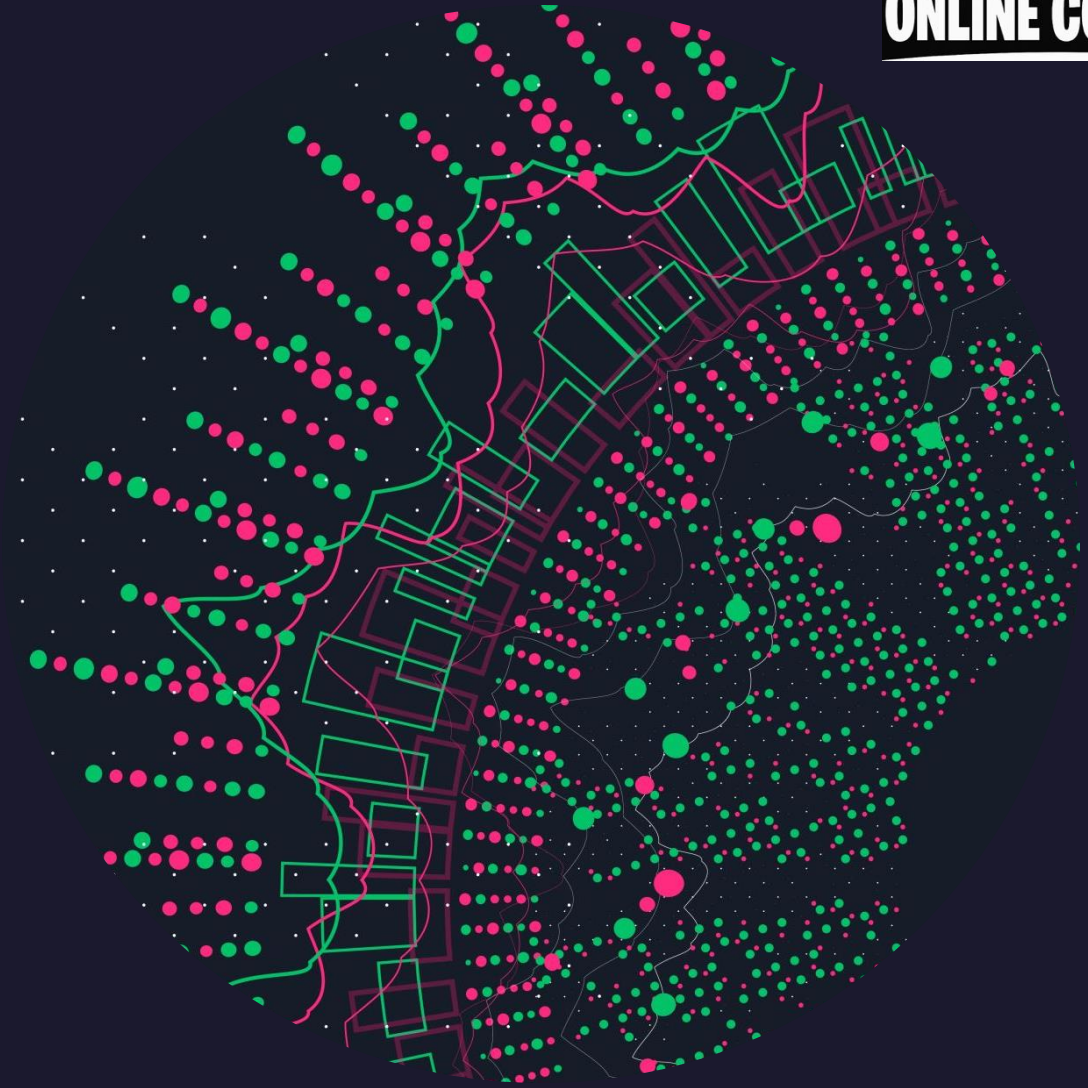


Digital Media Literacy and Disinformation Resistance

Online course for adult educators



Erasmus+ Project # 2025-1-NL01-KA220-ADU-000358363

Module 5: How to Combat Disinformation





Digital counterstrategies



Fact-checking platforms

Combines expert research and automated checks



Social media monitoring

Uses algorithms to detect and label fake content



AI tools

Identifies patterns in text, images, and videos to detect false information



Inoculation games

Teaches how misinformation works

Communication counterstrategies



Warning

Warning precedes the exposure to fake news

Inoculation

A weakened version of a misinformation to create an immunity

Education

Information and media literacy interventions



Disclosures

Labelling of promoted content to undermine the credibility of its source

Corrections

Alternative explanation by high-credibility sources

Retractions

of articles due to data falsifications and errors



