

Media Literacy in an AI-Driven World: An Ethical Lens

K. Ravi Kumar

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Communication and Journalism,
Suravaram Pratap Reddy Telugu University, Bachupally, Hyderabad
Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism,
St. Francis College for Women, Hyderabad, India
phdravi1988@gmail.com

Dr. G. Kiran Kumar Reddy

Assistant Professor in English,
Rajeev Gandhi Memorial College of Engineering and Technology,
Nandyal, AP, India
kiran.mokshita@gmail.com

=====

Abstract: This paper explores the transformative role and impact of AI in media. In the present era, individuals, especially students, rely on AI technology. This is clear with regards to Chat GPT as it makes obtaining and creating information easier and more convenient. This reliance becomes a challenge for accessing genuine information, questioning the core values of credibility and accuracy. With the rapid usage of this technology in media, concerns like deep fakes, misinformation, and bias are on focus during academic discussions, making ethics and media literacy the need of the hour today. The study is explorative in nature. It reviewed literature from various academic journals accessed on google scholar, research gate and sage publications, seeking to explore the role of media literacy in an AI era. With a descriptive qualitative approach based on the secondary data, the paper finds how ethical reflection becomes central to media literacy. The study proposes an ethics-centered media literacy approach in preparing students to use technology with integrity.

Keywords: Technology, Chat GPT, Credibility, Ethics, Media literacy

1. Introduction:

AI Tools like Chat GPT help to create information easier, faster and more conveniently today than ever before. At the same time, this convenience comes with concerns that endanger credibility. In today's world, it is challenging to detect AI-generated content that looks the same as human work and verify its reliability. As a result, the value of the content cannot be taken for granted at a single glance. This situation makes it more important to talk about the need for media literacy. It is not just a cognitive and technical competency but an ethical necessity requiring the ability to discern what is right and what is wrong to do. Individuals, particularly students who engage to a large extent with Chat GPT, need to learn to question and verify AI-generated content. This study argues that media literacy must integrate critical awareness with ethical conscience to

=====

better prepare learners to engage responsibly with AI-generated content. In a world where truth itself can be manufactured, fostering ethics-centered media literacy is necessary for informed participation in the techno-centric era.

2. Review of Literature

Cristian Vaccari and Andrew Chadwick (2020) argued that deep fakes work as tools of online political disinformation, causing significant uncertainty about the truthfulness of the content. It was established, by analyzing two case studies namely one that was a fake kidnapping video on Whats App in India that triggered mob violence and the other was a manipulated video of former U.S. President Obama, that the technology has the potential to deceive individuals, making it difficult to detect the truth and thereby influencing public trust.

Examining different ethical frameworks that address the influence of AI technologies, Dr. Thilo Hagedorff (2020) identified several issues, which are recurring, such as privacy, accountability and fairness. He argued that these guidelines focused more on technical rather than moral solutions, proposing a virtue-oriented approach that enhances individual responsibility and ethical awareness. Joelle Swart (2021), acknowledging that young people are aware about how algorithms structure the news on social media, opined that consistent and constant exposure can limit their awareness about the hidden work of algorithms. The study put forward a suggestion to develop algorithm literacy within media literacy. Tierman et al. (2023) explained how AI has conditioned individuals' ability to access, evaluate and produce information. Their review recommended a more collaborative strategy to strengthen information and media literacy. Malik Sallam (2023) examined the role of Chat GPT in healthcare education and research. His findings revealed both potential benefits and major concerns like bias, inaccuracy, plagiarism and lack of transparency. He concluded that developing a code of ethics is essential to ensure responsible use.

