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Upper secondary school students evaluating the credibility of web pages

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As the Internet includes a large amount of information of varying quality, the critical evaluation of information has become particularly important. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how skilled upper secondary school students are in selecting reliable web pages and putting forward justified credibility evaluations for them.

As part of a larger online inquiry task, students (N = 404) used a Google Custom Search Engine to search for two Web pages they regarded as reliable from a set of 150 pre-selected pages dealing with vaccination of children. The students were asked to evaluate the credibility of the two pages they selected (credible/quite credible/not credible) and to justify their evaluations. The students' responses were scored according to the quality of the web pages, and the number and quality of their justifications.

The results showed that the students mostly selected quite reliable web pages but the evaluation of their credibility was difficult for many of them. The results suggest that there is a growing need to systematically teach evaluation skills of online information to students at different educational levels.