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Requirement of Media Literacy Education for Primary School Students in Turkey: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract: This research has been aim to determine how primary school students use media tools. The study group of the research consists of a total of 32 primary school 3rd and 4th grade students 16 of whom attending private and 16 attending state schools in Istanbul during the 2018-2019 school year. For the purpose of revealing the opinion of the students thoroughly, a semi-structured interview form, one of the qualitative data collecting tools, has been used. The research has been designed upon phenemology, one of the qualitative research patterns. The findings obtained from the research have been analyzed via the descriptive analysis method. According to the outcomes of the research, it has been specified that the time the 3rd and 4th grade students spend for the media tools is much more than what is expected and the students are not generally controlled when they use the media mechanisms. In addition, it has been concluded that students use the media tools mostly for the purpose of game and fun, they come across inappropriate advertisements and images even when they visit educational sites and that families and students do not use television in accordance with the smart signs.

Keywords: Media Literacy, Digital Media Literacy, Primary School Students.

1. Introduction

The present century is a period when everything changes and is transformed rapidly; everybody has information about everything; job and life is administrated by fingertips at home. This period known as "information age" reveals new literacies although most of them are not yet a part of school curriculum or teacher training curriculum; such as media literacy, information literacy, digital literacy (Torres & Mercado, 2006: 260). Introduction of new mechanisms in the communication world brings about new literacy patterns. The concept of digital literacy came into prominence as equivalence to the developments in the computer technology in the 1990s. Today media literacy has switched to a new process. This process is expressed as 'new media literacy' or 'digital media literacy'. However, when the developments in the communication technology and the reality of diversified communication tools are taken into consideration, the use of the expression "media literacy" will be appropriate as an overall concept (Özcan, 2017: 57). Media is a title given to the communication environments such as newspapers, magazines, radio, and television which are mass communication mechanisms. Not only do we entertain information from these tools but also media is an environment that profoundly affects our perceptions, beliefs and behaviors (Koltay, 2011: 211).

Media literacy is a skill to reach, analyze, evaluate and create messages in various contexts (Livingstone, 2004: 3). Media literacy can also be defined as getting messages from the media such as television, newspapers and internet and evaluating these messages (Kurt & Kürüm, 2010: 20), because the aim of media literacy is to help people to become cultured citizens rather than cultured consumers (Lewis & Jhally, 1998: 109). At the present time, the use of television, which especially causes children to get exposed to information pollution, which is one of the media tools that affects improvements in all fields when not used appropriately, and which is generally open to the common environment at home, is quite different from the use of it by adults. Children perceive the world through television while adults watch it to have fun. As the children are taught what the difference between reality and the real world presented in the media is, the more the effects of media upon individuals can decrease (Akıncı, 2008: 72).

In a lot of studies that investigate media literacy (Aydemir, 2013; Ey, 2017; Görmez, 2014; Karahisar, 2014; Renes-Arellano & Barral-Aramburu, 2016; Semiz, 2013; Şahin, 2012; Zhang & Zhu, 2016), the status of media literacy and how the concept of media literacy can be gained have been discussed. Aydemir (2013) stated that the students, who attend schools in the city-centers; whose parents' education and socio-economic levels are high; who have the habit of reading

