THE EXPERIENCE OF MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND THE AWARENESS THEY HAVE GAINED: AN ACTION RESEARCH

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Abstract

In the ongoing struggle with media and technology on the individual-society axis, the importance of having a say in social and political issues as active citizens and being able to express oneself in digital environments is increasing. For this reason, media literacy, which is a life skill, appears as a skill that should be maintained throughout life in both formal and informal environments. The aim of this study is to improve the media literacy awareness of university students. The participants of the research are 150 university students who are studying in different departments of three state universities in three underdeveloped cities in Turkey and have not previously received media literacy education. The data of the research, which was designed as action research, was collected in the 2021-2022 academic year within the scope of an international outsourced project. An eight-week media literacy training was completed by providing face-to-face and online training to the students three days a week. The data results of the training were collected through a semi-structured interview form and also by the evaluation of student activities. According to the results of the research, the media literacy awareness of the students studying at all three faculties, which was weak at the beginning, increased by strengthening after the education. Students have gained an important awareness about criticizing the media and questioning the media, and media production.

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Keywords: Media, media literacy education, university students, higher education, action research

1. Introduction

The media is so effective today that it has become one of the most important environments to guide the society and to determine its culture, way of thinking, and character. The media is more effective in such means of producing and spreading ideology than traditional ideology-producing institutions such as families, schools, temples, barracks, and workplaces (Yıldırım, 2010: 72). In the media, previously traditionally and now called new media, there have been transformations under the influence of changes in time, form, content, and ideology. New Media technologies - internet, mobile broadband, e-commerce, internet-based entertainment, social networking, etc. fundamentally changes the way people interact with each other and the world. With the transition from traditional media to new media, which are now called, we have become more involved in digital environments. However, the new media technologies – the internet, mobile broadband, e-commerce, internet-enabled entertainment, social networking, and others - are fundamentally changing the way people interact with the world and with each other (Jackson, 2010). More and more individuals are using digital media tools and platforms with phones being used almost every moment of the day in addition to online chats and blogs. Especially, young people are unconsciously trained with media culture, and the time they spend with the media is increasing day to day. Children exposed to the media for hours a day face an incredible number of media messages every day (Gutnick et al, 2010; Livingstone et al, 2017).

They access messages through various media such as television, film, social media, video and digital games, and popular music. A computer is though a popular entertainment device, TV is still a priority device for entertainment. These media create a learning environment for adolescents and young people (Kaiseer Foundation Family, 2010; c. Hobbs, 2010: 26).

With its many positive and negative features, the importance of using it consciously and accurately without being too influenced by the media is increasing. Being a conscious media consumer and producer, the way to realize the reality of the media is through having "media literacy skills". In a globalized world, the importance of individuals being involved in social and current issues as active citizens with freedom of expression is felt more (Literat, 2014). On the other hand, with the words of the media, what the audience receives may be different. In other words, the same image, news, can be the source of different naming in the audience. Just because the social context is different, the fact that the content is the same does not change anything. Media information finds meaning through the special relationships established by the audience and followers with their own worlds rather than formal characteristics (Türkoğlu, 2016: 129). All these reasons reveal the importance of the conscious use of the media and correct interpretation. This seems to be possible by teaching the skill of media literacy and making it a way of life (Kellner & Share,2007; Hobbs, 2010). Due to the increasing media relations in today's society, the goal of the methods developed for the individual and social processing of information transmitted by mass media is to raise individuals who are informed, have the ability to resist the message they receive, can look analytically and are sensitive to the environment they live in, which is necessary for democracies to function better (Alton et al, 2013).

The USA, The Association of the National Center for Media Literacy (NAMLE) defines media literacy as a skill. Accordingly, media literacy is to gain the ability to have the equipment to perceive media messages correctly and to produce new messages over time (NAMLE, 2020). Media messages are carefully selected, edited, revised, and edited structures. Although it may seem real, the world it shows us is not the real one, but the way the truth is represented by the media. There is a close relationship between the way the media presents the world to us and the way media consumers perceive the world. Media messages embody values and ideologies. Media messages are produced within economic, social, political, historical, and aesthetic contexts. Media messages allow people to comprehend social reality (Hobbs,1998).

