



The Role of Academic Librarians in Combating Misinformation and Disinformation in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Misinformation and disinformation have become pervasive global challenges, intensified by the rapid expansion of digital communication technologies. These phenomena threaten the credibility of academic institutions and the integrity of scholarly communication. This study aims to examine the role of academic librarians in mitigating misinformation and disinformation within Ghanaian universities. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected through structured questionnaires from 268 respondents out of a population of 304 library staff. The data were analyzed using SPSS, employing mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) values to interpret the findings. Results indicate that academic librarians demonstrate substantial awareness of misinformation and disinformation but encounter significant barriers in addressing them effectively. The main challenges include limited institutional resources, insufficient professional training, and the dynamic nature of information dissemination across digital platforms. The study concludes that enhancing information and digital literacy programs, establishing robust verification protocols, and strengthening information management systems are essential strategies for sustaining academic integrity. These measures can empower library professionals and users to critically assess information, thereby fostering resilience against misinformation within the academic environment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, misinformation and disinformation in institutions of higher learning have become major issues of concern (Ojukwu & Saidu, 2025; Parker, 2024). Indeed, one defining feature of today's world is the concurrent presence of both accurate and false information within the same public sphere compounded by the growing and widespread dissemination of disinformation (Levak, 2020; Martínez-Rodríguez, 2024). This concern has increasingly attracted attention in both social and print media. The urgency of this issue has prompted several declarations by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), emphasizing the necessity for coordinated global action to curb the dissemination of false and misleading information (UNESCO 2017; UNESCO, 2020). The concepts of misinformation and disinformation are often used interchangeably, yet they possess distinct characteristics. While both involve the circulation of inaccurate or false information, the key difference lies in the intent behind their dissemination. Misinformation generally refers to the unintentional spread of inaccurate information resulting from error or misunderstanding (Lan & Tung, 2024; Santos-D'Amorim & de Oliveira Miranda, 2021). Whereas disinformation denotes the deliberate creation or manipulation of information with the intent to deceive or mislead the public (Chen & Shu, 2024; Hameleers, 2023). In essence, misinformation is typically propagated by individuals unaware of the inaccuracies they share, while disinformation is intentionally fabricated and strategically disseminated to achieve specific objectives. Therefore, the fundamental distinction between misinformation and disinformation rests on the communicator's intent. Nevertheless, whether false information is disseminated deliberately or inadvertently, its ultimate impact on recipients can be equally detrimental, undermining trust, distorting perceptions, and influencing decision-making processes (Armitage & Vaccari, 2021; Bastick, 2021; Lim et al., 2024; Kiili et al., 2024).

The contemporary digital landscape presents significant challenges in effectively identifying and verifying information (Colomina et al., 2021; Gadjanova et al., 2022; Santin & Pra, 2021). The sheer volume of information readily available online, coupled with its rapid dissemination across numerous social media platforms, creates an environment conducive to the proliferation of false information. This abundance of sources, often lacking proper evaluation or reliable origins, significantly contributes to the widespread dissemination of both misinformation and disinformation across all sectors of society globally. Universities, as integral institutions within society, are not immune to this phenomenon. Misinformation and disinformation can infiltrate academic discourse, undermining the credibility of scholarly resources and eroding trust in information systems (Aissing, 2024; Elahi et al., 2022). In academic settings, where the pursuit of knowledge and the cultivation of critical thinking are paramount, the presence of inaccurate information poses a significant challenge. However, academic librarians, as custodians of credible knowledge and facilitators of information literacy, play a pivotal role in addressing this challenge (Aissing, 2024; Revez & Corujo, 2022). By leveraging their expertise in identifying and evaluating reliable information sources, librarians empower their users to access accurate information and engage in rigorous scholarly pursuits (Chinemerem, 2024; Rasheed & Ahmed, 2024).

