



Evaluating the Effectiveness of News Literacy Workshops in Strengthening High School Students' Critical Awareness: Evidence from a Pre–Post Intervention Study in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of digital media and social networking platforms has substantially transformed the ways students' access, consume, and disseminate news, while simultaneously increasing their vulnerability to misinformation and disinformation. This condition underscores the urgency of strengthening news literacy as an essential cognitive and social competence for fostering critical awareness and responsible digital citizenship. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of a news literacy workshop in strengthening senior high school students' perceptions and critical awareness in Indonesia. The study employed a quasi-experimental design using a pre-test and post-test approach involving 91 senior high school students who participated in news literacy workshops conducted at four schools in North Sumatra Province. Data were collected using a news literacy perception questionnaire encompassing conceptual understanding, information verification skills, awareness of media bias, and ethical attitudes toward media use. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and the nonparametric Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, complemented by effect size calculations to assess the magnitude of the intervention's impact. The results indicate a statistically significant increase in students' mean news literacy perception scores following the workshop, with significance values of $p < 0.05$ and effect sizes ranging from large to very large. The most substantial improvements were observed in indicators related to understanding news structure and news values, recognizing media bias, and applying practical digital information verification skills, including the use of fact-checking tools and reverse image search techniques. Although the normalized gain (N-Gain) was categorized as low, this finding is understandable given the limited duration of the intervention and the complex nature of news literacy, which requires sustained and continuous learning processes. Overall, the findings confirm that news literacy workshops are effective as an initial strategy for strengthening high school students' critical awareness and news literacy perceptions and have important implications for the development of integrated and sustainable news literacy programs within formal education in Indonesia.

ABSTRAK

Perkembangan pesat media digital dan platform jejaring sosial telah secara substansial mengubah cara siswa mengakses, mengonsumsi, dan menyebarkan berita, sekaligus meningkatkan kerentanan mereka terhadap misinformasi dan disinformasi. Kondisi ini menggarisbawahi urgensi penguatan literasi berita sebagai kompetensi kognitif dan sosial yang penting untuk menumbuhkan kesadaran kritis dan kewarganegaraan digital yang bertanggung jawab. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi efektivitas lokakarya literasi berita dalam memperkuat persepsi dan kesadaran kritis siswa SMA di Indonesia. Studi ini menggunakan desain kuasi-eksperimental dengan pendekatan pre-test dan post-test yang melibatkan 91 siswa SMA yang berpartisipasi dalam lokakarya literasi berita yang diadakan di empat sekolah di Provinsi Sumatera Utara. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan kuesioner persepsi literasi berita yang mencakup pemahaman konseptual, keterampilan verifikasi informasi, kesadaran akan bias media, dan sikap etis terhadap penggunaan media. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan uji peringkat bertanda Wilcoxon nonparametrik, dilengkapi dengan perhitungan ukuran efek untuk menilai besarnya dampak intervensi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan secara statistik pada skor persepsi literasi berita rata-rata siswa setelah lokakarya, dengan nilai signifikansi $p < 0,05$ dan ukuran efek berkisar dari besar hingga sangat besar. Peningkatan paling substansial diamati pada indikator yang berkaitan dengan pemahaman struktur berita dan nilai berita, pengenalan bias media, dan penerapan keterampilan verifikasi informasi digital praktis, termasuk penggunaan alat pengecekan fakta dan teknik pencarian gambar terbalik. Meskipun peningkatan yang dinormalisasi (N-Gain) dikategorikan rendah, temuan ini dapat dipahami mengingat durasi intervensi yang terbatas dan sifat literasi berita yang kompleks, yang membutuhkan proses pembelajaran yang berkelanjutan. Secara keseluruhan, temuan ini menegaskan bahwa lokakarya literasi berita efektif sebagai strategi awal untuk memperkuat kesadaran kritis dan persepsi literasi berita siswa SMA dan memiliki implikasi penting bagi pengembangan program literasi berita yang terintegrasi dan berkelanjutan dalam pendidikan formal di Indonesia.

