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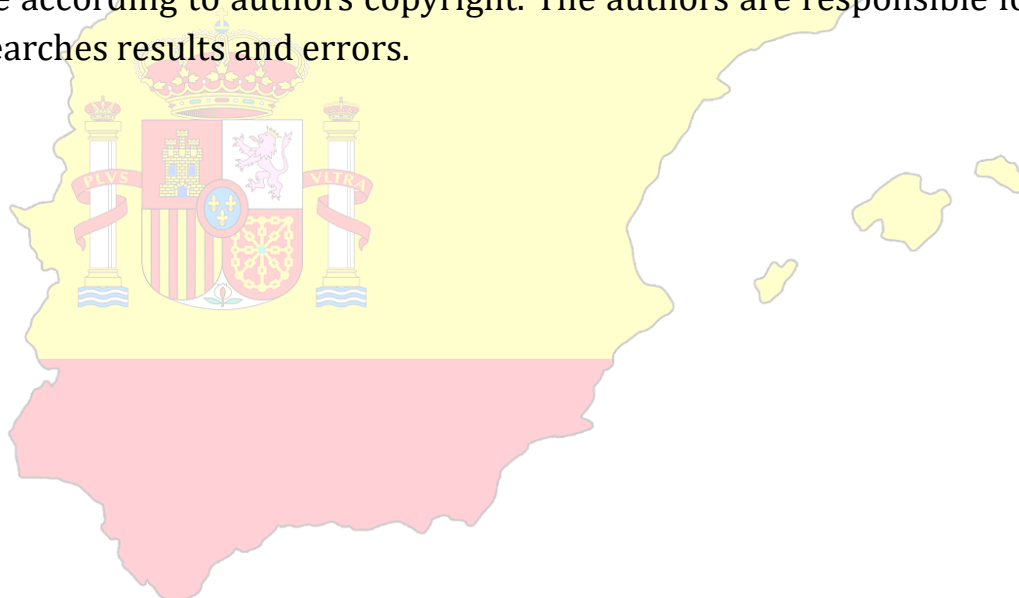


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Media literacy in the Digital Age: Challenges, Necessity and Development Directions

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Annotation: This article analyzes the role and significance of media literacy in the modern information space, as well as the urgent aspects of its development. As digital technologies expand rapidly and the consumption of information grows globally, issues such as fake news, manipulative content, information overload, and cybersecurity threats have intensified. The article discusses the essence of media literacy, its importance for society—especially for the younger generation—and effective ways of developing media literacy within the education system. The findings show that improving media literacy is a key factor in building a democratic society, creating a stable information environment, and strengthening young people's critical thinking skills.

KEYWORDS: Media literacy, information security, fake news, digital culture, information bubble, manipulation, cybersecurity, critical thinking, media content, information flow.

INTRODUCTION. In the 21st century, the development of information technologies has influenced all aspects of human life. Social networks, online mass media, blogs, and messaging platforms have created a powerful flow of information that exerts significant influence on public consciousness. Today, information not only spreads rapidly but also appears in various forms and with different intentions. Therefore, media literacy is understood not merely as the ability to consume media content but as a competence involving critical analysis, evaluation, fact-checking, and forming objective conclusions.

Media literacy plays an essential role in shaping a conscious and responsible information environment in society. Its importance is especially notable for students and young people, who frequently encounter a wide range of information, often accepting it without verification. The purpose of this article is to explore the relevance and necessity of media literacy in modern conditions from an academic perspective.

MAIN PART. In the digital environment, the concept of media literacy is becoming increasingly comprehensive. Originally, media literacy was associated only with understanding mass media. However, under the influence of globalization and technological advancement, it has gained a broader meaning: it now encompasses critical thinking, creative thinking, digital culture, cybersecurity awareness, media ethics, and media psychology.

One of the most serious issues in media literacy today is the widespread dissemination of fake information. Fake news is often created deliberately to manipulate public opinion. Such messages frequently contain emotional headlines, unverified facts, false statistics, or edited images and videos. Their rapid spread is largely due to users' low media literacy levels, lack of fact-checking skills, or the tendency to believe the first information they encounter. Fake news can significantly affect personal decisions, social moods, and even political processes.

Another major challenge in modern information consumption is information overload. This condition is known as "information fatigue," where individuals are exposed to excessive amounts of content but lack time to process or evaluate it properly. As a result, attention becomes scattered, important messages may be overlooked, and information consumption becomes unproductive. Media literacy equips individuals with the skills to filter information, compare sources, verify facts, and eliminate irrelevant content.

Cybersecurity is also a critical component of media literacy. Today, various online threats such as phishing links, cyber fraud, and malicious software pose significant risks to personal data and financial security. A media-literate individual can recognize these threats, protect personal information, and behave responsibly in digital environments.

Social media algorithms also contribute to the formation of "information bubbles," where users mostly see content that aligns with their existing interests or beliefs. This narrows their worldview, reduces exposure to diverse perspectives, and contributes to polarization within society. Media literacy encourages individuals to seek alternative sources, compare different viewpoints, and form balanced judgments.

The societal importance of media literacy is profound. Individuals equipped with media literacy skills are less vulnerable to manipulation, make conscious decisions, and actively participate in public life. Integrating media literacy into the education system fosters critical thinking, develops digital culture, and promotes responsible information consumption among youth. Ultimately, media literacy serves as a foundation for building a democratic society and ensuring a secure and balanced information environment.

CONCLUSION. As discussed in this article, media literacy is one of the essential competencies for individuals to function successfully in today's global information space. The rapid development of digital technologies, the growing influence of social networks, and the increase in fake information further highlight the importance of media literacy. Media literacy is not only about reading and understanding information but also about analyzing it critically, evaluating its accuracy, verifying sources, understanding the intention behind messages, and drawing fair conclusions. Developing this



competence plays a crucial role in ensuring social stability, protecting information security, and nurturing a conscious and responsible younger generation.

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