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books, magazines and newspapers; who watch television less, and who have Internet-connected computers and mobile phones, have higher media literacy levels. Ey (2017), in his comparative study; he concluded that the impact of media education on personal development was insufficient. The inadequacy of media education leaves children vulnerable to adopting negative sexualized attitudes, beliefs and behaviors portrayed in the media. Görmez (2014) concluded that the students who took media literacy lesson, in contrast to those who did not, internalized more acquisitions that took place in the units "What is Communication?, Mass Communication, Media, Television, Newspaper and Internet", but there was no difference between the two groups of students in terms of internalizing the acquisitions related to the unit "Internet". According to the outcomes of Karahisar's (2014) research, the following assumptions concerning the 8th grade students were verified: "the number of friends in the social network websites has come out to be quite large; they add unfamiliar people to their friend list; the internet use is not substantially limited; the sites visited in the Internet are not consistently checked by the parents; the children are very likely to come across writings, videos and visuals that include elements of violence and sexuality; they frequently do not share the negative situations they see in the Internet with their families; the students are unconscious and unprotected against the risks they are apt to confront in the Internet; and the parents are indifferent in controlling their children". Renes-Arellano and Barral-Aramburu (2016) specified in a study concerning media literacy and values that students and teachers should be given mediabased literacy training through value-based training. Semiz (2013) concluded that sex, the condition whether media literacy lesson has been taken, whether parents inspect TV or not and the class the students attend are effective on their media literacy efficiency, but the period the students watch TV daily is not. It was also concluded from the findings obtained in the qualitative part of the research that the teachers are not satisfactory in terms of media literacy field information and that media literacy course program should be updated. Şahin (2012) concluded that the students who have not chosen media literacy course spend more time with the computer, that most of the students use the computer in an uncontrolled way, that they take the celebrities on TV as role models and that the most decisive factor for the children to approach the media and use the media tools is the family and social environment. Zhang Zhu (2016) found in terms of digital media literacy that there is not a meaningful difference between female and male students although there are significant differences in different classes and age groups. Moreover, digital media literacy of the primary school students is affected by the students' digital media experiences and parent inspections.

Providing to "ask critical questions concerning what we observe, see and read" lies in the center of being media literate. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to have efforts that can bear more knowledge and skills concerning more widespread environments, media analysis and creation by reaching more pedagogues, children and youths via primarily well-organized programs, activities and pedagogic experiences. At the same time, it is necessary to have academic studies to support this situation (Hobbs, 2004: 136). Since the media literacy course is included in the second level as an elective, studies in this field are mostly related to the second level of primary education (Görmez, 2014; Tan, 2015; Görmez, 2015; Sur 2012). Studies conducted in the field of basic education (Gündüz Kalan, 2010; Altun & Çakmak, 2013) are quite limited. Considering that it is different from field studies, the purpose of this study is to determine how primary school students use media tools. For this purpose, the following questions were sought:

- 1. What is Primary School Students' Ownership and Use of Digital Media Tools?
- 2. According to the students, do their parents follow them while they're on the screen?
- 3. How do students use smart signs in their daily life?

2. Method

This research has been carried out in the content of phenomenology pattern which is one of the qualitative research methods. Phenomenology is focused on cases whose pattern is different but that do not have a deep and detailed understanding. These cases can be seen in various forms in the daily life. However this acquaintance does not mean that the events are understood thoroughly. Phenomenology pattern is used for studies aiming at investigating cases that are not only unfamiliar but also cannot be totally comprehended (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 1999: 69). According to Creswell (2007), phenomenological studies are an inquiry strategy applied to reveal human experiences.

2.1. Study Group

The study group of the research consists of 32 elementary school 3rd and 4th grade students 16 of who attended private and 16 state schools in İstanbul in the 2018-2019 school-year. The study group was preferred by the typical sampling method, one of the intentional sampling methods. Depending on the aim of the study, intentional sampling enables us to deeply investigate well-off situations in terms of knowledge. Typical sampling, on the other hand, requires

designating a typical situation out of various situations in the universe and gathering information out of this sample (Büyüköztürk et al., 2013). The demographic properties of the students who participated in the research are given in Table 1.

Variable	Туре	Private	State	Total
Gender of the Student	Female	8	8	16
Gender of the Student	Male	8	8	16
Level of the Class	3 rd Grade	8	8	16
Level of the Class	4 th Grade	8	8	16
Education Level of the Mother	Primary	4	8	12
	Middle		2	2
	High School	3		3
	University	9		9
Mother's Job	Housewife	14	15	29
	Working	2	1	3
=1	Primary		2	2
Education Level of the Father	High School	1	3	4
	University	11	1	12
	Own work	13	2	15
Father's Job	Worker	1	13	14
	Civil Servant	2	1	3
Mother-Father	Together	16	15	31
יאוטנוזפו -רמנוזפו	Separate		1	1