Prebunking vs debunking

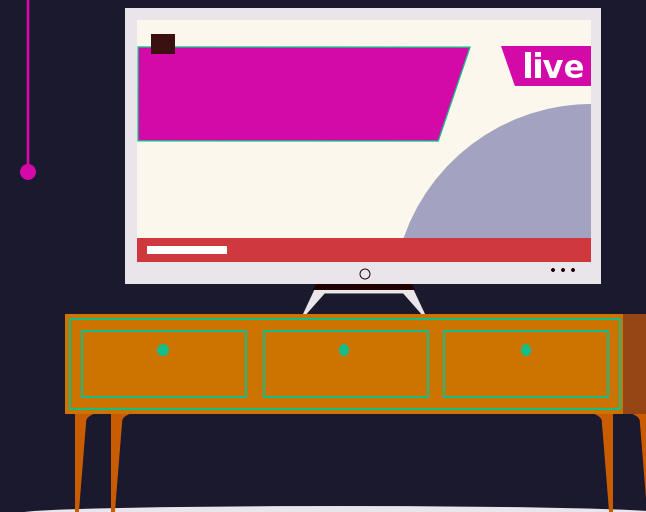
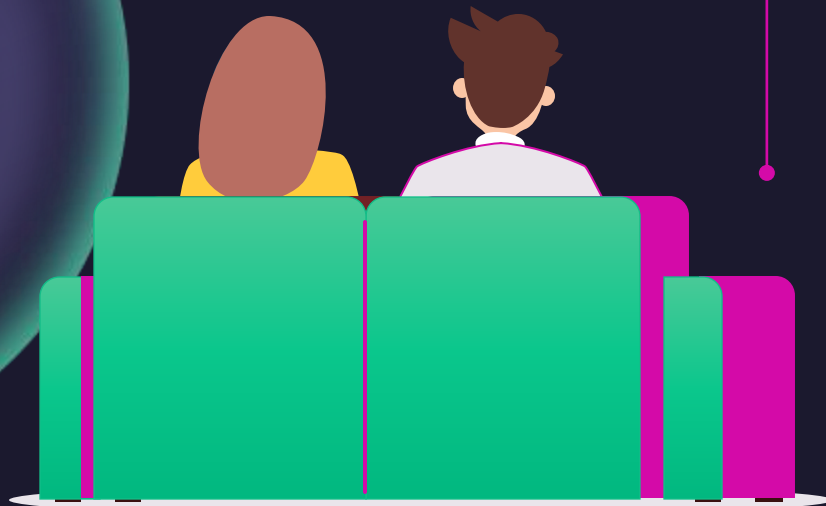
Prebunking

Warning people that the information is false is only protective when the warning precedes the exposure



Debunking

Reactive interventions do not work. Misinformation continues to influence people after they receive a correction



Why debunking does not work?



Backfire Effect

Worldview Defence: Corrections challenge deeply held beliefs, leading individuals to defend their worldview.

Familiarity Boost: Repeating the false claim during correction increases its familiarity, making it seem truer.



Continued Influence Effect

Cognitive Persistence: Misinformation continues to influence reasoning even after being corrected

Source Confusion: People may forget whether information was confirmed or debunked

Swire-Thompson et al., 2020

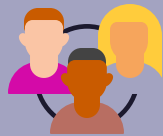
Lewandowsky et al., 2012

Can we change human beliefs?



