


VIEWS OF COMMUNICATION SCIENCES STUDENTS ON THE NEW MEDIA LITERACY TRAINING

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Abstract

The widespread use of media through different tools and channels, the acceleration of information flow, the increase in global connections and their intense and rapid effects on societies require the training of conscious media literate individuals. The article aims to evaluate the views of the people receiving media education in the new age, which is called as post-truth era. Students studying media at universities constitute the focus of this study. The research was conducted among students studying at communication faculties through semi-structured in-depth interviews. Students were selected randomly. The research emphasizes the importance of media literacy awareness of young people receiving media education by discussing the media consumption habits of the study group, the effects of digital media and the effects of media literacy training. The results show that their theoretical knowledge and awareness about certain manipulation patterns are satisfactory, whereas they need more practices when producing their own contents.

Keywords: Media, Literacy, Communication, Media Literacy

İLETİřİM BİLİMLERİ ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN YENİ MEDYA OKURYAZARLIĞI EĞİTİMİNE İLİřKİN GÖRÜřLERİ

Öz

Medyanın farklı araç ve kanallar aracılığıyla yaygınlaşması, bilgi akışının hızlanması, küresel bağlantıların artması ve toplumlar üzerindeki yoğun ve hızlı etkileri, bilinçli medya okuryazarı bireylerin yetiştirilmesini gerekli kılmaktadır. Makale, post-truth çağ olarak adlandırılan yeniçağda medya eğitimi alan kişilerin medyaya ilişkin görüşlerini değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Üniversitelerde medya eğitimi alan öğrenciler bu çalışmanın odağını oluşturmaktadır. Araştırma, iletişim fakültelerinde eğitim gören öğrenciler arasında yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine görüşmeler yoluyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Öğrenciler rastgele seçilmiştir. Araştırma, çalışma grubunun medya tüketim alışkanlıklarını, dijital medyanın etkilerini ve medya okuryazarlığı eğitiminin etkilerini ele alarak medya eğitimi alan gençlerin medya okuryazarlığı farkındalıklarının önemini vurgulamaktadır. Sonuçlar, belirli manipölasyon örüntüleri hakkındaki teorik bilgilerinin ve farkındalıklarının yeterli olduğunu, ancak kendi içeriklerini üretirken daha fazla pratiğe ihtiyaç duyduklarını göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Medya, Okuryazarlık, İletişim, Medya Okuryazarlığı

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1. Introduction

Rapid changes in media and communication technologies created a need to question societies' awareness of media literacy. Digital media has made it easier to centralize the information flow and provide instant access to all developments. While global connections are strengthened with digital media, communication takes place through new media in the digital age. Hence, the importance of literacy has become more evident. In addition to basic skills, various literacy skills are also expected to be developed. To name some, information literacy, computer literacy, financial literacy, technology literacy, e- literacy, visual literacy are a few of them. Media literacy may be the first of these because young people's ability, specifically communication faculties' students, to access, analyze, evaluate and transmit messages depends on how successful they are in media literacy.

Although technology literacy, digital literacy, media literacy and finally new media literacy differ from each other on certain main issues, there are also common points where they overlap. Kurt et al. (2014) states that each of the literacy areas such as digital literacy, technology literacy, computer literacy, media literacy and information literacy interact with each other and that there is no clear distinction between these literacies, and that the concepts of digital and technology literacy are intertwined concepts.

However, the literature on literacies has different definitions for different literacies. It would be necessary to define some of these literacies, which are often intertwined and used interchangeably, it would be appropriate to make the following definitions for each of them.

Technology literacy is defined as using, managing, evaluating and understanding technology (International Technology Education Association (ITEA), 2000). It covers the use of technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate and communicate and use of digital technologies, networking tools and social networks by accessing, managing, integrating, evaluating and creating information to function successfully in the information economy as well as to apply a basic understanding of ethical and legal issues around access and use (Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

Digital literacy can be taken as a social, political, cultural, and economic product, and in this digital age, hence literacy has important benefits for the updated trainings, culture and social improvement (Bruce, 2003).

The first researcher who introduced the meaning of digital literacy was Paul Gilster. Gilster (1997) stated that digital literacy is a special kind of mentality related to mastering ideas that is not just about pressing buttons (Gilster, 1997: 15). Gilster's view is based on three accepted principles of digital literacy: (1) Knowledge and ability to access and use a variety of hardware devices and software applications; (2) Competence to understand and critically analyze digital content and applications; (3) Ability to create with digital technology. Gilster (1997) introduces the concept of digital literacy as the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide variety of sources when presented through computers.

