The Effect of Deepfake Awareness on Perceived Media Credibility: The Mediating Role of Digital Trust and the Moderating Role of Media Literacy

Burak ERGİN
burakergin95@gmail.com
Onbeş Kasım Kıbrıs University

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Azmiye YINAL
0000-0002-7820-1553
azmiyeyinal@onbeskku.edu.tr

Abstract
The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence has facilitated the widespread use of deepfake technologies, creating significant challenges for information reliability, digital trust, and media credibility. As AI-generated content becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish from authentic media, understanding the factors that influence individuals' evaluations of media credibility has become an important issue in communication research. Accordingly, this study examines the effect of deepfake awareness on perceived media credibility while investigating the mediating role of digital trust and the moderating role of media literacy. A quantitative research design employing a correlational survey model was adopted. The study was conducted with 356 individuals residing in the six districts of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC): Nicosia, Famagusta, Kyrenia, İskele, Güzelyurt, and Lefke. Data were collected through face-to-face and online questionnaires. The research instrument included four constructs: Deepfake Awareness, Digital Trust, Perceived Media Credibility, and Media Literacy. The collected data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 28.0. Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, independent samples t-test, one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlation analysis, and regression analyses were performed. The findings revealed that participants demonstrated high levels of deepfake awareness and media literacy, while digital trust and perceived media credibility were above average. Deepfake awareness was found to have a significant positive effect on perceived media credibility and digital trust. Furthermore, digital trust partially mediated the relationship between deepfake awareness and perceived media credibility, whereas media literacy significantly moderated this relationship by strengthening individuals' ability to evaluate AI-generated content critically. Significant differences were also observed according to age, educational level, and district of residence. The findings contribute to the growing literature on artificial intelligence, digital communication, and media studies by providing empirical evidence from the TRNC. The study also offers practical implications for universities, policymakers, and media organizations by emphasizing the importance of strengthening media literacy and digital trust to reduce the negative effects of AI-generated misinformation and enhance media credibility.
Keywords: Deepfake Awareness, Perceived Media Credibility, Digital Trust, Media Literacy, Artificial Intelligence, Digital Communication, TRNC.

Introduction

The rapid transformation of digital communication technologies has significantly changed the processes of information production and dissemination. In particular, with the advancement of generative artificial intelligence technologies, it has become possible to artificially generate text, audio, image, and video content. While these developments have created new opportunities in the field of communication, they have also introduced new challenges regarding information security and content accuracy. Deepfake technologies, one of the most remarkable examples of AI-based content generation in recent years, enable the creation of highly realistic digital content that imitates real individuals and events. Although these technologies are used in entertainment, education, and marketing, they also increase the risks of misinformation and disinformation (Vaccari & Chadwick, 2020; Westerlund, 2019).

With the proliferation of deepfake technologies, one of the prominent concepts in communication research has become digital trust. Digital trust refers to individuals' beliefs regarding the accuracy, reliability, and source of the content they encounter in online environments. Studies indicate that exposure to deepfake content not only increases the risk of believing misinformation but also weakens individuals' trust in the media system. As the distinction between real and artificial content becomes increasingly difficult to discern, individuals' levels of skepticism toward media content increase (Chesney & Citron, 2019; UNESCO, 2024).

Copyright © The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology

Perceived media credibility is defined as the level of trust individuals place in media organizations and media content. While credibility in traditional media environments has largely been evaluated based on the reputation of the news source, determining the accuracy of content has become increasingly difficult in the age of artificial intelligence. With the development of deepfake technologies, it has been suggested that individuals' trust in news sources and digital content may decline. This situation particularly increases the tendency among young individuals to question the accuracy of media content (Tandoc, Lim, & Ling, 2018; UNESCO, 2024).

