

Unmasking Illusion: Factors Influencing Deepfake Video Awareness among University Students in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The rapid proliferation of deepfake technology has created a growing challenge to information authenticity and public trust. University students, as frequent digital content consumers, are especially susceptible to the dangers posed by manipulated media. This study investigates the awareness of deepfake videos among students at Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, focusing on how digital literacy, media literacy, critical thinking, and information sources influence their ability to identify and understand such content. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected from a sample of 366 students across multiple faculties within the university, selected through a cluster sampling method. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data, which were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis. The results demonstrate that all four variables significantly impact students' awareness of deepfakes. These findings suggest an urgent need for targeted educational strategies that enhance students' media competence and critical evaluation skills. This study contributes both theoretically and practically by extending understanding of how specific cognitive factors influence deepfake recognition, and by offering insights for curriculum designers, media educators, and policymakers developing digital literacy frameworks in South Asian higher education.

Keywords: awareness, critical thinking, Deepfake videos, digital literacy, media literacy