As for media literacy, it is defined as “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and transmit written and non-written messages in a wide variety of structures (internet, television, etc.)” (İnceoğlu, 2005). The main features of new media that distinguish it from traditional media (newspaper, radio, television, cinema) are that it has an interactive and multimedia format, can convey a large amount of information at the same time, and enables different communication dimensions to occur at the same time (Binark and Bek, 2007).

While the media has become a tool for people to meet their needs such as entertainment, information and communication, it has also become a force that dictates what they need and how they should be affected by it. With this strong and dominant influence of the media, new individuals have emerged who are passive and only recipients of the written, visual and audio messages presented by the media. For this reason, individuals need to be made aware of media literacy and become active in order to stop being passive recipients of media products and become active (Barut, 2018).

With the development of communication technologies, multiple and cross-border communication environment, rapid information flow and freedom of communication have come, but with these, the content problem has also arisen. Media literacy has emerged as a solution to this issue.

2. Literature

2.1. Definitions

Media literacy includes the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media in various forms. In today's digital age, where information is easily accessible and disseminated through a wide variety of media platforms, media education is becoming increasingly important. It is widely believed that young people in communication faculty are more conscious of media literacy than others, and this may be true when considered within the context of the media education received. It is important that this assumption be confirmed by many studies and that awareness levels regarding new media literacy be reformulated when necessary. Media literacy is an essential skill in the digital age, enabling individuals to interact with media content consciously and critically. According to TÜBİTAK, media literacy is defined as "the ability of individuals to critically analyze, evaluate, and consciously use media content." This involves questioning media messages, comparing information from various sources, and understanding the intentions behind these messages. Such skills help individuals shift from passive media consumers to active, aware participants (TÜBİTAK Bilim Genç, n.d.).

It is also possible to read new media literacy as an updated version of the traditional media literacy concept with new media forms and technologies brought by the digital age. In other words, it is a version of traditional media literacy adapted to today's digital world. The rise of the internet, the popularity of social media platforms and the availability of digital media production tools to everyone have moved media literacy beyond the traditional understanding of media. New media literacy focuses on the ability to understand, produce and critique digital media content.

The Internet is the new name for accessing information, but it is also possible to access misleading or inaccurate information. New media literacy provides guidance on recognizing and selecting reliable sources. Another name is media production. Anyone who wishes can now produce media content. New media literacy is the ability of individuals to read videos, blog posts, podcasts, etc. It teaches them to act consciously and ethically when creating media content such as. Digital security is another important issue. It is important to protect internet users' personal information and online security. New media literacy raises awareness about creating secure passwords, limiting the sharing of personal data, and recognizing online dangers. It also

teaches how to evaluate media from a critical perspective. It focuses on recognizing misleading headlines, distinguishing biased reports, and detecting media manipulation (Livingstone, 2016).

Although it is true that new media literacy is similar to media literacy in certain ways, it appears to differ in many ways. Since media contents are generally created with moving pictures, images and graphics, all the contents that can be accessed and evaluated are digital-based products (Karaduman, 2019). In addition, accessing content, analysis, understanding, detailed evaluation of content and then production are among the basic skills within the scope of new media literacy.

It is possible to say that due to the increased opportunity for interaction in new media environments, there is much longer exposure compared to traditional media. Therefore, this increase in exposure and interaction will enable the individual to develop literacy skills faster by interacting effectively and quickly with the content in new media. However, in the new media, since the individual is a content producer and has the power to influence people, it is possible to be trained at a much more effective and comprehensive level compared to traditional media (Literat, 2014).

2.2. Media Literacy Education

The education process, which basically starts with being able to use the necessary tools to understand new media elements and reaching a sufficient cognitive level, can be continued with the analysis, synthesis and evaluation stages. It is crucial to prove the accuracy of the content by comparing it with various types of media in terms of differences and similarities. When it comes to the term literacy, first of all, it is necessary to have various skills in terms of the “reader” part. In the “authorship” section, a certain hierarchy should be followed. In this context, first of all, the person must have qualifications such as technical skills in various types of media production, distribution and dissemination of media content. In the next stage, finding a place in critical and interactive media communities and media production and control based on the expectations, ideology and sociocultural structures of the target audience are also considered important (Lin et al., 2013).

