

Media Literacy and Television Viewing Habits in Media Consumption Process

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Abstract

It can be said that media literacy emerged as a need for individuals who live in a world surrounded by media messages and the media is rapidly consumed. Media literacy aims to enable individuals to be conscious of the media and to evaluate media contents with a critical perspective. At the same time, media literacy is to obtain ability to perceive media messages correctly and produce messages in progress of time. The significance of media literacy is rooted the fact that the target audience can gain more control over the messages which were sent. Media literacy is included in the curricula in order to create a conscious audience who can follow and intellectualize media content correctly, who is sensitive to the environment where they live, who has knowledge about the country's agenda. The aim of the media literacy course is to enable students to learn the structure and function of media institution; to evaluate fictionalized content consciously by distinguishing the fiction from reality; and to follow the media critically. In short, it has skill-building aim by enabling students to ask accurate questions and find accurate answers about the media. In this study, it will be emphasized how students approach the media especially television, how they evaluate media content, and whether they gain a critical point of view in evaluating the content and by this way it will be tried to reveal influence of media literacy course on conscious level of the students. The data of the study will be obtained from conducting face-to-face survey with sampled students of Selçuk University Faculty of Communication by conducting.

Keywords: media literacy, media message, communication, Selcuk University

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Introduction

The rapidly changing technology both shapes our lives and provides various opportunities. Today, the dimensions of interactivity vary depending on the technology. People from almost all generations can benefit from these opportunities provided by the technology. The innovations brought by media technologies have become an inseparable part of human life. In addition to the traditional mass media such as radio, television and newspapers, in recent years, media technologies, which have been called new media, have been able to fill almost every moment of human life.

Mass media, especially television, offer various worlds for people. For this reason, media literacy is very significant for media user in order to be selective, interpret media messages consciously, make accurate evaluations. In order to enable individuals to become a conscious media literate, media literacy courses have taken their place in the curriculums in our country as well as in many other countries of the world. Actually, media literacy is a life-long education which every individual should be involved in.

Television offers individuals a world which is unreal and fictional. What is important here is to reveal the distinction between the world presented on television and the real one (Mutlu, 1999: 97). Nowadays, it is possible to say that the mass media, especially television, has shaped the social identity of the individual by giving messages from different sources and played an effective role in socialization.

Considering the nature and basic perceptions of the television as a communication tool, it has changed our relations with each other and with the world, and it has created unpredictable results by influencing basic family structures, cultural and social life. Television has led to the shift of fundamental interest to television in communication studies because it is such a powerful and effective tool (Koçak and Terkan, 2010: 50).

Media Literacy

Media messages are fictionalized and they are produced in economic, social, political, historical and aesthetic contexts. Media messages are based on interpretive sense-making processes, reader, and the interaction between text and culture and the media have a unique language and characteristics. Media designs play a role in how people understand social reality (Hobbs 2004: 124). Media literacy emerged as a need from necessity to be able to evaluate the media contents of individuals who live in a world surrounded by media messages with a critical perspective, to ensure order in social life and create a democratic society (Tokgöz, 2010: 159).

The aim of the media literacy is not only providing individuals skills and abilities to overcome the negative effects of media cognitively, but also protecting living spaces determined by the media increasingly (Alver, 2006: 23). Media literacy is not only important for ensuring participation in democratic societies, but also refers to one of the requirements of social justice and being critical citizenship. It is possible to say that the increasing competition, globalization and the privatization of the media

around the world bring about the need for media literacy, which is a new form of education (Solmaz and Yılmaz, 2012: 57).

When we look at the development process of Media Literacy in the world, there are different opinions in Western and non-western countries about the scope and content of this concept.

