

# A survey on rate of media literacy among Isfahan University of Medical Sciences' students using Iranian media literacy questionnaire

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Media literacy is a 21<sup>st</sup> century approach to education. It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate, and create messages in a variety of forms - from print to video to the Internet. Also, it builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy. The purpose of this research was to determine the rate of media literacy among Isfahan University of Medical Sciences' students using Iranian Media Literacy Questionnaire (IMLQ). **Materials and Methods:** This is a survey research in which the data were collected by a researcher-made questionnaire. Its validity and reliability were confirmed by Library and Information Sciences specialists and Chronbach's alpha ( $r = 0.89$ ), respectively. Statistical population consisted of all students in Isfahan University of Medical Sciences (7000 cases) and the samples were 364. Sampling method was random stratified sampling. Data were analyzed by descriptive (frequency distribution, mean) and inferential ( $T$ -test, ANOVA, and one-sample  $t$ -test) statistics through SPSS16 software. **Results:** The findings showed that the mean level of media literacy among Isfahan University of Medical Sciences' students was  $3.20 \pm 0.558$  (higher than average). The highest mean was skill in avoiding confusion and focus on activates such as watching television, listening to radio, reading newspaper, and using internet; and the lowest mean was skill in membership and subscription in useful society networks. The mean of evaluation of media messages dimension was more than others. The lowest mean of dimensions was for selective and purposeful use of media with  $2.99 \pm 0.761$ . Comparison between gender, married status, educational degree, and college type and the rate of media literacy among Isfahan University of Medical Sciences' students showed no significant difference. **Conclusion:** The results showed that the rate of media literacy among Isfahan University of Medical Sciences' students was higher than average. But students didn't have enough skill in membership and subscription in useful society networks and Skill in tracking news about your favorite artists and musicians. Generally, all students and education practitioners should pay special attention to factors affecting in improving media literacy as a basic capability in using media.

**Key words:** Iranian Media Literacy Questionnaire, Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Media Literacy, students

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## INTRODUCTION

With the advent of technological revolution in the 1980s, the world has got to the step that a range of political, social, cultural aspects of different society have undergone fundamental changes. These changes were along with human senses and have overcome them on the elements of time and space and have opened many opportunities facing the nations. But alongside this opportunity, challenges and consequences people's lives are threatened. The threat includes political regimes up to social cohesion. Today, it can be said that the foundation of identity and social cohesion as one of the most important factors is faced with a serious crisis.<sup>[1]</sup> With the equalities, there is no doubt about the formation of the global village. The most important issue in this era is rapid advances and fascinating approach and the use of ICT in various facets of life. In the meantime, media as an effective tool helps people to have desired and ambitious life with the latest scientific phenomena. Moreover, if this instrument be used with false, incorrect, or malicious intent, it can be devastating and act like a tragedy. The knowledge and information about utilization of media messages causes to use them more effectively, more dynamic, and more enjoyable and not become influenced by the media exception of certain values and ideologies.<sup>[2]</sup> Accordingly, Koltay (2012) argues that with the advent of new technologies, new concepts such as digital literacy, information literacy, particularly media literacy left foot to the existence and they have critical approach to media messages.<sup>[3]</sup> Exchange of knowledge and raise of awareness about the use of media messages is needed; because we observed that exposure to media messages is often, if not deliberate and purposeful, but just as habit and just some limited number of people control what ever be seen or heard by media. As a result, individuals can withdraw from a passive audience and actively treat the messages, and the audience becomes selector. Here, the media literacy as one of the most important phenomena is the emergence of the information age to help the audience to raise their level of knowledge and effort not to use it for just entertainment and recreation, but with enough knowledge and insight engaged in the production and interpretation of messages.<sup>[2]</sup>