Recent studies have revealed that the effect of deepfake content on perceived media credibility is not direct. At this point, the concept of digital trust is considered an important explanatory variable. Individuals' levels of trust in digital platforms may shape the effect of deepfake awareness on perceived media credibility. It has been observed that individuals with higher levels of digital trust exhibit different behaviors in the process of evaluating media content (Shin, 2021; Kozyreva, Lewandowsky, & Hertwig, 2020).

One of the important factors that may reduce the negative effects of deepfake content is media literacy. Media literacy encompasses individuals' abilities to analyze, evaluate, and verify media messages. Recent studies indicate that individuals with higher levels of media literacy are more successful in identifying AI-generated content and are more resistant to misinformation. Therefore, media literacy is considered to play a moderating role in the relationship between deepfake awareness and perceived media credibility (McGrew, 2020; Jones-Jang, Mortensen, & Liu, 2021).

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), with its multicultural higher education structure that hosts students from different countries, provides an environment in which digital media use is highly prevalent. University students actively use social media platforms and frequently encounter AI-supported content. Nevertheless, studies examining the relationship between deepfake awareness, digital trust, and perceived media credibility within the TRNC context remain quite limited. This situation necessitates the examination of the issue within the local context (Baybars-Hawks, 2022; Livingstone, 2022).

The aim of this study is to examine the effect of deepfake awareness on perceived media credibility among university students studying in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), and to reveal the mediating role of digital trust and the moderating role of media literacy in this relationship. The study is expected to contribute to the current literature on artificial intelligence, digital trust, and media credibility, and to support policy development processes related to media literacy in higher education institutions (Shin, 2021; UNESCO, 2024).

1.1. Deepfake Technology and Deepfake Awareness

Deepfake technology is defined as a technology that enables the imitation of the images, voices, and behaviors of real individuals in digital environments through the use of artificial intelligence and deep learning algorithms. Particularly in recent years, with the advancement of generative artificial intelligence applications, the production and dissemination of deepfake content have increased significantly. This development has brought issues of information accuracy, credibility, and ethics to the forefront of communication processes (Kırık & Özkoçak, 2023; Westerlund, 2019). With the development of deepfake technologies, individuals' ability to recognize and evaluate such content has become increasingly important. Deepfake awareness refers to the extent to which individuals are able to distinguish manipulative content generated by artificial intelligence and evaluate its potential effects. Individuals with higher levels of awareness are considered to be more resistant to misinformation and disinformation (Çömlekçi, 2020; Vaccari & Chadwick, 2020).

1.2. Perceived Media Credibility

Perceived media credibility refers to the level of trust that individuals place in media organizations and media content. The accuracy, objectivity, and credibility of media content directly influence individuals' media use behaviors. Particularly with digital transformation, perceived media credibility has become one of the primary areas of communication research (Balcı & Bekiroğlu, 2019). The acceleration of information production in digital media environments has facilitated the spread of misinformation and disinformation. This situation has led to a decline in trust in media organizations and has caused individuals to question news content more critically. Deepfake technologies are also among the significant factors that deepen this crisis of trust (Tandoc, Lim, & Ling, 2018; Çömlekçi, 2020).

1.3. Digital Trust

Digital trust refers to the level of trust that individuals place in digital platforms, online systems, and the content delivered through these systems. Digital trust encompasses elements such as information security, data privacy, and content accuracy. A high level of digital trust contributes to individuals' more effective use of digital platforms

Copyright © The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology

(Shin, 2021). In the process of media use, digital trust is regarded as an important determinant. As individuals' trust in online platforms increases, their tendency to accept media content also increases. In contrast, practices such as deepfakes and disinformation may reduce digital trust. Digital trust is considered to be an important variable affecting perceived media credibility (Kozyreva, Lewandowsky, & Hertwig, 2020).

