

## Preservice Elementary Teachers' Entertainment-oriented Media Literacy and Critical Literacy Skills for Internet\*

### Öğretmen Adaylarının Eğlence Odaklı Medya Okuryazarlığı ve İnternet İçin Eleştirel Okuryazarlık Becerileri

Demet SEBAN\*\* 

Betül ARIKAN\*\*\* 

Aziz ASLAN\*\*\*\* 

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**ABSTRACT:** This survey study explores the relationship between entertainment-oriented media literacy and critical literacy skills for internet among 355 preservice elementary teachers, using the Entertainment-Oriented Media Literacy Scale and the Critical Literacy Scale for Internet. Findings indicate high levels of both literacy types, with a weak positive correlation between them. Female students demonstrated higher entertainment-oriented media literacy, while critical literacy skills showed no gender difference. Fourth-year students and those with media literacy course experience exhibited enhanced skills in both areas. Students producing content and those using the internet for education and shopping displayed higher entertainment-oriented media literacy. Additionally, students who used the internet for news and information had higher critical literacy. Frequent entertainment media users also exhibited stronger media literacy skills. Results suggest that media literacy courses contribute to improved critical evaluation of media content, though room for growth remains. The study highlights the significance of media literacy education in teacher preparation programs and recommends targeted interventions to further develop critical literacy skills related to media and Internet use among future educators.

**Keywords:** Critical literacy, entertainment, internet, media literacy, preservice teachers.

**ÖZ:** Bu ilişkisel tarama çalışması, 355 sınıf öğretmeni adayının eğlence odaklı medya okuryazarlığı ile internet için eleştirel okuryazarlık becerileri arasındaki ilişkiyi Eğlence Amacına Duyarlı Medya Okuryazarlığı Ölçeği ve İnternet İçin Eleştirel Okuryazarlık Ölçeği kullanarak incelemektedir. Bulgular, her iki okuryazarlık türünün de yüksek düzeyde olduğunu ve aralarında zayıf bir pozitif korelasyon bulunduğunu göstermektedir. Kadın öğrenciler yüksek düzeyde eğlence odaklı medya okuryazarlığı becerisi gösterirken, eleştirel okuryazarlık becerilerinde cinsiyet farkı görülmemiştir. Dördüncü sınıf öğrencileri ve medya okuryazarlığı dersi alanlar her iki alanda da gelişmiş beceriler sergilemiştir. İçerik üreten ve interneti eğitim ve alışveriş için kullanan öğrenciler daha yüksek eğlence odaklı medya okuryazarlığı göstermiştir. Ayrıca, haber ve bilgi için internet kullanan öğrencilerin eleştirel okuryazarlığı daha yüksektir. Medyayı eğlenceye yönelik daha sık kullananlar ise yüksek medya okuryazarlığı becerilerine sahiptir. Sonuçlar, medya okuryazarlığı derslerinin medya içeriğinin eleştirel değerlendirilmesine katkıda bulunduğunu, ancak gelişim için hala alan olduğunu göstermektedir. Çalışma, öğretmen yetiştirme programlarında medya okuryazarlığı eğitiminin önemini vurgulamakta ve geleceğin eğitimcilerin internet kullanımıyla ilgili eleştirel okuryazarlık becerilerini daha da geliştirecek müdahaleler önermektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Eleştirel okuryazarlık, eğlence, internet, medya okuryazarlığı, sınıf öğretmen adayı.

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\*\* Corresponding Author: Assoc. Prof. Dr., Akdeniz University, Antalya, Türkiye, [dseban@akdeniz.edu.tr](mailto:dseban@akdeniz.edu.tr), <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9319-0530>

\*\*\* Teacher, Akkonak Cumhuriyet Şehit Uğur Gencelli Elementary School, Afyonkarahisar, Türkiye, [betul.arikan.90@hotmail.com](mailto:betul.arikan.90@hotmail.com), <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-7028-6873>

\*\*\*\* Prof. Dr., Akdeniz University, Antalya, Türkiye, [aslan@akdeniz.edu.tr](mailto:aslan@akdeniz.edu.tr), <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7903-2886>

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Media literacy encompasses a diverse range of meanings (Potter, 2022), but its most common usage refers to an individual's skills, knowledge structures, and personal capacity to construct broader frameworks for understanding media. Potter (2019) defines media literacy as a set of perspectives that we actively employ to engage with mass media and interpret the meanings of the messages we encounter. Critical literacy, on the other hand, involves the ability to analyze, critique, and question attitudes, beliefs, and ideologies present in written texts, media, and other forms of communication. It goes beyond accepting information at face value, encouraging individuals to examine the underlying assumptions, biases, and power structures in various texts and messages (Luke, 2012; Janks, 2018). Potur (2014) emphasizes that critical literacy also aims to develop individuals' skills in questioning media content and responding actively. In the current information age, these critical literacy skills have become increasingly important for the conscious and effective use of electronic media (Burnett & Merchant, 2019).

