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# FACT-CHECKING

in the age of

# DISINFORMATION

academe's initiative

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# **INITIATIVES & INSIGHTS**

- **Disinformation in the Philippines**
- **Fact-checking in the Classroom**
- **Disinformation Research**

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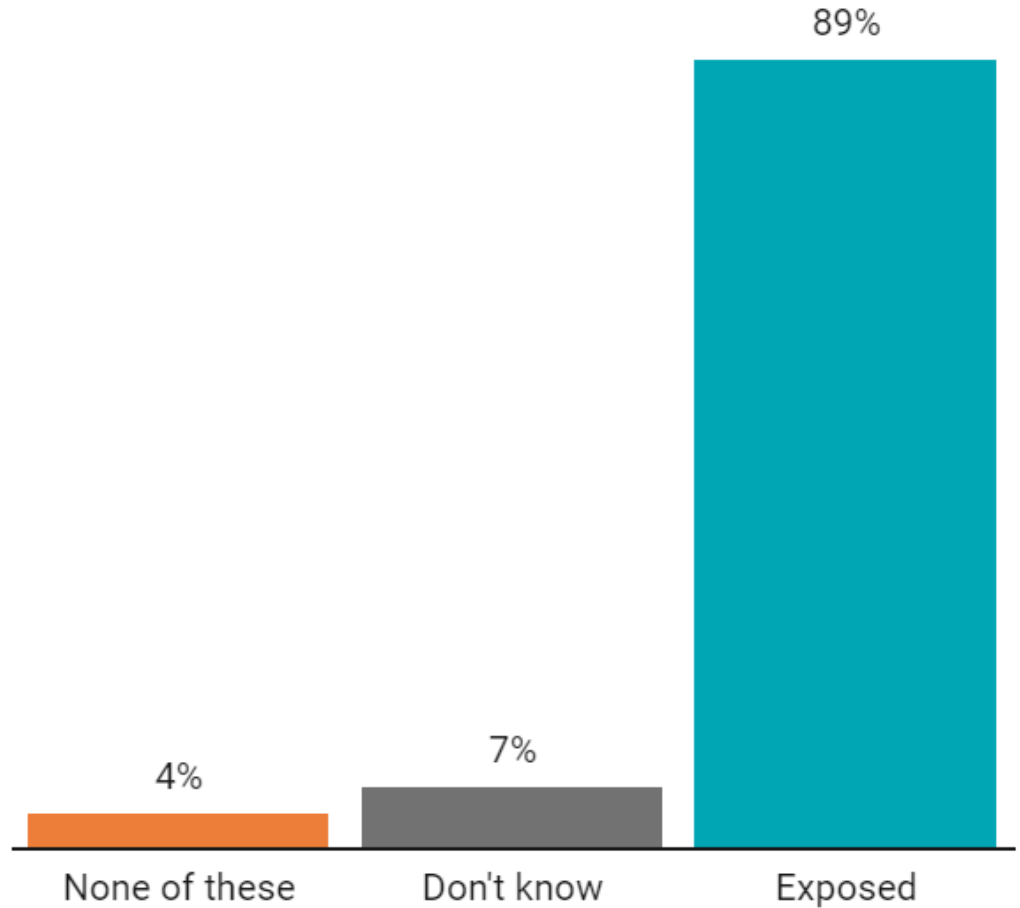
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# **Disinformation in the Philippines**

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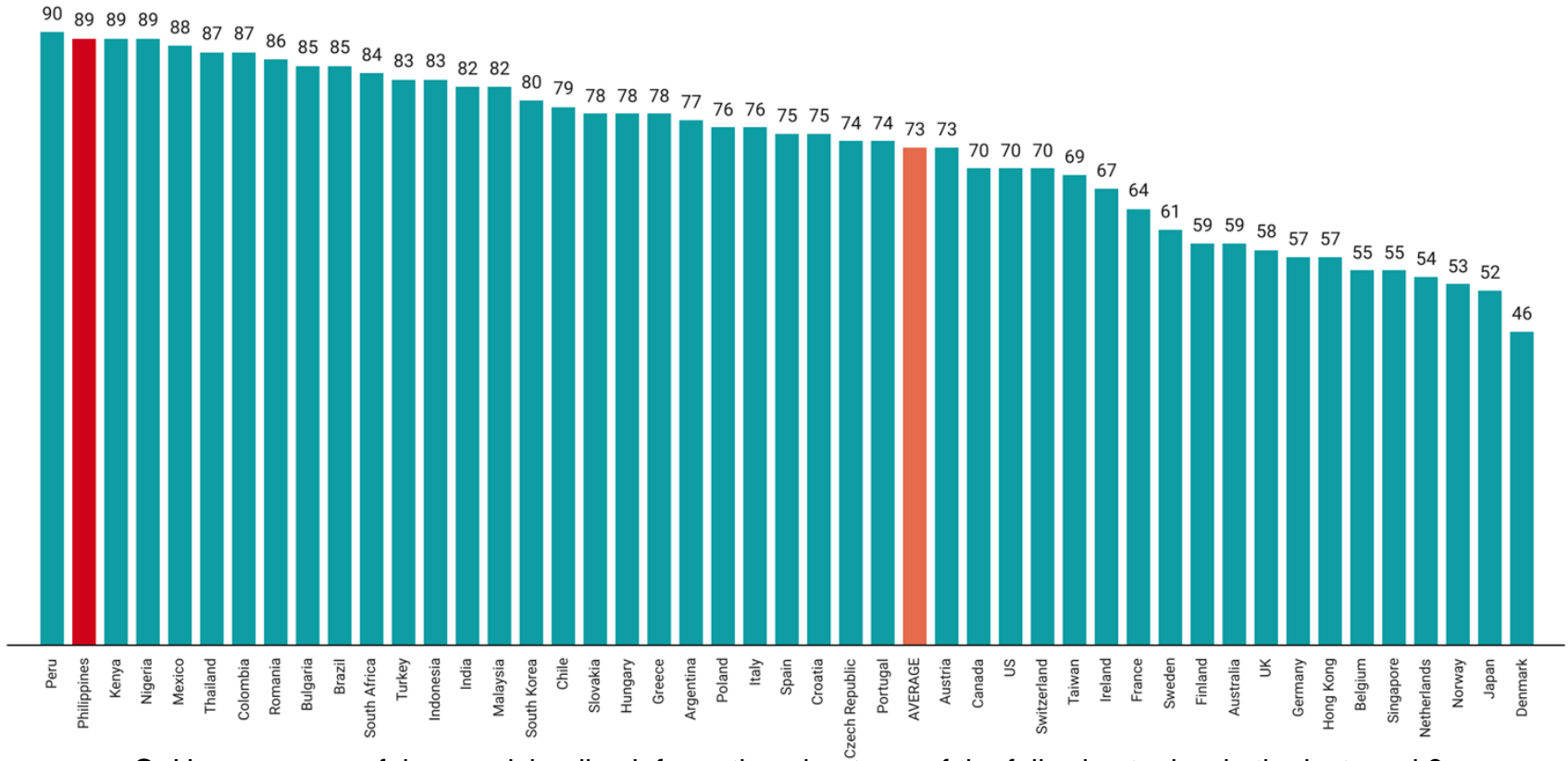
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# Self-reported EXPOSURE to disinformation: Philippines



