not specifically designed to mislead people, whereas disinformation is deliberately misleading information.

Doctored videos and fake messages circulated via platforms such as WhatsApp have triggered tensions, violence and negative stereotyping of individuals, groups and communities.² Fake news has also become a concern, especially during the pandemic when rumors, disinformation and hoax claims spread via chat apps. India's Supreme Court raised concerns that panic from mis- and disinformation would destroy more lives than the virus, directing The Centre (central government) to disseminate verified information in real time.³

These developments have generated significant interest in, and research into, media literacy and fake news. A study of sources of COVID-19 mis- and disinformation in 138 countries found that, globally, Facebook was the most prominent source (accounting for 66.87% of this misleading information) followed by WhatsApp (10.22%) and Twitter (8.22%).⁴ Collectively, 85% of this mis- and disinformation was produced on social media.⁵ Another study suggests that nearly 6,000 people worldwide were hospitalized and at least 800 died because of false information relating to COVID-19 in the first three months of 2020.⁶

During the early stages of the pandemic, social media use in India increased by 75%. Facebook and WhatsApp were the most widely used social media platforms for news (cited by 52% of respondents), followed by Instagram (26%), Twitter (18%), and Facebook Messenger (16%).⁷ Another study before the pandemic had previously found that over 50% of respondents got their daily news from social media, and one-quarter identified social media as their main online news source.⁸

India is the world's largest source of online COVID-19 misinformation, accounting for 18% of it.⁹ Health-related misinformation is the most common type of misinformation in the country (comprising 67.2% of all misinformation).¹⁰ A major reason for this behavior is people's trust in online information and 'cyberchondria' — online searches related to health-related anxiety or distress.¹¹

Figure 3. Community radio listeners in Maharashtra gather for an in-person FactShala session



Mis- and disinformation in India includes text, photos, audio and video files, and combinations of these formats, particularly on Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp and YouTube. Video-based mis- and disinformation was more prominent than other forms on these platforms.

1.3 The Value of Media Literacy

As online sources of information continue to be the major news and information sources, internet users need to develop skills to avoid and tackle online mis- and disinformation — notably critical thinking and the habit of evaluating online information.

A study of internet users in India conducted to inform the FactShala training curriculum found that respondents did not question sources, verify information or look for verifiable evidence in online information, and lacked strategies to spot and evaluate mis- and disinformation.¹² There was evidence that traditional knowledge and beliefs, validation from friends and acquaintances, and the sender's influence and reputation made people consider a message to be credible and authentic.¹³

Researchers studying Facebook's efforts to educate its users in 14 countries on mis- and disinformation found that people in the US and India were less likely to say a false headline was true after they were exposed to tips on spotting misleading information.¹⁴ Similarly, a US study on COVID-19 information found that while adults do not think carefully before forwarding a message, a simple nudge on critical thinking can help to curb the spread of mis- and disinformation.¹⁵ There is a growing body of evidence that more focused instruction similar to the FactShala training program can improve learning outcomes in relation to evaluation of online information.¹⁶

As there is so much information on social media and online in general, identifying useful and accurate sources is deceptively difficult. Media literacy interventions have an important role as citizens are not checking online information for accuracy and authenticity, largely because of the sheer volume of messages and low levels of awareness about mis- and disinformation and fact-checking. Simple, scalable media literacy interventions can help people to better distinguish mis- and disinformation from accurate news.¹⁷

However, there are no large-scale interventions to address this challenge in India. Small, standalone interventions targeting school students or institutions exist but tend to focus either on fact-checking and verification training, or critical thinking. As a result, research on nationwide media literacy interventions is lacking.¹⁸ The impact assessment of FactShala will help bridge this gap.

Chapter 2:

The FactShala Media Literacy Program

There is an urgent need for media literacy programs to help internet users in India identify and disregard mis- and disinformation, especially in regional languages and rural areas. This is because 210 million active internet users in India prefer regional language services and products. Even on social media, local language content accounted for up to 49% of engagement and as much as 45% of the time was spent on regional language content on digital platforms by media consumers in India.¹⁹ The FactShala training program, run by the FactShala India Media Literacy Network, aims to help meet this need.

2.1. Aims of FactShala

FactShala is a media and information literacy initiative that aims to empower adults across India, especially in states with low literacy levels, to consume information critically. It was launched by Internews, a non-profit that supports independent media, in collaboration with the digital media and information initiative DataLEADS, with the support of Google.org and the Google News Initiative.

Figure 4. Tea garden workers in West Bengal attend FactShala in hybrid mode



The FactShala training curriculum was based on a user study that revealed a stark contrast between the strategies used by professional fact-checkers and other Indian citizens to assess online content.²⁰ This study found that both urban and rural respondents focused on online information's content rather than its source. Most respondents did not question whether a source was a credible authority on the subject in question. Most respondents believed in a message if they knew the sender or trusted them.

The FactShala training aims to achieve five learning outcomes:

1. Training participants are aware of the concept and extent of misinformation and disinformation, especially on social media.
2. Introduce critical thinking to training participants, to create discerning information users who can check supporting evidence.
3. Training participants are able to spot misinformation and disinformation, and verify information using one or more methods.
4. Training participants are able to protect themselves from harm caused by misinformation and disinformation.
5. Training participants help to curb the spread of deliberately or unintentionally inaccurate information, by reporting or deleting content, alerting others, or sharing fact-checked information.

2.2. FactShala Implementation

The FactShala curriculum modules were designed in consultation with experts from the Amity University, BBC, BoomLive, Don Bosco University, Indian Institute of Journalism and New Media, Hong Kong University and the Stanford History Education Group.

The modules were designed to spark discussion around unreliable information in everyday life. They focus on helping participants to understand their 'information neighborhoods' (media environments), how to verify sources, and critically appraise online information.

Focusing on information neighborhoods aims to make participants assess their media environment, and their biases and choices regarding the content they see online. Trainees are encouraged to move from passive to active information consumers, who spot mis- and disinformation and take decisive action against it.

The verification section focuses on giving participants the knowledge and skills to assess information,

including which evidence to evaluate and authoritative sources to use when checking the accuracy of online content.

The critical thinking element of the course focuses on making trainees aware of mis- and disinformation, and how to protect themselves and others from it.

The curriculum was designed to make participants aware of the changing media landscape and the key differences between traditional and social media, and news and non-news content, and teach them basic verification techniques.

Using a train-the-trainer model, the FactShala team trained 253 trainers selected from hundreds of applicants to train the end-users. These trainers are journalists, fact-checkers, media faculty members, non-profit workers, community, and civil society thought leaders, and community radio representatives.

Between September 2020 and January 2021, the training program was conducted in more than 10 languages and dialects across 28 states in India, reaching 23,347 participants in underserved communities across India — primarily in Tier 2 and 3 cities with low literacy levels. All aged 18 or over, trainees included students, teachers, primary health and childcare workers, community reporters, NGO representatives, CSO volunteers, women's self-help group members, government employees, journalists, and media professionals.

Trainers held classes online and in person (sometimes a mix of both) and adapted the course content to suit the needs of trainees by combining elements from all modules or focusing on just one. The session usually ran for two hours.

Chapter 3:

About this Impact Evaluation

In early 2021, Internews commissioned the Centre for Media Studies (CMS), an independent social and media research think tank, to undertake a comprehensive impact evaluation of FactShala's training program. This evaluation took place in July–August 2021.

3.1. Questions and Objectives Guiding the Impact Evaluation

Evaluation questions

1. How **effective** has the FactShala training been in achieving its core learning outcomes?
2. What **impact** has the FactShala training had on participants' ability to use and share their learning to protect themselves and their community from misinformation and disinformation?

Evaluation objectives

1. Assess how far FactShala improved trainees' awareness of, and ability to identify, online misinformation and disinformation.
2. Determine how far FactShala motivated trainees to share this knowledge with others.
3. Capture best practices in curbing misinformation and disinformation at the individual, organizational or community level.
4. Provide insights to help design or improve future training modules, curricula and capacity-building sessions.

3.2. Evaluation Methodology and Components

To answer the two evaluation questions and achieve the evaluation objectives, this study used a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research ([Figure 5](#)). The quantitative research comprised two components.

Quantitative component 1: A quasi-experimental study to assess the impact of FactShala training on participants' knowledge retention and handling of online information several months after the training. This was measured by comparing survey responses from people who had attended FactShala training (treatment group) and people who had registered for but not yet attended FactShala training (control group).

Quantitative component 2: Pre- and post-training assessments were used to assess participants’ knowledge and ability to critically analyze online information. The same respondents were interviewed once before attending the FactShala training (pre-training assessment) and again one week after their training (post-training assessment).

Component 3: Qualitative methods were used to collect rich data on, and insights into, training participants’ and other stakeholders’ perceptions and experience of online information.

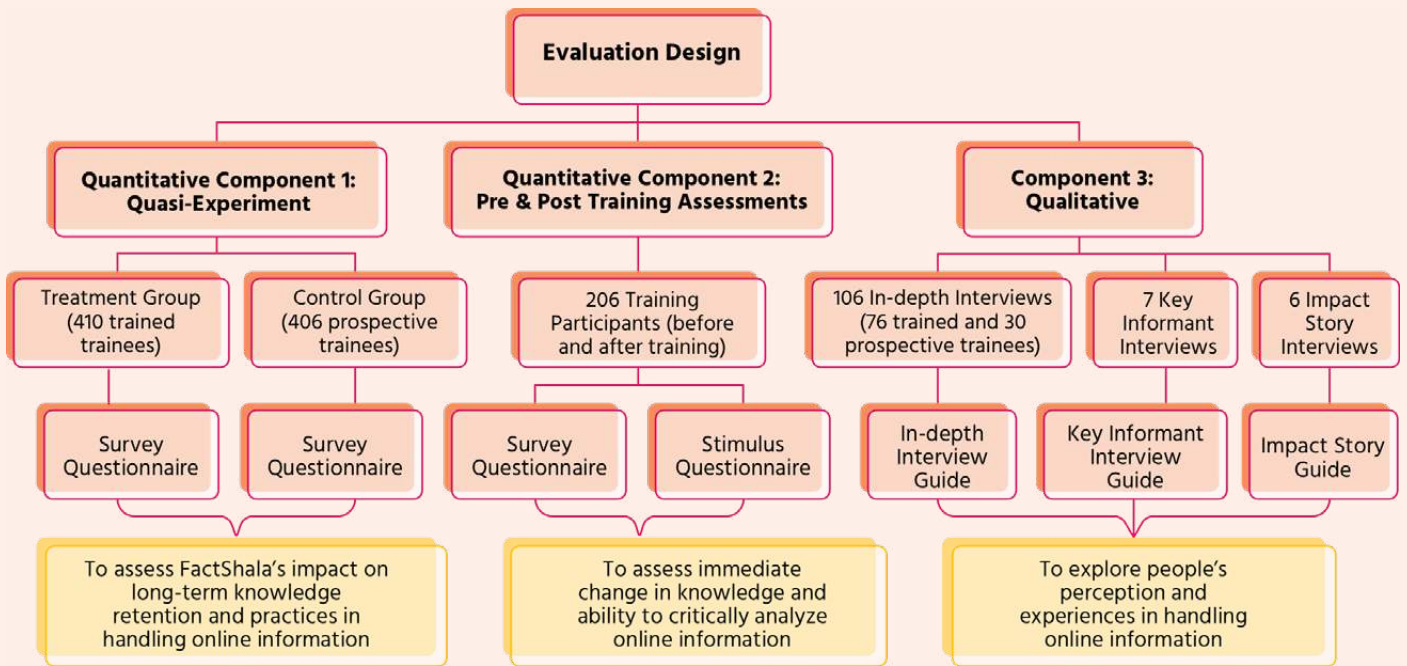


Figure 5. Evaluation design

In-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted with FactShala trainees and people who had not attended FactShala training. All IDI participants were randomly selected from FactShala training databases. The initial plan, based on COVID-19 restrictions, was to conduct face-to-face interviews only with respondents living in Delhi National Capital Region and neighboring states. However, as some travel restrictions eased during the study period, researchers conducted additional in-person interviews with respondents in rural locations. If respondents were not willing to attend IDIs in person, some were conducted online.



Figure 6. Research executives conducting IDIs with student and teachers in Haryana and Delhi (Credit: CMS)

In addition, key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with FactShala trainers to obtain their views and opinions on the program, including its quality, desired and achieved outcomes, and suggestions for future improvements.

Building on the findings from these IDIs and KIIs, the research team held additional interviews with selected respondents to develop stories highlighting the potential impact of the FactShala training.

Sample Distribution

Study respondents came from both rural and urban areas of 10 (out of 27) program target states: Delhi, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, West Bengal, Kerala, Karnataka, Assam and Maharashtra (Figure 7). These states were selected because each contained a sizeable number of FactShala training participants.

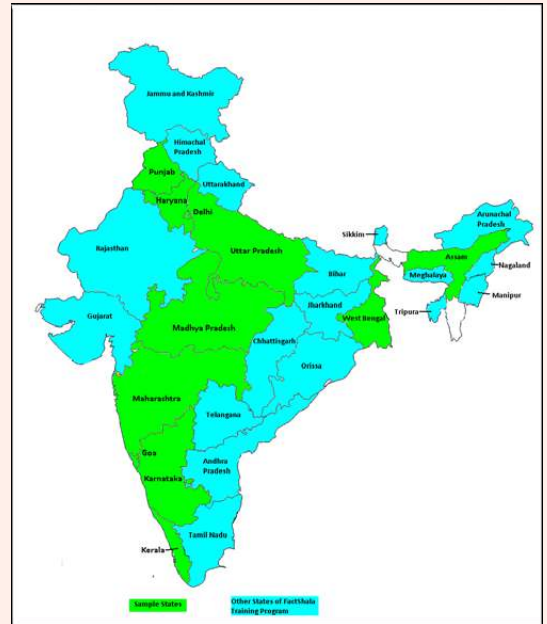


Figure 7. FactShala sampling and training

Sampling Framework

Stratified sampling was used for the quantitative elements of the study. This divided the total possible survey population into strata based on their location, gender and cohort/occupation (Figure 8). Each stratum was then sampled using another probability sampling method simple random sampling.

This process was designed to develop a representative sample of all FactShala trainees by location, gender and cohort. However, this could not be achieved for several reasons:

- The databases used for the treatment and control group sample selection did not contain full or accurate contact details for many potential respondents.
- The uneven distribution of training participants by cohort, location and gender compared to the sampling frame for the pre- and post-training assessment.
- Some potential respondents refused to participate in the survey or failed to complete the whole survey.

Sample Size

For the quasi-experimental study, the statistically rigorous sample size required for the treatment group (95% level of confidence and 5% margin of error; 5% no response/refusal rate) was 400 respondents from around 15,000 people recorded in the FactShala database who had recently attended training and completed the online

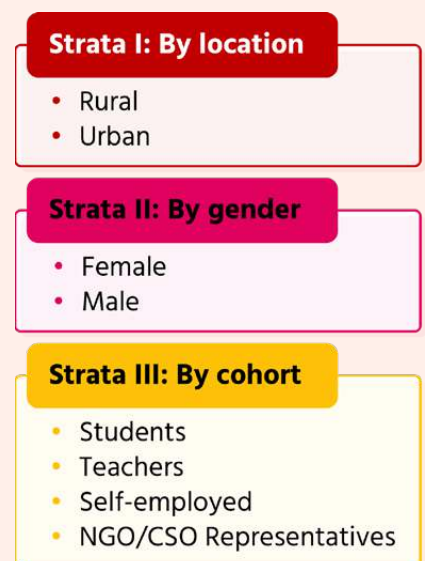


Figure 8. Research sample strata

feedback form. The same sample size was used for the control group.

The study covered the same 200 respondents in both pre- and post-training assessments. The sample size was based on the assumption that around 2,000 participants would attend FactShala training during the study period and the study aimed to cover at least 10% of them.

IDI respondents were randomly selected. Treatment group IDI respondents were selected from the database mentioned above. Control group and pre- and post-training assessment respondents were randomly selected from the database of around 2,000 prospective trainees who had registered for FactShala training using an online form but who had not yet attended training.

During the fieldwork, the research team was able to interview more respondents in the quantitative components than originally anticipated. The final sample sizes achieved for both components 1 and 2 of the study are shown in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Quantitative respondent sample sizes

Quasi-experimental study		Pre- and post-training assessments	
Treatment	Control	Pre-training	Post-training
410	406	206	206

3.3 Research Techniques and Tools

The research team developed different data collection tools for the quasi-experimental study, the pre- and post-training assessments, and the qualitative research methods (see Annexes for full details). These tools were all pre-tested and finalized in consultation with Internews.

The team developed two sets of **IDI** guidelines, one for respondents who had attended FactShala training and one for those who had not. **KII** and impact story guidelines were also developed to capture the requisite information.

The research team used computer assisted telephonic interviews (CATI) for the **quantitative surveys** as this was the best method to complete the study in a timely way during government COVID-19 restrictions. The research team developed the quantitative survey questionnaires using Open Data Kit (ODK) software and captured responses on tablets and smartphones.

The team created two questionnaires for the **quasi-experimental study**, one each for the treatment and control groups. The treatment group questionnaire contained additional questions to capture trainees' perceptions and experience of the FactShala training.

