

A Critical Education for 21st Century: A study on Youth and Media literacy

Ms. Priyanka Sachdeva

Research Scholar, University School of Mass Communication,
Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, New Delhi, India

Dr. Durgesh Tripathi

Assistant Professor, University School of Mass Communication,
Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, New Delhi, India

ABSTRACT

Youth being exuberant, coruscating, inventive and spirited is the most critical element of the population. Youth are the powerful agents of social change. The study adopts UN stated citizenry between the age of 15-34 years as a youth. Youth presently comprises a significant part of the Indian population. India is anticipated to have a 34.33% share of youth in the total population by 2020. Social media is capturing plenty of popularity, study divulges that the average person spends additional time each day on their smartphone and PCs than they do sleeping. The youth expends more than 27 hours a week on social media platforms. Social media enables them to communicate and stay in touch with their social peers 24 x 7. Youth is plugged with the internet and aware of the constant updates. Media literacy becomes imperative for the youth as they are the social agents, if social agents are not media literate then the development of the country will hamper. Mis informed youth can create confusion and will be misled. Media literacy is to educate and make aware to the youth about the different media sources, content and how to read the content. The focus of the study is to promote media literacy among Indian Youth. This study intends to make Indian youth an expository thinker of the media content so that they can develop critical thinking, become analytical choosers, and inculcate critical reading skills. The study tries to probe the sagacity of Media literacy amid Indian Youth through online surveys. The study is done on social media users who devour the internet more than two hours per day. The sample consumes information mainly political followed by entertainment and then International and sports. The survey reveals that the Indian youth face disinformation on social media routinely and sometimes they can unearth fake news and sometimes take it as truth. They find it hard to identify reliable and unreliable sources. The findings reveal that the Indian youth is somewhat aware of the media literacy but feel that media literacy should be enforced powerfully among the Indian citizens. The youth believes that thinking critically should be the main motive of media literacy followed by understanding the author's goal, creating media responsibly and become a smart consumer. The study concludes that social media platforms along with the government bear a responsibility to make Indian youth acquainted with the media literacy campaigns. Media literacy among youth can be imposed by organizing training programs, workshops by colleges and other educational institutions, incorporate in school and college curriculum.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, Youth, Education, 21st Century, Social Media, Misinformation.

Introduction

"If you are on social media, and you are not learning, not laughing, not being inspired or not networking, then you are using it wrong"

By: Germany Kent, American Print and Television
Journalist and Etiquette Social Media expert

Youth is zealous, spirited, ingenious and energetic and comprises the important section of the society. Youth is the most valuable manforce with passion, inspirations and tenacity for promoting economic, social, cultural and political developments of a country. The size of the young people's

population decides the growth and potential of the country. This segment of the population if channelized correctly can lead to the positive sustainable development of a nation. With the advent of digital media, social interactions have transformed drastically. This study progresses with the importance of technology and how it poses challenges to the social life of young people. The study elaborates with the recent examples of fake news and how it has impacted society as a whole. The study discusses the solutions to overcome the negative effects of digital technology on youth as a segment of the study.

Definition of Youth

'Youth defined as a period of life between childhood and adulthood. United Nations defines youth as persons between the age of 15-24 years, age between childhood and adulthood. The Indian National Youth policy 2014 defines the age of youth between 15 to 29 years as this age group comprises 28% of India's total population. According to the Database of the United Nations Population Division (2015) shows that India has the largest number of 10 to 24 years olds in the world. As per India's Census 2011, Youth in India constitutes one-fifth(19.1%) of India's total population. The youth share is expected to reach 34.33% by 2020 in total of India's population.'

Technology and Social Life

The advent of technology is regarded as transforming the social relations in the private and public lives of people. The Internet has transformed social relations in a way that it has become the most preferred form of communication. Zaryn Dentzel (2014) said that "the emergence of internet has given ignition to the argument that how communication through online networks affects the social life. Communication through digital media eliminates all the geographical barriers and brings everyone under specific communities and groups which are beyond space restrictions."

