

MODULE C

Practicing Healthy Skepticism

OBJECTIVES

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

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

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

1. Why should we keep our emotions in check when we are online?
2. How do we find balance between doubting and trusting?

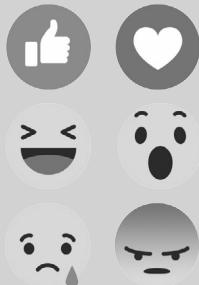
HEADS UP!

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

*Lunas sa COVID,
natagpuan na!!!
ALAMIN DITO*

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

*Pilipinas kulelat nga
ba sa laban kontra
COVID-19?*



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

It can be hard to admit to oneself and to others when you have fallen for false information. This is especially true when you realize that it was because you did not put much thought to it.

Instead, you were just fueled by your emotions. Misleading stories spread like wildfire because they prey heavily on our strong feelings of anger, fear, or joy. To avoid this, you must pause, slow down, and try to switch off your emotions.

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

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

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

DJ LOONYO



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

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

VOCABS

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

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



Tweet your thoughts. Everyone has a bias. What certain biases of yours do you think could affect your consumption of news and information?

Tweet us at @ootbmediлит and use the hashtag #IWASFAKE.

Image source: https://www.inquirer.com/philly/opinion/signe/20161202_Daily_Signe_Cartoon_12_02_16.html



Confirmation Bias

Aside from our emotions, we also tend to accept information faster and easier when they confirm our existing views. This is called '**confirmation bias**'. The danger here is when we think something is true when we feel that it must be true. This is most applicable to misleading content -- information that has some amount of truth to it rather than being entirely



Cartoon by Signe Wilkinson. Courtesy of The Philadelphia Inquirer.

made up. If an online post is 'partly true' and you are already convinced by half of it, you may disregard that that post is also 'partly false' or, at the very least, incomplete.

If we encounter a post online that feels right to us and triggers our emotion, our tendency is to share it with others. So, the very first step

is crucial: pause, calm down, and recognize your emotional response. This is called '**emotional skepticism**' or questioning your own emotional reactions to the messages around you.

Bonus: Other Hidden Biases

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

1. Implicit bias: we associate two different things, which in our minds, are usually linked
2. Sunk-cost fallacy: the more time or emotions we invest into something, the more we want to keep investing in it
3. Anchoring bias: the first piece of information we hear tends to have more influence on us
4. Bandwagon effect: if a lot of people act or think in a certain way, we tend to act or think the same

HEADS UP!

List down your most trusted news and information sources.

What makes these sources trustworthy for you?

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

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



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

Healthy Skepticism vs Cynicism

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

Skeptics	Cynics
<input type="checkbox"/> are open-minded	<input type="checkbox"/> are close-minded
<input type="checkbox"/> challenge negative factors	<input type="checkbox"/> focus on the negative factors
<input type="checkbox"/> can be convinced by presenting evidence	<input type="checkbox"/> cannot be convinced by presenting evidence

How to Spot Potential Disinformation

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

VOCABS

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

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

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



Tweet your thoughts. Aside from the red flags listed here, what other reasons will make you doubtful of a certain piece of information?

Tweet us at @ootbmediлит and use the hashtag #IWASFAKE.

FAKE NEWS BINGO

MGA SIGNS NA DAPAT MONG PAGDUDAHAN ANG ISANG POST

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

www.ootbmediality.org
#IWASFAKE



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