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MEDIA LITERACY RESEARCH AND A SURVEY ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Media literacy has been a widespread research topic among scholars in communication since the 1990s. The concept generally refers to a critical analysis process. It is common to define this idea as accessing, analyzing, evaluating, and creating new messages "(Baran, 2004:50; Hobbs, 1998:16; Potter, 2005:22; Livingstone, 2004:4). Media Literacy is also defined as the ability to access, interpret, analyze, evaluate and transmit messages in a wide variety of formats such as television, video, cinema, advertising, and the Internet. In order to be able to recognize and receive relevant media messages and can be interpreted as active viewers, firstly education and then family structure, world view, economic situation, gender, age etc. are really important factors. In order to be aware of media literacy, critical media literacy trainings should be provided in all segments of society, especially children. Thus, society will be able to distinguish the line between the world shown by the media and the real world. Media literacy education includes cognitive processes used in critical thinking. Media workshops and curriculums emphasize moral values (defense, vaccination approach), distinctive response (critical audience), consumer revolution (Livingstone, 2004:3). Compared with European countries in Turkey's education received too late in the curriculum of Media Literacy course with following the correct media, analyzing the meaning of media messages is permeable to the mind and logic, is aimed to create an informed audience. Meaning is based on the media experiences (selective perception), the context in which they use the media (accommodation), and how and why they use the media (use and satisfaction). In this context, it is aimed to determine how Media Literacy is perceived by university students. In addition to this general purpose, raising awareness about media literacy is adopted as another goal.

Key Words: Media Literacy, New Media, Awareness

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, there are significant changes arising from the increasing use of communication technologies in the acquisition and processing of information. While rapid developments in information and communication technologies lead to the globalization of information, people's communication styles and communication environments are differentiating and the scope of mass media is expanding. In this context, the media is defined as a one-way mass communication medium that spreads various messages to the audience with different socio-demographic characteristics in accordance with their own broadcasting policy (Mora, 2008:12). Media concerns written (audio and video) and electronic media (radio, television, cinema and film), internet, hypermedia, computer, video, communication satellite, frequency distribution, books, slides, multivision, fax, tele-photo, radio-photo, lifax, telephone and so on. as well as mass media (Buckingham, 2003; Giddens, 2009; Bülbül, 2000; Levin, Arafah, Deniz and Gottesman, 2004).

In traditional meaning, the media, which has become a part of daily life, affects individuals in a different way by having various functions such as communicating with each other, being aware of the agenda, acquiring information and updating their information (Karaman&Karataş, 2009). Although the media seem to be the source of information and the center of polyphony today, under the intense information bombardment of the digital age, what is real and what is virtual is intertwined. In today's world, which is considered as the digital age, analyzing and evaluating the impact of media that is becoming more and more digitalized under the information boom should be considered as a fundamental objective in terms of communication sciences. Kellner (2010) defines the new form of culture created by the mass media as "media culture". According to him, media culture leads the economy, promotes advertising and luxury consumption, and helps the formation of consumer society. Kellner (2010:7) talks about media culture as "... media culture finds examples of high consumption ideals and individuals for everyday life and sells products to consumers, solutions to their problems, new technologies and models to emulate."

With the convergence of media and technology in the globalizing world, the way we perceive the world has changed and the change of many approaches, especially education and training, has begun. Now it is not enough to just watch, listen to or read a publication, but different analysis skills have begun to show itself. In today's world of visual culture, the ability to critically explain and understand the effective and powerful messages that media culture presents to them as an important skill to be possessed by children, young people and even adults is indispensable (Gündüz, 2019:30)

In short, The 21st century has created new requirements for the individual to sustain his social life, to decode this new form of culture, to express himself and to reach information. One of these requirements is media literacy.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF MEDIA LITERACY

In addition to changing concepts and technologies, the skills and competencies expected of individuals have changed in order to keep up with this development and make the best use of these developments. Furthermore, the channels and environments in which information is transmitted with technological developments are constantly renewed and information literacy as well as the ability to use these channels (TV, radio, newspaper, internet, etc.) in which information is transmitted effectively, to analyze, evaluate and transmit the messages in these channels. The concept of literacy has gained importance (Thoman ve Jolls, 2003; Kurt&Kürüm, 2010).