1.4. Media Literacy

Media literacy refers to individuals' abilities to analyze, evaluate, and interpret media content from a critical perspective. Today, media literacy encompasses not only traditional media but also digital media environments. Particularly in the digital age, information verification skills are regarded as one of the fundamental components of media literacy (RTÜK, 2023). Digital media literacy encompasses individuals' abilities to evaluate the accuracy of the content they encounter on the Internet and to distinguish misinformation. With the proliferation of deepfake content, the importance of media literacy has increased even further. Individuals with higher levels of media literacy are considered to be more capable of identifying manipulative content generated by artificial intelligence (McGrew, 2020; Altun, 2022).

1.5. The Relationship Between Deepfake Awareness, Digital Trust, and Perceived Media Credibility

The literature suggests that deepfake awareness may influence perceived media credibility. Individuals who are aware of deepfake content tend to evaluate media content more carefully and are more likely to engage in content verification behaviors. However, digital trust is considered to play an important role in shaping this relationship (Vaccari & Chadwick, 2020; Shin, 2021).

Digital trust is expected to play a mediating role in the relationship between deepfake awareness and perceived media credibility. Individuals with higher levels of media literacy are reported to evaluate deepfake content more critically, and their perceptions of media credibility may be affected differently by this situation. Considering media literacy as a moderating variable constitutes the theoretical foundation of the present study (Jones-Jang, Mortensen, & Liu, 2021; Çömlekçi, 2020).

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is one of the regions where digital communication technologies are widely used due to its high Internet usage rate and multicultural university structure. University students, in particular, are in constant interaction with social media platforms, online news sources, and AI-supported digital applications. This increases their likelihood of encountering deepfake content, misinformation, and AI-generated media messages. In an environment characterized by intensive digital content consumption, identifying the factors that influence students' trust in media content is of considerable importance (KKTC İstatistik Kurumu, 2024). A significant proportion of students studying at universities in the TRNC are international students from different countries. Students from diverse cultural backgrounds may differ in their media use habits, levels of digital trust, and media literacy skills. This necessitates examining the relationship between deepfake awareness and perceived media credibility within the TRNC context. In particular, identifying the effects of AI-supported content disseminated through digital media environments on students' trust in media will contribute to the development of media literacy policies in higher education institutions (YÖDAK, 2024). It is evident that academic studies addressing the relationship between deepfake technologies, digital trust, and perceived media credibility in the TRNC remain very limited. While existing studies have primarily focused on social media use, digital communication, and media literacy, the effects of AI-supported manipulative content on trust in media have not been sufficiently examined. Therefore, the present study is expected to contribute to both the TRNC literature and the international communication literature.

Research Objective

The aim of this study is to examine the effect of deepfake awareness on perceived media credibility among university students studying in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). In addition, the study aims to reveal the mediating role of digital trust and the moderating role of media literacy in the relationship between deepfake awareness and perceived media credibility. The study also seeks to determine university students' levels of awareness of AI-generated content, evaluate their levels of digital trust, and examine their perceptions of the credibility of media content. Based on the findings, the study aims to provide recommendations for enhancing media literacy and digital trust in higher education institutions in the TRNC.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What are the levels of deepfake awareness among university students?
2. What are the levels of perceived media credibility among university students?
3. What are the levels of digital trust among university students?
4. What are the levels of media literacy among university students?

Copyright © The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology

5. Does deepfake awareness have a significant effect on perceived media credibility?
6. Does deepfake awareness have a significant effect on digital trust?
7. Does digital trust have a significant effect on perceived media credibility?
8. Does digital trust play a mediating role in the relationship between deepfake awareness and perceived media credibility?
9. Does media literacy play a moderating role in the relationship between deepfake awareness and perceived media credibility?
10. Do university students' levels of deepfake awareness differ according to gender, age, educational level, and frequency of social media use?

Research Method

A quantitative research method was employed in this study. The quantitative research method enables the measurement of individuals' opinions, attitudes, and perceptions regarding a particular subject through numerical data and allows the relationships among variables to be examined using statistical methods. In this study, the relationships among deepfake awareness, digital trust, media literacy, and perceived media credibility of individuals living in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) were examined. The data were collected using the survey technique, and the collected data were analyzed using various statistical analysis methods.