The 21st Century is globally based web bridging through new inventions in technology. Through the internet, interactions have become easier but pose new challenges to society. This transformation in social communication is of particular significance. However, analog communication tools still hold its importance in a few sectors, digital technologies have revolutionized the communication especially among young people. Surpassing all traditional barriers of space and time, opening up a new world of interaction possibilities.

As Carolyn Marvin in her book 'When old technologies were new' (1990) articulated that technology glorifies the opportunities and on the other hand can be threatening to the social relationships. She lays stress on how the innovations in telecommunications and electricity in the 1990s posed challenges that invited discourses to express the power of

technology. On one side of the coin, the newer technologies were promoted by experts which intensified the opportunities and on the flip side, there were claims that the technologies can be menacing to social life. For instance, the invention of the telephone was praised for efficiently making business and for easier communication but at the same time criticized for creating barriers in close and intimate relations. It is evident that similar discourses and debates are going on as were a century ago and now with the advent of digital technologies.

Similar kind of Discussions concretizes formation of 'Technological Determinism' by Karl Marx, where technology begins from an objective procedure of systematic and methodological research and later seen as effecting social and psychological changes. Harold Innis and Marshal McLuhan, the Canadian scholars set the best example of 'Medium is the Message'. They saw media as the nucleus of advancement and development. According to McLuhan, there exists a strong relationship between media, technology and language. He also laid stress on the use of media which has a certain effect on the individual, most importantly the effect on social life and communication is crucial.

Critics to Technology and Social Relations

Deriving to a relationship between technology and social relations manifest a hard-won task. Looking upon one side of the coin the scholars have build arguments that advancement in technology causes human actions, which is directed by the webs and circuits. (Marcuse 1941, Ellul 1964). On the flip side, the scholars define technology as liberating and thus reinforcing the developments in information and technology (Gilder 1989, Mitchell 1996). Raymond Williams who was a creative and intellectual analyst, his writings furnishes an important frame on understanding current technological innovations in an information society. He makes a powerful argument in a rational way, in which technology is **socially shaped and socially shaping**. **Herbert Marcuse** (1964) elaborated on the topic of technology and its inevitable progress. His writings represent the most penetrating sources to align with today's information age. "The movement of thought is stopped at barriers which appear as the limits of Reason itself. (p. 14) The instrumentalist's conception

of technological rationality is spreading over almost the whole realm of thought... The improved facilities of transportation and communication, the extension of training, the general dissemination of knowledge – all these factors seem to facilitate the exchangeability of [rational] functions.”

Youth and Social Media

In the last five years, the Indian digital Media witnessed a phenomenal rise in social media use and user base, which enables users to share the information with global audiences with barely any regulations or quality assurance. Social Media is like a jinx where on one hand, there is rapid sharing and creation of information with the help of the internet and on the other hand, it is a way of spreading misinformation, disinformation, propaganda through the internet bots by malicious users. These users reach far and wide at an unparalleled scale. This multiplies the fake information created with the motive a) to divert the traffic towards their website which will yield them financial benefits like clickbait b) to influence the audience's beliefs, resulting in influencing crucial affairs such as political happenings or on public issues.

The primary reason for the growth of social media is youth as they dedicate a chunk of their time to social media and political parties are well aware of the fact that youth is influenced by social media.

According to Reuters India, there is a (40%) internet penetration in the country. Interestingly, more than (95%) of users access the internet on their mobile phones. Facebook has a strong user base of 300 million active users in India, whereas Twitter users in India are about 30 million. The IANS report 2019 shows that internet users have doubled over the past half-decade. Statista report, global research agency depicts that 67% of total internet users by 2020 in India will be under the age group of 35 years.

Positives of Social Media Engagement

Educational aspect

It enables Academicians in effective collaborations and communications amongst themselves and their students. For students, the easy and free availability of the online educational material and resources assist them in their field of specialization. It further

improves their grades and in turn better comprehension of the subject. In research, it was found that approximately 60% of students use social media networks for educational purposes like discussing their school assignments and their educational topics.