The **pre-training assessment** used the quasi-experimental study control group questionnaire to collect respondents' baseline knowledge before attending the training. Respondents were

administered another quantitative questionnaire after attending the training (**post-training assessment**). This captured respondents' recall of their knowledge gained from the training and the interviewers coded their responses. In addition to the quantitative questionnaire, the respondents also received a web link containing **stimuli-based questions** to understand their thought process when engaging with various kinds of online information. There were four sets (two in Hindi and two in English) of 5 open-ended, stimuli-based questions, containing a mix of specially developed text and video messages/information sources. The open-ended questions asked respondents for their opinion on the trustworthiness of each message/information source, whether they would forward it to others, and why. The pre- and post-training assessments used different sets of questions. Respondents chose whether to answer these questions in English or Hindi.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

A team of 19 field executives, seven moderators, two researchers and a field operation manager was involved in carrying out the survey from July 22 and August 31, 2021. Beforehand, team members received three day's orientation training — some at the CMS office in New Delhi while team members from other states attended via virtual platforms (Google Meet or Zoom). Specific training sessions covered the research tools for the control and treatment groups and the IDIs.

The IDIs were mostly conducted face-to-face by visiting locations suggested by the interviewees (usually their home or workplace). Around 15% of the IDIs were conducted virtually using Google Meet platforms. Senior researchers conducted the KIIs with trainers.

Quantitative data was validated, coded and analyzed using SPSS 21.0. The research team entered **qualitative data** in a Parameter Matrix in an Excel spreadsheet, to analyze responses against each parameter to see the overall trend and other key insights. The team identified some verbatim quotes to complement the quantitative findings.

Quantitative data analysis was based on two datasets: one for component 1 (quasi-experimental study) and another for component 2 (pre- and post-training assessments). The team labelled pre-coded options and coded open-ended responses, then scrutinized and validated the data to identify gaps and outliers and rectify them when possible. Researchers then generated simple frequency tables of all variables (dependent and independent) and cross-tabulations of all variables across both datasets, disaggregated by respondents' location and gender.

The research team created rubrics for each stimulus used in the **stimuli-based questions**. Respondents' open-ended responses to the stimuli were graded in line with the criteria outlined in [Table 2](#).

Table 2. Stimuli-based questions — rubric grading criteria

Grading Criteria	Grade	Score
Technically correct responses; uses critical thinking, with proper reasoning and mention of verification	Correct	2 marks
Responses with minimal reasoning and critical thinking, based largely on common sense or observation	Partially correct	1 mark
Responses displaying incorrect knowledge about messages and inclination to share them, or no responses	Wrong	0 mark

The pre- and post-training assessments gauged the knowledge of respondents who participated in the FactShala training and their ability to critically assess online information, both before the training and one week afterwards. The research team interviewed around 25% more respondents than the agreed sample size to ensure that they achieved an identical respondent sample of the required size for both pre- and post-training assessments.

3.5 Limitations of the Study

This impact evaluation study has several limitations. These limitations, their potential impact and steps taken to overcome them are outlined below.

1. The survey was conducted telephonically due to COVID-19 restrictions leading to less engagement with the respondents.
2. The databases of both trained and registered trainees did not contain full contact details for many participants, limiting the ability to achieve a representative sample of all FactShala trainees by location, gender and cohort as originally planned, reducing the overall sample pool for the quasi-experimental study treatment group.
3. Stratifying the quasi-experimental study respondents by educational qualification was not possible as this information was missing from the database of treatment group respondents.
4. Due to COVID-19 restrictions and hesitation among participants, 15% of IDIs were conducted using virtual platforms, which may have restricted the interview duration and the depth of information and views shared by respondents.
5. Some participants refused to participate in the survey, perhaps partly because of COVID-19 challenges, and others did not complete the whole survey.
6. Open-ended, stimuli-based question responses were recorded verbatim, meaning that some respondents did not fully articulate their responses. This was minimized as far as possible when collating and coding the responses.
7. Some of treatment and control group respondents had previously received some kind of media literacy training, which could lead to some of them having a level of media literacy before the FactShala training. This was taken into account when analyzing and discussing the survey results.

Chapter 4:

Key Findings – Study Respondents Profile and Media Habits

As a first step, the research team asked study participants about their media habits, smartphone use, occupation, education level and gender.

Previous studies in India have hinted at a correlation between these factors and people's media literacy levels. One study found that even though people educated to at least grade 12 use smartphones more, fake news is more often spread by people educated to grade 10 or below.²¹ Smartphone use is also more common in cities than small towns and rural areas, and among employed people than homemakers, students and unemployed people. This study found that people aged 34 and over fell prey to mis- and disinformation more than younger people.

4.1 Profile of Study Respondents

[Table 3](#) and [Figure 9](#) break down samples for the quasi-experimental study, and the pre- and post-training assessments, by occupation (cohort), gender and location.

Overall, the gender and location breakdown of the quasi-experimental study treatment and control groups is slightly different, but this is not statistically significant. The treatment group contains fewer women (58% versus 64%) and fewer urban participants (64% versus 70%) than the control group.

Table 3. Quantitative sample distribution by gender (#)

Cohort	Quasi-experimental study treatment group (N=410)		Quasi-experimental study control group (N=406)		Pre-/post-training assessment (N=206)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Students	106	157	92	141	43	76
Teachers	54	65	38	85	13	48
NGO/CSO Workers	4	10	8	29	4	17
Self-employed	10	4	7	6	2	3
Total	174 (42%)	236 (58%)	145 (36%)	261 (64%)	62 (30%)	144 (70%)
	410 (100%)		406 (100%)		206 (100%)	

The pre- and post-training assessment samples only include respondents who attended the training program and participated in both assessments. In this sample, 70% of respondents were women and 71% were from urban areas. Some 58% were students, 30% were teachers and 10% were NGO or CSO representatives.

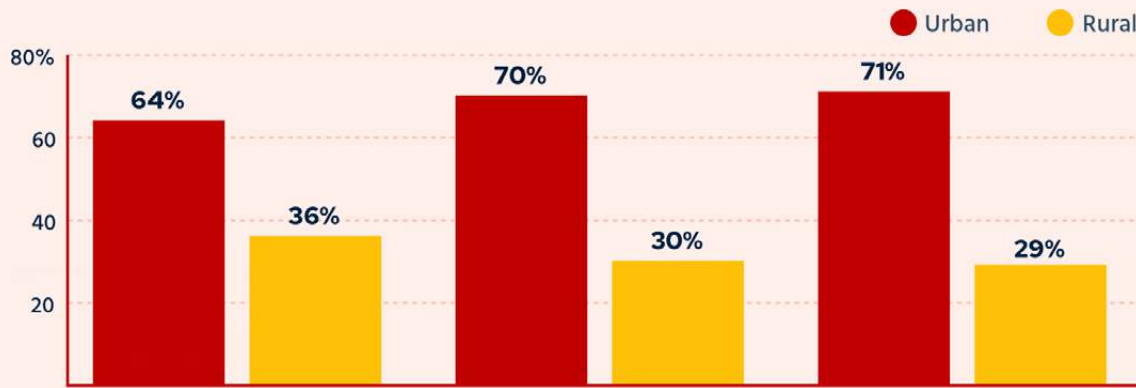


Figure 9.
Sample distribution by location

The overall age profile of respondents was similar across all three samples. Study participants were aged 18–29, with an average age of 28 (Figure 10).

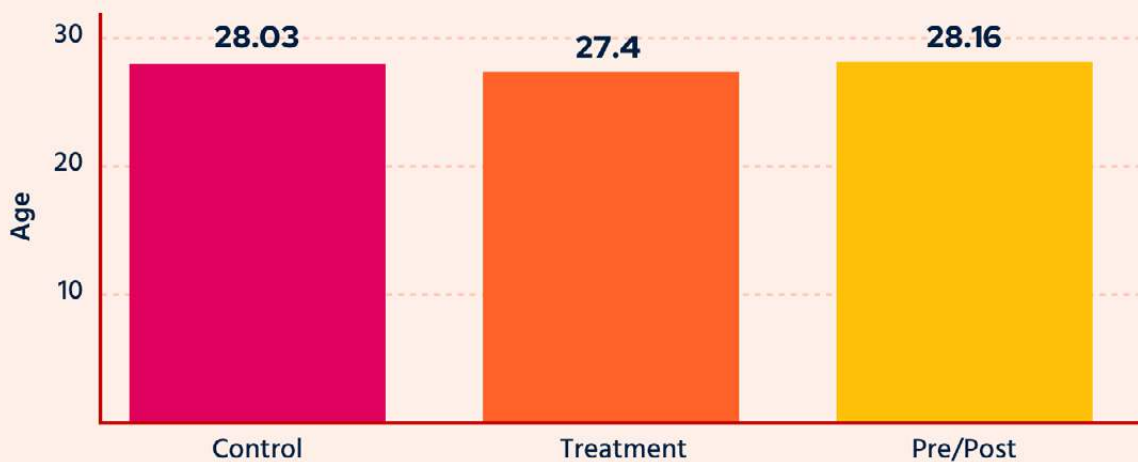


Figure 10.
Age of research respondents

In the treatment group, 75% of the males and 65% of the females had a degree-level education or above. In the control group, fewer males but slightly more females were educated to this level (62% and 66%, respectively). While 9% of males and 7% of females in the control group had been educated to class 12 or below, the corresponding percentages in the treatment group were 0% and 2%, respectively (Table 4).

Among the pre- and post-training assessment respondents, 60% of the males and 65% of the females were educated to at least degree level, and 11% of males and 7% of females were educated up to class 12 or below.

Table 4. Educational level of quantitative research respondents (%)

Cohort	Quasi-experimental study treatment group (N=410)		Quasi-experimental study control group (N=406)		Pre-/post-training assessment (N=206)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Below grade 10	0	1	1	0	0	1
High school (grade 12)	0	1	8	7	11	6
Some college but not graduate	25	33	30	28	29	28
Graduate/postgraduate (general)	51	42	37	32	37	30
Graduate/postgraduate (professional)	24	23	25	340	23	35

The qualitative research sample comprised 106 IDI respondents — 76 who had attended FactShala training and 30 prospective/untrained respondents.

Table 5. Profile of qualitative research respondents (%)

	Trained respondents (N=76)	Untrained respondents (N=30)
Gender		
Male	55	60
Female	45	40
Location		
Urban	88	78
Rural	12	22
Education		
Below grade 10	0	3
High school (grade 12)	1	3
Some college but not graduate	46	53
Graduate/postgraduate (general)	28	17
Graduate/postgraduate (professional)	25	24
Occupation		
Students	64	27
Teachers	27	27
NGO/CSO workers	7	23
Self-employed	2	23

Less than half of the IDI respondents were women (45% of trained respondents and 40% of untrained respondents). A large majority of respondents were from urban locations (88% of trained and 78% of untrained respondents) (Table 5). In addition, almost all respondents were college students or graduates (99% of trained and 94% of untrained respondents). Students were more represented in the trained sample, while the untrained sample contained more NGO/CSO workers and self-employed people. Both groups contained the same proportion of teachers (27%).

As previous research indicates that less educated people are more likely to fall for mis- or disinformation, a predominantly urban and educated sample could be presumed to have higher than average levels of media literacy.

The respondents were asked if they had attended any media literacy training before the FactShala program. More control group respondents (23%) than treatment group respondents (8%) reported having done this. Almost a quarter (23%) of respondents from the pre- and post-training assessment sample reported having previously attended similar training (Figure 11).

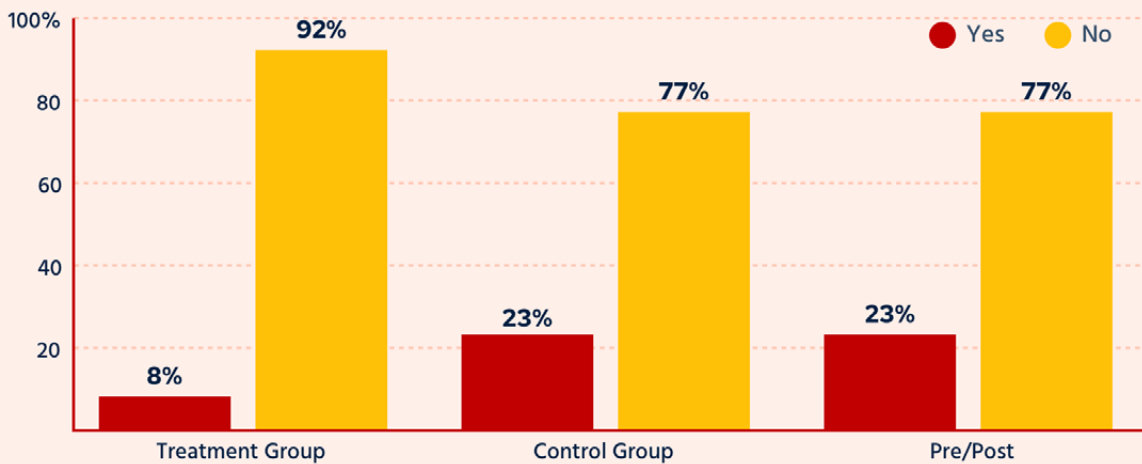


Figure 11. Participants who had attended media literacy training before FactShala

4.2 Media Habits

4.2.1 Average Time Spent Online

On average, respondents across all quantitative samples reported spending 3.9 hours a day online (Figure 12). Time spent online was similar among the treatment and control group respondents, irrespective of gender. Male respondents in both the treatment and control groups tended to report spending more time online (4.1–4.2 hours) than their female counterparts (3.6–3.7 hours). Similarly, male respondents in the pre- and post-training assessment sample spent 0.7 hour more online than females.

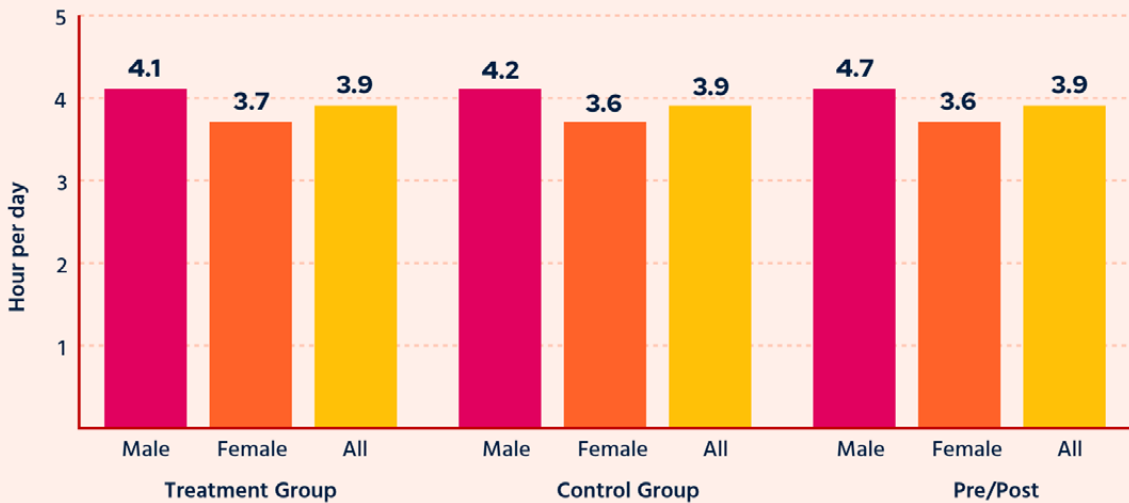


Figure 12. Respondents' average time spent online each day

4.2.2 Preferred Sources of Online Information

Multiple studies have indicated that social media platforms are popular ways to access news in India. The respondents had similar preferences. WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and news websites were the main sources of online information for respondents in the treatment and control groups, irrespective of their location and gender.

WhatsApp is the single most-used online information source for respondents in both the treatment and control groups (cited by 90% and 86%, respectively). Facebook and YouTube come in second and third place for trained respondents, (third and second, respectively, for the untrained sample). Respondents in both groups use Instagram and news websites but to a lesser extent (Figure 13). Interestingly, 5% more of trained respondents get information from Twitter than their untrained counterparts. Overall, the treatment group reported using a greater number of information sources than the control group as they also use TV and newspapers in this way.