Elaborating on the influence of AI and ChatGPT in terms of learning and evaluation in the education sector, Simone Grassini (2023) brought to light the important concerns like accuracy, plagiarism, data privacy and bias. He emphasised that the integration of AI in education calls for an individual's ethical reflection and moral responsibility. Frau-Meis (2024) amplified the need for understanding the algorithmic processes, especially its influence on information consumption, creation and dissemination. She proposed a conceptual framework and use of algo-literacy pre bunking kit which can support both educators and learners to have a critical engagement with AI-driven content. Edda Lundberg and Peter Mozelius (2024), examining the socio-psychological effects of deep fakes across news media, entertainment and education, found that deep fakes, besides being creative, have the potential to endanger public trust. Drawing insights from educators in Hong Kong, Stephanie Jean Tsang (2025) proposed the integration of AI literacy into media literacy for junior high school students. The study stressed that teaching should focus on ethical reasoning rather than technical proficiency of AI tools. The study commented that empowering students to navigate the digital technology and evaluate generative information. Opeyemi Dorcas Alawode (2025) analysed how the personalised content curation on social media affected public opinion. The research revealed that hidden algorithms through emotional content reinforce existing beliefs. The study cautioned that algorithms thrive on engagement metrics over accuracy leading to increased polarization and weakening informed citizenship.

3. Objectives:

1. To explore the role of media literacy in the AI era
2. To propose an ethics-centered media literacy

4. Methodology

The study systematically reviewed appropriate literature relevant to media literacy. With a descriptive research approach, the secondary data were drawn from peer reviewed journals accessed through databases such as Google Scholar, Research gate and Sage publications. The review involved a critical examination of concepts that address the need for media literacy.

5. Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded on the theories from media and communication studies.

5.1 Technological Determinism : It is a reductionist theory that questions the influence of technology on individuals, social structures and culture. Advanced by Marshal McLuhan in 1964, the theory states that media and technology shape individual's thinking, perception and interaction with the world. It is fitting to note his quote that says, "We shape our tools and they in turn shape us" to fit in the discourse. The relevance of this theory is significant as individuals, particularly students, adopt technology such as Generative AI tools for learning, creativity and production.

5.2 Uses and Gratification Theory : developed by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumer and Michael Gurevitch (1973), the Uses and Gratification theory (UGT) focuses on the active role of media users. It assumes that the audience are goal-driven and deliberately choose media to fulfill "specific needs such as information, personal identity, integration, social interaction and entertainment". In the context of an AI-driven environment, the theory is highly applicable in understanding how users engage with Generative AI tools and recommendation systems to satisfy their needs. As students actively choose platforms like Chat GPT, AI systems can simultaneously anticipate and shape their choices through personalized responses and adaptive learning patterns.

5.3 Postmodern Media Theory : Advocated by Jean Baudrillard in 1981, the theory posits that how media in the postmodern era blurs the boundaries between reality and representation. In his study, Baudrillard defines Simulacra as the copies that no longer refer to any original truth and this leads to the state of hyper reality. In the AI-driven era, Deep fakes, AI-generated voices and fabricated news are simulacra in the words of Baudrillard, represented as reality. They create convincing narratives about the events or the persons. Content of this nature makes one believe that truth can be manufactured and trust can be programmed.

6. Discussion

=====

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 25:11 November 2025**

K. Ravi Kumar and Dr. G. Kiran Kumar Reddy

Media Literacy in an AI-Driven World: An Ethical Lens

6.1 Artificial Intelligence is present everywhere

It is no more a distant technology. It has changed our life and learning. Voice Assistants (Siri, Google Assistant and Alexa) help us in our regular activities like setting alarms, navigating traffic. Netflix, Spotify and YouTube use AI to curate content based on our content preferences for watching and listening. E-commerce platforms such as Amazon and Flipkart recommend products based on past purchasing behavior. Writing, studying and generating ideas is becoming easier with AI writing tools like Chat GPT and Gemini. AI is also integrated into healthcare, finance and transportation.

6.2 Algorithm Driven Media Content

India has over 886 million internet users (ICUBE, 2024), making it the world's second-largest digital population (Petrosyan, A.2025). In this context, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is shaping how people consume news and entertainment through algorithms on social media and streaming platforms. Engagement becomes the key metric for platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) that use algorithms to promote content, often reinforcing the existing beliefs. Joelle Swart (2025) finds that journalism students and young audiences mainly get their news from social media feeds driven by these algorithms, which present highly personalized content. Kreiss & McGregor (2021) also indicate that users often do not realize how much their feeds are filtered or how algorithms can amplify certain viewpoints while limiting others.