Political aspect

Researches related to the General Election in 2019 shows the rise of voter participation due to social media platforms which give them easy and direct access to information from higher authorities. They also get motivated by watching their peers participating in politics through social media. Social media has become the biggest battleground for the political parties and the elections are won on the social media platforms. It enables the government and political parties to disseminate the information to a larger audience quickly and effortlessly.

Awareness being transformed

Social Campaigns on health, family planning and education-related information is promoted through social media. It gets noticed and appreciated by the users. It has become the largest source of disaster management, where people instantly inform about the natural calamities and call for help. Users reported that more than half of the time they are updated on the breaking news from social media. Social media assists in academic researches with easy accessibility to million of libraries around the world including first-hand access to archived data.

Social Benefits

Social networking has become the key advantage to the youngsters. In research, it was found that youngsters feel that social media strengthens their relationship. 52% of teenagers believed that social networking sites like facebook, twitter, WhatsApp have helped them develop their friendship in a better way. 88% of teenagers feel, it also helps in maintaining relationships with friends who are distanced far and wide and they don't see them regularly. 57% of youth agreed that the majority of friends are made online.

Job Opportunities

Social Media platforms are a great source for professionals as it helps them in building relations with global professionals and finding

prospective job opportunities. Social Media Networks through job portals help corporates find suitable employees for their organization vis a vis plays an important part for the unemployed people to find desired jobs. It was reported the 88.5% of employers have hired employees through LinkedIn, Facebook and via twitter.

Flip Side of Social Media

Ease of access to networking platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat has to lead to a steep rise in privacy concerns. Rise in dependency on social media leads to physical and emotional withdrawal. Rampant misuse of networking platforms through fake news and videos has a rattling effect on society. Phishing, Cyberbullying and Cyber Stalking are the ominous repercussions of social media.

Recent Cases of Fake News in India

2018 is often referred to as the “Year of Fake News” in India, with close to 300 million WhatsApp subscribers fake news and misinformation spread like wildfire making each segment of the society susceptible. More than a dozen incidents from north to south India occurred due to the escalation in fake rumors on social media; a sharp rise in hoax news right now temple vandalism to community killings headlined on social media in India.

Fake news of high scale child kidnapping caused maximum damage; indiscriminate sharing of hoax news on WhatsApp and Facebook spread to the far-flung areas of the country leading to fear amongst parents especially in the tier 3 cities of the country. Sham news on consumption and storage of cow beef across the length and breadth of India sparked massive public outrage and mob lynching; considered sacred amongst the Hindu population cow slaughter and storage of cow beef created a furor across India. Mere suspicion on storage of beef or cow slaughter lead to disastrous consequences. Fake videos of the furling flag of a particular country and a terrorist organization caused immense polarisation; with fake news of furling flag of a banned militant organization in politically and geographically sensitive areas of India lead to public anger and discrimination towards a certain community of the society

Deaths Linked to Social Media Rumours

A 55-year old woman in the state of Madhya Pradesh suspected of being from the lower caste for drinking water from a well-meant for people of the upper cast was ostracised from village. A transgender was killed in the state of Andhra Pradesh on being a suspected child kidnapper after fake news spread like mid-fire. A man in the northeastern state of Tripura was killed by a mob while spreading awareness about an erroneous message, all connected to fake news on the online platform. Two young media professional were mob lynched in Assam on being susceptible child traffickers moving around in an SUV, on the contrary, they were asking directions from local people.

Why Media Literacy?

The civil society felt a constructive and decisive awareness program is required to educate people to address fake news and promote media awareness. The Legal and cyber experts exerted demand for stringent laws to deal with fake news and killings related to fake news along with promoting practices essential self skill and positive self-expression. The social media platforms also felt the need to curbing the spread of fake news on their platforms and frame policy guidelines to promote media literacy. Hobbs and Frost (2003) have researched the school children and drawn conclusions that children who are media literate can easily comprehend the media messages and understand the objectives and perspectives lying under the media message.

