Bringing MIL into the Margins: Introducing Media and Information Literacy at the Outskirts

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Abstract

With the vast amount of information readily available online, not to mention the gaining popularity and use of social media platforms and the rampant proliferation of alternative facts and news fabrication that affects decision-making, it is indeed empirical for everyone to be media and information literate. More true in it sense, people living in areas with limited or no internet access at all should be more critical and analytical about every information they encounter as this may affect their perspectives on things and life in general. This paper documents how media and information literacy was promoted and introduced to selected Senior High School (SHS) students and teachers of Loyola College of Culion (LCC) in Isla Culion, Palawan, Philippines. The effectiveness of the seminar-workshops conducted among the participants was also determined as well as their working knowledge on MIL through some tests and group activities. This case study also revealed that the participants' working knowledge has increased after being exposed to the lectures and activities. Furthermore, the participants highlighted how they found MIL valuable in critically evaluating sources of information and how to use social media responsibly. In addition, the participants found the seminar-workshop engaging and recommended to have more sessions like this in improved in the future.

Keywords: media and information literacy, Isla Culion, Palawan, Philippines

1. Introduction

With an average of 9 hours and 45 minutes per day spending on the internet and almost 3 hours and 53 minutes devoted to the use of social media (Kemp, 2020), it is undeniably no doubt that Filipinos were one of the heaviest users of Internet. Thus, they should need to be well-verse and are expected to be more responsible in using this technology. While it is true that Philippines has been called the social media capital of the world (Sanchez, 2020), there are still areas in the country that has limited access to internet such as the Isla Culion in Palawan.

Dubbed as the *Island of the Living Dead, the Land of No Return*, and even a *Paradise Lost*, Culion was declared as the Leper Colony in 1904 (Mun. of Culion, 2018). Avoided by some outsiders and travelers due to its unique history, Isla Culion has slowly been recognized to be one of breathtaking islands in Palawan and even in the country. With its declaration as leprosy-free in 2006 by World Health Organization (Mun. of Culion, 2018) and its gaining popularity and emerging development especially in tourism, people in the island such as students and teachers of Loyola College of Culion (LCC), a lone private school in the island, were now able to enjoy limited access to internet. Given this, students and teachers should be able to learn and understand the value of information before disseminating it. This paper documents how media and information

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literacy was promoted and introduced to selected Senior High School (SHS) students and teachers of Loyola College of Culion in Isla Culion, Palawan, Philippines last March 2019. The effectiveness of the seminar-workshops conducted among the participants was also determined as well as their working knowledge on MIL through some tests and group activities. Furthermore, the paper identified some of the strengths and weakness of the said seminar-workshop and how can it be further improved in the future.

The Isla Culion and The Loyola College of Culion, Palawan. Beautiful not only because of its breathtaking landscapes but also due its unique story, Isla Culion was once called as the Island of the Living Dead, the Land of No Return, and even a Paradise Lost (Mun. of Culion, 2018). Being the second largest island of the Calamianes Group north of Palawan, Culion was selected to be a leper colony due to its strategic location, cool climate, great harbor, adequate water and its suitability to be developed in a minimal cost (Arcilla, 2009). Under the American administration, with the passage of the Act No. 1711 of the Philippine Commission, it was mandated the compulsory segregation and isolation of lepers in Culion to avoid the spread of such disease (Culion…, 2020). As time goes by and with the various successful treatments conducted over the years, the World Health Organization finally declared the island as leprosy-free in 2006 (Carpio, 2017). This rich history of Culion were well documented in the Culion Leprosy Archives which made its way to its inscription as a UNESCO Memory of the World for Asia and the Pacific in 30 May 2018 (Pe, 2018).

The Loyola College of Culion (LCC) is also one of the institutions in the island that has a great history to share. Tracing its humble beginnings since 1936, LCC began its journey as the Culion Catholic Primary School under the Jesuits administration which gave primary education to children of the leper patients. In 1942, it started to open its doors to high school students and in 1988, was renamed to Loyola College of Culion to accommodate those high school students who would like to proceed to higher education. As a lone private school in the island, they eventually received a recognition from the government in 1992 to offer Bachelor of Arts major in Literature. In 2009, they started to offer BS Entrepreneurship major in Entrepreneur Tourism and two years after, the Teacher Certificate Program was able to offer to students. As years goes by, after producing a number of graduates despite limited resources, LCC still envisions itself to be a "leader in Entrepreneurial Tourism and Transformative Education in the Calamian Islands" and is committed to form Christ-centered, competent, and compassionate leaders who care for creation and are concerned for the poor" (Loyola…, n.d.). In 2012, following a nationwide mandate to offer K-12 education, LCC started to offer Senior High School (Grades 11-12) with academic track on Humanities and technical-vocational track on Tourism Services. Up to this date, LCC still putting its best efforts to provide quality education to students in the islands despite limitations.