For example, while Canada, Australia, and European experts emphasize that media literacy will raise critical and independent individuals; in non-Western countries such as India, Brazil and South Africa, it is emphasized that media literacy will support liberation, development of society, and providing social justice (İnceoğlu, 2007). Of course, the media has an informative dimension and will be extremely useful when it is used properly. Frequently, we see the traces of how harmful media can be, rather than the benefits of them. So, negative effects of the media should be considered. In this context, it is possible to say some principles of the media that media literacy educators in the UK., Australis, Canada and USA have reached agreement on these principles (<http://www.yasemininceoglu.com/makaleler10.php>):

1. Media messages are carefully selected, edited, reviewed and fictionalized. Although it may seem real, the world it shows us is not the reality, but the media's representation of reality.
2. There is a close relationship between media's way of presenting the world to us and media consumers' perception of the world.
3. Media messages contain values and ideologies.
4. Media messages are produced in economic, social, political, historical and aesthetic contexts.
5. Media messages allow people to understand social reality.

Radio Television Supreme Council has taken the media literacy concept to its agenda in 2004 by the help of the works carried. The Radio and Television Supreme Council first proposed the teaching of Media Literacy course in primary schools on the Violence Prevention Platform which was established in 2004 within the Ministry of State where the leading public institutions, non-governmental organizations and universities are represented. A commission has been established with the participation of scholars in order to carry out the studies on Media Literacy.

In the scope of Media Literacy course, with the participation of scholars to carry out the studies on Media, students were informed about various topics such as the functions, aims, significance of media, meaning of Media Literacy, television broadcasting and types of programs, the influences of television, television viewing habits, program analysis, smart signs, functions and influences of the radio, newspaper, magazine news, internet usage Literacy (Türkoğlu, 2006)

Media literacy is not only important for ensuring participation in democratic societies, but also refers to one of the requirements of social justice and critical citizenship. It is possible to say that the increasing competition, globalization and the privatization of the media bring the need for media literacy which is a new form of education (Solmaz and Yılmaz, 2012: 57).

With this study, it is planned to reveal the perception of the target audience on media literacy or media literacy course. This study will contribute creating or empowering an awareness on media literacy on the relevant target group.

Methodology

Sample

The sample of this study is composed of 3rd grade students of Selçuk University's Public Relations and Publicity Department. A purposive sample was used from non-probabilistic sample types. The reason for the selection of these students as a sample is that media literacy course is compulsory for them. 173 students take the course in the department. Of these, data were collected by using a face to face survey technique with 146 students.

Measurement Instrument

A two-part questionnaire form was prepared to determine students' television viewing habits and their views on media literacy course. In the first part of the questionnaire; questions about socio-demographic characteristics and television viewing habits of the participants were given. Second part focuses on media literacy and include expressions as "Media literacy course changes my watching habits", "Media literacy course is necessary to use the media consciously", "Media literacy course enables me to read and analyze the media consciously", "Media literacy course is informative", "Media literacy course enables me to question media", "The media literacy course provides information on the preparation of television programs", "Media literacy course suggests that the world presented by the media is a fiction", "Media literacy course constitutes the idea that the media is not unbiased", "Media literacy course provides an ability to recognize and evaluate the media". For these expressions, a five-point Likert-type scale was used. The options are offered as "Completely Agree", "Agree", "Neither Agree Nor Disagree", "Disagree" and "Completely Disagree" and the students were asked to mark the option they think best reflects their feelings and thoughts about media literacy and television viewing habits.

Findings

In this study; students' watching habits, how they evaluate the content, whether they gain a critical point of view or not, have been emphasized. In addition to this, it has been tried to determine whether media literacy course makes a difference in terms of students' use of media and television.

Demographic findings about the students participating in the study are presented in the table below.

Table 1. Distribution of Students by Sex and Education Program

Sex	f	%
Male	54	37
Female	92	63
Education Program	f	%
Daytime Education	76	52
Evening Education	70	48
Total	146	100.0

54 (37%) were male and 92 (63%) were female of 146 students interviewed by face-to-face survey techniques. 76 of these students (52%) were in daytime education and 70 (48%) were in evening education.

Table 2. Percentage Distribution of Television Viewing Duration of Students

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less Than 1 hour	20	13,69
1-2 Hours	57	39,04
3-4 Hours	46	31,50
4-5 Hours	13	8,90
More Than 5 Hours	10	6,84
Total	146	100,0

When the frequency distribution rates of the students about TV viewing times are examined, it is seen that 13.69% of the respondents who give less than 1 hour response and 1-2 hours have the highest average with 39.04%; 31.50% of the respondents give 3-4 hours response; %8,9 of respondents give 4-5 hours; and it was observed that those who answered more than 5 hours had a minimum average of 6,84%.