The rapid development and proliferation of digital technologies have significantly increased individuals' interaction with media, particularly in the realm of entertainment. Digital media usage for entertainment purposes has become a widespread phenomenon, especially among younger generations (Jordan, 2017). Digital entertainment tools such as social media platforms, video sharing sites, and video games over the internet have become a fundamental part of everyday routines, necessitating a new set of skills to navigate this digital landscape effectively (Jenkins et al., 2016).

With the advancement of technology, the appropriate use of evolving communication tools and how users process the content provided by the internet or media have recently become important issues (Arğın, 2021; Buckingham, 2015). This situation highlights the importance of media literacy and critical literacy skills, particularly in the field of education, increasing its significance for preservice teachers to develop these skills. These individuals, who will guide their students in the future, must understand and manage the benefits and risks brought by the digital age (Ata & Yıldırım, 2016; Redmond, 2015).

Despite the growing importance of media literacy and critical literacy skills in today's technology-driven world, there is a lack of in-depth research exploring the relationship between entertainment-oriented media literacy and critical literacy skills for internet among preservice teachers. This study aims to address this gap by investigating these skills in preservice elementary teachers and exploring various demographic factors that may influence them. By doing so, this research contributes to our understanding of how future educators are prepared to navigate and teach in an increasingly digital world.

### **Entertainment-Oriented Internet Use and Media Literacy**

In the digital era, media plays a pivotal role in several aspects of human life, from socialization and information consumption to education and entertainment. The concept of new media encompasses all electronic devices capable of connecting to virtual environments, such as tablets, smartphones, smartwatches, and computers. The internet serves as the foundation for new media, with its visual and auditory platforms and applications analogous to countries and cities in the physical world, creating a parallel universe often referred to as the virtual realm (Aslan & Tuncer-Basel, 2017).

Social media has surfaced as a key concept in internet-based interaction, allowing users to create profiles, share content, and interact in virtual environments. The purposes of social media usage vary widely, including gaming, commenting, travel planning, product tracking, sharing experiences, and communication (Erol & Hassan, 2014; Hazar, 2011). While earlier studies (Boyd & Ellison, 2007) laid the groundwork for understanding social media, more recent research has highlighted its evolving nature and impact on society (Keles et al., 2020; Polanco-Levican & Salvo-Garrido, 2022).

Generational differences in internet usage are notable, with Y and Z generations using the internet more for social media and entertainment, while the X generation focuses on news and communication (Özdemir, 2021). In Turkey, digital age students mainly use the internet for communication and entertainment, followed by activities such as reading news, chatting, gaming, and watching movies (Yılmaz, 2012). This trend is not unique to Turkey; similar patterns have been observed globally, with younger generations showing a greater propensity for entertainment-oriented internet use (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Scolari and colleagues (2020) emphasize the significance of grasping how younger generations interact with media in non-academic settings and the processes through which they acquire these skills.

The COVID-19 has significantly accelerated the entertainment-oriented use of e-media. Due to increased time spent at home and social isolation, people have turned to digital platforms, resulting in a rise in subscriptions to film and series platforms, increased interest in digital games, and the popularity of digital activities such as online concerts, virtual museum tours, live broadcasts, and social media events (Küçükvardar & Türel, 2022). This shift has enabled individuals to use digital media more frequently and in various ways to meet their entertainment needs, highlighting the importance of entertainment-oriented media literacy. The idea of "entertainment-oriented media literacy skills" emerges as a crucial area for further exploration (Hobbs & Jensen, 2009) and participating consumption and the rapid development of new media culture needs rapid attention (Wang et al., 2019).

Entertainment-oriented media literacy, though rooted in general media literacy principles, specifically emphasizes the skills required to navigate, analyze, and critically engage with entertainment content in digital media. It encompasses the ability to discern quality content, understand the implications of excessive media consumption, and recognize potential biases or manipulations in entertainment media (Jeong et al., 2012). Effectively utilizing new media necessitates media literacy, which enables individuals to be knowledgeable about online risks while benefiting from online opportunities. While entertainment-oriented internet use offers numerous benefits, it also presents challenges. Excessive use can lead to addiction, social isolation, and exposure to misinformation (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). Therefore, developing critical media literacy skills is crucial for navigating these potential pitfalls and maximizing the positive aspects of digital entertainment.

Assessing media critically, a prominent dimension in media literacy approaches, is particularly relevant in the context of entertainment-oriented internet use. Potter (2019) emphasizes that media literacy is built on useful information structures, and individuals need skills such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis to make informed choices about media consumption. Kurt and Kürüm (2010) argue that critical

engagement with media requires analytical skills such as data analysis, problem-solving, questioning, and critical thinking.