Despite growing global scholarship on misinformation and disinformation, limited empirical research has examined how academic librarians in African contexts, particularly in Ghana, respond to these challenges within higher education settings. Existing studies predominantly focus on media literacy or user behavior, often overlooking the institutional and professional strategies applied by librarians. This study thus offers a novel contribution

by exploring the specific approaches, awareness levels, and constraints faced by librarians in Ghanaian universities in combating misinformation and disinformation, thereby filling a critical gap in the current literature (Ayoung et al., 2023; Saunders, 2023).. The study also resonates with recent discussions emphasizing the evolving professional roles of librarians in addressing misinformation through digital literacy and institutional collaboration, as highlighted in recent research (Adewojo et al., 2024; Revez & Corujo, 2021)

This study aimed to investigate the role of librarians in combating misinformation and disinformation within Ghanaian universities, focusing on how they perceive, interpret, and respond to these emerging challenges in the academic information landscape (Antoliš et al., 2024; Joosten, 2024). Specifically, it explored both proactive and reactive strategies adopted by librarians, the extent of their preparedness in identifying false or misleading information, and the institutional mechanisms that facilitate or constrain these efforts (Sales, 2024; Saunders, 2023). In achieving these objectives, the study sought to determine librarians' levels of awareness regarding misinformation and disinformation, evaluate their capacity to identify and manage potentially misleading materials within library collections, analyze the strategies implemented to mitigate the spread of false information, and identify the major institutional and professional challenges that hinder the effectiveness of academic libraries in addressing information disorders (de & Elias, 2025; Yap et al., 2024)

2. METHODS

This study was conducted in three academic libraries in Ghana. For confidentiality purposes, the libraries are referred to as Uni A Library, Uni B Library, and Uni C Library. The study adopted a quantitative research approach, specifically a descriptive survey design, which allows researchers to collect numerical data and describe existing phenomena objectively. This design was considered appropriate for understanding librarians' strategies and challenges in combating misinformation and disinformation, as it facilitates the systematic examination of current practices and perceptions (Ahmad et al., 2019; Timans et al., 2019).

The population consisted of all library staff from the three participating universities, totaling 304 respondents, comprising 142 from Uni A Library, 66 from Uni B Library, and 96 from Uni C Library. Given the manageable population size, a census approach was employed in which the entire population was included in the study. This method enhances the generalizability and reliability of results by reducing sampling error and ensuring that all relevant perspectives are captured (Giri, 2024; Weber et al., 2018).

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed from prior studies and theoretical frameworks on misinformation, disinformation, and information literacy in academic settings. The questionnaire consisted of 25 items measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). To ensure validity and reliability, the instrument underwent a pilot test with 20 librarians who were not part of the final study. The pilot testing process helped assess the clarity, content validity, and internal consistency of the instrument, aligning with recommendations that pilot testing strengthens data accuracy and instrument credibility (Khanal & Chhetri, 2024; Timans et al., 2019). Necessary revisions were made based on the feedback obtained.

Prior to data collection, ethical clearance was obtained to ensure compliance with research ethics, including voluntary participation, confidentiality, and informed consent. Questionnaires were distributed manually to the respondents in their respective libraries

during official working hours. Participants were informed of the study objectives and assured that their responses would remain anonymous and be used solely for academic purposes. Completed questionnaires were collected within two weeks, after which the responses were verified for completeness. Each questionnaire was assigned a unique code for ease of identification during data entry and analysis.

Data obtained from the usable questionnaires were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24 for analysis. The study employed descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies, means, and standard deviations, to summarize responses and present findings in a clear and interpretable form. Descriptive analysis was appropriate as it provides a comprehensive overview of patterns and trends in quantitative data, which supports effective interpretation and comparison with previous research (Alem, 2020; Cooksey, 2020). The analyzed results were presented in tables and discussed in line with the research objectives.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Response Rate

Of the 304 questionnaires distributed, 268 were duly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 88%. The data were analyzed using cross-tabulation techniques to facilitate comparative analysis among the three participating universities. The study was guided by four primary research objectives. To address each objective, respondents were provided with a series of statements designed to assess their levels of agreement or disagreement using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Agree (SA), 2 = Agree (A), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Disagree (D), and 5 = Strongly Disagree (SD).