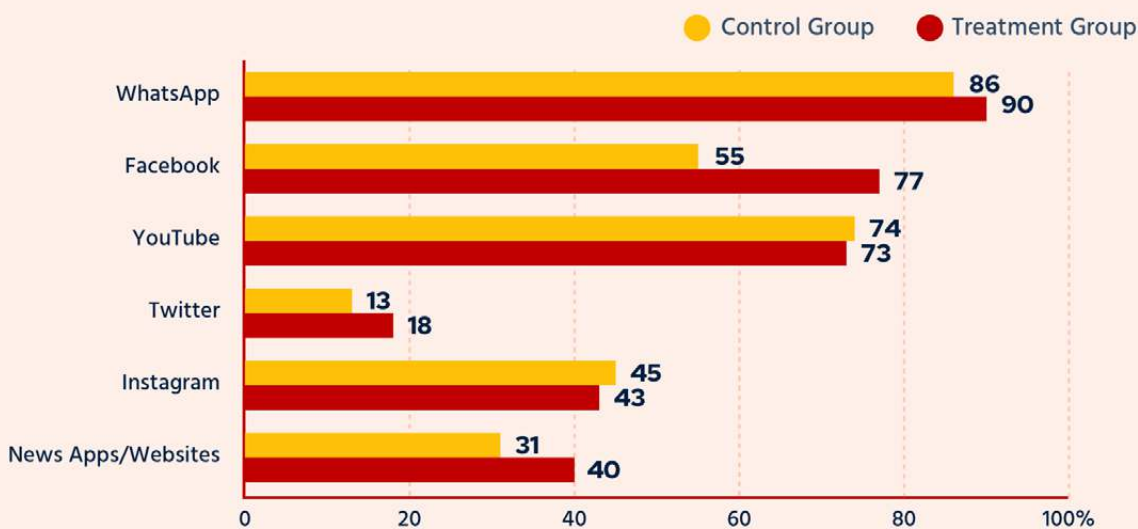


Figure 13. Treatment and control group respondents' main sources of online information (%)

Key observations based on the study findings include:

- More rural women in the treatment group reported using all kinds of social media platforms as major information sources than their peers in the control group. This could be due to the training increasing their awareness of additional platforms.
- Twitter was identified as a major information source by more urban men in the treatment group (28%) than their peers in the control group (16%).

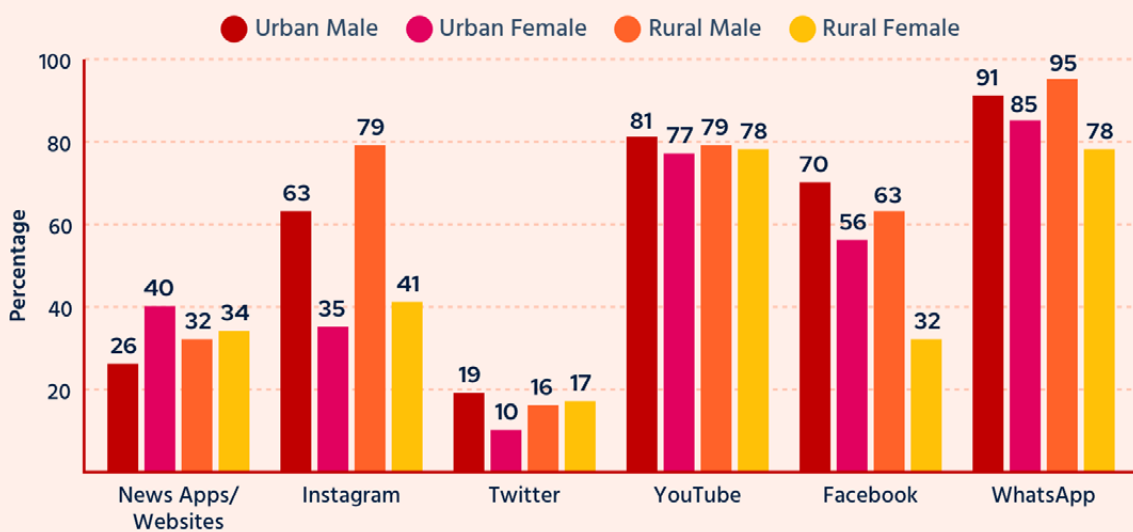


Figure 14. Pre- and post-training assessment respondents' main sources of online information (%)

Similarly, WhatsApp, YouTube and Facebook were the top three sources of information among the pre- and post-training assessment respondents (cited by 86%, 78% and 55%, respectively). There was a small proportion of rural female respondents who reported Facebook as one of their main sources of information (32%) (Figure 14). Fewer female than male respondents reported Facebook and Instagram as their main sources, particularly among urban females.

4.2.3 Most Trusted Social Media and Online Platforms

Across all respondent samples, WhatsApp is by far the most trusted social media platform. When asked to rate their three most trusted social media and online platforms, the quasi-experimental study respondents cited WhatsApp, YouTube and online news portals, in that order. The most trusted platforms were similar for both treatment and control group respondents, although more of the former cited WhatsApp (84% compared with 68% of the control group).

Across the treatment and control groups, YouTube was cited as a trusted source by an average of 45% of respondents and news websites by 24.5%. Overall, irrespective of location and gender, 7% more respondents in the treatment group trusted news apps and websites than those in the control group. A few respondents listed Instagram and Twitter in their three most trusted social media platforms, broadly reflecting the most used platforms reported above.

Similarly, the social media and online platforms most trusted by pre- and post-training assessment respondents were WhatsApp (cited by 72%) and YouTube (43%), followed by Instagram and news websites (both 25%), and Facebook (24%). Male respondents were more likely than females to trust Instagram. Notably, only 5% of females in rural locations ranked Facebook in the three most trusted platforms.

During the qualitative interviews, all respondents mentioned WhatsApp, YouTube and Facebook as the most used platforms, but when asked about the most trusted platforms, many of them also mentioned Google search, Twitter and Instagram.

Chapter 5:

Key Findings – Impact of FactShala Training

This chapter analyzes the FactShala program's effectiveness in achieving its five expected learning outcomes.

5.1. Awareness about Misinformation and Disinformation

Learning outcome 1: Training participants are aware of the concept and extent of misinformation and disinformation, especially on social media.

The FactShala training increased participants' awareness and knowledge of these phenomena, enabling them to differentiate between misinformation and disinformation.

A large majority (91%) of the quasi-experimental study treatment group respondents stated that they knew the difference between mis- and disinformation, compared to only 9% of control group respondents.

When asked to define mis- and disinformation, respectively 69% and 68% of trained respondents in the treatment group did so correctly, compared to just 34% and 44% of control group respondents, respectively (Table 6). In the treatment group, urban women tended to have better knowledge than urban men, while the opposite was observed among rural respondents.

Table 6. Understanding of misinformation and disinformation in quasi-experimental study

	Urban				Rural				Overall	
	Male		Female		Male		Female		CG	TG
	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG		
Respondents, n	102	111	181	150	43	63	80	86	406	410
Misinformation is:										
Information that is false, but not intentional or deliberate	36	59	31	79	33	78	40	62	34	69
All kinds of false information and fake news are misinformation (incorrect)	49	31	57	19	49	14	39	23	51	23

	Urban				Rural				Overall	
	Male		Female		Male		Female			
	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG
Disinformation is:										
Deliberate or intentional false information	48	64	45	79	33	63	42	58	44	68
Any kind of misinformation/ fake news online (incorrect)	33	25	36	17	42	24	26	26	34	22

CG = Control Group; TG = Treatment Group

In the pre- and post-training assessments, the percentage of respondents who could correctly define misinformation rose from 39% before training to 55% afterwards. Similarly, 65% of respondents could correctly define disinformation after attending the training, compared to 47% beforehand (Table 7). The highest improvement in understanding misinformation from pre- to post-assessment stages was among urban women, whereas rural women displayed the greatest improvement in understanding disinformation.

Table 7. Understanding of misinformation and disinformation in pre- and post-training assessments

	Urban				Rural				Overall	
	Male		Female		Male		Female			
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Respondents, n	43	43	103	103	19	19	41	41	206	206
Misinformation is:										
Information that is false, but not intentional or deliberate	51	56	30	53	47	58	46	59	39	55
Disinformation is:										
Deliberate or intentional false information	56	65	49	67	47	53	34	63	47	65

Pre = Pre-assessment; Post = Post-assessment

In the qualitative IDIs, respondents were asked to define mis- and disinformation in their own words (some responses are in Table 8). Treatment group respondents demonstrated better understanding of the terms than control group respondents, defining them in more clear and nuanced ways.

Table 8. Definitions of misinformation and disinformation emerging from IDIs

Treatment group respondents	Control group respondents
For own benefit spreading wrong news is disinformation	Misinformation and disinformation is... the same thing
The wrong news shouldn't be spread purposely Disinformation purposely spread to defame someone	The news that is being spread to spark riots
Disinformation spreads deliberately under some agenda to defame some politician or religion and caste	Political people deliberately spread wrong news to prove someone wrong
Telling fake news means misinformation, to defame someone [means] disinformation	The wrong information is being spread in the wrong ways
Disinformation [means] to spread a rumor about some person or party, saying he didn't do anything	Misinformation means keep[ing] on forwarding the news
Misinformation always tell wrong things and if it's wrong it is disinformation	To talk bad about someone
Misinformation... spreads wrong information, to spread fake news is disinformation	Purposely spreading wrong news about someone is disinformation
If any information is shared repeatedly, that is misinformation	If [you] repeatedly share wrong news it is disinformation

5.2. Critical Thinking and Checking Evidence

Learning outcome 2: Introduce critical thinking to training participants, to create discerning information users who can check supporting evidence.

The FactShala program trained participants to apply critical thinking to the information they encounter online. It enabled them to check information using trustworthy sources and to exercise caution around the information they share with others.

5.2.1. Dealing with Online Information

After attending the FactShala program, respondents in the quantitative research components were more inclined to check the authenticity of social media posts.

There is a clear difference between how respondents in the treatment and control groups approach social media messages and content. The treatment group reported being more skeptical about online information, more aware of how to tackle mis- and disinformation, and more proactive in using these approaches than control group respondents.

Table 9. Behaviour in dealing with online information among treatment and control groups respondents (%)

	Urban				Rural				Overall	
	Male		Female		Male		Female		CG	TG
	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG		
Respondents, n	102	111	181	150	43	63	80	86	406	410
Check if message is true or false	61	67	53	73	70	90	61	73	58	74
Do fact checking	44	60	37	65	51	62	34	47	40	59
Immediately share/forward it to those who may be impacted	33	24	30	22	33	21	46	19	34	22
Forward as received, without checking	10	12	10	3	7	3	16	15	11	8
Trust it as it is	10	4	7	0	7	2	15	8	9	3
Don't do anything	9	5	22	5	9	2	4	8	14	5

CG = Control Group; TG = Treatment Group

Findings from the quasi-experimental study show that a higher proportion of treatment group said they usually fact-check information encountered on social media or chat apps (59%) compared to the control group (40%) (Table 9).

About three-quarters (74%) of the treatment group stated that they would check the authenticity of information, compared to 58% of the control group. This means using observation skills and critical thinking, such as assessing whether a logo or URL looks suspicious, an image looks doctored or a claim is unsubstantiated.

Only 5% of the treatment group said they would not do anything about information they see on social media, compared to 14% of control group respondents. And only 3% of respondents in the treatment group said they trust any new information on social media — 6 percentage points lower than the control group.

While 34% control group respondents said they would immediately forward information to others, only 22% of treatment group participants said this. Irrespective of gender and location, trained respondents are more aware of, and cautious about, the risks of online information than other respondents.

The pre- and post-training assessments indicate similar positive improvements after the training, including a 22-percentage point increase in respondents reporting that they fact check information received online. The percentage of respondents who reported doing nothing about such information, and trusting as it is, more than halved after training (Table 10).

Table 10. Behaviour in dealing with online information among pre- and post- training assessment respondents (%)

	Urban				Rural				Overall	
	Male		Female		Male		Female			
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Respondents, n	43	43	103	103	19	19	41	41	206	206
Check if it's true or false	65	70	52	68	84	74	59	66	59	68
Do fact checking	47	72	37	63	68	63	32	51	41	63
Immediately share/forward it to those who may be impacted	28	19	30	36	21	21	41	51	31	34
Forward as received	9	5	7	11	11	16	20	24	10	13
Trust it as it is	9	2	7	4	5	11	20	2	10	4
Don't do anything	12	9	26	5	5	-	5	5	17	5

Pre = Pre-assessment; Post = Post-assessment

Among respondents who had attended other media literacy training before the FactShala training (23% of the sample), less than 50% reported conducting fact-checking before FactShala training. Regular, post-training follow-up with participants may help to embed the practice of fact-checking online information and messages.

5.2.2 Sharing Online Information

The FactShala training program aimed to make participants aware that sharing online information without checking its authenticity is risky.

Respondents of the quasi-experimental study were asked what they do with online content that could be useful for their friends or relatives. More than half of the treatment group respondents (66%) reported they would only share if it came from credible news sources, compared with 45% of the control group. More than one third (35%) of the control group reported forwarding these messages immediately, while only 12% of the treatment group reported doing so. More than half (57%) of the treatment group reported that they used the skills and techniques they learned in the training to verify information before sharing ([Table 11](#)).

Table 11. Actions taken in relation to potentially useful messages by treatment and control group respondents (%)

	Urban				Rural				Overall	
	Male		Female		Male		Female			
	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG		
Respondents, n	102	111	181	150	43	63	80	86	406	410
Forward it to inform them immediately	20	17	38	5	28	10	53	21	35	12
Verify from alternate sources only then I share	47	55	43	55	65	51	43	42	46	51
Share only if it has come from credible news sources	49	71	39	55	53	75	48	72	45	66
Share only if it has come from a friend/person I trust	43	41	38	37	42	68	41	52	40	46
I don't do anything	9	4	10	2	7		5	2	9	2
I use skills/techniques I learned in training to verify and	0	56	0	60	0	63	0	48	0	57

CG = Control Group; TG = Treatment Group

Respondents in the pre- and post-training assessments were also asked what they do with online content that could be useful for their friends or relatives. Before the training, 36% of these respondents immediately shared information. After the training, this reduced to 10%. More than half (60%) of trainees reported using skills or techniques learned in the training to verify information before sharing it (Table 12). In addition, the proportion of respondents who said they only share information from credible sources increased by 9 percentage points after the training (to 52%).

Table 12. Pre- and post-training actions taken in relation to potentially useful messages (%)

	Urban				Rural				Overall	
	Male		Female		Male		Female			
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post		
Respondents, n	43	43	103	103	19	19	41	41	206	206
Use skills/techniques learned in training to verify	0	56	0	58	0	63	0	68	0	60
Share only if received from credible news sources	49	44	35	50	53	58	51	63	43	52
Share only if it has come from a trusted friend/person	37	33	34	31	32	32	49	46	37	34
Forward it to inform them immediately	14	7	37	11	42	5	54	15	36	10
Don't do anything	5	2	153	4	0	5	5	2	8	3

Pre = Pre-assessment; Post = Post-assessment

Findings from the IDIs suggest that most trained respondents were confident about finding trustworthy information related to health issues such as COVID-19, by using fact-checking apps, Google search and news websites to confirm information before sharing it.

“I shared information that government is giving laptop if I share it to 15 persons. I shared it as I wanted to get laptop.”

– Control group respondent

“I didn’t anything before the training. Whatever appears on social media, I accepted it as correct information, but after the training I checked on Google by copy-pasting the link of the post as taught in the training.”

– Treatment group respondent

“If I don’t find any traceable sources, I don’t share it. Because if I share it without checking I too will become the part of the chain of forwarding messages without verifying.”

– Treatment group respondent

Before the training, respondents said they used to consider information appearing online or on social media to be true and share it, as they did not know the importance of, or techniques for, checking this kind of information. Reflecting this, many control group respondents admitted sharing information in good faith if they thought it might benefit others, though this sometimes turned out to be false.

5.2.3. Confidence in Finding Trustworthy Sources of Information

The quantitative and qualitative findings highlight greater levels of knowledge and confidence about finding trustworthy information sources online among FactShala trainees than other respondents.

In the quasi-experimental study, respondents rated their confidence in finding trustworthy sources of information. Some 71% of trained respondents reported being very or extremely confident about this, compared to 54% of untrained respondents ([Figure 15](#)).

The pre- and post-training assessments found that respondents’ confidence level about finding trustworthy sources of information improved after the training. The proportion who reported being extremely or very confident about this increased after training, from 11% to 32% and from 39% to 49%, respectively ([Table 13](#)). No trained respondents reported lacking confidence about this.

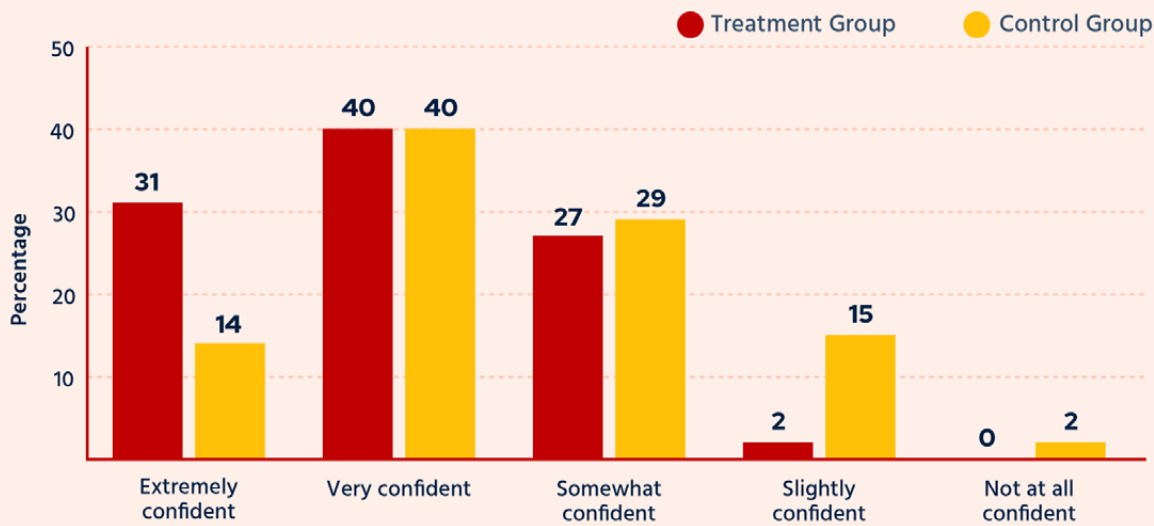


Figure 15. Confidence level in finding trustworthy sources of information among treatment and control group respondents (%)

Table 13. Pre- and post-training confidence levels in finding trustworthy sources of information (%)

	Urban				Rural				Overall	
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Pre	Post
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post		
Respondents, n	43	43	103	103	19	19	41	41	206	206
Extremely confident	26	37	9	29	11	32	2	32	11	32
Very confident	33	37	40	51	47	58	39	49	39	49
Somewhat confident	33	21	30	14	26	11	44	20	33	16
Slightly confident	9	5	19	6	16	0	15	0	16	4
Not at all confident	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

Pre = Pre-assessment; Post = Post-assessment

Overall, 23% of trainees had attended some media literacy training before FactShala. Among these respondents, 17% reported low level of confidence in finding trustworthy sources of information before attending FactShala training. However, this proportion reduced to 2% after the training.