The "critical" dimension of media literacy refers to critical thinking, which involves analyzing and evaluating knowledge claims to form informed judgments (Hitchcock, 2022). Teaching critical media literacy based on critical pedagogy refers to social justice education to challenge power relationships and existing social inequities (Buckingham, 2003; De Abreu, 2019; Hobbs, 2010; Kellner & Share, 2019). Entertainment-oriented media literacy is likely to become increasingly important as virtual and augmented reality technologies advance, blurring the lines between digital and physical experiences. This evolution requires new skills and critical approaches to media consumption.

### **Critical Literacy: Media Engagement as a Form of Power**

The integration of media education and critical literacy education has become increasingly important, particularly in the context of 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills and entertainment-oriented media consumption (Valle et al., 2024). In addition to media consumption, youth are the drivers of innovation through media production as engaging in social change and redesigning the social world (Currie & Kelly, 2021). While modern media devices contribute to media literacy, it's crucial to recognize that media as "a venue for the operation of power" (& Kelly, 2021, p.406) and can be manipulated by power centers to influence people (Potur, 2014). Education plays a vital role in teaching healthy media consumption, especially in the scope of entertainment. Therefore, media literacy education should be provided in conjunction with critical literacy education (Semerci & Semerci, 2017).

Critical literacy, inspired by Paulo Freire's work, is an approach that allows individuals to understand the world and participate in thought processes. This concept aims to increase awareness and empower groups subjected to social and political discrimination. In the context of media, besides technology that enables communication there are messages embedded in that communication, so literacy takes the attention to the forms of communication as well as the various forms of media texts (Jenkins, 2006). Critical literacy skills enable individuals to question texts and content of various artifacts and distinguish between reality and fiction, fake and real, and the social impacts of the media (Hammer & Kellner, 2009; Syam & Nurrahmi, 2020). It also allows the reader and the user to question media, audiences, information and power from the perspective of sociopolitical issues, gender and class (Kellner & Share, 2019; Mihailidis, 2020).

As text media representations and their delivery technologies are never neutral and have their own purposes reflect histories, social dynamics, and cultural perspectives, while also holding power (Mason et al., 2018). Kellner and Kim (2010) contend that without a well-defined educational approach, user-generated technology risks becoming nothing more than a luxury item for the wealthy or a tool solely for personal enjoyment and self-expression. Transforming individuals from passive media consumers to active users is crucial when engaging with entertainment media, which often carries implicit messages about social norms, values, and power structures.

For preservice teachers, developing critical literacy skills within the realm of entertainment media is particularly important because they will guide future generations

in navigating the complex media landscape (Share et al., 2023). Critical literacy skills of preservice teachers affect their media literacy levels (Semerci & Semerci, 2017).

Adopting a critical approach to media literacy can help practitioners and researchers gain a deeper understanding of whether preservice teachers are more inclined to incorporate critical media explorations into their curriculum and teaching practices. This understanding helps them consider how to address these issues responsibly while teaching (Marlatt, 2020). Furthermore, preservice teachers can evaluate the credibility, reliability, and potential biases of entertainment media messages, supporting their ability to make informed choices when integrating media into the classroom.

In conclusion, while significant strides have been made in understanding critical literacy and its relationship to media education, there is a need for more focused research on how these concepts apply specifically to entertainment-oriented media literacy, especially in the context of teacher education.

### **Method**

This study employed a quantitative research method to assess the critical literacy skills of preservice elementary school teachers in their use of digital media for entertainment purposes. Quantitative methods facilitate the systematic investigation of existing situations and events through the collection of numerical data via surveys and similar inventories, followed by analysis using statistical techniques (Ocak, 2019).

The research design was founded on a relational survey model, which aims to evaluate and measure the degree of association between two or more variables of interest, and this approach is particularly suitable for examining relationships and correlations among variables without manipulating the research environment (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

### **Population and Sample**

The study population comprised preservice elementary school teachers studying at universities. A convenience sampling method was chosen for its practicality and efficiency in accelerating the data collection process, providing time and financial advantages (Baltacı, 2018). The sample consisted of 355 preservice elementary school teachers who volunteered to participate, representing the population in both quality and quantity, and aligning with the number of items in the survey used during the study.

Data from preservice elementary school teachers at three universities were analyzed and classified by gender, grade level, completion of a media literacy course, and university affiliation. 347 preservice teachers participated in the research, with 67% female (n=232) and 33% male (n=115) participants. Data from eight candidates were excluded due to incomplete coding or extreme values, resulting in the final analysis of data from 347 preservice elementary school teachers.