Media literacy is defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and transmit messages in written and unwritten, widely varying structures (internet, television, etc.) (İnceoğlu, 2005). Potter (1998) compared media literacy to the processing of raw materials; and describes it as "perspectives that we actively use to reflect ourselves when interpreting the meaning of the messages confronted" and that these perspectives consist of structured information and that the structuring of information means that raw information in the environment is processed with the skills we have. According to Bawden (2001), media literacy is the process that involves following, understanding and interpreting mass media such as television, radio, internet, newspapers and magazines. Gomez&Gomez(2007) defined media literacy as; being able to reach, analyze, evaluate and transmit messages in written and unwritten and wide variety of formats (television, video, cinema, advertisements, internet etc.). According to the definition of the European Information Society (2007), media literacy is the ability to access, analyze and evaluate everyday images, words and sounds, while providing easy communication across the media. The effects of the mass media, which individuals are constantly exposed to in their daily lives, on their decisions, behaviors and speeches have an important effect on their lives. On the other hand, individuals are often unaware of the impact of news, advertisements, messages on mass media preferences such as costumes, lifestyle, political views, and even when they behave as they see in the media, they feel happy when they talk and live. Thanks to media literacy, individuals can contribute to the conscious reading of the media, thus ensuring that individuals can express themselves freely and participate actively and constructively in social life; individuals have

the ability to perceive media messages correctly and to produce messages over time (Korkmaz & Yeşil, 2008).

Based on these definitions, it can be said that the aim of media literacy is to create a media awareness that will enable the individual to understand media messages correctly and to gain a critical perspective that analyzes media culture in this direction.

When this conceptual structure is examined, the characteristics of a media literate individual can be explained as follows:

- ✓ Uses the media consciously, effectively and for their own benefit.
- ✓ Look for alternative sources of information, evaluate the accuracy of information from different sources.
- ✓ Aware of the impact of media on beliefs, attitudes, behaviors and values of individuals and societies.
- ✓ He is aware that the media conveys ideas, information and news from another perspective.
- ✓ They are aware that media messages are formed at the end of a certain process of creation.
- ✓ Aware that media messages are produced in a variety of contexts such as economic, social, political, historical and aesthetic.
- ✓ He sees media as a source of understanding culture.
- ✓ Knows that media has its own language.
- ✓ He is critical of the media.
- ✓ Knows ethical and legal issues in accessing and using information.

The aim of media literacy is not only the acquisition of skills and abilities for the cognitive elimination of negative effects of the media, but the protection of living spaces determined by the media more and more strongly (Alver 2006: 23). Although media literacy is aimed primarily to perceive the media messages correctly and to use the received messages correctly and interpret them properly. Media literacy also has the aims: (<http://medyaoy.blogspot.com>).

1. To be able to receive media messages from a critical perspective
2. To be able to distinguish between reality and fiction in the media
3. Identify how people should be trained in the skills necessary to process media messages
4. To enable students to use the media as a tool to strengthen their ability to reach, analyze, evaluate and communicate.
5. Understanding that the world presented by the media may not be the truth itself
6. To contribute to raising awareness of individuals in terms of moving public and private broadcasting to more positive points
7. To be able to realize that the media has routing and managing functions
8. Evaluating that message senders may try to impose their own thoughts
9. Ensuring public awareness or awareness of information and news provided by mass media
10. Emphasizing the importance of media literacy in educational, cultural, political, social and economic programs
11. Ensuring that every citizen has the maximum knowledge and skills on media use in both formal and informal education
12. Learning the structure and functioning of the media
13. Conscious evaluation of content
14. Encourage democracy, citizenship and political participation
15. Identify and eliminate racial, class and gender discrimination in media products (articles, films, news, etc.)
16. Preventing drug use and violence, especially among young people and children.

It is necessary to be a good media literate in order to reach all these objectives and to filter and interpret the media messages under its influence and to evaluate them critically. In this context, it can be said that education comes to the forefront to raise awareness of individuals about media literacy.

Çetinkaya (2008) emphasizes that education constitutes one pillar of media literacy and that for this reason, media and education should be handled as a whole. Media literacy education has started in many educational institutions due to the fact that media literacy has become an important one and especially individuals have been informed about media literacy since the beginning of their education.

According to the research of RTÜK ; “In all developed countries of the world, media education or media literacy courses are taught in schools at various levels. These courses either take their place directly in the curricula (England, France, USA, etc.) or are taught in the related courses (arts, grammar, literature, citizenship, etc.) as in Canada.”