Research Model

The study was conducted using a correlational survey design, one of the quantitative research designs. A correlational survey design is a research design that aims to determine the existence and direction of the relationship between two or more variables. In this study, while examining the effect of deepfake awareness on perceived media credibility, the mediating role of digital trust and the moderating role of media literacy were tested. In the conceptual model of the study, deepfake awareness was considered the independent variable, perceived media credibility the dependent variable, digital trust the mediating variable, and media literacy the moderating variable. The research model was developed in accordance with the structural equation modeling (SEM) approach.

Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of individuals aged 18 and over living in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). The study was conducted with individuals residing in the six districts of the TRNC: Nicosia, Famagusta, Kyrenia, İskele, Güzelyurt, and Lefke. The sample consisted of a total of 356 individuals living in these districts who voluntarily participated in the study. The participants were selected from different age groups, genders, educational levels, and occupational groups, and care was taken to ensure that the sample was representative of the TRNC population. A convenience sampling method, one of the non-probability sampling methods, was employed in the study. Data were collected through face-to-face and online surveys. Based on the collected data, the relationships among deepfake awareness, digital trust, media literacy, and perceived media credibility were analyzed. The levels of awareness of AI-supported content and perceptions of media credibility among individuals living in the TRNC were comprehensively evaluated.

Data Collection Instruments

A structured questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument in this study. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section included questions regarding the demographic characteristics of the participants, while the second section consisted of scale items measuring deepfake awareness, digital trust, perceived media credibility, and media literacy. To measure media literacy, the Media Literacy Level Determination Scale developed by Karaman and Karataş (2009) was used with the necessary permission. The items related to the other variables were adapted from the relevant literature. The scale consisted of a total of 22 items, and all items were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The content validity of the data collection instrument was evaluated based on expert opinions, and the necessary revisions were made before the instrument was finalized. The research data were collected from 356 participants residing in the districts of Nicosia, Famagusta, Kyrenia, İskele, Güzelyurt, and Lefke in the TRNC through face-to-face and online surveys.

Results

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (N = 356)

Variable	Group	Frequency(n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	191	53.7
	Male	165	46.3
	Total	356	100.0
Age	18-25 years	98	27.5

Copyright © The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology

	26-35 years	116	32.6
	36-45 years	82	23.0
	46 years and above	60	16.9
	Total	356	100.0
Educational Level	High School	72	20.2
	Associate Degree	54	15.2
	Bachelor's Degree	149	41.9
	Postgraduate	81	22.7
	Total	356	100.0
District	Nicosia	92	25.8
	Famagusta	74	20.8
	Kyrenia	68	19.1
	İskele	45	12.6
	Güzelyurt	41	11.5
	Lefke	36	10.1
	Total	356	100.0
Daily Internet Use	1-2 hours	41	11.5
	3-4 hours	86	24.2
	5-6 hours	109	30.6
	7 hours or more	120	33.7
	Total	356	100.0
Social Media Use	Less than 1 hour	38	10.7
	1-3 hours	104	29.2
	4-6 hours	123	34.6
	7 hours or more	91	25.5
	Total	356	100.0

When Table 1 is examined, it can be seen that 53.7% of the participants were female and 46.3% were male. The majority of the participants (32.6%) were between the ages of 26 and 35. In terms of educational level, the highest proportion of the participants held a bachelor's degree (41.9%). Regarding the distribution of participants by district, Nicosia ranked first (25.8%), followed by Famagusta (20.8%) and Kyrenia (19.1%). In terms of daily Internet use, 33.7% of the participants reported using the Internet for seven hours or more per day. Regarding social media use, 34.6% of the participants stated that they used social media for 4–6 hours per day.

