



Empowering Minds: Media Literacy among Higher Education Students of Haryana

(Author) **Chirag Chhillar**, Ph.D. Research Scholar, Chaudhary Devi Lal University, Sirsa, Haryana

Ravinder Dhillon, Associate Professor, Chaudhary Devi Lal University, Sirsa, Haryana

Abstract

The way youth consume media has changed drastically with the onset of digitization in the country. The Indian youth now have unprecedented access to various global platforms with the proliferation of streaming platforms - Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+ Hotstar - and high-speed internet. In India where traditional media continue to have cultural significance, young Indians are increasingly turning to various digital media channels for the convenience and freedom of choice these platforms offer. They can consume media on their phones, laptops, and tablets, anytime, anywhere at their convenience. Youth currently interact with one or more media platforms, primarily daily. It helps the students improve their decision-making abilities, solve issues, and develop their attitudes, beliefs, and skills. This study examines the media literacy behaviors of higher education students at universities in Haryana. By understanding how students navigate and interact with different media platforms, the research aims to uncover patterns of media consumption. This would help to learn the impact on their academic, and personal lives, and the development of critical thinking skills. The findings underscore the importance of integrating media literacy into the educational curriculum. By incorporating media literacy into pedagogy, educators can better equip students with the skills needed to critically evaluate information, make informed decisions, and navigate the complex media landscape effectively.

Keywords: *Media Literacy, Higher education Students, Haryana, digital media.*

1. 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

'Media literacy' is defined as the ability to **access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act** using all forms of communication (according to, **NAMLE**; National Association for Media Literacy Education). The capacity to comprehend the messages presented to you on radio, television, video games, movies, news programs, social media, and other media is referred to as media literacy. Media literacy entails knowing:

- Different people will have various interpretations of the same event.
- Media creation is a company that expresses political and cultural ideals.
- Media is created with a certain intention in mind—made to get you to think. Depending on the media type, the sort of story varies.

There are several advantages of media literacy for students. Media literacy primarily assists students in becoming knowledgeable consumers of media as well as accountable media creators. In a similar vein, teaching media literacy encourages people to develop critical thinking skills. As they get older, this way of thinking may eventually come naturally to them, which will be

beneficial in many ways. Strengthening process skills rather than subject knowledge is the main objective. The non-mainstream content is slowly being adopted by Indian youth, indicating their evolving taste preferences.

The era of digitalization made it possible for the current generation of Indians to have easy access to various media platforms. They get exposed to different cultures and storytelling styles, making their experience more fulfilled and their ideology broader. The media consumption habits of the Indian youth in the digital age as a whole, thus, reflect a varied, free environment that at the same time, caters to an ever-changing cultural mindset.

It is important to understand the changing media consumption patterns among the youth of India in this digital time. In the age of online streaming services and high-speed internet, Indian youth now have access to more content than ever before and the walls of territorial and linguistic barriers are slowly crumbling. The democratization of content consumption has not only widened their content palette but also ensured that narratives they could engage with, are more socially conscious resulting in a more sensitized taste. In 2014, the *National Digital Literacy Mission* (NDLM) was introduced by the Union government with the objective of

enhancing the digital literacy of 1 million Indian citizens. Subsequently, in December of the same year, the *Digital Saksharta Abhiyan* (DISHA) was launched with a target population of 4.25 million individuals. DISHA differed from NDLM as it specifically aimed to provide training to government personnel, including Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA), *Anganwadi* workers, and Fair Price Shop employees, with a **primary focus on rural areas**.

1.1 Media Theories Related to Media Literacy & Youth

Various media theories mold a multifaceted and diverse relationship between media literacy and youth.

a. Uses and Gratification Theory

This theory suggests that people deliberately select media to satisfy specific needs. The movies chosen for youth development speak to pertinent societal concerns that young people can identify with. Encourage conversations and introspection on the social concerns the movie raises, so that they can actively participate in the viewing experience. This particular theory is **audience-centric** in nature, there are several needs and gratification for people, and according to this theory they could be categorized into five sections:

1. Cognitive needs

2. Affective needs

3. Personal integrative needs

4. Social integrative needs

5. Tension-free needs

- **Cognitive needs**- People use media to acquire knowledge, information, etc. Every person has different needs e.g. youth watch films to be aware, to gain knowledge and information. This way they satisfy their needs.

- **Affective needs**- It includes all kinds of emotions, pleasure, and other moods of the people. People use media like television to satisfy their emotional needs. People relate to the character and feel the emotions the characters show. If they cry, the audience cries and if they laugh, the audience laughs along with them.

