



Digital Media Literacy Education And Social Development: A Study On The Need Of Digital Media Literacy Education Among The School Students Of Tonk District Of Rajasthan State In India

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ABSTRACT

In the digital world, the use of digital media and its popularity have transmuted the way information is produced, accessed, and distributed. Digital media literacy is all about the receiver's knowledge to understand analyze and evaluate the message received in any formats from the sender. The core of digital media literacy is to strengthen the people capacity for critical social participation in the current media environment and help them live meaningful lives. Digital media literacy is very much required to support and promote a sense of social responsibility and social participation among school students. The study is also designed to explore the importance of digital media literacy education and examine the current level of digital media literacy among school students. A sample of 100 students from the school of Tonk district of India was selected using the purposive sampling method through the non-probability sampling technique. The data was collected through survey questionnaire and analyzed using statistical tools. The findings of study suggest that digital media literacy is crucial for the new generation and school students, as they must understand the value of quality information, which directly influences the constructive growth and development of Indian society. The study also emphasise the importance of an immediate action on the integration of media literacy education into the school curriculum.

Keywords: Digital media literacy; School students; Social responsibility; Social development; Indian society

1. Introduction

In this digital world, the use of digital media and its popularity have transmuted the way information is produced, accessed and distributed. As defined by Centre for Media Literacy (CML), "Media Literacy is a 21st century approach to education. It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate, create and participate with messages in a variety of forms — from print to video to the Internet".

The incorporation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into education was mandate with the progress and acceptance of technology especially when we live in this digital world. The habits of receiving information have changed among the society which again emphasises the importance of digital media literacy among the students who are the future of the society. The students are the most powerful

users of digital media; they are not only consuming the media content but also generating and creating media messages and components (Levicán & Salvo, 2022). Students normally spend more time on digital media and online media applications as the information is available on the fingertip. Presently, if we consider the level of digital media engagement, children of a very young age are well familiar with digital media applications, online gaming, and they use devices very competently. Also, with this post Covid scenario the students are well acquainted to use the digital media. The extensive use of digital media in today's society emphasises the need for digital media literacy education among school students. As opined by Beck et al. (2021) students need to develop media literacy to learn the ways to critically parse information that they viewed, heard, and read and connect them to the skills that can help them to grow personally and professionally. Media literacy is effective for students to develop the fundamental abilities that are necessary for critical thinking, self-expression, analysis, and creativity. In this context, Garcia et al. (2021) stated that media literacy helps students to develop their skills to evaluate media for determining the credibility of media and participate in online conversation safely. Rasiet al. (2019) asserted the increasing importance of media literacy today for acting, creating, analysing, evaluating, and accessing all forms of communication. With the introduction of information and communication technology (ICT) in to the education, the relevance of digital media and digital media literacy among the student community is becoming unavoidable factor. Also digital media literacy is becoming a very important domain in the present society as the media plays very important role in social communication and the establishment of relations. This is why most social agencies are now focusing on the quality use of digital media. According to the Centre for Media Literacy (CML), Media Literacy is a 21st century approach to education. It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and participate with messages in a variety of forms — from print to video to the Internet. According to the data report al, 2023; there were 692.0 million internet users in India at the start of 2023, when internet penetration stood at 48.7 percent; India was home to 467.0 million social media users in January 2023, equating to 32.8 percent of the total population and a total of 1.10 billion cellular mobile connections were active in India in early 2023, with this figure equivalent to 77.0 percent of the total population. The above figure indicates the present scenario of the digital media revolution, it is really important to understand the level of media literacy to show how important media literacy is for the current generation. The educational system is developing in such a way that a new generation of students is immersed in technology and media. Many scholars mentioned that students in early primary classes are using media tools and spending a lot of time handling media-based tools and programmes, and certainly the present generations are known as tech-savvy children or digital children." Digital media and their users have given new meaning to society. Everyone is a digital audience: children, adolescents, and adults, all using digital media and becoming technologically dependent. In a similar context, digital media users are using all kinds of media applications, as these technologically based media tools are the need of the hour. In the present time of the media revolution, society is not only using media for knowledge purposes but also as a tool of social convergence and social empowerment. However, media impact does not necessarily indicate digital's ability to look at society from new perspectives but rather at the issue and determine its impact. Literacy is currently a multidimensional skill that involves the way people create meaning and communicate through the media. On the other hand, media education is part of the new literature "based on the ability of students to use reading and writing to learn, but requires new knowledge, skills, and strategic ideas to meet the conceptual and technical requirements of a fully networked environment" (Vacka, Vacka, and Mráz, 2014, p). New strategic information needed for fluency arises as a result of the proliferation of media that obscures the skills of students in assessing the relevance of resources. Thus, media education can be considered an extension of other literacy skills, such as literacy, computer literacy, visual literacy, and information literacy. In order for schools to take full advantage of digital natives, they need to introduce technology into the classroom and teach media skills. Media literacy actually shows the way media is being used by people and how it can change their behavior by shaping their communication patterns. The new media has given new momentum to such communication styles and created a new way for social and political interactions. The impact is very mixed, i.e., negative, and positive. The present paper is mainly intended to deal with the analysis of the level of media literacy in the present scenario, which means how the students are using media and taking care of social complexities like fake content, misrepresentation of images, and bullying on social media. Herman and Chomsky (2002), which define the power interests associated with research, development, and dissemination of digital media content. The users must understand the changing impact of social media on their audiences and how these misleading digital memes can cause severe damage to the socio-political development of society.