Media Literacy Concept in the 21st Century

Literacy originated from a Latin word ‘Literatus’ which means educated, learned and having knowledge of letters. In a world of media, Media Literacy is like maps that help to navigate in the media world. Media Literacy is defined as “ability to access, evaluate and process media”. Media Literacy helps develops skills that develop Critical thinking among citizens. Buckingham (2017) to develop media literacy among the youth, there is a need to develop a degree of competence which depends on three factors: Cognitive level, Emotional and Social Development on a whole. The youth’s knowledge of the world and specific media experiences also plays an important role. Critical Media Literacy is

important for young people to participate in democracy. The youth are plugged to social media, so they must be media literate. Media Literacy will help the Indian Youth to be the wise consumers of media, develop critical thinking, recognizes the underlying meaning of media messages. Media literate citizens can integrate new information into the existing fabric of knowledge which motivates in constructive learning.

According to a Youth and Participatory Politics Survey, youngsters who have no basic information about media literacy are more easily trapped in inaccurate and false information and consider them to be true. It was established that 84% of young people would like to learn how to tell if online news and information is trustworthy. It was also found that youngsters who acquired basic skills of media literacy, 26% were more likely to comprehend well with the media messages and able to differentiate between fake and genuine news.

Key Goals for Media Literacy among Youth

1. Cultivate Concern for whether the content is accurate

The young country like India needs to cultivate among youth to navigate in this networked world of media. Developing critical thinking and the ability to differentiate between the fake news and genuine news is the need of the hour.

2. Providing skills and strategies for accessing the accuracy of truth claims.

Potter, 2005 said Media Literacy requires skills and knowledge structure. Skills include assessment, grouping, induction, deduction, synthesis and abstracting.

Critical Approach to Media Literacy and Youth

As far as developed countries are concerned, numerous researches have already been done to study the levels of media literacy and create awareness regarding the underlying motivations of the media messages. In the United States, an organization named NAMLE (National Association of Media Literacy Education) targeted towards developing critical understanding, analyzing and evaluating the media messages. Various workshops and online programs are scheduled from time to time to highlight the

essentials of media literacy and its role in 21st-century education.

In the United Kingdom, numerous researches by eminent researchers like Sonia Livingstone, Bober, 2004 on children concluded that the media literacy skills are not developed among them and lack the use of basic media literacy skills like the information of search engines, browsers, URLs. Whereas on the other hand, Facer (2003) said that the children have the functional expertise of intent while they lack the critical thinking approach and not able to link the internet and formal education healthily.

In developing countries like India Media Literacy is on the initial stage, not much work has been done in this field. The importance of Media Literacy is felt far and wide in Indian states, with the recent cases fake news and its ill effects on Indian society. This study helps in developing media literacy as a concept and analyzing from youth the importance of Media Literacy among them. Media Literacy's future depends on the logical interpretation of the digital world.

Objectives of the Study

- To analyze the sagacity of Media Literacy among Indian youth
- To find out the number of hours devoted by Indian youth on social media.
- To ascertain the perceptions of Indian youth for media literacy.
- To know who bears the responsibility to spread media literacy.
- To determine how media literacy can be promoted among youth.

Research Methodology

Method of Research is Survey Method. "The collection of statistics from a selected sample which is a representation of the universe through the answers to questions." (Check and Schutt, 2012). This method is commonly used in social and psychological research. (Singleton & Straits, 2009).

Area of Study is the Capital City of India-Delhi. Delhi is chosen as study areas as it is a Metropolitan city and hold a good number of migrant population and people adapt to new technology and innovations rapidly. Sample size- 100 respondents of age group between 15-24 years, 50 girls and 50 boys. Sampling

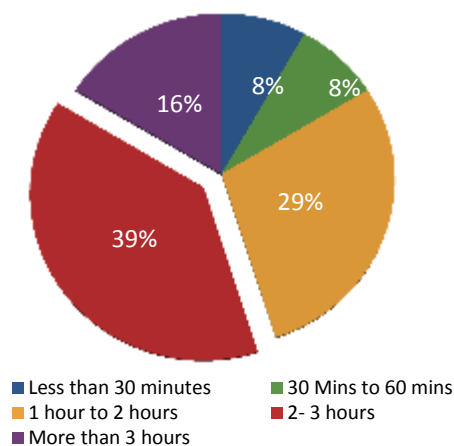
Technique- Stratified Proportionate Random sampling was adopted.