2. Materials and methods

Two seminar-workshops were conducted to Senior High School (SHS) students and teachers of Loyola College of Culion (LCC) in Isla Culion, Palawan, Philippines last 12 March 2019 to introduce and promote media and information literacy (MIL). The participants were comprised of 36 students who were in Grades 11-12 and all 16 teachers of LCC. These students were already taking MIL, thus the seminar-workshop was aimed to supplement, in some ways, the subject being taught. On the other hand, all teachers, who teaches across all grade levels and subjects were encouraged by the school administration to attend the said activity.

Adapting the technique from the study conducted by Yap and Manabat (Yap, Manabat, 2018) to gauge the working knowledge of participants about MIL, all participants were asked to answer pre and post tests before and after the session. Scores on these tests were compared to check if their knowledge in MIL has increased. During the seminar-workshop, a group activity was conducted wherein participants were asked to determine the different scenarios where misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information happens. In addition, an interactive gamified quiz was also used to make the session more fun. After the session, a simple general evaluation of the effectiveness of the seminar-workshop was also conducted as perceived by the participants. Percentage of the scores were calculated, tabulated, and analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the seminar-workshop.

To ensure the credibility and integrity of this paper, the researcher applied for the Nazarbayev University Institutional Research Ethics Committee (NU-IREC) review and was approved for exemption from further IREC oversight.

3. Discussion

The Use of Social Media and The Fake News Hoopla. Social media is one of the primary means of communication used by people across the globe. With 3.8 billion active social media users (Kemp, 2020), people can only imagine how every bit of information accessible at their fingertips. The increase use of social media coupled with the rising digital technology has also paved the way to the proliferation of "fake news" and fabricated rumors (Lim, Tan, 2020). As it was used to describe the modern form of online disinformation, fake news in some ways, are information created with the intention to deceive and imitates news media content but not in the organizational process or intent (Vziatysheva, 2020). These information distortions might be similar in some concepts but they are in some way different (Carmi et al., 2020). As defined by Wardle and Derakhshan (Wardle, Derakhshan, 2017), there are different definitions depending on the intention why the information is created and disseminated:

Misinformation – false information but the person disseminating it believes to be true;

Disinformation – false information and the person disseminating it knows it is false, thus it is a deliberate, intentional lie; and

Mal-information – information that is based on reality but it is used to inflict harm on a person, organization, or country.

With this in mind and the fast spread of these falsified information, everyone should take into account being critical on every information they encounter online, thus being media and information literate is a must (Wardle, Derakhshan, 2017).

Media and Information Literacy. Media and Information Literacy (MIL), as defined by The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "includes a set of competencies to search, critically evaluate, use and contribute information and media content wisely; knowledge of one's rights online; understanding how to combat online hate speech and cyberbullying; understanding of the ethical issues surrounding the access and use of information; and engage with media and ICTs to promote equality, free expression, intercultural/interreligious dialogue, peace, etc." (UNESCO, 2019). These competencies help people to be critical thinkers and responsible producers and consumers of media and information. While it is true that media literacy educates people on how and not what to think (Silverblatt, 2018), with the influx of overwhelming information available online, being media and information literate is really a must. Hence, including MIL in the curriculum would educate them to make cognizant decisions in life.

Integrating MIL in the curriculum is one of the UNESCO's objectives as indicated in various UNESCO publications that aim to foster MIL concepts, principles, and importance. Media literacy education is not just mere incorporating computers and technology in the educational system, it should be associated with the capacity of students to apply critical thinking skills to any information available online and the responsible use of it (Fedorov, Mikhaleva, 2020). There were a number of studies shows that students were not quite demonstrative of their strong evaluation skills wherein students tend to have some troubles being critical and analytic about the information they encounter on the internet particularly on social media (Johnston, 2020). Furthermore, MIL also aims to transcend values education across general educational system by teaching the students with the responsible use of media and by applying analytical and critical thinking skills to every bits of information they encounter (Sanchez et al., 2019).