6.3 AI Hallucinations

Artificial intelligence (AI) increases the fake news phenomenon (Frau-Meigs, 2024). AI enables online tools to imitate and even extend human intelligence, making it easier to spread and harder to control the proliferation of misinformation (Ghallab, 2019). Students, if not aware of these potential issues, can be susceptible to fraud or even harm. For example, Chat GPT has the “potential to generate incorrect or even fabricated information”, as often reported by both users and the scientific literature (Sallam, 2023). Such issues can be problematic for students who rely on Chat GPT in the process of learning. This tendency of AI models is often referred to as “AI Hallucinations” (Alkaissi, H., & McFarlane, S. I.2023).

6.4 Information Integrity

India experienced a significant surge in AI-generated misinformation and deep fakes during the 2024 general elections, with altered videos and audio targeting both political figures and celebrities. The American global computer security software company, McAfee reports that More than 75 per cent of Indians have encountered deep fake content in the past year and a significant number of people were unable to spot real and AI-generated content (Nishtha Badgamia, 2024). The report also highlights that one in four Indians believed “political deep fakes were real.” In these instances, it is important to note that differentiating fact from fabrication has become difficult, posing a profound threat to information integrity.

6.5 Academic Integrity

With the use of Chat GPT, plagiarism and lack of proper citation have become major concerns for academia. These practices obstruct the true objective of learning, complicating the assessment of the students' conceptual learning. It is important to note here that among AI tools, ChatGPT is the most widely used Automated text tool among students, particularly in academic settings (Divya & Ravi Kumar, 2024), but its accuracy and reliability remain uncertain (Sallam,2023). Providing meaningful feedback to students, who rely on such tools consistently, is demanding for educators. It may even impede their learning process.

7. Challenges

7.1 Ignorance is invisible

Ignorance is often unnoticed as users rarely realise how little they understand about how algorithmic models work and what data they process. For many students, this lack of awareness is a great concern. Overreliance on such models can cover up gaps in genuine understanding as the automation tools perform the thinking instead of students. Evidently, there is a lack of knowledge about how these models work, both students and educators may overlook biases built into them. This lack of understanding can also lead to what Symons & Alvarado (2024) call “epistemic injustice”, wherein people affected by such systems cannot challenge them due to insufficient knowledge.

7.2 The Dunning–Kruger effect

The “*Dunning-Kruger effect*” states that people with limited knowledge are disposed to overrate their competence because they cannot assess their own understanding accurately (Kruger & Dunning, 1999). While students are engaged with ChatGPT, they often assume that its answers are correct and believe that they fully understand the topic, causing them to overlook their learning gaps. As a result, these tools can mask weaknesses in comprehension. Research also points out that limited awareness of how these systems work can increase overconfidence in both personal ability and trust in the tools' output.

8. Recommendation

Use of AI technology looks unavoidable among students. Gaining deeper insights into what goes behind the data sets used by the AI tools to generate information is a must-know for students. For example, engaging students in hands-on activities like comparing and contrasting information generated by ChatGPT with verified sources and reflecting on their accuracy, can strengthen their ethical awareness and critical thinking. In this way, ethics-centered media literacy becomes effective in molding students into responsible informed citizens. Educational institutions should include ethics into curriculum and have AI policy for detecting AI content for all academic related purposes, not just the research helping to uphold academic integrity.

9. Conclusion

AI technologies, like ChatGPT, come with a lot of opportunities for learning and also raise concerns about credibility. The study realises that students' heavy reliance on these tools is likely to result in unnoticed learning gaps, overconfidence and a decline in critical thinking. It is important to stress on the role of educators and institutions in preparing students to use technology with integrity by equipping them with Ethics-Centered Media Literacy (ECML) skills.