Various definitions have been used in relation to media literacy. Although the concept of aspects, elements, and indices are more common in definition, there are some differences in this regard. These differences are based on cultural and communication systems. In other words, these distinctions are largely rooted in the needs, objectives, and different educational systems of the region, nations, communities, individuals, groups, unions, political parties, pressure groups, and other minorities.<sup>[1]</sup>

Potter sees media literacy as a set of perspectives that helps people to interpret the concept of messages while they face with media.<sup>[4]</sup> Shokrkah expresses that media literacy is the ability to understand the meaning of media's work.<sup>[5]</sup> Badiee sees media literacy as a set of approaches that audience actively use for selective exposure to media and for critical

evaluation of media's content, interpret the meaning of messages, and defend against the power of the media.<sup>[6]</sup>

From the total definitions that have been told, it could be concluded that Media literacy is a set of skills that allows audiences to access and create the types of communication signals and recognize the property, wealth, and values underlying the messages. It helps them to regulate dietary intake of communication with critical approach.<sup>[1]</sup>

New media accused the two views to create new challenges in life. Media activities in education are competing on one hand and on the other to accommodate the new challenges are often. In these circumstances, how the necessary cognitive and motivational needs of students are created that can help them to react against the content and functionality of the media spontaneously and bring meaningful to meet with the media and their content, through analysis and reflection. One of the main ways to achieve the above objective is the promotion of intellectual thinking in schools and institutions of higher education by promoting the use of media literacy education to students.<sup>[7]</sup>

Koltay argues that media literacy for citizens with no intention of trying to use the media is necessary. Therefore, media literacy education for all people in various academics predicts and runs.

Taherian in her article "media literacy education for children and Adolescents" emphasizes on media education to increase their awareness of children and adolescents in various forms of media messages and to highlight the creativity and dynamism; because Children who are the main audience have little power in the selection, processing, and analysis of information and news, and furthermore the centralized monitoring and control of media output is more difficult and adds to the problem. So the audience of parents, teachers, and professors about media literacy can guide us to the consequences of media.<sup>[8]</sup> Basirian Jahromi, Haghgoie, and Soofi did research as "accelerate the development of media literacy in society". In this paper, the effects of media literacy in general and Internet and ICT in particular have been studied and explored, as new technologies of communication-information which are effective in social development on indicators of education, income, poverty, health, and access to equal opportunity. Results indicated that audiences in developing countries and in developed countries today need more information on their everyday problems. This makes the need for analytical tools associated with communication and development more than ever.<sup>[9]</sup> Taghizade has research entitled "the effective factors on media consumption regime of high school students of Kerman city". The results showed that access to and use of male students to media is higher than female students. In addition, there is a relationship between the amount of access and use of media and economic- society status with the amount of using interactive medias. But the use of written media (newspapers and magazines) is not significant.<sup>[10]</sup> Hajiheydari and Yazdian have research entitled