Tool - The nature of the study is empirical so the tool adopted is schedule. Empirical research helps in gaining knowledge with the help of direct or indirect observation. **Data Collection**- Two types of data is used in primary and secondary data. Primary data is the first-hand data collected with the help of research methods like surveys, observation or experiments. Data collected from published books, journals, articles and previous researches.

Key Findings

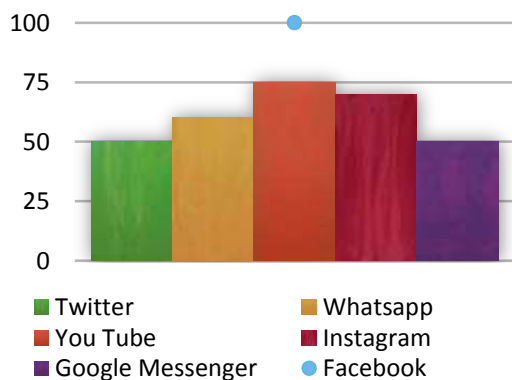
The survey on Media Literacy and Indian youth finds that:

1) Exposure to Social Media in a day



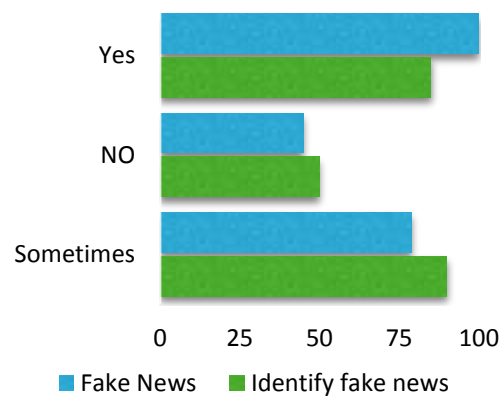
The above chart depicts the youth devotes on an average of 2 to 3 hours a day on social media platforms. Whereas 29% of the youngsters spend one to two hours a day. 16% of the youth sample spend more than three hours on social networking sites in a day.

2) Social Networking Site popular among Indian Youth



Facebook is the most popular social networking sites among the youngsters and when surveyed about the informational genre preferred by them, it was revealed that political information followed by entertainment and then the social news or information material is preferred by them.

3) Youth when survey about the **Fake News on Social Networking sites**, revealed that 90% of the youth sample encounter fake news frequently on social media platforms whereas 75% said they encounter fake news sometimes and very little percentage said that they hardly encounter fake news. The youth also revealed that 75% of the respondents were sometimes able to identify the fake news whereas 60% of them were able to differentiate between fake and genuine news.

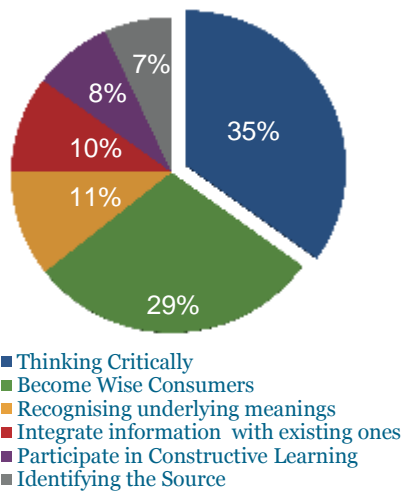


4) What is Media Literacy?