According to the research results, 34.3% of the students were in their 4th year (n=119), 29.7% in their 3rd year (n=103), 25.9% in their 2nd year (n=90), and 10.1% in their 1st year (n=35). The study aimed to reach an equal number of preservice elementary teachers who had and had not taken a media literacy course. However, it



was found that 68.3% of the students had not enrolled in a media literacy course (n=237), while 31.7% had completed the course (n=110).

### **Data Collection Process**

The data were collected using an instrument comprising three main sections: demographic information of preservice elementary school teachers, the Entertainment-Oriented Media Literacy Scale (EOMLS) developed by Ulu-Aslan and Baş (2022), and the Critical Literacy Scale for Internet (CLSI) developed by Dal and Aktay (2015).

Ulu-Aslan and Baş (2022) developed a new 24-item scale due to the lack of existing media literacy measurement tools specifically designed to assess entertainment purposes and their unsuitability for the target audience. The scale was constructed using a five-point Likert structure. The Cronbach's Alpha value for the total items of the scale was 0.940, indicating a high level of data reliability. As noted by Seğer (2015), a value of 0.70 or above suggests that the scale possesses internal consistency. After verifying the data's suitability for factor analysis, item eigenvalue statistics, scree plot, and the percentage of factor components in total variance were examined to determine the appropriate number of factors.

The CLSI, developed by Dal and Aktay (2015), has been utilized in several studies to assess students' critical thinking abilities. A literature review was initially conducted on the topics of the internet, critical literacy, and the application of critical literacy in the context of the internet. Subsequently, a general framework was established, and expert opinions were sought. A pool of 33 items was created, rated on a five-point Likert scale to evaluate the frequency of specific tendencies and behaviors. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were performed to assess the validity and reliability of the scale. The exploratory factor analysis showed that the scale comprised 27 items and a single factor. The Cronbach's Alpha, which measures the scale's internal consistency, was calculated to be 0.95. The confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated that the goodness-of-fit indices were within an acceptable range.

### **Data Analysis**

The findings were analyzed using SPSS 25.0 software. Frequency and percentage analyses were conducted to determine the distribution of students according to their demographic characteristics, while the student levels related to the scales used were determined using means and standard deviations. Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis was conducted to evaluate the reliability of the scales, and the results showed that all measurement tools had reliability scores above 0.70.

Hypotheses and sub-problems established in accordance with the research aim were statistically tested at a 95% confidence level ( $p < 0.05$ ). Pearson correlation analysis was performed to explore the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, as it is appropriate for normally distributed, continuous data. Additionally, independent samples t-test was applied to determine the difference between binary groups according to the measurements, while one-way ANOVA was used for groups with more than two categories.

According to the results of the normal distribution analysis, it was determined that the data obtained had a normal distribution due to the proximity between the mean and median of the examined central tendency measurements, and the kurtosis and

skewness being between  $\pm 2$  (George & Mallery, 2021). Furthermore, given that the number of participants in the study was sufficient ( $n \geq 30$ ), parametric methods, which are statistically more robust, were employed with the assurance provided by the central limit theorem (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012).

### Ethical Approval

This research has Akdeniz University Social Sciences and Humanities Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee approval with a date 09.06.2023 and number 662919.

### Results

This section presents the results regarding preservice teachers' levels of critical literacy for the internet and entertainment-oriented media literacy (Table 1), as well as the relationship between these variables (Table 2).

Table 1

*Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of Preservice Teachers' Media Literacy and Critical Literacy Levels*

Variable	Mean	SD
Critical Literacy for Internet	3,64	0,54
Entertainment-Oriented Media Literacy	3,94	0,42

Students' critical literacy level averaged  $3.64 \pm 0.54$ , corresponding to a 'high' level on the 5-point Likert scale. The highest means were observed for the items "I pay attention to whether the information on websites is up-to-date" ( $M=4.07$ ) and "I pay attention to whether the opinions on websites conflict with my own views" ( $M=4.07$ ). The lowest mean was for the item "I share content on social networks to facilitate societal transformation" ( $M=3.12$ ). Students' entertainment-oriented media literacy level was high, with an average of  $3.94 \pm 0.42$ . The highest means were found for the items "I question the accuracy of information in media content" ( $M=4.20$ ) and "I follow different types of media tools suitable for my purpose" ( $M=4.20$ ). The lowest mean was for the item "I question who creates entertainment-oriented media messages" ( $M=3.64$ ).

A positive, low-level significant correlation ( $r=0.370$ ;  $p=0.001 < 0.05$ ) was found between students' critical literacy levels for the internet and their entertainment-sensitive media literacy levels (Table 2).

Table 2

*Correlation Analysis between Critical Literacy for Internet and Entertainment-Oriented Media Literacy*

Variables		Critical Literacy for Internet	Entertainment-Oriented Media Literacy
Critical Literacy for Internet	r	1	
	p		
Entertainment-Sensitive Media Literacy	r	0.370	1
	p	0.001*	

\*p&lt;0.05

This finding suggests that as students' critical literacy levels for the internet increase, their entertainment-oriented media literacy levels may also increase slightly.