1. Introduction

The development of digital technology and social media has fundamentally transformed the ways individuals interact with news. A growing number of people now rely on social media not only for social interaction but also as a primary source of up-to-date information (Thompson et al., 2020). However, behind the convenience of accessing news and information through social media lies a significant risk, namely the rapid and widespread circulation of misinformation and disinformation, particularly via digital platforms. In many cases, audiences are unaware that content appearing legitimate may in fact consist of disguised advertising, misinterpreted humor or satire, or even digitally manipulated material. Images circulating in the context of social conflicts, for instance, may be edited or taken from entirely different contexts, thereby creating

confusion and misleading the public (Chowdhury et al., 2019; Tsang, 2019).

In this era of information abundance, news consumers require new competencies to avoid being misled, one of which is news literacy. According to Schneider (2010), news literacy refers to the ability to think critically when evaluating whether a news report is trustworthy, regardless of whether it originates from print media, broadcast media, or online platforms. Beyond the assessment of credibility, news literacy also involves an understanding of how news is produced, the role of journalism within democratic systems, and the appropriate attitudes audiences should adopt when consuming information (Ashley et al., 2013; Fleming, 2014). Consequently, strengthening news literacy is not merely concerned with distinguishing accurate news from false information, but also constitutes a fundamental component in fostering a

healthy, informed, and ethical democratic society (Martens, 2010; Masterman, 2001; Mihailidis, 2012).

Despite its importance, news literacy has not yet received adequate attention in Indonesia, particularly in North Sumatra. This region possesses considerable potential, characterized by cultural and linguistic diversity as well as relatively high levels of internet access. Nevertheless, recent survey findings indicate that the level of news literacy among senior high school students in North Sumatra remains low, with an average score of only 25 out of 100 (Bahri, 2023).

Schools, which ideally function as primary institutions for educating information-literate citizens, have not yet positioned news literacy as a central component of the formal curriculum. This is noteworthy given that formal education has been identified as the most effective approach for cultivating an information-literate society (Reese, 2019).

Therefore, this community service-based research aims to provide news literacy education for students in Indonesia, particularly senior high school students. The workshops were conducted in four schools in North Sumatra Province. In addition to delivering educational interventions, this study also measured students' perceptions of news literacy by administering pre-test and post-test instruments to 91 participants who took part in the workshops.

2. Literature Review

The Concept of News Literacy

News literacy is a branch of media literacy that specifically focuses on individuals' abilities to understand, evaluate, and use news critically. According to Ashley et al. (2013), news literacy encompasses an understanding of the news production process, the ability to assess the credibility of information sources, and the skills required to distinguish between facts, opinions, and interpretations. Within this framework, news literacy is not limited to the act of consuming news content, but also involves a critical understanding of journalistic values, including accuracy, objectivity, and transparency (Potter, 2010).

By emphasizing these principles, news literacy equips individuals with the cognitive tools necessary to critically engage with news content and to recognize the normative role of journalism in society. As such, news literacy functions as both an educational and civic competence that supports informed participation in public discourse.

Teaching News Literacy

Studies by Corser et al. (2022), Dezuanni et al. (2020), and Notley and Dezuanni (2018) provide important insights into how younger generations—particularly children and adolescents aged 8 to 16—interact with news in the digital environment. Large-scale surveys involving thousands of young respondents reveal that while the majority access news content on a daily basis, their level of trust in news remains relatively low. Moreover, many students experience difficulty distinguishing between credible information and misleading content, including misinformation and disinformation, even after receiving media-related instruction at school.

These findings raise critical questions regarding the effectiveness of existing pedagogical approaches to news and media education. Despite exposure to formal instruction, students often lack the applied skills necessary to critically evaluate news content encountered on digital platforms.

The News Literacy Project (2021) emphasizes that news literacy should not be understood merely as knowledge about what constitutes news. Rather, it represents a complex set of competencies, including the ability to identify credible news sources, distinguish among various types of informational content, and evaluate which information is trustworthy, appropriate to share, or suitable as a basis for decision-making and action.