Q: Have you seen false or misleading information about any of the following topics, in the last week? (Digital News Report 2021)

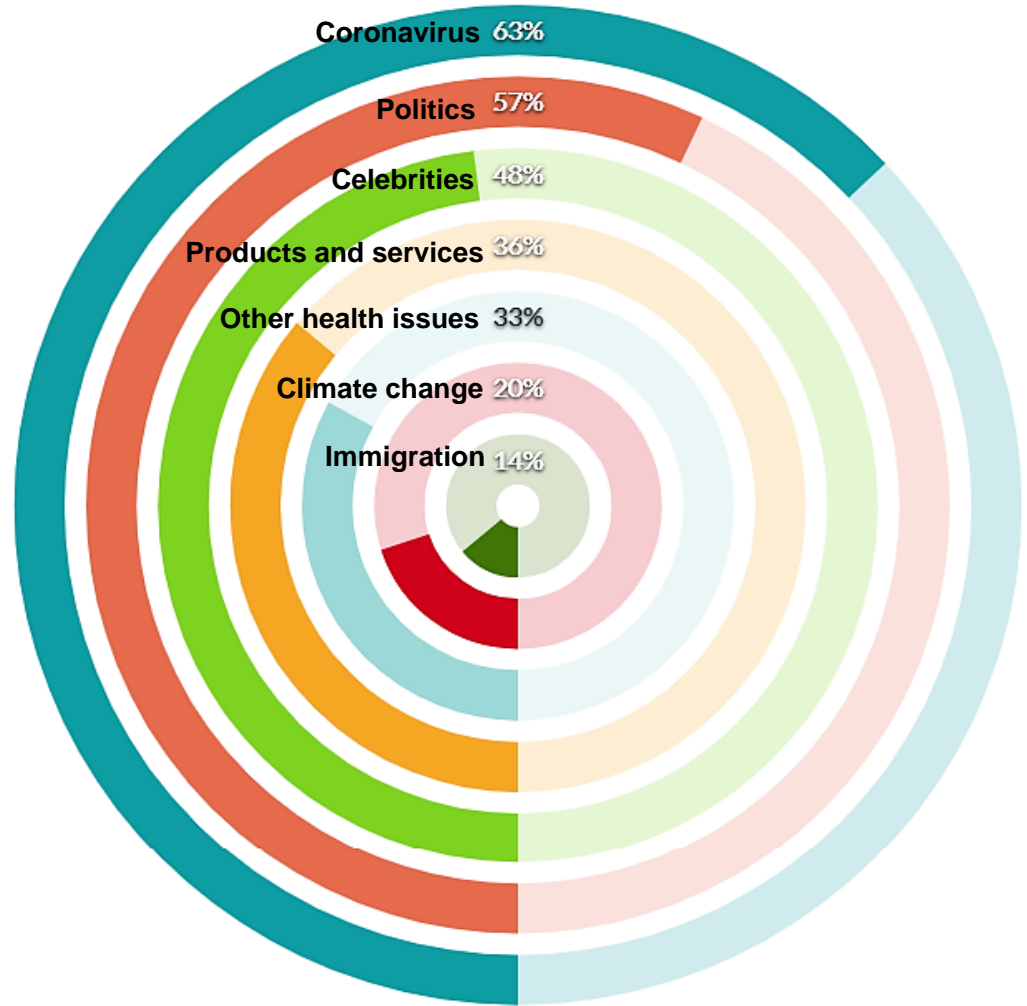
# Self-reported EXPOSURE to disinformation: 46 markets



Q: Have you seen false or misleading information about any of the following topics, in the last week?  
(Digital News Report 2021)







# Disinformation by TOPIC

PH respondents



# SOURCES of Disinformation

PH respondents

	2020 (all topics)	2021 (coronavirus)
politicians 	44%	34%
ordinary people 	15%	19%
journalists 	15%	11%
activists 	11%	10%
foreign governments 	9%	10%
celebrities 		6%

Q: Which of the following, if any, are you most concerned about online?  
Please select one. False or misleading information **FROM**... (Digital News Reports 2020, 2021)