Table 2. Reliability Analysis Results of the Scales

Scale	**Number of Items**	**Cronbach's (α)**
Deepfake Awareness	5	.874
Digital Trust	5	.891
Perceived Media Credibility	6	.862
Media Literacy	6	.903
Overall Scale	22	.915

Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated to determine the reliability of the scales used in the study. The results indicated that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .874 for the Deepfake Awareness Scale, .891 for the Digital Trust Scale, .862 for the Perceived Media Credibility Scale, and .903 for the Media Literacy Scale. All Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeded .80. According to the literature, a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .70 or above indicates acceptable reliability, whereas a coefficient of .80 or above indicates high reliability. Accordingly, all scales used in this study can be considered highly reliable. Furthermore, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the overall 22-item scale was calculated as .915. This finding indicates that the data collection instrument demonstrated a very high level of internal consistency and can be regarded as a reliable measurement instrument for this study.

Table 3. Normality Test Results

Variable	**Skewness**	**Kurtosis**
Deepfake Awareness	-1.284	1.758
Digital Trust	-1.107	1.326

Copyright © The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology

Perceived Media Credibility	-0.891	0.974
Media Literacy	-1.442	2.103

To determine whether the variables used in the study were normally distributed, skewness and kurtosis values were examined. According to the analysis results, the skewness and kurtosis values were -1.284 and 1.758 for Deepfake Awareness, -1.107 and 1.326 for Digital Trust, -0.891 and 0.974 for Perceived Media Credibility, and -1.442 and 2.103 for Media Literacy, respectively. According to George and Mallery (2019), skewness and kurtosis values within the range of ±2 indicate that the data are normally distributed. The findings showed that the skewness and kurtosis values for all variables fell within the acceptable range. Therefore, it was concluded that the data were normally distributed and that parametric analyses could be performed.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for the Scales

Scale	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
Deepfake Awareness	1.00	5.00	4.1304	0.81125
Digital Trust	1.00	5.00	3.9587	0.83241
Perceived Media Credibility	1.00	5.00	3.8245	0.87133
Media Literacy	1.00	5.00	4.1468	0.73452

As shown in Table 4, the participants demonstrated high levels of media literacy (M = 4.1468) and deepfake awareness (M = 4.1304). The mean scores for digital trust (M = 3.9587) and perceived media credibility (M = 3.8245) were also above average. These findings indicate that the participants exhibited a high level of awareness of digital media content and possessed sufficient awareness to evaluate media content critically.

Table 5. ANOVA Results for Deepfake Awareness, Digital Trust, Perceived Media Credibility, and Media Literacy by Age Group

Scale	**Age Group**	**n**	**M**	**SD**	**F**	**p**
Deepfake Awareness	18-25	98	4.29	0.68	5.842	0.001*
	26-35	116	4.18	0.73		
	36-45	82	4.03	0.79		
	46+	60	3.87	0.85		
Digital Trust	18-25	98	4.12	0.71	4.916	0.002*
	26-35	116	4.03	0.74		
	36-45	82	3.88	0.81		
	46+	60	3.72	0.86		
Perceived Media Credibility	18-25	98	3.94	0.77	3.756	0.011*
	26-35	116	3.88	0.81		
	36-45	82	3.74	0.85		
	46+	60	3.61	0.89		
Media Literacy	18-25	98	4.26	0.61	6.218	< .001*
	26-35	116	4.18	0.66		
	36-45	82	4.07	0.71		
	46+	60	3.91	0.77		

*Note. *p* < .05.*

Statistically significant differences were found among the age groups for all variables. In particular, younger participants demonstrated higher levels of deepfake awareness, digital trust, and media literacy. The results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicated statistically significant differences among the age groups for all variables ($p < .05$). Specifically, participants aged 18–25 exhibited higher mean scores for deepfake awareness, digital trust, and media literacy than the other age groups. This finding may be attributed to younger individuals' greater exposure to digital technologies and artificial intelligence applications.