MIL in the Philippine Setting. In the Philippines, the Department of Education has started to integrate MIL in the school curriculum since 2013 as a core subject for senior high school students or those students that are in Grades 11 and 12. Taken for 80 hours per semester, the course aims to "introduce the learners to basic understanding of media and information as channels of communication and tools for the development of individuals and societies; and also intends to develop students to be creative and critical thinkers as well as responsible users and competent producers of media and information" (Department of Education, 2013).

Educators are the primary actors in the knowledge transfer especially in the school setting. Thus, teaching MIL effectively to students lies heavily on the hands of teachers. Teachers can integrate in their lesson plans and teaching resources a variety of approaches and strategies in teaching MIL (Leaning, 2017). Aside from resources, teachers also needs some training on how to impart such knowledge to their students. However, MIL educators still lack training on teaching MIL. The study conducted by Labangon and Zabala (Labangon, Zabala, 2018) revealed that majority of the MIL instructors in the Philippines were not exposed to training due to unavailability of sessions and training for teaching MIL. Thus, train-the-trainers approach is very much needed.

Introducing MIL to students is not just a sole responsibility of teachers but also the librarians as well. Revolving around the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) framework that "Authority is Constructed and Contextual" that is very much related to evaluating the source, librarians can help learners to think critically and to understand what bias is (Faix, Fyn, 2020). Dela Cruz (Dela Cruz, 2016) revealed in her study that there was an evident increase in the scores in the test taken by the students after their exposure to the media information program (MIP) modules conducted by the grade school library. To help address the lack of training of MIL instructors (Labangon, Zabala, 2020), an MIL training program entitled "TeachMeet with LORA, The Librarian for selected public secondary school teachers was organized by De La Salle University Libraries with the aim of imparting knowledge, skills and experiences through a half-day lecture and mentoring focusing on the value and importance of MIL (Yap, Manabat, 2018). The participants found the seminar-workshop effective and greatly appreciated the knowledge imparted by the resource persons.

The Loyola College of Culion in Palawan, just like all the other schools in the country that offers senior high school programs, has been doing its best to integrate MIL in their curriculum despite limited resources. Even before the pandemic escalated in the country, the school has been trying to make ends meet. LCC students, just like any typical students were also able to enjoy limited access to internet and are quite acquainted in using social media. Although it is a lone private school in the island, they are not exempted from experiencing limitations such as the instability of internet connections and power failure not to mention the lack of financial, manpower and state-of-the-art infrastructures.

Last 12 March 2019, a simple seminar-workshops on introducing media and information literacy (MIL) was conducted by the school administration with a professional librarian as a facilitator. Two half-day seminar-workshops were conducted; the morning session was dedicated for senior high school students while the afternoon session was focused on the teachers. These two seminar-workshops were aimed to introduce and promote media and information literacy to the participants through lectures, tests and activities. As part of this outreach initiative, the facilitator with the help of other librarians, visited the school library and conducted some technical assistance on how they can further improve their library service.

4. Results

The Respondents. The participants were comprised of 35 students who were in Grades 11-12 and all 16 teachers of Loyola College of Culion. These students, aged 16-18, were already taking MIL, thus the seminar-workshop was aimed to supplement, in some ways, the subject being taught. On the other hand, all teachers, who teaches across all grade levels and subjects were encouraged by the school administration to attend the said activity.

Assessment Tests. To gauge the knowledge of the participants about media and information literacy, they were asked to take some tests prior and after the lecture sessions. The tests were composed of 10-item MIL-related true/false questions were participants are asked to determine if the statements were true or false (Camosum..., 2020). These questions are appropriate to assess the surface knowledge or familiarity of the participants with the topic or subject content and to check for popular misconceptions (Center..., n.d.).

Students were asked to take pre-test and post-test to determine their working knowledge about media and information literacy concepts. Their scores on both tests as well as their percentage were presented in Table 1. During the pre-test, only 3 students (8.33 %) got a score of 8 out of the 10-item test while almost half of the students got a score of 5 and below. An increase in their scores were observed in their post-test after they have been exposed to the lectures and activities wherein four students were able to get a perfect score and less than half of them got a score lower than 5. The distribution of the students' scores on both tests is also shown on Figure 1.

