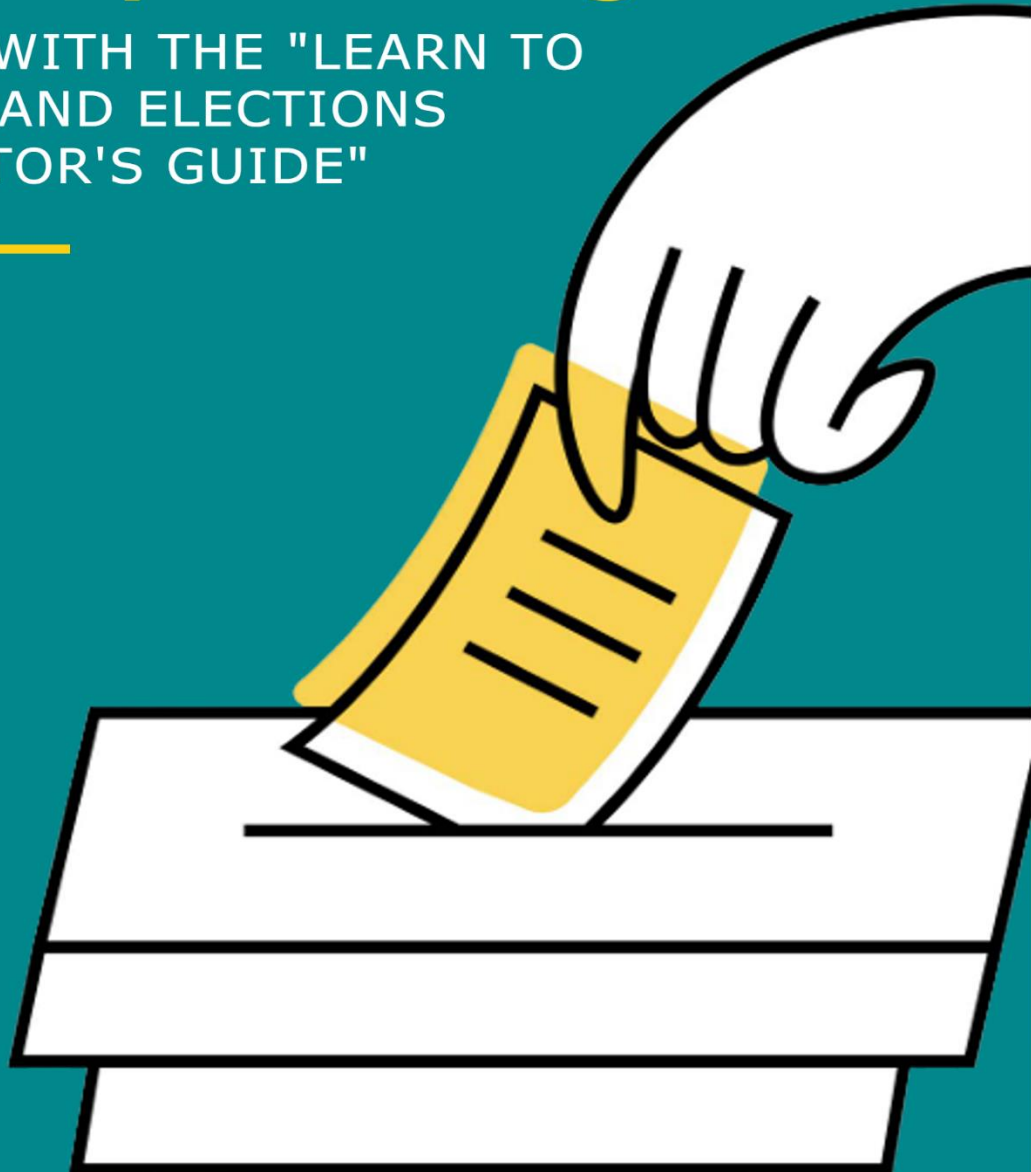# L2D Elections Curriculum Activity Package

FOR USE WITH THE "LEARN TO DISCERN AND ELECTIONS FACILITATOR'S GUIDE"

IREX

About this Document

In 2024, billions of people are set to participate in major elections that will have a significant impact on people's lives and the future of democracy around the world. However, false narratives, conspiracy theories, and baseless claims of election fraud pose a global threat, eroding trust in democracy and threatening the safety of citizens, journalists, elections workers, and political candidates, especially women in politics. As part of our work in supporting independent media and media and information literacy education, IREX has developed a **Learn to Discern and Elections Facilitator's Guide**, based on IREX's Learn to Discern (L2D) approach and training materials, with the goal of building resilience to manipulative information before, during, and after elections, through practical lessons, activities, and resources to support interventions for a variety of audiences in countries worldwide.

This Activity Package is intended as a supplement to the **Learn to Discern and Elections Facilitator's Guide**. Many of these activities are referenced directly in the Facilitator's Guide, while others are included as additional resources to enhance the various units and lessons contained within the Facilitator's Guide. The activities are organized in accordance with the five units of the Facilitator's guide, but a number of these activities would be appropriate across different learning units.

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UNIT 1. Evolving Information Landscape and Elections

Activity 1.1. Reflecting on Your Information Consumption Habits

Objectives:
To raise awareness about information consumption habits and to encourage critical thinking about the reliability of information sources.

Instructions:
- Divide participants into pairs or small groups and allocate 15 minutes for discussion.
- Instruct participants to discuss the following questions:
  - How frequently do you check your social media feed each day, without searching for specific information?
  - How often do you consult a reliable news source throughout the day?
  - How do you determine if a source is reliable? What factors contribute to its reliability?
- Encourage participants to engage actively in the discussion and exchange perspectives.
- Designate a presenter within each group to share the group's key observations and insights with the larger group.
- Facilitate a dynamic sharing session where each group presents their observations to the larger group.
- After all groups have presented, facilitate a reflective discussion, encouraging participants to explore common themes.
- Summarize the main points and key takeaways from the discussions, emphasizing the importance of being aware of information consumption habits, critical thinking, and source evaluation when engaging with any media content.

Conclusion and Talking Points:
- Emphasize the importance of being mindful of one's information consumption habits and the need for critical evaluation of information sources.
- Highlight the role of critical thinking in discerning reliable sources from unreliable ones.
- Encourage participants to apply the skills discussed in their daily media consumption practices to become more informed and discerning consumers of information.

Activity 1.2. Crafting Your Election Information Source System

Objective:
To develop a system for accessing credible election-related information.

Instructions:

- Explain the importance of having a reliable source system for election information.
- Provide an overview of the activity objectives.

Identify Potential Sources:
- Participants brainstorm and list potential sources for election-related information, considering traditional media, digital platforms, official sources, and international organizations.

Evaluate Source Credibility:
- Conduct an exercise to evaluate the credibility of each identified source.
- Use criteria such as accuracy, bias, ownership, and mission statement to categorize sources into tiers based on reliability.

Create a Source Matrix:
- Using the information from the previous step, participants create a source matrix organizing sources by type and credibility rating.

Practice Using the System:
- Participants research a specific piece of election-related information using their source system.
- Document sources used to evaluate ease of access, reliability, and discrepancies between sources.

Reflect and Adjust:
- Participants reflect on the effectiveness of their source system, discussing challenges encountered and adjustments needed.
- Adjust the source matrix based on reflections to improve its utility.

Share and Discuss:
- Participants share their source systems for feedback.

Conclusion:
- Summarize key insights gained from the activity.
- Emphasize the importance of maintaining a reliable source system for accessing election-related information.

Discussion Points

During elections, election management bodies (EMBs) should serve as a primary source of information about election procedures, voter registration, and official election results. They are responsible for maintaining transparency throughout the electoral process, providing accurate and comprehensive information to voters about registration, voting procedures, candidate details, vote counting, tabulation and implementing voter education campaigns to enhance understanding of the electoral process and encourage informed participation. Their work is regard is essential in fostering an informed electorate,

promoting democratic values, and ensuring that all citizens, including women and other marginalized groups, have the knowledge and opportunity to participate fully in the democratic process.

EMBs also collaborate with technology companies on initiatives aimed at extending the reach of the EMB's public messaging or by facilitating public access to reliable information about elections. For example, Google and Facebook offer Election Day reminders that direct users to EMB websites for additional information on voter participation. In various countries, Facebook places Election Day notifications at the top of users' news feeds,

Google's Doodle for Indonesia Elections which ran April 17, 2019

allowing users to note their voting status. Google features an election-themed image linking to country-specific voter information resources. These platforms also integrate notifications about voter registration deadlines, candidate information, and voting instructions. Additionally, both platforms offer tools to help voters find their polling locations, utilizing data from relevant EMBs.

Tech companies also took some measures to support information integrity initiatives by EMBs during electoral periods in specific countries, although not fitted to the dimension of the problem:

1. **Brazil:** The Superior Electoral Court (TSE) in Brazil collaborated with tech companies including Meta, Google, Twitter, and TikTok, to amplify reliable election-related information. TSE partnered with WhatsApp to develop a chatbot which provided accurate information about voting procedures and candidates to over 1.4 million users during the election. Instagram created stickers emphasizing the importance of voting and directing users to the TSE website. Twitter generated notifications with TSE webpage links and promoted official electoral content, while TikTok launched a page to centralize reliable election information.

2. **Mexico:** Technology companies collaborated with the Mexican National Electoral Institute (INE) on civic engagement initiatives. For example, Facebook amplified INE's call for citizens to choose the third presidential debate topic and subsequently streamed all the debates. INE partnered with Twitter by using Periscope for live video streaming of debates and by promoting public engagement with custom hashtags (#Elecciones2018 #EleccionesMéxico #VotoLibre). A Tweet-to-Reply tool allowed users retweeting INE messages on Election Day to receive real-time preliminary results.

3. **Indonesia:** Facebook also collaborated with electoral authorities in Indonesia by providing officials with voter education training on the platform. The training covered topics like creating compelling videos, selecting the right messenger, and utilizing the platform effectively. It emphasized technical skills without providing editorial guidance on content creation.

Activity 1.3. Analyzing Electoral Content on Social Media

Objectives:
To critically evaluate electoral content on social media and to understand the factors that influence its engagement and impact.

Introduction:
- Briefly explain the activity's purpose – to analyze how electoral content is presented on social media and its impact on users – and highlight the importance of critical thinking in evaluating political content.