The functions of mass media are listed as providing news and information, socializing, motivating, preparing a discussion environment, education, contributing to cultural development, entertaining, and integrating. However, priority is given to sharing news and information. It is seen that there has been a shift from a protectionist approach to a critical approach over time. The way has taken to support individuals as active, participatory individuals. With the development of technology, it is necessary to better analyze and evaluate the media that have changed in terms of technology and content. What will provide this situation is critical media literacy education and culture (Federov,2011: 59; İnal, 2016: 90). The media literacy skills expected from individuals in the world of the 21st century are the ability to think critically, to take part in society as an active citizen, to communicate effectively, and to produce their own critical and new media content (Kartal & Kıncal, 2012; Jolls & Johnsen,2018). According to the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) Media Literacy's statement media literacy expands the traditional concept of literacy to include the forms of communication that dominate the lives of our students (Sperry,2016). So how does media literacy take place in higher education?

1.1. The Importance of Media Literacy in Higher Education

One of the four key characteristics that media literacy offers for vocational teacher education is related to formal higher education: Formal higher education and diploma programs: prospective teachers can earn media literacy by integrating their education into their classrooms or by treating it as a separate course, it says. On the other hand, the Institute of Technology in International Education (ISTE) talks about the standards students should have to perform effective learning in the digitizing world. These: a-creativity and innovation, b-Communication and collaboration, c-research, d-critical thinking, problem-solving and decision making, e-digital citizenship, and f-the use of technology are disclosed as (ISTE, 2016). The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2009) is explains the skills of 21st: Learning and innovation skills (creativity, innovation, critical thinking, problem-solving); Information, Media, and technology skills (information literacy, media literacy, technology literacy), and life and career skills (entrepreneurship, self-management, leadership, etc.) are classified as. As can be seen, media literacy skill comes to the fore as a life skill that should be acquired. The European Commission, one of the organizations that contribute to the development of media literacy skills, has determined the objectives of media literacy. Accordingly, it is important that an individual who is faced with intense media messages at any time gains the ability to analyze these messages and find the most useful one for him by making an assessment of the information flow. Media literacy education should be provided at all levels. In this regard, emergency education, media productions (News, Text, series, movies, social media content, multimedia elements, visual narratives, advertisements, and computer games, such as due to his influence in their everyday lives, more and more young people of similar ages and studied in high school and college, it is stated that it should be given (European Commision, 2018). In today's world, it is not enough for students to acquire only technological competencies. Young people convey their thoughts to adults through media messages (Kotilainen, 2009: 145). Due to the future democratic and active citizenship roles of young people, it is thought that media education will prepare them better, they will understand and evaluate the problems of the society they live in better and faster, and it will provide them with an intellectual infrastructure (Kubey,2002; Baldwin-Philippi,2012; European Commision, 2018).

In this context, media culture should be integrated with education as part of general education in universities, and teacher-training institutions, that is, within the entire education system (Fedorov, 2011: 59). It should be taught by integrating it into traditional disciplines or as a separate course. This approach will support lifelong learning. Currently, media activists also consider media literacy as a lifelong process (Masterman, 1997; Buckingham, 2003). However, according to some experts, post-secondary school media literacy has been significantly lacking from experimental data (Schmidt, 2012: 68; Mihailidis,2008). Further experimental evaluation of media literacy results at the university is also required. In support of all this, UNESCO emphasizes that media literacy should be considered in the context of adult education and lifelong education, in addition to taking part in formal education programs (UNESCO,2011). Media literacy especially tries to make young people thoughtful, reliable, and effective media consumers and producers.