# CHANNELS of Disinformation

PH respondents



50%  
Facebook



14%  
News websites



11%  
Messaging apps



6%  
YouTube



5%  
Search engines

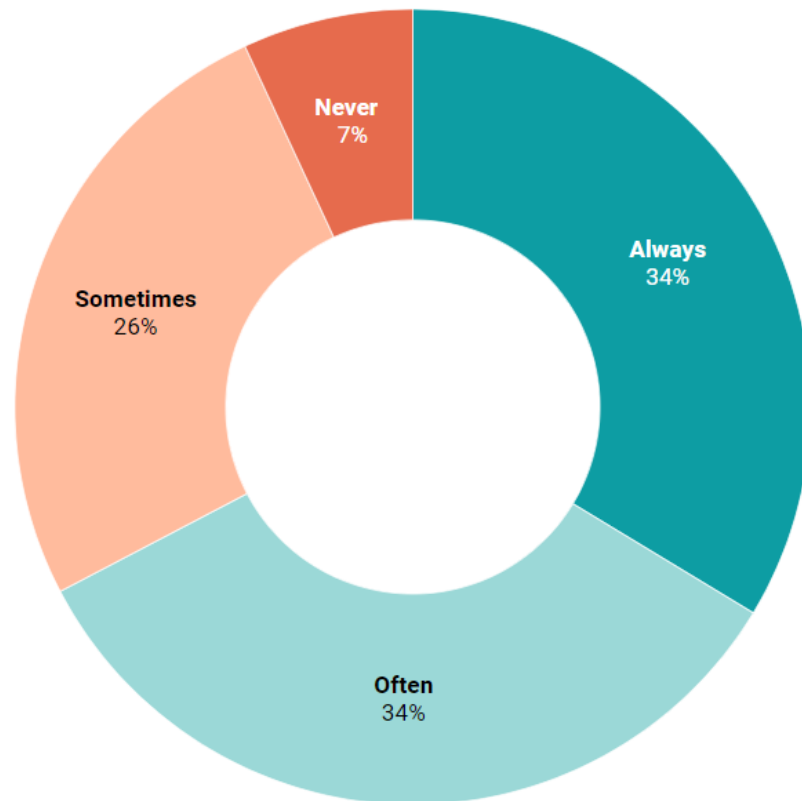


4%  
Twitter

Q: Which of the following, if any, are you most concerned about online?  
Please select one. False or misleading information **VIA...** (Digital News Reports 2021)



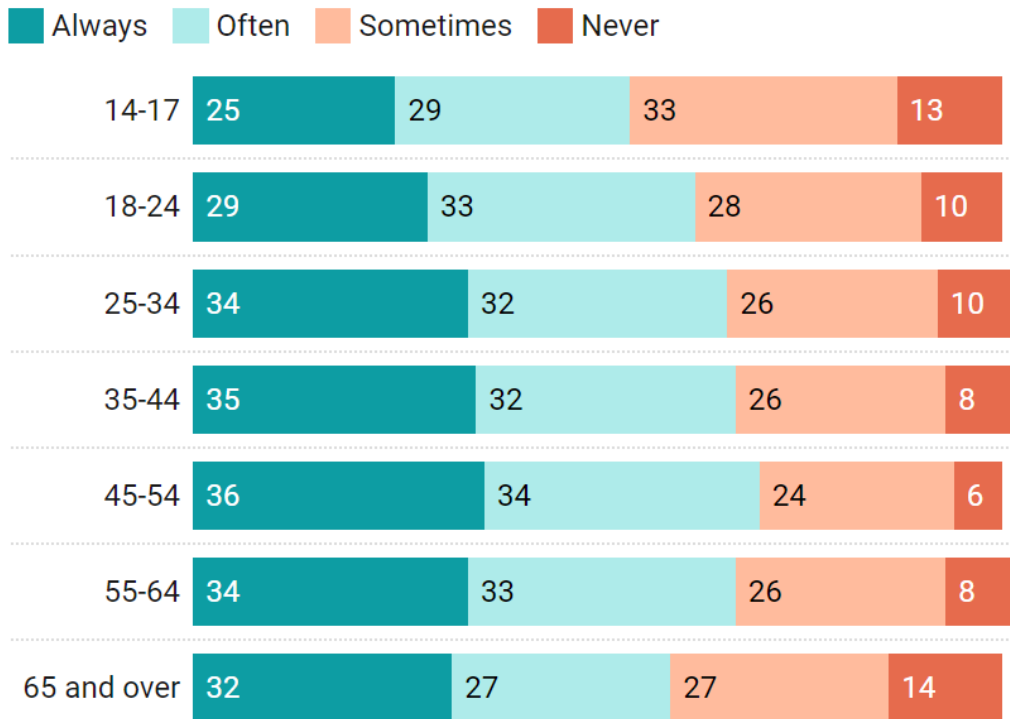
# Verification HABIT



*Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding*

Q: How often do you verify a news story? (Media and Disinformation in the Philippines 2021)

# Verification HABIT



*Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding*

Q: How often do you verify a news story? (Media and Disinformation in the Philippines 2021)