Media literacy is expressed as the educational approach of the 21st century (Thoman and Jolls, 2003). In particular, children who are vulnerable to visual, auditory and written media should be made aware of the media, starting from primary education. It is explained that instead of being a passive buyer in the face of the media, reaching the level of consciousness that can read the media and solve the language of the media will be an active individual in the communication phenomenon (RTUK:2008). In our country, media literacy courses have been started to be given as elective courses in selected schools in 5 province in Adana, Ankara, Erzurum, Istanbul and Izmir in 2006-2007 academic year with the cooperation of Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) and the Ministry of National Education in order to raise awareness of children and young people against the negative effects of mass media. In this course, students are informed about the functions of mass media, aims, importance, meaning of media literacy, types of television broadcasting and program types, effects of television, watching television activities, program analysis, smart signs, functions and effects of radio, newspaper, magazine news and internet usage. It is stated that today's students should grow in media-enabled environments, teachers should be able to understand how students from different cultures will learn, and they should be an effective media literate in order to direct and model them in order to increase the positive impact of media on students and to reduce their negative impact (Adıgüzel, 2005).

With this study, it is planned to reveal the information about media literacy or media literacy course and the perception of the target audience about media literacy. This study will contribute to raise awareness or strengthen media literacy on the target audience.

3. METHOD

The main point of this study was to evaluate the students' perception about media literacy in a foundation university campus. The overall aim of this research is to determine how media literacy and media literacy courses are perceived by the target audience. For this general purpose, the following question will be sought: What is the level of media literacy perceived by the students of a foundation university?

For this purpose, field research method was applied in the study and questionnaire technique was used to obtain the data. The questionnaire was formed after the literature review related to media literacy, the previous researches conducted in the field and for the purposes of the research. The questionnaire, which was initially tried in a control group of 50 people, was put into practice after necessary corrections and additions. The data obtained in the study were transferred to computer and frequency and percentage analyzes were performed. Since age groups and cities were similar to those of Solmaz and Yılmaz (2012), factor analysis was not performed.

4. POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population of the research consists of the students of a faculty at a foundation university. The sample of the research consists of randomly selected university students from the faculties of a

foundation university in the spring term of 2018-2019 academic year. The questionnaire was applied to a total of 313 randomly selected students from each faculty between 29 April-03 May 2019 from the existing faculties of a foundation university campus. The research was limited to the existing faculty students at a foundation university as a participant. During the survey, the questions that will be discussed face to face with the participants will be explained to the participants. Some of the questions in the questionnaire are related to age, gender and faculty.

The questions used by Solmaz and Yılmaz (2012) in their studies on “Media Literacy Research And An Survey in Selçuk University” are as follows: “Do you have any information about media literacy?”, “Do you think that media literacy contributes to the awareness of the society?”, “Do you think media literacy promotes critical and creative thinking?”, “Does media literacy help us distinguish between reality and fiction?”, “Should media literacy be included in the compulsory course?”, “Do you think that the media literacy course should be given by the graduates of the faculty of communication with pedagogical formation?”, “Do you think we will read and understand the media correctly with the media literacy courses?”, “Do you often follow the media?”, “Which media tool do you follow the most?”. The questionnaires will be applied by asking the participants one to one. The answers will be recorded on the questionnaire. It is recommended that respondents do not include their names on the questionnaire forms in order to respond more accurately and without hesitation.

5. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

57.2% of the participants were female and 42.8% were male students. Table 1 shows the distribution of these students according to the faculties they have studied.

Table 1. Faculty distribution of participants

	Frequency	%
Law	71	22,7
Finr Arts	36	11,5
Social and Humanitites Sciences	73	23,3
Economic and Administrative Sciences	68	21,7
Medicine	65	20,8
Total	313	100,0

313 students, whoparticipate in survey, are studying at 23.3% were in the Faculty of Social and Humanities, 22.7% were in the Faculty of Law, 21.7% were in the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, 20.8% were in the Faculty of Medicine and 11.5% were in the Faculty of Fine Arts.

Table 2. Do you follow the media frequently?

	Frequency	%
Yes	261	83,4
No	52	16,6
Total	313	100,0

Participants were asked whether they frequently followed the media. As shown in Table 2, the answers to this question were 83.4% Yes and 16.6% No. When these data are evaluated, it can be

said that the rate of media followers is very high. So, it is possible to say that the media is one of the indispensable tools of our lives.

Table 3.The Most Followed Media Tool

	Frequency	%
TV	52	16,6
Newspaper and Journal	10	3,2
Internet	240	76,7
Radio	3	1,0
Others	8	2,6
Total	313	100,0

When the answers given to the question which media tool the participants follow most are examined, as shown in Table 3, 76.7% chooses the most internet option while 16.6% chooses watching Tv. In the light of these data, it can now be said that the use of the Internet almost completely replaces traditional media tools.