Group Discussion
- Divide participants into pairs or small groups.
- Allocate time for each group to examine their social media feeds and identify electoral content.
- Provide the following instructions to guide their analysis:
  - Identify electoral content in your feed.
  - Analyze which elements caught your attention.
  - Determine if the content was manipulative or relevant to the political debate.
  - Reflect on what aspects of your online profile might have made the content interesting to you.
- Ensure each group designates a presenter to share their insights.

Presentation and Sharing:
- Each group presents their findings to the larger group, focusing on:
  - Key observations about the electoral content.
  - Examples of manipulative vs. relevant content.
  - Personal online profile factors influencing the content's appeal.
- Encourage each presenter to share specific examples and personal reflections.

Reflective Discussion:
- Facilitate a group discussion to explore common themes from the presentations.
- Questions to prompt discussion:
  - What are the common tactics used in manipulative electoral content?
  - How does personalized content affect political perceptions and beliefs?
  - What strategies can individuals use to critically evaluate electoral content?

Summary and Key Takeaways:
- Summarize the main points and insights from the group discussions.
- Emphasize the importance of:
  - Recognizing and questioning manipulative content.
  - Understanding the role of algorithms in shaping social media feeds.
  - Developing critical evaluation skills for consuming electoral content.
- Provide resources or tips for further learning and media literacy.

Detailed Instructions for Groups
Examine Social Media Feeds:
- Spend a few minutes scrolling through your favorite social media platform.

- Identify posts, ads, or videos related to elections or political campaigns.

Analysis Questions:
- What specific elements drew your attention to this content? (e.g., visuals, headlines, emotive language)
- Was the content manipulative? Consider elements like misinformation, sensationalism, or biased framing.
- Was the content relevant and informative regarding the political debate? Think about the accuracy and depth of information.
- Reflect on how your online profile (interests, likes, previous interactions) might have influenced the appearance of this content in your feed.

Group Discussion:
- Share your findings with your group.
- Discuss the different types of content identified and the strategies used to engage viewers.
- Select a presenter to summarize your group's insights.

Facilitator Tips:
- **Encourage Active Participation:** Ensure all participants engage in the discussion by asking open-ended questions and prompting quieter members to share their thoughts.
- **Provide Examples:** Share examples of manipulative and relevant electoral content to guide the analysis.
- **Monitor Time:** Keep track of time for each segment to ensure the activity stays on schedule.
- **Foster an Open Environment:** Create a supportive atmosphere where participants feel comfortable sharing their views and experiences.

Activity 1.4. Evaluating Online Content Engagement

Objectives:
To understand the factors influencing the decision to click on online stories and to develop critical evaluation skills.

Introduction:
- **Explain the purpose of the activity**: to analyze what makes certain online stories more appealing and how content presentation influences our choices.
- Highlight the importance of critical evaluation in navigating online content.

Individual Assessment:
- Present two screenshots of different online stories. *Examples below can be used*.
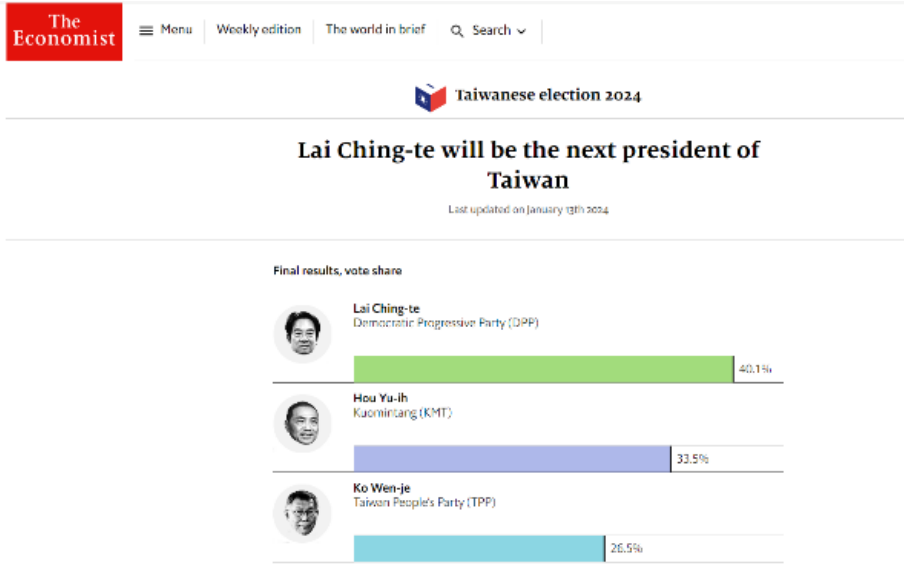
- Provide the URLs for reference:
  - [Economist: 2024 Taiwan Election](#)
  - [New York Times: Russiagate and Paul Manafort](#)
- Ask participants to individually assess which story they are more tempted to click on.

Group Discussion:
- Have participants share their choices with the group.
- Discuss the following questions:
  - Why did you choose one story over the other?
  - What elements (headlines, images, source, etc.) influenced your decision?
  - How did the content make you feel? (e.g., curious, skeptical, excited)
- Encourage participants to think about emotional and cognitive triggers.

Content Comparison:
- Open and compare both stories with the group.
- Analyze and discuss the following aspects:

- o **Content Quality:** Depth of information, accuracy, and reliability.
- o **Presentation:** Visuals, layout, and design elements.
- o **Bias and Perspective:** Any noticeable bias or perspective in the content.
- o **Engagement Tactics:** Clickbait elements, sensationalism, or emotional appeals.
- Ask participants to share what they noticed and any new insights gained.

Reflective Discussion:
- Facilitate a reflective discussion on the findings:
  - o What are the common tactics used to attract clicks?
  - o How can we become more discerning consumers of online content?
  - o How can we apply critical thinking to avoid manipulation?

Summary and Key Takeaways:
- Summarize the main insights and lessons learned from the activity.
- Emphasize the importance of:
  - o Recognizing emotional and cognitive triggers in online content.
  - o Evaluating the credibility and quality of sources.
  - o Applying critical thinking to navigate and consume online content responsibly.
- Provide resources or tips for further learning on media literacy and critical evaluation.

Facilitator Tips:
- **Encourage Participation:** Make sure everyone has a chance to share their thoughts and engage in the discussion.
- **Provide Examples:** Show examples of clickbait vs. high-quality content to illustrate points.
- **Monitor Time:** Keep track of time to ensure each segment stays on schedule.
- **Create a Supportive Environment:** Ensure a respectful and open atmosphere for discussion.

Activity 1.5. Technology Design and Human Behavior

Objectives:
To understand how design features in technology influence human behavior and to promote mindful usage of technology.

Instructions:
- **Briefly explain the purpose of the activity**: to explore how design features in technology platforms target specific human behaviors and highlight the importance of being aware of these influences to make more conscious choices in technology use.

Matching Design Features to Effects:
- Present the two sets of columns (design features and targeted effects).
- Ask participants to individually or in pairs match the design feature to the effect it might be targeting. Mention that there can be more than one connection.

- Example columns:

Design Features	Match Design Features with Targeted Effects	Targeted Effects:
Infinite scroll		Increased engagement time
Push notifications		Immediate gratification
Like buttons		Social validation
Autoplay videos		Passive consumption

Group Discussion:
- Facilitate a discussion using the following process questions:
    - How do you see platform design and human interaction being related?
    - Can you think of more design and interface innovations that target specific behaviors?
- Encourage participants to share personal experiences and observations related to these design features.

Reflective Exercise:
- Ask participants to reflect on how these design features affect their own technology usage.
- Provide prompts such as:
    - Which design features do you find most compelling?
    - How do these features impact your daily routines or habits?
    - What strategies can you use to mitigate the effects of these features?

Conclusion and Key Takeaways:
- Summarize the main points and insights from the discussion.
- Emphasize the intricate relationship between technology design and human behavior.
- Highlight the importance of awareness in resisting the temptation of technology.
- Encourage participants to apply this awareness to make more conscious choices about their interactions with technology.

Detailed Instructions for Participants

Matching Exercise:
- Review the two sets of columns.
- Draw connections between the design features and their targeted effects. Remember, there can be multiple connections for each feature.

Process Questions for Discussion:
- **Platform Design and Interaction:**
    - How does the design of a platform influence how we interact with it?

o   Share examples from your own experience where a design feature significantly influenced your behavior.
- **Additional Innovations:**
    o   Can you think of other design features not listed here that influence behavior?
    o   Discuss how these features might impact user engagement, satisfaction, or well-being.

Reflective Exercise:
- Reflect on how you interact with technology platforms.
- Identify specific design features that impact your usage patterns.
- Consider strategies to use technology more mindfully, such as setting time limits, disabling certain notifications, or using apps that promote focused usage.

Example Matching Exercise:
- **Infinite Scroll ↔ Increased Engagement Time**
- **Push Notifications ↔ Immediate Gratification**
- **Like Buttons ↔ Social Validation**
- **Autoplay Videos ↔ Passive Consumption**

Conclusion:
By becoming more aware of how technology design affects us, we can become more mindful users, making informed choices about our interactions with technology. This awareness enables us to resist manipulative design features and foster healthier digital habits.

Activity 1.6. Name it to Tame it

Objectives:
To develop awareness of emotional responses to online content related to elections and to learn techniques for managing these emotions effectively.

Instructions:
- Explain the role of strong emotions in driving online content engagement, particularly in relation to elections. Highlight that strong emotions often make content go viral because they drive clicks, shares, and comments.
- Encourage participants to think about how their emotions have influenced their engagement with online content.

Process Questions:
- Pose the following questions to prompt reflection:
    1. When was the last time you saw a headline in your social media feed that made you so angry that you commented on it or shared it with others?

2. What was it about the headline that made you react this way?
- Ask participants to share their experiences with encountering emotionally charged headlines or content on social media platforms.
- Encourage participants to reflect on the factors that triggered their emotional responses.

Insights and Technique Introduction:
- Provide insights into the significance of recognizing emotional manipulation in online content. Explain that while not all emotional content is manipulative, the use of highly emotional and graphic images can sometimes signal an attempt to influence reactions.

- Introduce the "Name it to Tame it" technique as a strategy for managing emotional responses effectively. Emphasize the importance of pausing, identifying emotions, and accepting them to regain control over reactions.