On the platforms, which are used more frequently by young people, behavioral codes are a matter of greater curiosity. Over time, with the detection of increased use by young people and adolescents new media literacy has begun to be seen as a course within the scope of

education, evaluated in the context of institutions and added to some of the curricula. In addition, media literacy and new media literacy trainings are carried out comprehensively in the Faculties of Communication, as well as basic communication training and specialization courses. In an effort to raise awareness about critical media consumption among students, the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) and the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) signed a cooperation protocol in 2022. As part of this initiative, a media literacy course was officially introduced as an elective subject in secondary education institutions. The curriculum was updated to reflect the needs of the digital age, and new educational materials were developed accordingly. The protocol also includes activities such as seminars and workshops focused on media literacy, cyber security, and the prevention of digital addiction (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2022).

Communication and collaboration competence will also provide the person with competence in being a participatory citizen in the public sphere, digital identity and reputation management. While creating digital content in new media; issues such as knowledge of copyrights, competence in licensing applications, and development of content and information should be taken into account. Also, individuals must have the competence to use new media safely. Thus, competence can be achieved in issues such as personal data-privacy, protection of physical and psychological health, social welfare. Finally, the individual must acquire problem-solving competence in digital environments. Thus, the detection and solution of problems will be much easier (UNESCO, 2018).

In social-emotional context; ensuring communication similar to the real world in the digital environment, using correct language, taking the privacy of individuals into account, data protection, avoiding disclosure, being aware of dangers and threats, knowing and respecting personal rights are highlighted. In the cognitive context; These include critical thinking, research and evaluation skills, and accurate and sufficient knowledge of legal and moral issues. Finally, in the technical part, all operational and technical competencies must be completed by the individuals (Wan Ng, 2012).

As Prensky (2001) notes, although these digital natives are more comfortable with technology, they need guidance to develop critical thinking and discernment skills when consuming digital content. On the other hand, scholars such as Hobbs (2010) emphasize the

importance of media literacy in the digital age and points out the role of media literacy in enabling individuals to interact critically with media content. Additionally, Jenkins (2006) highlights the concept of “participatory culture” in which individuals are not just media consumers but also active contributors and creators. These theoretical frameworks underscore the need to examine the effectiveness of media education in preparing youth for active and informed participation in today’s media environment.

New media literacy is not a skill that can be achieved without education. This education provided at universities can support young people to critically evaluate new media over time (Jenkins et al., 2016). Developing critical thinking skills is very important for new media literacy. Young people should be encouraged to question the content they encounter, consider multiple perspectives, and evaluate sources for credibility (Livingstone, 2004). Encouraging skepticism while teaching critical thinking skills can help young people become more informed consumers in the new media field.

New media literacy is reshaping the way young people create and express their identities. Boyd (2014) states that online spaces provide individuals with opportunities to connect with like-minded individuals, encouraging the development of subcultures and niche communities. In this way, young people can discover different aspects of their identities, share their experiences and find a sense of belonging in these digital spaces. However, this also raises concerns about filter bubbles and echo chambers that can limit exposure to different perspectives (Pariser, 2011).

It should be said that the digital world increases concerns about privacy and security. Young people are becoming more aware of the importance of online privacy with new media literacy skills (Boyd and Marwick, 2011). Although challenges such as sharing sensitive data on social media platforms still exist, it is also clear that they are more likely to engage in responsible online behavior and protect personal information (Livingstone and Haddon, 2009).

As a result, new media literacy has led to significant social and cultural changes both in society and among young people. These changes fundamentally include increased civic engagement, the formation of digital identities and communities, critical media consumption, cultural production, and increased awareness of online privacy. These impacts are complex and

multifaceted, and research needs to be diversified and nuanced to fully understand their long-term effects in rapidly evolving digital environments.

Based on the points above, it is considered important to evaluate young people's awareness of new media literacy within the scope of the knowledge they have acquired and their capacity to apply it.

3.Methodology

3.1.Purpose

This research aims to get the views of the students who receive media education in communication faculties on their competency about media literacy. The problem statement of the research is stated as “the necessity to search whether the students who receive media education at communication faculties after having a related training has not been given required priority.”

In this study, Ethics Committee Approval was obtained with the decision of the Anadolu University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee.

3.2. Importance

This research bears importance in terms of providing a source for future academic studies both in the field of social sciences and on literacy skills

The study indicates that communication students generally perceive new media literacy in a positive light. This favorable perception is crucial, as it not only reflects an awareness of the role of digital media in modern communication but also suggests a readiness to engage with media content critically and responsibly. The positive attitude of students towards new media literacy can significantly contribute to the effectiveness of educational programs aimed at fostering digital competence, critical thinking, and ethical media use. Integrating new media literacy into the communication curriculum could thus enhance students' ability to navigate complex digital environments and participate more actively in the media landscape.