Schneider (2010) further outlines a set of foundational skills and concepts that students should ideally master. These include the ability to distinguish journalism from other forms of information, differentiate news from opinion, evaluate claims in relation to evidence and verification, and analyze news reports based on the quality of sources and factual content. Equally important is students' understanding of how bias may emerge, both from media institutions and from audiences themselves.

Powers (2010) also underscores the importance of fostering a deeper understanding of journalistic practices, including how journalists work, why errors may occur, and how digital transformation has reshaped journalistic routines. He argues that students should be encouraged to appreciate the value of reliable information and to recognize that being a critical news consumer entails a form of civic responsibility within democratic societies.

Why News Literacy Should Be Taught

News literacy prioritizes the development of critical thinking skills that are more effective in addressing the challenges of information disorder in the contemporary digital environment than

approaches that focus solely on fostering appreciation for journalism (Begum & Khan, 2022; Chowdhury et al., 2019). Several key reasons support the inclusion of news literacy as a core component of secondary school curricula.

First, the volume and diversity of information that masquerades as legitimate news have increased significantly in the digital era. Second, although secondary school students are among the most enthusiastic consumers of content distributed through new media platforms, they generally lack sufficient experience in identifying unreliable or misleading information. These consumption habits are likely to persist into adulthood. Third, students often demonstrate limited awareness of the importance of maintaining free and reliable flows of information within democratic societies. Fourth, efforts to cultivate a news-literate population are likely to have the greatest societal impact when the necessary skills are taught to broad and diverse audiences, particularly school students who represent a cross-section of the population (Powers, 2010; Powers et al., 2014).

3. Method

Workshop Implementation Method

The implementation of this community service activity was designed in the form of a participatory workshop, emphasizing the processes of knowledge transfer, skill enhancement, and sustainable capacity building among participants. The workshop approach was selected because it is considered effective in promoting active participant engagement, two-way interaction, and experiential learning processes (Kolb, 1984).

Planning Stage

The planning stage constituted the initial phase of the program and was intended to ensure alignment between community needs and the workshop materials to be delivered. Activities undertaken during this stage included the following:

Needs assessment, conducted through preliminary observations, discussions with partner institutions, and the collection of information related to the challenges faced by the target community. Needs assessment is essential to ensure that community service programs are contextualized and responsive to actual conditions (Sumardi Efendi et al., 2025).

Formulation of objectives and success indicators, which were developed in a measurable manner and oriented toward improvements in participants' knowledge, attitudes, and skills. These indicators

served as the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention (Creswell, J W., Creswell, 2018).

Development of workshop materials and instruments, including modules, presentation materials, participant worksheets, and evaluation instruments. The instructional materials were designed using an andragogical approach that accounted for the characteristics of adult learners (Knowles et al., 2014).

Workshop Implementation Stage

The workshop was implemented in a structured and interactive manner through the following stages:

Opening and orientation, which involved introducing the objectives of the workshop, outlining the activity agenda, and aligning participants' expectations with those of the facilitators. This stage was essential for building participants' motivation and readiness to engage in the learning process (Uno, 2022; Uno & Ma'ruf, 2016).

Delivery of core materials, conducted through interactive lectures combined with question-and-answer sessions. This method was employed to provide participants with a conceptual foundation prior to their involvement in practical activities (Arends, 2012).

Group discussions and case studies, aimed at encouraging participants to think critically and to relate the workshop material to real-world problems encountered in their media consumption practices. Group discussions have been shown to be effective in enhancing comprehension and problem-solving abilities (Slavin, 2014).

Hands-on practice or simulations, implemented as a means of applying theoretical concepts in practical contexts. These activities enabled participants to gain direct experience, thereby enhancing the meaningfulness of the learning process (Kolb, 1984).