“assessment and applying five-fold level model of media literacy: a case study of IRIBU students”. This theory with focus on critical media literacy treats on the aspect of critical media literacy. Development of media literacy skills to protect citizens against the harmful effects of media messages is one of the most important tools of policy in the field of education in each country. Unfortunately, it has not been considered in Iran. Six interviews have been done based on crash film with graduate students of Communications J.A.A Broadcasting faculty as experts in the field of media. Questions based on the five concepts of critical media literacy (lack of transparency, codes and rules, decode audience, content and message, motivation) and the Crash film were set. With this study, the lack of consistency in critical teaching students and thus the unbalanced critical capability in the face of the message was clear.<sup>[11]</sup> Keshani has research entitled “the effective factors on media literacy among public relations specialists”. Results showed that the majority of respondents are familiar with media literacy and their educations are more relevant to their current job. The majority of respondent has passed the education periods about learning media literacy and so they believe in education of media literacy a lot. Most people believe that media literacy can be very effective in strengthening the public relations profession a lot. They refer to other media in order to implementation of the news of national media. They understand the bias and favoritism of media via content of news program. They believe that designed messages sent through the Medias, in part, have an impact on their feelings. They gain the sense of empathy by watching a dramatic movie but gain some sense of empathy by listening to a radio drama, reading a news paper, and a news page with a text (greetings, humor, etc.).<sup>[12]</sup> Aghili and Rasekh Mohammadi have research entitled “the effective factors on student’s media literacy”. The populations of research are experts of communication that they are engaged in public and Azad universities of Tehran. The findings showed that factors such as purpose of using internet, amount of using computer, and parental restriction have important effect on using internet. In addition, factors such as level of education and income of head of household are major factors in the use of internet. In the meantime, gender factor has no effect on amount of using factor and the most important barrier to the use of the Internet with the highest percent (35/5%) cited lack of English. Also, respondents with higher percent (78/4%) are aware about the effect of previous factor on the use of the Internet. 31/3% of respondents have mentioned as the most influential person on the use of internet. Maximum percentage of total samples (36/4%) use internet in order to increase their knowledge and Music and pictures are the most visited sites.<sup>[13]</sup> Nasiri and aghili did research entitled “the role of media literacy education in Canada and Japan”. The research was a comparative study. Findings showed that in order to teach media literacy none of government, neither media industry nor school/association can help to improve media literacy alone. If any of these organizations intend to continue their work independently, resolving ambiguities in the concepts of media literacy would not be possible. So, media literacy education requires all-out and systematic

cooperation of government, schools, institutions, and media industries.<sup>[14]</sup>

Nasiri did research entitled “survey on communication specialist’s viewpoints about media literacy in society”. The purpose of research is study about knowledge and recognition of communication science experts in all communication faculties about media literacy and giving different definition of media literacy from viewpoints of experts. Findings showed that media literacy is the way that helps people to think independently and have comprehensive image of media and to acquire knowledge in each of media. Media literacy is an essential skill in any case and it seems that it can modify the effects of mass media and it will give the audience the full knowledge to process media messages. Based on the research findings, faculty of communication are somewhat aware of the concept of media literacy.<sup>[15]</sup> Javadinia *et al.* did research entitled “effects of social Networks on academic achievement of students, a study in Birj and University of Medical Sciences”. Results showed that membership in these networks in more than 50% happened during the first year of university. Also, students with lower function and degree use social networks more than students with higher function and degree.<sup>[16]</sup> Findings of Primack *et al.* in relation to its effects on youth anti smoking from media education showed that media literacy programs have positive effect on adolescent students knowledge about smoking. However, the traditional program will also help to increase the impact.<sup>[17]</sup>

Pereira, Pinto, and Pereira expressed about media literacy’s resources that variety of sources in the form of books, pamphlets, magazines, the Internet, social networks, television, and radio can be used for media literacy educators.<sup>[18]</sup>

Piscinca, Basterretxea, and Jimenez did research entitled “report about the media literacy situation in the Basque school community”. Results showed that in the educational system, media literacy education is not a priority in their training program. Meanwhile, the younger teachers have a greater impact on students’ digital skills.<sup>[19]</sup> Culver and Jacobson did research entitled “media literacy and its as a method to encourage civic engagement”. Findings showed that technology is not an ultimate goal. However, the use of new technologies among all members of society to be trained and effective use of these media needs media literacy and information literacy.<sup>[20]</sup>

From these studies, it can be concluded that the acquisition of a learning media literacy and media literacy education is a necessity. Amount of media literacy in varied community is different. Most of the research about this subject in Iran is just theoretical and finally, studies that are specifically measured in the media literacy of students are rare. So this is felt necessary. It should be noted that students with media literacy can be analyst of information rather than only consumer of information and be aware of the goals, motivations, attitudes, and mechanisms of influence and how to use the media and finally they come to understand that this may be taken