Various studies have been conducted on the media literacy education of young people. Morrell (2011) discusses the need for media literacy in English teachers. Stein and Prevett, on the other hand, advocate media literacy training for social studies teacher candidates (Stein & Prevett, 2009). In fact, media literacy should be added to the curriculum at all grade levels (Swaim, 2002; Baker, 2010: 136). Despite the importance of the subject, there is no consensus in the literature on how media literacy should be given. The interdisciplinary nature of media literacy,

and therefore the emphasis on the need for students from almost all levels and fields to receive it, points to the necessity of providing this education in the form of seminars in each department and even in the course. On the other hand, it was also stated that media literacy should be taught as an independent course with a special curriculum. The proponents of this view claimed that the compression of media literacy into each lesson would reduce the importance that should be given to this education and said that only the relevant person would benefit from this education (Scheibe & Rogow, 2012). Unlike the two approaches in question, there are those who argue that media literacy can be given through practical training, beyond just being able to recognize and evaluate the media (Buckingham, 2013:1).

Media literacy emphasizes not only the acquisition of skills, but also a new deficit of today's societies within the framework of "critical and democratic citizenship". In this context, the concept raises not only a practical functional and instrumental requirement, but the necessity of critical reason (Türkoğlu, 2016: 266). Knowing the concepts and objectives of media literacy of each individual, it is important for citizenship awareness to participate by taking their own decisions in the cultural, political and economic fields created by the media. Teachers have the potential to transform society by changing and renewing educational systems and developing the knowledge and skills of future generations (UNESCO,2005: 11). Just like that, all other departments also have the power to change the system in which they will take part. Without examining the media, it is clear that an unconscious individual is open to all kinds of guidance in the face of the media and can be exploited morally, culturally, and economically.

1.2. Media Literacy in Turkey

Although the first media literacy beginnings and applications are seen in Europe and the USA, this concept is new for African, Asian, and Middle Eastern countries (Belshaw, 2011: 34). In the US, states and school districts set media literacy standards individually, as there is no national policy. Here, media literacy education is integrated with courses such as English, language, citizenship, social sciences, and health knowledge (Cramer,2015). The UK, on the other hand, although there are shortcomings in terms of national policy, gives Media literacy a place in educational programs. Also, they are more successful in applications (McDougall & Livingstone, 2014). The process of harmonization with Turkey's candidacy to the European Union, which started at the end of the 1990s in Turkey, is the starting point of the media literacy movement (Açıkalın, 2017: 52). However, the real impetus was gained in the Final Report of the Communication Council, which RTÜK organized in Ankara on February 20-21, 2003 with the contributions of the General Directorate of Press and Information and TRT. In this report, it was proposed for the first time to provide the media arrow course for primary and secondary education students. As a result of the meetings and conferences held in 2004 and 2005, the commission established in partnership with RTÜK and the Ministry of National Education has prepared a draft curriculum and teacher's guide for the media literacy course (RTÜK,2016). Then, on August 31, 2006, the Primary elective media literacy course was accepted. Since the 2007-2008 academic year, it has started to be taught as an elective course in all of Turkey. In Higher education, an important decision was made on May 16, 2018, and it was decided to add the Media literacy and Education course as a General Culture Elective course in social studies teaching undergraduate programs and as a Compulsory Field Course for final grades. In this regard, the teaching profession general qualifications and teacher strategy document (2017-2023) developed by the Ministry of National Education in 2017 was taken as a basis. For example, there are various acquisitions aimed at improving media literacy, which is one of the skills included in the social studies curriculum (MoNE,2018). If all updated teacher education undergraduate programs are examined, it can be seen that some courses of Media literacy are

included as Field Education Elective Courses in undergraduate programs and some as General Culture Elective Courses (Dolanbay, 2018). Unfortunately, it has not been possible to see this important development in other faculties or departments. There are no media literacy courses in faculties like Literature, Engineering, Medicine, Law, or Islamic Sciences, even if they are elective. For this reason, it is very important to educate students who do not have knowledge of the concept, content, and application of media literacy skills before. This situation increases the significance of the study. The fact that it is an example application of how media literacy can be carried out at the university level also increases the originality and value of the study. This research aims to improve the awareness of university students about media literacy skills. Within the framework of this general purpose, answers to the following sub-questions have been discussed:

1. What is the level of media literacy of university students before education?
2. How did the media literacy education provided affect the students' media literacy levels?
   a- What are their views on the concept of media literacy?
   b- What are the opinions about their awareness of media literacy after training?