Practice "Name it to Tame it" Technique:
- Guide participants through the three steps:
  - **Pause:** Turn your head away from the screen after viewing an image or article that provokes you. Take a deep breath.
  - **Ask Yourself:** How am I feeling?
  - **Name and Accept:** Identify and accept your emotion – this helps you regain control of your logical brain.
- Provide participants with a wheel of emotions (*Plutchik*) to help them describe what they're feeling.

Application Exercise:
- Present a series of photos or articles related to elections (you can also use those provided below).
- Ask participants to practice the "Name it to Tame it" technique with each example.

Source: Getty Images

How AI is resurrecting dead Indian politicians as election looms

Source: [Al Jazeera](#)

Student killed in Senegal protests over election delay

Violent protests erupt after President Macky Sall postponed presidential elections by several months.

Source: Al Jazeera

Source: ICIR

Source: International IDEA

Discussion and Reflection:
- Facilitate a discussion on the emotions participants felt and how the "Name it to Tame it" technique helped them manage their responses.
- Encourage participants to share any new insights or strategies they plan to use when encountering emotional content online.

Conclusion:
- Summarize the key points:
  - The role of emotions in driving online engagement.
  - The importance of recognizing and managing emotional responses to avoid manipulation.
  - How the "Name it to Tame it" technique can help in regaining control over reactions.
- Encourage participants to continue practicing this technique in their daily online interactions.
- Recommend watching a short video by Dr. Dan Siegel on the "Name it to Tame it" technique for further learning.
- By improving the structure and clarity of this activity, participants will gain valuable skills in recognizing and managing their emotional responses to online content, leading to more mindful and informed interactions with media.

Activity 1.7. My Media Landscape

Objectives:

To prompt participants to reflect on their information consumption habits, particularly during election periods, and to understand the impact of these habits on their daily lives and productivity.

Instructions:

- **Explain the purpose of the activity**: to reflect on and quantify media consumption habits during election periods and highlight the importance of understanding these habits to avoid information overload and to maintain productivity.
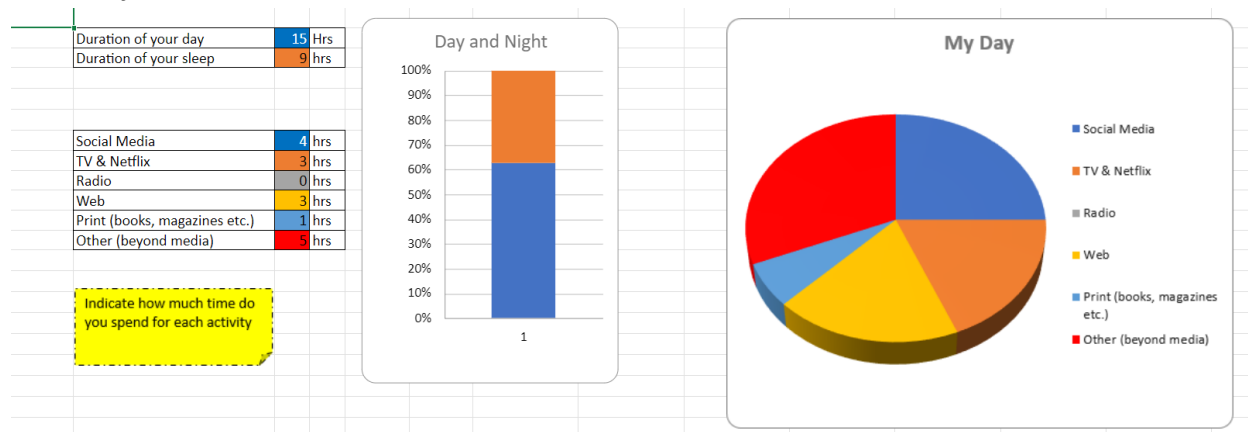
Reflection Questions:

- Have you ever thought about how much time you spend consuming news media during an election period? An hour or two per day? Three hours? Eight hours? Or even more?
- Do you choose specific sources to get election-related news, or do you stay informed through what comes up on your newsfeed?
- Take a moment to think about what forms of media you interact with to get election news. Consider everything, from picking up your smartphone, watching a political TV debate, listening to a podcast, and more. How much of your day is spent interacting with media and consuming election news? How does it affect your productivity during the day?
- How can one effectively stay informed about election-related information without falling into information overload?

Quantifying Media Consumption:

- Provide participants with an *Excel file* pre-configured with a formula and tabs labeled "Sample" and "Your Media Consumption."
- Instruct participants to:
  - Open the Excel file to the tab named "Sample."
  - Review the sample data, paying attention to the duration of hours for the day, sleep, and media consumption categories.
  - Click on the tab/sheet called "Your Media Consumption" and fill out the hours according to their typical day. They should make their best estimate for each category, including time spent on different media types.
- Provide a brief tutorial on how to fill out the sheet if necessary.

Below is an image example of what the Excel file could look like. Contact us if you would like a copy of our Excel file.

Personal Reflection and Discussion:
- After completing the form, ask participants to look at their pie chart results and reflect on the following questions:
    - How do you feel seeing your pie chart?
    - How do you feel about the media you use?
    - Does it seem like a lot of information is coming at you?
    - How does this affect your ability to discern the quality of information?
- Encourage participants to share their reflections in pairs or small groups.

Group Discussion:
- Reconvene the whole group and invite volunteers to share their key reflections and insights.
- Facilitate a discussion on common themes and differences in media consumption habits. Discuss strategies for managing media consumption to avoid overload and improve productivity.

Conclusion and Tips for Managing Media Consumption:
- Summarize the key insights from the activity.
- Emphasize the importance of being mindful of media consumption habits.
- Provide tips for managing media consumption, such as setting time limits, choosing reliable sources, and taking regular breaks from media.
- Encourage participants to apply these tips to stay informed without becoming overwhelmed.

Additional Resources:
- **Excel Template:** Provide participants with the Excel file for tracking media consumption.
- **Media Management Tips:** Share a handout or presentation with tips for managing media consumption and avoiding information overload.

Activity 1.8. Self-Reflection: Evaluating Information Consumption Habits During Elections

Objectives:
To help participants reflect on their information consumption habits during elections and to develop strategies to manage information overload effectively.

Introduction:
Are you feeling overwhelmed by the sheer volume of election-related information? This activity will guide you through a series of self-reflection questions to help you evaluate your information consumption habits and find a balance between staying informed and avoiding overload.

Instructions:

1. **Handout Distribution:** Provide participants with a handout that includes self-reflection questions and notes.
2. **Self-Reflection:** Ask participants to reflect on each question and consider how it applies to their own information consumption habits.
3. **Discussion (Optional):** Facilitate a discussion where participants can share their reflections and strategies for managing information consumption.

Self-Reflection Questions and Notes:

- **Question 1: Are you always on the lookout for recent political news?**
  - **Note:** Constantly consuming information might lead to information overload. Optimal information consumption occurs when you allocate time for reflection, review, and revision of your information sources. Avoid succumbing to the fear of missing out (FOMO) on important news, which can result in consuming excessive amounts of information.
- **Question 2: In the past three months, have you taken any constructive actions with the information you received about elections? If so, what are they?**
  - **Note:** Knowledge should lead to action. It doesn't need to be drastic; even small actions, such as sharing information about electoral procedures from an EMB (Electoral Management Body) website with a colleague, are meaningful.
- **Question 3: Do you take in information indiscriminately? Or do you carefully choose what information to consume?**
  - **Note:** With the abundance of information available, selecting what news to focus on can be challenging. Being discerning is essential. While managing the information flow, try to extract the information about elections that matters to you most by filtering news sources and allocating specific times when you read the news.
- **Question 4: Do you watch a political debate or listen to a podcast while, in parallel, scrolling through your news feed on social media?**
  - **Note:** Consuming information from multiple sources simultaneously leads to information overload, hence decreasing your productivity and attention to detail.

Conclusion:
Take some time to ponder these questions and consider how you can strike a balance between staying informed and avoiding information overload during elections. Remember, informed action is key to making a difference.

Facilitator Tips:

- **Encourage Honest Reflection:** Ensure participants feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences.
- **Provide Examples:** Share your own experiences or hypothetical scenarios to illustrate the questions.
- **Monitor Engagement:** Ensure all participants are engaged in the reflection process.

Additional Resources:
- **Handout Template:** Create a handout with the self-reflection questions and notes for participants.
- **Discussion Guide:** Prepare a guide with additional questions and prompts to facilitate deeper discussions if needed.

Activity 1.9. Analyzing Election-Related Media

Objective:
To critically examine various forms of election-related media to understand their impact on public opinion and the democratic process.

Introduction:
Elections are heavily influenced by the media landscape. From political advertisements to news coverage and social media campaigns, media plays a pivotal role in shaping public opinion and ultimately, election outcomes. This activity aims to help participants develop critical thinking skills by analyzing different forms of election-related media.

Materials Needed:
- Political advertisements
- News articles
- Opinion pieces
- Debates
- Social media campaigns
- Candidates' statements or manifestos
- Note-taking materials (paper, pens, or digital devices)

Instructions:
- Begin by explaining the importance of news media in the electoral process and its influence on public opinion.
- Provide an overview of the activity objectives and steps.

Group Division:
- Divide participants into small groups and distribute 2-3 different election-related materials to each group.

Assessment Guidelines:
- Provide the following guidelines for assessing the election-related materials (also distribute them to each group):
  - **Initial Impressions:** Note your initial impressions of each piece. Does it aim to inform and influence voters' decisions ethically, or does it appear to manipulate emotions or perceptions unfairly?

- o **Message Intent:** Examine the intention behind each message. Consider whether the message provides factual, transparent information helpful for making an informed decision, or if it uses misleading or emotionally charged content to sway opinions.
- o **Perspective Inclusion:** Assess whether the message acknowledges different perspectives or pushes a single viewpoint without justification.
- o **Impact on Voters:** Consider the potential impact of each message on voters. Does it encourage a well-informed, balanced decision-making process, or push voters towards a specific decision without fair evaluation of options?
- o **Public Opinion and Fairness:** Discuss how the message might affect public opinion, voter turnout, and the overall fairness of the election process.