# OBSTACLES to Verification

Not enough time

33%

I don't know how to

20%

No need to because I trust the source

17%

It is not my responsibility

16%

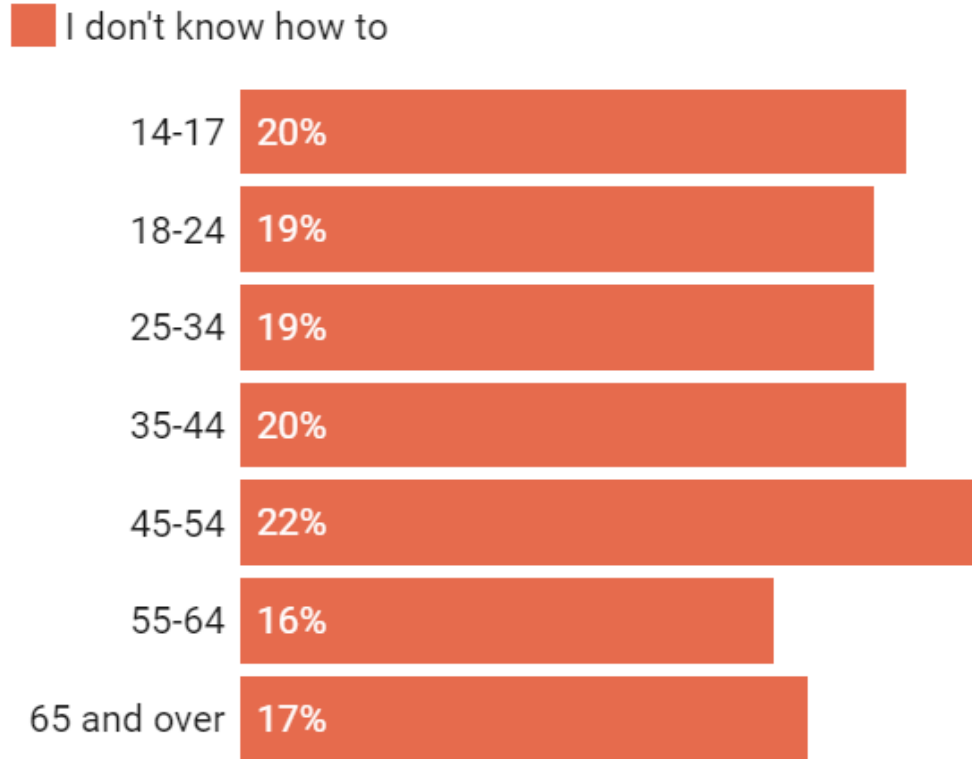
Can't be bothered because all media lie

14%

Q: What is the main reason you are unlikely to verify the information you consume?

# OBSTACLES to Verification

(Media and Disinformation in the Philippines)



Q: What is the main reason you are unlikely to verify the information you consume?

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# **Fact-Checking in the Classroom**

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# Journalism and Fact-checking

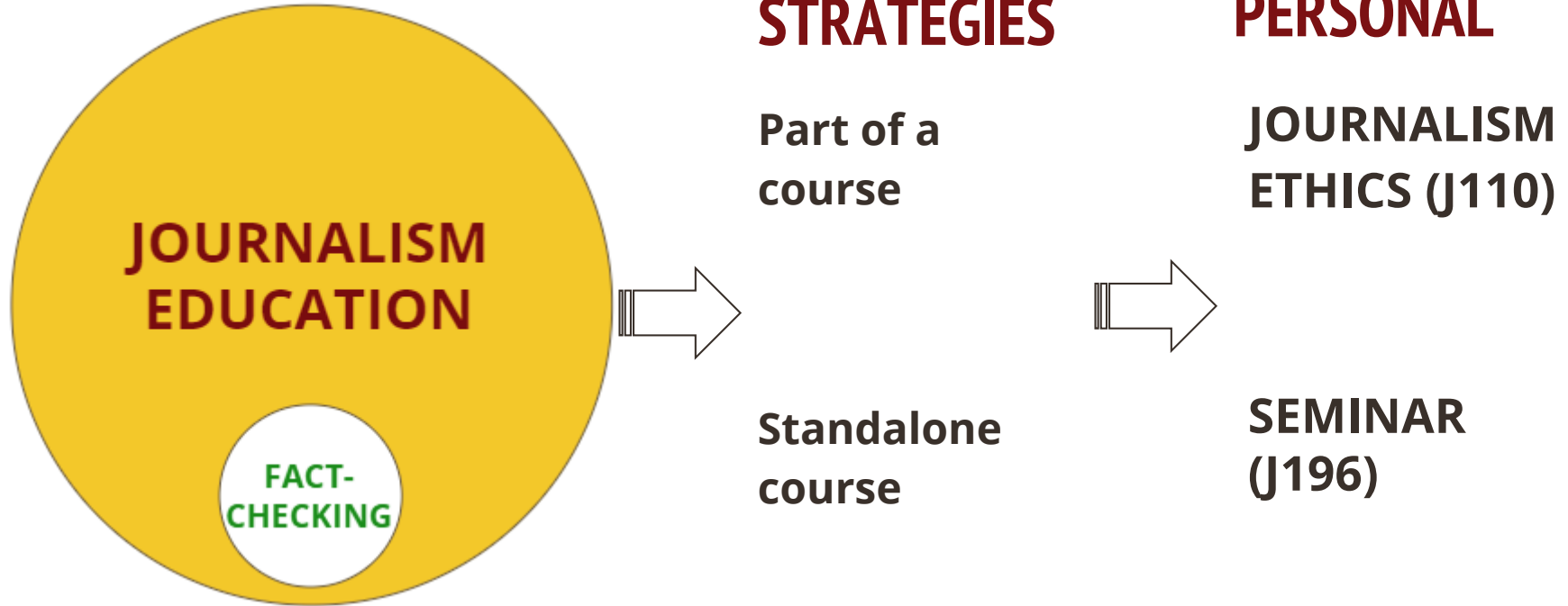
**JOURNALISM =  
Discipline of  
VERIFICATION**

**FACT-  
CHECKING**

**JOURNALISM  
EDUCATION**

**FACT-  
CHECKING**

# Fact-checking in J-school



2011

## Fact checking

Journalism  
Ethics:  
Truth-telling,  
accuracy,  
verification

**PolitiFact.com**  
from St. Petersburg Times

Home | Article | Truth-O-Meter | Obameter | Pig-O-Meter | Chain E-mails | About PolitiFact

Wednesday, January 14th, 2009

### Counting Obama's campaign promises

We scour Obama's position papers and speeches and find Obama made 510 campaign promises. We'll be tracking them with our new Obameter.

2.2.0909E

More from PolitiFact:

- Editor's Note: Introducing the Obameter
- PolitiFact: Will Obama Swear Off?

Changes to believe in: Obama promised 510 of them.

**OBAMETER**

"I want you to hold our government accountable. I want you to hold me accountable."  
— Barack Obama

"Yes, we will." — PolitiFact

#### Tracking Obama's promises

Promises Kept	2
Compromises	0
Promises Broken	0
Stalled	0
In the Works	3
No Action	0

PolitiFact will be tracking Barack Obama's promises during his presidency and will be rating the progress of each one. 2.2.0909E

#### Promises we have rated recently

No. 488:  
Reduce federal deficit at the 2010 deadline  
NO ACTION

No. 502:  
Get the Savannah 820000  
IN THE WORKS

### The Truth-O-Meter

A scorecard separating fact from fiction

	HALF TRUE
	HALF TRUE



2015



## Verification assignment

by [Yvonne Chua](#) - Wednesday, 28 October 2015, 2:10 PM

Hi, everyone.