- **Personal Integrative Needs**- This is the self-esteem need. People use the media to reassure their status, gain credibility, and stabilize. Media has an impact on people's lifestyles. By viewing Films, youth also gain insights into improving their personal choices, which affect their lifestyles.

- **Social Integrative needs**- It encompasses the need to socialize with family, friends, and relations in society.

Digital media plays an important role in fulfilling the social integrative needs of people. Through digital media, people can connect, network, and socialize. Because of the internet, 'access' is not a problem anymore, and hence, because of the myriad options available on digital platforms, social integration is easily possible.

-**Tension-free needs**- People sometimes use the media as a means of escapism and to relieve tension. For example, people tend to relax after watching TV and listening to the radio, to entertain themselves, people watch films. The uses and gratification theory therefore believes that the audience has a complex set of needs that it seeks to satisfy in the mass media. Gratifications help people escape from the constraints of routine and problems. They help strengthen personal relationships, as mass media is often seen as a social utility by people.

b. Cultivation Theory: The cultivation theory propounded by George Gerbner suggests that heavy television viewing is seen as cultivating attitudes. This theory suggests that the media shapes our perceptions of reality. Hence, exposing youth to different cultures, societies, and perspectives by using films from diverse backgrounds, can help youth develop empathy and understanding for people from different walks of life. When we apply cultivation theory to film viewing, we can see how it influences their social awareness. Gerbner thinks that mass media cultivates values and attitudes in consumers, which are from their culture. The culture thus binds people together, with each other. Prolonged exposure to certain themes, messages, and images in films can shape viewers' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of social issues. For instance, repeated exposure to violence in films may lead viewers to perceive the world as a more violent place than it is. Films often frame social issues in particular ways, influencing how viewers understand

and interpret those issues. The way a film portrays poverty, for example, can shape viewers' perceptions of its causes and potential solutions. This theory also suggests that the more time individuals spend consuming media, the more their perceptions of social reality will reflect the mediated world rather than the actual world. Therefore, films can play a significant role in cultivating social awareness by influencing viewers' perceptions of social issues, identities, and relationships.

2. Literature Review

Digital literacy is the ancestor of the idea of new media literacy, **Paul Glistner** coined the phrase "*digital literacy*" in his 1997 book *A Primer on Digital Literacy*. Glistner's notion of digital literacy impacted numerous subsequent publications on the topic, and it served as a foundation for the later development of this complicated Convergence culture University New media concept. "An ability to grasp and to utilize information in diverse formats from a wide number of sources when it is delivered via computers", according to Glistner, was the definition of digital literacy (**Glistner, 1997**). To accommodate the new digital environment, he argued for expanding the traditional definition of literacy. The National Association for Media Literacy Education developed a list of key ideas associated with accessing, analyzing, evaluating, and communicating media:

1. All media messages are "constructed."
2. Each medium has different characteristics, strengths, and a unique "language" of construction.
3. Media messages are produced for particular purposes.
4. All media messages contain embedded values and points of view.
5. People use their skills, beliefs, and experiences to construct their meanings from media messages.
6. Media and media messages can influence beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, and the democratic process¹.

The world has entered a new millennium, and as new technologies have emerged, a new idea known as "21st Century Literacy" has gained popularity. Aural, visual, and digital literacy all merge to form 21st-century literacy, according to the American New Media Consortium. These skills include being able to detect and harness the power of sound and vision, as well as manipulate and transform digital material, widely disseminate it, and readily adapt it to new forms (**New Media Consortium, 2005**). The literature contains a wealth of knowledge about media literacy. Since the media can imply many things to different individuals, many people may have diverse perceptions. There are many different ways to define media literacy. However, there are still some unanswered questions regarding media literacy. The development of media literacy education during the 2000s is also evident and can be attributed to the public's increased interest in academia. This ongoing trend has led to an increase in the teaching of media literacy. This research aims to pinpoint the essential elements that make up the subject of media literacy by looking at different definitions, models, usage contexts, and linkages to other literacy notions.