2. Literature Review

Baran. (2011), highlights that media consumption is easy but media literate consumption need to have media literacy skills, "the ability and willingness to make effort to understand content, to pay attention, and to filter out noise; an understanding of and respect for the power of media messages; the ability to distinguish emotional from reasoned reactions when responding to content and act accordingly; the development of heightened expectations of media content; a knowledge of genre conventions and the recognition of their mixing; the ability to think critically about media messages and a knowledge of the

internal language of various media and the ability to understand its effects". Scheibe and Rogow. (2012), emphasize the importance of teaching media literacy education and suggests that media literacy is both a content area and an approach to teaching can be integrated into any subject area. According to the author, integrating media literacy across the curriculum teaches the students to be independent, skilled, and reflective thinkers. Teaching media literacy across curriculum also ensure to teach 21st- century skills and high order critical thinking. States Ivanovic. (2014) states that, "Although media provides a more dynamic and flexible relation between a person and society, we must not lose sight that those mass communicators are largely a self-satisfied system, which is spreading limitless, unfettered and to a large degree pointless. Desire for knowledge of what media placed contents really mean, where their source is and why a certain message had been constructed, is crucial for quality understanding and recognition of media mediated messages and their meaning. Adequate answers to all these questions can only be acquired by media literacy. Acquiring media literacy can be truly successful only if we consider that relationship between specificity of media and the way those specificities are understood by those getting education". In this study, 'The New Curricula: How Media Literacy Education Transforms Teaching and Learning', says that media literacy has been prioritized by many countries like UK and Finland. The UK regulatory agency has advocated for media literacy after conducting the research while in Finland they have adopted a national strategy for encouraging media literacy. Also, this study quotes the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommendation for advance media literacy education throughout the world through its ongoing commitment to the field (Jolls, 2015.). Cappello. (2017), "Media literacy is about critical evaluation, about "demystifying" media messages in order to counteract their manipulative and ideological effects. Even more so with digital media, if we think that the Internet has undeniably made information more accessible, less centralized, even "alternative" to mainstream media, and yet equally questionable in terms of reliability and ideological orientation. Media literacy is also about producing and sharing media content in a responsible manner through the innumerable platforms and services of the cyberspace".

The students can be more critical through media literacy education and media literacy education can enhance the student digital and media literacy skill by inquiring about the accuracy of a variety of sources centered on a single piece of information. The author also says that the post-truth era has challenged traditional ways of teaching (Friesem, 2019). According to a researcher, Sachdeva P. (2019), the fake news and misinformation were spreading like wildfire in India in the year 2018 and hence this year was referred to as the "year of fakes". More than a dozen cases in north and south India occurred due to the spread of false rumours on social media networks. As a result, young people without basic knowledge of media literacy are more likely to fall into the trap of misinformation and find it truthful, according to studies of people and inclusive politics. In this regard, Buckingham (2019) demonstrated that the ability of students to identify different media is necessary to understand the world. On the other hand, Friesem (2019) stated that digital media helps teachers to connect with students and engage them in an easy way to improve their media literacy for developing the necessary skills to identify and create media messages. Digital media enables teachers to manage teamwork within classrooms through smart systems that facilitate students to build strong communication with each other. In this technology-oriented world there is a wide access to the internet. The people get all the needed information in a click, and this click opens the door to the world of knowledge and information. These changes have made drastic change in the student's approach towards collecting information and towards the education. Internet contributes to the incorporation of digital media in the education system, and this helps the teachers to incorporate new tactics in teaching and hence improve media literacy among students. As per the view of Alawamlehet al. (2020) digital media is a powerful means of communicating, connecting, creating, and learning among students with the help of modern methods of teaching within classroom and outside classroom. As opined by Tugtekin and Koc, (2020) the learning of media literacy is necessary for students to use media to create their own messages and ensure their future participation in economic and civic life of democracy. Additionally, media literacy enables people to understand the role of media in society and to develop essential skills of self-expression and inquiry that are essential for democratic regions.

In this regard, Share and Mamikonyan, (2020) commented that media literacy is significant for people to evaluate all media messages that people encounter regularly, and it also empowers them to make better choices to read, listen and watch. Therefore, digital media literacy must be developed among students for becoming efficient citizens of a democratic country by accessing and analysing all media messages. In this context, Tolnaiová (2020) stated that media literacy is one of the significant aspects for students to encourage digital citizenship which is an essential skill in the modern technology-dominated world and also helps students to develop smart behavior in online platforms.