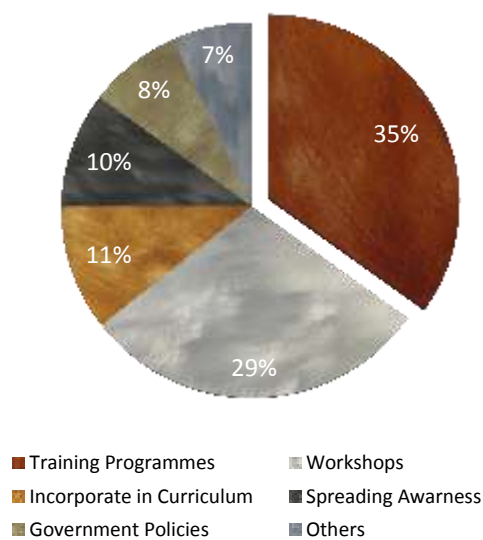
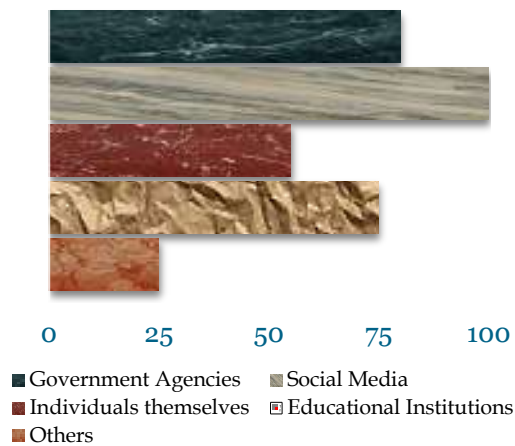
To identify whether the Indian youth are aware of Media Literacy, this question was developed. When surveyed it was divulged that 35% of the respondents believe that thinking critically is media literacy, whereas 29% believe that becoming wise consumers of the media messages is to be media literate, followed by recognizing underlying meanings, integrate information with the existing ones and participation in constructive learning.

5) Media Literacy can be spread by:

35% of the respondents believed that by organizing training programs among youth can help in spreading Media literacy. 29% believe that organizing workshops and seminars in their schools and colleges can make them aware and media literate. Others believed that incorporating in the education curriculum, spreading awareness of its importance and supporting government policies can be of great help.



6) Who bears the responsibility to spread Media Literacy?



According to youth, the data divulges that social networking sites bear the major responsibility to spread media education and

awareness followed by drafting of policies and programs by the government agencies and incorporating the media education as a part of educational institutions, at last respondents think that individual himself also bears responsibility of not spreading fake news and do efforts to be a media literate.

Conclusion

The above study draws the following Conclusion:

Media Literacy is to educate the youth about the different media sources, contents and how to read, analyze the message. With billions of bytes of data flowing in from all directions on the world wide web, it is imperative to authenticate the content and the origin of media message to cement media literacy. The findings from the study reveal that youth devours internet more than two hours per day, with the increase in internet penetration and high-speed broadbands time devoted to the internet is expected to go up north as the users are bound to expand and so is the availability of online content.

The Political followed by Entertainment news is preferred as more political representatives and entertainment celebrities are finding their feet on social media enhancing their presence, garnering more mileage and accruing followers. With the social outreach bound to increase in the future the flow of political and entertainment news will leapfrog in the times to come. As the flow of data is swelling with 24 * 7 access to information the young Indian youth are jostling with the reliability of the media source, similar news stories are accessible on various platforms with varying information confusing the reader on its originality, this is where media literacy play an important role in educating and making the youth to understand the and critically analyze the media content and share it wisely

The social media platforms such as facebook, twitter, youtube, WhatsApp must ensure that the content or information available on their respective portals is reliable and free from any bias. These networking sites play a pivotal role in promoting media literacy by regulating content and ensuring its authenticity. On the other hand, the government agencies involved in monitoring cyber activity should also shoulder responsibility by enacting stringent cyber and information laws to deter the spread

of misinformation or disinformation. The government must organize workshops and training programs at school, college-level supplementing it with online consumer awareness campaigns to educate Indian youth on media literacy

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