I've uploaded the PDF version of [Verification Handbook: A definitive guide to verifying digital content for emergency coverage](#). You'll find it in the Topic 1 tab. For those who prefer to read the book online, here's the

URL: <http://verificationhandbook.com/book/>

Instructions:

1. Verify a UGC, image OR video you find on social media
2. Use the verification checklist:
  - o Provenance: Is this the original piece of content?
  - o Source: Who uploaded the content?
  - o Date: When was the content created?
  - o Location: Where was the content created?
3. Use the tools suggested by the applicable chapter (Verifying User-Generated Content, Verifying Images, Verifying Video)
4. Share your output in this thread. Post the text, image or video and your discovery for everyone to view. Don't attach the Word file.

Journalism  
Ethics:  
Truth-telling,  
accuracy,  
verification

# Journalism Ethics: Fact-checking the elections

2016

## Is that so? Belgica's flat tax rate

MAY 4, 2016

### IS THAT SO?

**STATEMENT:** Independent senatorial candidate Greco Belgica was asked in a television interview on March 15 what his first bill would be if he won a seat in the Senate. He said he would push for a flat tax system on personal income.

*"Flat rate, meaning if you make P1 million, you pay P100,000. If you make P10,000 you pay P1,000... 10 percent flat rate. Ginagawa na po 'to sa halos mahigit kalahati (Many are doing this)... China, Russia, the biggest and strongest nations of the world, are flat tax."*

The income tax rate in the country ranges from 5 to 32 percent.

Source: The People's Republic of China Tax Facts and Figures—2015

—Mark Kevin Reginio

*(The contributor is one of the University of the Philippines journalism majors who are fact-checking candidates for their Journalism Ethics [J110] course taught by VERA Files trustee Yvonne T. Chua.)*

# Journalism Ethics: Post-2016 elections

2016



FACEBOOK



## How did VERA Files Fact Check begin?

It started during the 2016 presidential elections as a class activity of VERA Files cofounder and then trustee Yvonne T. Chua at the University of the Philippines where she teaches journalism. Chua's students fact-checked statements made by candidates for national positions, applying guidelines used by fact-checkers in other parts of the world. She and VERA Files writer Jake Soriano worked closely on the activity and posted the output in VERA Files under the "Is that so?"

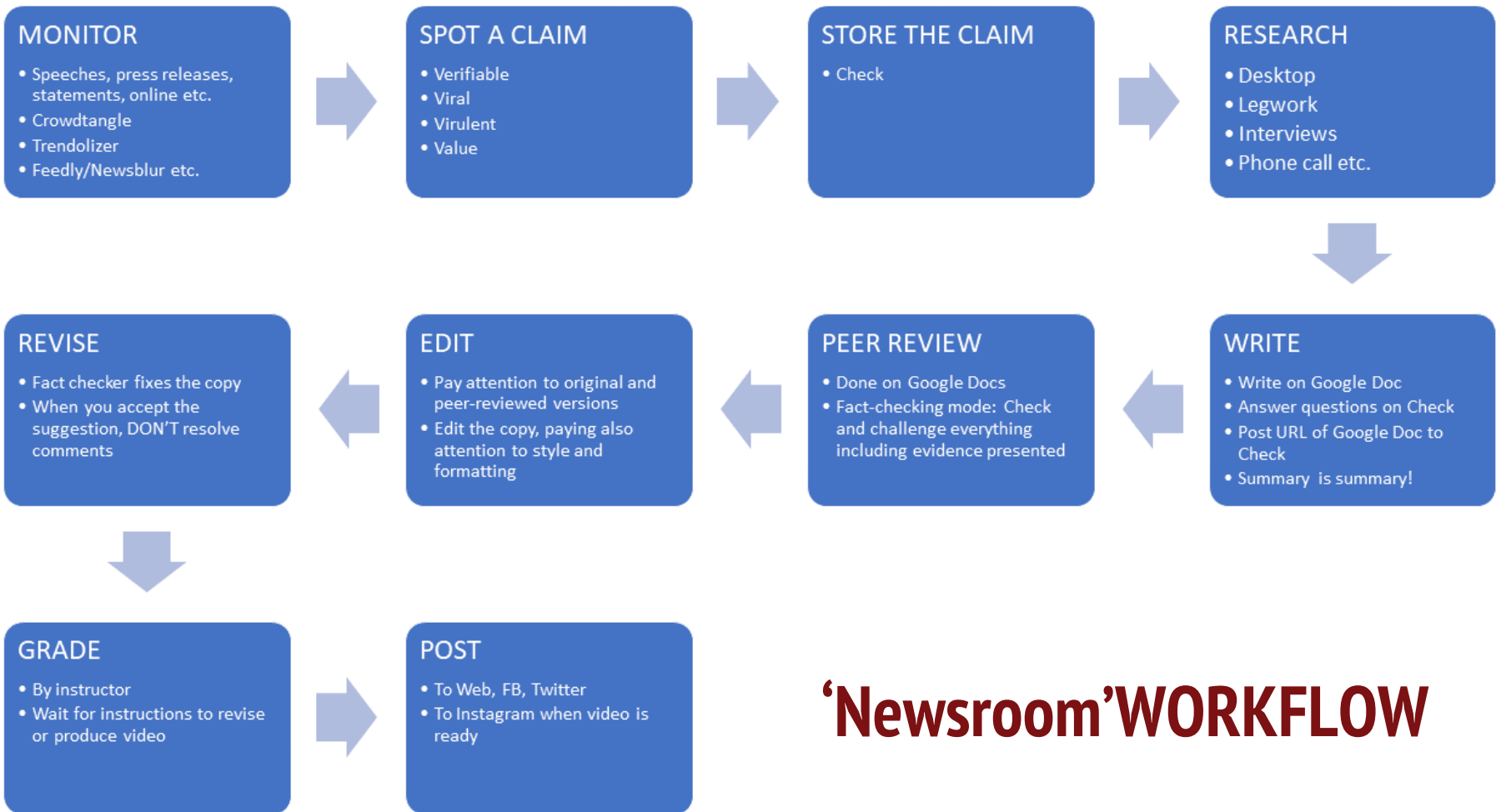
Verifying Textual Claims	Verifying Visual Claims	Understanding Disinformation
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- History and Process of Fact-Checking
- Fact-Checkable Claims
- Digging up the Facts
- Packaging the Fact Check
- Code of Principles