Bhamaniet al. (2020) opined that spreading awareness among schoolteachers and students to understand the impacts of digital media in the modern education system is an effective strategy to overcome the problems. Besides this, government support is an important factor to incorporate digital media in schools and in this context, motivating teachers to use digital technologies in classrooms is also an essential strategy. Therefore, providing funds, motivation, and developing the infrastructure of schools in India is necessary to mitigate the challenges of incorporating digital media in schools to develop media literacy among students. The ability of people to identify various types of media and understand the messages that

the media sends is referred to as media literacy. As stated by Jones-Jang et al. (2021) media literacy helps people to build their critical thinking skills and recognise various points of view. Media literacy provides the skills and tools that are necessary to be competent and confident media consumers. Media literacy has multiple benefits for students and for this reason; this literacy is significant in modern-day schools. As commented by Hobbs (2021) “media literacy enables students to become wiser consumers and responsible producers of media which can foster critical thinking skills in students. Media literacy plays a vital role to create a new generation that retains critical thinking skills for assessing different media messages and understanding differences in media outlets”. With the help of digital media, students can make different groups to exchange information which enables them to be literate. Criollo-C et al. (2021) commented that digital media such as emerging learning technologies, mobile learning, online video, and instructional games are being used in the education system to increase access to academic materials for students and facilitate effective learning in schools. According to the report “unified district information system for education plus” more than 6000 schools do not have buildings across India and more than 9 lakh schools do not have functional computer facilities for students (Newsclick.in, 2021). Poor infrastructure and lack of awareness among school authorities regarding equipping digital media in the education system are the challenges to incorporating digital media in schools. Moreover, a lack of knowledge among students and teachers to use these new digital media platforms is a challenge to the school authorities. Social media scenario reflects that there are around nine billion searches on google every day, five hundred million people use Instagram stories every day, one billion hours of videos are watched on YouTube every day, hundred billion messages are sent through WhatsApp every day, seven thousand and six hundred Tweets are posted on twitter every second and 1.91 billion people use Facebook daily in 2022, (Earthweb.com & Internet live Stats, 2022.).

Media literacy can enhance social awareness among students which enables them to make responsible decision-making. According to the news report published in Matrhruhumi online news portal (2022), KITE offered Digital Media Literacy training for 19.72 lakh students. During the third phase of the SathyamevaJayathe ‘Digital Media Literacy Programme KITE completed the fake news prevention and awareness creation training of class 5 to 10. “A recent study focused on the United States and India pointed out the lack of attention to digital media literacy in education policies as a critical factor in spreading online misinformation”, (Hindustan Times, 2022.) Adding to this it also reports, that “a second strategy that has not received sufficient attention (particularly in India) is digital media literacy to the citizens, especially school children, to equip them with skills to steer through the information they receive via these platforms. Hence, technological interventions to tackle misinformation should be complemented with human-centered solutions focused on digital media literacy”. India’s National Educational Policy (NEP) 2022 has mentioned media literacy only once in the entire document while many studies published in UNICEF reflects that missed literacy in the curriculum is crucial for preventing the threat of misinformation. The NEP 2022 (p.3) states the importance to ‘high-order’ cognitive capacities, such as critical thinking and problem -solving, social, ethical, and emotional capacities and dispositions.

3. Acceptance problem

The media plays a central role in the lives of people of almost all ages. If we consider digital media, and specifically social media, the number of users is increasing at a very fast rate. Digital media has changed its presentation according to the user's choices and demands. The present study mainly deals with the users of middle age, such as school-going children, and their ways of media handling and content absorption. The digital media is available with one click of a user's mouse, and the way students are using it, it seems that there is no control over the content creation and sharing. Considering all these factors, the present research mainly focuses on the analysis of the level of media literacy among school students.

4. Objectives of the study

- To analyze the level of media understanding among the school students.
- To understand the student’s perspective on cyber bullying, fake news and misrepresentation of Image.

5. Research Methodology

A survey was taken as a tool of research, and the collection of data was done with the help of a questionnaire. This method was used with the students of the school in Tonk, Rajasthan, India, and around 100 students were taken into consideration through purposive random sampling, including students from multiple backgrounds. The respondents were in age group of 13–18 years: 49 boys and 51 girls.

6. Data Analysis and Discussion

Digital media literacy is considered one of the most important parts of social communication as it places

value on content evaluation and anticipation for better information networking and social development. Media is a boon for development, and in the present time of the digital media revolution, social media is one of the most prime sources of information transfer for the quality development of any society or country. Considering all these factors, the survey was designed to get responses to evaluate the objective of this research study.

6.1 Awareness about Digital media platforms and its quality of contents

Q1. Are you aware about Digital media platforms?

Table:-6.1.1Awareness about Digital Media Platform

S. No.	Awareness	Frequency	Percent
1	Yes	98	98.0
2	No	2	2.0
Total		100	100.0

Around 98 percent of the respondents agreed that they are aware about the digital media platforms, but 2 percent were not aware about the digital media platforms which reveal the majority of students are aware of it. The **Fig.6.1.1** shows same.