Table 1. Percentage of students and their scores during the pre and post-tests

Pre-Test Scores	Number of Participants	(%)	Post-Test Scores	Number of Participants	(%)
10			10	4	11.11
9			9	3	8.33
8	3	8.33	8	6	16.67
7	8	22.22	7	6	16.67
6	7	19.44	6	5	13.89
5	6	16.67	5	4	11.11
4	8	22.22	4	5	13.89
3 and below	4	11.11	3 and below	3	8.33
TOTAL	36	100		36	100
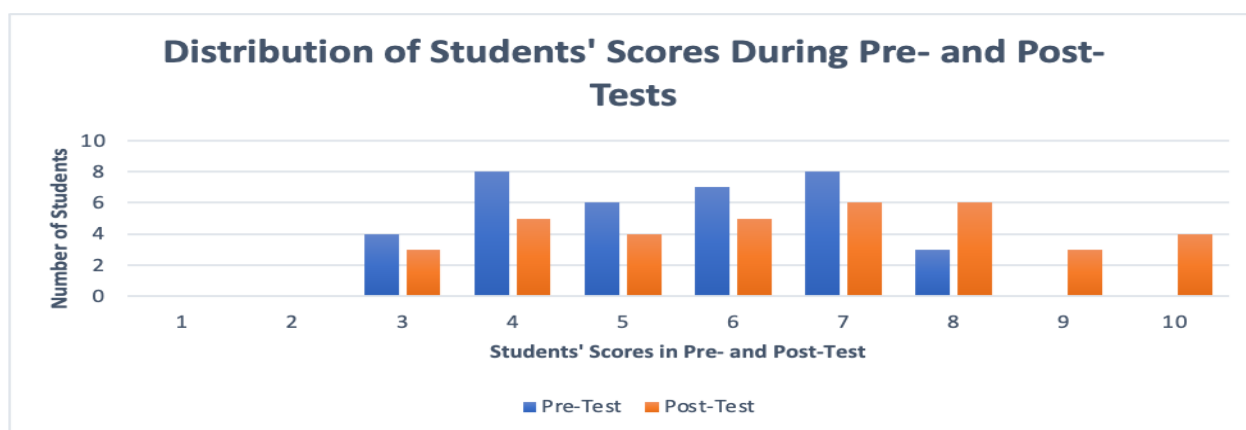
Fig. 1. Distribution of students' scores during pre and post-tests

Teacher participants were also asked to take the same set of tests. As presented on Table 2, from one participant during the pre-test, 10 participants were able to get a perfect score during the post-test. The noticeable increase on the scores were observed after the participants have attended the sessions. A graphical distribution of their scores is presented on Figure 2.

Table 2. Percentage of teachers and their scores during the pre-test

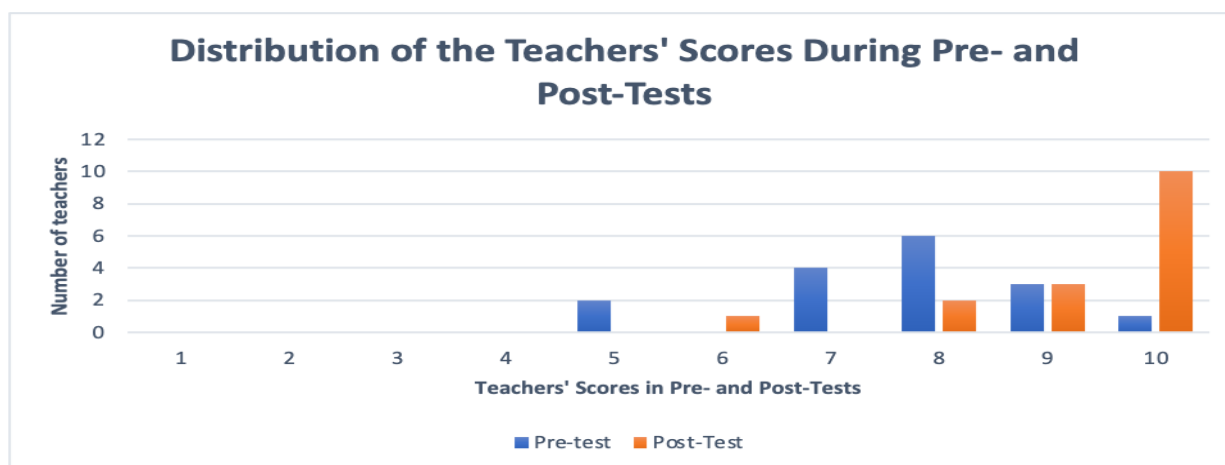| Pre-Test Scores	Number of Participants	(%)	Post-Test Scores	Number of Participants	(%)
10	1	6.25	10	10	62.5
9	3	18.75	9	3	18.75
8	6	37.5	8	2	12.5
7	4	25	7	1	6.25
6	0	0	6		
5	2	12.5	5		
4			4		
3 and below			3 and below		
Total	16	100		16	100

