

A Comparative Study on Media Literacy among School Children in Pudukkottai and Madurai District

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Introduction

The word "Media" is understood in two ways and it is the plural of the term 'medium'. There are various kinds of media like the print and the broadcast media. Intended messages are conveyed through these medium. The print medium, which is the most established shape, incorporates leaflets, daily papers and books. The broadcast medium incorporates TV and radio. The Internet medium incorporates social networking and a great deal more. The media additionally refer to billboards, applications and photos. We use media as a tool for mass communication. Mass communication incorporates the news, entertainment and the advertisements. This helps the media producer to inject the media message to the media viewer in order to gain some profit. With the advent of new media the avenues are very much open for the dissemination of any kind of information to all. In any case, the media are conveyance vehicles which now and then influence the content.

Literacy

Williams (1988), a well-known literary and cultural theorist, notes that as a new word in the nineteenth century, 'literacy meant both an ability to read and a condition of being well-read'. Literacy is the capacity to peruse and compose. It lies in having the capacity to comprehend the world around us. Henceforth, literacy genuinely is not just about examining and creating, it is about each one of the comforts, benefits and central focuses that ensue as a result of that ability. Literacy is a necessary component of citizenship in a democratic society Burroughs et al. (2009).

Media Literacy

Media education is an arrangement of capabilities that empower individuals to investigate, assess, and make messages in a wide assortment of media modes, genres, and formats. Media literacy is concerned with cultivating skills in analysing media codes and conventions, abilities to criticize stereotypes, dominant values, and ideologies, and competencies to interpret the multiple meanings and messages generated by media texts (Kellner and Share, 2007).

Definitions of Media Literacy

The National Tele media Council (1997) defines media literacy as “the ability to choose, to understand within the context of content, form/style, impact, industry and production, to question, to evaluate, to create and/or produce and to respond thoughtfully to the media we consume. It is mindful viewing, reflective judgment”.

At the National Conference on Media Literacy, sponsored by the Aspen Institute in December, 1992, the groups' Media Literacy is the ability of a citizen to access, analyze, and produce information for specific outcomes.” In the context of a developing country like India, media literacy would also require critical skills to evaluate the role of media in a developing democratic society.

The Center for Media Literacy, in view of the past definitions recognized there were a couple of different components required for the improvement of Media Literacy and its built up another meaning of media literacy: Media Literacy provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages in a variety of forms—from print to video to the Internet. Every form of media requires literacy skills (CML,2010).

Media literacy skills not only favour an individual, but also the society as a whole to be an active citizen of the nation.

Importance of Media Literacy

Media literacy should be considered as the major foundation for any nation. Today's children live in a mediated world. The current generation of children has been called the "M Generation" because of the amount of media consumed by them (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2005). Today children get greater access to various forms of media than adults. So it is necessary that they should be educated in using the media for their growth rather than for digging their own graves.

The other major intention of implementing media literacy is for citizenship and democratic participation. Davis (1992) stresses 'the ability to analyze, augment and influence active reading (i.e. viewing) of media in order to be a more effective citizen'. Today's children are tomorrow's citizens. They rely on media for all sorts of information and believe what is shown to them. The concept of media literacy is not just of contemporary urgency it is a traditionally related to the advent of the industrial revolution. The term was coined now because the need has arisen with the greater accessibility of various forms of media. The person who is able to read media messages in the way he is supposed to do is called a media literate. A media-literate person should be able to distinguish between facts and value claims (Silverblatt&Eliceiri, 1997). To become more familiar with the media messages we must get exposed to lot of media messages and start thinking critically. A media-literate person should also be able to deliberately transform the impact or meaning of a message into his own idiom, and produce a discourse understandable to other viewpoints (Davis, 1992).

Importance of the study

According to Alvermann (2000) Media effects research suggests that media viewing may be a transactional process. It is suggested that both the sender and receiver take part in a communication process so the sender's message reaches the receiver in a manner the sender wanted. Where in individuals accept or resist messages based upon contextual measures, such as the environment in which they are watching, their purpose for viewing, and their prior experiences and knowledge (Alvermann and Ha good, 2000; Buckingham, 1993; Marsh and Stolle, 2006; Wood, 1993). Technological innovations have disposed of media limits, permitting people to utilize varying media records on request, to play in versatile gadgets. There are heaps of courses in which a child consumes media. Versatile media transmission gadgets offer internet access, games, and varying media playback, notwithstanding phone and messaging capacities. In India According to Broadcast Audience Research Council of India (2016) it is no wonder then that a school going student spends an average of six hours attending to some form of media every day.