**Demographic Factors Affecting Entertainment-Oriented Media Literacy**

The study found that preservice teachers' entertainment-oriented media literacy levels differed according to gender, grade level, and whether they had taken a media literacy course (Table 3).

Table 3

*Differences in Entertainment-Oriented Media Literacy Levels Based on Gender, Grade Level, and Media Literacy Course Status*

Demographic	Groups	Entertainment-oriented Literacy		Media	p	Scheff e
		Mean	SD	F/t		
Gender	Female	3.98	0.38	2.648	0.009 *	4>2
	Male	3.85	0.47			
Grade	1 <sup>st</sup> year	3.97	0.28	3.374	0.019 *	
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	3.83	0.47			
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	3.93	0.40			
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	4.01	0.42			
Media literacy course status	Not taken	3.90	0.41	-2.082	0.038 *	
	Taken	4.00	0.42			

\*p&lt;0.0

Students' entertainment-oriented media literacy levels showed significant differences based on gender ( $p=0.009<0.05$ ). Females demonstrated higher levels of entertainment-oriented media literacy compared to males. Students' entertainment-oriented media literacy levels also differed significantly based on their grade level ( $p=0.019<0.05$ ). Fourth-year students' levels ( $M=4.01$ ) were higher than those of



second-year students ( $M=3.83$ ). Students who completed a media literacy course showed significantly higher entertainment-oriented media literacy levels ( $M=4.00$ ) compared to those who had not taken the course ( $M=3.90$ ) ( $p=0.038<0.05$ ).

### Demographic Factors Affecting Critical Literacy for the Internet

The study revealed that preservice teachers' critical literacy levels for the internet did not differ by gender but showed differences based on grade level and whether they had taken a media literacy course (Table 4).

Table 4

*Differences in Critical Literacy Levels for Internet Based on Gender, Grade Level, and Media Literacy Course Status*

Demographic	Groups	Critical Literacy for Internet		F/t	p	Scheffe
		Mean	SD			
Gender	Female	3.64	0.53	-0.111	0.911	
	Male	3.65	0.57			
Grade	1 <sup>st</sup> year	3.38	0.63	6.657	0.001*	4>1-2
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	3.54	0.51			
	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	3.66	0.54			
	4 <sup>th</sup> year	3.78	0.49			
Media literacy course status	Not taken	3.59	0.55	-2.740	0.006*	
	Taken	3.76	0.51			

\* $p<0.05$

No significant difference was found between students' critical literacy levels for the internet and their gender ( $p=0.911>0.05$ ). Significant differences were found between students' grade levels and their critical literacy levels for the internet ( $p=0.001<0.05$ ). Fourth-year students' levels ( $M=3.78$ ) were significantly higher than those of first-year ( $M=3.38$ ) and second-year ( $M=3.54$ ) students. Students who had taken a media literacy course demonstrated significantly higher critical literacy levels ( $M=3.76$ ) compared to those who had not taken the course ( $M=3.59$ ) ( $p=0.006<0.05$ ).

### Other Factors Affecting Entertainment-Oriented Media Literacy and Critical Literacy Levels for the Internet

The study also examined whether preservice teachers' entertainment-oriented media literacy levels and critical literacy levels for the internet differed according to their social media usage patterns, applications used, and content production status and type.

#### *Differences Based on Social Media Usage Patterns*

Preservice teachers who used the internet for shopping ( $p=0.006<0.05$ ) and educational purposes ( $p=0.008<0.05$ ) showed significantly higher entertainment-oriented media literacy levels compared to those who did not. Students' entertainment-oriented media literacy levels did not show significant differences based on using the

internet and social media for entertainment, news, and information gathering purposes (Table 5).

Table 5

*Comparison of Entertainment-Oriented Media Literacy Levels by Social Media Usage Patterns*

Social Media Usage Patterns	Groups	Entertainment-Oriented Media Literacy		F/t	p
		Mean	SD		
Time spent on social media	2 hours or less	3.91	0.45	0.469	0.626
	3-4 hours	3.94	0.39		
	4 hours or more	3.96	0.43		
Using internet for entertainment	No	3.84	0.38	-1.300	0.195
	Yes	3.94	0.42		
Using internet for news	No	3.85	0.37	-1.749	0.081
	Yes	3.95	0.42		
Using internet for information	No	3.87	0.39	-1.437	0.152
	Yes	3.95	0.42		
Using internet for shopping	No	3.82	0.45	-2.779	0.006*
	Yes	3.97	0.40		
Using internet for education	No	3.84	0.44	-2.681	0.008*
	Yes	3.97	0.41		

\*p<0.05

Students who used the internet for news ( $p=0.027<0.05$ ) and information gathering ( $p=0.001<0.05$ ) purposes showed significantly higher critical literacy levels compared to those who did not. No significant differences were found in other measured categories (Table 6).