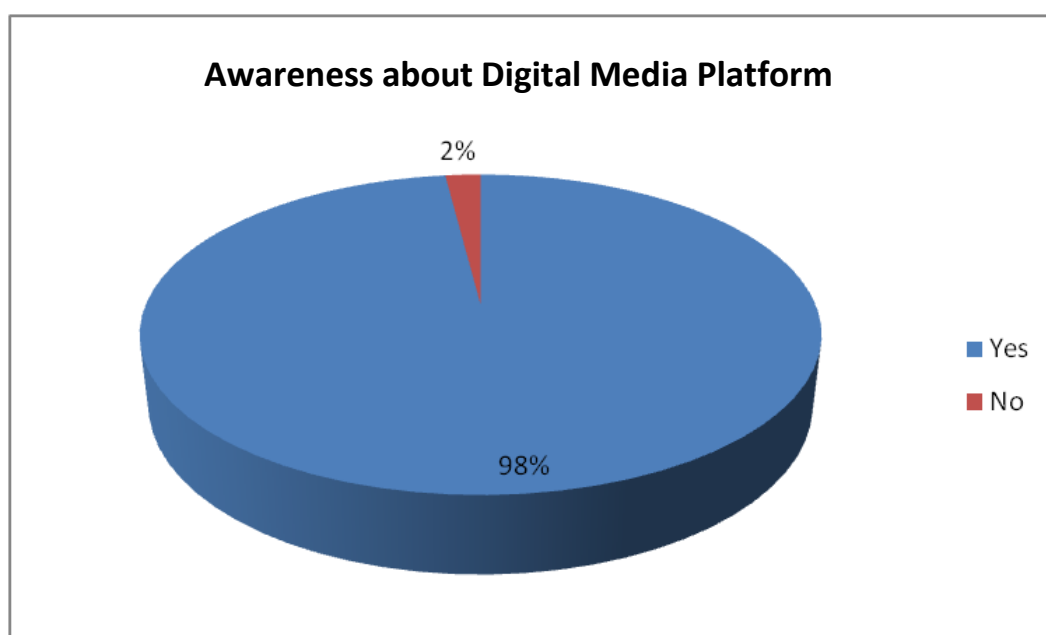


Fig.6.1.1 Awareness about Digital Media Platform

Q2. Are you active on social media?

Table:-6.1.2Active users of Social media

S. No.	Participation	Frequency	Percent
1	Yes	98	98.0
2	No	2	2.0
Total		100	100.0

Around 98 percent of the respondents agreed that they are active on social media and use it regularly, but 2 percent students denied using it regularly which reveals the majority of students are active users of social media. The **Fig.6.1.2** shows same.

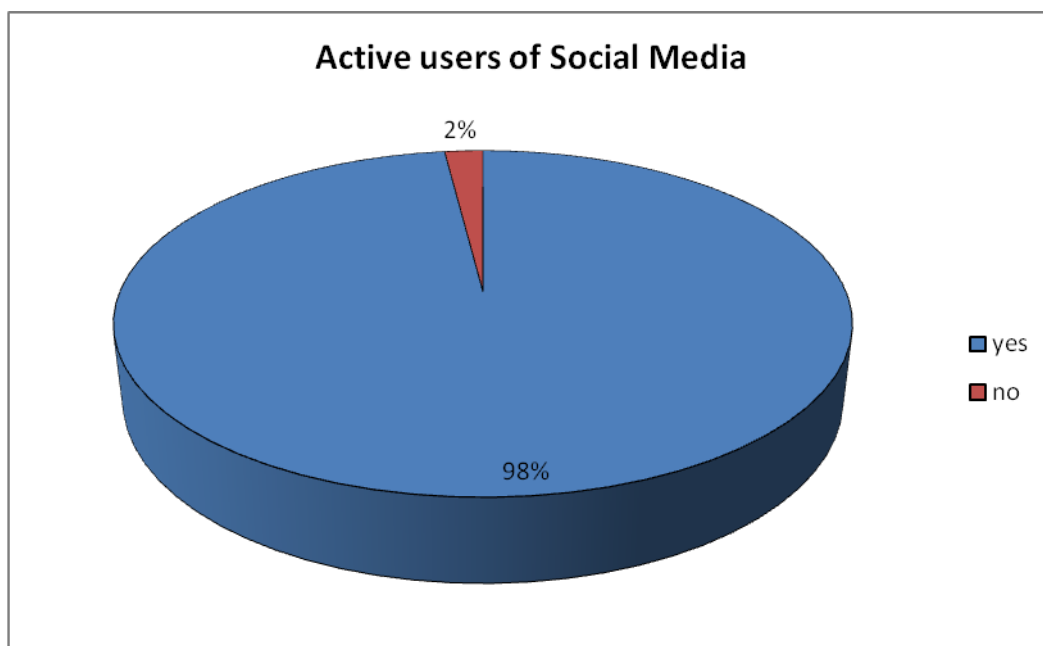


Fig. 6.1.2 Active users of Social media

Q3. Are you aware about the significance of digital media content?

Table:-6.1.3: Awareness about the significance of digital media content

S. No.	Awareness about the significance	frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	40	40.0
2	No	60	60.0
3	Total	100	100.0

Around 40 percent of the respondents agreed that they are aware about the significance and the quality of content available on social media platforms while 60 percent students expressed unawareness on the significance of digital media content. This reveals a majority of students are active users of social media but they are not aware about the significance and the quality of content available on social media platforms. The **Fig.6.1.3** shows same.