The ubiquitous nature of media in Indian society cannot be denied. Yet within the field of education, the media seem to be treated as a societal ill, which exerts too much influence upon Indian youth and contributes to increasing levels of childhood obesity, academic failures, societal crimes and much more.

Be that as it may, at last, duty regarding our kids' prosperity doesn't begin in schools, it begins in homes. It begins in families. Since no instructive strategy can supplant a parent who is included in his/her kid's training from the very first moment, who ensures that kids are in school on time, helps them with their homework after supper, and goes to parent-instructor

gatherings. No administration program can kill the Television, or set away the computer games, or read to youngsters. It is a parental/familial obligation.

Nevertheless people in general observation that expanded media utilization by youthful kids is a reason for scholastic and social disappointments, which is humorously bolstered to some extent by media reports, look into audits have demonstrated such circumstances and end results connections to be flawed. Killing the media won't plan Indian youth for what's to come. Rather, instructive policymakers and experts ought to advocate for showing Indian youth how to be more mindful buyers of media – through media literacy education. The value of media research for the field of education is not in what students are viewing or the degree of their exposure; the value of media research in the field of education will not be fully realized until the focus shifts to studies about how students are viewing media. Media literacy does not involve, for example, limiting media- use or consuming less media content: 'media literacy does NOT mean "don't watch"; it means "watch carefully, think critically"' (CML, 2010).

Need for the study

Media literacy standards have been advocated by national teaching groups and educational researchers for decades (Buckingham, 2001). Most of the western countries have started including Media literacy in their curriculum. Approximately only five states include media literacy assessments in their state wide education assessments. Research has shown that the skills possessed by the students are not on par with the extent of media they get exposed to. They require media literacy in curriculum. Research on media literacy must not include just the portrayal but should focus on the content of the media to which students are exposed. On an average, a child spends one third of his time with some form of media. If he/ she are educated in the handling of the medium it would make him media literate and inculcate the habit of critical choice. We need to bring it into our school curriculum so that children would learn to filter messages and consume the right ones.

Ever since the advent of media, children have been more exposed than the adults. They watch films / shows on fictitious characters and they pretend to imitate such characters. They regard those characters as saviours and seek their help, the imaginary characters don't exist in real life, never came to their help. The lack of awareness regarding real versus reel life leads to many complexities. Similarly, misinterpretation of messages causes great chaos. Students can be considered literate only when they can speak through the language of images and the language of words (Feldman, 1978). Then one way of examining media literacy is through the language used by students to describe media and their meaning.

Experts in the field of education concur that media proficiency is an imperative part of contemporary society; however, there is little research accessible about how youthful grownups analyze media or how teenagers perceive and clarify the courses in which media messages are developed and consumed.

A survey (2006) of educators suggested that media literacy was not being sufficiently addressed by current educational practice in classrooms across the United States (Cable in the Classroom, 2006). Considine (2009) suggests the need for the study is all the greater when one considered the challenge faced by today's educators in balancing the content of the old curriculum. Neither the curriculum nor the educators prepare the children to live in the media saturated environment. The provision of additional content that will prepare students for life in the 21st century (Considine, 2009).

Objectives of the study

The main objectives of the study are

1. To make children realize the difference between reel and real life.
2. To foster the ability to question the accuracy and authenticity of information in all its forms.

3. To enhance the reflective, critical responses to media information.
4. To find out whether children possess media literacy competencies.
5. To incorporate media literacy in the curriculum.

Research hypothesis

Null Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant relationship between watching movies and the age group.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the children critically analysing media messages and the gender.

Research questions

The guiding questions for the research are:

1. What is the level of media, particularly film, accessed by students?
2. Do the children analyse media messages and know the background scenario of each film?
3. Do children possess / exercise media literacy skills while watching movies?
4. Do children require media literacy in their curriculum?

Limitations of the Study

The study focuses on media access of school children under the age group of 14. No prior media education training was provided. The media clip was played from the movie and children had to answer the questions soon after watching it. This study has hooked on the Deep viewing guide propounded by Pailliotet and only the six categories/ codes for deep viewing of messages were considered.

This study was limited in several ways. The sample of students came from private schools in Pudukkottai and Madurai has English as the medium of instruction. They were selected based on convenience.

The survey was taken after their class hours Assumptions have been made that students have understood each question on the survey document and personally answered each item truthfully. Participation in the study was voluntary. The students who assented to participate may differ from the students who were eligible but declined to participate.