Group Discussion:
- Share assessments within the group and explore different interpretations of the same media piece.
  - o **Real-World Implications:** Discuss the real-world implications of influence and manipulation in the democratic process, especially the impact on trust in elections and political institutions.
  - o **Personal Reflection:** Reflect on your own biases and how they might affect your interpretation of election-related content. Consider how you can apply this analysis to improve your media consumption habits, especially in future elections.
  - o **Developing Criteria:** Based on the exercise, develop a set of criteria or questions to apply when encountering new election-related media. This might include checking source credibility, cross-referencing information, and being aware of emotional appeals.

Group Presentations:
- Each group presents their findings and discusses different interpretations and insights gained from analyzing the media pieces.

Conclusion:
- Summarize the key takeaways from the activity.
- Emphasize the importance of critically evaluating election-related information.
- Encourage participants to apply the developed criteria or questions in their future media consumption.

Additional Resources:
- **Handout Template:** Create a handout with the assessment guidelines and reflection questions for participants.
- **Discussion Guide:** Prepare additional prompts and questions to facilitate deeper discussions if needed.

UNIT 2. The Role of Media in Elections

Activity 2.1. Media Ownership and Elections

Objectives:
To critically analyze the concepts discussed in the podcast regarding media ownership and its influence on elections, and to evaluate their relevance to the participants' respective countries.

Note: *If time permits, participants can listen to the podcast during the training session. Alternatively, it can be assigned as homework for discussion during the following day's training session.*

Materials Needed:
- Access to the podcast episode: "On Media Ownership: On History of Elections, Protecting Free Press and Media in the Digital Age" by Sergei Guriev with Julia Cagé.

Instructions:
- Introduce the podcast episode and its topic: Media Ownership and Elections. Provide a brief overview of the discussion points and key concepts explored by Sergei Guriev and Julia Cagé.
- Ask participants to listen to the podcast episode attentively, either at home or during the training session (to be decided by the trainer), and to take notes on the key ideas, examples, and arguments presented by the speakers.

Podcast Summary:
Does it matter who controls the media? What are the democratic implications of the increasing concentration of the media industry in the hands of oligarchs? Is this a result of the weakening of the industry? What changes can we expect in the upcoming years? To answer these burning questions, Julia Cagé lays out some democratic solutions that her research finds promising to break away from editorial political lines and protect the public good that is information. Additionally, she delves into the main conclusions of her latest work, "Une Histoire du Conflit Politique", co-authored alongside Thomas Piketty, where she investigated geosocial factors of voting behavior and its consequences for current issues like EU membership or radical party voting.

Trainers can provide the following discussion questions in advance to assist participants in actively engaging with the podcast content:

Discussion Questions:
1. To what extent do the concepts of media ownership and its influence on elections, as discussed in the podcast, apply in your country?
2. List the identified elements or factors that resonate with the media landscape and electoral processes in your country. Consider aspects such as concentration of media ownership,

influence of media conglomerates, regulatory frameworks, political affiliations of media outlets, and the role of digital media platforms.

3. Discuss any similarities or differences between the situation described in the podcast and the participants' observations of media ownership and elections in their own country.
4. Reflect on the potential implications of media ownership dynamics on electoral integrity, democratic governance, and citizen participation in your country.

Activity 2.2. Unveiling Media Ownership

Objective:

To equip participants with practical skills to explore media ownership and its implications, particularly during elections.

Instructions:

- **Discuss Importance:** Briefly emphasize the critical importance of understanding media ownership and its profound impact on elections.

Talking Points:

Knowing media ownership during elections is crucial as it illuminates potential biases in news coverage, enabling voters to make informed decisions. Media owners often have vested interests that can shape how electoral issues and candidates are portrayed. For instance, outlets owned by corporations with specific business interests may favor candidates aligned with those interests, leading to biased reporting. Recognizing media ownership enables voters to seek diverse sources and ensures a more balanced perspective. Transparency in ownership fosters accountability, allowing voters to scrutinize the impartiality of news coverage. Ultimately, informed voters are vital for democracy, and understanding media ownership safeguards the integrity of the electoral process by promoting critical media consumption and an enlightened electorate.

- Have participants collaboratively list media outlets covering elections in the country.
- Divide participants into small groups and assign each group a media outlet to investigate.

Group Work Guidelines

Research Media Ownership:

- **Review Media Outlets Websites:**
  - Visit the official websites of the media outlets. Look for sections like "About Us" or "Corporate Information" which often disclose ownership details.
  - Check the "Investor Relations" section for publicly traded companies, where they provide shareholder information.
- **Business Directories and Databases:**

- Use business directories or local business registries to find ownership information.
- Access media-specific databases like the Media Ownership Monitor or Who Owns the Media.
- **Media Watchdog Reports and Investigative Articles:**
  - Consult reports from media watchdog organizations like Reporters Without Borders, the Media Reform Coalition, or the Center for Media and Democracy.
  - These organizations often investigate and publish detailed reports on media ownership and influence.
  - Search for news articles and investigative reports on the ownership of media outlets. Investigative journalism often uncovers hidden or complex ownership structures.

Analyze and Evaluate:
- Instruct groups to analyze the affiliations, interests, and potential influences of media owners on coverage.
- Encourage discussions within groups on how ownership might impact media content, considering political affiliations and historical biases.

Present Findings:
- Each group presents their findings to the class, including media outlet names, owners, ownership types, and potential biases detected.
- Encourage participation and facilitate a discussion on the implications of media ownership on public perception and democracy.

Reflect:
- **Summarize Insights:**
  - Summarize key insights from the activity, emphasizing the importance of analytical skills in understanding media ownership during elections.
- **Reflective Opportunity:**
  - Provide participants with a chance to reflect on the complexities of media ownership.

Activity 2.3. Understanding Journalistic Standards During Elections

Objectives:
Participants will understand the professional standards that journalists follow during election coverage and learn to distinguish quality journalism from biased or misleading content.

Materials Needed:
- Flip charts and markers
- Pens and paper for participants
- SPJ Journalism Standards handout

- Access to online resources for additional reading

Instructions:
- **Brief Discussion:**
  - Talk about the importance of professional standards in journalism, especially during elections.
  - Highlight how these standards ensure high-quality and unbiased coverage, distinguishing reliable journalism from false or misleading content often found online.
- **Talking Points:**
  - According to the Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the first duty of a journalist is respect for the facts and the right of the public to the truth.
  - Most journalism codes emphasize truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, fairness, and public accountability.
  - During election periods, additional standards focus on transparency, accountability, and minimizing harm.

Instructions:
- **Individual Reflection:**
  - Ask participants to think about what constitutes quality journalism during an election cycle and write down their criteria.
- **Group Sharing:**
  - Have some participants share their responses.
  - Discuss common themes and differences.
- **Explanation of Standards:**
  - Explain that journalists, like other professionals, have standards provided by various organizations (e.g., International Federation of Journalists, Association of Journalists, Council of Media Ethics).
  - Discuss key elements shared by most journalism codes: accuracy, impartiality, transparency, accountability, integrity, fairness, minimizing harm, and privacy.

Watch and Discuss:
- **Video Presentation:**
  - Watch a video highlighting the SPJ Journalism Standards.
- **Group Discussion:**
  - Discuss the SPJ Journalism Standards handout and highlight key points from the video.

Resources for Journalism in Elections:
- Provide an overview of various guidelines and handbooks for journalists on election reporting, such as:
  - Guidelines for Professional Election Reporting by *International Media Support*

- Coaching Manual for Support to Media During Elections by *Media & Democracy Group and Réseau Liberté*
- Media + Elections: An Elections Reporting Handbook by *IMPACS and International Media Support*
- Handbook for Journalists During Elections by *Reporters Without Borders*
- Covering Elections by *Thomson Foundation*
- EBU Principles for Election Coverage in New and Developing Democracies by *European Broadcasting Union*

Discussion Questions:
- Do the news media outlets you rely on respect these standards when reporting about elections?
- Discuss the differences between the standards and the actual reporting practices by your preferred news media outlets.

Debrief and Reflection:
- Reflect on how understanding journalistic standards can help participants evaluate election coverage.
- Encourage participants to think about ways they can apply this knowledge when consuming news.

Conclusion:
- Summarize the key insights from the activity.
- Emphasize the importance of supporting ethical journalism to ensure fair and transparent election coverage.

Activity 2.4. Why Journalism Matters During the Election Cycle

Objectives:
Participants will:
- Understand why journalists do much of what they do, and what their ultimate aims are.
- Better understand the role of journalism in elections and society, and its importance for the functioning of democracy.
- Understand the methods of journalism and how it can foster social good, including empowering citizens to make informed decisions.

Materials Needed:
- Journalism Cards (can be printed on paper by dividing A4 paper into 4 equal parts and cutting them)
- Issues signs (write up each issue on separate flip charts ahead of time)
- Tape

- Place signs with different issues (listed below) around the room, flipped over with the blank sides up.

Ask participants:
- What political and societal issues do you care about?
- Does journalism cover these?

Some potential answers (to both questions):
integrity of elections; digital technology; civic education; environmental issues; women's empowerment; disinformation; safety; political corruption; human rights.

Discussion Points for a Trainer:
For pretty much anything you care about, there are journalists who cover various topics, including politics, economy, digital transformation, education, security, etc. Some subjects are more complex to grasp, while others are more engaging. For example, you might read investigative news pieces to better understand campaign finance rules in elections, or how political parties finance their electoral campaigns and whether they submit financial reports. Alternatively, you may focus more on civic education and how it helps to promote informed citizenship in the digital age. Quality journalism provides us with important facts and information about political or societal issues, and journalists sometimes face scrutiny and even personal risk for doing that work. During elections campaigns, journalists are particularly vulnerable as they face enormous tensions while crafting critical stories or conducting investigations from politicians, their allies, and supporters who may not want to see such coverage published.

In this lesson, we'll look at some journalists who have made a powerful difference in the U.S. and around the world.

After the initial discussion, flip the issue signs over. You'll have a sign for each one of these issues:
- Politics and Elections
- Environment
- Health and safety
- Human rights
- Government and corporate corruption

Handout
Hand out to each participant a *Journalism Card*. The Journalism Cards include the name of a journalist, a picture of the journalist, a snippet from one of the journalist's articles that exposed a particular issue, and evidence of how that journalist's reporting changed things (disclosed corruption case, reported about women running for office, etc.).

Ask them to match the card to the issue that each journalist worked on and stand next to the sign with the issue that relates to their journalist.