particular values from these texts and images that may be completely different from their states. Accordingly, the aim of this study was to determine the media literacy of students in Isfahan University of Medical Sciences by using Iranian Media Literacy Questionnaire (IMLQ) in order to assess the level of media literacy and study the weak points of students in this area and warn authorities.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is an applied survey research in which the data were collected by questionnaire. Statistical population consisted of all students in Isfahan University of Medical Sciences (7000 cases) and the samples were 364. Sampling method was random stratified sampling and each faculty was considered as a class and proportionate with the number of students and the number of sample obtained. The tool for collecting data was Shahins questionnaire<sup>[21]</sup> that has been changed according to needs by researchers. In this study, its validity and reliability were confirmed by Library and Information Sciences specialists and Chronbach's alpha ( $r = 0.89$ ), respectively. The questionnaire included five dimensions. The first dimension was intended using of media messages (question 1-4), second dimension was related to understanding how the media works (question 5-11), third dimension was evaluation of media messages (question 12-19), the fourth dimension was the combination of media messages (question 20-24), and the fifth was dimension to summarize the media messages (question 25-28). The method has been collected by visiting students of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences in December and January of 2012. The questionnaire has been prepared according to Likert Scale; very much, much; somewhat, little, very little, has been considered. Data were analyzed by descriptive (frequency distribution, mean) and inferential (T-test, ANOVA and one-sample t- test) statistics through SPSS16 software.

## RESULTS

The purpose of this research was to determine the rate of media literacy among Isfahan University of Medical Sciences' students using IMLQ. Results showed that 73% of the students were women and 27% were men. 88% were single and 12% were married. Most students were undergraduates with 56% and minimum of students were PhD (about 2%). School of Medicine has most number of students with 35% and the School of Management and Medical Information has the least number of students with 7/4%. rate of media literacy of students in Isfahan University of Medical Sciences showed that highest mean is related to skill in avoiding confusion and focus on activities such as use of various media with  $3.63 \pm 0.959$ , skill in understanding images messages of media with  $3/59 \pm 0/909$ , skill in evaluating ethical media messages with  $3/52 \pm 1/83$  and the lowest mean is related to skill in membership and subscription in useful society networks with  $2/57 \pm 1/09$ , skill in tracking news about favorite artist and musicians with  $2/75 \pm 1/263$  and amount of search in Internet in order to complete content after of

watching television with  $2/80 \pm 1/16$ , respectively. Overall, the mean of media literacy among students is  $3/20 \pm 0/558$ , which is above average [Table 1].

According to the one-sample t-test results in relation to the mean level of media literacy among students of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, there is significant difference between index score (3) and mean score (3/20) [Table 2].

Results in relation to the mean level of media literacy among the students of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences revealed that the mean in the dimension "evaluation of media messages" was  $3/29 \pm 0/656$ , the highest mean is related to amount of skill in evaluating ethical messages of media with  $3/52 \pm 1/83$  and lowest mean is related to the amount of skill to update news published in the media with  $3/16 \pm 0/953$ . Also, the mean in the dimension "targeted use of media messages" with  $2/299 \pm 0/761$  showed that highest skill is related to avoid of confusion and focus on using various media with  $3/63 \pm 0/959$  and lowest is related to skill in membership and subscription in useful social networks with  $2/57 \pm 1/09$ . Altogether, the mean of evaluation of media messages was more than targeted use of media messages [Table 3].

According to the ANOVA results in relation to comparison among media literacy dimensions of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences' Students, there is significant difference between media literacy dimensions [Table 3].

The t-test results in relation to mean's difference of students' media literacy by regarding gender showed level of significant (0/294) that is more than  $\alpha=0/05$ . Thus, the mean level of media literacy and gender differences were not significant. The t-test results in relation to mean's difference of students' media literacy by regarding married status showed level of significant (0/616) that is more than  $\alpha=0/05$ . Thus, the mean's difference level of media literacy and married status were not significant. The ANOVA results in relation to mean's difference of students' media literacy by regarding educational degree showed level of significant (0/231) that is more than  $\alpha=0/05$ . Thus, the mean of media literacy and educational degree were not significantly different.