During the IDIs, respondents were asked to name some trustworthy sources of information. Most FactShala trained respondents mentioned sources such as Google, official websites, the Ministry of Information, the British Broadcasting Corporation and Press Trust of India. However, respondents who had not attended FactShala training mentioned social media platforms, Google, friends and family, and news apps, indicating lower level of knowledge in this area.

5.2.4. Ability to Identify Authoritative Sources

During the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the respondents used social media as a major source of information (in line with global trends). The study asked respondents to name

their most trusted sources for health and COVID-19 related issues to check whether they would continue to trust social media platforms for life-saving information.

A large majority (71%) of the treatment group cited the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW) as a trusted source of this kind of information, compared to only 36% of the control group. Similarly, 65% respondents from the treatment group mentioned doctors and nurses (versus 42% from the control group). The percentage of respondents relying on social media for this kind of information was low in both groups (Table 14).

Table 14. Treatment and control group awareness of trusted sources for health and COVID-19 related information (%)

	Urban				Rural				Overall	
	Male		Female		Male		Female		CG	TG
	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG		
Respondents, n	102	111	181	150	43	63	80	86	406	410
WhatsApp	23	28	22	16	26	27	18	36	21	25
Facebook	13	25	16	13	14	37	10	30	14	23
World Health Organization (WHO) website	26	45	25	23	19	44	19	51	23	38
Doctors and nurses	44	52	45	68	19	73	43	71	42	65
MoHFW	42	70	35	71	33	83	34	62	36	71
Friends and community	30	26	34	23	42	29	45	40	36	28
Aarogya Setu App on COVID-19 related info	12	7	6	3	0	0	8	9	7	5
Google	14	7	18	4	14	2	16	2	16	4

CG = Control Group; TG = Treatment Group

Over one-third (38%) of the treatment group identified the World Health Organization (WHO) website as a trusted source, compared with 23% of the control group. Over one-third (36%) of control group respondents reported checking with their friends and family to authenticate COVID-19 related information — 8 percentage points higher than the treatment group.

Apart from the FactShala program emphasizing the MoHFW as an authoritative source, another reason for this awareness could be government and other efforts to promote accurate sources of information during the pandemic, such as MoHFW, the government COVID-19 app Aarogya Setu and WHO.

The pre- and post-training assessment results showed that, after training, 61% of respondents mentioned the MoHFW as a trusted source for health-related information compared to 34%

beforehand (Figure 16). The number of respondents citing the WHO as a trusted information source also increased after attending the training. However, doctors and nurses were identified by a similar percentage of respondents in the pre- and post-training assessments.

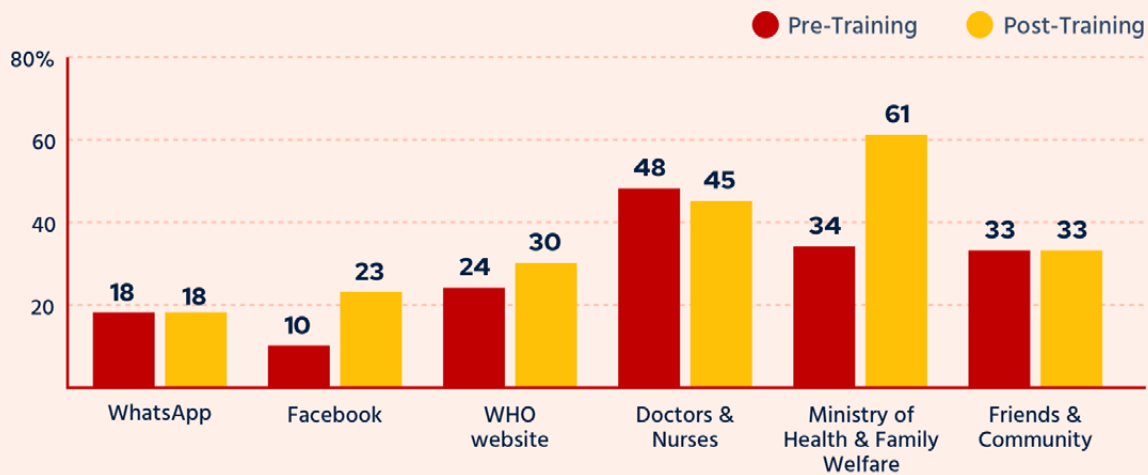


Figure 16. Awareness of trusted sources for health and COVID-19 related information among pre- and post-training assessment respondents (%)

Among the 23% of respondents who reported having attended other media literacy training before FactShala, only 23% of them mentioned sources like the MoHFW or WHO websites before attending FactShala training. After attending the FactShala program, this increased to 70%.

5.2.5. Ability to Critically Assess Online Information

To assess their verification and critical thinking skills in relation to online information, the pre- and post-training assessments showed respondents 10 sample social media posts (stimuli) and asked whether they would share and/or check each one.

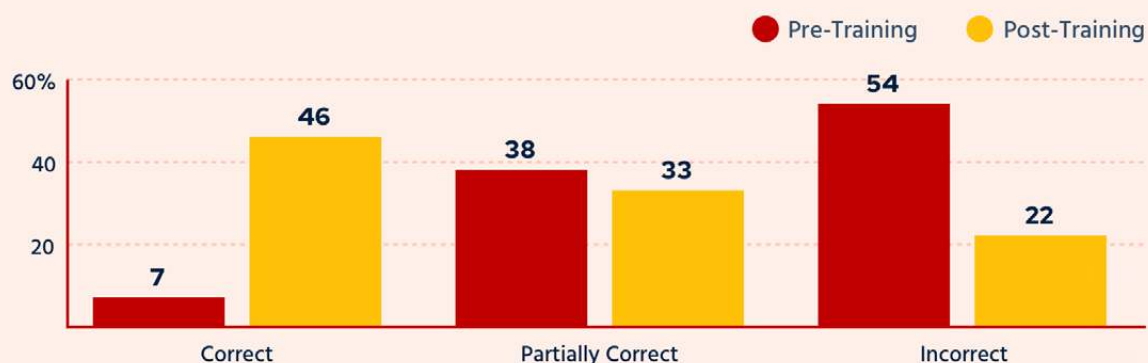


Figure 17. Response to stimulus questions provided by pre- and post-training assessment respondents

The study collected 1,030 responses to stimulus-based questions for both pre- and post-training assessments. Overall, these showed a significant (39 percentage point increase) improvement in respondents' ability to handle online information appropriately after attending training, primarily by checking for trustworthiness and believability (Figure 17).

Responses to the stimuli-based questions indicated that respondents who had attended FactShala training were more likely to verify the source of a social media post before believing, trusting or sharing it and they knew how to go about this.

In the pre-training assessment, respondents saw a chat app message, English pre-training assessment stimulus D (refer to annex), that asked people to forward the message to ‘opt out’ of new privacy terms (Figure 18). This message was in circulation when the chat app in question had just announced some changes to its policies. In the above message, the name of the chat app is misspelt and there is no source to verify the information.

When asked if this kind of post was trustworthy, 90% of respondents said it was not. However, just 6% could correctly state why and just 34% could give correct/partly correct reasons. Two-thirds (65%) of respondents in the pre-training assessment could not give any correct reasons why such a post is untrustworthy.

In the post-training assessment, the same respondents were asked about the trustworthiness of a message suggesting that a home remedy to treat COVID-19 was endorsed by the WHO (Figure 19). WHO has been a trusted source of information since the pandemic began, so any information claiming to be from that institution is taken seriously.

Some 79% of the trained respondents who answered this question stated that the message was not trustworthy. When asked why, 43% gave correct reasons, such as its unknown source. Some 38% gave partly correct responses, such as the fact that reputable news sources don’t advise people to “circulate this message”. Only 16% of post-training respondents gave incorrect responses.

These positive findings, relating to comparable stimuli, indicates that respondents picked up critical thinking skills, and the ability to identify disinformation and authoritative information sources from the FactShala training program.

Based on the overall findings from KIIs, the trainers felt that the program was a huge success in instilling a sense of critical thinking and awareness of the nature of online information among training participants. They reported that the trainees were well aware that not all online information could be trusted.



Figure 18. Pre-training assessment stimulus D (English)



Figure 19. Post-training assessment stimulus E (English)

5.3. Spotting and Verifying Misinformation and Disinformation

Learning outcome 3: Training participants are able to spot misinformation and disinformation, and verify information using one or more methods.

Respondents who had attended FactShala training were better able to identify potentially misleading online information in various formats, knew how to check this information, and put this knowledge into practice.

5.3.1. Information Handling Skills Gained Through FactShala

After attending the FactShala training, the majority of respondents in the quasi-experimental study reported having better knowledge about online information. Regardless of gender and location, a majority of respondents felt better able to identify and handle mis- and disinformation after the training ([Table 15](#)).

While most rural respondents and urban females were more motivated to identify misleading online information after the training, only a large minority of urban male respondents felt this.

Table 15. Change in treatment group respondents' skills after attending FactShala training (%)

	Urban		Rural		Overall
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Respondents, n	111	150	63	86	410
Better technical know-how/awareness about misinformation and disinformation	73	73	70	81	74
Avoid blindly accepting information as true	68	60	83	69	67
Better decision-making in handling misinformation and disinformation	66	53	60	73	62
Can identify misinformation and fake news	64	65	57	51	61
More motivated to identify misinformation and fake news	46	55	63	55	54
Not benefitted	3	1	0	1	1

5.3.2. Knowledge of Verification Methods for Text Messages

Respondents in the quasi-experimental study treatment group were more likely than control group respondents to be aware of the three text message verification methods taught in the training. They most commonly cited online searches (76%), checking with the source (51%), and keyword searches on fact-checking websites (34%) ([Table 16](#)).

A smaller proportion of control group respondents mentioned the first two methods, and none

mentioned keyword searches. A significantly higher proportion of control group respondents did not know how to verify text messages, or thought no action was required (35% versus 3% of the treatment group).

Table 16. Treatment and control group text message verification methods (%)

	Urban				Rural				Overall	
	Male		Female		Male		Female			
	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG
Respondents, n	102	111	181	150	43	63	80	86	406	410
Search on internet	59	86	56	80	51	60	54	70	56	76
Check with friends and family	30	50	29	57	35	48	48	48	34	51
Confirm with the source	35	52	20	39	28	67	25	55	26	50
Check on social media	32	46	35	33	28	41	38	36	34	38
Do keyword search on fact check websites	0	37	0	35	0	35	0	29	0	34
I don't do anything/don't know	81	5	38	3	47	0	31	5	35	3

CG = Control Group; TG = Treatment Group

Similarly, the pre- and post-training assessments indicated that FactShala-trained respondents were significantly more likely to know about these text verification methods, particularly online searches and keyword searches (Table 17).

Table 17. Pre- and post-training text message verification methods (%)

	Urban				Rural				Overall	
	Male		Female		Male		Female			
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Respondents, n	43	43	103	103	19	19	41	41	206	206
Search on internet	63	88	56	6187	53	95	56	90	57	89
Check on social media	42	47	31	37	37	47	34	54	34	43
Confirm from the source	37	53	21	39	26	37	27	37	26	41
Do keyword search on fact check website	0	37	0	31	0	21	0	37	0	33
Don't do anything	7	0	14	2	26	0	2	5	11	2

Pre = Pre-assessment; Post = Post-assessment

The pre- and post-training assessments used sample text messages (stimuli) to test respondents' understanding of how to verify text messages. One purporting to be from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declared India's national anthem the best, and another from an unnamed source reported finding a 40 foot humanoid skeleton (Figure 20 and Figure 21, respectively). UNESCO is not an authority for evaluating the national anthem of any country. Also, any notable national or international achievements would first appear in the news rather than on the chat app. Similarly, any humanoid skeleton found would first be reported by the Archeological Survey of India.



Figure 20. Post-training assessment stimulus A (English)



Figure 21. Post-training assessment stimulus C (Hindi)

After attending FactShala training around half of the respondents were able to list appropriate verification methods for these messages (51% 'UNESCO' and 43% 'skeleton'). Respondents found it easier to suggest verification methods for messages that mention a source, but could spot potential mis- and disinformation even when they were not sure how to verify information.

5.3.3. Knowledge of Verification Methods for Audio/Video Content

When asked about verification methods for video or audio content, more treatment than control group respondents cited checking whether information is from a credible source (60% versus 41% in the control group). Other methods mentioned by these trained respondents include looking for the story on alternative sources such as newspaper websites (cited by 47% versus 0% of the control group), using fact-checking websites and carefully checking links (Table 18).

Table 18. Treatment and control group audio/video verification methods (%)

	Urban				Rural				Overall	
	Male		Female		Male		Female			
	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG
Respondents, n	102	111	181	150	43	63	80	86	406	410
Carefully check if it has come from a credible source	43	59	36	59	49	57	45	63	41	60
Check with my family/close friends	36	59	26	57	40	63	53	60	35	59
Look for same news on other mediums YouTube/online newspaper	0	56	0	35	0	54	0	50	0	47
Check on fact check websites	26	49	23	45	19	48	20	38	23	45
Carefully check the extension/ URL link	22	27	13	23	7	35	16	34	15	28
Don't do anything	30	2	46	2	35	0	31	2	38	2

CG = Control Group; TG = Treatment Group

Some 38% of control group respondents reported that they would not do anything to verify online video or audio content, compared to only 2% of the treatment group. The pre- and post-training assessments echo these findings. Before attending the training, 38% of respondents said they would do nothing to verify this kind of content while no respondents said this after attending the program (Table 19).

Overall, these assessments indicated dramatic increases in respondents' awareness of video or audio verification methods after attending FactShala training.

Table 19. Pre- and post-training audio/video verification methods (%)

	Urban				Rural				Overall	
	Male		Female		Male		Female			
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Respondents, n	43	43	103	103	19	19	41	41	206	206
Carefully check if it has come from a credible source	42	63	33	54	42	68	46	71	38	61
Check on fact check websites	30	56	20	50	21	47	20	37	22	48
Carefully see the extension/ URL link	23	35	16	30	11	16	15	37	17	31
Don't do anything	26	0	47	0	32	0	34	0	38	0

Pre = Pre-assessment; Post = Post-assessment

5.3.4. Application of Knowledge and Verification Techniques

Respondents in the quasi-experimental study treatment group had applied verification skills such as keyword searches, using fact-checking sites, and confirming information sources.

“During the training we got to know new apps and websites of fact-checking. By putting an image on Google browser we can get detailed information about it. We can also check the exact date, place about the origin of the image.”

– Treatment group respondent

All post-training assessment respondents bar one reported being able to use techniques learned from the training to identify mis- and disinformation. A large majority (83%) of trained respondents in the treatment group reported having already applied knowledge and skills gained through FactShala training to identify mis- and disinformation.

“Yes, I can check on Google fact-check site. We can search the image also. Other than text messages, it can verify video too and find out about false and true news. Didn’t know this before training.”

– Treatment group respondent

During the IDIs, trained respondents were also asked whether they were able to verify any messages they received and what tools they used to do so. The majority cited Google fact-check website and Google browser. Other examples given were the Ministry of Information and the Press Information Bureau to verify any message. Most trained respondents interviewed said that they had learned how to check and verify any image, video link, or text message in fact-check sites and from credible sources.

The research team used stimulus questions in the pre- and post-training assessments to test how respondents applied this learning. Respondents were asked to comment on the trustworthiness of a text message and their rationale.

One stimulus used in the pre- and post-training assessments was an unattributed WhatsApp message implying that most of the practitioners of allopathic system of medicines and above 50 years are suffering from one or other disease while those practicing Ayurveda or Yoga and above 70 years are completely healthy (Figure 22). The text states that practitioners of ayurvedic/traditional medicine have a longer and healthier life than those who practice western medicine).