Fig. 2. Distribution of teachers' scores during pre and post-tests

The noticeable increase in both students' and teachers' scores in the post-tests in some ways indicates that the knowledge of the participants have improved after their exposure to the lectures during the half day seminar-workshops. This further shows that knowledge transfer among the participants has been successful.

The Activity. During the sessions, the participants were asked to examine some scenarios and identify if these scenarios shows misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information. This activity was a good way to encourage participants' engagement during the sessions. To guide the participants in examining the scenarios, the following definitions by Wardle and Derakhshan (Derakhshan, 2018) were used.

The students were divided into five groups to identify the seven scenarios, while the teachers were divided into four groups to examine nine scenarios. Out of 5 student groups, 2 groups were able to have 6 correct answers. For the teachers, 3 groups were able to get 8 correct answers. While it is true that the said activity cannot be used to measure the success of the program, it will, in some ways, supplement to the lecture sessions attended by the participants to fully understand the concepts related to MIL.
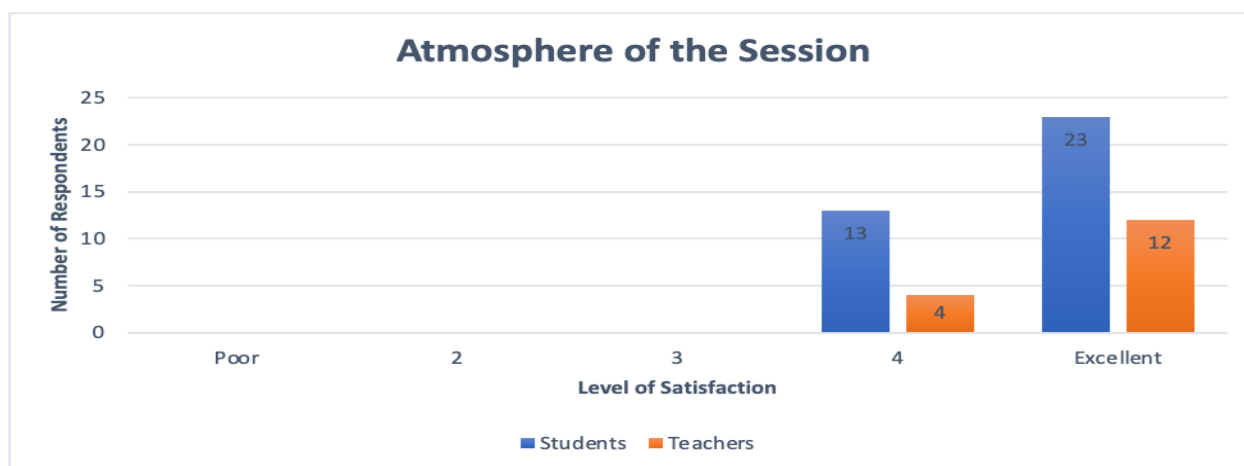

Fig. 3. Level of satisfaction of participants on the atmosphere of the sessions

The Seminar-Workshop. To gauge the effectiveness as well as to further improved the seminar-workshop, the participants were asked to evaluate the sessions based on the session's atmosphere, program flow, speaker, facilitation of the sessions, logistics and venue, as well at the overall satisfaction of the program. They were even asked for some learning during the sessions and their comments and feedback if any. A Likert Scale wherein 5 = Excellent and 1 = Poor was used in this evaluation.

Session's atmosphere. The session atmosphere deals with the mood or tone of the session. Was the session provided a friendly, accommodating and encouraging atmosphere among the participants and also with the facilitator? Based on the participants, they found the session's mood accommodating and friendly with 75 % and 63.89 % of teachers and students, respectively as presented on Figure 3. This further indicates the that participants felt comfortable and relaxed during the entire course of the session.

