



The Status of Media Literacy in the Textbooks of Junior High School

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Abstract

Aim: The aim of the present study was to investigate the status of media literacy in the textbooks of the junior high school with a quantitative approach and content analysis method. For this purpose, 15 books of the junior high school were selected as the sample due to their relevance to the subject and were analyzed using a researcher-made media literacy checklist. The validity of the checklist was approved by five experts, and its reliability was determined through inter-rater agreement. Data analysis was done with Shannon entropy method and descriptive statistics. According to the obtained results, the theoretical dimension of media literacy had the highest frequency (41%) and the media consumption regime had the lowest frequency (1.5%). The results indicate an unbalanced attention to the aspects of media literacy, so the distribution of the components of media literacy needs to be reviewed.

Keywords: *Media literacy, content analysis, textbook.*

Introduction

Access to media, as amazing phenomena of the information age (Castells, 2010), has brought many changes in human life (Rizk & Hillier, 2021). Correct exposure to the media requires "media literacy", which is one of the basic skills of citizens in the 21st century (Renee, 2010). In recent years, media literacy education has received attention in many advanced countries and has been added to the official curriculum (Taghizadeh & Taheri, 2016). However, in Iran, media literacy is less addressed (Dehghamshad & Mahmoodi, 2012). Media literacy in junior high school is especially necessary due to the students' biological and social changes because failure to think logically, being influenced by others, and the identity crisis in teenagers make them more vulnerable to media (Abdolahi Bektash et al., 2019).

In the current educational system of Iran, textbooks are considered the most important tool for education (Ebraahimi Dorcheh et al., 2016). Therefore, the capacity of this tool should be used to teach the dimensions of media literacy to students. The review of previous research shows that no research has been done regarding media literacy education in junior high school and its place in the textbooks of this period, so the main purpose of this research was to investigate the position of media literacy in junior high school textbooks and the following question were answered:

What is the frequency distribution of media literacy components in junior high school textbooks?

Methodology

The present research used content analysis and Shannon entropy method. The research community included all junior high school textbooks in 2022-2023, among which 15 books were selected due to their relevance to the research topic. The researcher used the literature to make a checklist regarding teaching media literacy for collecting data. After receiving the opinion of five experts in communication sciences, the final checklist was prepared with five main components, including theoretical foundations, message criticism and analysis skills, ethical and security considerations, media use and media consumption regimen, and 29 sub-components. The unit of analysis in this research was themes related to media literacy. Inter-rater agreement confirmed its reliability with correlation coefficient of 0.89. Data analysis was done with Shannon entropy method and descriptive statistics. Shannon entropy method presents data processing in content analysis with a new perspective that is much stronger and more valid. Entropy in information theory is an index to measure uncertainty, which is expressed by a probability distribution (Azar, 2001). Based on this method, the target textbooks were examined based on five components and 29 sub-components of media literacy.

Results

In the first step of the research, the text of the selected books was analyzed based on the media literacy checklist and the total frequency of the components was calculated. In the second step, based on the Shannon entropy method, the data were first normalized, and then the information load and the importance coefficient of each component were obtained. (Table 1)

Table1. Frequency and importance coefficient of media literacy components in junior high school textbooks

Component	Subcomponents	Textbooks					Total frequency	Importance coefficient	
		Thinking and lifestyle	Defense readiness	Social studies	Messages from heaven	Persian			Business and Technology
Theoretical foundations	The concept of media	2	0	4	0	0	0	6	0.027
	Media opportunities	2	1	12	0	1	20	36	0.043
	Media damage	10	12	10	13	7	4	56	0.074
	History of media	1	0	1	0	0	1	3	0.048
	Visual media	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	0.056
	Audio media	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	0.056
	Written media	0	1	0	0	0	3	4	0.024
	Internet sites	0	1	0	0	0	17	18	0.024
	Computer games	0	1	0	0	0	9	10	0.014
	news	0	1	1	5	0	1	8	0.46
total	15	19	28	18	8	57	145	-	
Message criticism and analysis skills	Media symbols	2	6	0	0	1	0	9	0.037
	Media persuasive techniques	1	0	0	3	0	0	4	0.024
	The hidden values of the media	3	2	2	2	0	1	10	0.071
	Ownership in the media	2	0	2	3	0	1	8	0.058
	Analyzing message	4	0	0	0	7	0	11	0.028
	Criticism and text, film, image	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0.056
	total	13	9	4	8	8	2	44	-
Media use	Using audio and video software	1	0	0	0	0	9	10	0.014
	Working with graphic software	1	0	0	0	0	23	24	0.007

	Working with communication software	1	0	0	0	0	12	13	0.011
	Basic Computer Skills (ICDL)	1	0	0	0	0	33	34	0.005
	Searching in Internet	0	0	1	0	0	23	24	0.008
	Content production	0	0	6	0	0	8	14	0.029
	total	4	0	7	0	0	108	119	-
Media regime	Time management in media consumption	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	0.056
	Selection of media content	0	1	0	0	0	2	3	0.028
	Total	0	1	1	0	0	3	5	-
Ethical and security consideration	Respecting the privacy of others	1	0	1	0	1	2	5	0.044
	Security tips in using media	2	0	8	0	0	13	23	0.037
	Ethics and immorality in the media	0	0	2	0	1	0	3	0.027
	Observance of intellectual property	1	0	0	0	0	2	3	0.028
	Honesty and trustworthiness	5	0	0	0	0	1	6	0.020
	Total	9	0	11	0	2	18	40	-
Sum of categories		41	29	51	26	18	188	335	-

Based on the findings of the first step, the Work and Technology textbook had the highest frequency (n=188) in media literacy components, and the Persian Literature textbook had the lowest frequency (n=18). The component of theoretical foundations had the highest frequency (n=145, 41%), followed by the components of media application with a frequency of 119 (34%), criticism and analysis of media messages with a frequency of 44 (12.5%) and security and ethical considerations with a frequency of 40 (11%). Meanwhile, the component of media consumption regimen with a frequency of 5 (1.5%) had the lowest frequency.

Based on the findings from the second step, the component of media damage had the highest coefficient of importance (0.0073) while the components of basic computer skills (0.005) had the lowest coefficient of importance.

Discussion and conclusion

The obtained results show that the frequency distribution of media literacy components in textbooks and different educational levels is unbalanced and the capacity of different courses for teaching media concepts has not been used well. According to the findings, the emphasis of media literacy education in junior high school is on the two dimensions of theoretical foundations and use of media. The basic skills including criticism and analysis, management of media consumption, and ethical and security considerations have been neglected. Considering the sensitivity of students at this age and their great impressionability towards the media, it is necessary to have a codified program for teaching media skills in junior high school. Therefore, it is suggested that media literacy be a separate lesson in the curriculum. It is also suggested that the capacity of other courses be used and media literacy training be included in other courses and presented in a consolidated manner.

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