- Process of Verification
- Provenance
- Digital Footprints
- Date and Time
- Geolocation

- History of Disinformation and Fake News
- Mapping the Information Disorder Landscape
- Information Disorder in the Philippines
- **The COVID-19 Disinfodemic**

# Journalism Seminar: 2017–present



# 'Newsroom'WORKFLOW

# Research: Elements of information disorder



# Research: Phases of information disorder



# 2018

## Tinig ng Plaridel

Tinig ng Plaridel is the Official Student Publication of the UP College of Mass Communication.

**STAND UP** councilor candidate wrongly states that gov't requires jeepney operators to have at least 10 jeepneys.

FACT CHECK 

By Richard De Leon (J 196 WUV)

**CLAIM:** [REDACTED], who is running for University Student Council (USC) councilor under Student Alliance for the Advancement of Democratic Rights (STAND UP), claimed April 18 that public utility jeepney operators are required to have a minimum of 10 jeepney units in order to be granted a franchise under the government's jeepney modernization program.

## ALYANSA councilor bet claims OCG lacks psychiatrists and professionals. This is misleading.

 TINIG NG PLARIDEL · FRIDAY, APRIL 27, 2018

By Karmela Gonzales (from J 196 class)

**CLAIM:** [REDACTED] a University Student Council (USC) councilor candidate running under UP Alyansa ng mga Mag-aaral para sa Panlipunang Katwiran at Kaunlaran (UP ALYANSA), said on April 25 the Office of Counseling and Guidance (OCG) does not have psychiatrists and professionals available to help address the mental health needs of the students.

"...We have to strengthen the offices that we have right now, that will help people with mental health problems. *Andito na yung* OCG, the Office of Counsel and Guidance (*sic*), at the same time *nandito yung* sa Department of Psychology, *yung* Psych Serve. *Pero* right now, *ano ba yung mga issues sa mga offices na 'to?* *Sobrang daming demand ng mga* UP students when it comes to mental health services, *pero sobrang konti ng slots kasi hindi napaprioritize ng* UP administration. *Kaya* we have to institutionalize psychiatrists in the OCG. **In the OCG right now, nakikita natin na wala silang mga psychiatrists, wala silang mga professionals** (There are the Office of the Counseling and Guidance and the Department of Psychology or Psych Serve. But what are the issues concerning these offices? The demand of UP students when it comes to mental health services is high, but only few are attended to because the UP administration is not making mental health care a priority. So we have to institutionalize psychiatrists in the OCG. **In the OCG right now, we can see there are no psychiatrists, there are no professionals**)."



2019

# Tsek.ph

Home About Tsek.Ph Ratings Corrections Copyright Submit A Claim

Senate bill goes after online 'fake news,' but Tsek.ph data point to wider problem

Jake C. Soriano and Yvonne T. Chua, UP Journalism Department Thu, 09/26/2019 - 15:40