Table 1. The Demographic Properties of the Students

In Table 1, it is seen that 16 (50%) students who took place in the research attended the state, 16 (50%) attended the private school; mothers of 9 students in the private school were university graduates; mothers of 14 students who attended the private school were housewives and 2 of them worked; 15 of the students who attended the state school were housewives and 1 worked; the father of 1 of the students who attended the private school was a high school graduate, but 11 were university graduates; fathers of 13 students who attended the private school worked in his own work place, but 1 worked as an employee; fathers of 2 students who attended the state school worked in his own work place, but 13 worked as employees.

2.2. Means of Data Collecting

In the research, literature survey related to the subject was done and a semi-structured interview form was developed depending on these studies. In a semi-structured interview, questions are specified previously and findings related to these questions are collected (Karasar, 2005). The questions in the interview form prepared by the researcher were structured in a way to reveal how primary school students use media tools. Two experts in this field were consulted for the conceptual validity of the questions in the interview form. In the interview form; "Do you have a cell phone?", "How old did you start using a cell phone?", "How many hours a day do you use your cell phone?", "What do you do with your cell phone?", "What / s do other members of the family do while you are dealing with the cell phone?", "What are you doing when you see smart signs on the screen? " In-depth interview technique was used by including questions like (Glesne, 2014).

2.3. Collecting the Data

The research data were collected in the spring term of 2018-2019. The findings were collected in the library of the state school, and in the teachers' room and in the offices of the assistant principal of the private school via one-to-one interviews. The interviews lasted average 18 minutes for each student. The interviews were recorded on the mobile phone upon the permission of the parents.

2.4. Analysis of the Findings

Descriptive analysis methods have been used to analyze the findings in this research. Descriptive analysis is a kind of qualitative analysis which includes summarizing and interpreting findings obtained by various data collecting techniques in terms of previously specified themes. In this kind of analysis, the researcher may frequently use quotations so as to

reflect conspicuously the opinions of the individuals. In this type of analysis, the main aim is to present the derived findings to the reader in a summarized and interpreted way (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016: 239).

The findings obtained from the primary school 3rd and 4th grade students were analyzed via the descriptive analysis. The findings were evaluated by an expert and a researcher separately, and the consistency between the results was found as .86. It was calculated using the formula Reliability = number of to Compromise / Compromise + number of Not to Compromise (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Direct quotations were used while the results were being reported in the research. During the transfer of the findings, S1-S8 represents the 3rd grade students attending the state school; S9-S16 the 4th grade students attending the state school; P1-P8 the 3rd grade students attending the private school; P9-P16 the 4th grade students attending the private school. In addition, in or der to show the gender, M for the boys and F for the girls were added to the end of the codes.

3. Findings

In this section, direct quotations were taken from the opinions of the students, and codes themes obtained from the categories were used.

Table 2. Owning and Using Digital Media Tools by the Primary School Students

Variable	Туре	Private	State	f
Owning a Mobile Phone	Yes	3	1	4
Owning a Mobile Phone	No	13	15	28
	-1 Hour /1 Hour	7	7	14
Daily Usage Time of Mobile Phone	+1 Hour	6	7	13
	Unlimited	2	2	4
Number of TV at Home	1	8	13	21
Number of TV at nome	More than 1	8	3	11
	-1 Hour /1 Hour	6	3	9
Daily TV Watching	+1 Hour	4	6	10
	Unlimited	3	6	9
	TRT Channels	3	1	4
	News Channels	2	2	4
Frequently Watched Channels	Netflix	3		3
	Other Channels	6	11	17
	Cartoon Channels	8	11	19
Tables	Yes	12	11	23
Tablet	No	4	4	8
	-1 Hour /1 Hour	6	2	8
Daily Tablet Using	+1 Hour	2	3	5
	Unlimited	2	4	6
	Yes	15	7	22
Computer	No		9	10
	-1 Hour /1 Hour	5	2	7
Daily Usage Time of Computer	+1 Hour	2	1	3
	- 6 and 6	11	10	21
Beginning Age of Starting Using Digital Media Tools	7	4	3	7
		1	_	
	8	1	3	4