3.2 Librarians Awareness of Misinformation and Disinformation

Given the critical role of librarians in managing the information landscape, the first objective of this study was to assess the level of awareness among the respondents regarding misinformation and disinformation. Table 1 summarizes the analysis of responses, showing that participants generally agreed they were aware of the issues addressed. The data revealed that respondents agreed they had received training in identifying misinformation and disinformation in library materials ($M = 2.27$, $SD = 1.12$) and used various criteria and strategies for this purpose ($M = 2.14$, $SD = 0.91$). Additionally, the respondents reported having undergone formal training or attended workshops on identifying misinformation and disinformation ($M = 2.76$, $SD = 2.29$). The results further indicate that the respondents were aware of the presence of misinformation and disinformation in academic journals and scholarly publications ($M = 2.22$, $SD = 0.93$), as well as in news sources and media materials available in the library ($M = 1.98$, $SD = 0.86$). They also acknowledged the potential effects of misinformation and disinformation in library resources ($M = 2.12$, $SD = 0.94$), the impact on library users' access to reliable information ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 0.93$), and the influence on users' trust in library services ($M = 1.88$, $SD = 0.84$). Finally, respondents recognized how misinformation and disinformation could affect the library's reputation and trustworthiness ($M = 1.73$, $SD = 0.79$).

Table 1. Librarians awareness of misinformation and disinformation

Level of Awareness	Cross Tabulation of responses			
	Univ. Library A M/SD	Univ. Library B M/SD	Univ. Library C M/SD	Total M/SD
I have received training on identifying disinformation and misinformation in library materials.	2.465 (1.207)	2.318 (1.139)	1.958 (0.905)	2.273 (1.123)
I am confident in my ability to recognize disinformation and misinformation in library materials	2.190 (0.907)	2.136 (0.721)	1.865 (0.803)	2.076 (0.847)
I use a variety of criteria and strategies to identify disinformation and misinformation in library materials.	2.366 (0.986)	2.076 (0.882)	1.854 (0.711)	2.141 (0.910)
The library provides adequate resources and tools to help me identify disinformation and misinformation.	2.317 (1.048)	2.046 (0.952)	2.031 (0.827)	2.168 (0.969)
I am aware of the potential presence of disinformation and misinformation in library materials.	2.352 (0.916)	2.242 (0.842)	1.865 (0.829)	2.174 (0.897)
I actively stay informed about emerging issues related to disinformation and misinformation	2.352 (0.885)	2.258 (0.982)	1.865 (0.854)	2.178 (0.920)
I rely on professional literature and journals to learn about disinformation and misinformation.	2.409 (1.118)	2.485 (0.827)	1.917 (0.735)	2.270 (0.978)
I have received formal training or attended workshops on identifying disinformation and misinformation in library materials	3.113 (3.076)	2.864 (1.201)	2.156 (1.060)	2.757 (2.290)
I use technology and online tools to assist in identifying disinformation and misinformation.	2.338 (1.883)	2.318 (1.055)	1.969 (0.787)	2.217 (1.453)
I collaborate with colleagues to share insights and strategies for recognizing disinformation and misinformation	2.380 (1.002)	2.258 (1.012)	1.958 (0.820)	2.220 (0.965)
I actively participate in professional library networks or associations that focus on disinformation and misinformation	2.500 (0.973)	2.515 (1.011)	2.000 (0.781)	2.345 (0.952)
I can identify disinformation and misinformation that originate from unreliable websites and online platforms.	2.331 (0.913)	2.288 (1.004)	1.823 (0.725)	2.161 (0.907)
I am aware of the potential for disinformation and misinformation in academic journals and scholarly publications.	2.380 (0.980)	2.349 (0.953)	1.885 (0.724)	2.217 (0.926)
I can recognize the presence of disinformation and misinformation in user-generated content, such as reviews, comments, and forums	2.430 (1.088)	2.167 (0.756)	1.875 (0.715)	2.197 (0.944)
I am knowledgeable about disinformation and misinformation in print materials, including books and magazines.	2.296 (1.009)	2.106 (0.897)	1.906 (0.796)	2.132 (0.935)
	2.127	2.076	1.698	1.980

