

Building A Resilient Society Through Media Literacy and Critical Thinking for National Development

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Abstract

Recent years have seen a growing recognition of the importance of media literacy and critical thinking in building resilient societies. As technology continues to advance and shape our daily lives, it is essential for individuals to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate and critically evaluate the vast amount of information and media that surrounds us. This includes being able to identify biases, evaluate sources, and think critically about the messages and narratives presented by various forms of media. By promoting media literacy and critical thinking, societies can become more resilient to the potential negative impacts of media manipulation and disinformation. Through education and training, individuals can learn to be more discerning consumers of media and actively engage in shaping the narratives that shape our world. In order to truly build resilient societies, a strong emphasis must be placed on promoting media literacy and critical thinking skills at all levels of education and throughout all sectors of society. In conclusion, media literacy and critical thinking are crucial in building resilient societies. By possessing these skills, individuals are better equipped to navigate the complex media landscape, actively engage in civic and political issues, and effectively communicate their ideas. As we continue to face challenges and issues in our society, it is vital that we foster and promote media literacy and critical thinking in order to build a resilient and informed society.

Keywords: *media, media literacy, critical thinking, resilient society National development*

Introduction

Media literacy is generally understood as an informed, critical understanding of the prevalent mass media, and it involves examining the techniques, technologies and institutions involved in media production; being able to critically analyze media messages; and recognizing the role audiences play in making meaning from those messages. Media literacy is also the ability to sift through and analyze the messages that inform, entertain and sell to us every day (Abbasi & Huang, 2020). It's the ability to bring critical thinking skills to bear on all media- from music videos and Web environments to product placement in films. It's about asking pertinent questions about what's there, and noticing what's not there. And it's the instinct to question what lies behind media productions- the motives, the money, the values and the ownership- and to be aware of how these factors influence content (Al-Hamdani, 2015).

Current transformations of the media environment with the emergence of new information models and storytelling styles imposed by social media have been identified as a major cause of such social challenges, reflecting the urgency of supporting the development of meta cognitive skills of individuals to understand media content and critically reflect on social and informational stimuli (Pfaff-Rüdiger & Riesmeyer, 2016). Part of the social and cultural issue can be traced back to educational levels and quality of education, where, in the absence of humanistic education, individuals with technical training would be more prone to a lack of critical thinking and media literacy (Bayer et al., 2019; Martens & Hobbs, 2015). Media literacy involves the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media in various forms. It empowers individuals to understand the role of media in society, recognize biases, and discern credible sources of information. With the rapid dissemination of

information and the proliferation of fake news, media literacy has become a crucial component in preventing misinformation and promoting informed citizenship.

Critical thinking refers to the ability to think clearly, rationally, and independently. It involves analyzing information, questioning assumptions, and evaluating evidence before forming conclusions. In a media-saturated environment, critical thinking helps individuals to scrutinize the information they consume and resist manipulation or deceptive practices. Critical thinking, according to Al-Zou'bi, (2021) is the ability to objectively analyze and evaluate information, arguments, and beliefs. It requires individuals to question assumptions, seek evidence, and make reasoned judgments. Critical thinking allows people to consider multiple perspectives, identify logical fallacies, and spot misinformation or manipulation (Devlin & Pohjola, 2020). By combining media literacy and critical thinking, societies can become more resilient in several ways. Firstly, individuals are better equipped to recognize and challenge false or misleading information that can potentially harm society. This can help prevent the spread of rumors, fake news, and conspiracy theories that can lead to social unrest or public health crises. Secondly, media literacy and critical thinking promote active citizenship and informed participation in democratic processes (Lee, 2010).

When people are able to critically evaluate political rhetoric, analyze campaign promises, and understand media biases, they can make more informed decisions during elections. This fosters a more engaged and responsible citizenry that can hold their governments accountable and contribute to positive societal change. Lastly, media literacy and critical thinking foster empathy and understanding by cultivating cultural competence and media

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literacy. By engaging with diverse voices and perspectives, individuals can challenge stereotypes and prejudices, promoting inclusivity and social cohesion. In conclusion, media literacy and critical thinking are vital in building resilient societies. They enable individuals to navigate the complex media landscape, critically evaluate information, and actively participate in democratic processes. By cultivating these skills, societies can better withstand adversities, foster informed citizenry, and promote social cohesion (Suminas, & Jastramskis, 2020).

