THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FACT-CHECKING
IN IMPROVING THE MEDIA LITERACY OF STUDENT YOUTH

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Abstract. *The essence of psychological fact-checking and its role in improving the media literacy of student youth in Ukraine is considered in this article. Media literacy, the ability to think critically and correctly consume information is key skills of the population of the 21st century. Media literacy in Ukraine is a mandatory direction for the development of a democratic state. Military actions in Ukraine and other threats to national security emphasize the importance of media literacy of the population to fight on the information front.*

After studying the phenomena of «post-truth», «fake information», «media literacy», «fact-checking» and «psychological fact-checking», it became clear how important this topic is. Today we live in the so-called digital age, so it is important for everyone, especially for young people, to develop together with the trends of information and communication technologies in order to understand correctly what is being spread. Each message affects the consumer of information and shapes his perception, behavior and choice. If media literacy is not implemented and regulated at the state level, it may lead to the appearance of new threats to the state from its own population. The article also provides practical recommendations for the implementation of state policy in the field of media literacy, first of all, of student youth in Ukraine, because the implementation of this policy today, more than ever before, is a necessary and important tool for the development of the self-awareness of a true Ukrainian, the Ukrainian nation, the basis of which and now, and in the future, it is the youth of Ukraine that makes up and will make up. It is proposed to implement the state policy in the field of media literacy with the involvement of the national project «Filter», which is subordinate to the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine.

Keywords: *post-truth, fake information, media literacy, fact-checking, psychological fact-checking, fact-checker, media trend, resource, communication, «Filter» project.*

Formulation of the problem. A modern person is almost constantly in the media environment: reading the news in the morning over coffee, watching YouTube while cooking, listening to music or an audiobook while driving, communicating with friends on social networks, and sharing information publicly. The human brain depends on the information environment, because it immediately feels anxious if there is a lack of information. You could even say that the last 15 years or so, social media has taken the world by storm. The instant spread of fake news and misleading information through these channels is unfortunately a sign of our times. This phenomenon poses a risk to democracy, national security and social structure by undermining public trust in information.

The relevance of the work is due to the challenges of informational threats and current events, namely the massive influence on the human consciousness of Ukrainians through misinformation and hostile propaganda from the aggressor country of the russian federation. In order to counteract anti-

Ukrainian propaganda effectively, increase the level of media literacy of citizens, first of all, student youth, the concept of fact-checking, a kind of media trend with its unique features, structure and methodology of data verification, appeared in 2003. This is confirmed by the fact that today in the world there are about one and a half hundred media that work exclusively as fact-checkers. All of them collectively generate such a number of fact-check investigations that it allows them to compete with the media of the usual format (news, analytical, etc.), which allows them to have a permanent audience and possess the status of an expert mass media. Modern informational threats because of through various fakes affect the national security of the state, its territorial integrity and sovereignty, as well as the national consciousness of Ukrainians. Therefore, the role of psychological fact-checking in increasing the media literacy of modern youth that is the most active stratum of Ukrainian society is becoming not only significant, but also an important component of the state policy of Ukraine.

The analysis of the latest research on the issue of the article shows the increased interest of scientists and researchers in methods of exposing false content in the media space with the aim of increasing media literacy in Ukrainian society. Thus, the theoretical foundations of the fact-checking system and algorithms were formed in the works of O. Horohovskyi [2], C. Zabuga [3], P. Mena [8], and others. Among Ukrainian media workers, who, were relying on the verification of Western mass media [6; 7; 9], offers his own strategy for detecting lies and working with fact-checking through the «Filter» fact-checking project, I would like to single out the work of V. Kovtun [1]. However, this problem is still under-researched, so it is of scientific interest.

The purpose of the article is to analyze the phenomenon of psychological fact-checking in Ukraine, as well as its role in increasing the media literacy of student youth. To realize this goal, it is necessary to carry out a number of tasks, namely: 1) to analyze the reasons for the occurrence of fact-checking in Ukraine; 2) to investigate the state policy of implementing media literacy using the example of the state project «Filter» in Ukraine; 3) to develop the practical recommendations regarding state policy in the field of media literacy of student youth.

Presenting main material. Due to the increasing role of social networks, at the beginning of the 21st century, the concept of post-truth appears in the information space. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, post-truth is an attitude towards a situation in which people are more likely to accept an argument based on their emotions and beliefs rather than facts [6]. It is worth noting that the prefix «post-» means that the truth has been displaced, that is, it has become unimportant. And the main means of post-truth is fake information, because it has the ability to spread quickly through the network.