I am aware of the influence of disinformation and misinformation in news sources and media materials available in the library	(0.890)	(0.882)	(0.742)	(0.863)
I am aware of the potential effects of disinformation and misinformation in library materials.	2.254 (1.107)	2.136 (0.721)	1.906 (0.755)	2.118 (0.940)
I am aware that disinformation and misinformation can impact library users and their access to reliable information.	2.134 (1.005)	2.030 (0.976)	1.781 (0.728)	2.000 (0.930)
I have a clear understanding of how disinformation and misinformation affect the credibility of library resources.	2.042 (1.044)	1.803 (0.898)	1.854 (0.696)	1.931 (0.918)
I am aware of how disinformation and misinformation can influence users' trust in library services.	1.993 (0.933)	1.697 (0.701)	1.833 (0.763)	1.878 (0.841)
I am aware that disinformation and misinformation can affect the reputation and trustworthiness of the library.	1.859 (0.880)	1.470 (0.638)	1.719 (0.706)	1.730 (0.792)

Source: Field Data.

Note: M-Mean, SD-Standard Deviation

3.3. Librarians' capacity to identify misinformation and disinformation

In an era marked by the rapid spread of misinformation and disinformation, librarians play a crucial role in ensuring the integrity of information within library collections. Their ability to identify and address potential instances of false or misleading information is essential for maintaining trust and reliability in information resources. Consequently, the second objective of this study was to assess the capacity of librarians to detect misinformation and disinformation in library materials, highlighting their skills, training, and strategies used to safeguard the quality of information accessed by library users. As presented in Table 2 the respondents noted that misinformation and disinformation are common in information sources (M = 2.41, SD = 0.95). They indicated frequent encounter with misleading information (M = 2.28, SD = 0.95) and often come across false information or rumors on the library's online platforms (M = 2.77, SD = 1.04). Additionally, the respondents reported encountering fabricated news while accessing online news sources (M = 2.05, SD = 0.97) and information disorder in traditional media sources such as newspapers and TV (M = 2.10, SD = 0.90). When it comes to digital platforms, the respondents agreed that social media platforms often contain misleading or inaccurate information (M = 1.90, SD = 0.86), and false or misleading content is prevalent in online discussions or forums (M = 2.07, SD = 0.93).

Furthermore, websites or blogs are frequently found to spread misinformation or conspiracy theories (M = 2.05, SD = 0.90). Despite these challenges, the respondents indicated that libraries have implemented mechanisms to manage and or mitigate information disorder. They agreed that library staff are knowledgeable and helpful in assisting users to locate information (M = 1.94, SD = 0.96) and that libraries enforce rules to maintain order and prevent information disorder (M = 1.78, SD = 0.80). The libraries also offer workshops or training to improve users' information literacy skills (M = 1.89, SD = 0.85) and effectively manage misinformation to prevent its spread (M = 2.00, SD = 0.99). Additionally, respondents recognized that information disorder negatively impacts public discourse and social cohesion (M = 1.83, SD = 0.93), emphasizing the need for libraries and other stakeholders to provide

reliable and relevant information. Despite these challenges, respondents affirmed that the information provided by the library remains accurate and trustworthy ($M = 1.77$, $SD = 0.82$).