2. Method

2.1. Focus of the Study:

This study was developed in the design of action research with the aim of changing and improving an existing situation. Although there are many action research cycles in the literature, action research can be depicted in 4 steps: 1. Plan 2. Collection of data 3. Analysis and 4. reflection (Henning et al,2009:8; Cohen, et al.2007:306).

2.2.Participants:

The sample of this research consists of a total of 150 university students from the Faculties of Education, Science, and literature, and Islamic Sciences of three state universities in Turkey in the 2021-2022 academic year.

Table 1: *Information about the participant group of the study*

University	Department/ Number	N	Gender	Age
Muş Alparslan University	Education Faculty	90	F:76 M:37	19-34
Bitlis Eren University	Faculty of science and literatüre- and Faculty of Islamic sciences	30	F:9 M:15	19-35
Bingöl University	Faculty of science and literatüre-	30	F: 18 M:5	19-30
Total:	150 Students	150		

Participation in the research is voluntary. Detailed information was given to the students about the objectives and process of the research before starting. Considering the ethical principles, nicknames such as K1, and K2 were given to the students participating in the research. The quotations between K1-K8 included in the research are students at Bingöl University, between K9-K16 point to Bitlis Eren, while K17 and K25 points to students at Muş Alparslan University. Direct citations have been made in order to increase the reliability of the

research. "Criterion sampling", one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used as a sample. The basic understanding of this method is the study of situations that form predetermined criteria (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008:112). The criterion in this study is to be a university student and not to have received media literacy education before. The educational dimension of the study lasted for eight weeks.

2.2 Data Collection

The data given in the research were collected with student activity papers, semi-interview form. In order to improve students' differences in media literacy, various activities have been conducted that improve their media literacy skills. In the analysis of the data, the content analysis method was used for individual interviews. The graded scoring key prepared (rubric) by the researcher was used in the evaluation of student activity reports 1. In data analysis. Collection of data, 2.Reduction of data, 3.Exhibition of data, 4. The stages of description and verification of the results were followed (Miles ve Huberman,1994: 12).

4. Findings

As a result of the analysis carried out according to the research questions, (1) Findings on media literacy information before and after education, (2) Findings on the level of realization of the applications made in the educational process, (3) Findings on media literacy awareness after education the themes have been reached.

4.1.Findings on media literacy information before and after education

At the beginning of the project training, it was tried to understand what the students' existing knowledge about media literacy skills is. For this purpose, individual interviews were conducted with the students before the training. The majority of the students said that they did not have knowledge about the concept or that it existed, but that it was insufficient. The students said that they did not know the content that made up media literacy before the education, that they only consumed (watched, listened to) the programs in the media without thinking. When it comes to media literacy, they stated that only social media and mass media come to mind. As can be seen in the table, those who said they had information also stated that they had only heard his name. They could not give any explanation about what the concept covers or its features.

Table 2: *Findings on media literacy information before and after education*

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes	N
Previously known	Information about the skill	Have no information	20
		Insufficient knowledge	5
	Knowns	I've heard, but I don't know the contents	3
		The platform where I receive news about current issues	1
		I only know it by name	1

What is known after training	The learned	The importance of questioning the message	16
		The importance of being critical	12
		That it have an implicit message	11
		Characteristics of ML	9
		Definition of ML	9
		Skills of ML	9
		The importance of using consciously	6
		That it have changed perceptions	5
		Influencing individuals	5
		The importance of investigation	4
		Media production	
		Harm and benefits	4
		The importance of analyzing	3
		false -fake news	3
			3

Some of the direct quotes about what preschool students know are as follows: (P6): *To be honest, I didn't know much about ML. I was just thinking of the media as a platform where we can get information from current issues. I was watching the ad just because it was an ad, I wasn't thinking about why it was being made.*" stated. (P11): *I didn't know much about media literacy. I had information about the media, but I didn't have any information about ML. I knew media literacy only by name. I joined this project to raise my awareness* they explained that they had no information with their words. Another participant, P20, is stated: *Before attending the Media Literacy training, I had some knowledge. But before the education, I could not explain the concept of media literacy, what it consists of, and the moral, economic, cultural, social issues in it. I was watching programs in the media like I was watching a movie. So I didn't understand what factors they were trying to convince me using media.* With his statements, he/she explained that he/she had a non-comprehensive knowledge of the skill. The majority of students do not know about ml. However, it is worth noting that the knowledge of students attending the Faculties of Literature and Islamic Sciences is less.