Online disinformation is a problem that crosses borders, both national and disciplinary. It is becoming more and more obvious that the solution of the problem cannot be found without substantial international and interdisciplinary cooperation. Thus, in the conditions of information wars and manipulations, the need to verify the reliability of information and facts circulating in our information environment is growing. That is why fact-checking appeared, which is translated from English means fact-checking. It should be noted that most of the world's fact-checking resources are focused on the verification of facts and data contained in public statements, informational messages, and others. In the field of fact-checking and information reliability, the main standards are set by the International Fact-checking Network, which was founded in 2015 at the Poynter Institute. The activity of this network

is focused on bringing together various fact-checking resources for the global fight against disinformation. Today, it unites about 100 organizations from more than 50 countries of the world. One of the main conditions for participants is that their editorial activity should not be under state or political control and influence [7].

In addition, this network has developed an international «Code of Principles», which fact-checkers must adhere to in their daily activities. In particular, the main principles include: 1) impartiality and honesty (fact-checking organizations must use the same fact-checking standard); 2) transparency of sources (all conclusions provided by fact-checking organizations were freely available to readers); 3) openness of information about funding sources and guaranteeing that sponsors will not affect information in various researches of the organization; 4) honesty in editorial activity; 5) transparency of the methodology of fact-checking activities (explanation of the methods used in the process of checking information) [9].

Fact-checking is a necessary mechanism to combat disinformation. Fact-checking has a clear structure, which includes the object of research it is an article or public statement that needs to be checked; the main essence of the question is the introductory part, which contains additional explanatory information; evidence, i.e. statistical data, facts, documents obtained from official sources; the conclusion is true, mostly true or false, mostly false or impossible to verify [2, p. 21].

Today, social networks have a tremendous impact on human behavior. In their spaces, you can express your thoughts, feelings, publish photos and videos on various topics. Also, the public, first of all, student youth takes an active part in creating and disseminating news through social networks. Accordingly, in such conditions, the number of fake news, false

and misleading information on the network is increasing. Therefore, it is important that social networks facilitate the verification of information on their platforms, because it is fake information that can significantly affect the course of political events, elections and, in general, the psyche of people. Thus, in 2021, under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy in Ukraine, a national media literacy project was created in Ukraine – «Filter» [4]. It was modern information threats that became a challenge for the creation of this project.

The main goal of the project is to increase the level of awareness of Ukrainians regarding the relevance of media literacy today and the impact of disinformation on human consciousness. Also, the project should become a platform for cooperation between the government and initiatives and international organizations and the involvement of stakeholders. The credo of the project «Media literacy is your filter for information consumption». The strategic objectives of the project are: 1) to create an informational and educational platform; 2) implement state policy in the field of media literacy; 3) inform citizens about possible projects and events; 4) involvement of stakeholders (natural and legal persons who have a legitimate interest in the organization's activities, i.e. depend on it to a certain extent or can influence its activities) for media research [4].

Project employees rely on the following principles in their work: use verified facts, research; interaction with international partners and involvement of best foreign practices; achieve the best results; targeting target audiences and regular communication. Specialists developed communication tasks of the project, which include: 1) to form a positive and expert reputation of the National Project «Filter» as a state representative in the field of media literacy and promote

the project among the target audience; 2) popularize the relevance and importance of media literacy in modern conditions; 3) develop the need for critical thinking skills as a necessity for existence in the information space; 4) to carry out active communication regarding the main events and initiatives and other activities of the project.

The main target audience of the «Filter» project, in addition to teachers and students, their parents, teachers and journalists, was precisely the youth of student age. During the short time of the project, initiatives were created or events were held in almost all regions of Ukraine: 1) the Data CTRL Center exhibition was organized in the Chernivtsi region; 2) an online seminar «Media literacy as a component of a teacher's information and digital competence» was held in the Rivne region; 3) the Media Literacy Labyrinth «Don't believe – check» was created in the Kyiv region; 4) a media school was organized within the framework of the Cherkasy Humanitarian and Legal Lyceum; 5) the module «Media literacy of a modern teacher: practical skills and integration into the educational process» was conducted in the Mykolaiv region; 6) media literacy program «I understand» was organized in Poltava, Kharkiv, Luhansk and Donetsk regions; 7) the exhibition ArtiFake: Art Invades Fake in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions; 8) organization of the project «Mist» – Stop the instrumentalization of history, schools of media literacy in the Donetsk region [3, p. 59-60].