Resilient societies are characterized by their ability to adapt, respond, and recover from various shocks and challenges, such as natural disasters, economic crises, and social upheavals. This concept emphasizes the importance of flexibility, resourcefulness, and interconnectedness among communities. Resilience is created by attention to people, to organization (social and economic systems), to place (infrastructure and ecosystems), and to knowledge (evidence-based decision-making) (Wright, 2015). According to Welsh and Wright (2010) empirical evidence across the literature about Resilient Societies suggests that societies that exhibit particular qualities or characteristics are more likely to be resilient. These qualities are defined as flexible, redundant, robust, resourceful, reflective, inclusive and integrated. Therefore, media literacy and critical thinking go hand in hand in promoting civic engagement and active citizenship. In today's digital age, social media has become a powerful tool for political activism and social movements and also critically analyzing the media and information presented on these platforms, individuals can become more engaged and informed citizens, leading to a stronger and more resilient society

Application of media literacy

Media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate the media

information and messages that can be provided in various printed and no printed frameworks. Media literacy is one of the most important phenomena of the information age that helps the audience enhance their level of knowledge and use media, not only out of habit and recreation, but also for use and interpretation of the media messages with insight (Amiri, 2008). Three aspects of media literacy include awareness promotion of the content of media, second are critical watching instruction, and the social, economic, and political analysis of the media that are not visible at first glance.

The first point about the issue of media literacy is to pay attention to consumption level and ratio of each media in the media rainbow; second point is to see, read, and hear mainly through a critical perspective; and the third point is the role of stakeholders and owners of the media (Nasiri & Aghili, 2012). In Nigeria educational system, media literacy has been accepted officially for better understanding and perception and for critical freedom of action. In Japan, media literacy education was implemented by the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications for the first time, taking the responsibility to provide and promote media literacy education. Media literacy education in these 2 countries has led their students to gain greater understanding of the media outlets, compared to students in other countries. They are well aware what they want from the media, and therefore, are actively engaged in critically analyzing and evaluating the media content to understand the content of the messages encountered (Shahbazi, 2011). In a study by Brian et al. an independent association was found between media literacy and reductions in smoking among adolescents and reduced susceptibility to smoke in future (Primack, Gold, Land, Fine, 2006). In a review by Brown et al. in (2006), media literacy was counted as the potential for improving health among

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adolescents. In a study by Zarepour et al., the role of mass media in promoting health literacy in the society was mentioned.

Media literacy is considered as an important tool in the direction of human development and the sustainable development of the communities (Babaii, 2008). Low levels of media literacy in one community are associated with a prevalence of many health problems including communicable and non-communicable diseases.

Building resilient societies through media literacy and critical thinking

Media literacy encompasses a range of skills, including critical thinking, information evaluation, communication, and digital literacy. As such, it empowers individuals to critically consume and evaluate media content. Media literacy interventions can take different shapes or forms (Bakhtiarzadeh, 2012) The Bad News game, for instance, utilizes gamification to train people from the ages 14 and up to identify and build cognitive resistance against common forms of manipulation.

The game is backed by scientific evidence and has inspired a whole range of similar media literacy interventions. Fostering such skills will gradually increase societal resilience to disinformation, giving individuals agency and taking away power from external actors. For that reason, FERMI integrates the community resilience and risk management modeler in its software tool which will allow law enforcement agencies to better understand the resilience level of the affected community and take appropriate action. The more resilient a society or community, the less impactful disinformation campaigns will be. That is why the FERMI project combines short- and long-term measures that address both the immediate

threat of disinformation and decrease a community's susceptibility to disinformation. As such, the FERMI platform allows users to analyse the disinformation landscape in a certain community and to gauge the potential of specific disinformation activities to cause real-world harm based on the level of societal resilience of said community (Haddad, 2012). FERMI's approach is unique in that it takes a more comprehensive approach acknowledging that disinformation will remain a constant feature of the online world and suggesting countermeasures with immediate and long-term effects (Ashrafi Rezi, Ramezani, Aghajani, & Kazempour, 2013).

Resilience can be defined as the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties. At a time of multiple challenges whether environmental, health, security, or epistemic it is urgent to develop new practical tools which will help to make people, systems and organizations better able to overcome shocks and crises.

Building societal resilience takes time and resources. Media literacy interventions need to be tailored to the specific needs of the target audience, they must be updated regularly to reflect technological progress and they require constant learning on the participant's side. Media literacy is not a quick fix but one that has been proven to work effectively and sustainably to inoculate people against disinformation (Abbasi, & Huang, 2020). To strengthen democracy and empower people as active and informed citizens beyond election cycles, governments should continue to invest in media literacy interventions and ensure they are incorporated into education at all levels. The effects will not be immediate but they will have a tangible impact on the health and resilience of our democracies.