Table 6

*Comparison of Critical Literacy Levels by Social Media Usage Patterns*

Social Media Usage Patterns	Groups	Critical Literacy for Internet		F/t	p
		Mean	SD		
Time spent on social media	2 hours or less	3.70	0.48	1.625	0.198
	3-4 hours	3.65	0.53		
	4 hours or more	3.56	0.62		
Using internet for entertainment	No	3.72	0.48	0.883	0.378
	Yes	3.63	0.55		
Using internet for news	No	3.50	0.56	-2.228	0.027*
	Yes	3.67	0.53		

Using internet for information	No	3.44	0.59	-3.338	0.001*
	Yes	3.69	0.52		
Using internet for shopping	No	3.58	0.55	-1.145	0.253
	Yes	3.66	0.54		
Using internet for education	No	3.59	0.61	-1.038	0.300
	Yes	3.66	0.51		

\*p<0.05

### *Differences Based on Applications Used*

Tables 7 and 8 present the analysis results for the question: "Do preservice teachers' entertainment-oriented media literacy levels and critical literacy levels for the internet differ according to the applications they use?" Students who did not use other applications showed higher entertainment-oriented media literacy levels compared to those who did ( $p=0.038<0.05$ ).

Table 7

### *Comparison of Entertainment-oriented Media Literacy Levels by Applications Used*

Applications Used	Groups	Entertainment-oriented Media Literacy		t	p
		Mean	SD		
Instagram	Don't use	3.80	0.53	-1.437	0.161
	Use	3.95	0.41		
Tiktok	Don't use	3.95	0.40	1.499	0.135
	Use	3.87	0.48		
Twitch	Don't use	3.93	0.42	-0.399	0.690
	Use	3.96	0.43		
Twitter	Don't use	3.93	0.42	-0.249	0.803
	Use	3.94	0.41		
YouTube	Don't use	3.85	0.42	-1.264	0.207
	Use	3.94	0.42		
Spotify	Don't use	3.92	0.41	-0.455	0.649
	Use	3.94	0.43		
TV/movie platforms	Don't use	3.89	0.41	-1.500	0.135
	Use	3.96	0.42		
Others	Don't use	3.95	0.40	2.079	0.038*
	Use	3.76	0.62		

\*p<0.05

According to comparison of used applications and critical literacy levels (Table 8), the students who did not use TikTok showed significantly higher critical literacy levels ( $M=3.69$ ) compared to those who used it ( $M=3.47$ ) ( $p=0.003<0.05$ ). Students

who did not use Spotify demonstrated significantly higher critical literacy levels ( $M=3.74$ ) compared to those who used it ( $M=3.57$ ) ( $p=0.003<0.05$ ).

Table 8

*Comparison of Critical Literacy Levels by Applications Used*

Applications Used	Groups	Critical Literacy for Internet		t	p
		Mean	SD		
Instagram	Don't use	3.65	0.49	0.046	0.963
	Use	3.64	0.54		
Tiktok	Don't use	3.69	0.54	2.947	0.003*
	Use	3.47	0.51		
Twitch	Don't use	3.64	0.55	-0.786	0.433
	Use	3.71	0.45		
Twitter	Don't use	3.65	0.54	0.401	0.689
	Use	3.63	0.54		
YouTube	Don't use	3.55	0.54	-1.039	0.299
	Use	3.65	0.54		
Spotify	Don't use	3.74	0.52	2.970	0.003*
	Use	3.57	0.54		
TV/movie platforms	Don't use	3.68	0.52	0.937	0.350
	Use	3.62	0.55		
Others	Don't use	3.65	0.54	0.345	0.730
	Use	3.61	0.48		

\* $p<0.05$

### ***Differences Based on Content Production Characteristics***

Table 9 presents the analysis results for the research question: "Do preservice teachers' entertainment-oriented media literacy levels and critical literacy levels for the internet differ according to the characteristics of the content they produce?"

Table 9

*Comparison of Entertainment-oriented Media Literacy and Critical Literacy Levels by Content Production Characteristics*

The Surveys	Variables	Groups	Mean	SD	t	p
Entertainment-oriented Media Literacy	Content production	No	3.90	0.41	-2.956	0.003*
		Yes	4.07	0.43		
	Content type	Video	4.06	0.42	-0.229	0.820
		Other	4.09	0.45		
Critical Literacy for Internet	Content production	No	3.62	0.54	-1.707	0.089
		Yes	3.75	0.52		
	Content type	Video	3.81	0.52	1.097	0.277
		Other	3.66	0.50		

\*p<0.05

Students who produce content demonstrated significantly higher entertainment-oriented media literacy levels (M=4.07) compared to those who do not produce content (M=3.90) ( $p=0.003<0.05$ ). No significant difference was found in critical literacy levels based on content production status ( $p=0.089>0.05$ ).