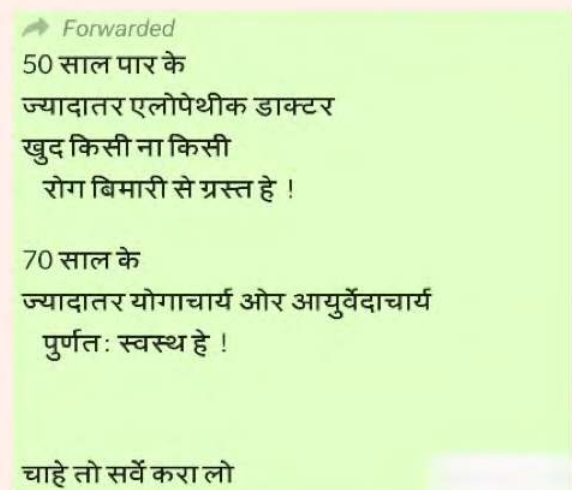


Figure 22.
Pre-training assessment stimulus B (Hindi)

However, there is no scientific evidence or source to back up this claim in the message.

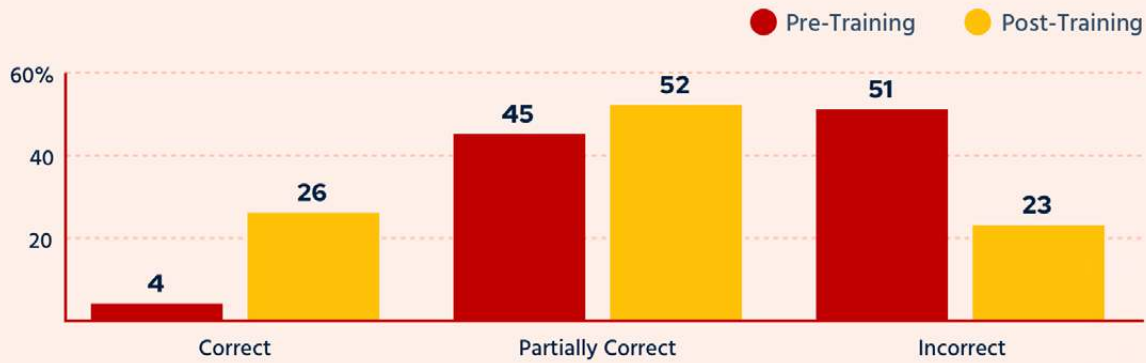


Figure 23. Pre- and post-training assessment responses to a sample WhatsApp message

About one third of respondents from both the pre- and post-training groups stated that they would not trust this message. However, when asked why, more trained respondents answered correctly (Figure 23).

Table 20. Treatment and control group methods for verifying information (%)

	Urban				Rural				Overall	
	Male		Female		Male		Female			
	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG
Respondents, n	102	111	181	150	43	63	80	86	406	410
Searched on the internet from other reliable sources	42	69	37	69	49	59	45	57	41	65
Checked with friends and relatives	29	59	24	47	33	67	46	53	31	55
Checked directly from primary source	23	57	10	29	21	56	24	52	17	45
Checked on social media	28	38	24	35	28	35	34	36	28	36
Did nothing	31	13	46	15	30	6	24	16	36	13

CG = Control Group; TG = Treatment Group

When asked whether they had ever verified misinformation/fake news and, if so, how, 87% of the treatment group respondents said they had (compared to 36% of the control group). Treatment group respondents were more likely than control group members to report having used methods taught in the training, including searching via reliable online sources (65% versus 41%) and checking primary sources (45% versus 17%) (Table 20).

5.4. Ability to Protect Themselves

Learning outcome 4: Training participants are able to protect themselves from harm caused by misinformation and disinformation.

Respondents who had attended FactShala training were more confident than other respondents in their ability to protect themselves from inaccurate or fraudulent information online. They were also more knowledgeable about how to do this, and were significantly more likely to have put this knowledge into practice.

When asked whether they know how to protect themselves from misinformation, disinformation and online fraud, 98% of treatment group respondents and 96% of post-training assessment respondents were confident or very confident they could do this. A significantly lower proportion of control group respondents (69%) expressed the same level of confidence. There was no significant difference in these findings by gender and location.

When asked if they had ever protected themselves from fake information, 79% of respondents from the treatment group said they had done this since attending the training. They reported having taken actions such as not clicking on suspicious links (53%), checking links using critical thinking and observation (45%) and reporting misleading content to service providers (15%) (Table 21). It is notable that no respondents reported having taken any of these actions before attending the training. Although control group respondents had some awareness of online fraud and scams, and some confidence in their ability to safeguard themselves against this, they had little awareness of techniques to verify suspicious content.

Table 21. Treatment and control group action taken to protect themselves from fraud and scams (%)

	Urban				Rural				Overall	
	Male		Female		Male		Female			
	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG
Respondents, n	102	111	181	150	43	63	80	86	406	410
Didn't click on the link	0	53	0	43	0	70	0	59	0	53
Immediately deleted the info	19	51	17	36	42	52	38	56	24	47
Carefully checked the link	0	51	0	33	0	52	0	53	0	45
Verified information/link	18	24	13	17	16	38	15	30	15	25
Reported to service provider (Facebook/Gmail/Twitter)	0	16	0	11	0	25	0	14	0	15
Didn't take any action	69	23	75	28	51	6	56	16	67	21

CG = Control Group; TG = Treatment Group

To verify respondents’ competency, they received two suspicious links (stimuli) and related questions in the pre- and post-training assessments.

The pre-training stimulus was a promotional offer claiming to be from British Airways (Figure 24). However, the URL in the message did not lead back to the British Airways website. The post-training assessment stimulus was emotional fundraising appeal for a child’s eye operation (Figure 25). There was no information about the hospital or the doctor’s name, or details about the girl which could indicate whether the message was genuine.

All respondents were suspicious of these messages, but after attending the training they were much more able to give the correct reasons for this suspicion and state how they would verify the information (Table 21).

Comparing responses to these two stimuli, more than half (54%) of the respondents said they would believe such a post before the training, compared with just 10% afterwards.

After the training, 45% of respondents could correct explain why such posts might be a scam, a significant improvement on the pre-training assessment score (7%) (Table 22).

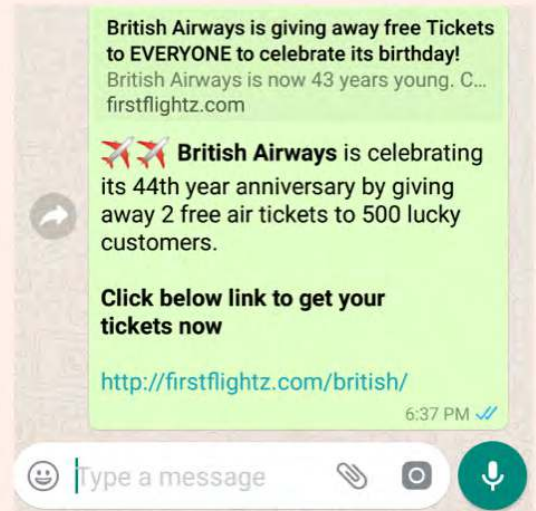


Figure 24. Pre-training assessment stimulus C (English)



Figure 25. Post-training assessment stimulus D (Hindi)

Table 22. Response of the two stimulus questions on British Airways promotional offer (pre-training) and child’s eye operation fundraising appeal (post-training)

	Pre-training	Post-training
Correct	7%	45%
Partly correct	39%	42%
Incorrect	54%	10%

5.5. Curbing the Spread of Mis- and Disinformation

Learning outcome 5: Training participants help to curb the spread of misinformation and disinformation, by reporting or deleting content, alerting others or sharing fact-checked information.

Overall, FactShala-trained respondents were more proactive than other respondents in acting against misleading online content to help reduce its spread.

Trained respondents in the treatment group were more likely than those in the control group to only share information from credible or trusted sources and to use various techniques to verify information before sharing it. Once they identified mis- and disinformation, FactShala-trained respondents were significantly more likely to take action against it. These actions include informing others (57%, versus 25% of control group respondents) and stopping others from sharing it (48% versus 15%), and reporting it to appropriate platforms (24% versus 5%) (Table 23). Significantly, only 22% of treatment group respondents reported taking no action against mis- and disinformation, compared with 59% of the control group.

Table 23. Treatment and control group action taken to fight online misinformation and disinformation (%)

	Urban				Rural				Overall	
	Male		Female		Male		Female		CG	TG
	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG	CG	TG		
Respondents, n	102	111	181	150	43	63	80	86	406	410
Informed others that it is false	24	51	19	53	33	75	39	59	25	57
Stopped others from sharing it	17	46	10	43	16	59	25	50	15	48
Verified information from other source(s)	20	51	12	40	26	56	21	37	17	45
Reported on platform where it appeared	9	23	5	21		30	4	27	5	24
Did not take any action	58	23	69	25	49	5	44	28	59	22

CG = Control Group; TG = Treatment Group

Findings from the IDIs tell the same story. The majority of untrained respondents in both rural and urban areas had not taken any action against mis- and disinformation, although a few had blocked people who shared misleading information.

In contrast, many trained respondents reported having taken steps such as stopping people from

sharing messages without confirming their authenticity, writing a social media post against fake news, and discussing fake news with friends and family.

“My friend shared a message that said ‘don’t take the vaccine during [menstrual] periods’. I called her to check and she said that some doctor told her. I checked in Google and found it was wrong. I wrote a post that [said] ‘don’t believe in it’ and shared it on every platform.”

– Treatment group respondent

“I reported to Twitter about fake news posted on someone’s account. Like me, many others also objected to the same Tweet. Twitter took action and deleted that tweet and blocked the account of the concerned person.”

– Treatment group respondent

“I am aware now and able to verify the information/news that can affect someone. I have told my students in class how to verify the news.”

– Treatment group respondent

Figure 26. Community radio listeners in Maharashtra gather for an in-person FactShala session



Chapter 6:

FactShala Impact Stories

Through in-depth interviews with the trained respondents, some interesting impact stories emerged. This chapter features six stories which describe training participants' ability to use and share their learning to protect themselves and their communities from misinformation and disinformation.

Story 1

Empowering tribals through media literacy

Jaskandih is a village located in Purbi Singhbhum district of Jharkhand, situated five km away from sub-district headquarters Golmuri-cum-Jugsalai and 16 km away from district headquarter Jamshedpur. The region is dominated by a tribal population.

A short voice note popped up on the mobile phones of several residents of the village and quickly went viral across many villages in the area. The message was about a mob lynching that had not actually happened, but its circulation had led to violence and harmed many innocent people.

Laxmi Munda, a 20-year-old tribal girl of the village, immediately swung into action. She sent a message to various WhatsApp groups informing members that the voice message had been verified through fact-checking and was fake. She also called up many people requesting them not to forward it further.

Brought up in a large, low income family, Laxmi loves to study and learn new skills so that she can transform the lives of people in her village. As a second-year B.A. student of LBSM College at Karandih, Laxmi heard about the FactShala program from Antara Bose, a journalist in the area who was organizing training for the people of Jaskindh and adjoining villages.

"I learned in FactShala training program many techniques to identify misinformation and fake news, and how to check such information through authenticated websites. We were taught why we should not forward any message before verifying it," says Laxmi.

As a result of the training program, she became aware of fake news on social media and how it can harm the community. She decided to create awareness about the risks among people in her village and those nearby, and educate them about how to spot misinformation appearing on their mobile phones.

She explains: “People in my village are not very literate. They tend to believe whatever they read or hear from others or on social media. They don’t know how to differentiate between right and wrong information or understand the meaning of rumors and fake news. This led me to take the learnings from FactShala further and teach them how they need to consume messages coming from social media.”

After the training, she organized a session on media literacy for 30-35 people in an adjoining village, Tupudang. It was attended by teenage girls, women of different age groups, and a few men. Laxmi conducted the training in Hindi and the local tribal dialect, using her mobile phone.

She says, “Most of the villagers who participated in the training weren’t aware of the fact that wrong messages can also appear on their WhatsApp.”

As part of the training, Laxmi gave them examples of posts which had recently circulated on their phones. For example, many people were getting WhatsApp messages which appeared to be from Kaun Banega Crorepati, the Indian version of the game show Who Wants To Be A Millionaire? Recipients were told that if they shared these messages with 20 additional people and input their own bank details they could claim attractive prizes.

Laxmi explained to the trainees that they should not click or forward the links embedded in these messages. She shared the techniques she had learned from the FactShala training, warning the group to protect themselves from such scams and advising everyone not to share account details.

She says, “Most of the people in my village and adjoining areas are innocent and not educated, so it will take more time and efforts to make them understand not to believe and share every message they receive.”

She is so impressed and inspired by FactShala that she has also shared her newly acquired knowledge with friends and relatives. Laxmi says that this kind of training should be given regularly and cover other areas of her district. She says she will continue to create awareness among her community regardless of official support from initiatives like FactShala, and will remain an informed and empowered change-maker.



Figure 27.
FactShala for
tribal girls in
Jharkhand



Figure 28.
Laxmi Munda,
a tribal and
FactShala
community
champion from
Jharkhand

Story 2

Fact-checking can help curb social evils and crime

Neha Tiwari, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Mass Communication, Karim City College of Jamshedpur, has always been troubled by kidnappings, communal incidents, mob lynching and the killing of the women as part of witch-hunting in the Jharkhand state

Neha has come to believe that one of the major drivers of these incidents in recent years was the spread of false information on WhatsApp and other social media and messaging platforms, reaching smartphone users who did not have the appropriate media literacy skills to sift through the information they received.

When her department was approached by FactShala to organize training in fact-checking and debunking misinformation delivered by Jamshedpur-based journalist Antara Bose, Neha participated in order to equip herself and pass on the techniques to others.

Karim City College is one of the oldest degree colleges in the state. It imparts education to an economically diverse range of students. Affiliated to Kolhan University, Chaibasa, this is the only college under the university that offers courses in mass communication.

After attending the training program, Neha saw a pressing need to take the initiative further and reach more people. She felt that building media literacy among the people of the region could reduce violence and tension.

Neha says, "As a part of the mass communication community, I always feel concerned about the falling credibility of various media due to prevalent spread of fake news."

She has proposed the creation of a 'fact-checking wing' in the college. Here students with basic knowledge about social media will be trained to fact-check a range of news items, including those focused on education, history, political and cultural issues that frequently appear on social media or websites.

"These selected groups will fact check the type of information which does rounds online and impacts people's lives," Neha explained. They will, "identify viral or suspicious stories circulating on social media platforms, fact check them, and then circulate the results among various WhatsApp groups. In addition, the group will also track correct information on the issue and will share the same on their college network. For tracking factual information, we plan to collaborate with local media houses and will

Figure 29.
Karim City
College in
Jamshedpur,
Jharkhand



try to get a small column daily where they can post fact-checked information. The proposed wing is scheduled to be launched in September 2021 when the college will reopen.”

“We are planning to begin first at the college level then will expand it to the university level, and if it succeeds will extend it to the general public. By reaching out to 3,000 students at the college level, they will also be reaching out to their families and contacts, thereby reaching out to a bigger set of people. At the university level, this number will multiply further.”

Neha is passionate about the idea and confident of getting permission. She intends to engage various organisations who may be willing to have fact-checked information disseminated through their WhatsApp groups. Neha says that private companies like the Tata group also may also be approached to reach out to a large section of society.

While explaining the motivation behind her commitment to stop spreading the mis- and disinformation, she says, “News should be something real and trustworthy, so the combination of these two terms — ‘mis and disinformation’ — are very questionable.” In addition, she says that the faculty and students all feel bad when people look down upon media coverage and hold them accountable for it. They feel a responsibility to build trust in credible media.

Neha invites other experts to join her as mentors. She hopes that FactShala can give advanced training to the students who will staff the wing.



Figure 30.
Neha Tiwari,
Assistant pro-
fessor at Karim
City College

Story 3

From fake news believer to misinformation buster

Uzma Alam, a social worker based in Kolkata, used to share every message that she received on her WhatsApp. As someone working in an organization dedicated to social good, she believed it was her duty to spread information that appeared convincing or beneficial to as many people as possible. It never occurred to her that such information could be incorrect or fake.

The 40-year-old works as the convener of Calcutta Muslim Orphanage and also runs a small NGO. The orphanage shelters around 400 boys and girls between five and 17 years old. Uzma felt that the use of mobile phones amongst older children in the shelter home was affecting their personal and social lives because of the deluge of misinformation and fake news.

In 2020, Uzma participated in a program of FactShala organised for NGOs. It was delivered by Ghazala Yasmin, Assistant Professor at the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Aliah University, Kolkata.

Uzma says the training made her aware how unverified information does not benefit anyone but can also be harmful to many people if it is widely shared. She also learned how to verify information and check the authenticity of URLs shared in forwarded messages.

She was so inspired by the tools and techniques available that she decided to train children in the orphanage.

Uzma now admits that she used to share many posts related to religion, mob lynching and other topics which later turned out to be false. She recalls many instances when she had fallen for fake news and inaccurate information. Several times, she was alerted that the news she shared was fake, and then she should take it off her timeline.

Her trainer Ghazala credits Uzma: “She has become a crusader for stopping others in spreading the fake news.”

The training program has impacted on her behavior. She feels more confident in navigating the information ecosystem. Now if she finds someone posting false information, she alerts the person immediately.

She no longer shares or forwards any message which is not verified or where the source is unknown. If she receives a message or news which does not have an authentic URL in it, she asks the sender for it.

Uzma feels that the FactShala training has made her more responsible in handling information online and has equipped her to role model critical engagement within her social group.

Story 4

A gatekeeper of misinformation

Karishma Choudhary a 23-year-old postgraduate Geology student was an intern in Radio Kamalvaani 90.4 FM, a community radio station in Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan.