The role of media literacy in critical thinking

In an era dominated by information overload and rapid digital advancements, the

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importance of media literacy has become increasingly evident. Media literacy, the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media content, plays a pivotal role in fostering critical thinking skills. The media literacy empowers minds to think critically and navigate the complex landscape of information. According to Al-Hamdani, (2015) media literacy goes beyond the traditional literacy skills of reading and writing. It encompasses a set of competencies that enable individuals to comprehend the multifaceted nature of media messages. From news articles and social media posts to advertisements and entertainment, media literacy equips people with the tools to decipher, question, and contextualize the information presented (Al-Omari & Al-Assal, 2017).

At its core, media literacy is a catalyst for critical thinking. By encouraging individuals to question the content they encounter, media literacy cultivates a habit of mind that is essential in today's information-driven society. Critical thinkers are not passive consumers but active analyzers, able to discern the nuances and biases inherent in media narratives. One of the key aspects of media literacy is the ability to recognize bias and understand different perspectives. Critical thinkers, according to Al-Shammari, (2014) are mindful of the potential influences shaping media content, whether they be political, cultural, or economic. Media literacy empowers individuals to question the motives behind information dissemination and to seek a more comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand.

In an age where misinformation and fake news proliferate, the skill of evaluating credibility is paramount. Media literacy guides individuals in assessing the reliability of sources, fact-checking information, and discerning between trustworthy journalism and sensationalism. This discernment is crucial for

making informed decisions and avoiding the pitfalls of misinformation. Media literacy acts as a shield against manipulation. Critical thinkers are less susceptible to being swayed by emotionally charged or misleading content (Al-Mashagbeh, 2018). By honing the ability to analyze the techniques employed in media messages, individuals become more resilient against manipulation and are better equipped to make decisions based on facts rather than emotional appeals.

In the ever-evolving landscape of media and information, critical thinking is a skill that cannot be overstated. Media literacy serves as the cornerstone for cultivating this skill, empowering individuals to navigate the vast sea of information with discernment and intelligence. By embracing media literacy, we not only fortify our individual cognitive abilities but also contribute to the creation of a more informed, resilient, and responsible society (Allen, 2017).

Challenges and opportunities in promoting media literacy and critical thinking

Media literacy involves identifying different types of media and understanding the message they are sending. This topic is an essential skill in the digital age where we are constantly exposed to various types of media and their messages (Al-Tawisi, Hamed, & Al-Banna, 2016). Here are some of the challenges and opportunities of media literacy:

1. Media literacy is being hailed as a silver bullet solution to many problems of the digital age such as misinformation, hate speech, cyber bullying. However, media literacy is not a simple or easy solution but rather a complex and costly one that requires investment, expertise and collaboration.
2. Media literacy empowers people to participate in democratic and civil life to access diverse and reliable sources of information and to hold media accountable for their actions and representations. Media literacy also fosters intercultural dialogue,

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peace and tolerance among different groups and perspective.

3. Media literacy can help students enhance their learning outcomes, deepen their understanding of core concepts and apply their knowledge and skills to real world contexts. Media literacy can also help students make connections between different areas of learning and appreciate the relevance and value of media literacy in their lives.
4. lastly, media literacy has helped addressing the ethical and social issues surrounding the access and use of media. With the media environment being shaped by economic and political interests, media literacy can help us to recognize the values and points of view embedded in media messages and to challenge and bias and stereotypes that are often present in media content.

Conclusion

In conclusion, media literacy and critical thinking are crucial in building resilient societies. Also media literacy and critical thinking are foundational to building resilient societies. By empowering individuals to navigate the complexities of the modern media environment and think critically about the information they encounter, these skills help to foster informed, engaged, and adaptable communities capable of thriving in the face of various challenges. By possessing these skills, individuals are better equipped to navigate the complex media landscape, actively engage in civic and political issues, and effectively communicate their ideas. As we continue to face challenges and issues in our society, it is vital that we foster and promote media literacy and critical thinking in order to build a resilient and informed society. Additionally, media literacy and critical thinking also contribute to the development of effective

communication skills. As individuals learn to critically evaluate information, they also learn to effectively communicate their thoughts and ideas. This is crucial in building resilient societies as effective communication allows for the exchange of differing perspectives and promotes understanding and collaboration.

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