Panelo's solution to copy US model to stop vote-buying NEEDS CONTEXT

VERA Files Fri, 05/31/2019 - 17:20



Duterte Youth's Cardema leaves a trail of false claims on party nominees

VERA Files Fri, 05/31/2019 - 17:15



### Academic Partners



Interaksyon



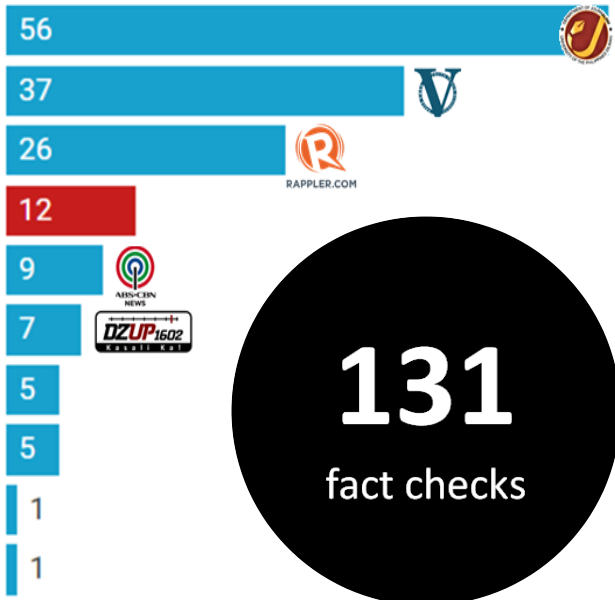
### Media Partners



With Support From



Macararas Journalism Grant



2019

Home Snippets About Contact

f @ t r Log In



Our Posts

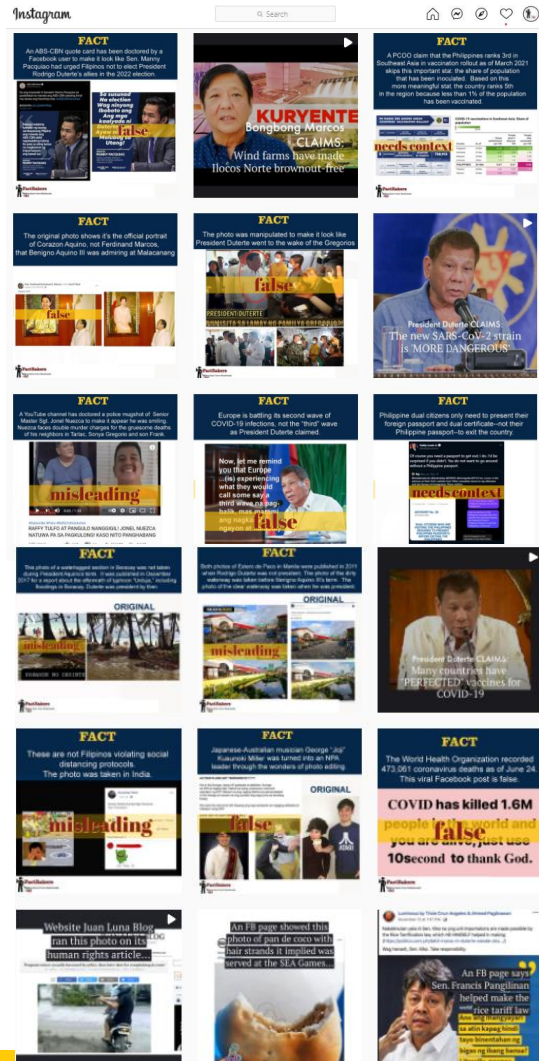
Search..



Jun 11 • 3 min

# Bongbong Marcos errs in claiming Ilocos Norte is brownout-free

Ilocos Norte still experiences power outages even with its three wind power plants, contrary to a recent claim of former senator and...



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# **Disinformation Research**

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# Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2021

10<sup>TH</sup> EDITION

Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism | Digital News Report 2021

## PHILIPPINES

### STATISTICS

Population **111m**  
Internet penetration **78%**



Major revenue drops arising from prolonged COVID-19

lockdowns have forced significant downsizing of the Philippine media. The media environment has also been reshaped by the closure of a major free-to-air TV network, journalists that have been critical of the government continue to face attacks and online harassment.

The Philippines somewhat defies the trend in many countries that has seen TV viewing surge as lockdowns grounded people at home. By February this year, at the time the Digital News Report survey was conducted, TV usage had slid to 6% (-55%) with an even larger decline in print consumption to 16% (-65%). The decline in TV viewing may have been partly influenced by the closure of ABS-CBN's free-to-air stations after the House of Representatives refused to renew its franchise to operate. The once profitable media giant continues online and via a number of pay television channels but had lost nearly 2,000 of its 11,000 employees, including a third from its news staff and chunked up losses of \$10m as of the third quarter of 2020.

By contrast, the rival GMA Network enjoyed a 29% jump in profits (US\$40.6m), from the previous year for the same period, while other big publicly listed media houses reported significantly reduced profit. Besides benefiting from the ad revenue advertising resulting from ABS-CBN's closure, GMA's online and digital ad sales grew 36%. It has launched a DTT receiver, GMA A+ for Dabao, and mobile song, GMA Now.

Many big television networks have taken to rebranding or reformulating programmes in a bid to engage consumers. Manila

Broadcasting Company replaced IZ104 Network News with MBC Network News, which now simulcasts three times a day on its flagship and several other radio and television stations. TV's converted its primetime newscast Atoan to Frontline Pilipinas and raised more anchors. Last February, GMA Network rebranded GMA News TV, its second free-to-air channel, as TV G (Good TV), adding more sports, entertainment, and lifestyle programmes to its existing line-up of news and current affairs programmes.

The newspaper industry has been hit particularly hard as COVID-19 curtailed distribution. The Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI), one of the biggest dailies, offered early retirement to employees, let go of several columnists, shut down its Metro section, and shrank the number of its pages. Earlier, it ceded to free paper Inquirer Libre and tabloid Banar, keeping the latter only online. In March, PDI launched a digital subscription package where its Inquirer Plus mobile app combines access to one of eight local newspaper partners. It says this strategy will help local journalism remain sustainable and is in keeping with the growing subscription model worldwide.

At least a dozen big community papers temporarily ceased publication, returning later in the year with reduced pages or frequency. The new paper association Philippine Press Institute has been supporting struggling community papers by paying for some of the stories they post on its website. PPI News Commons.

Going digital makes sense in a country that spends the greatest amount of time online in the world (nearly 11 hours per day, particularly on social media, more than four hours)<sup>16</sup>. Social media as a source of news has risen to 72% (+4) in our survey, with TikTok even becoming a destination for news among Filipinos (6%) alongside Facebook (73%), YouTube (23%), Facebook Messenger (36%), and Twitter (19%).

Despite the overall slight drop in podcast investment from a year ago (-20% to 54%), podcasting remains especially popular with younger users. A survey for Spotify nears this issue<sup>17</sup> comparing the platform to sign up 16 Filipino podcasts exclusively.



Locally produced news and current affairs podcasts include those from ANC, Puna Podcast, and the Manila Times. PDI and the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism are new entrants.

Over the past year, a number of Filipino journalists have been dogged by 'red-tagging' where they are labelled state enemies, subversives, or communists by the police and military, including via social media. In September, Facebook removed more than 100 fake accounts traced to police and military units in the Philippines for engaging in 'coordinated inauthentic behaviour'<sup>18</sup>. Maria Resia and Rogelio continue to be the subject of political attacks and a series of threats and lawsuits that Reporters Without Borders describe as 'a clear and present danger to press freedom'. She is not alone. One female editor from the red-tagged alternative news site Manila Today was arrested on charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives on 10 December. International Human Rights Day - though she was released months later. In Central Philippines, a 22-year-old 'red-tagged' female journalist has been languishing in jail for more than a year on charges of illegal possession of firearms.

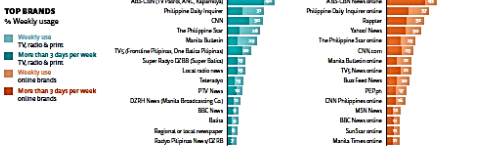
Meanwhile, a bill seeking to renew the franchise of ABS-CBN has been filed in both chambers of Congress. But chances that the network would operate its free-to-air stations again while President Rodrigo Duterte is in office appear to be slim.