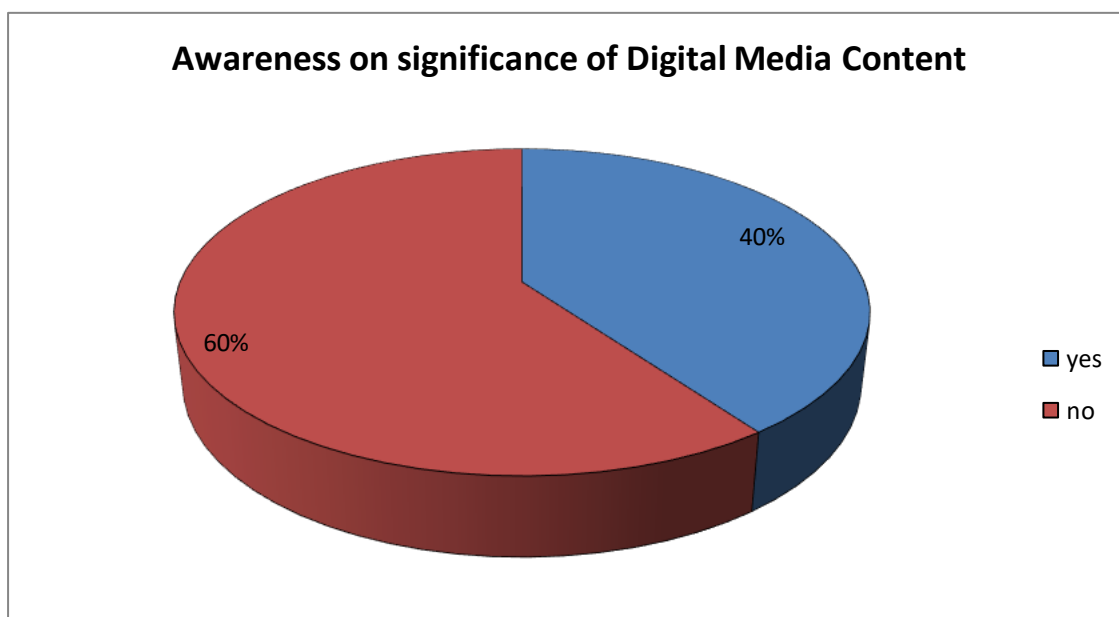


Fig.6.1.3 Awareness about the significance of digital media content

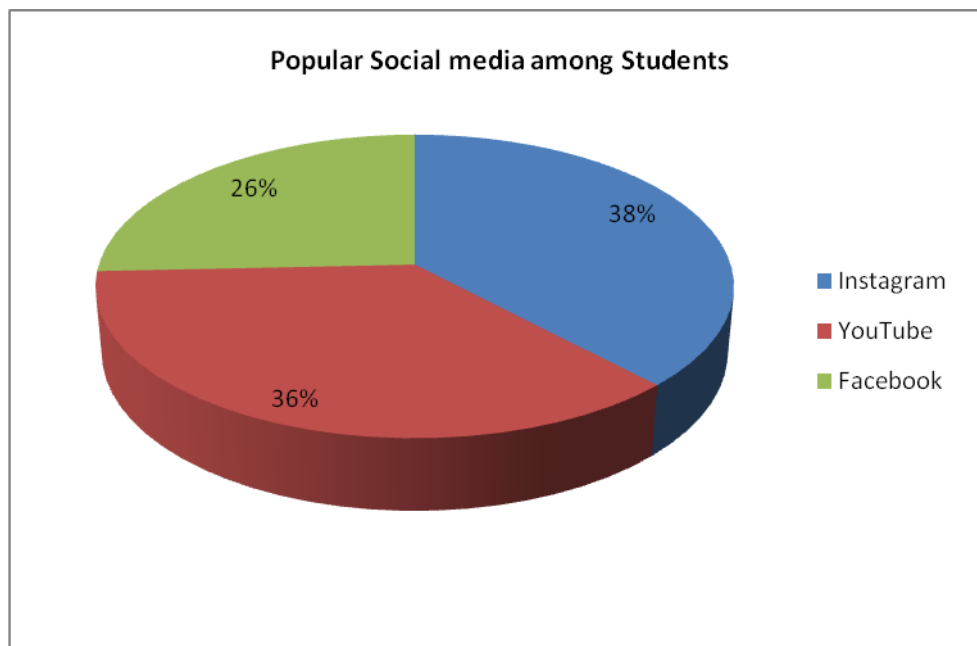
6.2 Popular Social media among Students

Q4. Which social media platform you use most?

Table:-6.2.4 Popular social media platform among students

S. No.	Social media platform	Yes	No	Total
1	Instagram	96	4	100
2	YouTube	92	8	100
3	Facebook	65	35	100

The popularity and maximum use of social media were mainly due to Instagram, which was used by most students due to its various attractive and interactive features. Around 96 respondents agreed that they have an account on Instagram and are using it regularly; YouTube was in second place with 92 students; and Facebook was in third place with 65 students, but Facebook is not at all popular. Students said they have an account on Facebook but the usability is very low. The figure below shows the % statistics of the responses.

**Fig.6.2.4** Popular social media platform among students

6.3 Students' perception on importance of digital media literacy in overall education

Q5. Do you think digital media literacy is important for your overall education?