Citations

Vaccari, C., & Chadwick, A. (2020). Deepfakes and disinformation: Exploring the impact of synthetic political video on deception, uncertainty, and trust in news. *Social Media + Society*, 6(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120903408>

Hagendorff, T. (2020). *The ethics of AI ethics: An evaluation of guidelines*. *Minds and Machines*, 30(1), 99–120. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11023-020-09517-8>

Swart, J. (2021). Experiencing Algorithms: How young people understand, feel about, and engage with algorithmic news selection on social media. *Social Media + Society*, 7(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/205630512111008828>

Grassini, S. (2023). Shaping the Future of Education: Exploring the potential and consequences of AI and ChatGPT in educational settings. *Education Sciences*, 13(7), 692. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13070692>

Sallam, M. (2023). ChatGPT Utility in Healthcare Education, Research, and Practice: Systematic Review on the promising perspectives and valid concerns. *Healthcare*, 11(6), 887. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare11060887>

Tiernan, P., Costello, E., Donlon, E., Parysz, M., & Scriney, M. (2023). Information and media literacy in the age of AI: Options for the future. *Education Sciences*, 13(9), 906. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13090906>

Frau-Meigs, D. (2024). Algorithm Literacy as a subset of media and information literacy: Competences and design considerations. *Digital*, 4(2), 512–528. <https://doi.org/10.3390/digital4020026>

Lundberg, E., & Mozelius, P. (2024). The potential effects of deepfakes on news media and entertainment. *AI & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-024-02072-1>

Alawode, O. D. & Department of Communication, Western Illinois University. (2025). Invisible Influence: How algorithmic news feeds are reshaping public opinion without disclosure. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 30(8), 58–73. <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-3008025873>

Tsang, S. J. (2025). Insights from educators: Integrating AI literacy into media literacy education in practice. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 17(2), 53–65. <https://doi.org/10.23860/JMLE-2025-17-2-4>

ICUBE. (2024). *Internet in India 2024*

[https://www.iamai.in/sites/default/files/research/Kantar %20IAMAI%20report_2024 .pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.iamai.in/sites/default/files/research/Kantar%20IAMAI%20report_2024.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

Petrosyan, A. (2025, February 10). *Countries with the highest number of Internet users 2025*. Statista.

Kreiss, D., & McGregor, S. C. (2021). The “Arbiters Of What Our Voters See”: Facebook And Google’s Struggle With Policy, Process, And Enforcement Around Political Advertising. *Political Communication*, 38(4), 455–477. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2020.1804439>

Badgamia, N. (2024, April 26). *Over 75% Indians were exposed to deepfakes as many struggled to distinguish between fake and real: Report*. WION. <https://www.wionews.com/india-news/over-75-indians-were-exposed-deepfakes-as-many-struggled-to-distinguish-between-fake-and-real-report-715440>

Kohlman, E. *Indian Voters Inundated with Deepfakes During the Largest Democratic Exercise in the World*. Blackbird.AI. Retrieved from <https://blackbird.ai/blog/india-election-deepfakes/>

Symons, J., & Alvarado, M. (2024). Epistemic injustice in generative AI. arXiv. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2408.11441> arXiv

Alkaissi, H., & McFarlane, S. I. (2023). *Artificial hallucinations in ChatGPT: Implications in scientific writing*. *Cureus*, 15, e35179. <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.35179>

Ghallab, M. (2019). *Artificial intelligence and misinformation: Challenges and perspectives*. *AI Perspectives*, 1(3). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42467-019-0003-z>

Divya, J. S., & Ravi Kumar, K. (2024). The use of artificial intelligence tools for education among students. In *Towards Viksit Bharat: Synergising human intelligence and artificial intelligence in commerce and management for a sustainable and prosperous India* (pp. 119–125). Paramount Publishing House. ISBN : 978-81-978596-9-4

Kruger, J., & Dunning, D. (1999). *Unskilled and unaware of it: How difficulties in recognizing one's own incompetence lead to inflated self-assessments*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77(6), 1121–1134. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.77.6.1121>

Potter, W. J. (2021). *Media literacy* (10th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Jan, A., Khan, S. A., Naz, S., Khan, O., & Khan, A. Q. (2021). *Marshal McLuhan’s technological determinism theory in the arena of social media*. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 18(2), 30–34. Medwell Publications.

Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and simulation* (S. F. Glaser, Trans.). University of Michigan Press. (Original work published 1981)

=====

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 25:11 November 2025**

K. Ravi Kumar and Dr. G. Kiran Kumar Reddy

Media Literacy in an AI-Driven World: An Ethical Lens