These findings indicate that preservice teachers' media and critical literacy skills vary according to various factors such as grade level, whether they have taken a media literacy course, and their internet usage habits.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

In today's world, the use of internet-connected media and social networks for entertainment purposes has seen a significant rise (Erdem, 2010). The proliferation of digital content has expanded the importance and scope of critical literacy skills (Küslü, 2022). This study reveals that preservice teachers spend an average of 3-4 hours daily on social media. According to Abbott (2013), the typical social media user dedicates approximately two hours daily to various online activities, including sharing images and messages, updating personal status, posting tweets, liking content, and commenting on the wide array of information shared across social platforms. Similar research shows that university students primarily use social media for relaxation, obtaining information, socializing, staying updated with news, and communication (Güney, 2018; Bedir, 2016). These findings indicate that social interactions among young people have largely shifted to digital platforms, underscoring the need for comprehensive research on digital media usage.

The results of this study demonstrate that preservice elementary school teachers have high levels of critical internet literacy and entertainment-focused media literacy. A positive and statistically significant relationship was observed between critical internet literacy and entertainment-oriented media literacy. This suggests that as students' critical literacy skills for the internet develop their levels of media literacy may also increase. However, the extent of this increase remains limited, as similar findings in literature suggest. For example, Karaman and Karataş (2009) and İnan (2010) found that while preservice teachers possess high media literacy skills, their highest competencies lie in "Being Informed," with the lowest scores in "Analytical Ability and Response Generation." Most preservice teachers do not engage in media production, indicating that their analytical and participatory skills in media are insufficient. Overall, findings of Gutiérrez-Ángel and colleagues (2022) review research indicate that university students possess digital literacy and utilize both the Internet and digital media effectively. Students demonstrated intermediate to advanced proficiency in communication and collaboration skills, adeptly using various chat platforms and communication apps. However, their abilities in producing and sharing multimedia content, were at a lower intermediate level. This area represents a key competency for future development among this demographic. It's worth noting that skill levels varied based on factors such as gender, age, and field of study. There is a clear need to implement comprehensive digital literacy programs for preservice teachers. Such training should be explicitly incorporated into their formal educational curricula. Fostering analytical and responsive skills can be supported through studies focused on critical literacy.

Media literacy encompasses the skills required to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media messages (Livingstone, 2004). This study shows that these skills are also effective in entertainment-oriented media use. Similarly, critical literacy is the ability to question, analyze, and evaluate information (Potter, 2022). In light of these findings, critical literacy education can be considered an effective strategy in strengthening students' media literacy skills. This supports the use of critical skills in entertainment-oriented internet use as well. However, further research is needed to determine the full extent of this effect.

### **Types of Literacy and Their Relationship with Other Variables**

The levels of critical literacy and entertainment-oriented media literacy were examined concerning different variables, including gender, grade level, completion of a media literacy course, type of content produced, and the purpose of social media use.

When the results are examined, firstly, a significant difference was found between the gender factor of preservice teachers and their entertainment-oriented media literacy levels, with women having higher levels compared to men. This situation is not valid for critical media literacy skills according to the research results. Findings related to the gender factor contradict different research results. In the studies of Uslu et al. (2016) and Güney (2018), it was found that male preservice teachers had higher levels of media literacy. On the other hand, Çepni et al. (2015), and Karasu and Arıkan (2016) found no significant relationship between media literacy and gender. The lack of a significant difference between critical literacy levels for the internet and genders is consistent with the studies of Çiftçi (2019) and Bircan (2022). These results indicate



that gender is not a determining factor in critical literacy levels. Gender roles and gender inequality are among the topics addressed in the content of critical literacy (Gürçan & Kargın, 2023). The lack of observed gender difference may be due to insufficient discussion of gender roles, as suggested by Vatandaş (2011). More data is needed to discuss the reasons for this situation.

Secondly, both literacy levels varied according to the students' grade levels and whether they had taken a media literacy course. The research found that as the grade level increased, the level of media literacy also increased. 4th-year students' levels are higher compared to 2nd-year students. This difference can be explained by the fact that courses in upper grades require more field expertise and encourage students to research (Tatar, 2016). However, there are also conflicting findings in the literature. For example, Uslu et al. (2016) and Çepni et al. (2015) found no significant relationship between grade level and media literacy level. These conflicting results indicate that grade-specific strategies need to be developed in media literacy education. A similar result was found between students' critical literacy levels for the internet and their grade levels. This difference can be explained by the teaching methods applied in the later years of university education (e.g., discussion groups, project-based learning, and research projects) developing students' critical thinking and analysis skills (Türkben & Satılmış, 2022). As Korkmaz (2009) stated, it can be said that the course contents received in teacher education contribute to students' critical thinking skills. These results emphasize the need for systematic development of critical literacy skills in higher education.