Table 6.3.5: Importance of digital media literacy

S. No.	Digital Media Literacy Importance in schools	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	92	92.0
2	No	08	8.0
3	Total	100	100.0

With the widespread usage and consumption of content on diverse digital platforms, it becomes pertinent to understand the perception of the students about the importance of teaching and learning digital media literacy as part of the school curriculum. The above table is a determinant of the student's response towards inclusion and importance of making digital media literacy a part of the overall educational discourse at school. 92 out of the 100 respondents said that digital media literacy is important for their overall education whereas only 08 students responded that it is not important for overall education. The Figure 6.3.5 is the graphic representation of the same.

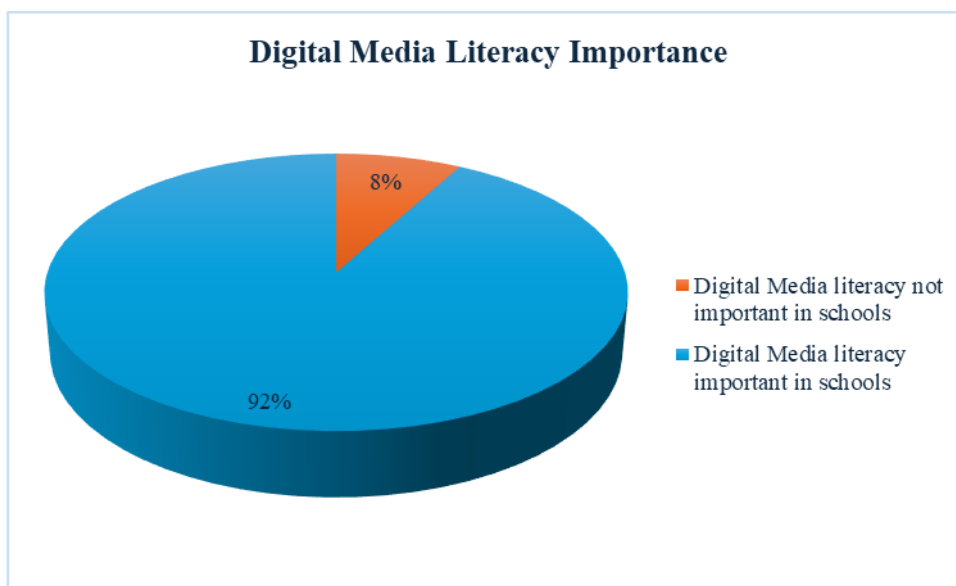


Fig. 6.3.5 Students’ Perception on importance of digital media literacy

6.4 Guidance about Online Safety and Privacy

Q6. Have you received guidance on online safety and privacy in school?

Table 6.4.6: Guidance on online safety and privacy

S. No.	Guidance on online safety and privacy	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	47	47.0
2	No	53	53.0
3	Total	100	100.0

The digital world is a maze where navigation without any plan or guidance is difficult for the digital users. The Table above throws light on the interplay between usage of digital media and the schools which can act as a guiding light to lessen the adversities faced by students when using digital tools. The concept of sharing and safeguarding content also is an integral part of understanding the online safety and privacy of media users. 47% of students state having received guidance on maintaining and managing safety and privacy while being online whereas 53% of students have not received guidance on the online media dynamics. The estimate further implies that with the right guidance, many students will be able to navigate online with precautions. The **Figure 6.4.6** shows the same.

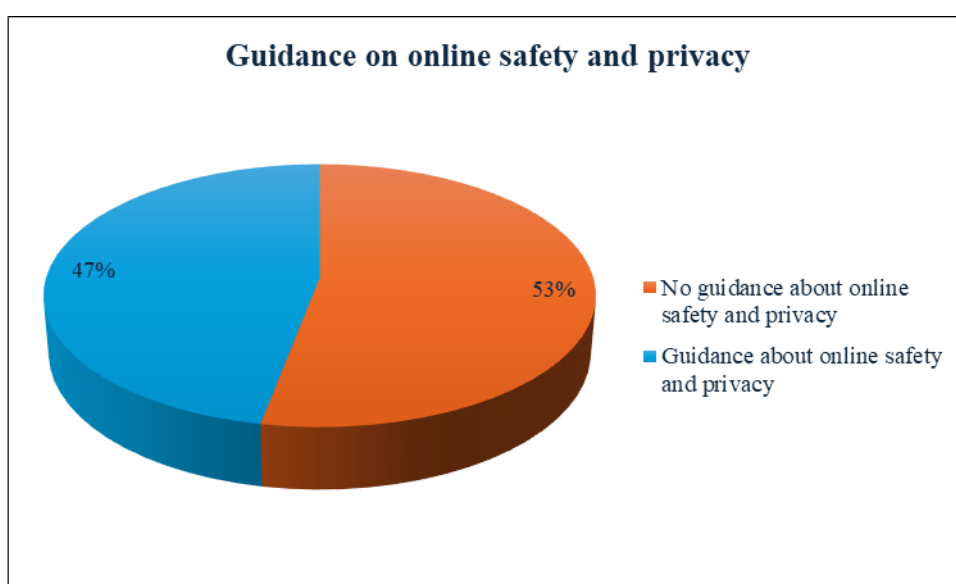


Fig. 6.4.6 Guidance on online safety and privacy

6.5 Encountered Misinformation or fake news

Q7. Do you come across misinformation or fake news online?