During her internship, a radio program on media literacy on misinformation and fake news was aired for their local audiences, aiming to empower them with approaches and skills to consume information critically, especially online.

Karishma was responsible for producing the program. This gave her the opportunity to research the many harmful effects of misinformation as well as available fact-checking techniques. She was



Figure 31.
Calcutta Muslim Orphanage, West Bengal hosts FactShala



Figure 32.
Uzma Alam, Convener of the orphanage

able to tap the expertise of Dr. Sangita Choudhary, who is both Program Lead at the DataLEADS Foundation and Station Head of Radio Kamalvani.

Karishma is now a local advocate for the importance of media and information literacy, and she seeks to limit the spread of mis- and disinformation in her own networks, both online and offline.

She has become very cautious about information she receives. She is wary of URLs and always checks the domain name carefully before clicking on any links.

She says that she tends not to trust information she comes across unless she is able to verify it. In relation to social media, she says, “Whenever any of my friends puts up a story or post that turns out to be fake, I immediately inform them and ask them to delete it.”



Figure 33.
Karishma
Chaudhary,
a radio
Kamalvaani
listener and
FactShala
trainee

Recently, one of her friends posted a story about Delhi airport being sealed due to the spread of the second variant of COVID-19. Karishma took a screenshot of the post and image and checked it on Google reverse image tool. She found that the image was old and was not Delhi airport. She immediately informed her friend and asked her to delete the post and replace it with another informing people that the previously shared post was fake. Karishma also told her friend to avoid sharing such news without first verifying it as it could create unnecessary panic.

Karishma also observes that people aren't easily convinced that information is fake and sometimes ignore others who call it out. But screenshots of fact-checked proof can be persuasive.

Another challenge she shares is that people can be more susceptible to scams and misinformation because of low levels of literacy and lack of education. She makes it a point to educate everyone in her network on the issue, and aims to play a role in curbing the spread of false news and its negative impacts.

She says, “In the rural areas, and especially the women there, are mostly illiterate and often become a cause in aiding the spread of misinformation via gossip, etc. Their only source of information is a word of mouth and informal discussions which take place with other women of the village. They are not much aware of the authenticity of the information and have no means of verification of the information they hear, so information keeps on spreading due to their conversations. Unknowingly they become a key point of dissemination of false information if it reaches them.”

However, Karishma also realizes that both educated and uneducated people forward information without thinking about its authenticity.

Karishma has become the fact-checking champion for all her friends and relatives. She tells others to take action to stop the spread of misinformation by identifying it and asking people to stop sharing it.

Story 5

Creating Awareness through WhatsApp groups

In more than six districts of North Bengal, WhatsApp groups have been formed comprising of students, teachers, workers, house makers, men, and women who sift through and debunk the fake news and misinformation spreading in their networks to protect the public from its harmful effects.

Tuhin Mandal, a former school teacher and activist in West Bengal, had attended a FactShala training in Bilaspur conducted by journalist Soma Basu. Beforehand, Tuhin would share messages and posts received on social media platforms without thinking about their impacts.

FactShala marked a turning point in Tuhin's life. It made him understand the urgency of the situation and he formed WhatsApp groups in North Bilaspur, Cooch Bihar, Jalpaiguri, and Malda to create awareness among different communities about handling information disseminated through social media and messaging platforms. He wanted to have a wider impact.

He started posting messages about information verification techniques.. He wanted to help spread awareness at the same speed that mis- and disinformation travel.

He says, "If you don't know what's right and what's wrong, which one is real news and which are fake news, then it's highly risky to spread it further in the form of rumors all over. I got to know this and learned that how to check the real news and fake news, from the FactShala training. I found that it's a valuable thing that everyone should know about and therefore I started working on it and got motivated to create awareness among other people about misinformation."

Tuhin is also a social worker and runs a magazine focused on environmental issues in Uttar Patra in Bilaspur district North Bengal. He plans to write about and publicize FactShala.

Whenever Tuhin has the opportunity to engage with people online or face to face, he aims to share what he has learned.

He feels that young children should be taught about these issues so that they can build resilience for the future.

Figure 34. Feedback about FactShala shared by a trainee



Figure 35. Tuhin Mandal, a misinformation warrior from West Bengal

Story 6

National Youth Volunteer Advocates Fact-checking

Prashant Kumar is a 24-year-old resident of Baghpat, Uttar Pradesh who participated in FactShala in 2020 and has helped spread the tools and techniques he learned about to at least 500 other people. He has achieved this in collaboration with FactShala trainer Gaurav Sharma, a Meerut-based fact-checker, researcher, and journalist.

Prashant first attended face-to-face training in Dahula Gaon, Baghpat, Uttar Pradesh. There he learned about fact-checking websites and how the authenticity of a piece of information can be checked with a simple search on Google.

Prashant supported Sharma to conduct further face-to-face training in Baghpat, with diverse groups comprising friends, relatives, networks of volunteers, school teachers, students, older people and community members. He helped to identify the trainees and encourage them to participate.

Prashant is the National Youth Volunteer of Nehru Yuva Kendra (NYK) in Baghpat. This Kendra has many volunteers between the age of 15-29 years. As part of his efforts to curb the spread of misinformation, he works with 8 or 9 other NYK members to fact check unverified news or information in circulation on social media and messaging apps. They use the NYK WhatsApp group to raise awareness and distribute corrections amongst the 150 members.



Figure 36.
Community
champion
Prashant Kumar
from Uttar
Pradesh

Chapter 7:

Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Conclusion

The findings set out above suggest that FactShala is an effective mechanism for increasing media and information literacy and building resilience to mis- and disinformation within communities experiencing exponential growth in internet access. This is encouraging, not least because the program is short, is easily adapted for multiple languages and contexts, and can be delivered through a flexible training-of-trainers model which lends itself well to replicability and scalability across large geographies with diverse populations.

Of particular note are the examples of trainees who have sought to share their new knowledge with a wider group of people or have taken action to reduce the spread of mis- and disinformation, which means that the program will deliver multiplier effects and reach hundreds of indirect beneficiaries through champions within their own communities. But this also reflects the fact that people are not passive bystanders to the pollution of their information ecosystems, but active agents who play a central role in reducing both the prevalence of mis- and disinformation and the severity of its impacts. This matters because harmful actors are more limited in their ability to spread disinformation without the consent and participation of the population at large.

Information literacy and the effectiveness of information literacy programs are difficult to measure. Information environments are complex, noisy and fast-moving, and social media platforms lend themselves to participation in automatic mode because people tend to use them as part

Figure 37.
FactShala for
villagers from
Jammu and
Kashmir



of entertainment and leisure. People may not be fully conscious of the steps they currently take to process information delivered to them on digital platforms and, therefore, whether they are processing information differently as a result of training.

This research was intended as a contribution to efforts to develop appropriate, practical and robust measurement methods and help move the field forward through experiential learning. The limitations of the study are well-rehearsed within the body of the report, but of particular note is that the study was conducted with cohorts who were disproportionately young and well educated in comparison with the wider population of FactShala trainees — and certainly in relation to the wider Indian population. It will be important to repeat this research with sample populations with different demographic characteristics, particularly as internet access becomes more widespread across socio-economic groups and in light of data which suggests that less educated, older groups are most at risk. In addition, even with a treatment group who had taken the training some months ago, the study offered a snapshot that can only indicate that knowledge and practice were present at that moment, not that they will endure months or years into the future. Regular follow up with past trainees is highly desirable to sustain skills and knowledge. Thirdly, FactShala could deepen its efforts to observe the application of knowledge obtained during training, rather than relying on self-report. The decision not to include multiple choice answers was one means of ensuring that knowledge could be volunteered by study respondents and did not emerge through prompting, but we recognize that more rigorous testing is preferable.

In addition, whilst increased confidence in one's own ability to detect mis- and disinformation is an important dimension of self-efficacy and therefore action, the most robust evidence will be where people are witnessed deploying their new skills and expertise on a consistent basis. The stimulus questions were an attempt to assess this through different scenarios which would present themselves in the course of daily life, but more could certainly be done here and we welcome dialogue with other practitioners around common evaluation frameworks and standards.

Nonetheless, there is now a template that can be deployed alongside future FactShala training

Figure 38.
Young women from Chattisgarh attend FactShala online



interventions to enable Internews and DATALeads to continue learning and finessing this model.

It is also important to recognize that disinformation strategies and the modes of dissemination of misinformation continually evolve and morph and that the skills and knowledge needed to navigate a given information ecosystem today may date in time. Therefore, a mechanism to continually update the FactShala curriculum and share new elements with former as well as new trainees is needed. Trainers and former trainees can be part of this effort, sharing their experiences of emerging trends around mis- and disinformation and how these are impacting in their communities, but Internews can also draw from its global networks to identify phenomena present outside India that may ultimately manifest there — and vice versa.

Finally, we should acknowledge the challenge posed by COVID-19 in terms of both the implementation and the evaluation of FactShala. It is likely that both these sets of activities are best delivered through a blended approach combining online and face-to-face interactions, which haven't been possible. Fewer restrictions on movement will enable the team to reach rural populations with limited connectivity in advance of that improving in the future. And it is advisable that FactShala adapt and test the core curriculum deemed effective by this study before rolling it out to these populations to ensure it meets them where they are. In this way, we can imagine continuing to grow this national network of media and information literacy champions equipped with an adaptable, flexible and proven curriculum until there is national coverage. Only bold ambition such as this is commensurate with the scale of the task at hand.

7.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to the FactShala team for incorporation into the next iteration of the program:

Incentivize testimony from trained participants: Trained participants should be encouraged to share the action they have taken to curb or restrict the spread of misinformation. This will guide as well as motivate the users of social media to alert fellow citizens about misinformation and fake news.

Prioritise in-person training: To have more impact, particularly in rural areas, face-to-face training is preferred. It overcomes connectivity challenges and is more effective in sustaining attention and creating opportunities for social learning.

Facilitate follow-up: To sustain the change among participants the further training or follow-up training sessions are required. These should be held regularly to generate sustainable practice.

Expand the focus to news media literacy: It is recommended that future iterations of FactShala should have an increased focus on news media literacy — creating awareness of the role of news media organizations in driving the spread of mis- and disinformation.

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Glossary

Assessment The systematic basis for making inferences about learning and development

Control group The standard against which comparisons are made in an experiment

Cohort study A type of longitudinal study that follows research participants over time (often many years)

CATI Computer Assisted Telephonic Interviews

Disinformation False information that is intended to mislead

Dissemination The wide spread of information, knowledge or opinions

Empirical Study A research study using empirical evidence. It is also a way of gaining knowledge using direct and indirect observation or experience.

Gatekeeper The process or person through which information is filtered for dissemination

Hybrid A mixture of digital and in-person activities

IDIs In-depth interviews

KII Key informant interviews

LGBT Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender

Media literacy This encompasses the practices that allow people to access, critically evaluate, and create or manipulate media

Misinformation False information that is not specifically designed to mislead people

PIB Press Information Bureau

Quasi-experimental study An empirical interventional study used to estimate the causal impact of an intervention on the target population without random assignment

Scam A fraudulent scheme generally involving money and some sort of business transaction.

Snowball sampling A process in which research participants recruit other participants. This approach is used where potential participants are hard to find

Stereotyping Ascribing the collective characteristics associated with a particular group to every member of that group, discounting individual characteristics.

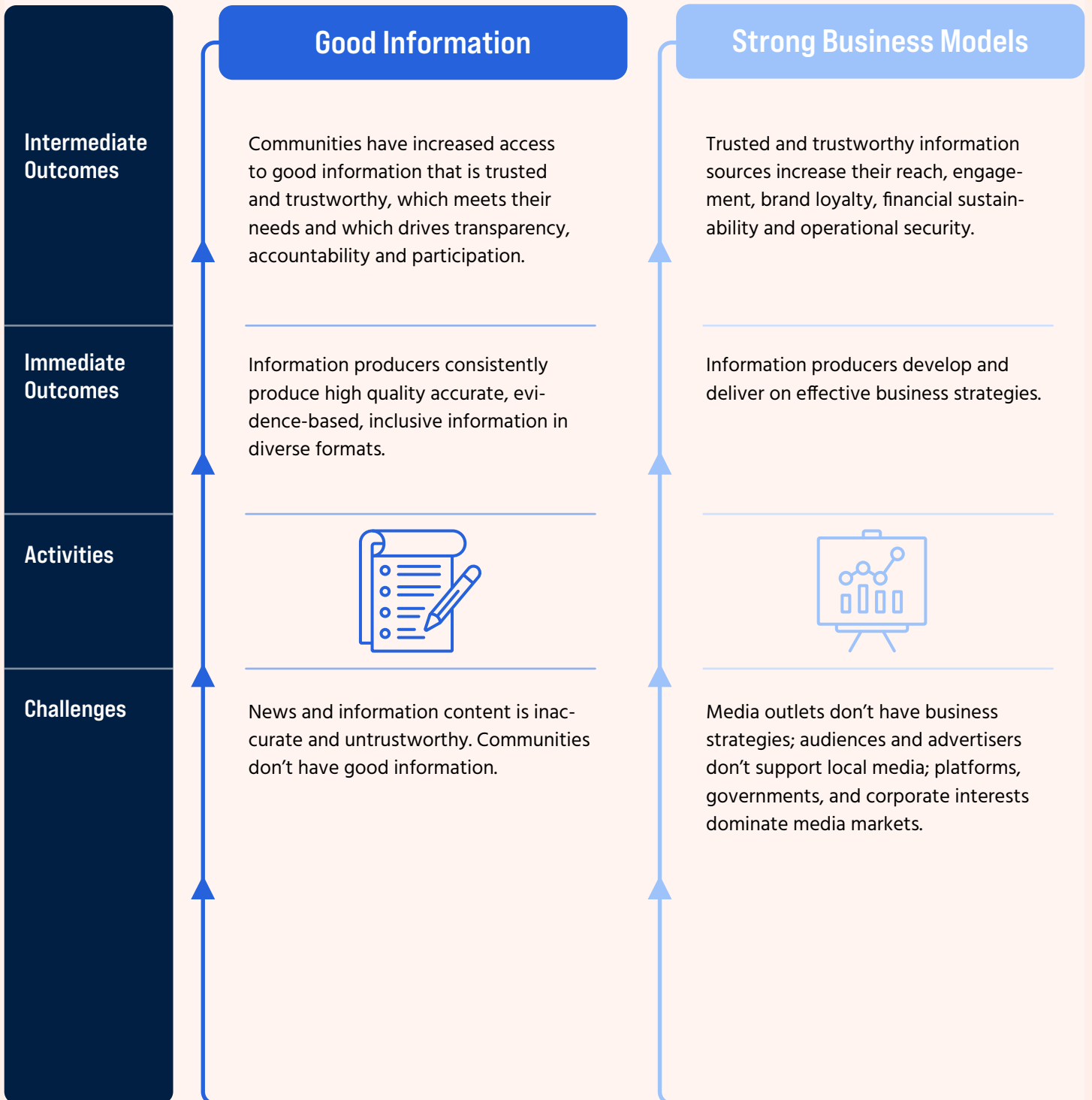
Think-tank An organization that gathers interdisciplinary scholars to research particular policies, issues or ideas

Endnotes

- 1 KPMG report — A Year off Script: Time for Resilience, 2020
- 2 Mclaughlin, 2021.
- 3 SC asks Centre to curb fake news, 2020
- 4 Guess, 2020
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Islam et al., 2020
- 7 Keelery, 2020
- 8 Reuters Institute, 2019
- 9 Al-Zaman, 2021
- 10 [Al-Zaman, 2021](#); [Kanozia et al., 2021](#)
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- 21 Goswami et.al, 2020

INTERNEWS THEORY OF CHANGE

Impact: Healthy information environments enable everyone to make better-informed decisions, bridge divides, participate more fully in their communities, and hold power to account.



Problem Statement: In an unhealthy information environment, people are unable to make informed choices, false and hateful information divides communities, citizen participation in civic life declines and the structures for holding power to account are weakened.

INTERNEWS THEORY OF CHANGE



- Assumptions:**
- Internews has the financial, technical and human resources to achieve significant reach and operate in every setting where this work is needed.
 - Media and information providers share Internews' commitment to high quality, accurate, evidence-based, inclusive information and are open to collaboration.
 - The existence of shared global norms continue to value freedom of expression and independent media.
 - High quality information acts as a driver of positive change.