In Table 2, the expression -1 hour/1 hour means the students spend 1 hour and less than 1 hour; +1 hour means more than 1 hour using media tools. -6 and 6 shows that digital media tools started being used at the age of 6 and before 6. According to Table 2, it is seen that 87.5% of the students who participated in the research do not own a mobile phone, but 12.5% have one. 4 of the students who had a phone said that they a telephone to communicate with their mothers because their mother worked or when they were alone at home. The parents seem to have been used to the rule "children should not own a telephone at a small age". But the time the children spend using a telephone is longer than the time they spend for other tools. Besides, the time spent with all kinds of tools is quite long when the age of the

students is taken into consideration. Another concept which attracts attention is the number of students who watch and/or use digital mechanisms in an unlimited way. The beginning age to use digital media tools is another remarkable issue. It is remarkable that 65.6% (21 children) before the age of 6 or earlier use digital media tools. Some samples of the interesting expressions the students use about media tools are as follows:

"Mum checks me. I am disturbed by mum's control, a little. But I don't frequently avoid showing the screen. Half an hour at most... It can be half an hour 2 or 3 times a day. Roughly 1.5 hours a day. Morning, noon, evening like the meal times." (P5-M)

"I have no time limit at the tablet. I study until 9-9:30 as much as I want. Then I am at the telephone or tablet until I go to bed. My sleep time changes between ten and ten thirty. I go to bed when the game or video is over. They warn me. But I don't listen." (P8-F)

"I don't play games on the telephone. I look blankly. I look at YouTube. I watch all the films I come across. I switch it off at nasty places." (P12-F)

"I very rarely enter the sites my family won't allow me. Afterwards I understand my mistake and switch it off repenting. Unfortunately I use the telephone quite long, like 6-7 hours. I go to bed at ten-thirty." (S13-M)

"We watch TV until dad comes home in the evening. Then when mum's film starts, we watch that film altogether." (S2-F)

"I watch it as it goes. I have such a feeling." (S7-F)

"My homeworks finish very quickly; then I am at the Internet, television, cell phone and computer (almost 3.5 hours)." (P2-M)

As can be understood from the statements of the students, they spend most of their time at home at the digital media tools. Either there is not another activity to make the students busy and to contribute to their development or they spend all their remaining free time at these tools. This situation is valid for both groups of students attending the state or private school.

Theme	Code	f
	Yes, my family checks me	18
Positive (19)	They check me from the smart clock	1
	Generally they don't watch me	8
	I feel disturbed when they look thinking that they won't allow me for some things.	2
Negative (15)	I don't share with my family thinking that they won't allow videos and films containing swear words and wars	2
	Mum frequently checks what I am doing thinking that the bill will be high	2
	I delete when nasty things appear	1
Both Positive and Negative (4)	Sometimes mum is with me	3
	I share with my family when I am scared. I don't share when I am not scared or scared a little	1
Total		38

Table 3. According to the students, do their parents follow them while they're on the screen?

In Table 3, it is aimed to determine the parents' views about their children's awareness of using media, according to the students. "Would you let your parents look at the screen while on the phone or the computer?" The answers were examined under the themes of "positive", "negative" or "both positive and negative".

Examples of direct quotes about the positive theme include the following. "Sometimes mum gets angry when I watch videos saying that Internet bill will be high. For that reason often checks whether we are playing games or watching videos." (S9-M)

The following can be given as an example to the direct quotations concerning the Negative theme.