Answers from U.S. curriculum version/should be adapted for each country. Examples of issues, with the journalists that best fit under each:
- Politics and Elections (Jim Rutenberg, Andrew E. Krammer, Christopher Miller, Joel Wasserman, Lee Reaney, Allison Meakem)
- Environment (Carson)
- Health and safety (Sinclair, Adams, Werner)
- Human rights (Morel, Skinner, Wells, Shah, Liu)
- Government and corporate corruption (Tarbell)

Debrief:
- Did the issue resonate with you? Why?
- Next, pick 3-4 participants to role play. These participants will assume the identity of the journalist on their card, presenting themselves to the group as their chosen journalist: for example, "Hi, I'm …, and I wrote about …"
- Ask each of the presenters to share with the group, in the role of their chosen journalist:
  - What issues are you concerned about today?
  - What makes your job difficult today?

Trainer tips
Possible answers to the question, "What issues are you concerned about today?":
- Politics and Elections: integrity and transparency of election campaigns, disinformation, impact of wars and conflicts on geopolitical agenda, cyber threats, youth participation.
- Environmental journalists: Climate change, air pollution, water pollution, loss of habitat, endangered species
- Health journalists: Poor insurance coverage, conflicts of interest in industry-funded research, need for more research (e.g., on possible carcinogens)
- Human rights journalists: Religious freedom, poor working conditions in many industries, restrictions on women's rights.
- Government/corporate corruption journalists: Voting inference, enrichment at public expense, monopolies and industry consolidations.

Process questions:
- Can you name three journalists working today whom you trust? Why do you value them?
- If you can't name three journalists whom you trust, why do you think this is?

Talking points:
We don't often pay much attention to the names of journalists, because we're more focused on the name of the publication or the content of the story. We might be better able to recall names of TV

correspondents as compared to newspaper reporters, because we see and hear them onscreen regularly and are able to associate their names with their faces and voices. However, some of these TV personalities are not presenting news but expressing opinions or hosting individuals to share their viewpoints. It's important to be able to distinguish between news reporting and editorializing or commenting on the news and expressing opinions.

Conclusions:

Today we looked at some of the most notable contributions journalists have made towards covering politics and matters of public interest. Amid global challenges affecting the integrity of electoral process, security, education, environment and economy, it's crucial to ensure and support independent reporting and evidence-based investigations. This work provides us with information essential for making important decisions in our day-to-day lives and to help us make informed choices when electing government representatives.

UNIT 3. Information and Decision-Making in Elections

Activity 3.1. Cognitive Reflection Test

Objectives:
Participants will:
- Complete a Cognitive Reflection Test
- Reflect on their own cognitive distortions
- Consider their susceptibility and others' susceptibility to manipulative information

Instructions:
- Have participants take a *Cognitive Reflection Test* (see below) before the session.

Discussion:
- Begin the session with the Introduction and then a small group or whole group Reflection Discussion:
  - How did you score on the test?
  - What surprised you?
  - How susceptible do you believe you are to manipulative information?
  - How susceptible do you believe others are to manipulative information? More or less than you?

Conclusion and Talking Points:
Ahead of each electoral period, many citizens follow their news feeds in near real time to stay informed about the latest political developments. However, the quest for facts is often hindered by our cognitive biases. External entities, such as the media or politicians, can exploit these biases to shape our perspectives. By capitalizing on our inclination to rely on stereotypes and providing superficial information, they embed lasting generalizations in our minds.

When consistently applied to a wide audience, these strategies can significantly influence public opinion. To navigate these mental pitfalls, this infographic from World Economic Forum/PredictIt highlights prevalent cognitive biases that impact the political landscape, starting with the "Big Cs" – Confirmation bias, Coverage bias, and Concision bias:

- *Confirmation bias* means favoring or seeking information that affirms your pre-existing beliefs.
- *Coverage bias* is the extent to which different issues are reported on and discussed.
- *Concision bias* implies selective focus on certain information while losing nuance.

QUIZ: WHY DO WE FALL FOR POLITICAL SPIN
Washington Post Quiz

Cognitive Biases can affect the way we perceive information, sometimes leading to irrational behavior and affecting our decision-making. Politicians, among others, know this and try to use these biases to win favors. Take this quiz to learn more about these biases and how they might affect you.

QUESTION 1:

Theresa is 31, single, outspoken and very bright. She majored in philosophy. As a student, she was deeply concerned with issues of discrimination and social justice. She also participated in anti-nuclear demonstrations.

Which is more likely? There is...
   A.   A bank teller
   B.   A bank teller active in feminist movement

Correct Answer: Bank Teller

THE CONJUNCTION FALLACY

The conjunction fallacy occurs when we assume that specific conditions are more probable than a single general one. Academicians Rajeev Gowda and Jeffrey C. Fox explained how many people choose answer two, although the probability of two events occurring together is always smaller than either one occurring alone. Psychologists Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman argued that we make this error because the second answer seems more 'representative' of Theresa, although it is less likely.

This bias is sometimes used in politics to make an unlikely event more credible for voters by adding specific details. One example is President Trump's assertion that millions voted illegally in 2016 presidential election, causing him to lose the popular vote. Trump has claimed that between 3 million and 5 million people voted illegally, mainly in states like California, Virgnia and or New Hampshire, and that people were brought in on busses from Massachusetts to vote in the latter.

QUESTION 2:

> The American Civil War took place from 1861 to 1865.

What year did Congress hold its first session in the Capitol?
1780 ---1980

Correct answer: 1800

ANCHORING BIAS

The first session of Congress in the Capitol happened in 1800, and that fact is totally unrelated to the Civil War. Anchoring bias happens because, in our decision making, we rely too heavily on the first piece of information that is given to us, even if it is not related to the same issue.

For example, one of Barack Obama's major promises as president was to have the most transparent administration in history. The creation of open data portal, his open-data policy and related executive actions created an impression of openness that was not translated to other important matters, like his administration's more punitive treatment of whistleblowers.

QUESTION 3:
All cherry trees are plants. Some plants fade quickly. Therefore, some cherry trees fade quickly.

Is the last sentence TRUE or FALSE?
- A. True
- B. False

Correct Answer: True

COGNITIVE EASE: Illusory Truth Effect
Cognitive ease makes us feel more favorable toward tings that are familiar and easy to understand. Our brain is wired to accept what is familiar. That can make us resistant to new assessments, even when presented with reliable facts. The illusory truth effect is a consequence of this cognitive bias. It is the tendency to believe information because it is repeated often. Our minds need to make quick judgements, so we take shortcuts. Relying on how often you've heard something to judge the truth of something is just one strategy.

During the Obama administration, many of Obama's opponents claimed the president was Muslim. They used the detailed, like the fact that his middle name is Hussein, or that he lived in Indonesia (a majority Muslim country) as proof of his religious believes. Obama is a practicing Christian, but enemies tried to use this bias to convince some that the President had a secret agenda.

QUESTION 5:
Tina: Intelligent – industrious – impulsive – critical -stubborn – envious
Telma: Envious – stubborn – critical – impulsive – industrious – intelligent.

Which one do you see more favorably?
- A. Tina
- B. Telma
- C. Neither

Correct answer: Neither

HALO EFFECT
Both descriptions are the exact same words in a different order. The halo effect relies on the weight of the first impression. It is also the phenomenon whereby we assume that because people are good at

doing A, they will be good at doing B, C and D, whatever B, C or D is. This is why many people believe that beautiful people are better at their jobs.

A Washington Post-ABC poll in January 2017 found that 61 percent of American voters expected President Trum to do an excellent or good job handling the economy, higher than for many other issues. Because Trump didn't have ay governing or political experience at that time, these expectations may have been rooted in his reputation as a successful businessman. People may have believed that his private-sector experience would translate to effective handling of economic policy, although these roles involve different expertise.

QUESTION 5:
Hector thought of a rule for a sequence of three numbers. The numbers are 3, 9 and 81.

Try to guess the rule by proposing three sequences of three numbers. We'll tell you if your sequences follow the same rule.
   A.   I know the rule.
   B.   Give me the answer.

Correct answer: Any numbers in ascending order

CONFIRMATION BIAS
Confirmation Bias is the tendency to look for and favor information that confirms our beliefs. In this example, you may have been biased toward believing that the question was hard, thereby overcomplicated your answer.

In politics, this bias can lead us to believe in anything that supports our beliefs, even if no facts are given or the facts given are incorrect. When a politician tells supporters what they want to hear, they're leveraging this bias. *Washington Post* opinion writer David Ignatius wrote about this issue in the column [Why facts don't matter to Trump's supporters](#), but politicians from all sides make use of it.

CONCLUSIONS
These are just five of the multiple cognitive biases we experience daily.

Tversky and Kahneman introduced these concepts in 1972, proving that we are not completely rational individuals. Cognitive biases lead to a distorted perception of reality, causing us to make judgments inaccurately, make illogical interpretations and come to irrational conclusions. These same biases allow us to make optimal quick decisions in everyday tasks.

Politicians and marketing professionals understand and utilize these biases in their daily work. Being aware that these biases exist can help us be smarter and more critical of our initial reactions.

Activity 3.2. Individual Reflection Activity: Social Media Engagement Reflective Analysis

Objective:
To practice self-reflection on the factors influencing emotional engagement with social media content and its potential impact on our perceptions.

Instructions:
- Read the following scenario and think about your personal experiences and reactions.

Imagine you discover a video clip on social media showing a political figure making a controversial statement that sparks outrage. The clip is edited to highlight the most provocative part of the speech. It quickly gains traction and draws a flood of negative comments and reactions.

This content captures your attention not only due to the nature of the statement but also because of the emotional responses it triggers in the comments. You find yourself more engaged with the content, possibly sharing the clip or adding your reaction to the comments.

Reflect on why this piece of content drew you in more than others. Was it your emotional reaction, the controversy with the political figure, or the reactions it garnered? Consider how this engagement might have amplified your feelings towards the politician and influenced your perception of the politician's character.

Reflect on the following questions and jot down your thoughts in a journal or document:

Reflection Questions:
- Remember a similar situation when you encountered a controversial social media post, how did it make you feel?
- What specific aspects of the content elicited an emotional reaction from you?
- Did you engage with the content by sharing it or reacting to it? If so, why?
- Reflect on whether your emotional reaction influenced your perceptions.