Table 4. Knowledge about Media Literacy

	Frequency	%
Agree	156	49,8
Undecided	96	30,7
Disagree	61	19,5
Total	313	100,0

Participants were asked if they had any information about media literacy, and 49.8% of them were present, 19.5% of them were absent, and 30.7% of them were partially answered. In the light of these data, it can be said that participants do not know much about media literacy.

Table 5. Thoughts that Media Literacy Contributes to Public Awareness

	Frequency	%
Agree	205	65,5
Undecided	97	31,0
Disagree	11	3,5
Total	313	100,0

Participants were asked whether media literacy contributes to the awareness of the society and whether they agree with this idea. When the answers given by the participants are examined, it is seen in Table 5 that 65.5% agree with this idea, 31% remain undecided and 3.5% disagree with this idea.

Table 6. Thoughts on Media Literacy Developing Critical and Creative Thinking

	Frequency	%
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Agree	199	63,6
Undecided	99	31,6
Disagree	15	4,8
Total	313	100,0

When the answers of the participants to the question that media literacy develops critical and creative thinking were examined, it was seen that 63.6% of them agreed with this idea, 31.6% remained undecided and 4.8% did not agree with it.

Table 7. Thoughts that Media Literacy Contributes to Distinguishing the Reality of Television from Fiction

	Frequency	%
Agree	181	57,8
Undecided	105	33,5
Disagree	27	8,6
Total	313	100,0

When the answers of the participants to the question that media literacy contributed to differentiating reality from fiction on television were examined, it was seen that 57.8% agreed with this idea, 33.5% remained undecided and 8.6% did not agree with it.

Table 8. Media Literacy Thoughts That Should Be Taught as a Compulsory Course in Universities

	Frequency	%
Agree	114	36,4
Undecided	140	44,7
Disagree	59	18,8
Total	313	100,0

The participants were asked whether media literacy should be taught in universities as compulsory courses. It was seen that 36.4% of the participants agreed with this idea, 44.7% remained undecided and 18.8% disagreed with this idea.

Table 9. Thoughts on Media Literacy Course Graduates with Pedagogical Formations

	Frequency	%
Agree	171	54,6
Undecided	112	35,8
Disagree	30	9,6
Total	313	100,0

The participants were asked about their opinions about the media literacy course given by the faculty of communication who had a pedagogical formation. It was observed that 54.6% of the participants agreed with this idea, 35.8% remained undecided and 9.6% disagreed with this idea.

Table 10. Thoughts that Media Literacy Contributes to Reading and Understanding Media Correctly

	Frequency	%
Agree	227	72,5
Undecided	69	22,0
Disagree	17	5,4
Total	313	100,0

Participants were asked to think that media literacy contributed to the correct reading and understanding of the media. It was seen that 72.5% of the participants agreed with this idea, 22% of them were undecided and 5.4% did not agree with this idea.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Messages given in the media affect both individuals and communities to a great extent. With this research, it is seen that 83.4% of the participants follow the media frequently and 76.7% choose the internet as the media tool they follow. When the answers to the question “Whether they have information about media literacy are examined, it is seen that 49.8% have information about media literacy however, the percentage of those who answered “undecided” and “I have no information” was 30.7% and 19.5%, respectively. These two percentages have the same percentage as those who say “I have knowledge”. In this context, when we look at these rates, it is seen that there is not enough information about media literacy. It is foreseen that this ratio will be less for producers in any part of the society if the awareness of media literacy is almost half of those who are educated at the academy and who use the media frequently at a rate of 83.4%. If the aim of media literacy is defined as the correct perception of the messages transmitted by the media, it cannot be said that the percentage of individuals who can evaluate and use the information regardless of its source is high today. The diversification of communication channels in parallel with the development of mass media raises problems regarding how to reach the right information. Under intense bombardment of information, we are unconsciously getting what the media offer and are impressed at that rate. That is why it is important to educate individuals as conscious receptors who can critically look at the media through media literacy courses. In this context, it is possible to emphasize the importance of media literacy course and even the necessity to evaluate it within the compulsory course. It can be considered that media literacy education will contribute to individuals becoming a conscious media consumer. Because communication and technology affect almost all of our lives. The necessity of this course to be given by the graduates of the faculty of communication is an important issue that has been particularly mentioned by the participants. The necessity of the media literacy course in order to read and understand the media correctly is another point expressed by the participants.

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