"Yes. But they don't frequently come and look. When I'm at the telephone, mum does housework, dad looks at the computer. My brother is 5 years old; he plays with his tablet. When his tablet is out of charge, he looks at the telephone with me." (P2-M)

"Once they asked me my name and province number in an online game. I told dad by mistake. And he got angry. He switched it off. Now I play written online games. I switch off if they ask for information. I don't want to share with my family: thinking that they may limit the games." (P5-M)

"Question from the child: If I give my identity information at the Internet, will they change my information?" (P7-M)

"Recep İvedik, horror films (Siccin, Dabbe) sometimes with my elder sister or alone. When mum looks, I delete. Games (candy game), point coming, joker (like poker)." (S16-F)

"Sometimes naked women appear. I immediately switch off the telephone or get out of those videos. They sometimes appear when I watch lessons or sometimes when I watch videos. They sometimes appear when I watch EBA or Morpa." (S6-F)

The following can be given as an example to the direct quotations concerning the theme 'both positive and negative'.

"Sometimes an advertisement appears. Like Momo and Jackie. I get scared. I share with my family. I don't share things that I am not scared of or not much scared of. I don't believe they are real. That's why they cannot give harm to me. I switch off nasty images. I don't share with my family. Because they get angry with me, they don't let me use the cell phone for one day as a punishment." (S10-F)

"Sometimes woman images come out in the Google advertisements. Mum changes it to the plane mode." (S9-M)

The frequent control of the families in the above statements as positive, not sharing anything because they refrain from the family as negative and sometimes sharing with their families, sometimes hiding it can be grouped as both positive and negative.

Table 4. Students' Use of Smart Signs in Their Daily Life

Theme	Code	f
Negative	What do "smart signs" mean?	32

In Table 4, in order to determine students' awareness of using smart signs in daily life, the students asked "What do you do when you see smart signs while watching TV? The question has been posed. Although there are subjects about smart signs in their lessons, all the students asked the researcher the question "What does a smart sign mean?" Thereupon, what the smart sign means was explained to the students. After that, they gave the following answers.

"I switch on and look. If there is anything. When there is something I switch off. When I watch TV, sometimes there is an adult with me and sometimes there is not. I take the decision to switch off on my own." (P1-F)

"I don't watch, my brother does. He is very interested (5 years old). Mum doesn't give permission, but dad does." ((P2-M)

"I remember the smart signs. I often watch the action films with my mum. They don't seem horrible. I close my eyes and hug my mum if they are very horrible." (P6-F)

"I watch but I know I don't have to. Mum is with me." (P7-M)

"I watch that kind of films when mum is nearby. Mum closes my eyes with her hand. Sometimes I look on the opposite side not to see it" (P10-F)

"When I see I ask mum, and get permission. But I still watch, even though it is a horror film." (P12-F)

4. Results

In this section, there are results about how primary school 3rd and 4th grade students use media tools, whether their families follow them while using media tools, and students' use of smart signs.

Primary School Students' Owning and Using Digital Media Tools

It was concluded that almost all of the students who took place in the research did not have mobile phones and very few of them used mobile phones to communicate with their families in the event that their mothers worked or they were left alone at home. However, it was stated that the students could easily use their family members' mobile phones while at home, frequently exceed the time limit on the phone, use the phone uncontrolled, and often encounter unpleasant images. This situation may be thought to be undesirable according to the age of the students.

According to the students, do their parents follow them while they're on the screen?

It was concluded that families have both low awareness and sensitivity about media literacy. This situation does not change whether the children attend private or public schools or the high level of education of the parents.

Students' Use of Smart Signs in Their Daily Life

In the study, it was determined that the students had a lack of knowledge about smart signs, and that most of them continued to watch even though their families and themselves saw images on the screen that were stated to be unsuitable for age.

5. Discussion

In this section, the results were discussed in the light of the literature and recommendations were presented.