3.3.Method

In this study, the interview technique, one of the qualitative research methods, was used. Interview is an effective technique for understanding people's feelings, thoughts, attitudes,

experiences and complaints (Sevecan and Çilingiroğlu, 2007). The research was conducted among students (8) studying at Communication Sciences Faculties and having media courses in Turkey through semi-structured in-depth interviews. After data saturation was achieved and similar answers began to be received, the 7th person was not interviewed. Students were selected randomly. The research emphasizes the importance of media literacy awareness of young people receiving media education by discussing the media consumption habits of the study group, the effects of digital media and the effects of media literacy. Within the scope of the research, the following basic questions were asked:

1. What is the concept of media literacy?
2. Do you think you are well educated in terms of media literacy?
3. How would you evaluate the trainings you have received throughout your education related to media literacy?
4. How can disinformation be distinguished in new media?
5. What behaviors do you think a good new media literate should exhibit?

4. Findings

As seen below, the answers given by the participants to the questions are categorized. The answers given are presented in summary tables as bullet points. “P” refers to “participant”.

Q1. What is the concept of media literacy?	Q2. Do you think you are well educated in terms of media literacy? Q3. How would you evaluate the trainings you have got throughout your education related to media literacy?
P1 It is about seeing what is actually behind what appears in the media.	This cannot happen only through education. It is necessary to know the society, its sensitivities and current politics. Based on this, I give myself 5 out of 10. Q3 The training I received explains with examples how the media changes messages according to its own desires. From now on, the success of evaluating specific examples is up to me.
P2 It is the ability to see the facts, not what is shown in the media and social media.	I think I display different skills in different subjects. From time to time I think I am manipulated, especially on social media. Q3. I wish I had been better educated on this subject.

P3 Becoming aware of the implicit (background) messages conveyed by the mass media	Yes, because I can decide for myself whether the messages in the mass media are true or false. Q3. Media literacy courses create differences in students' approaches to the media, which changes their media usage habits.
P4 Mass media have political, economic, cultural and social priorities and purposes, and they shape the things they show accordingly. Being aware of this fact makes you literate.	Yes, I always ask the question "what is actually happening?" Q3 I can say that I have become a more conscious consumer by deciphering the interlinear language of the media.
P5 It is to be able to detect whether there is biased reporting in mass media.	Yes, I look at the messages given through mass media from a critical perspective. Q3. Thanks to media literacy training, hidden messages in media aren't hidden for me
P6 It is the ability to analyze the meanings of messages conveyed through mass media.	Yes, I know that the messages given are created in different ways in different mass media. Q3. Thanks to the media literacy training, I have progressed towards evaluating the media correctly and being conscious when producing media messages.

Table 1: Understanding of media literacy and the perception of the students related to given training

When evaluating the responses given to the first three questions about the students' awareness on the concept of media literacy, their perceptions on how well educated they are in terms of media literacy and their evaluations related to the trainings they have got throughout their education related to media literacy, it has been concluded that the students are well aware of the term and satisfied with the related training. The responses show that communication faculty students are aware of the important points of media literacy and are at a satisfactory level regarding their proficiency in the subject due to the education they receive. The participant, who stated that it could have been better, expressed his need for content production practice rather than theoretical knowledge. Table 2 Shows the responses given to the question: How can disinformation be distinguished in new media.

Q4. How can disinformation be distinguished in new media?
Confirmation of the message from other sources
Checking whether the source is reliable or not
Being careful about the date of the message

Checking the reliability of the visuals
Noticing the hidden advertising in mass media
Observing the influence of sponsors on the broadcasting
Being aware that mass media have political, economic, cultural and social priorities.
Being aware of biased reporting in the mass media.
Checking if the messages given are created in different formats in different mass media.
Noticing the purposes for which messages are created, such as, informing, entertaining, social responsibility, consumption and so on.
Knowing the legal and ethical rules regarding publications in mass media
Using news verification platforms
Applying protective media pedagogy and critical media pedagogy in all levels of education

Table 2: How to distinguish disinformation in new media

Seeing Table 2, which categorizes the answers to the question "How can disinformation be distinguished in new media?", it has been seen that the students have responded showing how well educated they are related to media literacy. The response such as, confirmation of the message from other sources, checking the reliability of the source and visuals, being careful about the date of the message, seeing the hidden advertising in mass media, knowing the influence of sponsors on the broadcasting and being aware of biased reporting because of political, economic, cultural and social priorities and the need for legal and ethical regarding publications in mass media regulations and having knowledge on protective media pedagogy show that the training they get is as it is required. Table 3 shows the categorization of the answers to the question "What behaviors do you think a good new media literate should exhibit".