Reflection and feedback, conducted at the conclusion of each session to explore participants' learning experiences and to evaluate their understanding of the materials presented. Reflection constitutes a critical component of adult learning processes (Brookfield, 2017).

Evaluation

Stage

Evaluation was conducted to assess the overall success of the workshop and its impact on participants. The evaluation process consisted of the following components:

Process evaluation, which examined the extent to which the activities were implemented in accordance with the planned design, participants' level of

engagement, and the effectiveness of the instructional methods employed.

Outcome evaluation, carried out through pre-test and post-test instruments or questionnaires to determine changes in participants' knowledge and skills following the workshop (Sugiyono, 2019).

4. Result and Discussion

The implementation of the news literacy workshop was carried out through collaboration between the research team and the *newsliteracy.id* community. The workshops were conducted in four senior high schools, namely MAN 1 Deli Serdang, SMA Negeri 1 Percut, SMA Negeri 7 Medan, and MAN 1 Medan, involving a total of 133 student participants. The workshop facilitators consisted of administrators and volunteers from the *newsliteracy.id* community who had previously completed a Training of Trainers (ToT) program. Various instructional media were employed during the workshops, including printed handouts and news literacy learning videos produced collaboratively by the research team and the *newsliteracy.id* community.

The workshops were designed to achieve several educational objectives for students, including the enhancement of critical thinking skills, the ability to distinguish between factual information, opinion, and hoaxes, the improvement of digital and media literacy, the promotion of social responsibility in information sharing, increased awareness of social and democratic issues, the cultivation of independent learning and curiosity, and the strengthening of resilience against misinformation and disinformation. Collectively, these objectives reflect the broader goal of preparing students to navigate contemporary information environments in a critical, ethical, and informed manner.

Students' Perceptions of News Literacy After the Workshop

Through the application of an integrative and interactive learning approach, the workshop was found to contribute significantly to the development of students' critical thinking capacities, improved levels of media literacy, and enhanced cognitive resilience to exposure to misinformation and disinformation. These outcomes not only affected students' individual abilities to understand and evaluate media content but also carried broader social implications, particularly in supporting collective efforts to build a digitally informed society characterized by high levels of information awareness, rational judgment, and adaptability

within increasingly complex digital information ecosystems.

To examine differences in students' perceptions before and after the instructional intervention, this study employed an evaluative research design using pre-test and post-test instruments. A total of 91 student responses were included in the analysis, as several participants encountered technical constraints when completing the online questionnaires. These constraints were primarily related to limited access to supporting communication facilities within school environments, including the availability of digital devices such as smartphones and laptops, as well as unstable internet connectivity. The impact of the workshop intervention was subsequently visualized through graphical representations illustrating changes in students' perception and understanding across 24 observed indicators, as measured through comparisons between pre-test and post-test scores.

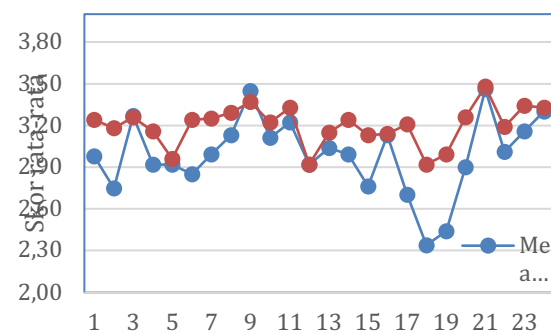


Figure 2. Comparison of Mean Perception Scores

The comparative analysis of mean pre-test and post-test scores revealed a consistent pattern of improvement across the majority of the measured news literacy indicators. Overall, post-test mean scores tended to be higher than pre-test mean scores, indicating that the workshop intervention contributed positively to strengthening students' understanding and attitudes toward news consumption and evaluation. The most pronounced improvements were observed in indicators related to cognitive and applied skill dimensions, particularly students' understanding of news elements and news values, their ability to distinguish between news and general information, and their capacity to recognize the characteristics of verified news media in contrast to news aggregator platforms. These findings suggest that the instructional approach employed in the workshop was effective in enhancing participants' conceptual understanding of the fundamental

structure and characteristics of journalistic information.