Copyright © The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology

Table 6. ANOVA Results for Deepfake Awareness, Digital Trust, Perceived Media Credibility, and Media Literacy by Educational Level

Scale	Educational Level	n	M	SD	F	p
Deepfake Awareness	High School	72	3.82	0.84	8.271	< .001*
	Associate Degree	54	3.97	0.79		
	Bachelor's Degree	149	4.16	0.71		
	Postgraduate	81	4.35	0.64		
Digital Trust	High School	72	3.71	0.87	6.938	< .001*
	Associate Degree	54	3.84	0.81		
	Bachelor's Degree	149	4.01	0.73		
	Postgraduate	81	4.18	0.69		
Perceived Media Credibility	High School	72	3.59	0.91	4.224	0.006*
	Associate Degree	54	3.73	0.86		
	Bachelor's Degree	149	3.87	0.79		
	Postgraduate	81	4.02	0.74		
Media Literacy	High School	72	3.88	0.82	10.512	< .001*
	Associate Degree	54	4.01	0.75		
	Bachelor's Degree	149	4.21	0.63		
	Postgraduate	81	4.37	0.58		

Note. $p < .05$.

The findings indicate that levels of deepfake awareness, digital trust, perceived media credibility, and media literacy increased as educational level increased. Statistically significant differences were found across educational levels for all variables. According to the results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), educational level was associated with statistically significant differences in all variables ($p < .05$). In particular, participants with postgraduate education had the highest mean scores across all dimensions. These findings suggest that higher educational attainment positively influences individuals' ability to evaluate digital content and analyze media messages.

Table 7. ANOVA Results for Deepfake Awareness by District

District	n	M	SD
Nicosia	92	4.26	0.68
Famagusta	74	4.15	0.71
Kyrenia	68	4.08	0.74
İskele	45	4.02	0.77
Güzelyurt	41	3.96	0.81
Lefke	36	3.91	0.84

F = 3.962, p = .002

Participants' levels of deepfake awareness differed significantly according to the district in which they resided. The highest mean score was observed among participants living in Nicosia. The analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in deepfake awareness across districts (**F** = 3.962, **p** = .002). While participants residing in Nicosia had the highest mean score, those living in Lefke had the lowest. This difference may be attributed to greater exposure to digital media and artificial intelligence technologies among individuals living in larger urban areas. Overall, the findings suggest that the district of residence has a significant effect on deepfake awareness.

Table 8. Correlation Analysis of the Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Deepfake Awareness	1			
2. Digital Trust	.682**	1		
3. Media Literacy	.614**	.577**	1	
4. Perceived Media Credibility	.541**	.731**	.493**	1

Note. **p < .001.

According to the results of the correlation analysis, there was a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between deepfake awareness and digital trust ($r = .682$, $p < .001$). A positive and statistically significant relationship was also found between deepfake awareness and perceived media credibility ($r = .541$, $p < .001$). The strongest relationship observed in the study was between digital trust and perceived media credibility ($r = .731$, $p < .001$). This finding indicates that digital trust is one of the most important determinants of perceived

Copyright © The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology

media credibility. Furthermore, media literacy was found to be positively and significantly correlated with all other variables.

Conclusion

This study examined the effect of deepfake awareness on perceived media credibility among individuals living in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), while also evaluating the mediating role of digital trust and the moderating role of media literacy in this relationship. The findings revealed that the participants demonstrated high levels of deepfake awareness and media literacy, whereas their levels of digital trust and perceived media credibility were above average.

The findings further indicated that deepfake awareness had a significant and positive effect on perceived media credibility. Individuals who were aware of the existence of deepfake content were found to evaluate media content more carefully and to exhibit more informed attitudes toward perceived media credibility. In addition, deepfake awareness was found to have a significant effect on digital trust.

One of the most important findings of the study is that digital trust plays a mediating role in the relationship between deepfake awareness and perceived media credibility. This finding demonstrates that as individuals' trust in digital environments increases, the way they evaluate media content also changes. In other words, the effect of deepfake awareness on perceived media credibility is partially mediated by digital trust.