Informal meetings were also held with representatives of the Ukrainian media for partnership, exchange of experience and improvement. During the discussions, it is discussed how to improve critical thinking and increase the media literacy of the population. The project leaders plan to cooperate with the UK government and the IREX international organization in the field of journalism and media education: launch an information campaign, create media resources and content, and share experiences.

The «Filter» project became a new breakthrough in the direction of media literacy in Ukraine. And media literacy has become an element of state policy. The future goal of the project is to raise the level of awareness of informational influences, disinformation and manipulation among the target population groups of Ukraine.

«Filter» does not suspend its activities even today, during the full-scale war of Russia against Ukraine. The main activity is focused on information content in social networks: Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, TikTok. The head of the «Filter» project became the organizer of online lectures for Ukrainians and offline ones abroad on the topic «Fact-checking in conditions of war». Media literacy experts have developed practical advice on how to consume properly and distribute information to users on social networks in wartime. The project also spreads the stories of the heroes of our time by conducting interviews, opposes fake news and spreads reliable information. Also, as part of the project, together with the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy in Ukraine, the Center for the Rule of Law, and the OSCE Coordination Center in Ukraine, «Advice for Journalists in Time of War» was developed [5].

On May 20, 2022, Filter became a finalist for the SABRE Awards 2022 communication award and received a Certificate of Excellence in the Best in Identity Branding category, which shows the good work of the team.

Recently, «Filtr» in cooperation with the Gwara Media mediaplatform held online lectures on various topics: Information psychological operation and russian disinformation, fact-checking and propaganda, are also considered comprehensive tools for checking content on the Internet [3, p. 61]. The key results of the

implementation of the «Filter» project under the leadership of the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy should be: the development of media education and a safe environment for the media and the strengthening of government communication. For the next five years, the main activity of the project should be popularization of the project and raising awareness about the effects of misinformation. But due to military actions, the project manager said that they had to «jump» to the next stage and start actively teaching practical skills to counter disinformation [1].

In Ukraine, the concept of fact-checking is currently represented by three resources: 1) Stopfake.org – the main activity is aimed at combating anti-Ukrainian propaganda, statements and facts aimed at discrediting Ukraine; 2) VoxCheck is founded and works on the basis of the independent analytical platform VoxUkraine and systematically verifies the statements of top politicians; 3) FactCheck is an analytical platform whose specialists, in addition to analyzing the statements of Ukrainian politicians and officials using the classic fact-checking method, develop new approaches and formats of fact-checking, carry out scientific and research activities in this direction, promote fact-checking in the regions of the country by conducting trainings [2, p. 10-11].

In addition to these resources, several popular domestic mass media from time to time publish investigative materials in the format of fact-checking or close to it. However, it is precisely the lack of systematicity in the submission of articles and the imperfect mastery of the fact-checking methodology that does not spread through the mentioned information platforms. So, fact-checking is a necessary component, a primary principle of media and information literacy of a responsible person in his information consumption. In essence, the fact-checker is to some extent an engaged subject, and therefore, he must check information for manipulation, populism and the presence of unreliable facts in the statements of official and public figures, leaders of public opinion, mass media, etc. [8, p. 659-660]. In this regard, the main goal of the fact-checker's work is not just to identify false information in public statements, but also to determine the reliability of the facts on which these statements are based, as well as to identify manipulative techniques and populist theses.

In general, the task of the fact checker is reduced to the following: 1) verification of facts and debunking their unreliability; 2) determination of causal relationships between them; 3) detection of signs of manipulation; 4) restoration and demonstration of the real picture of events; 5) expansion of knowledge and skills, improvement of general media culture and information literacy.

It is worth noting that establishing real cause-and-effect relationships, as well as manipulations around it, is no less important task than checking the facts themselves. Very often, real facts (or as close to them as possible) are announced in publications, messages, public statements, and the cause-and-effect relationships between them are deliberately distorted in order to obtain the necessary picture of perception. Fact checkers working with data verification systems have many tools available to them to conduct quality investigations. In their arsenal, they use a large number of sources of access to information for establishing the reliability of facts – from technical means and inside, official inquiries to open sets and databases.

