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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Dimensions of Media Literacy Among Female Students in Tehran: A Comparative Study of Alzahra University and Refah University Students

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction:

Media literacy constitutes a set of specific abilities and competencies that, in the form of a distinct body of "knowledge," enable the understanding and comprehension of media texts. It is also a body of knowledge and a skill through which one can acquire an understanding of media types, media production mechanisms, and the hidden and latent layers of meaning embedded in media products. Individuals who are media literate are less vulnerable to media information, as they are better equipped to recognize and identify messages that are designed and transmitted to influence them at various levels. Even children, by becoming aware of how information is produced through the media, are able to be less affected by the multitude of media messages in their childhood world. For instance, a media-literate audience is cognizant of the goals and policies of different media and engages with message content in a conscious and active manner. A review

of studies conducted in the field of media literacy reveals that, although media literacy has existed globally for more than three decades, it has only established its place among academic texts in Iran since the mid-1980s. The present research aims to compare the dimensions of media literacy among female students at Tehran universities, with particular emphasis on Al-Zahra University and the Faculty of Welfare.

Method:

This study is applied research conducted using a survey method. The data collection instrument was a standard questionnaire, and data analysis was performed using SPSS software. The statistical population comprises all undergraduate and graduate students at Al-Zahra University and the Faculty of Welfare in the humanities and technical and engineering fields. The fields considered at Al-Zahra University span four faculties (Social Sciences, Technical and Engineering, Psychology, and Mathematical Sciences), encompassing a total of 5,190 students (4,170 from Al-Zahra University and 1,020 from the Faculty of Welfare). The number of undergraduate students at Al-Zahra University is 3,190, and the number of graduate students is 980 (totaling 4,170); similarly, the number of undergraduate students at the Faculty of Welfare is 820, and the number of graduate students is 200 (totaling 1,020). Using stratified sampling and Cochran's formula, the sample size for each stratum at Al-Zahra University and the Faculty of Welfare was calculated ($N = 5,190$; Cochran sample = 358). The questionnaire employed was the standard Potter questionnaire, which comprises four components of media literacy dimensions (emotional, moral, perceptual, and aesthetic). Spearman and chi-square tests were used to examine the research questions and the relationships between variables. Cronbach's alpha was also used to assess the reliability of the questionnaire, yielding a value of 0.84.

Findings:

The findings indicate that, regarding the four dimensions of media literacy examined at Al-Zahra University, most students demonstrated low media literacy in the perceptual dimension, low to moderate in the emotional dimension, moderate to high in the aesthetic dimension, and low to moderate in the moral dimension. At the Faculty of Welfare, however, most students demonstrated low to moderate media literacy in the perceptual dimension, moderate in the emotional dimension, moderate to high in the aesthetic dimension, and low to moderate in the moral dimension. Overall, a comparison of the two universities reveals that the levels of media literacy knowledge at Al-Zahra University and the Faculty of Welfare are largely similar across various dimensions. Nevertheless, the level of media literacy at Al-Zahra University in the emotional dimension is higher than that at the Faculty of Welfare, while the level of media literacy at the Faculty of Welfare in the perceptual dimension is higher than that at Al-Zahra University.

Conclusions:

It should be noted that no significant relationship was found between the variables of marital status, employment status, educational fields, and media consumption with the dimensions of media literacy. Among the variables under study, however, a positive and strong correlation was observed between employment status, educational groups, and media literacy dimensions, with this correlation being greater in the perceptual dimension than in other dimensions. Furthermore, in order to improve the status of media literacy among students, it is recommended that a course unit related to media literacy knowledge be added to the curricula of students at all levels across

different universities. Additionally, websites and resources for enhancing media literacy knowledge should be made more practical and widely accessible for students to utilize as effectively as possible. The media should also dedicate programs to media literacy in a documented and systematic manner throughout the week, so that the information and media literacy of families can be updated in accordance with the requirements of the time.

Data Availability Statement

Data available on request from the authors.

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Ethical considerations

Not applicable.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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