Substantial improvements were also identified in indicators directly related to digital information verification practices, including the use of fact-checking tools and reverse image search techniques. This finding indicates that the workshop not only enhanced theoretical understanding but also successfully strengthened practical skills relevant to addressing misinformation in digital spaces. Conversely, for several indicators that exhibited relatively high pre-test mean scores, the differences between pre-test and post-test scores were comparatively smaller or stable. This pattern reflects the presence of a ceiling effect, whereby participants already possessed relatively high levels of awareness prior to the intervention. Overall, the observed pattern of increased pre-test and post-test mean scores confirms that the news literacy workshop played an effective role in strengthening students' perceptions, understanding, and preparedness in confronting the complexities of information in the digital era.

Descriptive Statistical Analysis

To further examine the observed differences, a series of inferential statistical analyses were conducted to draw empirical conclusions regarding the significance of the changes identified. Paired-samples statistical analysis and effect size calculations were employed to assess both the statistical significance and the magnitude of the workshop's impact.

Table 1. Mean Scores of Students' News Literacy Perceptions in Pre-Test and Post-Test

	N	Rang e	Minimu m	Maximu m	Mea n	Std. Deviati on
Post test	91	40	56	96	76.82	8.873
Pre test	91	34	59	93	71.76	5.755
Valid N (listwise)	91					

Source: primary data's

The results of the descriptive statistical analysis indicate a difference in the mean scores of students' news literacy perceptions between the pre-test and post-test. The mean pre-test score was 71.76 with a standard deviation of 5.755, while the mean post-test

score increased to 76.82 with a standard deviation of 8.873. This increase in the mean score reflects a positive change in students' news literacy perceptions following participation in the workshop.

The larger standard deviation observed in the post-test scores suggests greater variability in students' levels of understanding after the intervention. This variability may be interpreted as indicating differential effects of the workshop across participants, influenced by factors such as individual background characteristics, prior media exposure, and levels of engagement during the workshop sessions.

Normalized Gain (N-Gain) Analysis

Table 2. Percentage Scores of Pre-Test and Post-Test and N-Gain Values

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre test_persen	91	74.7482	5.99467
Post test_persen	91	80.0252	9.24237
N_Gain	91	0.1568	0.82789
Valid N (listwise)	91		

Source: primary data's

To determine the extent of improvement in students' learning outcomes, the normalized gain (N-Gain) was calculated. The results indicate an N-Gain value of 0.1568, which falls within the low category. Nevertheless, within the context of a short-duration workshop intervention, this value still represents a meaningful improvement in learning outcomes.

The relatively low N-Gain value suggests that improvements in news literacy perceptions require sustained and continuous learning processes. The workshop functioned as an initial stimulus for raising students' awareness and knowledge related to news literacy; however, achieving higher levels of improvement would necessitate reinforcement through integrated instructional programs and repeated practice over time.

Normality Testing

Table 3. Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test of Students' Perception Scores

	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
diff_score	.110	91	.008	.957	91	.005

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Source: primary data's

A normality test was conducted using the Shapiro–Wilk test. The results yielded a significance value of 0.005 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the pre-test and post-test data were not normally distributed. Consequently, a nonparametric statistical test, namely the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, was selected for subsequent analysis.

The use of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was deemed appropriate due to the violation of the normality assumption and the paired nature of the data, which involved pre-test and post-test scores obtained from the same respondents.

Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Results

Table 4. Paired Sample Statistics (Wilcoxon Signed Rank Analysis)

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Post test – Pre test	Negative Ranks	18a	25.03	450.50
	Positive Ranks	64b	46.13	2952.50
	Ties	9c		
	Total	91		
a. Post test < Pre test				
b. Post test > Pre test				
c. Post test = Pre test				

Source: primary data's

The results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test show that 64 students experienced an increase in post-test scores compared to pre-test scores, 18 students experienced a decrease, and 9 students showed no change. These findings indicate that the majority of participants demonstrated improved news literacy perceptions following the workshop intervention.