At the end of the training, the same question was posed to the student's again. This time, almost all of the students said that education made them conscious of ML. As can be understood from the table, they stated that they learned the concepts, content, features and skills of media literacy. They also stated that they understood the importance of questioning, being critical, and researching a media message. Some of the direct statements about their views after training are as follows: P2: *First of all, I learned that we need to use the media consciously. I have learned that information transmitted to us through the media can implicitly give false messages, such as advertising, propaganda. I've learned that we shouldn't take information directly, that we should look for meaning underneath it. I didn't understand the lesson before I saw it, because I didn't have the skills to question it, and after taking the lesson, I thoroughly*

learned about its harms and benefits. Another student, P5, expressed what he learned in the following sentences. *We have learned how to use the media effectively in education and how to protect ourselves against its dangers. We have learned about the diversity of video design and social media networks. I can understand the messages from the media much better now. I can see whether the message created is made for reaction, to be informed or to create awareness.* P15 has also explained what they have gained with education with the following words: *I learned that there are messages under the ads and that individuals should use the media effectively. I have learned that it is very important in shaping the lives of individuals and societies. I have learned that what is reflected in the media may not reflect the truth that individuals should not believe everything they see by researching them, and that they should look at every issue from a critical point of view.*

4.2. Findings on the level of realization of the activities (practices) they have prepared in the educational process

The students developed five different activities during the eight-week media literacy training. These are; digital storytelling, Short film making, True / false news analysis, How do I get to the truth?, and How often do I use social and digital media? Addiction and awareness. To evaluate these activities, a rubric was prepared by the researcher. In addition, a rubric has been prepared evaluating the media literacy competencies that students will gain when they perform the activities. According to the existence of the dimensions described by the explanations, levels such as low, medium, and high are given. The following table provides explanations about these competencies.

Table 3: *Information about the qualification of ML student working papers:*
Example Activity 1

| Activity name: Digital storytelling	Description	Level/Evaluation
ML competence indicators:		
Content	Knowledge of media concept, feature, principle	High: New and correct information about media literacy.
Contact/ using media	Frequency of contact with media	High: Every activity contacts with various types media messages
Creativity/ product	Different aspect of media literacy	High: Create one's own media product
Interpretation	Ability to access, analyze and critical thinking of various media messages (visual, text)	Analyze and critique of different media
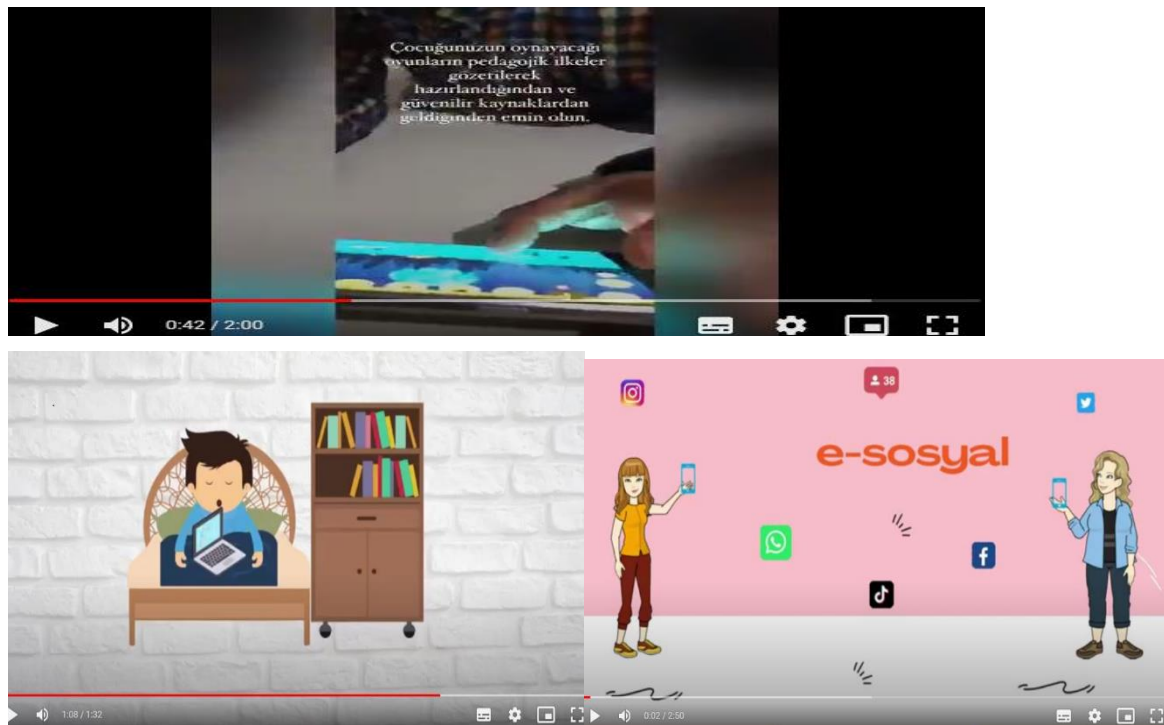
Photo: Some examples of student applications for digital storytelling and short film activities