Program Flow. The smooth course of the session was being measure through the program flow. Was the session too fast? Does the timing okay? As shown on Figure 4, majority of the participants with 69.44 % of students and 68.75 % of teachers found the program smoothly executed. Participants believed that half-day session was enough to cover the basic topics in MIL though some of them would like to have more time for the activities.
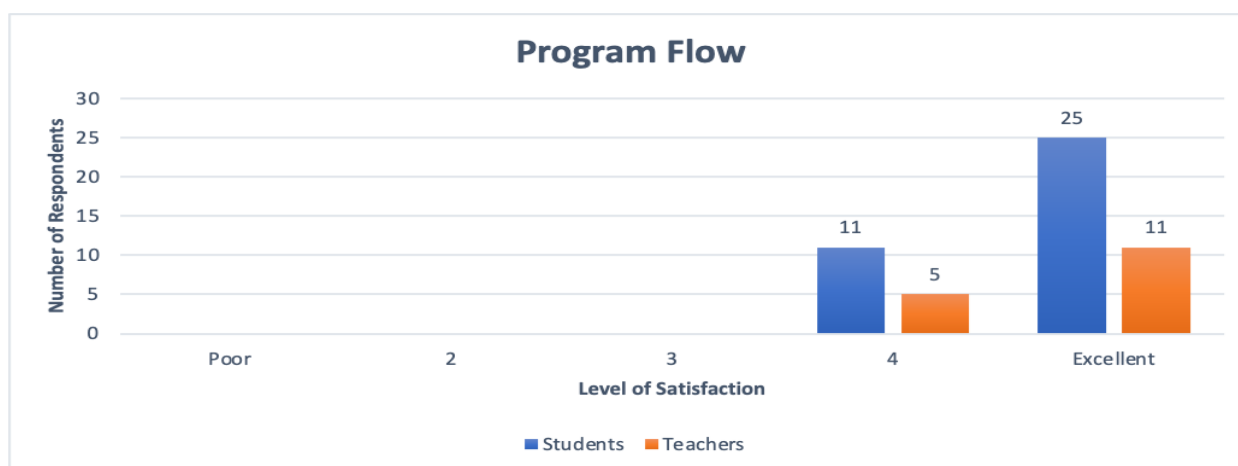

Fig. 4. Level of Satisfaction of Participants on the Program Flow of the Sessions

Speaker. The knowledge and expertise of the facilitator was being measured in this part. Did the participants found the speaker knowledgeable about the topic being discussed? Figure 5 shows that almost all the student participants (88.89 %) revealed that they found the speaker knowledgeable on the topic. This perception was same with the teachers' responses with 87.5 %.
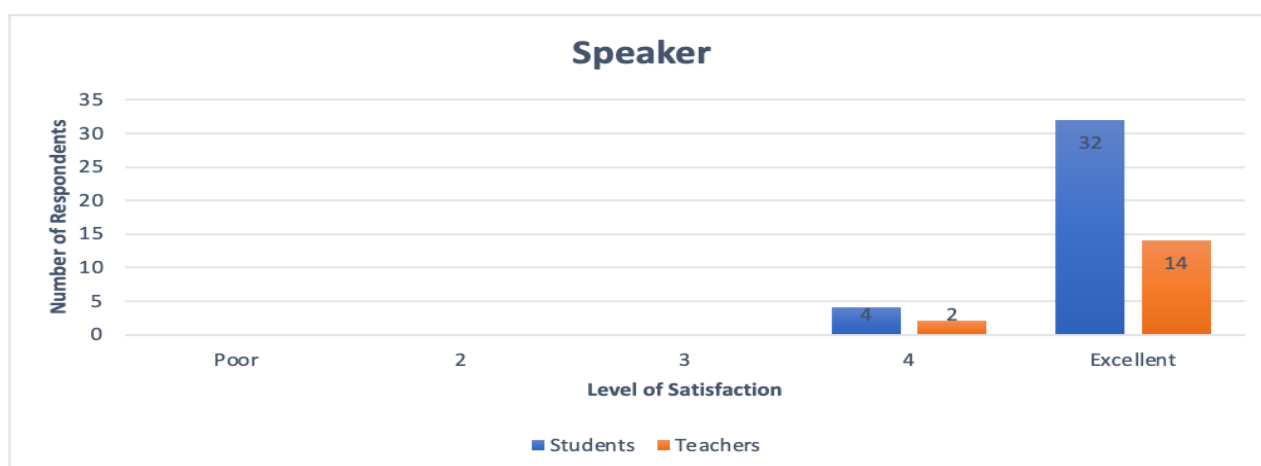