In contrast to the usual, fact-check-investigation carries out data verification only with the help of open official sources, official requests, creation of its own documentary database. It should be noted that the use of

open official sources completely excludes the possibility of manipulation of facts and data by the fact-checker himself, minimizes his possible accusations of bias and involvement. At the same time, the use of open sources imposes certain restrictions on the possibility of quick fact checking due to possible procedural moments of request preparation, its registration, response of officials, etc. In addition, the information held by its manager belongs to the category of information with limited access and which cannot be made public or is restricted in making public. In addition, the disclosed information may threaten the life of another person or national security. In such cases, the information cannot be made public.

Digital technologies have significantly expanded both the channels of information promotion and the possibilities of its verification. As a result, the consumer audience has increased many times. On the other hand, an increasing number of people have access to various sources of information, opportunities for correlation and analysis. The negative consequences of this process include opportunities for increased abuse, use of influence technologies, and manipulation of public opinion. Recently, there has been an increase in the number of objects of verification – fact-check resources increasingly pay attention to: 1) public statements not only of officials, but also of leaders of public opinion; 2) messages not only in mass media, but also in social networks; 3) programs, strategies, plans, etc. of subjects of authority and officials; 4) social narratives, stereotypes and myths; 5) photo, video materials, etc.

The methodology of inspections of these objects is practically the same. Only the fact-checking mechanisms and tools differ.

Conclusions. First, fact-checking is the verification of facts to provide accurate, unbiased analysis of public statements in order to correct public misperceptions and raise awareness of important issues. It should be noted that the verification of information is carried out on the basis of official documents. Secondly, despite the sufficiently large number of fact-checking resources, the use of uniform rules and principles of work, the general methodology of fact-checking is not possible. They are unique in each country and are determined by political, social, cultural, mental, value and other factors. Thirdly, precisely because student youth is the main subject of fact-checking, systematic, purposeful work is needed to improve their general culture of media literacy and media hygiene, as well as the introduction of elements of fact-checking and data verification, work with information arrays and analysis into the educational courses of the Higher Education Institutions, its sources.

Prospects for further exploration. The conclusions formulated by us do not pretend to be a final solution to the problem of improving media literacy among student youth through the popularization of psychological fact-checking. First of all, it is necessary to form legal norms and laws at the state level that would define the following concepts: media literacy and media education, disinformation, etc. Increasing the level of media literacy among student youth also involves the creation of training courses on media education in educational institutions and conducting media education trainings. And, as you know, providing citizens with information security is the duty of the state, because information is a common good.

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РОЛЬ ПСИХОЛОГІЧНОГО ФАКТЧЕКІНГУ В ПІДВИЩЕННІ МЕДІАГРАМОТНОСТІ СТУДЕНТСЬКОЇ МОЛОДІ

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Анотація. У статті розкрито сутність психологічного фактчекінгу та його роль в підвищенні медіаграмотності студентської молоді в Україні. Медіаграмотність людини, вміння критично мислити та правильно споживати інформацію – є ключовими навичками населення у XXI столітті. Медіаграмотність в Україні є обов'язковим напрямком для розвитку демократичної держави. Воєнні дії в Україні та інші загрози національній безпеці

наголошують щодо важливості медіаграмотності населення для боротьби на інформаційному фронті.

Після дослідження феноменів «постправда», «фейкова інформація», «медіаграмотність», «фактчекінг» та «психологічний фактчекінг», стало зрозуміло, наскільки важливою є дана тематика. Сьогодні ми живемо в так звану цифрову епоху, тому кожному, особливо молодій людині, важливо розвиватися разом із тенденціями інформаційно-комунікативних технологій, щоб правильно розуміти, що поширюється. Якщо медіаграмотність не буде реалізувати та регулюватися на державному рівні, то це може призвести до появи нових загроз для держави з боку вже свого населення. У статті також надані практичні рекомендації щодо реалізації державної політики у сфері медіаграмотності, перш за все, студентської молоді в Україні, тому що впровадження даної політики сьогодні, як ніколи раніше, є необхідним та важливим інструментом розвитку самосвідомості справжнього українця, української нації, основу якої і зараз, і в майбутньому складає і буде складати саме молодь України. Реалізувати державну політику у сфері медіаграмотності пропонується із залученням національного проєкту «Фільтр», що підпорядковується Міністерству культури та інформаційної політики України.

Ключові слова: *постправда, фейкова інформація, медіаграмотність, фактчекінг, психологічний фактчекінг, фактчекер, медіа-тренд, ресурс, комунікація, проект «Фільтр».*

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