

# Who Falls For Fake News?: The Role of Emotional Intelligence



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## RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

In this study we investigated whether participants level of emotional intelligence (EQ) was associated with their ability to detect fake news items presented in a real world Facebook format

**Objective:** Is High EQ associated with greater fake news detection rates (i.e. are those high in emotional intelligence better at seeing through the emotional content of the news item, leading to a great focus on the veracity of the content)

## POPULATION STUDIED

The participant sample was recruited via the Psychology Participant Pool and via ads posted via social media platforms (@UOSPsychology)

87 UK Adult Participants  
55 Female  
22 Male  
17-56 Years Age Range  
57 University Level Education  
30 School/UK College Level Education

## TASK PLATFORM

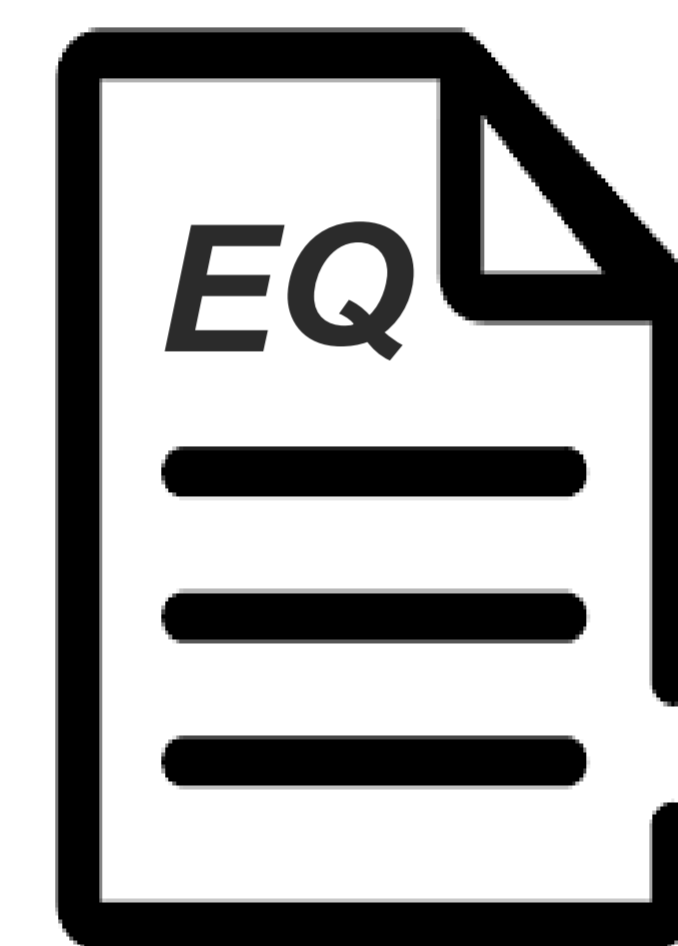


## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our thanks to the participants from the Psychology Participant Pool for taking part in this study

## STUDY DESIGN

- 29 Item Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (Overall Score + 3 Subtests)
- Fake News Detection Task: 6 items/3 Real/3 Fake, Topics: health/crime/immigration/education/climate change. 4 questions per item + text response box (see Qualitative panel)



- Q1 (Objectivity): 'the author and attached article are objective'
- Q2 (Professionalism): 'the article looks to be produced by a professional'
- Q3 (Argument Strength): 'the article presents a strong argument', and finally the explicit fake news detection question
- Q4 (Trustworthiness): 'this source of information is credible and trustworthy'.

## RESULTS I

- As seen in Figure 1, we replicate previous work showing greater fake news detection rates are associated with higher levels of educational attainment
- As seen in Figure 2, our novel finding shows that those with higher levels of EQ were better at detecting the fake news items