Table 2. Librarians' capacity to identify misinformation and disinformation

Statements	Cross Tabulation of responses			
	Univ. Library B M/SD	Univ. Library B M/SD	Univ. Library B M/SD	Univ. Library B M/SD
Misinformation and disinformation are prevalent in the sources of information I come across	2.641 (0.985)	2.485 (0.881)	2.010 (0.814)	2.408 (0.950)
I often encounter information that is misleading or false	2.310 (0.962)	2.500 (1.027)	2.094 (0.859)	2.283 (0.954)
The library staff is knowledgeable and helpful in locating information	2.127 (1.017)	1.621 (1.049)	1.885 (0.709)	1.941 (0.956)
I frequently encounter false information or rumors on the library's online platforms	2.739 (1.063)	3.303 (1.150)	2.448 (0.738)	2.770 (1.037)
Social media platforms often contain misleading or inaccurate information	1.930 (0.856)	2.000 (0.977)	1.802 (0.790)	1.905 (0.864)
I have come across fabricated news articles or stories while accessing online news sources	2.007 (0.855)	2.318 (1.010)	1.938 (0.751)	2.053 (0.870)
False or misleading information is prevalent in online discussions or forums	2.176 (0.894)	2.242 (1.039)	1.802 (0.841)	2.072 (0.927)
Websites or blogs frequently spread misinformation or conspiracy theories	2.162 (0.958)	2.046 (0.793)	1.885 (0.857)	2.049 (0.898)
I encounter information disorder in traditional media sources (newspapers, TV, etc.)	2.190 (0.867)	2.470 (1.070)	1.698 (0.634)	2.095 (0.898)
Information disorder negatively affects public discourse and social cohesion	2.113 (1.004)	1.576 (0.583)	1.583 (0.891)	1.829 (0.928)
The information provided by the library is accurate and trustworthy	2.028 (0.930)	1.530 (0.684)	1.552 (0.578)	1.770 (0.816)
The library enforces rules and regulations to maintain order and prevent information disorder	2.028 (0.842)	1.318 (0.559)	1.729 (0.718)	1.780 (0.797)
The library offers workshops or training to help users improve their information literacy skills	1.894 (0.814)	1.576 (0.766)	2.104 (0.888)	1.891 (0.847)
The library effectively manages misinformation and prevents the spread of false information	2.197 (0.962)	1.758 (1.008)	1.865 (0.958)	2.000 (0.987)

Source: Field Data.

Note: M-Mean, SD-Standard Deviation

3.4. Librarians' strategies to combat misinformation and disinformation

As misinformation and disinformation continue to pose significant challenges in the information landscape, librarians play an essential role in safeguarding the integrity of library environments. Their ability to combat the spread of false or misleading information is crucial

for maintaining the trust and credibility of library resources. The third study objective thus set out to identify the strategies employed by the libraries to prevent the dissemination of misinformation and disinformation within the library setting.

Table 3 summarizes the strategies that libraries and library staff use to address misinformation and disinformation. These included promoting transparency on online platforms ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 0.72$), improving algorithms to curb the spread of false information ($M = 2.33$, $SD = 0.90$), monitoring and addressing the distribution of fake news within library resources ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 1.15$), and creating displays or signage to emphasize the importance of evaluating news sources ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 1.10$). The respondents also highlighted the importance of encouraging users to question the credibility of information sources ($M = 2.23$, $SD = 1.01$), collaborating with local news organizations or experts to ensure accurate information ($M = 2.23$, $SD = 1.00$), and offering critical thinking courses to help users tackle fake news ($M = 2.66$, $SD = 1.27$). Respondents strongly agreed on the significance of several actions to combat misinformation and disinformation. These included encouraging users to fact-check before using information ($M = 1.71$, $SD = 0.85$), providing information literacy education ($M = 1.82$, $SD = 0.93$), promoting source evaluation ($M = 1.74$, $SD = 0.72$), urging users to read information before sharing ($M = 1.71$, $SD = 0.73$), and utilizing library and university websites to direct users to credible sources ($M = 1.99$, $SD = 0.91$).

Table 3. Librarians' strategies to combat misinformation and disinformation

Statement	Cross Tabulation of responses			
	Univ. Library B M/SD	Univ. Library B M/SD	Univ. Library B M/SD	Univ. Library B M/SD
We encourage our clients to check facts before using it	1.648 (0.717)	1.864 (1.214)	1.688 (0.715)	1.707 (0.850)
we educate our clients on information literacy skills	1.578 (0.645)	1.758 (0.634)	2.219 (1.267)	1.819 (0.928)
we encourage source evaluation	1.676 (0.658)	1.727 (0.714)	1.854 (0.808)	1.743 (0.722)
We encourage our clients to read the information before sharing	1.655 (0.653)	1.924 (0.950)	1.635 (0.634)	1.707 (0.729)
We organize conferences to deal with information disorder	2.359 (0.977)	2.167 (0.670)	2.688 (1.284)	2.421 (1.047)
We present conference papers on information disorder	2.514 (0.980)	2.364 (0.922)	3.083 (1.194)	2.661 (1.078)
we organize webinars and other discussion forums on information disorder	2.275 (0.931)	1.970 (1.022)	2.750 (1.161)	2.359 (1.065)
We use our website platforms to link our clients to credible information	1.901 (0.886)	1.833 (0.938)	2.219 (0.897)	1.987 (0.912)
we use our LibGuides to educate our clients on information disorder	2.099 (0.793)	1.970 (0.841)	2.281 (0.764)	2.128 (0.800)