All the activities prepared by the students in the process of media literacy awareness education indicate a high level of media literacy proficiency. The activities prepared by the students have a high percentage of media content, using medium, creativity and evaluation dimensions that directly characterize media literacy. They were able to make various explanations about the concept of media, media characteristics, skills, types of media and their analysis, social, political, cultural and moral effects of media, and give examples from their own lives. Based on this, it is possible to say the art of students' awareness of media literacy.

Table 4: *The relationship of applications with ML skills*

Activities	Relation to ML
Digital storytelling	Access, awareness, production, creativity,
Short film making,	access, awareness, production, creativity,sharing
True / false news analysis, How do I get to the truth?	Access, awareness, inquiry, analysis, evaluation,
How often do I use social and digital media? Addiction and awareness	Researching, inquiry, analysis, evaluation, production.

As can be seen in the table, the activities applied in the trainings improved the students' competencies for media literacy skills. In addition to the students' knowledge of the concept of media literacy, their awareness of their skills has increased.

4.3. Findings related to the media literacy awareness they gained after education

In the study, students were asked to make assessments about the MOY consciousness/awareness that they think they have gained themselves. The table is presented below:

Table 5: *Students views on the media literacy awareness they gained after education*

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes	N
Awareness	Self awareness	I'm questioning the messages	16
		I'm researching messages	11
		I Criticize	10
		I have reduced my use (social media)	9
		I'm getting the right information	8
		I'm being selective	6
		My view of the media has changed	4
		I use it more effectively	3
		I'm more objective	2

One of the students, P3, tried to explain the awareness that has formed in him with the following words: *Thanks to media literacy training, there have been changes in me. Now I have started to examine the news I have read, advertising products, etc., and the events I have seen in the media more carefully. When I saw a news article before, I used to read and pass by without examining its content, and thanks to the lesson, I started to examine it more. I have started to look more critically, I am trying to research the same news from several places and reach the right one.* In this regards P4 says: *It changed me more or less even though I knew the meaning of ML, I didn't know how to apply it to my life. I knew critical thinking, but I didn't know how to look critically. I'm more conscious now and I notice it easily. There were various news sites, and I started to better distinguish which of them were true and which were false news. I tried to reduce the use of social media.* He/she draws attention to the awareness formed with these sentences. P8, who thinks that the media changes perceptions, also thinks that awareness of the media has developed in him: *Sometimes in films, the event is pulled in other directions, thus trying to change the perception of society. I can see they're biased in the news. I can understand that it's real fake news. Is the exact time of the news given, and how is the news reflected on other sites? I do research on who the author is, the author.* P12: *ML training made me more aware of the media. I am now paying attention to using social media such as Instagram WhatsApp more consciously. After the training, I don't just watch and think about the sub-message, I analyze it. In questioning media messages, I try to look at multiple sources, not from one source.* P21 says: *I can now better understand the message that is being given. I understand the messages that are wanted to be given with news programs, Twitter, especially ones placed at the back of TV programs. I often used social media because I didn't have ML knowledge and skills. I would also react in a biased way to a news story I saw, a share. But now I don't react to everything I hear, every time I see, every time I hear with prejudice, I compare it with other news sites, I research it.* Finally, P25 says: *I now approach the messages given in a different way, at a critical level. While I was just looking before, now I started to see messages in the*