Figure 1

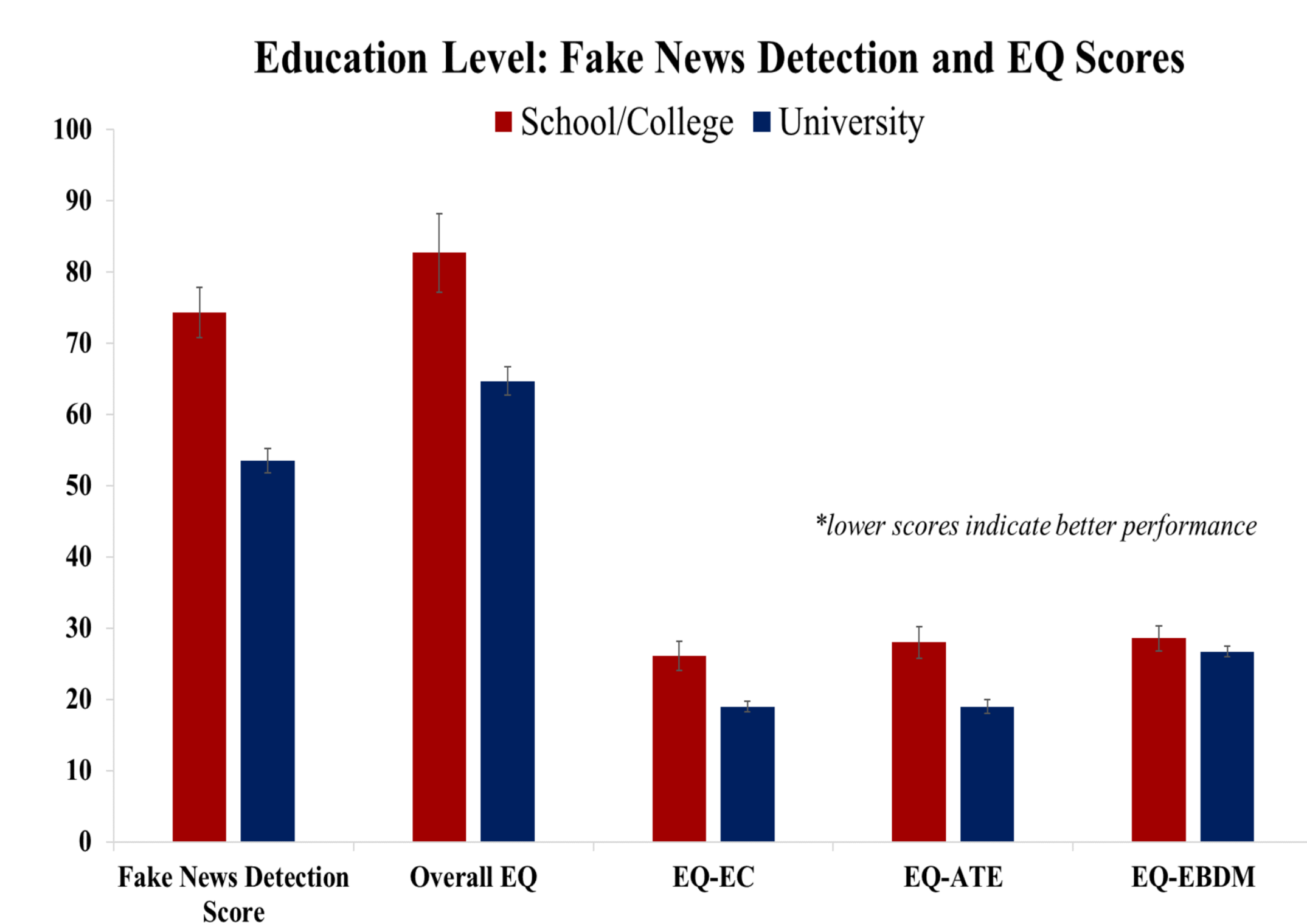
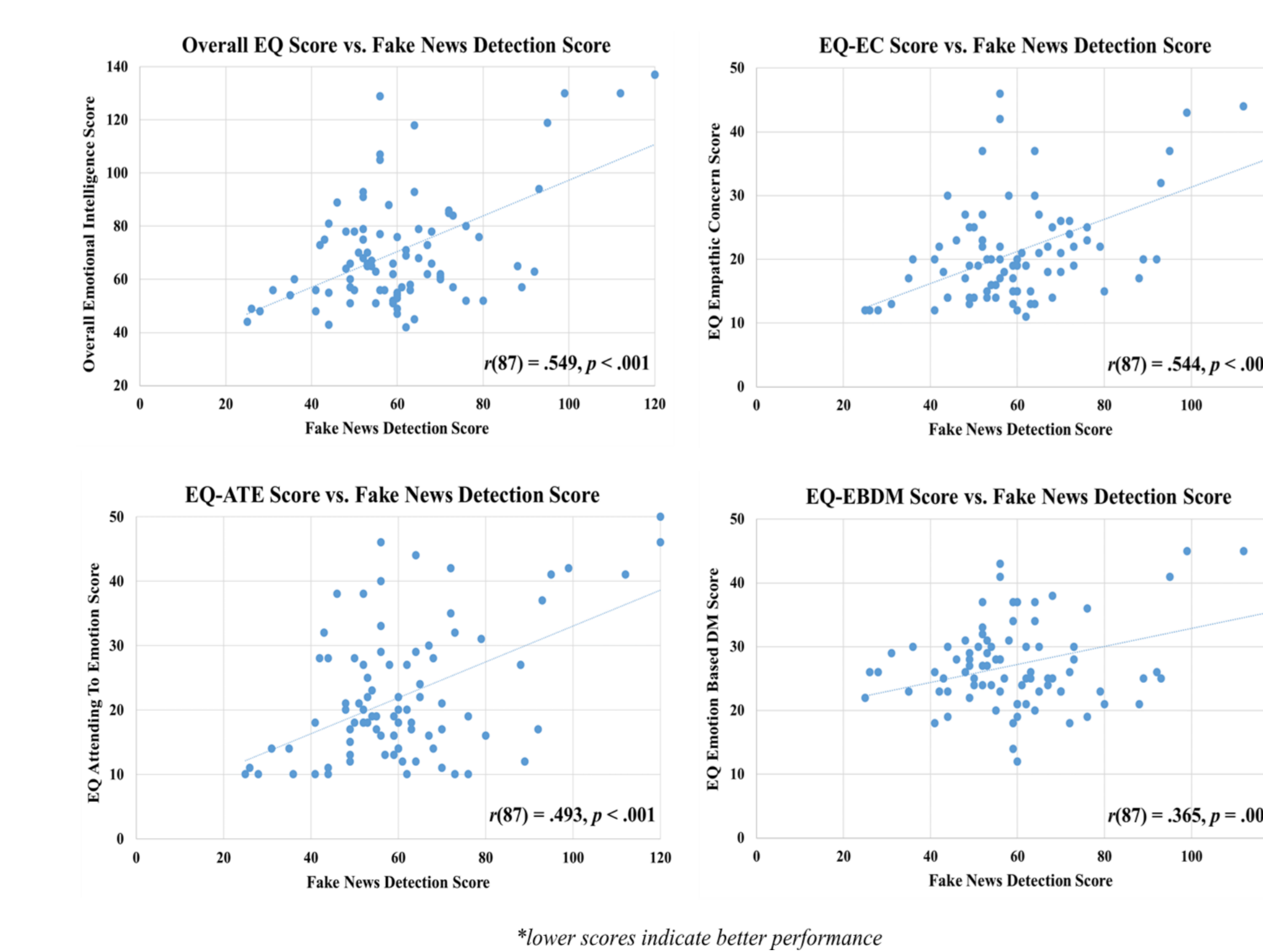