The ANOVA results in relation to mean's difference of students' media literacy by regarding faculty type showed level of significant (0/570) that is more than  $\alpha=0/05$ . Thus, the mean of students' media literacy by faculty is not significant.

## DISCUSSION

Nowadays, with the increasing use of various media and their impact on the lives of participants, the importance of audience awareness and training is essential. Various researches such as Javadinia *et al.*<sup>[16]</sup> showed that students with a lower degree and academic performance are more vulnerable to damage of various media. Thus, the importance of education in many studies including the Shahin,<sup>[21]</sup> Nasiriand Aghili,<sup>[14]</sup>

**Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of media literacy among students of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences in 2012**

Choice	Mean and Standard deviation
Skill in tracking news about your favorite artists and musicians	2.75±1.26
Skill in membership and subscription in useful society networks	2.57±1.09
Skill in avoiding confusion and focus on activities such as watching television, listening to radio, reading newspaper and using internet	3.63±0.959
Skills to actively pursue topics of local, regional, national, international news	3.01±1.08
Skill in the use of pictures, diagrams and tables during the study of resources and doing university projects	3.11±1.003
Skills in recognizing various media around the world to better understand their message.	2.90±0.937
Skill in the use of modern tools and technologies to better understand the environment around	3.24±1.79
Skill in understanding pictorial messages in media	3.59±0.909
Skills in understanding the published information and messages from various media	3.45±1.003
Skill in learning to work with various media to understand a message	3.38±0.939
Skills in working with new media	3.27±0.927
Skill in definition of differences and capabilities when using different media	3.29±0.852
Skills of defining accurate and non-accurate information and media messages	3.27±0.909
Skill of recognizing exact word during search	3.31±0.956
Skill in determining that the news of media is the overall picture of what is really happening in the world	3.24±0.973
Skill of defining whether news media is related to event of that day or not	3.16±0.953
Skill in defining comprehensive and complete news	3.17±0.912
Skill in evaluating the moral messages of media	3.52±1.83
Skills in evaluating media content	3.36±0.963
Skill in finding the needed information from a variety of media to communicate with others	3.36±0.933
Skills of getting information about dangerous events such as earthquakes and epidemics for appropriate action during crisis	3.16±1.84
How familiar are you with websites of your favorite channels on TV	2.95±1.13
How much do you refer to other media such as internet in order to complete story that you have heard from television	2.80±1.16
Skill in mixing various messages of media in order to get global fact	3.04±0.982
Skill in the adjudication of media messages such as gender issues, racism and	3.19±1.04
Skills to obtain necessary information from various media in order to understand the subject	3.21±0.922
Skill in recognizing various cultures while using media	3.26±0.937
Skill in recognizing myself as a member of society while using media	3.34±0.99

**Table 2: One-sample t-test for level of media literacy among Isfahan University of Medical Sciences Students**

Index score=3						
Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig
Media literacy	364	3.20	0.558	363	7.080	0.000

Nasiri,<sup>[15]</sup> Culver and Jacobson,<sup>[20]</sup> Javadi-Nia and others,<sup>[16]</sup> Morrel,<sup>[22]</sup> and Austin<sup>[23]</sup> has been emphasized. In addition, media literacy education in the form of various kinds of resources is needed. The findings related to media literacy rate of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences revealed that the highest mean is related to skill in avoiding confusion and focus on activities such as using various media, skill in significant perception of pictorial messages of media, and skill in evaluating of moral messages of media and lowest is related to skill in membership and subscribing in useful social networks, skill in pursue of news about favorite artist and musicians, and amount of referring to internet after watching television in order to complete story. But totally, media literacy of students was more than average. Shahin's finding showed that skill in social network subscription and skill in avoiding confusion and focus on activities such as

watching television, listening to radio, and using Internet and his finding is in alignment with his research.<sup>[21]</sup>

It seems that students of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences are not much familiar with new media, perhaps due to lack of training to be familiar with new media. So the necessity of training media is felt. Overall findings of Shahin,<sup>[21]</sup> Keshani,<sup>[12]</sup> and Nasiri<sup>[15]</sup> also suggest that the media literacy rate is well higher than average, which is similar with current research.