Fig. 5. Level of Satisfaction of Participants on the Speaker

Facilitation of the Session. Facilitation of the session also deals with the smooth action of the organizers in making the session easier for the participants and speakers. Were the participants feel at ease on doing the activities and answering the tests? As presented on Figure 6, majority of the students (63.88 %) and teachers (81.25 %) participants has observed an excellent facilitation of the session of the organizers. Though there were areas that still needs to be improved, the participants found the smooth implementation of the two sessions.
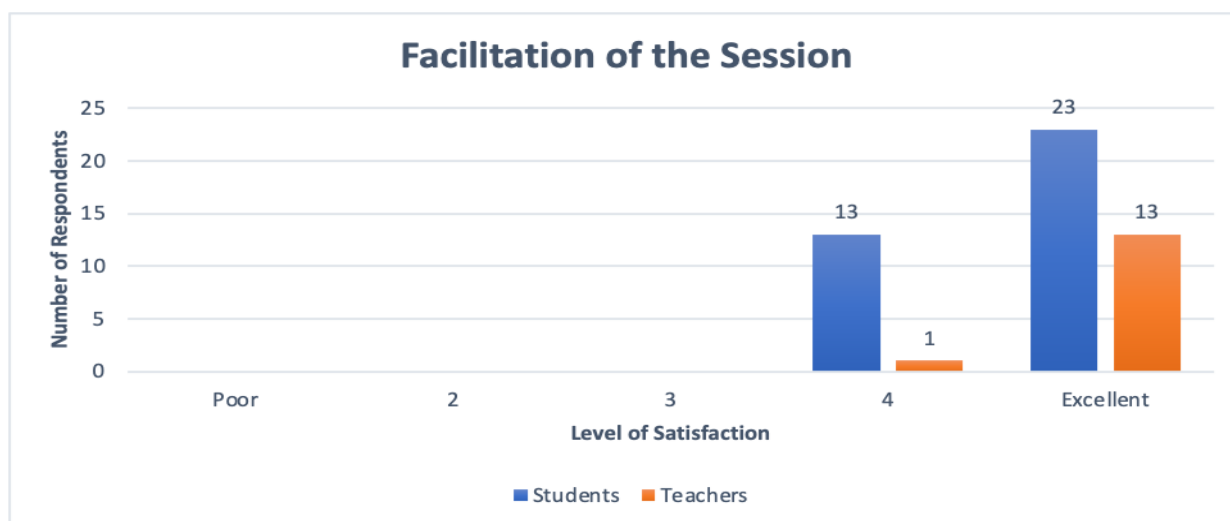
Fig. 6. Level of Satisfaction of Participants on the Facilitation of the Session

Logistics and Venue. The place of the event as well as the materials and equipment needed were also being evaluated. Is the place conducive for the seminar-workshop? Were the materials needed for the seminar-workshops and activities available? Both students (52.78 %) and teachers (75 %) believed that the venue was conducive for the session and that all the materials needed were made available to the them during the sessions. Although it was expected that there will be problems encountered especially with regards to the internet connections, the organizers made it sure that the internet connection works well during the entire sessions. In addition, printed tests as well as other papers and pens to be used for the activities were also made available to the participants to help them focus on the lectures during the sessions.
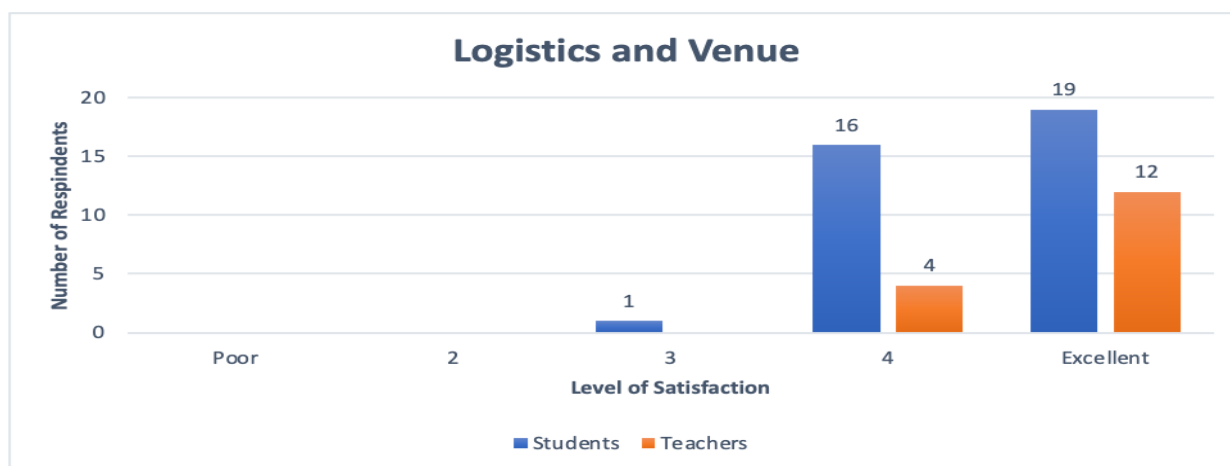

