



EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH DIGITAL LITERACY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE INFORMATION AGE

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Annotation *Young people are leading the way in technological change in today's quickly changing digital environment. On the one hand, young people can interact with people around the world, access an endless amount of educational resources, and express themselves creatively. However, problems like false information, internet addiction, and inadequate media literacy pose a threat to their growth. This article examines how youth are affected by digitalization, emphasizing the value of media literacy and the necessity of appropriate online behavior.*

Key words: *media literacy, misinformation, media education, fake news, addiction, digital skills.*

Annotatsiya *Yoshlar bugungi tez o'zgarayotgan raqamli muhitda texnologik o'zgarishlarda yetakchilik qilmoqda. Bir tomondan, yoshlar butun dunyo bilan muloqot qilishlari, cheksiz ta'limiy resurslardan foydalanishlari va o'zlarini ijodiy ifoda etishlari mumkin. Boshqa tomondan esa, noto'g'ri ma'lumotlar, internetga qaramlik va yetarli darajadagi media savodxonlikning yo'qligi ularning rivojlanishiga tahdid soladi. Ushbu maqolada raqamlashtirishning yoshlarga ta'siri ko'rib chiqiladi, media savodxonlikning ahamiyati va onlayn xulq-atvorning to'g'ri bo'lish zarurati ta'kidlanadi.*

Аннотация *Молодые люди играют ведущую роль в технологических изменениях в сегодняшней быстро меняющейся цифровой среде. С одной стороны, молодёжь может взаимодействовать с людьми по всему миру,*



иметь доступ к бесконечным образовательным ресурсам и творчески самовыражаться. С другой стороны, такие проблемы, как ложная информация, интернет-зависимость и недостаточная медиаграмотность, угрожают их развитию. В данной статье рассматривается, как цифровизация влияет на молодёжь, подчеркивая важность медиаграмотности и необходимость правильного поведения в интернете.

INTRODUCTION

The majority of us believe we are reasonably media literate. We are able to access a wide variety of media to locate the games, entertainment, music, and information we desire. We are familiar with numerous celebrities' looks and a wealth of information about their life. We identify a variety of different musical genres and have formed firm tastes in what we enjoy. Using text, images, and videos, we may quickly compose messages and post them to different websites on the Internet. We are obviously aware of how to expose ourselves to the media, how to take in its information, how to find amusement in it, and how to utilize it to craft our own messages and spread them to others.

Are we literate in the media? Indeed, We have gathered a lot of knowledge and acquired extraordinary abilities. Speaking a language, reading, comprehending images, and following stories are important accomplishments, but we frequently Consider them a given. Although we shouldn't undervalue our accomplishments, we must also recognize that we can all become much more media savvy. Our current level of media literacy is likely comparable to that of your early adolescence in many respects. Our knowledge base about various media messages, including well-known songs, websites, and video clips, has significantly expanded since then. However, it's possible that our knowledge base hasn't expanded much in other areas, such as the economics of the mass media sector, who controls it, how content production decisions are made, and the various hidden ways that the constant flow of content impacts you and society. We can therefore do a lot with the media at your current level of media literacy, but if we expanded our knowledge in other areas, we could be using the media with much greater control and benefit. In today's fast-paced digital



world, technology connects us like never before, creating limitless opportunities for communication, learning, and invention. However, along with these developments come important issues that influence how we engage with the digital world. The spread of fake news affects our ability to discriminate between truth and deception, impacting public opinion and decision-making. Screen addiction traps people in a never-ending cycle of digital consumption, diminishing productivity, well-being, and real-world interactions. Furthermore, a lack of digital skills makes many people vulnerable—unable to properly handle technology, exposing them to security concerns and restricting their chances in an increasingly digital workplace.

FAKE NEWS & MISINFORMATION

In the digital age, false information and fake news have grown to be serious problems that affect how people think and make decisions. The term "fake news" describes intentionally made-up tales intended to lie, frequently for financial or political advantage. Contrarily, misinformation is content that is inaccurate or misleading and is spread without the intention of misleading, frequently as a result of misunderstandings or a lack of verification.