We create awareness through collection development	2.028 (0.850)	1.773 (0.697)	2.021 (0.846)	1.970 (0.822)
We rely on media literacy to fight fake news	2.247 (1.005)	2.697 (1.150)	2.563 (0.916)	2.444 (1.026)
We use our checklist to fight against fake news	2.324 (1.069)	2.152 (0.899)	2.396 (0.688)	2.309 (0.928)
We organize seminars to fight against fake news	2.521 (1.930)	2.318 (0.914)	3.042 (1.247)	2.641 (1.575)
We offer critical thinking as a course for our clients to deal with fake news	2.549 (1.152)	2.152 (1.070)	3.188 (1.394)	2.665 (1.274)
We use Audio-visual materials (videos, audio, interactive, and quizzes) to help deal with fake news	2.275 (1.046)	2.242 (0.978)	3.490 (1.205)	2.651 (1.223)
We advocate for equal and free access to information and knowledge.	2.085 (0.855)	2.015 (0.920)	2.635 (1.232)	2.243 (1.034)
We update our conventional role and constantly adjust to develop digital literacies, learning, and reading	2.049 (0.819)	2.167 (0.736)	2.115 (0.881)	2.095 (0.821)
We understand our community needs better and design services to their satisfaction and achieve impact	2.120 (0.758)	2.121 (0.621)	2.302 (0.884)	2.178 (0.776)
We collaborate with local news organizations or experts to provide accurate information to users	2.197 (0.827)	1.818 (0.802)	2.573 (1.212)	2.234 (0.996)
We encourage users to question the credibility and sources of information they encounter	2.134 (0.810)	2.046 (1.044)	2.510 (1.188)	2.234 (1.009)
We display signage or create displays to highlight the importance of evaluating news sources	2.254 (0.871)	2.409 (1.228)	2.781 (1.233)	2.454 (1.098)
We monitor and address the dissemination of fake news within its resources and materials	2.387 (0.966)	2.652 (1.030)	3.406 (1.219)	2.766 (1.152)
We improve algorithms to reduce the spread of false information	2.324 (0.957)	2.152 (0.808)	2.458 (0.857)	2.329 (0.899)
Fostering transparency in online platforms	1.923 (0.715)	1.924 (0.563)	2.167 (0.804)	2.000 (0.722)

Source: Field Data.

Note: M-Mean, SD-Standard Deviation

3.5. Challenges Faced in Combating Disinformation and Misinformation

The fight against disinformation and misinformation presents significant challenges for libraries who are at the forefront of maintaining the credibility and reliability of information resources (Adewojo et al., 2024; Revez & Corujo, 2021). These challenges can stem from limited resources, insufficient training, rapidly evolving technologies, and the sheer volume of false information circulating online (Fernandez & Alani, 2018; Lim et al., 2024). Thus, the study's fourth objective was to find out the key obstacles faced by the libraries in combating disinformation and misinformation, shedding light on areas that require targeted interventions to enhance their effectiveness in addressing this critical issue.

Table 4 highlights the challenges library staff encounter in addressing disinformation and misinformation. Respondents generally agreed that libraries face significant obstacles, including difficulties in effectively communicating the importance of combating fake news to users (M = 2.66, SD = 1.08), a lack of standardized guidelines or best practices for addressing fake news (M = 2.57, SD = 1.08), and challenges in collaborating with external organizations or experts on fake news initiatives (M = 2.46, SD = 0.98). Additionally, navigating legal and ethical considerations while addressing fake news posed challenges (M = 2.51, SD = 0.90). In their interactions with clients, respondents agreed that libraries struggle to engage and educate diverse user groups on recognizing and combating fake news (M = 2.85, SD = 0.90), promote media literacy and critical thinking skills (M = 2.45, SD = 1.10), and overcome user resistance or skepticism toward the concept of fake news and the need to verify information (M = 2.52, SD = 1.07). Further challenges include information overload, which complicates controlling the spread of information (M = 2.18, SD = 0.90), lack of media literacy among users (M = 2.10, SD = 0.86), and the spread of false information by governmental bodies and political parties (M = 1.91, SD = 0.89). Respondents also noted the challenges posed by users' lack of digital literacy (M = 2.20, SD = 0.86) and the legal and ethical complexities of addressing misinformation (M = 2.24, SD = 1.04). Notably, the greatest challenge identified was the spread of false information by political and governmental bodies.