¹ Source: (National Association, 2007)

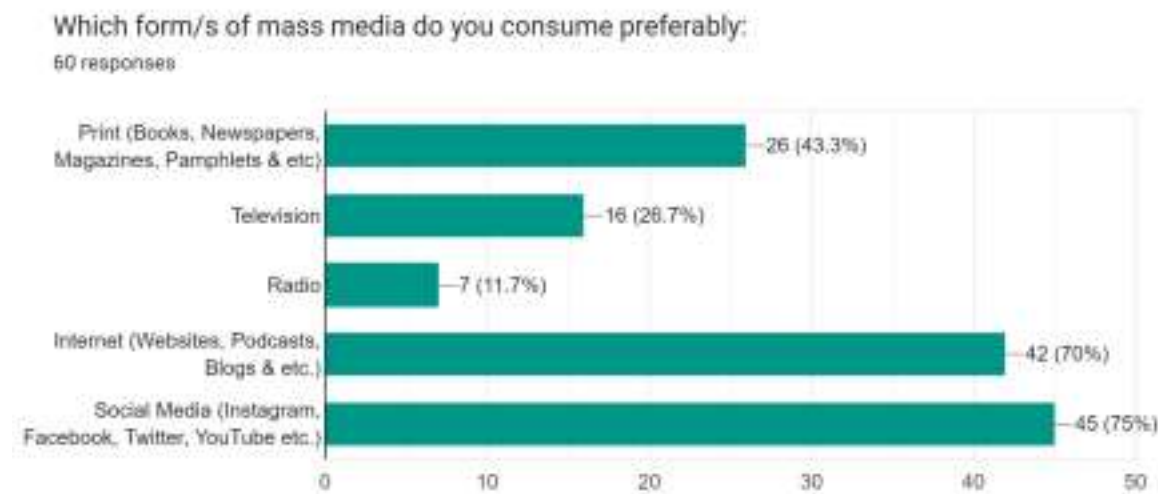
3. Methodology

A quantitative approach has been used among higher education students of Haryana. to investigate media literacy among them. A structured questionnaire was designed based on established frameworks and literature on media literacy. The questionnaire included items assessing students' awareness, knowledge, skills, and critical engagement with media content.

This design allowed us the collection of data at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of students' media literacy behaviors and skills. The reason for choosing these universities is that these institutions have met certain scientific, technical, and human resources standards that are set by the project and offer advanced degree programs. The study tries to probe the key issues centering on the new media technology and new media environment to conclude the advantages and problems among university students when they deal with online videos and give further suggestions as to how to enhance their new media literacy. The study has adopted the theoretical framework of foreign scholars and possible changes were made to the framework from a cultural perspective. Based on the theoretical framework, this study investigated the media literacy level of university students as online users by the method of survey using the questionnaire tool. Four State Universities of Haryana were randomly selected, and a questionnaire was used to collect data from the randomly drawn sample of Mass Communication/Media students and research scholars. In total, 100 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 60 were returned by the higher education students & research scholars from various four state Universities of Haryana. The questionnaire consisted of two parts, the first part carried the basic information (Demographics) of the students for further analysis. The second part consisted of questions aimed at their patterns of using different platforms of digital media, the degree of consciousness while consuming different media, and so on.

4. Data Representation & Analysis

Question 1.



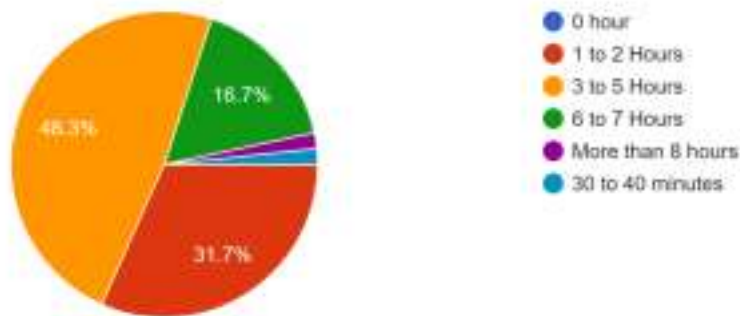
The survey data indicated that the most preferred forms of mass media are the **Internet** (48 responses, 75%) & **Social Media**, with 47 respondents indicating it as their preferred medium (73.4%). **Print** media is preferred by 26 respondents (40.6%). **Television** is preferred by 16 respondents (25%) and the least preferred form is **Radio** with 5 respondents (7.8%).

With the majority of respondents preferring the **Internet (75%)** and **Social Media (73.4%)**, it is crucial to focus on enhancing digital media literacy. This includes teaching users how to critically evaluate online content, recognize biases, and identify credible sources. Given the high consumption of digital and social media, there is a significant need to educate users on identifying misinformation, fake news, and sponsored content. Given that many respondents use multiple forms of media (e.g., Print, Internet, Social Media), media literacy education should address **cross-media competencies**. This includes understanding how information is presented differently across various platforms and how to apply critical thinking skills universally.