Findings in relation to the dimensions of media literacy among students of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences revealed that the mean in dimension "evaluation of media messages" is highest, that highest mean is related to skill in evaluating of moral media messages and lowest is related to skill of updating news published by media. Also, amount of media literacy in dimension "targeted use of media messages" showed that most of the skills is related to avoiding of confusion and focus on using various medias and lowest skill is related to membership and subscription in useful social networks. Altogether, the mean of evaluating media messages was more than dimension of targeted use of media messages.

**Table 3. ANOVA test for comparison among media literacy dimensions**

Dimensions	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Targeted use of media messages					
Between groups	133.483	69	1.935	7.380	0.000
Within groups	77.066	294	0.262		
Total	210.549	363			
Understanding how the media works					
Between groups	119.693	69	1.735	12.173	0.000
Within groups	41.895	294	0.143		
Total	161.588	363			
Evaluation of media messages					
Between groups	114.961	69	1.666	11.785	0.000
Within groups	41.563	294	0.141		
Total	156.525	363			
Combination of media messages					
Between groups	176.893	69	2.564	12.184	0.000
Within groups	61.860	294	0.210		
Total	238.753	363			
Summarize the media messages					
Between groups	126.678	69	1.836	7.306	0.000
Within groups	73.876	294	0.251		
Total	200.554	363			

ANOVA = Analysis of variance

Shahin's finding<sup>[21]</sup> showed that the mean of evaluating media messages was more than other dimensions and so it was similar with this research. The findings of this study can be deduced that these students have not used the media for entertainment but also to strengthen their understanding of media messages have been considered and accosted with the media message by critical view and they were not just the passive consumers of media messages. But these findings are not similar with Hajihyeydari and Yazdiyan,<sup>[11]</sup> because mentioned study showed that students had no critical abilities in the face of the message. Perhaps one reason for this imbalance is the difference in population. Results regarding the difference between students' media literacy and gender showed no significant gender difference in mean levels of media literacy. This is similar with findings of Aghili and Rasekh Mohammadi<sup>[13]</sup> but not similar with findings of Taghizadeh.<sup>[10]</sup> Because mentioned research showed that level of media literacy of boys was more than girls. In addition, finding related to mean difference of student's media literacy in terms of married status, educational degree, and faculty type showed no significant different. Therefore, these factors had no effect on levels of media literacy students.

## CONCLUSION

New era is an era in which the audience is active and selective, and for human being to be able to have good communication

with media, he must be able to distinguish between different forms of media. He must know how to express basic and principle questions and not be just an illiterate, powerless, and mere consumer. He must face with messages with scrutiny and recognize whatever effect on thought and action by Medias. All of this capability is possible by media literacy.

The results of this study showed that media literacy among students in Isfahan University of Medical Sciences is more than average and relatively favorable, but their skill in some case such as membership and subscription in useful social networks, tracking news of their favorite artist and musicians, referring to various medias in order to complete issues that has been received from other media and skill in cognition all various media in the world, have been lower than average. Also, the dimension "targeted use of media messages" is more than other dimensions such as understanding how the media works, evaluation of media messages, combination of media messages, and to summarize the media messages.

## SUGGESTIONS

In order to achieve the research objectives, the following suggestions are offered:

1. Education Development Center of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences executes workshops for their students with the theoretical and practical components of media literacy to make the more familiar
2. Authorities of this University should hold meeting and seminars in order to familiarize students with the concepts and intent of media literacy.

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