background. I use more limited time in my media usage. Hate, sexuality, violent news in the media changed my sensitivity to these issues after the training. She/he explained the awareness that formed in him with his words.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

   This article is aimed at university students studying in different departments of three different universities to gain awareness of media literacy with the education they receive. As a result of the analysis of the data, it was found that the students' awareness of media literacy is high. Masterman (2001) says that the purpose of media education is to provide students with the ability to evaluate media messages. As a result of the analysis of the interviews conducted at the beginning of the education, it is observed that the students' media literacy knowledge, which was low before the education, increased after the education. The students gained awareness about the content, subject area, and sub-skills of the media literacy skill. They stated that they learned the importance of analyzing, evaluating, producing, researching, and questioning media texts, the different effects of the media on individuals and society, and their benefits and harms. On the other hand, students explain that they have learned to question the media the most through education. The questioning taught in the trainings and asking critical questions to the media with key questions supported them to acquire this skill. Indeed, "key concepts" allows us to ask critical questions about how media are built, how they represent the world, how they are produced and used (Buckingham,2013:4). The critical inquiry is one of the significant goals of media literacy. According to Thoman, it is not about asking any question but rather asking the right questions. This is important that what do we want student how can he/she ask the right questions? (Baker, 2016). Without critical pedagogy and core principals, media literacy is not realizable.
In the research, it was found that the level of media literacy differs according to the department of Education. It is noteworthy that the students who initially attended the faculties of Literature and Islamic Sciences had less knowledge. It can be considered that the frequent inclusion of literacy in the courses of the Faculty of Education and the digital transformation projects at the mentioned university is effective in this. Studies conducted in different areas of teacher education support this (Lenhart,2009; Literat,2011). However, from the answers given at the end of the training, it is noticeable that the awareness levels of all three universities are similar. Ashfaq, Ibrahim & Ishak (2021) examined the media literacy levels of university students who continue their education in different departments. This survey compares the students of the Media Department with students of other faculties, such as English, Psychology, and Business administration. According to the study results University students in media departments tend to be more media literate than the students in other departments. Based on this, it can be said that university students who have received media education will have different perspectives on the media. in our research, the initial knowledge of the students of the Faculty of Education is higher than the other two faculties/departments.

 The activities implemented in the training have increased students' awareness of their skills in addition to their knowledge of the concept of media literacy. On the other hand, the mobile phones they use while preparing short films with the Canva tool, used in digital storytelling have also improved their technology use and digital literacy skills. Thanks to these individual and group activities, students have gained the ability to produce media. Buckingham (2013) also states that while media education includes creativity in the form of media production, digital technologies offer new possibilities. Based on this, it is concluded that the use of digital technology supports media production.

Students also gained awareness in the dimension of applying the Ml skill. It is possible to see this under the theme of awareness that they think has formed in them. They stated that they are now questioning media messages, researching from different sources, being selective, reducing media consumption, being more objective, and using the media more effectively. The students explained that they were more conscious after the training and that they understood the messages from the media much more clearly with the increase of their awareness. In fact, people with critical media literacy skills analyze and evaluate the media by distinguishing bias and stereotypical situations. Individuals who research media effects and develop their ability to understand multiple meanings create new media (Kelner & Share, 2005:372).