Wynne T. Chia  
University of the Philippines

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/digital/2021>  
<sup>17</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/news/2021/04/09/spotify-reports>  
<sup>18</sup> <http://2021/03/09/philippines-foreign-embassy-press>

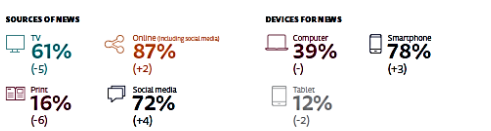
143 | 143

### WEEKLY REACH ONLINE AND OFFLINE



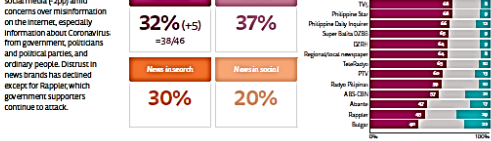
### CHANGING MEDIA

Dependence on smartphones to access online news, including on social media, has grown among Filipinos (+30%) during what was one of the world's longest lockdowns due to COVID-19. Not surprisingly, consumption of traditional media, particularly print, has gone down.

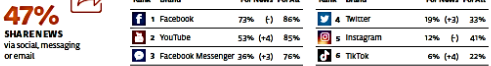


### TRUST

Overall trust in news among Filipino internet users has risen (+5%), but has fallen in social media (a 3pp amt) concerns over misinformation on the internet, especially information about Coronavirus from government, politicians and political parties, and ordinary people. Distrust in news brands has declined except for Rappler which government supporters continue to attack.



### TOP SOCIAL MEDIA AND MESSAGING





## Electoral Disinformation: Looking Through the Lens of Tsek.ph Fact Checks

Yvonne T. Chua and Jake C. Soriano

Elections are fertile ground for disinformation. The 2019 midterm elections, like the 2016 presidential election, buttress this observation. This ugly side of electoral contests is documented by Tsek.ph, a pioneering collaborative fact-checking initiative launched by three universities and eleven newsrooms specifically for the midterms. Its repository of fact checks provides valuable insights into the nature of electoral disinformation before, during and after the elections. Clearly, electoral disinformation emanates from candidates and supporters alike, on conventional (e.g., speeches and sorties) and digital (e.g., social media) platforms. Its wide range of victims includes the media no less.

*Keywords:* Philippines, elections, Tsek.ph, fact-checking, journalism

If there was one bright spot in the May 13, 2019 Philippines midterm elections, that certainly would be the groundbreaking collaborative fact-checking initiative undertaken by media and academia to help counter the escalation of political disinformation in the country.

Launched February 11, the eve of the campaign period, Tsek.ph was instrumental in addressing newsroom rivalry and other barriers that for years had deterred newsrooms from working alongside one another, not even after the Philippines was dubbed “Patient Zero” of the modern disinformation age as early as 2016 (Rappler, 2018).

During the presidential election that year, an insidious, sophisticated network of disinformation players emerged on social media, particularly on Facebook, dominated by the camp of then candidate and now president Rodrigo Duterte (Bradshaw & Howard, 2017). Disinformation would worsen and take various forms under the Duterte presidency, with the Philippines quickly and consistently making it to the list of countries identified as being engaged in state-led social media manipulation “Freedom on the Net 2017: Manipulating social media to undermine democracy,” 2017; Freedom on the Net 2018: The rise of digital authoritarianism,” 2018).

Modeled on successful fact-checking collaborations during elections elsewhere—France, Brazil and Indonesia, among them—Tsek.ph brought into its fold eleven newsrooms, national and regional alike (ABS-CBN, Baguio Midland Courier, CLTV 36, DZUP 1602, Interkasyon, Mindanews,

## From Infodemic to Disinfodemic: A Typology of COVID-19 Disinformation Debunked by Fact-Checkers in the Philippines

Ma. Diosa Labiste and Yvonne T. Chua

### Abstract

*This study constructs a typology of COVID-19 related disinformation in the Philippines that the fact-checking projects of Rappler and Vera Files systematically verified from March to May 2020, the period which coincides with the hard lockdown imposed by the government in a bid to curb the pandemic. Drawing some of the categories from studies of the World Health Organization, UNESCO, and First Draft, and from the code of principles and methodology of fact-checking from the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN), as well as from the normative standards of journalism on truth-telling and fairness, this study examines 148 fact checks from the two fact-checking organizations to determine the types of disinformation. The study adopted the term infodemic, which is the prevalence related to COVID-19, and disinfodemic, which is the prevalence of the infodemic. Results show that disinformation verified by fact-checkers fall primarily under these categories: (1) interventions such as cures, remedies, and claims of available vaccines, (2) impact of the pandemic on society and the environment, especially the panic and confusion it created, (3) predominance of claims rated “false,” (4) persistence of text-and-visual formats (5) preponderance of official and authority-sourced evidence over scientific studies, and (6) preference for celebrities-focused disinformation. The categories reveal the strengths and limitations of fact-checking projects, in terms of content and methodology, to deal with disinfodemic at the height of the hard lockdown in the Philippines.*

*Keywords:* disinformation, infodemic, disinfodemic, fact-checking

## Southeast Asia: Contact Tracing A COVID-19 Hoax

YVONNE T CHUA\*



14 JANUARY 2021 | REPORTING ASEAN

**MANILA** – The diet hoax—that eating high-alkaline foods could beat COVID-19—should have died down by now. After all, science experts and fact checkers across the globe had been quick to bust it when it came out.

But the fact that the erroneous claim has lingered on social media for nine months attests to the staying power of the disinfodemic that accompanies the pandemic.

Southeast Asia, in no way immune to the wealth and waves of misinformation spurred by the outbreak of the SARS-CoV-2 in late 2019, has partly contributed to the longevity of the lie. For one, many Facebook groups touting an alkaline diet as prevention or cure for COVID-19 were, as of late December, still spreading this from Indonesia, with a couple from Myanmar. What transpires

# **VALUE of Fact-Checking**

- **Evidence-based correction**
- **Swift response**
- **Foil vs data voids**
- **Influence on knowledge**
- **Can be taught**
- **Support for fact-checking**