Reflection Guidelines:
- Be honest and introspective in your reflections.
- Consider both your initial emotional reaction and any subsequent actions prompted by the content.
- Explore the underlying reasons behind your engagement with the content, such as personal beliefs, values, or prior experiences.

- Take your time to delve deep into your thoughts and feelings, and jot down any insights or realizations that arise during the reflection process.

After completing the reflection activity, take a moment to review your thoughts and observations. Look for patterns or recurring themes in your responses and reflect on the broader implications of emotional engagement with social media content. Use your insights to inform your future interactions with similar content and to cultivate a more mindful approach to social media engagement.

By engaging in this reflective practice, you will gain a deeper understanding of how social media content affects you emotionally and cognitively, empowering you to navigate social media more thoughtfully and intentionally.

Activity 3.3. Understanding Emotional Responses to Social Media Content

Objectives:
Learners will analyze their emotional responses to social media content and reflect on how these responses can influence their perceptions and behaviors.

Introduction:
- Begin by discussing the prevalence of social media and its impact on society.
- Introduce the scenario below, emphasizing the role of emotional responses in shaping engagement with social media content. Divide students into small groups and ask them to respond to the scenario analysis questions as a group and be ready to share their responses in a big group later.

Read The Scenario

Imagine your friend discovers a video clip on social media showing a political figure making a controversial statement that sparks outrage. The clip is edited to highlight the most provocative part of the speech. It quickly gains traction and draws a flood of negative comments and reactions.

This content captures your friend's attention not only due to the nature of the statement but also because of the emotional responses it triggers in the comments. You find your friend more and more engaged with the content, sharing the clip or adding his reaction to the comments.

Reflect on why this piece of content drew your friend in more than others. Was it his emotional reaction, the controversy with the political figure, or the reactions it garnered? Consider how this engagement might have amplified his feelings towards the politician and influenced his perception of the politician's character.

The Scenario Analysis Questions

- Lead a discussion using the questions below:
    - What emotions do you think your friend might be experiencing as they engage with this social media content?
    - What factors do you think contributed to your friend's emotional engagement with this particular piece of content?
    - How do you think the editing of the video clip might have impacted your friend's perception of the political figure's statement?
    - Do you think your friend's emotional reaction is influenced by the reactions of others in the comments section? Why or why not?
    - How might your friend's engagement with this content affect their perceptions of the political figure?
    - In what ways do you think your friend's actions (e.g., sharing the clip, adding reactions) might contribute to the spread of the content and its impact?
    - Can you think of any strategies for helping your friend maintain a critical perspective when consuming social media content, especially when it elicits strong emotions?
    - Reflecting on this scenario, how do you think individuals can navigate the challenge of balancing emotional responses with critical thinking when consuming social media content?

Big Group Reflections

- Facilitate a whole-class discussion, allowing groups to share their key takeaways.
- Encourage participants to share their thoughts and insights with others and share examples of social media posts or videos that have elicited strong emotional reactions from them or others.

Conclusion

- Summarize the main points of the discussion and emphasize the importance of critically evaluating emotional responses to social media content.
- Encourage students to apply the lessons learned to their future interactions with social media.

Activity 3.4. Understanding and Escaping Your Filter Bubble

Objectives:

To raise awareness about filter bubbles and to equip participants with practical tips to understand their social media feeds, recognize potential filter bubbles, and implement strategies to escape them. By doing so, participants can cultivate a more diverse and balanced information diet.

Materials Needed:

The activity includes two worksheets. Depending on the time and needs of your participants, you can choose to use both or just one. You may also consider combining the two worksheets based on your available time and the needs and interests of your participants.

Printed copies of two worksheets, one per participant (*see below*):
1. **Worksheet 1: Social Media Feed Analysis**
2. **Worksheet 2: Understanding Your Filter Bubble**

Introduction:
- Begin by explaining the concept of filter bubbles and their impact on individuals' online experiences.
- Discuss how algorithms personalize content based on users' past behaviors, leading to the reinforcement of existing beliefs and limited exposure to diverse perspectives.

Group Introductory Discussion:
- Facilitate a discussion on participants' experiences with filter bubbles.
- Encourage participants to share instances where they felt their online information was biased or limited in perspective due to algorithmic filtering.
- Discuss the implications of filter bubbles on critical thinking, societal polarization, and the spread of misinformation.

Worksheet 1: Social Media Feed Analysis

Instructions:
- Distribute Worksheet 1 to each participant.
- Ask them to analyze their social media feed from the past three days. Instruct them to carefully analyze the feed of the social media platform they most frequently use and jot down answers according to the instructions on the worksheet.
- Encourage participants to reflect on the diversity of perspectives represented in their current sources and identify any potential filter bubbles.

Group Sharing for Worksheet 1 Results:
- Invite participants to share their observations and insights from completing Worksheet 1. Ask volunteers to share their observations—ideally different people for each question.
    - What range of topics did you notice in your social media feed over the past 3 days? Were they diverse, or did you observe a prevalence of certain themes or viewpoints?
    - Were there specific messages, themes, or narratives that kept appearing repeatedly in your feed? How do you think this repetition could shape your perception of certain issues or candidates?
    - How many of the posts in your feed were advertisements? Do you believe that targeted ads might be influencing your views on electoral issues or candidates? If so, how?

- o Reflect on the emotions evoked by the posts you encountered. Were certain emotions like fear, anger, or hope more prevalent? How do you think these emotions might influence your political opinions or decision-making?

Worksheet 2: Understanding Your Filter Bubble

Instructions:
- Distribute Worksheet 2 to each participant.
- Explain that they will use these worksheets to analyze their current online content consumption habits and identify strategies that can help them diversify their information sources.

Worksheet Completion:
- Participants individually fill out the provided worksheet, which includes sections for listing their primary social media platforms, news websites, and favorite sources.
- Encourage participants to reflect on the diversity of perspectives represented in their current sources and identify any potential filter bubbles.

Group Sharing:
- Invite participants to share their observations and insights from completing the worksheet.
- Facilitate a discussion on common patterns or biases identified in participants' content consumption habits.
- Encourage participants to exchange tips and strategies for escaping filter bubbles.

Conclusion:
- Wrap up the activity by summarizing key takeaways about filter bubbles and emphasizing the importance of consciously diversifying information sources.
- Encourage participants to implement the strategies discussed and continuously evaluate their online content consumption habits to ensure a balanced and informed perspective.

Additional Tips:
- Encourage participants to follow diverse voices and media outlets.
- Remind participants to regularly review and adjust their social media settings to reduce algorithmic filtering.
- Suggest the use of tools and browser extensions designed to promote a more balanced information diet.

WORKSHEET 1: Social Media Feed Analysis

Analyze your social media feed (you most frequently use) from the past 3 days.

#	Question & Task	Your Response
1	What range of topics did you notice on your social media feed? **List topics you came across**	
2	Were these topics diverse, or did you find a prevalence of certain themes or viewpoints? **Rate the diversity of topics on a scale of 1 to 5** (1 being least diverse, 5 being most diverse).	
3	Identify the frequency of repeated content. **List 3 most frequently repeated topics**	
4	Were there specific messages, themes, or narratives that kept appearing? **List top 3 that stood out.**	
5	How does this repetition potentially shape your perception of certain issues or candidates? **Jot down your thoughts.**	
6	Estimate the proportion of posts that were advertisements. Assess how targeted ads might be influencing your views on electoral issues or candidates. **Write down the estimated proportion of ads.**	
7	Note the emotions evoked by the posts. Were certain emotions like fear, anger, or hope more prevalent? **Write down most prevalent emotions and reflect on how these emotions might influence your political opinions or decision-making.**	

WORKSHEET 2: Understanding Your Filter Bubble

List your primary social media platforms, news websites, and favorite sources, reflect on the diversity of perspectives represented in your current sources and identify any potential filter bubbles.

Task	Your Response
Primary Social Media Platforms *List the social media platforms you use <u>most frequently.</u>*	
Favorite Sources or Accounts *Identify specific sources, accounts, or pages you follow for news, opinions, or entertainment.*	
Favorite News Websites *Write down the news websites <u>you visit regularly</u> for information*.	
Diversity Check - *Reflect on the perspectives, ideologies, and demographics represented in your current sources.*	
Rate the diversity of your sources on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being least diverse, 5 being most diverse).	
Strategies for Escaping Filter Bubbles *Brainstorm and write down practical strategies for diversifying your information sources and escaping filter bubbles.* ***Consider strategies such as following accounts with opposing viewpoints, exploring new topics, or using alternative news sources.***	

Activity 3.5. Split Screen: How Different Are Americans' Facebook Feeds?

Objectives:
To understand how filter bubbles arise on social media and how they influence our exposure to and perspectives on elections-related news.

Context:
Have you ever looked at someone else's Facebook feed? Glimpsing someone else's can feel like seeing another reality altogether: different takes on the news, strange new groups, and ads for things you would never be shopping for. Facebook's recommendation algorithm shows different news, groups, and hashtags to different users. But who sees what?

The Markup, a nonprofit newsroom that investigates how powerful institutions are using technology to change our society, built a tool, Split Screen, to let us explore what different groups of people see in their Facebook news feed by using the real-world data collected between December 2020 and June 2022 from paid panellists as part of The Markup's Citizen Browser project. The data, from more than 2,500 Facebook users in the U.S., illuminates how Facebook's recommendation algorithm siloes information on the platform.

Side-by-side view of the tool lets you choose to see what's happening in the feeds of Trump voters versus Biden voters, older people versus younger people, and people of different genders. The tool shows you the different news, hashtags, and group recommendations that appeared in the panelists' feeds.

Introduction:
Understanding how filter bubbles shape our social media experience is crucial for navigating diverse perspectives online. In this activity, you'll use an interactive tool to simulate different filter bubbles and explore their impact on the content you see.

Instructions:
- Have your learners access the Split Screen tool.
- Pick a different four-week timespan from project's duration.
- Learners should explore and compare the following:
    - Biden Voters vs. Trump Voters
    - Women vs. Man
    - Millennials vs. Boomers

Explore the differences:
- Learners use the interactive tool to examine how content varies across different filter bubbles.
- Learners pay attention to the types of news stories, hashtags, and group suggestions presented.

Reflect on your findings:
- Learners consider how the content in each filter bubble may influence perspectives and shape their understanding of various issues.

Discuss with others:
- Learners share their observations and insights with others in the group.
- Then, learners discuss strategies for diversifying their social media experience and escaping filter bubbles.