Q5. What behaviors do you think a good new media literate should exhibit?
Getting to know the media industry
Analyzing messages critically and independently
Knowing that media outlets do not fully reflect reality
Checking verification platforms such as, Teyit.org
Obtaining versatile information in order to associate the news created by media and politics and capital structures.
Checking whether the URL is fake or not
React positively and negatively to the messages in mass media.
Behaving consciously about protecting themselves from the negativities of publications
Noticing hidden advertising in mass media

Table 3: Features of a good new media literate

Seeing Table 3, which categorizes the answers to the question "What behaviors do you think a good new media literate should exhibit ", it has been seen that the students have responded showing they are highly proficient in the behaviors that a media literate person should have. The responses such as, getting to know the media industry, analyzing messages critically and independently, checking verification platforms such as, Teyit.org, obtaining versatile information on the messages, checking the accuracy of the message react positively and negatively to the messages in mass media, behaving consciously about protecting themselves from the negativities of publications show that they are knowledgeable enough certain behavioral patterns a media literate person must have.

5. Conclusion

While we expect the media literacy level of societies to be high in our age, it would be appropriate to expect this from the society's most educated university students and especially communication faculty students. New media literacy has led to significant social and cultural changes both in society and among young people. The concept of media literacy has a great impact on the development and peace of the societies and therefore, studies should be increasing more day by day. Students studying media at universities constitute the focus of this study aiming to examine the awareness levels of young people receiving media education at the beginning of Turkey's new century about new media literacy. The widespread use of media through different tools and channels, the acceleration of information flow, the increase in global connections and their intense and rapid effects on societies require the training of conscious media literate individuals. It is important to emphasize that media literacy knowledge of the new generation receiving media education must be a priority.

Recent studies indicate that communication students generally perceive new media literacy positively. This favorable perception is crucial, as it reflects an awareness of the role of digital media in modern communication and suggests a readiness to engage with media content critically and responsibly. For instance, a 2025 study by Cho et al. emphasizes that media literacy involves not only technical skills but also the ability to assess the purpose, credibility, and ethical dimensions of media messages. Integrating new media literacy into the communication curriculum could thus enhance students' ability to navigate complex digital environments and participate more actively in the media landscape (Cho et al., 2025).

Media literacy education also means critical thinking and questioning skills. Media literacy means being aware that some mass media organizations that produce media messages do not deal with the truth objectively, but reshape it for their purposes, and being able to protect themselves against disinformation and manipulation. From this point of, this study concludes that communication faculty students who got such a training are well aware of how to evaluate media accurately.

When evaluating the responses given to the questions about the students' awareness on the concept of media literacy, their perceptions on how well educated they are in terms of media literacy and their evaluations related to the trainings they have got throughout their education related to media literacy, it has been concluded that the students are well aware of the concept of media literacy and satisfied with the training on the concept. The responses show that communication faculty students are aware of the important points of media literacy and are at a satisfactory level regarding their proficiency in the subject due to the education they receive. The participant, who stated that it could have been better, expressed his need for content production practice rather than theoretical knowledge.

The responses to the question "How can disinformation be distinguished in new media?" reveal that the students have certain competencies on media literacy. The responses such as, confirmation of the message from other sources, checking the reliability of the source and visuals, being careful about the date of the message, seeing the hidden advertising in mass media, knowing the influence of sponsors on the broadcasting and being aware of biased reporting because of political, economic, cultural and social priorities and the need for legal and ethical regarding publications in mass media regulations and having knowledge on protective media pedagogy show that the training they get is as it is required.

The skills such as, getting to know the media industry, analyzing messages critically and independently, checking verification platforms such as, Teyit.org, obtaining versatile information on the messages, checking the accuracy of the message react positively and negatively to the messages in mass media, behaving consciously about protecting themselves from the negativities of publications have all been elicited from the students, which show that they are knowledgeable enough on certain behavioral patterns a media literate person must have. The data show that the students have a high level of proficiency on media literacy. As some responses suggest the curriculum of their training might cover some practical drills.

The research has been conducted among only communication faculty students and limited number of participants have been interviewed. It could be suggested to conduct expanded research including participants from all the universities in the country

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