Annexes

Impact Assessment Study Tools (Treatment group)

Q. No.	Demographic Profile Questions	Responses	Code
a)	Name		
b)	Contact Number		
c)	State		
d)	Location	1 = Urban 2 = Rural	
e)	Sex	1 = Male 2 = Female Others specify	
f)	Age		
g)	Highest level of Education attained	1 = Below 10th 2 = HSCSSC 3 = Some college but not graduate 4 = Graduate Post graduate general 5 = Graduate post graduate professional	
h)	Occupation	1 = Student 2 = Teachers 3 = NgosCSOs workers 4 = Self Employed Others specify	
Media Habits			
Q1	How many hours per day on average do you usually spend time online? Write down the number of hours	Number of hours per day =	
Q2	Other than TV or newspaper, what are your major sources of Information, especially on social media and the internet? (Multiple Response)	1 = WhatsApp 2 = Facebook 3 = You Tube 4 = Twitter 5 = Instagram 6 = News Appswebsites Other Specify	

Q. No.	Demographic Profile Questions	Responses	Code
Q3	Which social media or internet platforms do you use more? Rank them in order of usage from maximum to minimum: WhatsApp Facebook You Tube Twitter Instagram News Appswebsites (1=maximum, 6=minimum)	WhatsApp= Facebook= You Tube= Twitter= Instagram= News Appswebsites= Other-specify	
QN. 4	Out of those platforms you have mentioned, which ones do you trust more? Rank them in order of trust from "most trusted" to least trusted: WhatsApp= Facebook= You Tube= Twitter= Instagram= News Appswebsites= Other- specify (1=Most trusted, 6=Least trusted)	WhatsApp= Facebook= You Tube= Twitter= Instagram= News Appswebsites= Other- specify	
Q5	Out of these platforms which are the top 3 sources do you get most misinformation or fake news? (starting with 1 = Highest)	1=WhatsApp 2=Facebook 3=You Tube 4=Instagram 5=Twitter 6=News Appswebsites	
Knowledge Status after the Training Program			
Q6	What do you MOSTLY do when you get some new information from social media or chat apps like WhatsApp or Facebook, Twitter, or on YouTube? (Multiple Response)	1=Trust it as it is 2= Check if it is true or false 3= Immediately share/forward it to those who may be impacted to help them and inform them early 4= Forward as received 5= I do fact-check 6 = I don't do anything Others specify	

Q. No.	Demographic Profile Questions	Responses	Code
Q7	<p>If you read some information/ message that you think could be useful for your friends or family, what do you do?</p> <p>(Multiple Response)</p>	<p>1 = Forward it to inform them immediately</p> <p>2 = I use skills /techniques I learned in training to verify and then only share</p> <p>3 = Verify from alternate sources only then I share</p> <p>4 = Share only if it has come from credible news sources</p> <p>5= Share only if it has come from a friend/ person I trust</p> <p>6 = I don't do anything</p> <p>Other specify</p>	
Q8	<p>According to you, where you can find trusted COVID or health-related sources of information?</p> <p>WhatsApp</p> <p>Facebook</p> <p>WHO website</p> <p>Doctor and Nurse</p> <p>Ministry of Health and Family Welfare website</p> <p>Friends & Community</p> <p>(Multiple Response)</p>	<p>1=WhatsApp</p> <p>2=Facebook</p> <p>3= WHO website</p> <p>4=Doctors and Nurses</p> <p>5=Ministry of Health and Family Welfare</p> <p>6=Friends & Community</p> <p>7 = I don't know</p> <p>Other specify</p>	
Q 09	<p>Do you know the difference between misinformation and disinformation?</p>	<p>1=Yes</p> <p>2=No</p> <p>Other specify</p>	
Q 10	<p>What is misinformation?</p>	<p>Information that is false, but not intentional and person disseminating believes it is true</p> <p>All kind of false information and fake news is misinformation</p> <p>Don't know</p> <p>Not Sure</p>	
Q11	<p>What is disinformation?</p>	<p>It is a deliberate, intentional lie and person disseminating knows it's false.</p> <p>Any kind of misinformation/fake news spotted on the social media</p> <p>Don't know</p> <p>Not Sure</p>	

Q. No.	Demographic Profile Questions	Responses	Code
Q12	What do you do when you spot misinformation/fake news? (Multiple Response)	1=Delete 2= Forward to others 3= Don't know 4= Ignore 5= Do fact Check 6 = Inform others that it is misinformation or fake news 7 = Other-specify	
Q13	When you get news in text, how do you verify whether it is authentic or fake? (Multiple Response)	1=search on Internet 2=confirm from the source 3=Do Keyword search in fact check website 4=Check on social media 5=Check with friends and family 6= I don't know	
Q14	When you get any video/audio information, how do you verify whether it is authentic or fake? (Multiple Response)	1= carefully check if it has come from a credible source 2= LOOK for the same news on other mediums (YouTubeonlinenewspaper) 3= check with my family/close friends 4=Check on fact check websites 5= carefully see the extension url link 6 = I don't know Other specify	
Q15	Do you know of any website, where one can check whether the information/news is authentic or fake? If YES, the name of the website	1 = Yes, name of website..... 2 = No	
Q16	What kind of knowledge/information you gained through the FactShala training program? (Multiple Response)	1 = How to identify fake/false news 2 = About websites available to check authentic news items/articles/videos 3 = Videos can be morphed all videos are not real/genuine 4 = Audio clips are not always real 5 = How to identify source of the audio/video shared 6 = How to cross-check the reality of news/information shared Other specify	

Q. No.	Demographic Profile Questions	Responses	Code
Q17	With the knowledge you gained through the FactShala training, do you feel you can protect yourself from misinformation/disinformation fraudscam?	1= Yes 2= No 3= Not sure	
Q 18	Please rate your confidence in finding trustworthy sources of information, on a scale of 1-5? 1=Not at all confident, 5=Extremely confident	1= Not at all confident 2 = Slightly confident 3 = Somewhat confident 4 = Very confident 5 = Extremely confident	
Behaviour Change Practice after the Training program			
Q 19	Have you used the techniques learned from FactShala training to identify misinformation?	1 = Yes 2 = No Other	
Q 20	Have you ever verified misinformation/fake news post-training program? If yes, What methods did you use? (Multiple Response)	1 = Yes, searched on the internet from other reliable sources 2 =Yes, checked directly from the primary source 3 = Yes, checked with friends and relatives 4 = Yes, checked on social media 5 = No Other specify	
Q 21	Do you take action to fight against misinformation and disinformation If yes, what action did you take? (Multiple Response)	1=Yes, Verified the information from other sources 2=Yes, Informed others that it is false 3=Yes, Stopped others from sharing it 4=Yes, Reported on platform like FB/Twitter 5=Yes, If I had shared false info, I would inform them 6=NO Other specify	
Q 22	Have you ever protected yourself from becoming a victim of fraud and scam due to fake information post-training program? If yes, what did you do? (Multiple Response)	1= Yes, Carefully check the link 2=Yes, I didn't click on the link 3= Yes, I immediately deleted the info 4= Yes, I tried to verify information link 5= Yes, I reported to service provider (FB Mail Twitter) 6= No Other specify	

Q. No.	Demographic Profile Questions	Responses	Code
Q23	Do you share information with others even if you are not sure whether it's true or false?	1 = Yes, before training only 2 = Yes, after training only 3= Yes, both before and after training 4= No, never	
Q24	Do you discuss misinformation and disinformation with others?	1 = Yes, before training only 2 = Yes, after training only 3= Yes, both before and after training 4= No, never	
Q25	Have you noticed any change improvement in your life skills due to attending the FactShala training? If yes, what change did you notice? (Multiple Response)	1=Yes, Better technical know-how awareness about misinformation and disinformation 2= Yes, Better decision making in handling misinformation and disinformation 3= Yes, Avoid blindly accepting information received as true 4= Yes, Can, identify misinformation and fake news 5=Yes, more motivated to identify misinformation and fake new 6 = No Other – Specify	
Best Practices			
Q 26	Did you share what you have learned in the training program with other people such as friends, colleagues, relatives, and others? If so, with how many people?	1=Yes, with ____ many people 2=No Other specify	
Q 27	Can you give any example of your biggest achievement or any specific action in identifying misinformation fake news post the training program? Please specify.	1=Yes, specify 2=No	
About FactShala Training Program			
Q 28	From where did you come to know about FACTSHALA training for the first time? (Multiple Response)	1= E-mail 2= Family/friends 3= College Institution 4= Social media (Facebook/Twitter/Instagram) 5= Online/website Other specify	
Q 29	What was your mode of training under FactShala project?	1= Online 2= Face-to-face/Offline 3= Hybrid	

Q. No.	Demographic Profile Questions	Responses	Code
Q30	<p>What topic(s) issues you may recall were shared during the training sessions under FactShala?</p> <p>(Multiple Response)</p>	<p>1=Understanding Information Ecosystem 2= Facts vs Opinion 3= Critical Thinking 4= Understanding Bias 5= Photo + video Verification 6= others</p>	
Q 31	<p>How useful did you find the FactShala training program? Rate on a scale of 1-5, where 5 is Extremely useful and 1 is Not useful at all?</p>	<p>1=Not useful at all 2=Slightly useful 3=Somewhat useful 4=Very useful 5=Extremely useful</p>	
Q 32	<p>Have you ever attended any similar media literacy program other than the one provided by FactShala?</p>	<p>1= Yes, before FactShala only 2=Yes, after FactShala only 3=Yes, both before and after FactShala 4 = No</p>	
Q 33	<p>One word about the training program</p>		

**FactShala Impact Assessment Study
Pre-Post Assessment/Control Group Survey Tool**

Introduction: Hello, I am _____ from CMS, a social and media research organization. We are conducting a research study on behalf of Internews to capture your opinion and experience with regard to misinformation and fake news. Your participation in the telephonic interview is voluntary but will be very valuable for designing the training programmes on misinformation/ fake news, in future. The interview will take around 15-20 minutes. We will ensure confidentiality of your responses and your responses will not be associated with your personal identifiers. While reporting the findings, nowhere your name or contact details will be mentioned.

In case you have any query with regard to this survey, you may contact Mr. Narendra Bhatt at 9899979162. Do you agree to participate in the study: Yes....1; No.....2(Say Thank you and disconnect the call).

May I begin the interview?

INSTRUCTION: DON'T READ THE PRE-CODED RESPONSES UNLESS INSTRUCTED TO DO SO

Q.No	Demographic Profile/Questions	Responses	Code
a)	Name		
b)	Contact Number		
c)	State		
d)	Location	1= Urban 2= Rural	
e)	Sex	1= Male 2= Female Other	
f)	Age		
g)	Highest level of Education attained	1 = Below 10th 2 = HSC/SSC 3 = Some college but not graduate 4 = Graduate/ Post graduate general 5 = Graduate/ post graduate professional	
h)	Occupation	1=Student 2=Teachers 3=Ngos/CSOs workers 4=Self Employed Others specify	

Q.No	Demographic Profile/Questions	Responses	Code
Media Habits			
Q1	How many hours per day on average do you usually spend time online? Write down number of hours	Number of hours per day =	
Q2	Other than TV or newspaper, what are your major sources of Information, especially on social media and the internet? (Multiple Response)	1= WhatsApp 2= Facebook 3= You Tube 4= Twitter 5= Instagram 6= News Apps/websites Other Specify	
Q3	Which social media or internet platforms do you use more? Rank them in order of usage from maximum to minimum: WhatsApp Facebook You Tube Twitter Instagram News Apps/websites (1=maximum, 6=minimum)	WhatsApp Facebook You Tube Twitter Instagram News Apps/websites Other-specify	
Q4	Out of those platforms you have mentioned, which ones do you trust more? Rank them in order of trust from "most trusted to least trusted: WhatsApp Facebook You Tube Twitter Instagram News Apps/websites (1=Most trusted, 6=Least trusted)	WhatsApp Facebook You Tube Twitter Instagram News Apps/websites Other- specify	
Q5	Out of the platforms you just mentioned, which are the top 3 sources do you get most misinformation or fake news? (Starting with 1 = Highest)	1=WhatsApp 2=Facebook 3=You Tube 4=Instagram 5=Twitter 7=News Apps/websites	

Q.No	Demographic Profile/Questions	Responses	Code
Knowledge-Practice Status before the Training Program			
Q6	<p>What do you MOSTLY do when you get some news information from social media or chat apps like WhatsApp or Facebook, Twitter or on YouTube?</p> <p>(Multiple Response)</p>	<p>1=Trust it as it is</p> <p>2= Check if it is true or false</p> <p>3= Immediately share/forward it to those/ who may be impacted to help them and inform them early</p> <p>4= Forward as received</p> <p>5= I do fact checking</p> <p>6 = I don't do anything</p> <p>Others specify</p>	
Q7	<p>If you read some information / message that you think could be useful for your friends or family, what do you do?</p> <p>(Multiple Response)</p>	<p>1= Forward it to inform them immediately</p> <p>2= Verify from alternate sources only then I share</p> <p>3= Share only if it has come from credible news sources</p> <p>4= Share only if it has come from a friend/ person I trust</p> <p>5= I don't do anything</p> <p>Other specify</p>	
Q8	<p>According to you, where can you find trusted COVID or health related sources of information?</p> <p>WhatsApp</p> <p>Facebook</p> <p>WHO website</p> <p>Doctor and Nurse</p> <p>Ministry of Health and Family Welfare website</p> <p>Friends & Community</p> <p>(Multiple Response)</p>	<p>1=WhatsApp</p> <p>2=Facebook</p> <p>3= WHO website</p> <p>4=Doctors and Nurses</p> <p>5=Ministry of Health and Family Welfare</p> <p>6=Friends & Community</p> <p>7 = I don't know</p> <p>Other specify</p>	
Q9	<p>On a scale of 1 to 5, please rate your trust on all the information you get on Social media?</p> <p>1=Not at all trusted, 5=Extremely trusted</p>	<p>1= Not at all trusted</p> <p>2 = Slightly trusted</p> <p>3 = Somewhat trusted</p> <p>4 = Very trusted</p> <p>5 = Extremely trusted</p>	
Q10	<p>What is misinformation?</p>	<p>1=Information that is false, but not intentional and deliberate and person disseminating believes it is true</p> <p>2=All kind of false information and fake news is misinformation</p> <p>3=Don't know</p> <p>4=Not Sure</p> <p>Other specify</p>	

Q.No	Demographic Profile/Questions	Responses	Code
Q11	What is disinformation?	1= It is a deliberate, intentional lie and person disseminating knows it's false 2= Any kind of misinformation/fake news spotted on the social media 3= Don't know 4= Not Sure/ Other specify	
Q12	What do you do when you spot misinformation/fake news? (Multiple Response)	1=Delete 2= Forward to others 3= Don't know 4= Ignore 5= Do fact Check 6 = Inform others that it is misinformation or fake news 7 = Other-specify	
Q13	When you get news in text, how do you verify whether it is authentic or fake? (Multiple Response)	1=Check on social media 2=Check with friends and family 3=search on Internet 4=confirm from the source 5=I just read it 6= I don't do anything	
Q14	When you get any video/audio information, how do you verify whether it is authentic or fake? (Multiple Response)	1= carefully check if it has come from a credible source 2= I don't do anything 3= check with my family/close friends 4=Check on fact check websites 5= carefully see the extension /url / link //url Other specify	
Q15	Do you know of any website, where one can check whether the information/news is authentic or fake? If YES, name of the website	1= Yes, name of website, 2= No,	
Q16	Do you feel you can protect yourself from misinformation/ fraud/scam?	1= yes 2= no 3= not sure Other specify	
Q17	How much confidence do you have in yourself that you can find trustworthy sources of information? 1=Not confident at all, 5=Extremely confident	1= Not at all confident 2 = Slightly confident 3 = Somewhat confident 4 = Very confident 5 = Extremely confident	

Q.No	Demographic Profile/Questions	Responses	Code
Behaviour/Practice before the training program			
Q18	Are you able to identify misinformation and disinformation?	1= Yes 2= No Other Specify	
Q19	Have you ever verified misinformation/fake news? If yes, What method did you use? (Multiple Response)	1=Yes, searched on the internet from other reliable sources 2=Yes, checked directly from the primary source 3=Yes, checked with friends and relatives 4=Yes, checked on social media 5=No Other specify	
Q20	Do you take action to fight against misinformation and disinformation online? If yes, what do you do? (Multiple Response)	1=No 2=Yes, Verified the information from other sources 3=Yes, Informed others that it is false 4=Yes, Stopped others from sharing it 5=Yes, Reported on platform like FB/Twitter 6=Yes, If I had shared false info, I would inform them Other specify	
Q21	Any example/ incident where you have protected yourself from becoming a victim of fraud and scam due to fake information. If yes, what did you do? (Multiple Response)	1= No 2= Yes, I immediately deleted the info 3= Yes, I tried to verify information/ link Other specify	
Q22	Do you share information with others even if you are not sure whether it's true or false?	1= Yes 2= No Other Specify	
Q23	Do you discuss misinformation and disinformation with others?	1= Yes 2= No Other Specify	

Q.No	Demographic Profile/Questions	Responses	Code
About FactShala Training Program (only for Post –Assessment)			
Q24	From where did you come to know about FACTSHALA Training for the first time.?	1= E-mail 2= Family/friends 3=College/ Institution 4=Social media (Facebook/Twitter/ Instagram) 5= Online/website Other specify	
Q25	Why is it important for you to attend such a training session? (Multiple Response)	1=Important for my profession/occupation 2= Not to get misled by wrong information 3= To avoid sharing wrong/fake information with my family and friends 4= To avoid getting into any legal problem/ trouble Other (specify)	
Q26	What will be your preferred mode of training?	1=Online 2= Face-to-face/Offline 3= Hybrid	
Q27	What are your expectations from the training program/ What do you want to learn from the training program? (Multiple Response)	1= How to protect myself from misinformation 2= How to debunk any kind of misinformation 3=Want to know the right and factual information Other specify	
Q28	Have you ever attended other media literacy training before?	1= Yes 2= No	
Q29	Sending you a link of Stimulus questions in a Google form. Kindly answer them immediately after the interview. For any further query please contact us. Link:	1=Received 2=Not received	

Thank you for your time and sharing your opinion!