UNIT 4. Information Manipulation Before, During, and After Elections

Activity 4.1. Election Fact-Checking Analysis

Objectives:
To understand the process of fact-checking in relation to election-related content and to identify key elements highlighted by fact-checkers to determine the accuracy of information.

Materials Needed:
- Election related news fact-checked by reputable fact-checking organization, preferably local.

Introduction:
- Explain the importance of fact-checking in election-related content.
- Provide an overview of the activity objectives.

Fact-Checking Process Overview:
- Briefly explain the process of fact-checking, emphasizing the criteria used to assess the accuracy of information.

Talking Points:
The primary goal of fact-checking is to provide the public with reliable and credible information to help them make informed decisions. Fact-checkers examine the evidence presented to support the claims made in the information. They look for corroborating evidence from multiple sources and assess the quality and reliability of the evidence. Fact-checkers also consider the context in which the information was presented. They examine whether the information is presented in a way that is accurate and not misleading, considering the broader context of the issue or topic. Fact-checkers adhere to established standards and methodologies for conducting fact-checking and they follow rigorous procedures and guidelines to ensure the accuracy and reliability of their findings.

Fact-Checking Exploration:
- Instruct participants to access reputable fact-checking websites or platforms that focus on election-related content in your country.
- Ask participants to select one recent election-related claim or piece of information to analyze.
- Encourage participants to read the fact-checking article or report thoroughly, paying attention to the key elements highlighted by the fact-checkers.

Analysis and Discussion:
- Divide participants into small groups or pairs to discuss their findings.

- Prompt participants to identify and discuss the key elements highlighted by the fact-checkers, such as:
  - Sources cited or referenced to verify the information
  - Methodology used to verify the claim (e.g., interviews, data analysis)
  - Presentation of evidence supporting or refuting the claim
  - Conclusion reached by the fact-checkers regarding the accuracy of the information

Facilitate a discussion by asking questions such as:
- Were you surprised by any of the fact-checking findings?
- What criteria did the fact-checkers use to determine the accuracy of the information?
- How do you think fact-checking contributes to promoting informed decision-making during elections?

Sharing and Reflection:
- Invite each group to share their analysis and key takeaways with the larger group.
- Encourage participants to reflect on the importance of fact-checking in the context of elections and media literacy.

Conclusion:
- Summarize the main insights gained from the activity.
- Emphasize the importance of critically evaluating information and relying on reputable sources during elections.

Note: Adapt the activity duration and discussion questions according to the available time and specific context of your audience and country's election landscape.

Activity 4.2. Distinguishing Facts from Opinions in Voter Turnout Analysis

Objective:
To differentiate between factual information and personal opinions by analyzing voter turnout data.

Introduction:
- Explain the importance of differentiating facts and opinions and remind participants of the definitions of each.
- Provide an overview of the activity objectives.

What is a Fact?
A fact is a statement that can be proven to be true or false through evidence, data, or verification. Facts are objective and based on observable and verifiable information. Examples include statistics, historical events, and scientific findings.

What is an Opinion?

An opinion is a statement that reflects personal beliefs, feelings, or thoughts and cannot be proven true or false. Opinions are subjective and based on individual perspectives or interpretations. They often include words like "believe," "feel," or "think" and may be influenced by personal experiences or emotions.

Text Writing:
- Ask participants to access the International IDEA's Voter Turnout Database or a trusted source to gather information on the turnout in the most recent three parliamentary elections in their country.
- Instruct participants to write two separate texts:
    - **Factual Information:** Write a sentence or two informing the audience about voter turnout over the past parliamentary elections. Include key statistics and trends observed in the turnout rates.
    - **Personal Opinion:** Express your personal opinion on how the turnout in the next parliamentary elections will look like and provide reasons to support your opinion. Consider factors such as the current political climate, public sentiment, and any significant events or changes since the last election.

Group Sharing:
- Ask participants to share their texts with a partner or small group, and discuss the following:
- Ask participants to share their reflections about activity
    - Identify factual statements in each text that are supported by evidence or data.
    - Identify opinions in each text that reflect personal beliefs or predictions about future events.

Group Reflection:
- Bring the participants back together as a larger group.
- Facilitate a brief discussion where each pair or small group shares one key insight they gained from analyzing the voter turnout data.
- Encourage participants to reflect on the process of differentiating between facts and opinions.
- Summarize the main points made during the discussion and emphasize the importance of critical thinking and discernment when interpreting information.
- Discuss the importance of distinguishing between facts and opinions in understanding and interpreting information.
- After the discussion, reflect on the differences between facts and opinions and how they influence our understanding of political events and decision-making processes.
- Encourage participants to apply the skills learned in future information analysis tasks.

Activity 4.3. Fact vs. Opinion in the News on Organization and Management of Elections

Objective:
Participants will be able to differentiate between opinion pieces and factual news articles in media reporting, specifically focusing on the organization and management of elections.
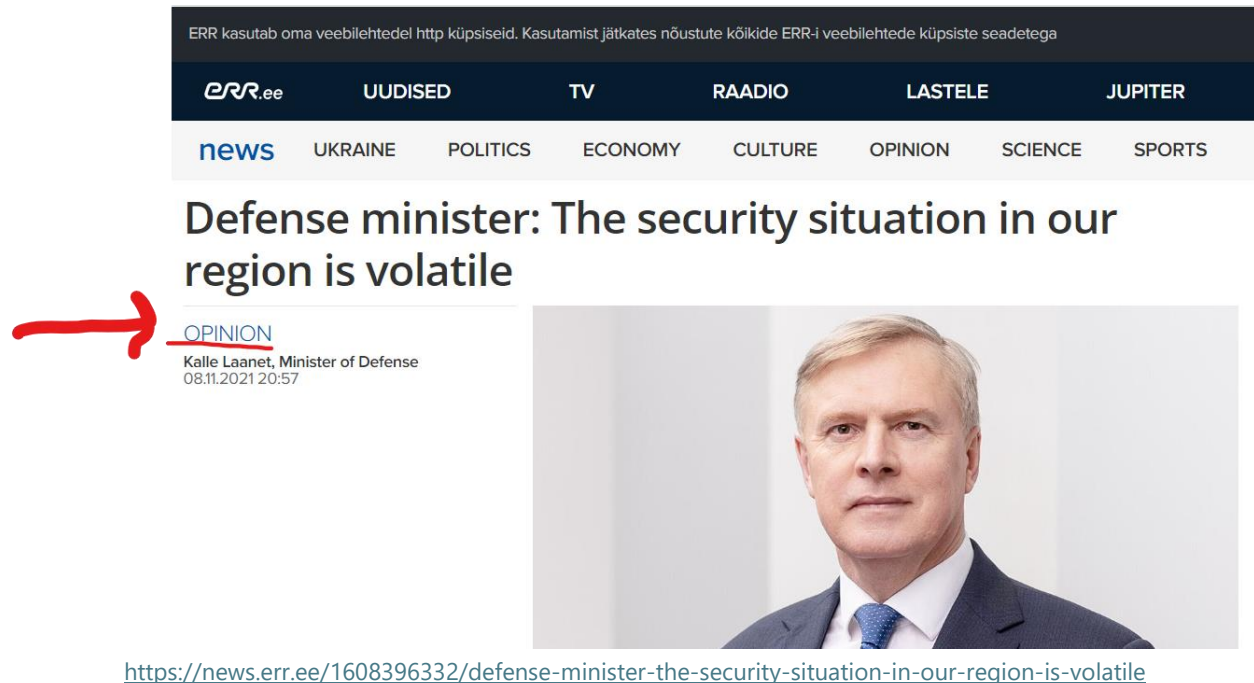
Materials Needed:
- Printouts or screenshots of opinion pieces and factual news articles related to election organization and management.

Introduction:
- Begin by discussing the importance of being able to distinguish between opinion pieces and factual news articles in media reporting.
- Explain that opinion pieces express personal viewpoints and perspectives, while factual news articles present objective information based on evidence and research.
- Introduce the topic of election organization and management as the focus of the activity.

Examples:

https://news.err.ee/1608396332/defense-minister-the-security-situation-in-our-region-is-volatile

Identifying Opinion Pieces:

- Divide participants into small groups.
- Provide each group with a set of printouts or screenshots of articles related to election organization and management, including both opinion pieces and factual news articles
- Instruct participants to review each article and identify whether it is an opinion piece or a factual news article.
- Encourage students to look for key indicators such as the use of subjective language, personal opinions, and the presence of evidence and sources.
- Allow time for discussion within each group as participants analyze the articles.

Group Discussion:

- Reconvene the small groups and facilitate a group discussion.
- Ask each group to share their findings and discuss the indicators they used to identify opinion pieces and factual news articles.
- Encourage participants to explain their reasoning and provide examples from the articles they analyzed.
- If available, use the whiteboard or flipchart to list the main elements that differentiate opinion pieces from factual news articles.

Reflection and Conclusion:

- Conclude the activity by asking participants to reflect on the importance of critically evaluating media sources, especially when it comes to topics like election organization and management.
- Emphasize the need to seek out multiple sources and consider different perspectives when forming opinions and making decisions.

Activity 4.4: Evaluating News Source Credibility and Bias

Objective:
To enhance participants' critical thinking skills by evaluating the credibility and biases of news sources, particularly in election reporting.

Introduction:
- Explain the importance of evaluating the credibility and biases of news sources, especially during elections.
- Provide an overview of the activity and its objectives.
- Review Journalistic Standards

Step 1:
- Divide participants into small groups of 3-5 individuals.
- Instruct each group to find one news article about elections from a reputable source (e.g., major news outlet) and another article from a lesser-known or alternative source (e.g., independent blog, social media post).

Credibility Assessment:
- Prompt participants to critically analyze the credibility of each source using the following questions:
  - What is the reputation of the news outlet or source? Is it known for adhering to journalistic standards and accuracy?
  - Are there any identifiable biases or affiliations associated with the source?

Transparency Evaluation:
- Have participants discuss the transparency of the news sources using these questions:
  - Does the news source disclose its funding? Is the information sufficient to understand potential biases?
  - Does the news source state any affiliations or partnerships with other organizations? How might these relationships affect the content?
  - Are there potential conflicts of interest, and how might they impact the credibility of the news?