Table 3. Percentage Distribution of Reasons for Watching Television of Students

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Recreation	20	13,69
Entertainment	80	54,79
Learning-Information	37	25,34
Other (Habit, Loneliness, Laziness)	9	6,16
Total	146	100,0

When the statistical distribution of the responses given to the students about the reasons of watching TV was taken into consideration, it is seen that that entertainment is the highest with 54.79%, the second is learning-information with the 25.34%, the third place is recreation answer with 13.69% and the other answer is the least average with 6.16%.

Table 4. Percentage Distribution of Changes that Media Literacy Course Creates in Television Viewing Habits of Students

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	56	38,35
Agree	40	27,39
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	30	20,54
Disagree	8	5,47
Strongly Disagree	12	8,21
Total	146	100,0

When the frequency distribution of responses given to the question of Media Literacy Course Has Created Change in My Television Viewing is taken into consideration, it is observed that Strongly Agree has the highest average with 38,35%; Agree is the second one with 27,39%; Neither Agree Nor Disagree is third one with %20,54; Strongly Disagree is the fourth one with 8,21% and disagree is the least one with 5,47%. When the findings are analyzed, it is obviously seen that the students who take Media Literacy course think that the course has changed their TV viewing habits.

Table 5. Percentage Distribution of Students' Views on the Necessity of Media Literacy Course in Conscious Use of Media Terms

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	70	47,94
Agree	33	22,60
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	21	14,38
Disagree	10	6,84
Strongly Disagree	12	8,21
Total	146	100,0

In this question, students' perspectives on the necessity of the media literacy course for the conscious use of the media are evaluated. When the frequency distribution of this question is taken into consideration, it is seen that Strongly Agree response has the highest average with 47,94%, agree is the second one with 22,60%, Neither Agree nor Disagree is the third one with 14,38%, Strongly Disagree is the fourth one with 8,21% and Agree is the least one with 6,84%.

Table 6. Percentage Distribution of Students' Views on Whether Media Literacy Course Enable Them to Read and Analyze the Media Consciously

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	66	45,20
Agree	38	26,02
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	22	15,06
Disagree	8	5,47
Strongly Disagree	12	8,21
Total	146	100,0

When the frequency distribution of students' views on whether media literacy course enable them to read and analyze media consciously is taken into consideration, it is seen that the response of Strongly Agree has the highest average with 45,2%, Agree is the second one with 26,02%, Neither Agree Nor Disagree is the third one with 15,06%, Strongly Disagree is the fourth one with 8,21%, and Agree is the least one with 5,45%. When the findings are analyzed, it can be concluded that the students who take a media literacy course think that the course enables them to read and analyze the media consciously.

Table 7. Percentage Distribution of Students' Views on Being Informative of Media Literacy Course

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	91	62,32
Agree	26	17,80
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	13	8,90
Disagree	6	4,10
Strongly Disagree	10	6,84
Total	146	100,0

When the frequencies of students' views on being informative of media literacy course is taken into consideration, it is observed that Strongly Agree response has the highest average with 62,32%; Agree is the second one with 17,8%; Neither Agree Nor Disagree is the third one 8,9%; Strongly Disagree is the fourth one with 6,84% and Disagree is the least one with 4,1%. When the findings are analyzed, students who take a media literacy course think that the course is informative.

Table 8. Percentage Distribution of Students' Views on Whether Media Literacy Course Enable Them to Question the Media

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	72	49,31
Agree	30	20,54
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	21	14,38
Disagree	9	6,16
Strongly Disagree	14	9,58
Total	146	100,0

When frequency distribution of students' views on whether media literacy course enable them to question the media is taken into consideration, it is observed that Strongly Agree has the highest average with 49,31%; Agree is the second one with 20,54%, Neither Agree nor Disagree is the third one with 14,38%; Strongly Disagree is the fourth one with with 9,58%, and Disagree is the least one with 6,16%. It can be deduced that students think that media literacy course helps them to question media.