Social media, where untrue statements can become viral before fact-checkers step in, is a major contributor to the quick dissemination of misleading information. Fake news spreads 70% more quickly than actual news¹, according to studies, making it harder for individuals to tell fact from fiction. Some disinformation, including health-related myths that encourage negative behavior, can potentially have serious consequences. For example, Research by Guess, Nyhan, and Reifler (2020) indicates that a considerable portion of the American electorate was exposed to misleading online sources during the 2016 U.S. presidential election.² While fake news didn't necessarily *change votes*, it contributed to **misunderstandings of facts, distrust in media, and polarized opinions.**

SCREEN ADDICTION

¹ <https://www.science.org>

² Guess, A., Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2020). Exposure to untrustworthy websites in the 2016 U.S. election. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 4(5), 472–480. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-020-0833-x>



Screen addiction is a growing concern in the digital age, where excessive use of devices like smartphones, computers, and televisions can lead to negative physical and psychological effects. It is characterized by a compulsive need to engage with screens, often at the expense of productivity, social interactions, and overall well-being. Studies show that prolonged screen time can contribute to **eye strain, sleep disturbances, anxiety, and even cognitive decline.**³ The constant stream of notifications and digital entertainment stimulates the brain's **dopamine reward system**, reinforcing compulsive usage. Over time, this can lead to **reduced attention span, impaired memory, and social isolation.** Breaking free from screen addiction requires conscious effort, such as setting screen time limits, engaging in offline activities, and practicing digital detox strategies. According to [Amber Biello-Taylor](#) people spend up to seven hours a day looking at a screen for work-related purposes. When added to the four to six hours of personal screen time the average person engages in (mostly on their phone), almost half the day is spent with their eyes glued to a screen.⁴

LACK OF DIGITAL SKILLS

In today's technologically advanced society, the lack of digital skills is becoming a bigger problem. It describes the gap between people's actual skill set and the digital competencies needed in contemporary businesses. This disconnection may restrict professional options, limit efficiency, and even create security threats. This problem is caused by a number of factors, one of which is the speed at which technology is developing, which makes it challenging for workers and educational institutions to keep up. Furthermore, many people are unable to acquire necessary skills due to restricted access to digital training, particularly in areas with a lack of digital literacy programs. This imbalance has serious consequence: companies have trouble hiring skilled workers, and people have trouble adjusting to digital tools that are now necessary in almost every sector. Livingstone

³ longevity.stanford.edu

⁴ www.addictioncenter.com



and Helsper (2007) emphasize that digital inclusion involves more than just internet access—it also depends on how effectively young people use online tools for learning and development.⁵ Media literacy is essential for participating fully in the digital age. Young people need critical thinking skills to evaluate online content, understand bias, and create their own media responsibly. Hobbs outlines a national strategy for integrating media literacy into education, emphasizing its role in democracy, education, and personal empowerment.⁶ Promotes teacher training, curriculum reform, and public awareness to build a media-literate society.

CONCLUSION

In an era dominated by digital content and online communication, media literacy has become known as a critical skill for safe information management. The difficulties, ranging from misinformation and algorithmic biases to a lack of critical thinking resources, show the crucial need for comprehensive education in media literacy. Society may build a more informed and adaptive population by teaching people how to identify trustworthy information, detect manipulation, and interact wisely with digital platforms. Educators, governments, and parents all play critical roles in describing media literacy programs. Teachers might include critical thinking activities into their classes, while politicians can promote transparent laws and fund in educational efforts. Parents, too, ought to encourage digital responsibility at home by teaching younger generations in responsible online activity. Finally, promoting media literacy is more than just consuming information; it is about preparing people to think critically, engage meaningfully, and contribute to a society based on truth and informed decision-making. By collaborating, we can make sure that future generations have the ability to manage all aspects of the digital world with confidence and decision.

⁵ Livingstone, S., & Helsper, E. J. (2007). Gradations in digital inclusion: Children, young people, and the digital divide. *New Media & Society*, 9(4), 671–696.

⁶ Hobbs, R. (2010). *Digital and media literacy: A plan of action*. The Aspen Institute.



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