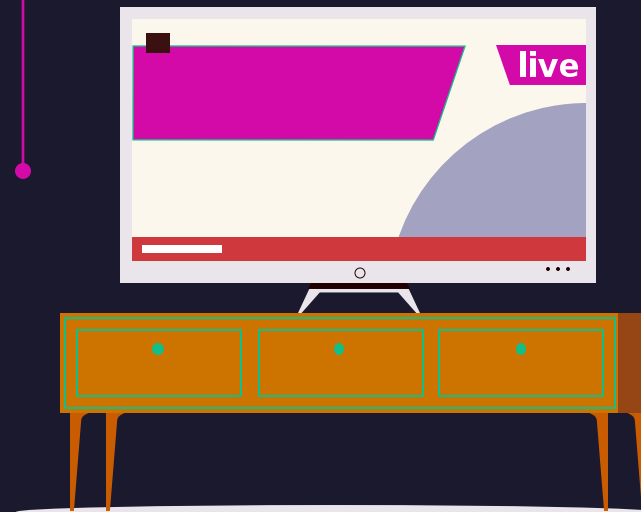
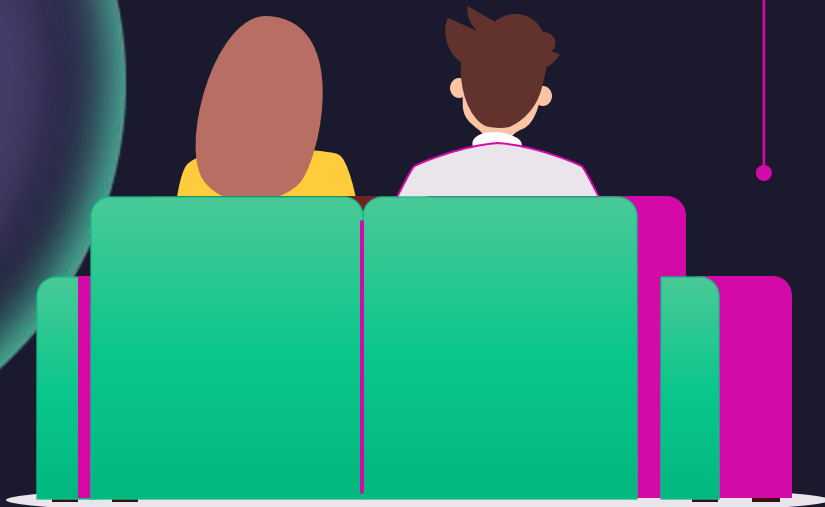
Continued influence

Once people believe in false information, this belief is difficult to correct.



Inoculation Theory

The intervention should precede the attempts to persuade an individual with misinformation



What is Inoculation Theory?



Inoculation Theory

- People exposed to weakened arguments against their attitudes can develop **resistance** to future threats to those attitudes.

Key terms

- **Inoculation pre-treatment** contains two components: a threat and a disproof.
- **Threat** is a warning that your attitude is about to be attacked.
- **Disproof** is information that helps to fight the incoming attack.
- **Counterarguing**: process of generating arguments against the attack.

Key findings

- Support has been found for Inoculation Theory since the 1960. In the last 20 years Inoculation Theory was used in fighting fake news, conspiracy theories, propaganda, and *inoculation itself*.





Inoculation: Passive vs active



Passive

Inoculation is tailored to a specific issue by weakened doses of misinformation

It is impossible to refute every specific misinformation



Active

Active inoculation lets people generate their own counterarguments

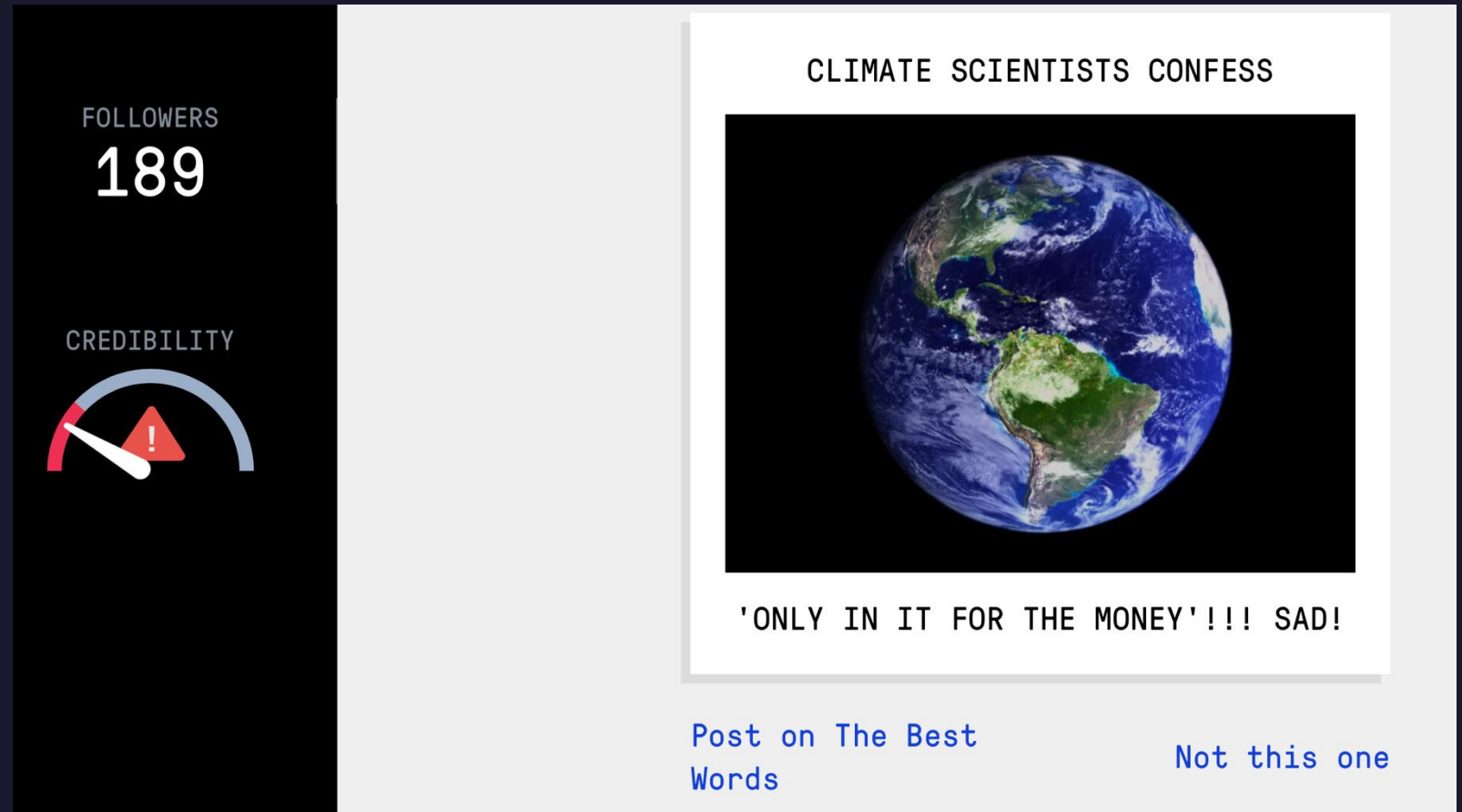
Can be generalized to other domains; creates general resistance to disinformation

Active inoculation: online game

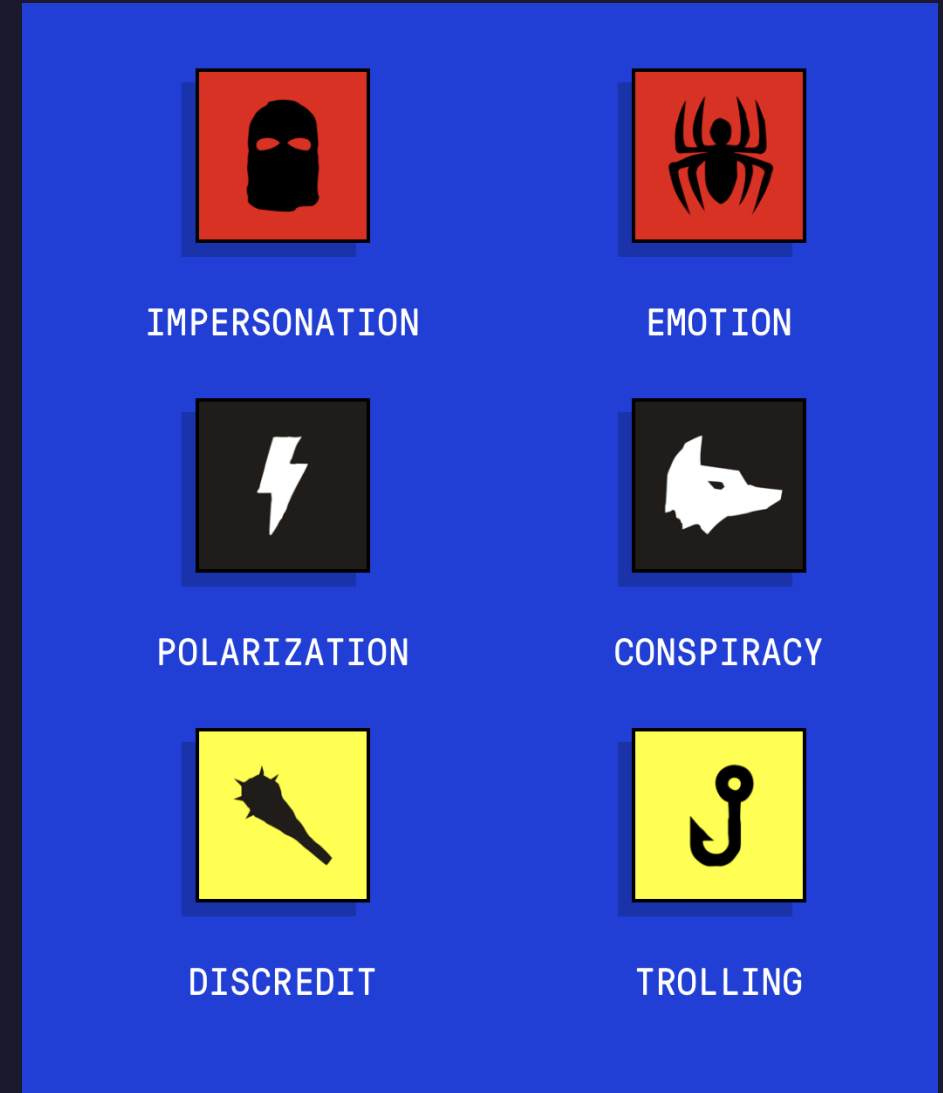


Roozenbeek et al. (2020) designed an online game in which players take on the role of fake news creators and learn about common misinformation techniques.

After playing the game, people became less susceptible to future exposure to common misinformation techniques



“Bad News” online game

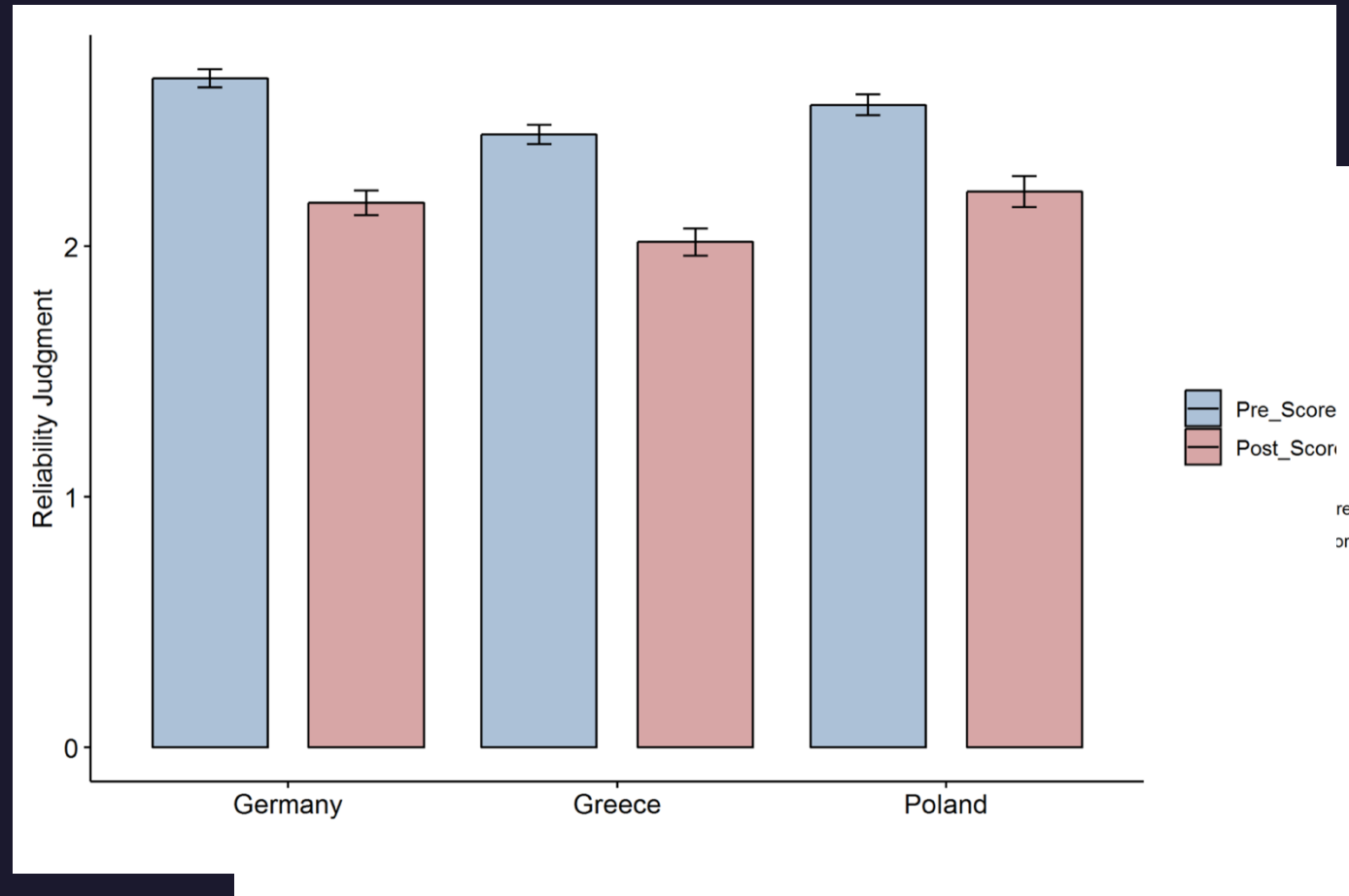




Results of playing online game

In a cross-cultural comparison, the effectiveness of this game in 3 languages (German, Greek, and Polish) was tested. Across all languages, participants' ability to spot misinformation significantly improved.

Social impact games rooted in insights from social psychology can boost psychological immunity against online misinformation and can be used as digital literacy teaching tool.



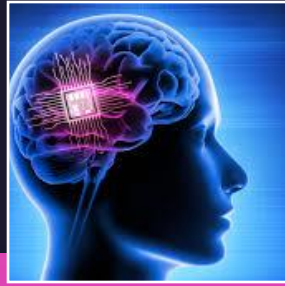
How to fight misinformation?

Resources

- Motivation
- Effort
- Time
- Information
- Training

Cognitive tools

- Thinking slow
- Using logic
- Fact checking
- Critical analysis of arguments
- Source analysis
- Media and digital literacy
- Objectivity
- Impartiality
- Independence
- Resistance to cynicism
- Outgroup empathy



Organizational

- Fact-check tags and flagging false content
- Digital identity verification
- Data protection laws
- Government regulation of content
- Cyber operations
- Community monitoring of the information
- Flooding: Exposing accounts of trolls and countering false content with truthful responses





Time to reflect

Choose one example of a specific type of misinformation you want to target.

- What is the most effective way to fight this misinformation?
- How will it work? For which audience? In what context?
- What might prevent this counterstrategy from being effective?





Quiz

What is debunking?

- A. Removing misinformation from social media platforms.
- B. Refuting misinformation after it has spread.
- C. Highlighting the credibility of accurate sources.

Correct answer: B





Quiz

What does emotional reframing aim to achieve in corrections?

- A. To increase familiarity with the misinformation.
- B. To reduce fear or anger associated with misinformation.
- C. To challenge deeply held beliefs.

Correct answer: B





Quiz

What is an example of prebunking?

- A. Teaching audiences about fear-based disinformation tactics.
- B. Posting fact-checks after misinformation spreads.
- C. Removing false claims from social media.

Correct answer: A



Combating Online Misinformation to Prevent Radicalisation of Vulnerable Adults



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