Corona and Efforts for Media Literacy Education

Nader Shahamat [1*], Davarpanah Ali[2], Mirshakari Banafsheh[2], Kamandardar Mohammad[2]

[1]Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Management, Marvdasht Branch, Islamic Azad University, Marvdasht, Iran

nader_shahamat@yahoo.com

[2]Ph.D. Student in Educational Management, Marvdasht Branch, Islamic Azad University, Marvdasht, Iran

Alidavar48@yahoo.com

Abstract

The number of media audiences in Iran is increasing over time, and pupils and students, teachers and faculty members have become 100% media audiences in the Coronavirus crisis, and with home quarantine, a significant part of day and night has spent to media.

Media encompasses all the aspects of life, and people's life is tied to the media. Considering different dimensions of this phenomenon and recognizing its opportunities and threats is essential. From an expert point of view, it can be said that using any tools requires its related knowledge, and media literacy enables the audience to interpret and analyze media messages as a thoughtful activist and to use media services properly. The present study aimed to examine the role of media literacy in optimizing the audiences' use of media and encourage them to strengthen their media literacy.

Using media literacy, audiences will be able to produce and process the information and then they will be empowered in analyzing scientific, health, political, social, economic, and media messages.

Keywords: Corona, Media Literacy, Media Messages, Strategy (tricks), Skills

1. Introduction Statement of the Problem

These days, the Corona virus is the media breaking news around the world, and every media wants to attract the audience attention in some way and show its superiority by informing about Coronavirus. Television, satellite, and virtual space networks are trying to provide new and different ideas with scientific, political, and economic perspectives. Therefore, unfamiliar audiences with media literacy will suffer from fear, contradiction, depression, despair, aggression, and illogical decisions and feel failure in the face of multiple media messages.

With the emersion of new technologies, the educational process has shifted from the schools and institutes and the world has turned to the field of education. How can it be possible to provide essential cognitive and motivational contexts for students to react spontaneously to the content of the media? One of the most important ways to get this goal is to promote thoughtfulness and thinking in schools and educational centers using media literacy education for students (Soltanifar, 2006, p. 36).

2. Coronavirus

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* Corresponding author

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can infect animals and humans. As we know, several viruses from Corona family can cause a range of respiratory infections in humans which can include simple cold on the one hand, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) on the other hand. The newly discovered virus has caused a new disease that now is called COVID-19.

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. This virus was unknown before its spreading in December 2019 in Wuhan, China.

The most common symptoms are fever, tiredness, and dry cough. Some patients may experience mild to severe muscle pain and headaches, nasal congestion or runny nose, sore throat, or diarrhea. These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people can be infected by the virus without having any specific symptom or getting sick. About 80% of the people recover completely without any specific action, but among those who develop the disease, about one in six patients experience severe illness and dyspnea. Older people and those with underlying medical problems like hypertension, cardiovascular disease or diabetes are more likely to develop serious illness. About 2% of these patients have died so far. Those who experience fever, cough, and shortness of breath should see a doctor.

Humans can be infected by anyone with the virus. Small droplets that are thrown out of a patient's mouth or nose during coughing or exhaling can spread the virus to the other person and cause disease. These droplets may also fall to the objects and surfaces and they can remain infectious if people touch contaminated surfaces and then their eyes, nose or mouth. The person may also inhale the same small droplets into his respiratory system that are thrown out of the mouth or nose on an infected person during coughing and exhaling and get sick. For this reason, healthy people should keep their distance of more than one meter with the infected person.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses and primarily were discovered in 1960s. They cause diseases of the common cold family in humans and animals and they have a crown-like appearance on their walls. Sometimes some coronaviruses attack the respiratory system and sometimes they show their symptoms in the gut and stomach. Symptoms of coronavirus in the lungs usually appear in common colds and a type off secretory cold called pneumonia, which is usually associated with a mild cold in most people.

The World Health Organization (WHO) is examining all the ways of disease spreading and will share new findings.

3. The Importance of the Research

Nowadays, media is considered somehow as a window of looking differently to the world, and media literacy allows us to know how accurately and fairly the media's representation of reality is. Media literacy helps us to understand and analyze the forms and contents of the programs on the people's perceptions. Furthermore, about different social problems of adolescents and young people, it is necessary to consider media literacy education because media literacy education by creating critical thinking in the individual helps him to analyze the issues (Movahednasab and Ghasemi, 2014).

Media literacy is also very important psychologically and doubles the need for education, because the media besides their ability in imposing a lot of psychological pressure on a person, they also can keep the audience away from stress and helps them to relax. By considering the fact that the impact of media products is not hidden from anyone, even in the absence of measurable tools and indicators, we know that by expansion of communications and media, a new human being with new characteristics and high media consumption or in other words media addiction is created that its negative outcomes are visible. In this case, when individuals see an event and then exposed to new and misleading information about it, they may fail to recognize the correct and wrong information, and since the incorrect information is not evaluated as it should be, the unconscious part invades people's brain and will cause a severe negative impact on the individuals' mind (Amini, 2014).