Question 2.

How much time do you spend on mass media (eg. watching TV, reading newspapers, Scrolling Social Media, surfing the internet, etc.) daily on an average?

60 responses

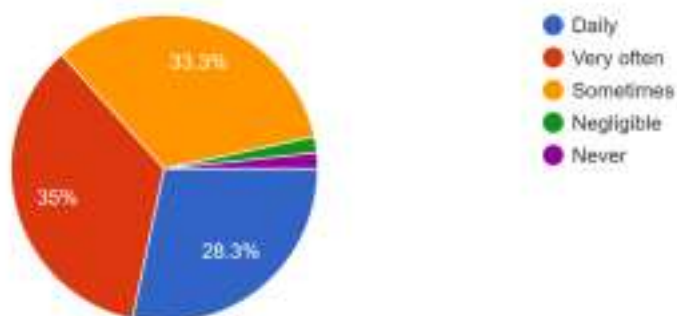


The majority of respondents spend **3 to 5 Hours** on mass media daily (32 responses, 49%). A significant portion of respondents spend **1 to 2 Hours** (20 responses, 31.7%). Some respondents spend **6 to 7 Hours** (10 responses, 16.7%). The above data shows the consumption of media, and the results point to promoting media literacy programs and helping people make the most of their media consumption time.

Question 3.

How often do you come across information, which you consider to be fake information/news?

60 responses



A significant portion of respondents (62.5%) encounter fake information frequently or daily. This suggests a high level of awareness and recognition of fake information among the respondents. With 37.5% encountering fake information sometimes, there's a clear need for enhanced media literacy to help people better identify and handle fake information. Very few respondents (3.2%) rarely or never encounter fake information, indicating that fake news is a common issue among the majority.

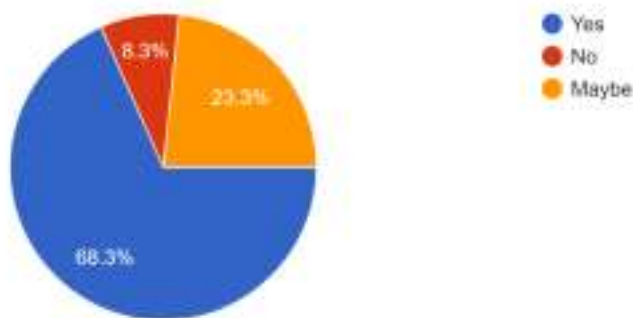
Looking at the above figures, it becomes essential to encourage the use of fact-checking tools and browser

extensions that can help identify fake news. Also, educating higher education students on the use of algorithms and AI can help filter out fake content. All these activities could be made possible through conducting workshops and seminars in communities to raise awareness about the prevalence of fake information. And, engaging with local media to disseminate tips and strategies for recognizing fake news.

Question 4.

Do you know that media represent information in a selective way (e.g. implicit versus explicit media language, the structure of a text/article/film/video)?

60 responses

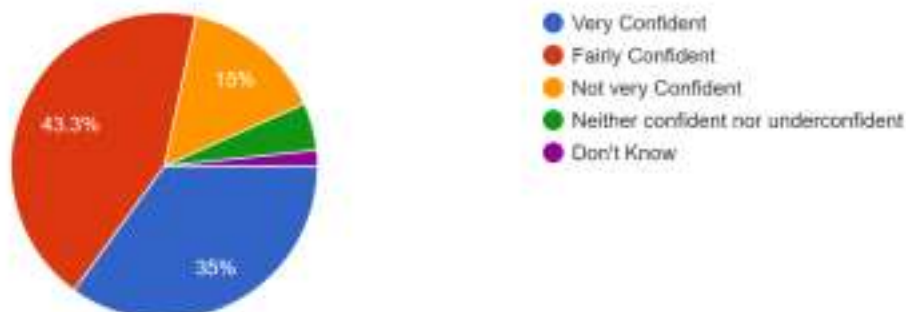


The majority of respondents (**68.8%**) are aware that media represents information. There is still a significant portion (**20.3%**) who are unsure (maybe) about this concept, indicating a need for further education and awareness. Developing educational campaigns that explain how media can represent information selectively through implicit and explicit language, text structure, and media formats could be an effective way in this situation.

Question 5.

When you see or read things online, how confident are you in recognizing the paid content/advertising.