Tools used

The data were collected and analyzed based on the researcher's convenience. The collected data were grouped using the following tools

- Simple percentage analysis
- Bar diagram
- Chi square test

Review of Literature

In the twenty-first century, there are numerous sorts of media, for example, advertising media, electronic media, print media, published media, news media, recording media and much more. Non-print media include television, video and audio recordings, electronic games, films, photography, and the Internet (Cheng and Wan, 2004).

Cheng and Wan (2004) states that media literacy also provides students with the ability to create media products.

Hobbs and Jensen (2009) explain how media literacy works in the twenty-first century, Media literacy not only competes with related concepts like [information communication technology (ICT)] literacy, critical literacy, media management, and information literacy; now “digital citizenship” and “new media literacies” stress the skills and knowledge should have been powerful in the undeniably complicated web-based social networking environment, where the qualifications amongst producer and consumer have vanished and it is an obscuring amongst public and private universes make new moral difficulties and open doors for children, young people and adults.

Borawski(2009) describes that to be media literate is to be able both to understand and effectively use various sources of information and communication in the digital world.

Media literacy involves “asking questions about what you watch, see, and read,” thus encouraging ongoing critical inquiry (Scharrer, 2010).Worsnop (2010) describes media literacy as the skill of experiencing, interpreting, analyzing, and making of media products.

Thoman (2010) states that there are three stages to media literacy. The first stage is getting to be distinctly mindful of how much media people are taking in regularly. Stage two recognizes specific skills required for critical viewing and learning how to analyze and question what is in the media. In stage three, people realize who creates the media, what their motivation is, and media preferences and disservices. Media literacy in the school setting aims to increase students’ understanding and pleasure in how media function, how they deliver meaning, how they are sorted out, and how they develops reality.

Results and Discussion

- This study has found that male children are more interested in media literacy than females. But female children watch more media content because they have immediate access to media instruments and fewer other distractions. So it is necessary that girls should become more aware of the media.
- The media viewing habit among children’s varies with the age. The more mature they are, the better they understand the media. So age plays an important fact in media literacy.
- Movies are the major sources of entertainment today. Children watch movies. This study shows that most of the children watch movies every day. Once they are exposed to contents every day the media effects/ influence is greater.
- The analysis of movies plays a pivotal role in shaping the minds of the children. If we do things without analyzing the results it may lead to trouble. This could be applied to the media also, as the majority of the respondents have stated that they don’t analyze movies as they see it only for pleasure.
- Children always believe the contents shown in movies. But often there is an impasse, whether to believe or not. Neutrality occurs when children are not aware of media literacy skills. So we need to educate children about media literacy to bridge the gap real life and reel life.
- A visual is more potent than words. The respondents have accepted that visuals have a lasting impression on their minds. These visual images are stored in their subconscious mind and retrieved when required or even otherwise this aspect requires special attention in promoting media literacy.
- Films are dream versions of reality. So they mix up reality and illusion to attract audiences. The real facts may be either the location or characters. It is found that children believe the characters and locations to be real. This makes media literacy imperative.
- Children also have some knowledge about camera movements. This point to media awareness.

- Media do not present the totality of the world. So messages have to be constructed and presented. The children are unaware of the constructed nature of messages. So a critical attitude should be cultivated through media education.
- Many children have agreed that they needed media literacy skills and are ready to accept it as a course if it is offered through the curriculum.
- Digital media allows audience members to interact with the media and manipulate its use for their own pleasures and/or purposes, in a way that traditional media did not (Olsson, 2006)

Suggestions

- The girl children must be given special attention. Viewing mode should be vitiated by taboos.
- Children at a very young age seem to utilize the media. So they must be trained in media skills.
- Children can watch movies every day, but the supervision of the parents is essential so that they act as gatekeepers in media messages.
- Children should have media literacy skills as a part of the curriculum so that they can acquire critical thinking skills at school.
- The government of India had taken some initiatives, but the moves are yet to gain momentum, such steps are yet to be taken in each state, especially Tamil Nadu where media organizations are growing swiftly.

Scope of further study

- This study sought to add to the field of knowledge about media literacy by examining the experiences of school students in Pudukkottai and Madurai districts, but it is only a piece of research that can help confirm that media literacy is essential. Similar studies could be carried out in other parts of the states with more number of respondents.
- This research specifically focused on young participants who have not had any formal media skills exposure at school. Schools may incorporate media literacy as an additional course.
- Comparative studies could be carried out with students exposed to media literacy courses.
- Similar research could be conducted with different cultural groups.
- The NCERT initiatives should be empirically analyzed to assess whether the courses offered are sufficient or whether they need revision.

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