Thirdly, it was determined that students who took a media literacy course had higher levels of entertainment-oriented media literacy compared to those who did not (Atmaca, 2016; Kartal, 2007). Atmaca (2016) determined that preservice teachers who took a media literacy course were more conscious about media and expressed themselves more effectively. Kartal (2007) found that students who took this course evaluated media texts from a more critical perspective. Similarly, a significant relationship was found between taking a media literacy course and critical literacy levels for the internet. This result shows that the media literacy course develops students' skills in analyzing and interpreting media content more critically (Atmaca, 2016). These findings emphasize the importance of media literacy courses in teacher education programs and show that these courses can increase students' ability to question and analyze information, and that these skills are also effectively applied in entertainment-oriented media use.

Fourthly, the research results showed a significant relationship between students' content production and their entertainment-oriented media literacy levels. It was found that students who produce content have significantly higher levels of entertainment-focused media literacy compared to those who do not. However, no significant relationship was found between content production and critical literacy levels. This situation reflects the difference between Karaduman's (2019) view that content production is one of the media literacy skills and Potur's (2014) view that critical literacy skills focus more on questioning and actively responding to produced content. These results emphasize that content production and critical analysis dimensions should be addressed together with critical literacy skills in media literacy education and indicate that teacher education programs should be re-evaluated accordingly.

Fifthly, within the scope of the research, the relationship between social media usage purposes (entertainment, news, information, shopping, and education) and entertainment-oriented media literacy levels and critical media literacy levels for the internet was examined. The findings showed a significant relationship between students' entertainment-oriented media literacy levels and their use of the internet for educational purposes and online shopping. Moreover, a significant relationship was found between students' use of the internet for news and information purposes and their critical literacy levels. These results indicate that as the frequency of preservice teachers using the internet for education and shopping increases, their media literacy levels increase, and as the frequency of using it as a source of information and news increases, their critical literacy levels also increase.

In media literacy education, it is essential to examine the content and messages related to these contents in the media. Today's media diversity has led to the presentation of content and advertising messages to consumers from a variety of different platforms. The skills acquired in relation to media literacy may become more apparent in the use of the internet for educational and shopping purposes (Kırık, 2017; Kula & Güler, 2019).

The increase in critical literacy level with the increasing frequency of using it as a source of information and news may be due to the fact that literacy skills are more focused on analyzing text content. In the study of Türkben and Satılmış (2022), it was also revealed that preservice teachers who use the internet for information purposes have high levels of critical literacy skills.

Finally, in this study, it was found that students who use entertainment-oriented popular media tools have higher media literacy skills. However, students who do not use platforms such as TikTok and Spotify have higher levels of critical literacy. This situation can be associated with users thinking that they do not need critical literacy skills on platforms such as TikTok (a social media application that allows creating and sharing videos as well as live streaming) and Spotify (a digital music, podcast, and audio steaming service that allows users to access to a vast content from content producers worldwide). This can be explained by individuals resorting to media tools to meet their entertainment and stress reduction needs (Park, et al., 2009). In the research of Yetkiner and Öztürk (2020), it was also emphasized that TikTok is used for reasons such as meeting daily entertainment needs, interacting with different people, relieving stress, and expressing oneself.

Overall, the study results suggest that when media literacy and critical literacy skills are taught together effectively to preservice teachers, development in both areas is enhanced. Teachers who have acquired these skills will be able to provide opportunities for these skills for their own students in an age where virtual environment and especially entertainment-oriented content are rapidly increasing.

Teachers can impart this skill to students by evaluating digital media in terms of critical literacy in their lessons. By organizing seminars and workshops on social media, methods to evaluate content from a critical perspective can be taught. In addition, by providing information about the ways of spreading disinformation and methods of being careful against these misleading contents, students can be encouraged to produce critical content. Researching digital media content in terms of critical literacy can improve

preservice teachers' media literacy and critical thinking skills for entertainment-sensitive internet use.

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This study was derived from the master's thesis of Betül Arıkan. Demet Seban and Aziz Aslan contributed to the study design and supervision. Demet Seban, serving as a field expert, contributed to the original draft of the manuscript. Aziz Aslan, as the official thesis advisor, and Betül Arıkan, as the student, were responsible for reviewing and editing the final draft. Demet Seban: Conceptualization, Methodology, Supervision, Writing - Original Draft. Betül Arıkan: Data Collection, Formal Analysis, Writing - Review & Editing. Aziz Aslan: Project Administration, Resources, Supervision - Review & Editing.

### Conflicts of Interest

We declare that there are no competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper. This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or non-profit sectors.

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