Table 4. Challenges in combating disinformation and misinformation

Statement	Cross Tabulation of responses			
	Univ. Library B M/SD	Univ. Library B M/SD	Univ. Library B M/SD	Univ. Library B M/SD
We encountered rapid spread and virality in dealing with fake news	2.352 (0.909)	2.323 (0.923)	2.591 (1.052)	2.395 (0.949)
Information overload makes it difficult to deal with fake news	2.338 (0.967)	2.063 (0.792)	2.015 (0.850)	2.181 (0.899)
Not all online platform information are true	1.768 (0.778)	1.729 (0.912)	1.864 (0.742)	1.776 (0.814)
Lack of media literacy by clients	2.218 (0.826)	1.781 (0.784)	2.318 (0.931)	2.102 (0.863)
Government institutions and political parties can give misinformation and disinformation	1.852 (0.807)	1.833 (0.902)	2.152 (1.026)	1.911 (0.895)
Legal and ethical considerations make it difficult to deal with fake new	2.338 (0.997)	1.844 (0.875)	2.606 (1.188)	2.240 (1.043)

We sometimes find it difficult to identify fake news	2.366 (0.919)	2.021 (0.906)	2.591 (0.894)	2.306 (0.931)
Lack of digital literacy by some of our clients	2.190 (0.807)	2.073 (0.909)	2.409 (0.894)	2.201 (0.865)
The library faces difficulty in identifying and distinguishing fake news from genuine sources	2.718 (1.074)	2.313 (1.259)	2.803 (1.153)	2.609 (1.167)
The library struggles with limited resources and funding to effectively combat fake news	2.521 (1.057)	2.125 (1.059)	2.909 (1.063)	2.480 (1.093)
The library faces resistance or skepticism from users in accepting the concept of fake news and the need to verify information	2.366 (1.068)	2.417 (1.050)	2.985 (0.953)	2.516 (1.065)
The library encounters difficulties in promoting media literacy and critical thinking skills among users	2.507 (1.116)	2.188 (1.019)	2.727 (1.131)	2.454 (1.104)
The library faces challenges in engaging and educating diverse user groups about recognizing and combating fake news	3.099 (0.431)	2.458 (1.004)	2.864 (0.892)	2.845 (0.115)
The library encounters obstacles in navigating legal and ethical considerations while addressing fake news	2.310 (0.860)	2.490 (0.894)	2.955 (0.867)	2.507 (0.905)
The library finds it challenging to effectively collaborate with external organizations or experts on fake news initiatives	2.437 (0.964)	2.323 (0.989)	2.697 (0.960)	2.457 (0.977)
The library struggles with the lack of standardized guidelines or best practices in addressing fake news	2.500 (1.050)	2.406 (1.011)	2.939 (1.162)	2.566 (1.079)
The library faces obstacles in effectively communicating the importance of combating fake news to its users	2.514 (1.077)	2.594 (1.011)	3.091 (1.092)	2.665 (1.081)

Source: Field Data.

Note: M-Mean, SD-Standard Deviation

The findings revealed a high level of awareness regarding the concepts of disinformation and misinformation among library staff. This indicates that these issues are widely recognized as significant concerns within the library profession. The results are consistent with previous research showing that library professionals are increasingly aware of the implications of information disorders in their professional contexts (Ayoung et al., 2023; Saunders, 2023). Both studies highlighted that librarians perceive misinformation and disinformation as threats to the integrity of information services and actively engage in strategies to mitigate their spread.