In the crisis of coronavirus pandemic, massive media messages are associated with fear, anxiety, confusion, over concern and ignorance.

On the other hand, media literacy has its first and most important effect on the main institution of society which is family, therefore its necessity can be understood. Media literacy can teach the family as a member of media audience to put away the passive and consuming state and enter into a mutual and active equation that finally benefits them. In fact, media literacy helps us to use the media products in a smart and useful way. Media literacy will give the family an intellectual structure to determine the do's and don'ts of using the media, thus helps the family to avoid many risks and threats (Amini, 2014).

The mentioned cases are examples of the importance and necessity of media literacy education in people's lives, which highlights the constructive role of media literacy skills in optimal use of media in this crisis of coronavirus, which today encompasses a major part of people's daily lives.

4. Theoretical Foundations

Everett M. Rogers addresses innovation in his "diffusion of innovation" book in 1962. His approach is more concerned with the processes of diffusion of innovation and accepting them in a systematic and planned manner. While researchers and decision makers at the macro level were discussing the supportive role of mass media in development and modernization, the theory of innovation diffusion gradually emerged as a local framework for guiding communications for development. Innovative diffusion theory is presented for important theoretical connections with research focused on the fields of media communication effects and intellectual leaders to provide relevant knowledge of new procedures and ideas, as well as pursuing the message audiences to adopt innovations presented to them from the outside.

With regard to the definitions of Rogers, media literacy is considered a kind of technological innovation for potential adapters as new ideas and because of its hardware and software components.

Famous Canadian scholars have also stated their ideas: Pat Kipping believes that "media literacy makes you a better citizen." People with media literacy pay attention to the fact that the media is very delicate and complex to convey views, information and news. They also know that certain techniques and methods are used to create a message and to influence emotions and feelings. People with media literacy can identify targeted techniques. People with media literacy can discuss who or what benefits from the media, and who is left out and ignored, and why this happens. People with media literacy can search for different sources of information and entertainment and use the media according to their information needs. They know how to act with the media rather than wanting to delegate their authority to the media. In this sense, people with media literacy are better citizens (Nasiri et al., 2013).

Marin Barn believes that "today, since the media is a major part of life and plays an important role than before, so citizens need to be educated about how to communicate properly with messages, the power of criticism, reasoning, creativity, attention and active participation with messages" (Nasiri et al., 2013).

Haqparast and Dehghan Shad (2014) in an article entitled "Media Literacy Skills of Users of Virtual Social Networks in Iran" randomly examined Instagram and Facebook users. They talked about media literacy as a new literacy its importance has grown due to the increasing access to interactive media and social networks and the growing number of their users and also the enhancement of possible social harms of virtual space. Therefore, citizens can use technologies properly only by learning media literacy, because this literacy includes primary information about capabilities, opportunities, and how to use new technologies and the potential harms and how to deal with them.

In a paper entitled "Social Media as Challenges for Media Literacy", Heis Brink and Heis Brink (2007) discussed about how users of social media benefit from the risks and opportunities that privacy, content, and existing laws provide, and referred to specific points from social media that consider the produced content user-consumed content necessary.

In an article entitled "A Perspective of Media Literacy, Education and New Media", Martin (2011) explored media literacy perspectives in education and new media, especially online and active media in virtual space based on previous articles, and introduced media literacy as a

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framework for Adjusting high volume of information and a way to encourage talented learners in the digital era.

The studies have indicated that media literacy education leads to the acquisition of analytical skills and careful review and intelligent and critical selection, and these skills leads to privacy, better family life, and reading the subjects and benefiting from them with a critical view and cases like that. Therefore, more efforts should be made to acquire these skills in order to have the best life with optimal use of media, especially social networks.

With regard to the perspective of communications scholars, a person with media literacy has the following characteristics:

•Uses media wisely, purposefully, with management, planning, and effectively.

•Participates in critical thinking when analyzing media messages.

•Assesses the information validity from different sources and is not limited to just one source of information.

•Perceives the power of media messages and knows how to "read, see or hear" them more consciously and wisely.

•Be aware of the impact of the media on the formation of beliefs, values and behaviors.

•Be aware of the world with diverse and various cultures and respects different perspectives.

He expresses his beliefs, views, and insights clearly and creatively using various forms of media (Nasiri, Bakhshi and Hashemi, 2012).