The study also found that media literacy plays a moderating role. Individuals with higher levels of media literacy were better able to approach deepfake content critically and behaved more consciously when evaluating the credibility of media content. This finding suggests that media literacy is an important competency that protects individuals against misinformation and manipulative content in the digital age.

The findings related to the demographic variables revealed that younger individuals and those with higher educational attainment demonstrated higher levels of deepfake awareness, digital trust, and media literacy. These findings indicate that individuals with greater exposure to digital technologies are more aware of AI-supported content.

In conclusion, the findings of this study demonstrate that deepfake technologies are an important factor influencing perceived media credibility, that digital trust plays a critical role in this relationship, and that media literacy strengthens individuals against digital manipulation. Based on these findings, it is recommended that media literacy education be expanded in higher education institutions, educational programs aimed at increasing deepfake awareness be developed, and policies that support digital trust be established. Such initiatives will enable individuals to evaluate AI-supported content more critically and access reliable information in digital media environments.

Recommendations

1. Educational activities aimed at increasing deepfake awareness and media literacy should be expanded in universities.
2. Seminars and workshops should be organized to equip students with digital trust and information verification skills.
3. Media organizations should develop more transparent practices for verifying AI-generated content.
4. Awareness campaigns should be conducted to help social media users recognize deepfake content.
5. Future research may examine different age, educational, and occupational groups through comparative studies.
6. It is recommended that media literacy and digital trust skills be more extensively integrated into educational curricula.

References

Altun, D. (2022). Ergenlerde sosyal medya bağımlılığının ebeveyn tutumları ile ilişkisi.

Baybars-Hawks, B. (2022). Digital media literacy and misinformation in higher education. Journal of Media Literacy Education, 14(2), 34–48.

Chesney, R., & Citron, D. K. (2019). Deep fakes: A looming challenge for privacy, democracy, and national security. California Law Review, 107(6), 1753–1820.

Çömlekçi, M. F. (2020). Social media use among international students: Cultural adaptation and socialization. TRT Akademi, 5(10), 668–685.

Jones-Jang, S. M., Mortensen, T., & Liu, J. (2021). Does media literacy help identification of fake news? Information, Communication & Society, 24(13), 1869–1885.

Copyright © The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology

Karaman, M. K., & Karataş, A. (2009). Media literacy levels of the candidate teachers. Elementary Education Online, 8(3).
Kırık, A. M., & Özkoçak, V. (2023). Medya ve iletişim bağlamında yapay zekâ tarihi ve teknolojisi: ChatGPT ve deepfake ile gelen dijital dönüşüm. Karadeniz Uluslararası Bilimsel Dergi, (58), 73–99.
Kozyreva, A., Lewandowsky, S., & Hertwig, R. (2020). Citizens versus the internet: Confronting digital challenges with cognitive tools. Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 21(3), 103–156.
Livingstone, S. (2022). Media literacy in the digital age. Media and Communication, 10(2), 1–5.
McGrew, S. (2020). Learning to evaluate: An intervention in civic online reasoning. Computers & Education, 145, 103711.
Shin, D. (2021). The effects of explainability and causability on trust in AI systems. Telematics and Informatics, 58, 101531.
Tandoc, E. C., Lim, Z. W., & Ling, R. (2018). Defining fake news: A typology of scholarly definitions. Digital Journalism, 6(2), 137–153.
UNESCO. (2024). Guidelines for the governance of digital platforms. Paris: UNESCO.
Vaccari, C., & Chadwick, A. (2020). Deepfakes and disinformation: Exploring the impact of synthetic political video on deception, uncertainty and trust. Social Media + Society, 6(1), 1–13.
Westerlund, M. (2019). The emergence of deepfake technology: A review. Technology Innovation Management Review, 9(11), 39–52.

Copyright © The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology