

The Construction of Truth and the Use of Social Media in A Context of Law Education: Empirical Research on Law Degree Students at Concepción Del Uruguay University.

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ABSTRACT: This article presents the findings of a research project conducted in 2025 at Legal and Social Sciences Faculty, Concepción del Uruguay University (Argentina). The research had as its main purpose to examine the relationship between the use of social media and conceptions of truthfulness of information among first- and fifth-year law degree students. It also investigated whether there were differences in critical skills among students at different stages of legal education to distinguish between evidence-based information and misinformation in digital environments.

Using a quantitative and comparative research design, the study analyzed patterns on how students consume information on social media and their influence on the evaluation of truth. The findings indicate that although intensive social media use is common across both academic groups, significant differences emerge regarding the criteria used to assess information credibility and the verification strategies that students adopt.

The research is grounded in theoretical frameworks such as cognitive bias theory, uses and gratifications theory, and major philosophical conceptions of truth. In this sense, the article not only organizes empirical evidence, but also offers a critical reflection on the pedagogical implications of the findings for legal education.

KEYWORDS - *truth; social media; legal education; cognitive biases; critical thinking.*

I. Introduction

Within legal education, the search, interpretation and argumentation about truth constitute fundamental dimensions of both academic inquiry and professional practice. The education of future lawyers requires developing critical and analytical skills that allows them to evaluate different versions of facts based on available evidence and logical reasoning.

However, the notion of truth in the legal domain is far from univocal. On the contrary, it constitutes a complex and dynamic concept that is profoundly shaped by historical, cultural, and discursive factors.

Several scholars have problematized this issue from philosophical and hermeneutic perspectives. Gadamer (1960) argues that truth emerges from the process of interpretation and dialogue, emphasizing its historical and contextual character. Similarly, Rorty (1986, 1998) challenges the notion of objective and universal truth, proposing instead a pragmatist conception in which truth functions as an instrument at social cooperation and collective progress.

These perspectives are complemented by the contributions of Nietzsche and Foucault, who emphasize the constructed and, at times, strategic nature of truth, as it is linked to power relations and specific discursive frameworks. In this sense, legal truth can be understood as the result of interpretive processes influenced by multiple historical, social, and institutional factors.

In turn, analyzing how truth is constructed in contemporary contexts requires considering contributions from cognitive psychology. In particular, the work of Kahneman and Tversky (1974) has shown that people don't process information strictly rationally, but rather through heuristics that can lead to systematic biases, such as availability, representativeness, and anchoring biases. Similarly, later research has dug deeper into phenomena like confirmation bias (Swann & Read, 1981; Nogueras, 2020, 2022) and motivated ignorance (Frimer et al., 2017). In today's digital ecosystem, characterized by the central role of social media as sources of information, these cognitive limitations become especially relevant. Digital platforms not only mediate access to knowledge but also shape the way it is interpreted, validated, and ultimately accepted as true.

Based on this background, this research aimed, as a general goal, to evaluate the correlation between the use of social networks and the beliefs about the truthfulness of information in first- and fifth-year Law students at Concepción del Uruguay University. Likewise, an investigation was conducted to identify possible differences in students' critical abilities according to their level of education.

From the proposed perspective, the work seeks to transcend the mere systematization of empirical data, placing its results within a broader framework of theoretical and pedagogical reflection. In this way, it aims to contribute to the understanding of the impact of digital information practices on the contemporary construction of truth and, particularly, on the process of training future legal professionals.

II. Research

This research was aimed at examining the correlation between the use of social networks and conceptions regarding the veracity of information. To this end, a plural theoretical framework was adopted, integrating the proposals of Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Michel Foucault, whose perspectives offer radically different ways of understanding truth: as adequacy within the conditions of possible knowledge, as a historical and social construct, and as a linguistic illusion linked to conventions and power relations. This approach is complemented by contributions from cognitive psychology, particularly the conceptualizations regarding recurrent cognitive biases in human reasoning (Kahneman, 2011; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974), as well as by the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which conceives of the user as an active subject in the interaction with media, offering an ideal framework for analyzing information consumption in contemporary society (McQuail, 2010).

Methodologically, it was a quantitative, cross-sectional study of a descriptive-analytical nature, conducted through a structured survey with a Likert Scale and administered by the research team. The target population consisted of first- and fifth-year law degree students from the Central Campus and the Gualaguaychú Regional Center of the Legal and Social Sciences Faculty at Concepción del Uruguay University. The selected sample was probabilistic, ensuring that each member of the population had a known and non-zero probability of being included. This procedure allowed valid inferences to be made about the entire population, guaranteeing a quantifiable level of confidence in the results obtained.

III. Results

3.1. Social Media uses

The comparative analysis between first- and fifth-year law degree students allows for the identification of three central patterns in their relationship with social media use, the circulation of fake news, and the processes of truth construction.

Firstly, regarding the intensity and mode of social media use, both groups show a high level of consumption. However, fifth-year students report a greater daily dedication and a more consolidated use of these platforms as a simultaneous source of information and entertainment, which reflects a more stable integration of social media into their daily practices.

Secondly, regarding the handling of fake news, while both groups demonstrate the ability to identify questionable information and resort to verification sources, first-year students show greater discipline in checking sources. In contrast, advanced students tend to rely more on their own judgment, which results in less caution when sharing content.

Finally, regarding cognitive biases, both groups exhibit moderate levels of confirmation bias, although this is more pronounced in the fifth-year group. In this case, the content consumed more frequently reinforces prior opinions, shaping a more rigid informational identity. At the same time, there is a more marked consumption of news for recreational purposes and a greater influence of emotional factors in the act of sharing information.

In summary, as students progress in their academic trajectory, they develop higher levels of critical autonomy, although this is combined with a deeper emotional and recreational integration of digital information, which may increase exposure to unverified content.

3.2. Conceptions of truth

The research also aimed to investigate the conceptions of truth held by first- and fifth-year law degree students, based on four classical philosophical perspectives — Foucault, Nietzsche, Kant, and the notion of objective truth — and an open question designed to elicit general definitions. The results reveal both continuities and shifts in representations of truth throughout academic training.

3.2.1. Truth as a disputed concept, linked to power (Foucault)

Students show a high adherence to the idea that truth is conditioned by those who hold power, with percentages exceeding 90% at both levels. However, the belief in the possibility that justice can prevail over certain truths decreases from 95.45% in the first year to 76% in the fifth. The influence of the political and cultural context is also recognized by more than 79% of respondents.

3.2.2. Truth as fiction or metaphor (Nietzsche)

Acceptance of this perspective is lower. 59.09% of first-year students and 54.17% of fifth-year students consider that truth is a narrative form rather than a correspondence with reality. The difference becomes more pronounced when exploring the use of 'truth' as a useful metaphor: while 77.27% of initial-year students conceive it in this way, only 36.36% of advanced students agree.

3.2.3. Truth as a rational structure (Kant)

The Kantian conception shows a high level of adherence. 90.48% of first-year students and 82.61% of fifth-year students maintain that truth is attained through logical reasoning and argumentative dialogue. Furthermore, all initial students and 82.61% of advanced students consider logic and argumentation fundamental in the construction of truth.

3.2.4. Truth as a unique, objective and universal reality

The belief in absolute truth remains at high levels, although with a slight decrease in the higher years: from 100% in the first year to 96% in the fifth. When inquiring about the independence of facts from individual thoughts, the percentages drop to 81.82% and 76%. Finally, regarding the question of whether truth is discovered or constructed, both groups agree: 55.56% maintain that truth is discovered.

3.2.5. Open question about the meaning of 'truth'

The definitions offered are mainly divided between 'the real/reality' and 'something proven/proven with arguments.' In line with previous responses, most opt to understand truth as that which aligns with 'the real' or 'reality': 22.39% in the first year and 64% in the fifth. On the other hand, 31.34% of the initial students define truth as that which is sufficiently proven, while only 16% of advanced students choose this answer. It is worth noting that 22.39% of first-year students do not answer the question, compared to 4% in the fifth year.

IV. Discussion

A preliminary analysis of the results highlights a series of tensions and inconsistencies in the conceptions of truth held by the students. First, a contradiction between relativism and objectivity is observed. Although more than 90% of the students acknowledge the influence of power and context in the definition of truth, an equally

significant proportion maintains the existence of objective and universal truths. This coexistence reflects an overlap of Foucauldian and Kantian perspectives that do not always align coherently (Foucault, 1975/2002; Kant, 1781/1998).

Secondly, a decrease is observed in the value attributed to metaphor at the higher levels of training. The acceptance of truth as a useful metaphor drops significantly in the fifth year, even though the idea of truth as a social construction is maintained. This shift suggests that, as they progress in their studies, students tend to favor more rational and objective conceptions, relegating narrative or symbolic approaches, in a manner contrary to Nietzsche's conception of truth (Nietzsche, 1873/2001).

Similarly, a tension emerges between open definitions and closed responses. In the open-ended question, fifth-year students predominantly lean toward defining truth as "the real," reinforcing an objectivist view. However, in the closed-ended questions, they also acknowledge the influence of power and context. This duality reveals difficulties in integrating diverse perspectives into a consistent conception of truth.

In this regard, the observed shift —characterized by the decrease in the option "truth as something proven with arguments" and the increase in the definition "truth as what is real" at advanced levels— suggests a transition from a predominantly epistemological conception towards one of a more ontological nature. This movement can be interpreted as a conceptual simplification that contrasts with the greater diversity of responses recorded in the early years.

Overall, the survey results reveal a persistent tension between different conceptions of truth, manifested both in conceptual choices and in the internal inconsistencies of the responses.

The strong adherence to the idea that truth is influenced by power relations confirms the impact of a Foucauldian perspective. From this point of view, truth does not constitute a neutral concept but is historically conditioned by regimes of knowledge-power (Foucault, 1975/2002).

More than 90% of students recognize this dimension highlights a marked critical sensitivity toward the social construction of truth. However, this stance coexists with a strong belief in objective and universal truths, which generates an internal contradiction: simultaneously accepting that truth depends on context and power while also believing that there are facts independent of any socio-historical framework.

On the contrary, the Nietzschean perspective appears with less intensity, particularly at higher levels. The conception of truth as a useful fiction or as a set of metaphors loses adherence as academic training progresses (Nietzsche, 1873/2001). This change suggests a tendency to abandon symbolic or narrative approaches in favor of more rational and objective definitions, which can be interpreted as an orientation toward more traditional epistemological models, although in tension with the social critique acknowledged in other items of the questionnaire. The Kantian conception, on the other hand, remains remarkably robust. The valuation of logic, rational coherence, and argumentation as the foundations of truth is reflected in the high levels of adherence recorded, in line with the idea of truth as a condition of possibility for knowledge (Kant, 1781/1998). This perspective seems to offer a framework of stability in the face of oscillations between relativism and objectivity.

Finally, the responses to the open-ended question reinforce the identified tensions. While first-year students tend to define truth as 'something proven with arguments,' fifth-year students prioritize the notion of truth as 'what is real.' This evolution is particularly significant, since in closed-ended questions, advanced students recognize the influence of power and context, but in the open-ended definition, they lean towards an ontological conception of truth as an independent reality. The coexistence of these positions suggests that, although academic training strengthens confidence in rationality and objectivity, it does not succeed in fully integrating the critical and social dimensions of truth in a coherent manner.

V. Conclusion

The analysis of students' responses allows for the identification of a transformation process that unfolds on two interrelated levels: the use of social networks and conceptions of truth. Regarding the former, it is observed that students in the early years face higher levels of uncertainty in the circulation of contradictory information and

experience a more pronounced influence from peer groups in their information practices. As they progress through their studies, critical autonomy is strengthened, and skepticism towards digital information increases, although simultaneously, the emotional and recreational integration of content deepens.

Regarding the second aspect, the results highlight the persistence of tensions between different philosophical conceptions of truth. The strong adherence to the idea that truth is shaped by power relations coexists with the belief in objective and universal truths, generating a conceptual contradiction that is difficult to resolve. Likewise, the perspective that conceives truth as metaphor or useful fiction loses strength at higher levels, while the notion of truth as rational coherence and a condition for the possibility of knowledge consolidates as a relatively stable framework.

Overall, the findings suggest that attending university strengthens confidence in rationality and in critical autonomy regarding information but does not guarantee the coherent integration of the objective, social, and critical dimensions of the concept of truth.

This coexistence of unarticulated approaches constitutes a pedagogical and philosophical challenge for legal education, particularly in a context marked by information overload and the complexity of contemporary discourses.

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