60 responses

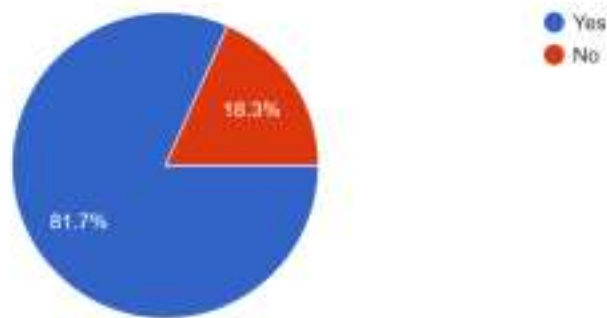


The majority of respondents (75%) are either **very confident or fairly confident** in recognizing paid content or advertising online. This indicates a relatively high level of awareness and ability to identify such content among the respondents. 14.1% of respondents could be more confident, and 4.7% are neutral. This suggests there is still room for improvement in helping some users develop better skills to recognize paid content. Some measures could be taken to ensure that students develop the skills needed to recognize paid content from a young age. Such as integrating media literacy education into school curriculums and organizing interactive workshops that teach practical skills in identifying paid content. Use real-world examples and hands-on activities to enhance learning.

Question 6.

Can you communicate and present contents using media (e.g. structure and adapt a presentation, publish media content through an appropriate channel such as blogs, YouTube).

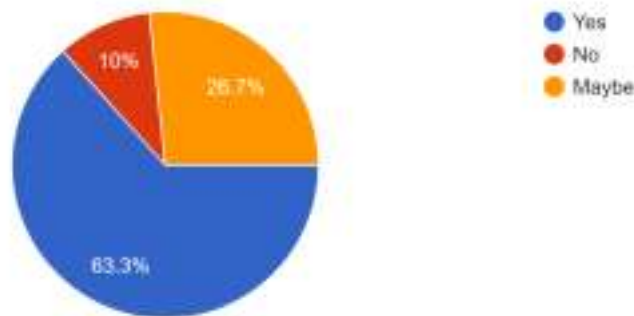
60 responses



The majority of respondents (81%) possess the skills to communicate and present content using media, indicating strong media literacy capabilities among this group. While 19% of respondents lack these skills, highlighting a need for targeted interventions to improve media communication abilities. By encouraging **peer learning and collaboration** by creating opportunities for individuals to share their knowledge and skills in media communication with others who may need improvement. This way we can help bridge the gap in media communication skills and ensure that more individuals are capable of effectively presenting and communicating content using various media platforms.

Question 7.

Are you aware that media content is tailored to the target audience (e.g. selection possibilities, personalized on line offer through cookies, newspaper...n channels/websites and their target audience).
60 responses :

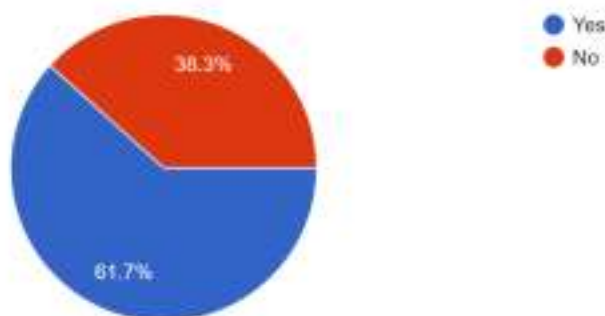


41

respondents (64%) are aware that media content is tailored to the target audience. This majority indicates a solid understanding among a significant portion of the respondents. 18 respondents (28.1%) are unsure whether media content is tailored to the target audience. This suggests some level of awareness but also indicates a need for clarification or further education on the topic. 5 respondents (7.8%) do not believe or are unaware that media content is tailored to the target audience. A clear majority of respondents understand that media content is tailored to specific audiences, which is crucial for media literacy and understanding how information is presented based on audience characteristics. But, still, there is a notable portion of respondents who are uncertain or unaware of this concept. This highlights an opportunity for educational initiatives to clarify the methods and implications of audience-targeted media content.

Question 8.