There are studies that try to find out the media literacy levels of university students (Som & Kurt, 2012; Karataş, 2008; Güven, 2014; Saçan & Adıbelli, 2016; Diaz, Hallaq, Xiong, 2019; Tutkun,2020;Syam &Nurrahmı, 2020; Tuğtekin,2021). However, it is not enough just to determine the level. There is a need for experimental, applied studies aimed at developing skills.

Kartal (2007) aimed to determine the effect of media literacy education given to secondary school students on students' perception of messages in television series. As a result of the research, it has been concluded that "Media Literacy Education" develops awareness of media messages in students, provides a critical perspective on media messages, and the ability to analyze and evaluate messages. The results of the study mentioned in terms of improving the media analysis and evaluation skills of the students in terms of the education provided support this research. Meehan and colleagues (2015) "media literacy in teacher education: a good fit " across the curriculum", titled Private College of education in the study of media literacy have done research on how teacher education programs are included. After various training activities provided by the teacher candidates supporting media literacy, critical thinking skills by using persuasive techniques in the media, identifying all kinds of media tools, analyzing, evaluating, and having acquired new skills such as media production, is concluded. Tang & Yang (2016) analyze the current situation of media literacy education in Chinese universities and explain the importance of media literacy education aimed at the development of media literacy in their study. Although it does not contain any educational applications like in this research, it is similar to this research in terms of explaining the ML situation in universities and what needs to be done to strengthen media literacy. Based on the survey results of 900 university students, reveals media literacy strategies such as providing ML education awareness, developing rich educational content, and educational methods.

In another study Schilder & Redmond (2019) examined the changes in critical questioning habits of university students in their studies. They aimed to measure the students' questioning of the media through the questions asked in an advertisement. For this purpose, they analyzed the questions before and after participation in media literacy courses according to the level of complexity associated with the concept of media literacy. The findings of the study revealed that the students' questions were more complicated after the media literacy lessons. it was found that the students paid more attention to the basic concepts related to production and representations after the training. The study is similar to this research in that it analyzes the changes before and after media literacy education. Both studies have similar results in terms of students gaining the ability to question the media after their education. They improve students critical thinking and reveal the importance of media literacy education to be given.

As a result, ML allows children and adults to make individual decisions, as well as freedom of expression and active participation in society. It teaches people what programs to choose freely and how to interpret programs thanks to the knowledge they receive from it. Media literacy will provide individuals with access to information and conscious consumption by giving them the ability to question and analyze. Individual and social awareness of the media helps to understand the mass communication process: strengthening attitudes, values, and culture, shapes the types of behavior. Strategies can be developed to improve the analysis and discussion of media messages, such as intervening in the use of alcohol and tobacco by young people. International and cultural collaborations should be established in order to improve media literacy. New educational policies should be developed in order to incorporate media literacy into the education system. Media literacy should be freed from the options of filling empty courses or becoming an elective course. When considering the Turkish education system, the compulsory media literacy course should be added to the curriculum not only in educational faculties but also in other faculties and colleges such as engineering, medicine, and law. Activities should be prepared with appropriate learning methods and materials. Instead of studies that determine the level of media literacy of university students, interactive research aimed at practice should be conducted to support their development and give awareness of media literacy. Various methods and techniques that will make the student active in media literacy courses should be applied. Project-based learning, creative and reflective learning, critical thinking, collaborative learning, problem-based learning, multiple intelligences, internet, and computer-based learning, and alternative learning can be counted among these.

Lastly, the results from this research are very crucial. Because this research will support the demand for media literacy education by identifying the gap in universities.

5.1 Recommendations

Media literacy should be applied as a lesson at all levels, starting from kindergarten. The use of web tools containing digital technologies and educational technologies to be used in learning environments should be supported. In this way, students' media production can be facilitated. In general, this research is an important study for university students to develop awareness about media literacy skills and to learn and apply different media skills. This study, which contributes to the field, was conducted at newly established state universities in three underdeveloped cities of Turkey. The implementation of similar studies in metropolitan areas and public and private universities with a more developed socio-economic level will contribute to the field. In addition, conducting similar studies with in-service teachers, administrators, librarians, students at different grade levels and their families will support the dissemination of skills

5.2 Ethical Text

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