Table 9. Percentage Distribution of Students' Views on Whether Media Literacy Course Inform Them about Preparation of TV Programs

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	81	55,47
Agree	30	20,54
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	18	12,32
Disagree	10	6,84
Strongly Disagree	7	4,79
Total	146	100,0

When frequency distribution of students' views on whether Media Literacy course inform them about preparation of television programs is taken into consideration, it is observed that the response of Strongly Agree has the highest average with 55,47%; Agree is the second one with 20,54%; Neither Agree nor Disagree is the third one with 12,32%; Disagree is the fourth one with 6,84; and Strongly Disagree is the least one with 4,79%. The general view of the students is that the media literacy course provides information.

Table 10. The Percentage Distribution of Students' Thoughts that the World which the Media Present is not Real, it is Fiction.

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	52	35,61
Agree	31	21,23
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	28	19,17
Disagree	14	9,58
Strongly Disagree	21	14,38
Total	146	100,0

When the statistical table about the question that students think that the world presented by the media is not real, it is fiction analyzed, it is observed that the response of Strongly Agree has the highest average with 35,61%; the second one is Agree with 21,23%; the third one is Neither Agree Nor Disagree with 19,17%; Strongly Disagree is the fourth one with 14,38%; and Disagree is the least one with 9,58%. In the light of results obtained, it is thought-provoking whether sufficient awareness about media reality or fictionality has been created or not because of a considerable amount of respondents who are undecided or strongly disagree.

Table 11. Percentage Distribution of Students' Views on Impartiality of Media Institutions

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	58	39,72
Agree	30	20,54
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	24	16,43
Disagree	14	9,58
Strongly Disagree	20	13,69
Total	146	100,0

When the responses to the expression of media institutions are not unbiased analyzed, the response of Strongly Agree has the highest average with 39,72; the second one is Agree with 20,54%; the third one is Neither Agree nor Disagree with 16,43%; Strongly Disagree is the fourth one with 13,69% and Disagree is the least one with 9,58%.

Table 12. Percentage Distribution of Students' Views on the Media Literacy Course's Recognition and Evaluation Ability

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	89	60,95
Agree	24	16,43
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	14	9,58
Disagree	11	7,53
Strongly Disagree	8	5,47
Total	146	100,0

The frequency distribution of the last question of the study which is about recognition and evaluation ability of Media Literacy course is taken into consideration, it is observed that the response of Strongly Agree has the highest average with 60,95%; the second one is Agree with 16,43%; the third one is Neither Agree Nor Disagree with 9,58%; response of Disagree is the fourth one with 7,53; and Strongly Disagree is the least one with 5,47%.

Overall Review

In this study, students' television viewing habits, contents of media messages and how students evaluated these contents, their thoughts on questioning the media, their ability to recognize and evaluate the media, whether they gained a critical perspective or not, are examined.

As a result of the conducted study, the necessity to raise awareness of individuals in every segment of the society about media literacy becomes prominent. Because the more knowledge about media literacy, the boundary between the real world and the world constructed by the media can be so easily recognized and the detrimental effects of the media can be avoided. It is possible to emphasize the significance and necessity of the media literacy course in this context. It can be considered as another result that media literacy education will contribute to the individuals being a conscious media consumer. Because communication and technology influence almost all of our lives.

The necessity of media literacy course is another point expressed by the participants in order to read and understand the media accurately. As a consequence of the study, the participants stated that they follow the media frequently and watch TV at certain intervals during the day. In addition to this, the students stated that they develop some positive attitudes in terms of the effect of media literacy on their daily lives.

As a result; media literacy aims to raise individuals who can investigate, question and evaluate messages sent by the media. In a rapidly changing and developing world, it can be said that one of the ways to become a conscious media consumer is to gain media literacy skills. Not only the students, but also people from all levels of society should be informed about media literacy and they should become a media literate. Media literacy can be defined as a road map enables individuals to approach on the media critically and to be educated as conscious receivers.

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