Do you know how media production and distribution works (e.g. from source to article, the filtering of news, the intersection between politics, media and democracy).
60 responses :



38

respondents (58.5%) indicated that they have an understanding of how media production and distribution works, including the filtering of news and the intersection with politics and democracy. However, there is also a significant portion (**41.5%**) that lacks understanding in these critical areas. This highlights the importance of enhancing media literacy education to ensure a well-informed populace capable of critically analyzing media content and its societal implications. It becomes imperative to develop comprehensive educational programs aimed at enhancing understanding of media production processes, news filtering mechanisms, and the

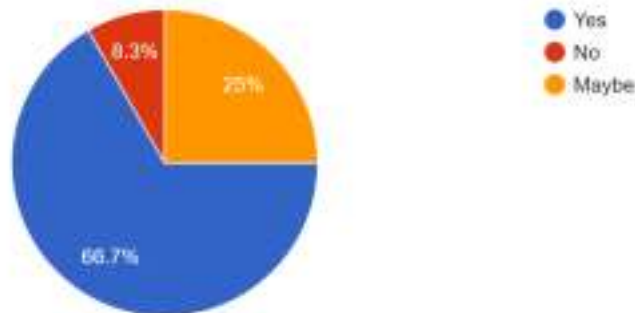
intersection of media with politics and democracy.

Question 9.

Can you create media content (e.g. write an article, create a photo or video document, set up a blog)

?

60 responses



46 respondents (66.7%) indicated that they are capable of creating media content, such as writing articles, creating photo or video documents, or setting up a blog. This majority suggests a significant number of respondents possess skills in media creation across various platforms. 17 respondents (25%) are unsure about their ability to create media content. This group may have some skills or interests but lacks confidence or experience in executing media creation tasks. 7 respondents (8.3%) do not believe they can create media content. This minority may lack the necessary skills or interest in media production. Providing accessible online tutorials and resources that cover various aspects of media creation, including writing, photography, videography, and blog setup could be one of the solutions. We can empower more individuals to effectively create and share media content, contributing to a diverse and vibrant media landscape.

5. Conclusion

The findings from this research highlight several key insights into media consumption habits and media literacy awareness among the respondents. Firstly, regarding media consumption preferences, it is evident that a diverse range of mass media forms are favored by the respondents, with internet-based platforms, including websites, blogs, and social media, prominently featured alongside traditional forms like print media and television. This underscores the shift towards digital platforms in contemporary media consumption patterns.

Secondly, the data reveals varying levels of confidence in recognizing paid content and advertising online. While a significant majority expressed confidence, a notable portion indicated uncertainty or lack of confidence in discerning such content. This suggests a need for enhanced media literacy education to empower individuals to navigate and critically evaluate digital media environments effectively. Furthermore, the awareness that media content is tailored to target audiences is prevalent among a majority of respondents. This awareness is crucial in understanding how media selection, personalized online offers through cookies, and the alignment of content with audience preferences shape the media landscape.

In conclusion, while the survey reflects a generally high level of media literacy and proficiency in media consumption and communication, there are opportunities for further education and awareness initiatives. Strengthening media literacy programs, integrating these into educational curricula, and promoting public awareness campaigns can enhance individuals' ability to critically engage with media content and navigate the evolving media landscape effectively.

References

- Keshalu, P., & Srinivasulu, V. (2016). Awareness of information literacy among undergraduate students of Paritala Sriramulu Government Degree College: Penukonda. *International Journal of Research in Library Science*, 2(2), July-December, 109-115.
- Lokesha, M., & Adithya, K.H. (2019). Digital information literacy of Mangalore University students: A study. *International Journal of Information Dissemination and Technology*, 9(1), 40-43.
- American Library Association [ALA] (2000) Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/>
- Bawden, D. (2008) Digital Literacy. *SeiTopics*. December 29. October, 4, pp. 237-246. Retrieved from http://www.scitopics.com/Digital_Literacy.html
- Denchev, S. and Pavlova, I. (2009) 'Role of digital libraries in the university information environment', *Annual of "Informatics" Section, Union of Scientists in Bulgaria*, Volume 2, pp. 56-60.
- Bergsma, L. Contidine, D.(2007). Core Principles of Media Literacy Education in the United States. National Association of Media Literacy Education, USA.
- Hobbs, R. (2005). The state of media literacy education. *Journal Of Communication*, 55(4), 865-871.

- Jayachandra, J.(2018). Media Literacy and Education in India during times of communication abundance. Sage Journals. Vol. 13 p.75. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0973258617743625> .
- McQuail, Denis (1994) Mass Communication Theory, London: Sage.
- UNESCO. (2018). Journalism, fake news and disinformation: Handbook for journalism education and training. UNESDOC.
- Roy,S. (2016). Significance of Media Literacy Education in India.International Journal of E-Government & E-Business Research, Vol. No.2.pp 58-71.