5. The Concept of Literacy

Nowadays, as we see a fundamental change in communication and information technology, a new kind of literacy - if it is really new and the word of "literacy" is appropriate to describe it - is created at the center of a series of heated arguments among the university, political community and the public, and has led to the formation of a group of experts in the fields of literacy, culture, media education, human-computer interaction, and social studies in technology (Livingstone, 2004).

Literacy is an acquired ability and this acquired skill will also have special conceptual implications for it. The first important component in acquisition is intentionality and self-awareness. Acquiring anything requires a person's decision and effort to achieve it. Therefore, a person's conscious decision and diligent effort to acquire it is really essential.

The word literacy, which refers to a kind of understanding, will imply a type of content knowledge. This conceptual analysis, which is borrowed from the analysis of Peters and Hirst, emphasizes that when it comes to understanding, the discussion of the content of knowledge and theory will also be unavoidable (Peters and Hirst, 1980).

History tells us that even the most limited and the most common meaning of "literacy", which is the ability to read and write, narrates a complex history of competition for power and authority to access, interpret, and produce printed texts.

5.1. Media

"Media" is considered as the means of conveying a message from the sender or senders to the audience or audiences, which includes newspapers, books, radio, television, satellite, new communication and information technologies, the Internet, and so on. These devices have features such as unfamiliar message recipients, high speed of action and message reproduction (Dadgaran, 2005).

Mass or public media, in other words, "instruments of mass media" is the Persianized term for the Latin word "Medium" and its plural form is "media" and refers to those devices that are considered by a large number of new civilizations (Sarukhani, 1995).

The media is often a place for cultural change, whether in the sense of art and symbolic forms or in the sense of fashion, moods, lifestyles and norms, and also the media has become the dominant source of social reality for individuals, groups and communities. They state their value and normative judgments in a way that is inseparable and mixed with news and entertaining programs (McQuill, 2009).

5.2. Media Literacy

Many people believe that the term literacy has the most relevance to the print media, as it is equivalent to the ability of reading and in terms of education and television this term is called visual literacy (Kavousi, 2006). In fact, literacy involves acquiring the skills and knowledge to read, interpret, and produce specific types of texts, and to acquire the intellectual tools and capacities to participate in culture and society (Montazerghaem and Shaban Kassegar, 2014). However, media literacy can be defined as the knowledge mass media performance in society. In general, knowledge should encompass all the aspects of media work: economic basis, organizational structure, psychological effects, social consequences and the most importantly, the language of media that represent expressive and contractual advertising strategies, television programs, movies and other forms of mass media content (Montazerghaem and Shaban Kassegar, 2014).

In other words, media literacy means the ability to interpret media messages and decoding them, and the ability to detect different aspects of media products and their ideology, and to detect hidden, and intangible messages that are not obvious and must be detected before they can have a detrimental effect (Amini, 2014).

In fact, media literacy, in addition to the ability of reading and writing, seeks to create analytical capabilities and evaluate messages, and to generate the power to produce, disseminate, diffuse, and transmit information to others in a variety of forms. It can be said that media literacy can be used in mass media such as various forms of visual and written language, so that by producing extensive auditory and visual cues can be helpful in creating analytical ability and evaluating of messages and transferring relevant information to maintain their media audience (Sharbatian, 2010).

Thus, as it was mentioned, the term media literacy in the public mind is associated with print and written media. However, from the perspective of communications scientists in the modern age, media literacy is allocated for all media. People with a high level of media literacy have a broad and strong and powerful discernment ability, so that they have the ability to develop highly advanced skills for interpreting and analyzing different types of messages in different dimensions. This skill gives them more choices. Therefore, such audiences have the most control over their media messages and at the same time their beliefs and behavior (Niazmand, Partou and Faghihinia, 2014).

According to the above definitions, it can be said that "media literacy is a kind of perceiving based on skills that can be used to differentiate between different types of media and to differentiate and identify different types of media products" (Shekarkhah, 1999). As it was mentioned in the definitions, media literacy is having an ability in four areas of access, analysis, evaluation, and creative production, and all of these skills enhance the personal aspects of self-awareness, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities (Taghizadeh, 2012).

5.3. Sociology of Media Literacy

The sociology of mass media tools is the knowledge in which social groups examine, identify, and explain the means of mass communication and the situations in which they are influenced by each other. The media have various functions in society. So the audience with the knowledge of working with them can protect themselves against destructive effects, and using the media optimally, by gaining knowledge, they can participate in the process of socialization. Today, sociologists consider media literacy and its education as an important and valuable element. Some sociologists believe that media literacy education can greatly solve many problems of mass media. Media literacy is important because it helps our children to protect themselves against dangerous and destructive environment that the media create (Babaeirad, 2008, p. 21).

5.4. Benefits of Media Literacy Education

Media literacy education in schools leads to:

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-Raise thoughtful users in dealing with the media.