Figure 2



## REFERENCES

Preston, S., Anderson, A., Robertson, D. J., Shephard, M. P., & Huhe, N. (2021). **Detecting fake news on Facebook: The role of emotional intelligence.** PLOS ONE, 16(3), e0246757.

## RESULTS II

Qualitative analysis *why some people fall for fake news*

Those who incorrectly accepted the fake news content	Theme
I have personal experience of this	Personal Experience
My kids are in this position so I completely get this	
Good argument, it uses a graph and data from a source	Visuals/Data/Graphs
The graph shows it all	
This calls out poor practice and makes sense	A 'Hidden' Problem
Horrible problem, glad it was pointed out	
The commenter on the post has the same thoughts as me	Fits Existing Beliefs
Agree, makes good points	
Those who correctly rejected the fake news content	Theme
Emotive language, subtitle is designed to create a reaction	Emotive Language
There is emotive/condescending language in the blurb	
Fearmongering article with no data	No Supporting Data
No data/facts to back up the information	
The source is not an official scientific, or governmental source	Source Concerns
It doesn't look official/look like it is from a trustworthy source	
Comes across as more of a rant	Unprofessional Tone
From an opinion page, talking in the first person	
The graph looks bad	Poor Graphs/Visuals
The data is not presented well	
There is proof that we are causing global warming	Appeals To Evidence
Climate change is real	

## CONCLUSIONS

- **Here we replicate** previous research which shows that greater levels of educational attainment are associated with greater fake news detection proficiency
- **Our novel finding shows** that high EQ individuals are better at ignoring the affective content of the news allowing greater focus on its veracity (> detection rates)
- **Our exploratory qualitative data** provides additional insights into why some people fall for fake news
- **Emotional intelligence can be trained**, such training could be one way of increasing an individuals ability to detect fake news

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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