	Post test – Pre test
Z	-5.788b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	
b. Based on negative ranks.	

Source: primary data's

The Wilcoxon test statistics revealed a Z value of -5.788 with a significance level of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This result confirms the presence of a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores, indicating that the news literacy workshop

had a significant effect on improving senior high school students' news literacy perceptions.

Effect Size Analysis

Beyond statistical significance, the magnitude of the workshop's impact was assessed through effect size calculations. The Wilcoxon effect size yielded a value of $r = 0.61$, which is categorized as a large effect. Additionally, the calculation of Cohen's d produced a value of 1.53, indicating a very large effect size.

Effect size r:

$$.r = \frac{Z}{\sqrt{N}}$$

$$.r = \frac{5.788}{\sqrt{91}} = 0.61$$

Cohen's d

$$.d = \frac{2r}{\sqrt{1-r^2}}$$

$$.d = \frac{2(0.61)}{\sqrt{1-0.61^2}} = \frac{12134}{0.795} = 1.53$$

These results demonstrate that the news literacy workshop was not only statistically significant but also practically meaningful in enhancing students' news literacy perceptions. In other words, the intervention produced substantial changes in students' understanding and critical awareness of news and information.

Interpretation of Findings

The observed increase in students' news literacy perceptions following participation in the workshop provides empirical support for the effectiveness of educational interventions grounded in media literacy principles. These findings align with previous research indicating that news literacy programs can enhance individuals' abilities to understand, analyze, and evaluate media information critically.

However, several indicators related to media behavior change—such as habits of verifying information prior to sharing news and ethical practices in commenting on social media—exhibited less substantial improvement. This pattern suggests that behavioral change requires a longer period of habituation compared to increases in knowledge and awareness.

The workshop also succeeded in increasing students' sensitivity to media operations. Students' ability to recognize media bias through comparison of different media perspectives increased by 0.37, while theoretical understanding of media bias increased by 0.25. The most pronounced improvements were observed in students' technical competencies related to information verification.

Prior to the workshop, students recorded the lowest scores on indicators related to the use of fact-checking tools such as Google Fact Check (Mean = 2.34) and reverse image search techniques (Mean = 2.44). Following the workshop, these indicators showed significant increases of 0.58 and 0.55, respectively, demonstrating the effectiveness of introducing digital verification tools.

Overall, the findings confirm that news literacy workshops serve as an effective initial strategy for enhancing senior high school students' news literacy perceptions. To achieve more sustainable and long-term impacts, news literacy programs should be systematically integrated into formal curricula and supported by school and family environments that are themselves media literate.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that news literacy workshops are effective in enhancing senior high school students' perceptions of news literacy, both statistically and practically. This conclusion is supported by the observed increase in post-test mean scores compared to pre-test scores, as well as by the results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, which indicate a statistically significant difference between students' news literacy perceptions before and after the intervention. Furthermore, the large to very large effect size values confirm that the workshop produced a substantial and meaningful impact on students' understanding and critical awareness in relation to news consumption.

Although the normalized gain (N-Gain) value was categorized as low, this outcome is understandable given that the intervention was implemented in the form of a short-term workshop, whereas news literacy represents a complex and higher-order cognitive competence that requires sustained instructional engagement. In this regard, the workshop functioned effectively as an initial stimulus for raising students' awareness and foundational knowledge of news literacy, but it should not be viewed as a standalone solution.

Accordingly, while news literacy workshops represent an effective preliminary strategy for strengthening students' news literacy perceptions, their impact would be significantly enhanced through systematic integration into formal educational curricula. Such integration should be supported by continuous pedagogical reinforcement and by learning environments—both within schools and families—that actively promote critical engagement with media. Through these efforts, news

literacy education can contribute more effectively to the development of informed, critical, and responsible digital citizens.

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