The present study also found that respondents acknowledged the potential negative impacts of misinformation and disinformation on libraries. Participants expressed concerns that the prevalence of false information could damage the reputation of libraries, erode users' trust, and undermine the credibility of library services. These findings are consistent with prior studies emphasizing that misinformation and disinformation promote false representations and foster negative attitudes among library users (Komendantova et al., 2023; Hassan et al., 2019). Furthermore, although library staff are generally equipped to assist users in locating credible information and enforcing information management standards, misinformation and disinformation are often fueled by misleading content disseminated on social media platforms due to their virality (Hassan et al., 2019; Ramadani & Rodiah, 2025).

Regarding strategies for mitigating misinformation and disinformation, the findings indicate that the libraries employed a wide range of approaches, including educational programs designed to enhance users' information literacy skills. These awareness programs encouraged users to critically evaluate sources and verify information before sharing it. The findings align with previous studies that underscore the importance of integrating information and media literacy into educational programs to foster critical evaluation skills (IFLA, 2018; McDougall, 2019). Similarly, other researchers have highlighted that fact-checking, contextual analysis, and critical thinking competencies are essential to combat misinformation effectively (Oladokun et al., 2024; White, 2021). Additionally, scholars have argued that developing digital resilience and evaluative reasoning among learners contributes to a more sustainable approach in identifying false information in digital environments (Kiili et al., 2024; Lim et al., 2024).

The study also identified several challenges faced by libraries in combating misinformation and disinformation. Another major issue was the limited media literacy skills among users, which hindered their ability to critically assess information accuracy. Moreover, external influences, such as politically motivated propaganda and the amplification of misleading narratives by state and non-state actors, further complicated librarians' efforts to ensure the reliability of information (Armitage & Vaccari, 2021; Bastick, 2021). The rapid spread of misinformation through social media platforms continues to amplify these challenges, while deficiencies in digital literacy among both users and staff exacerbate the problem. Ethical and legal dilemmas surrounding information regulation and access also add complexity to librarians' responsibilities in managing misinformation within library environments. These findings are consistent with previous studies that emphasized the critical role of social media in accelerating misinformation and the impact of low digital literacy and information saturation on the persistence of false narratives (Alobaid & Ramachandran, 2021; Hassan et al., 2019).

The findings from this study carry several implications for library management, training, and policy formulation. First, libraries must adopt a proactive stance by embedding media and information literacy instruction into their user education programs. Such initiatives can strengthen users' critical thinking, fact-checking, and evaluative reasoning capabilities (Chen & Shu, 2024; Lan & Tung, 2024). Second, professional development programs for library staff should prioritize digital literacy, algorithmic awareness, and techniques for identifying disinformation trends. This can enhance librarians' ability to respond swiftly and accurately to information manipulation. Third, collaboration between libraries, academic institutions, and digital platforms is crucial for developing unified frameworks to counteract the virality of misinformation (Lim et al., 2024; Kiili et al., 2024). Lastly, policy-level interventions are

necessary to establish ethical standards and information verification protocols that ensure libraries remain credible and trusted institutions for reliable information dissemination.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study confirm the expectations stated in the introduction, emphasizing the crucial role of librarians in addressing the growing challenge of misinformation and disinformation within academic environments. The results indicate that librarians are not only aware of the prevalence of false information but also actively engaged in implementing strategies such as information literacy education, digital literacy training, and critical thinking programs to promote responsible information use among library users. These outcomes align with the initial premise that librarians, as custodians of credible knowledge, serve as key agents in safeguarding the integrity of information within universities. The study also revealed several obstacles faced by librarians in combating misinformation and disinformation. Information overload, limited media and digital literacy skills among users, and the rapid dissemination of misleading information through social media platforms continue to hinder effective information management. These challenges highlight the complex and evolving nature of information ecosystems in the digital era and underscore the need for ongoing professional development, stronger institutional support, and collaboration between libraries, academic institutions, and policymakers.

To enhance the effectiveness of current interventions, it is recommended that academic libraries strengthen their information management systems, establish comprehensive and interdisciplinary information literacy programs, and implement proactive mechanisms for detecting and verifying online information. Collaboration with technology experts and media organizations can further enhance the libraries' ability to identify and mitigate false information more efficiently. For future research, it is suggested that similar studies be conducted in different institutional and regional contexts to provide comparative perspectives on the effectiveness of library-based interventions. Longitudinal studies could also explore how librarians' roles evolve alongside changes in digital communication and information behavior.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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