-Students should have information management and not give up against powerful tools of global media.

-Engages students to bring the real world to the classroom.

- It gives students and teachers a similar approach to critical thinking.

- It increases students' ability and skills to communicate and express their ideas and thoughts on a broad scale.

- Give this opportunity to the teacher to learn with the students and have a guiding role from the outside.

- Students by acquiring content-related knowledge can analyze any messages in any media (Soltanifar, 2006, p. 115).

The audiences of information age, especially our teens and young adults, need to .learn media literacy skills in order to identify the hidden goals of the lifestyle embodied in each message and have a better reaction with the content of media messages. When educational institutions can train individuals in such a way that they have the power to discern and decipher the content of media messages this goal will be achieved (Nasiri and Aghili, 2012).

5.5. Dimensions of Media Literacy

In media literacy education, there are four components of cognitive, emotional, aesthetic and moral. Each one focuses on a different range of our understanding.

1.   The cognitive dimension requires the individual to expand his knowledge structure. Acquiring necessary knowledge about a subject comes from multiple media sources and the real world.

2.   In the emotion dimension, controlling emotions and feelings against media messages is really important.

3.   The aesthetic dimension is an assistance to judge the message and the way of compiling, editing, lighting, acting, page layout, etc., and also in this dimension, people will be aware of the manner of manipulations and tricks.

4.   The moral dimension of media literacy is judging about values. Today, the media sometimes destroy moral boundaries and offers new patterns of action and behavior. The moral dimension is the distinction between right and wrong. Here, media literacy in the management and enhancement of media adverse effects (Kalantari and Momeni, 2015).

6. Discussion and Conclusion

It has been a while that the spread of the coronavirus and its effects on the situation of many countries and various aspects of people's lives are discussing greatly in all media, and also the virus has been spreading in Iran and it has influenced the public opinion. Is the virus really as dangerous as it sounds, or is it the influence of rumors and exaggerations that makes Coronavirus powerful and deadly? Meanwhile, the existence of numerous and diverse media, including television, radio, satellite and other social networks with multiple and different media messages has led to confusion, fear and panic of the audiences, and instead of correct and appropriate behavior in dealing with the virus crisis, they have become weak, ignorant, and terrified against it. They do noy know how to analyze and interpret different messages and which message to follow and apply. In the current situation, coronavirus has influenced the media space, in a way that can be called a virus (viral) message, that is, messages that are transmitted in any way without being sure of their accuracy or inaccuracy, and are completely transferable and unreliable. People in the form of artists, doctors, specialists, and messengers as a headman suggests prescriptions for people and their instructions are very different. In this regard, the important, vital, and crucial role of thinkers and media professionals in conscious and correct defense should not be neglected. Now, in social networks, users are divided into several categories of busy, leisure, skilled, looking for entertainment, business, worry, pessimistic, active, inactive, merely observer, forwarder, rioter, and so on. Informed audiences are usually placed in the category of inactive users. One way to prevent these

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rumors is to raise awareness and provide rational insights that media literacy should be taught to the general public in a variety of academic, educational, expert, non-expert levels and also general groups. Therefore, media literacy will prepare the audience to use properly media messages. If there was a platform for media literacy education before the widespread expansion of the media, many problems would not been occurred. Now that we have been harmed in this situation, it is imperative that everyone in general and those in charge of education in particular, take action to educate and train media literacy so that in a situation similar to the outbreak of the coronavirus and home quarantine, the lifestyle of families does not change at once.

The main purpose of media literacy education is to determine the correct media consumption or media diet and to spread critical thinking in the ways of persuading the mass media, to increase the power of message analysis and to produce content in accordance with the Iranian Islamic lifestyle. Media literacy education increases the audience's ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and produce media messages.

Today, methods and perspectives on the process of teaching and learning should be changed and the program orientation should be replaced with the book orientation. So on December 13, 2011, the problem-solving document in education was unveiled to achieve the visionary goals of 1404. The document has eight macro objectives and 130 operational strategies for fundamental change in education, some of which are related to the subject of media literacy:

1. Help to promote and media literacy among parents

2. Generalizing computer literacy of trainers and developing the use of new educational technologies

3. Development of Internet and Intranet penetration with the propriety of filling the digital gap

4. Providing schools infrastructures to technologies that are appropriate to the curriculum (hardware and software)

5. Producing and applying electronic content in accordance with the needs of teachers and schools

6. Dominant of active methods in learning by relying on the information and communication technology applications in schools

7. Improving the attitude and strengthening skills of trainers for optimal use of technologies

Maybe by the efforts of public, including policy makers and the Higher Education Council an effective action in promoting media literacy will be taken so that in the crisis and non-crisis situations like coronavirus, it does not take away our culture, lifestyle and authority.

Acknowledgments

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