Table 6.5.7: Encounter with fake news or misinformation

S. No.	Fake news or Misinformation online	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	72	72.0
2	No	28	28.0
3	Total	100	100.0

Digital world is a plethora of content and information, but what is concerning is the fact that a considerable amount of that information might be unauthentic or misleading. The consequences of consuming misinformation and news which is fake or fabricated has unfathomable implications. The Table above highlights the instances or the frequency at which the respondents recall being exposed to information which was misleading or entirely baseless. Out of 100, 72% of respondents state having come across fake news or misinformation on various digital media platforms, whereas only 28% respondents have not encountered any kind of misinformation online. The Figure 6.5.7 represents the same in an illustrative form.

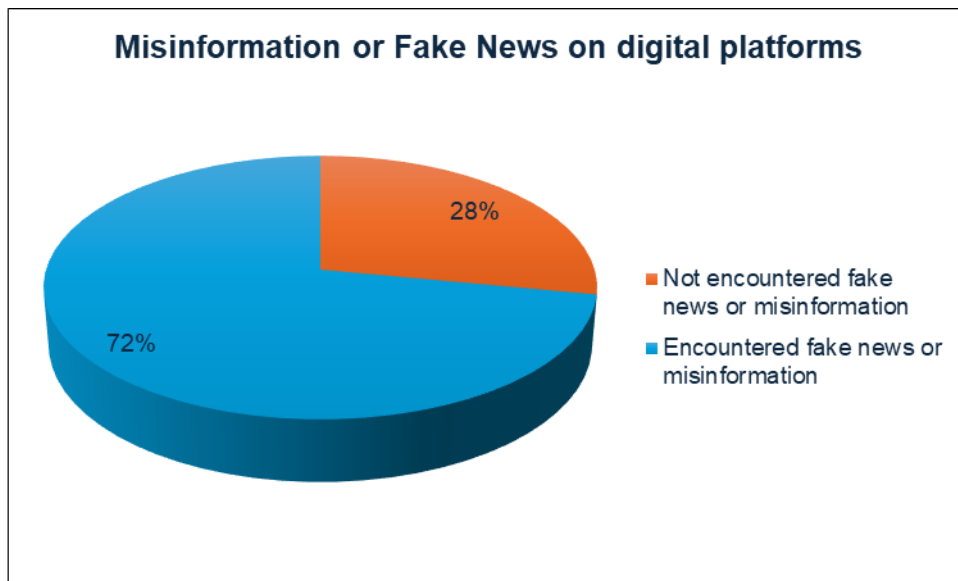


Fig. 6.5.7 Encounter with fake news or misinformation

6.6 Students Perception of Digital Media Literacy

Most of the students agreed that they have no idea about the concept of digital media literacy and around 96 percent respondents were unaware on the use of media as public platform, but they agreed on the fact that they understand well the difference between personal and public use of information.

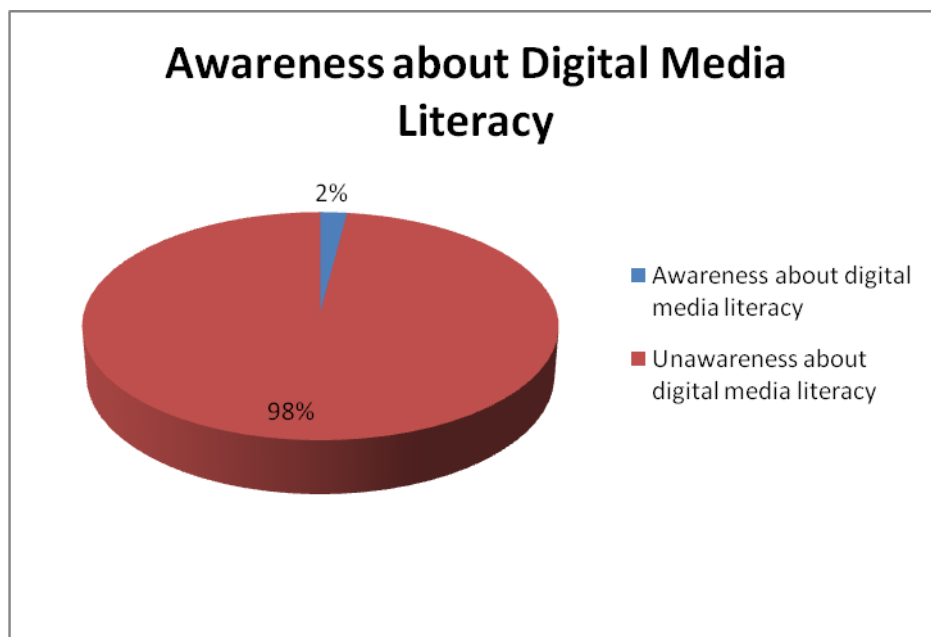


Fig.6.3 Awareness about digital media literacy

6.7 Students access on Media Programme and Contents

Based on the parameters, the media content and its use were asked as a question to the respondents, and the responses were very different as the way students were using social media was very casual and not at all based on any logic. The researchers have asked about the Importance and value of media and information for the people and asked questions on the following important parameters, such as:

- Level of evaluation of fake information
- Social media as a tool of bullying
- Digital media as a tool for misrepresenting images

Most of the respondents were totally unaware about the value of information for socio-cultural development, and they are using all these variables as a playing tool, awareness about the fake content were only 35 percent. Students agreed that they normally use some of the words in their conversational language that is not accepted socially, and some of the respondents agreed about bullying as a normal part of social media use and the use of various images for fun and as a tool of digital play, awareness percentage were 32 percent. Overall, it was very clear that the respondents were not at all serious about the media content and its importance for intellectual development.