Fig. 7. Level of Satisfaction of Participants on the Sessions' Logistics and Venue

Overall Satisfaction of the Sessions and Their Feedback. In general, both the student and teacher participants rated the sessions excellent with 77.78 % and 81.25 %, respectively. They found the sessions enjoyable, interesting and useful. As perceived by the students, they liked the session as it provides them some knowledge related to MIL in a more fun and understandable way. As for the teachers, they found the session interesting and even became aware of what they read or share online.

Responsible use of social media and the importance of being media and information literate were emerged as their takeaways during the sessions. Though they found the sessions interesting and enjoyable, they thought that the time was limited, thus requesting for a follow-up session in the future.
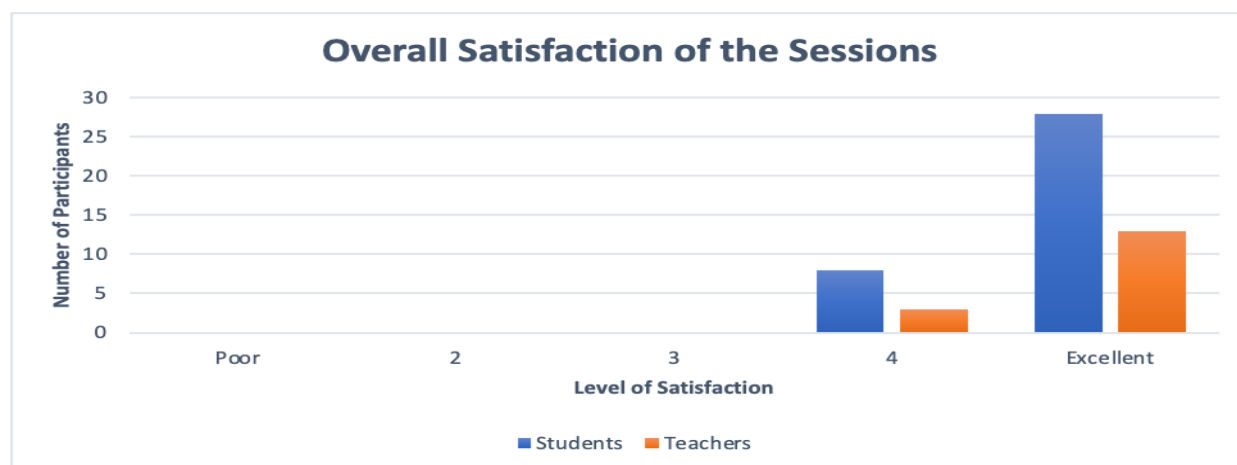
Fig. 8. Overall Satisfaction of Participants on the Session

5. Conclusion

In a world where all information is just a click away, it is very much needed that people should be educated in the responsible production, consumption, and dissemination of information. Thus, equipping people to be media and information literate is a must. Especially in those areas where access to information is limited, it is important to make sure that the information is reliable, trustworthy, and factual since this information will be used in making cognizant decisions in life. The seminar-workshop was just one way of reaching out to more people in the outskirts and to educate them about the value of MIL. Though there were challenges encountered and weaknesses identified while planning and implementing the sessions, the event became successful because of the support and cooperation both from the participants, organizers and facilitators. Alongside the effectiveness of the program, the lessons learned and the experiences that the participants gained will be more useful in making better life decisions and good judgment.

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