Name of Interviewer:

Date of Interview:

Factshala Impact Assessment Study
Pre- Trainees IDIs

Introduction: Hello, I am _____ from CMS, a social and media research organization. We are conducting a research study on behalf of Internews to capture the experience of the participants who will attend the training program to identify misinformation/fake news. Your participation in the interview is voluntary but will be valuable for designing the training program in the future. The interview will take around 30 minutes. We will ensure the confidentiality of your responses and your responses will not be associated with your identifiers. While reporting the findings, nowhere your name or contact details will be mentioned.

In case you have any queries regarding this survey, you may contact Mr. Narendra Bhatt at 9899979162. Do you agree to participate in the study: Yes....1; No.....2(You can say Thank you and disconnect the call).

May I begin the interview?

INSTRUCTION: DON'T READ THE PRE-CODED RESPONSES UNLESS INSTRUCTED TO DO SO

S.No.	Demographic Profile/Questions	Responses	Code
a)	Name		
b)	Contact Number		
c)	State		
d)	Location	1=Urban 2=Rural	
e)	Sex		
f)	Age		
g)	Education	Below 10th HSC/SSC Some college but not graduate Graduate/ Post graduate general Graduate/ post graduate professional	
h)	Occupation	Student Teachers Ngos/CSOs workers Self Employed Other	
Media Habits			
1.	How many hours of the day do you spend online?		

S.No.	Demographic Profile/Questions	Responses	Code
2.	Other than TV or newspaper, what are your major sources of Information, especially on social media and the internet? Please tell them in order based on usage and trust.		
About Factshala			
3.	How did you come to know about FACTSHALA for the first time?		
4.	What motivates you to join FactShala?		
Knowledge and skill status			
5.	What do you now know about Fake news? Give an example to explain.		
6.	What according to you are the possible motives behind spreading fake news?		
7.	Are you able to verify if the message you have received is true? What tools do you use and how? Give specific examples.		
8.	Have you heard or encountered misinformation and disinformation? If yes, on which platforms mostly? Usually, what kind of messages are they? Please give any example. Do you know what is the difference between misinformation and disinformation? Please explain.		
9.	Do you know trustworthy sources of information? What are they? Give examples.		
Behaviour and Practice			
10.	What do you do if you come across suspicious information on social media?		
11.	If you get any important online information such as those about COVID 19, what do you do before sharing it?		
12.	Have you ever shared information even if you are not sure whether it's true with others? Why/why not?		
13.	Your views about the post/ messages on social media?		
14.	Does fake news affect your life? If yes, how?		
15.	Have you ever taken any action to combat misinformation/fake news? If Yes, can you give examples?		
16.	Why do you feel such media literacy programs like Factshala are useful in the present context?		
17.	What are your expectations from the training program?		
18.	Any other comments?		

Factshala Impact Assessment Study Past Trainees IDIs

Introduction: Hello, I am _____ from CMS, a social and media research organization. We are conducting a research study on behalf of Internews to capture the experience of the participants who attended the training program to identify misinformation/fake news. Your participation in the telephonic interview is voluntary but will be valuable for designing the training program in the future. The interview will take around 30 minutes. We will ensure the confidentiality of your responses and your responses will not be associated with your identifiers. While reporting the findings, nowhere your name or contact details will be mentioned.

In case you have any queries regarding this survey, you may contact Mr. Narendra Bhatt at 9899979162. Do you agree to participate in the study: Yes....1; No.....2(You can say Thank you and disconnect the call).

May I begin the interview?

S.No.	Demographic Profile/Questions	Responses	Code
a)	Name		
b)	Contact Number		
c)	State		
d)	Location	1=Urban 2=Rural	
e)	Sex		
f)	Age		
g)	Education	Below 10th HSC/SSC Some college but not graduate Graduate/ Post graduate general Graduate/ post graduate professional	
h)	Occupation	Student Teachers Ngos/CSOs workers Self Employed Other	
Media Habits			
1.	How many hours of the day do you spend online?		
2.	Other than TV or newspaper, what are your major sources of Information, especially on social media and the internet? Please tell them in order based on usage and trust.		

S.No.	Demographic Profile/Questions	Responses	Code
About Factshala			
3.	How did you come to know about FACTSHALA for the first time? When and where did you attend FactShala? And what was the mode of training?		
4.	What motivated you to join FactShala?		
5.	Was it useful for you? Why or Why not?		
	Knowledge and skill Gained		
6.	What do you now know about Fake news that you didn't know before attending FactShala? Give an example to explain.		
7.	What according to you are the possible motives behind spreading fake news? Did you know this before or after attending FactShala?		
8.	After attending FactShala, are you able to verify if the message you have received is true? What tools do you use and how? Give specific examples. Could you do this before the training?		
9.	Have you heard or encountered misinformation and disinformation? If yes, on which platforms mostly? Usually, what kind of messages are they? Please give any example. Do you know what is the difference between misinformation and disinformation? Please explain.		
10.	Do you know trustworthy sources of information after the training program? What are they? Give examples. Did you know those trustworthy sources before the training program?		
	Behaviour change/ Practice		
11	What did you do if you come across suspicious information on social media before the training? Do you approach it differently after the FactShala training? If so, please explain.		
12.	If you get any important online information such as those about COVID 19, what will you do before sharing it? How did you approach this differently before and after the training?		
13.	Have you ever shared information even if you are not sure whether it's true with others? Why/why not?		
14	Has attending FactShala changed your opinion about the messages on social media? If so, how?		
15	Does fake news affect your life? If yes, how?		
Best Practices			
16	Have you shared the knowledge you gained from the training program with your friends, colleagues and other community persons? If yes, to how many?		

S.No.	Demographic Profile/Questions	Responses	Code
17	<p>Have you ever taken any action to combat misinformation/fake news post-training? If Yes, can you give examples?</p> <p>(This could include calling out bad actions, forming a fact-checking team, writing a story about misinformation/fake news, and conducting advocacy campaigns both online and offline).</p> <p>Have you ever taken similar actions before the training too?</p>		
18	<p>What is considered your biggest achievement in combating misinformation/ fake news? Please provide a brief description.</p>		
19	<p>How has attending FactShala training benefited you personally and professionally?</p> <p>Gaps and lessons learned</p>		
20	<p>What do you think about the quality of training? How can the training be improved, concerning content/topics covered, duration, mode, language, etc.?</p>		
21	<p>Why do you feel such media literacy programs like Factshala are useful in the present context?</p>		
22	<p>Any other suggestions?</p>		

**FactShala Impact Assessment Study
Stimuli-based Questions – English (Pre-Assessment)**

See the questions below and answer in one or two sentences.

Name: _____

Contact Number: _____

Mail ID: _____

A.

Q.1

(a) Your friend shared this picture with you. Would you find it trust worthy ?

- Yes
- No



(b) Why or why not? (Reply in one or two sentences)

B.

Q.2

(a) You get this information on your social media. Do you trust it?

- Yes
- No



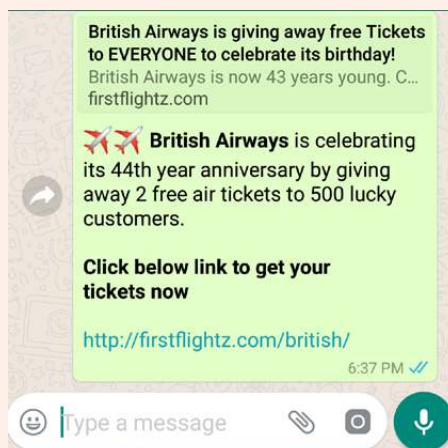
(b) Why or why not? (Answer in one or two sentences; only 'Yes' or 'No' won't qualify as a good answer)

C.

Q.3

(a) Do you find this message you received on your phone trustworthy?

- Yes
- No



(b) Why or why not? (Answer in one or two sentences)

D.Q.4

(a) If you received this message on WhatsApp, would you believe it?

- Yes
- No

(b) Why or why not? (Answer in one or two sentences)

**E.**Q.5

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1D9YgN0QGNSnFOMXO87js5d2Ewtjc6vO-/view?usp=sharing>

(a) You come across this video on social media. Do you think this is trustworthy?

- Yes
- No

(b) Why or why not? (Answer in one or two sentences)

FactShala Impact Assessment Study Stimuli-based Questions – Hindi (Pre Assessment)

नीचे लखि प्रश्नों के एक या दो लाइनों में उत्तर दें ।

Name: _____

Contact Number/: _____

Mail ID/: _____

A.

Q.1

(a) सोशल मीडिया पर आप इस पोस्ट को देखते हैं। क्या आप इस पर भरोसा करेंगे?

- हाँ
- नहीं

(b) क्यों या क्यों नहीं? एक या दो लाइनों में जवाब दें ।



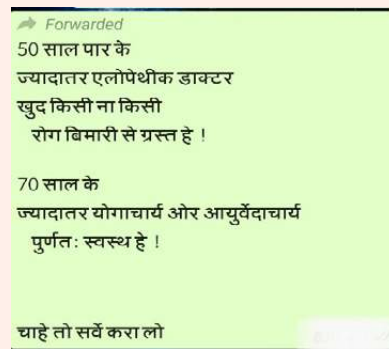
B.

Q.2

(a) आपको यह संदेश आपके वाट्सएप पर मलिता है, क्या आप वशिवास करेंगे और दूसरों को फॉरवर्ड करेंगे?

- हाँ
- नहीं

(b) क्यों या क्यों नहीं? एक या दो लाइनों में जवाब दें



C.

Q.3

(a) यदि आपको यह ट्वीट देखने को मलिता है तो क्या आप इस पर वशिवास करेंगे ?

- हाँ
- नहीं

(b) क्यों या क्यों नहीं? एक या दो लाइनों में जवाब दें ।



D.

Q.4

(a) सोशल मीडिया पर आप इस पोस्ट को देखते हैं। क्या आप इस जानकारी पर विश्वास करेंगे ?

- हाँ
- नहीं

(b) क्यों या क्यों नहीं? एक या दो लाइनो में जवाब दें

E.

Q.5

(a) सोशल मीडिया पर आप इस पोस्ट को देखते हैं। क्या आप इस जानकारी पर विश्वास करेंगे?

- हाँ
- नहीं

(b) क्यों या क्यों नहीं? एक या दो लाइनो में जवाब दें



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कृपया ध्यान दे: यह ऑफर केवल **30 APRIL 2021** तक ही सिमित है!



Desh Ki Awaaz

घर में ऑक्सीजन पैदा करने के लिए गौ माता के गोबर से बने 2 छोटे कंडे (उपले) देसी गाय का घी डालकर जलाएं। 10 ग्राम घी 1000 टन वायु को ऑक्सीजन में परिवर्तित (कन्वर्ट) कर देता है। हमारे (भारतीय) ऋषि मुनियो ने यह हजारों वर्षों पहले यह बताया था। शोध के रूप में जापान ने यह प्रयोग वर्षों पहले किया है।

Like Comment Share

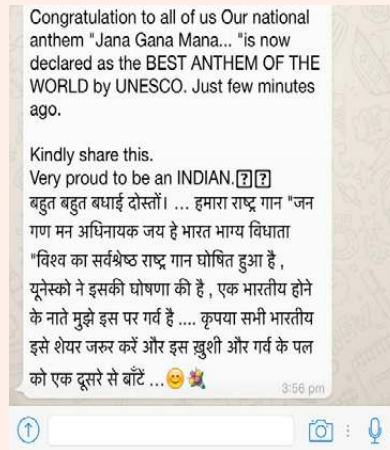
788

FactShala Impact Assessment Study Stimuli-based Questions – English (Post-Assessment)

See the questions below and answer in one or two sentences.

A.

Q.1 How will you check that this message you received is true or fake?? **(Reply in one or two sentences)**

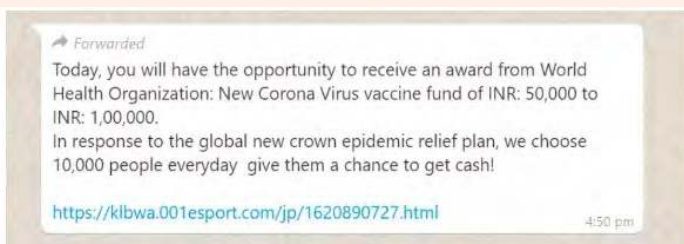


B.

Q2. You come across this post claiming that a lot of birds have died because of exposure to 5G testing in India. Do you find it trustworthy? Why or Why not? Reply in one and two sentences.



C.



Q3. (a) If you got this information, will you trust it? Why or Why not?

- Yes
- No

(b) Would you share it? Why and why not? (Reply in one or two sentences)

D.

Q4. (a) Do you find this post suggesting that scientists have created an animal human hybrid trustworthy?

- Yes
- No

(b) Why or why not? (Answer in one or two sentences)

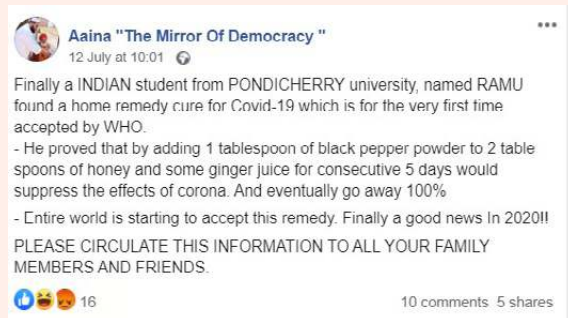


E.

Q5. (a) If you get this information on a Facebook page titled 'Aaina-the mirror of democracy' would you believe this?

- Yes
- No

(b) Why and why not? (Reply in one or two sentences)



FactShala Impact Assessment Study Stimuli-based Questions – Hindi (Post Assessment)

नीचे लखे प्रश्नों के एक या दो लाइनों में उत्तर दें।

A.

Q.1 (a) यह आपको सोशल मीडिया पर देखने को मिलती है। क्या आप इस जानकारी पर भरोसा करेंगे?

- हाँ
- नहीं

(b) क्यों या क्यों नहीं? एक या दो लाइनों में जवाब दें



B.

Q.2

(a) यह आपको सोशल मीडिया पर देखने को मिलती है। क्या आप इसे अपने दोस्तों या परिवार को फॉरवर्ड करेंगे?

- हाँ
- ही

(b) क्यों या क्यों नहीं? एक या दो लाइनों में जवाब दें



C.

Q.3 ये पोस्ट सोशल मीडिया पर वायरल हुई थी। इसे पढ़ने के बाद आप इसकी पुष्टि कैसे करेंगे, की ये गलत है या सही?



D.

Q.4

(a) यह आपको सोशल मीडिया पर देखने को मिलती है.क्या आप इस जानकारी पर भरोसा करेंगे?

- हाँ
- नहीं

(b) क्यों या क्यों नहीं? एक या दो लाइनो में जवाब दें



E.

Q.5

(a) आपको यह संदेश आपके व्हाट्सएप पर मिलता है, क्या आप विश्वास करेंगे ?

- हाँ
- नहीं

(b) क्यों या क्यों नहीं? एक या दो लाइनो में जवाब दें



**FactShala Impact Assessment Study
Trainers IDIs**

	Demographic Profile/Questions	Responses	Code
a)	Name		
b)	Contact Number		
c)	State		
d)	Location		
e)	Sex		
f)	Age		
g)	Education		
h)	Occupation		
i)	Which topic you covered for taking the training	Understanding Information Ecosystem Facts vs Opinion Critical Thinking Understanding Bias Photo + video Verification	
General			
1.	How did you come to know about FACTSHALA and what was the procedure for becoming a trainer?		
2.	What motivated you to become a FactShala trainer? How many training sessions have you given till date and what was the mode of your training program?		
3.	Why do you think FactShala training is relevant for the trainees?		
4.	Your views regarding training modules and how do you find it relevant for the target trainees?		
5.	As the same modules have been used for the different target trainees how do you contextualise it and make it relevant for specific participants? / If the same modules are used for different sets of trainees like the general public or different community members, will they still serve the purpose and be relevant?		
6.	How will you explain your experience of training? And, what kind of challenges or problems you face during the training program?		
7.	What has been the role of the factshala trainers in adopting the modules as per local and language context? Are the modules locally contextualised?		
Outcome of the training			
8.	As per your experience and understanding, has the training been effective for the participants?		
9..	Do you feel that audiences/participants understand what is fake news and how to identify it? How?		
10.	What's your perception about their overall knowledge gain through the FactShala training?		

11.	What kind of feed -back you received post-training program?
12.	To what extent are you satisfied with the topic of the training programme; and with the response of the participants?
13.	Do you feel that participants are using the techniques learnt during the training to debunk misinformation? Can you cite any example?
Behaviour Change/Practice	
14.	Do you know of any examples of visible behaviour change in the trainees you trained? If yes, please explain.
Best Practices	
15.	Can you help us identify any trainee who has taken the training further to create awareness about media literacy If yes, can you share the relevant information with us?
Gaps & Lessons Learnt/About Factshala	
16.	Would you like to do such training program in future again? If yes, what are the issues/topics, you feel, should be included in the training program
17.	Any suggestions you would like to give regarding the program?
18.	Any other comments on the impact of the training program?

25
X25