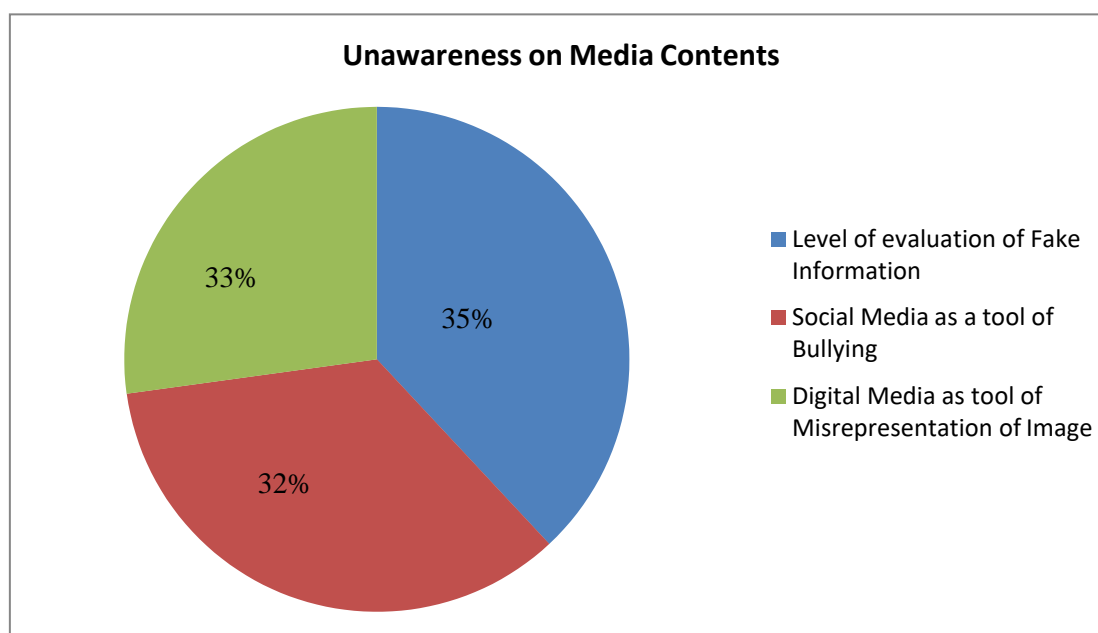


Fig.6.4 Unawareness on Media Contents

Based on the outcome of the survey and with the replies of the respondents, digital media literacy is very important for the students for their intellectual growth and to become self-responsible citizen. The research also brings to attention that the respondents are able to identify that all information available in the social media or other platform is not good and beneficial, therefore the knowledge to understand and analyze quality information is very important. While considering the amount of time and effort students spend on social media and other digital platform, they must have an idea about the digital media literacy where they will be able to identify the quality and effectiveness of information they are receiving as well as they will know how to identify fake information. The students must have an understanding that the wrong dissemination and consumption of information will have a bad impact on social development; in fact, information is the backbone of a society. In addition, in the context of India, the media market is diversifying, and the accessibility of media tools is very intense. Digitalization is widely accepted and implemented widely and high percentage of people especially the youth, have access to the smart phones. Therefore, it's very important to educate the students about digital media literacy. Digital media literacy awareness or education is very important and crucial for the holistic development of the country and also to build responsible citizen of the society to lead the nation towards success.

7. Conclusion

The people's need for news and information, as well as entertainment and communication, led to the emergence of the mass media. The role of mass media is to reflect reality, but now with the emergence of digital media; social media is being represented and are being used as a source of fake information propagation and misrepresentation of people's image which is really alarming the society. The study analyzed the school-going students level of understanding of digital media literacy and the complexities of social awareness of the same. The respondents clearly pointed out that they are using media content for their absolute

entertainment, and they are not at all serious about media consumption and its effectiveness on the constructive development of social capital. The objective of this study and related parameters show that the understanding of media content is not adequate in school students. Lastly, it can be concluded that digital media literacy is crucial for the new generation and school students, as they must understand the value of quality information, which directly influences the constructive growth of society. The most significant recommendation of this study is to initiate the awareness sessions on digital media literacy for students at school level. The education sector needs to develop strategies, policies, and frameworks for the incorporation of digital media literacy as a mandate programme (awareness programme) or can be incorporated as a topic into the curriculum to educate the students on digital media handling and to equip the future generation in identifying right information and misinformation. A different study published by UNICEF also reflects the importance of teaching students on digital media literacy. Hence, teachers, educators, and education professionals also need to be trained in digital media literacy so that they can teach the same to students.

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