Bias Identification:
- Guide participants in identifying potential biases in the articles with these questions:
  - Does the article present a balanced perspective by including diverse viewpoints or sources?
  - What language or framing techniques are used that may indicate bias?

o   Are there any noticeable omissions or selective reporting of facts that could skew the narrative?

Group Discussion:
- Facilitate a group discussion where participants share their findings and observations.
- Encourage them to compare and contrast the credibility, transparency, and biases of the different sources.

Reflection Questions:
- How does the credibility of the two sources compare?
- Are there significant differences in transparency between the two sources?
- What biases, if any, are evident in each article, and how do they differ?
- Based on your analysis, which source do you consider more trustworthy and why?
- How might the biases of the sources influence public perception and understanding of the election-related news?
- What strategies can individuals employ to verify information and mitigate the impact of bias when consuming news?

Conclusion:
- Conclude the activity by asking participants to reflect on the importance of critically evaluating news sources, especially during election periods.
- Encourage them to consider how their perceptions of credibility and bias may influence their information consumption habits.

UNIT 5. Elevated Threats During Elections

Activity 5.1. Exploring Gender Bias in Election Leadership

Objectives:
To critically examine perceptions of gender in leadership roles within election organizations across different cultural contexts, and to foster awareness of unconscious biases and promote open dialogue on gender equality in leadership.

Introduction:
- Explain that the goal is to explore perceptions of gender in leadership roles within election organizations, using Egypt and Sweden as case studies.

Opening Question:
- **ASK:** "Who do you think is more suitable to lead the organization of elections in Egypt: a woman or a man?"
- Allow participants to share their initial thoughts and reasoning behind their perspectives.
- Next ask the same question about Sweden.
- **NOTE:** Selecting "both" as a possible answer is not permitted for this activity. The objective is to engage in critical thinking and discussion to explore the complexities of gender biases in leadership.

Exploration of Perspectives:
- Encourage participants to consider cultural norms, historical context, and personal biases that may influence their views.
- Facilitate an open and respectful exchange of ideas, allowing participants to challenge and question each other's viewpoints.
- Prompt participants to critically analyze the factors contributing to their perceptions of gender in leadership roles.
- Encourage reflection on the potential impact of gender biases on decision-making processes within election organizations.

Summarize key insights from the discussion:
- Invite participants to reflect on any shifts or changes in their perspectives as a result of the discussion.
- Emphasize the importance of recognizing and addressing unconscious biases in evaluating leadership capabilities.

NOTE: *Ensure that the discussion is facilitated in a respectful and inclusive manner, allowing all participants to contribute their perspectives without fear of judgment. Encourage active listening and constructive dialogue throughout the discussion.*

Activity 5.2. Hate Speech in Political Discourse

Objectives:
To raise awareness of the prevalence of hate speech on social media platforms during election campaigns, especially against women politicians, and to empower participants to recognize and report hate speech content effectively.

Instructions:
- Divide participants into small groups.
- Instruct each group to access the social media profiles of a woman candidate and a man candidate running in the upcoming elections in their country.
- Ask participants to scroll through the comments sections on both profiles and identify any instances of hate speech.
- Once hate speech posts are identified, instruct participants to take screenshots or note down the details.
- Reconvene the groups and facilitate a discussion based on the following discussion points.

Discussion Points:
- What did you notice when reviewing the comments on the social media walls of the woman and man candidates?
- Did you encounter hate speech posts? If so, what types of hate speech were prevalent? Did you identify specific differences based on the gender?
- Reflect on the impact of hate speech on political discourse and its potential to influence public opinion.

Discuss the findings of the report "[How Women Politicians of Fiji are Treated on Facebook](#)" and draw parallels, if applicable, to the situation in your country.

Key findings from the report:
"Overall, there were four times as much problematic content related to the Facebook pages of male politicians compared to their female counterparts. It is important to note that the vast majority of the problematic comments aimed at women politicians were in the sexist category. Compared to their male colleagues, female politicians are treated in a less serious manner on Facebook. Comments on their posts touch on their appearance and personal qualities rather than their politics".

Reflection:

- Encourage participants to reflect individually on their role in combating hate speech on social media platforms.
- Ask participants to consider how they can contribute to creating a safer and more inclusive online space during election campaigns.
- Prompt participants to share their reflections with the group, fostering dialogue in addressing hate speech.

Conclusion:
- Summarize key insights from the discussion and reflections.
- If time allows, provide information on [how to report](#) hate speech on various social media platforms ([Facebook](#), TikTok, [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#), and [X](#)).
- Encourage participants to take proactive steps to report hate speech and promote positive engagement on social media.

Activity 5.3. Securing Social Media Accounts

Objectives:
To enhance the security of social media accounts, particularly for women in politics who may face increased risks of harassment and targeted attacks, and to empower participants to navigate privacy and security settings on Facebook effectively.

Instructions:
- Log into your Facebook account using your preferred device.
- Navigate to the "Settings & Privacy" option located in the top right corner of the Facebook homepage.
- Click on "Settings" to access your account settings.
- In the "Security and Login" settings section, locate and enable "Two-Factor Authentication" for an added layer of security. Choose a method of authentication that you feel comfortable with, such as receiving a text message code or using an authentication app.
- Check the "Where You're Logged In" section to view all devices and locations where your Facebook account is currently logged in. Log out from any unfamiliar devices or locations.
- Move to the "Privacy" settings section and review the "How People Find and Contact You" settings. Consider limiting friend requests to "Friends of Friends" and adjusting who can look you up using your email or phone number.
- In the "Apps and Websites" settings, review the list of apps that have access to your Facebook information. Remove any apps or websites that you no longer use or trust.
- Navigate to the "Timeline and Tagging" settings and adjust who can post on your timeline and who can see posts you're tagged in. Consider enabling review options for tags to have more control over what appears on your timeline.

- Visit the "Ad Preferences" section to control how Facebook uses your information for advertising purposes. You can limit ad topics, review advertisers you've interacted with, and adjust your information preferences regarding ads.
- Additionally, go to the "Location" settings and review the geotagging options to control who can see your location when you post.

Reflection on following questions:
- Why is it important for women in politics to prioritize the security of their social media accounts?
- How might increased security measures, such as two-factor authentication, help mitigate risks of harassment and targeted attacks?
- What are some potential consequences of unauthorized access to social media accounts for women in politics?
- How do the privacy and security settings on Facebook empower users to control their online presence and protect their personal information?

Reflect on the steps taken to enhance the security of your Facebook account. Consider how these measures can contribute to a safer online experience, particularly for women in politics facing gender-based harassment and abuse.

Activity 5.4. Role-Play: Addressing Information Manipulation in Elections

Objectives:
To simulate real-world scenarios of information manipulation during elections and to empower participants to recognize, fact-check, and counter such manipulation effectively.

Instructions:
- Assign the following roles to participants and divide them into groups according to the assigned roles:
    - Voter
    - Candidate
    - Election Official
    - Journalist
- Provide each participant with a scenario involving information manipulation during the election process. For example:
    - A voter receives a misleading social media post about a candidate's stance on a controversial issue.
    - A candidate discovers false rumors being spread about their personal life by an opposing campaign.

- o   An election official receives reports of misinformation being disseminated about the voting process.
- o   A journalist encounters fake news articles being circulated to sway public opinion.
- In their assigned roles, participants should role-play how they would react, fact-check, and counter the manipulation in their respective scenarios.
- After the role-play, ask participants to identify the electoral phase when the manipulation was initiated, who the initiators were, and what the main narratives were.
- Have each group present their findings, including the signs of information manipulation they identified during the role-play.
- Facilitate a discussion where participants share their insights and perspectives on how such manipulation could influence public opinion or the electoral process. Encourage critical thinking about the importance of media literacy and fact-checking in combating misinformation during elections.

Discussion Points:
- What challenges did participants face in identifying and countering information manipulation in their roles?
- How can voters, candidates, election officials, and journalists collaborate to address information manipulation effectively?
- What strategies can be implemented to prevent or minimize the impact of misinformation on the electoral process?
- How does the role of social media and online platforms contribute to the spread of misinformation during elections?
- What measures can be taken to enhance media literacy and critical thinking skills among the electorate?

Reflection:
- Reflect on the role-play exercise and discuss key takeaways regarding the importance of vigilance, collaboration, and informed decision-making in combating information manipulation during elections.
- Consider how participants can apply these insights in real-world scenarios to safeguard the integrity of electoral processes.

Activity 5.5. Analyzing Political Drops and Counteracting Information Manipulation

Objectives:
To understand how political parties use "drops" to manipulate the media and to identify key steps journalists can take to counter information manipulation narratives effectively.

Instructions:
- Watch the video titled "[How political parties manipulate the media](#)" together as a group.
- After watching the video, summarize the key takeaways as a group.
- Discuss how political parties strategically use "drops" to shape media narratives and influence public opinion during elections or other political events.

Discussion Points:
- How do political parties strategically use "drops" to manipulate the media and shape public opinion?
- What challenges do journalists face in identifying and countering information manipulation narratives?
- What are the ethical considerations for journalists when reporting on politically sensitive issues or events.

Activity 5.6. Analyzing Information Manipulation Targeting Election Workers

Objective:
To understand the key objectives behind information manipulation narratives used against election officials during elections.

Instructions:
- Watch the ABC NEWS video reporting on information manipulation targeting election workers during elections: [“Threats against election officials on the rise”.](#)
- After watching the video, divide participants into small groups for a discussion.
- In each group, facilitate a discussion to identify and analyze the key objectives behind the information manipulation narratives used against election officials. Encourage participants to consider the following questions:
    - What specific types of misinformation or disinformation were targeted at election workers?
    - What were the main objectives or goals of the individuals or groups spreading these narratives?
    - How did these narratives aim to influence public perception of election workers and the electoral process?
    - Were there any patterns or recurring themes in the misinformation targeting election officials?
- Provide participants with time to discuss and share their insights within their groups.
- Reconvene as a whole group and have each group share their findings and observations. Facilitate a discussion where participants can compare and contrast the different perspectives presented by each group.

Reflection:
- Reflect on the insights gained from the discussion and consider the broader implications of information manipulation tactics on election integrity and democratic processes.
- Discuss the importance of media literacy, critical thinking, and fact-checking in combating misinformation and disinformation during elections.
- Identify potential strategies for addressing information manipulation and protecting the integrity of future electoral processes.

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