Primary School Students' Owning and Using Digital Media Tools

The results of this study are consistent with the results of studies in which media tools were used and the problems faced by students were investigated. According to the survey outcomes related to the TV choices of the students in a study carried out with primary school students, it was pointed out that children did not watch only programs about the 'Children World' and they were also spectators of the adult world substantially (Cesur & Paker, 2007: 106). Akşit and Dönmez (2011) stated that students prioritize television among the mass media, watch television for more fun, that TV series are at the top of the programs they follow, children's programs are not followed, they perceive all the messages presented to them as "correct information", they are not selective, found that they found the messages and information presented to be reliable. In one of the studies that did not show similarity; primary school children watch more television; After the primary school age, adolescents use the internet more, and children from low-income families spend more time in front of the screen than children from high-income families. In addition, it was found that the duration of watching TV varies depending on whether their mothers are educated or not. It has been stated that the children of highly educated mothers look less at television, and these mothers recommend different activities to their children (Cheviron, 2011: 190). Children and young people watching violent programs on television, playing computer and internet games; It is stated that psychiatric disorders, especially attention deficit, hyperactivity disorder, mood disorders and anxiety disorders. The frequency of these situations increases with Internet addiction (Tahiroğlu, Çelik, Bahalı & Avcı, 2010: 19).

According to the students, do their parents follow them while they're on the screen?

As a result of the research, it was revealed that the parents did not have sufficient knowledge about the internet. This result is similar to the results of Kalan's (2010) study stating that parents whose children continue their preschool education do not have information about media literacy. In addition, in the study in question, it was determined that parents tend to be guiding in choosing the programs their children watch, they especially prefer thematic children's channels, and they do not have the consciousness of preventing their children from being passive viewers while watching television. Similarly, Kırık (2014) found that half of the parents do not take care of their children when they are on the internet and look at their own business. Tomczyk & Wąsiński (2017) concluded that parents who control their children's e-activities, the time they spend, as well as software content, computer games and websites, contribute to shaping the awareness of youth by achieving an important educational goal. In the study of Çimen (2018), it was found that there is a relationship between internet, mobile phone usage characteristics and psychiatric treatment; it has been concluded that families' attitudes towards internet use of young people and family functionality are also related to being cyberbully and / or victim.

Students' Use of Smart Signs in Their Daily Life

In many studies supporting these results (Özonur, 2016: 214; Belviranlı et al., 2008; Kalan, 2010), it was emphasized that smart signs could not protect children and young people from the negative effects of television. It was revealed that primary school 7th and 8th grade students who took and did not take the media literacy course did not consciously follow the mass media and that the difference in the attitudes of the students who did and did not take the media literacy course towards using media was not enough, and that the students found the curriculum boring (Bütün & Kesten, 2014: 49; Çakır, Koçer & Aydın, 2012). In another study, it was observed that the students achieved the gains

(Gömleksiz & Duman, 2013; Gün & Kaya, 2017), and the opposite results were reached. In a different study, students who did not take the media literacy course know what communication is, being able to use the media and know its functions, separating TV program types in terms of their functions, knowing and obeying warning symbols and explanations, knowing the basic concepts related to the newspaper, knowing the basic concepts of internet use and It was concluded that they were not at a sufficient level in terms of basic skills such as application (Görmez, 2015: 67). Although media literacy has been on the agenda in Turkey since 2003, children still spend a significant part of their time at home for games and entertainment purposes in a relatively uncontrolled environment in media tools, especially mobile phones and tablets. It is noteworthy that when they watch TV as a family, parents often do not choose according to smart signs. Although the child is afraid of what he is watching and hugs his mother, they continue to watch as a family. The fact that students do not remember the information they have learned at school and therefore do not reflect them in their daily lives raises questions about how the information learned at school is presented. Often families do not use or do not know the "Secure Internet Service". In his study supporting this result, Yurttas (2013) concluded that internet filter programs are not used much. Studies on media literacy cannot be overcome by parents alone. In their expressions, students complain that advertisements that are not appropriate for their age are displayed even on game sites and educational sites such as Okulistik and EBA. As a result, we live in a digital age. Media tools and their effects cannot be ignored. By minimizing the harms of the media, the protection of students can be made possible and critical media literacy awareness can be increased.

The suggestions have been organized in 4 areas.

What the government can do in terms of media literacy:

- 1. Students complain about the advertisements that come to the educational sites and the sudden unfavorable images. This situation shows that many families have no knowledge about "family protection". "Family protection filter" should not be optional but should be compulsory for all the families with children.
- **2.** The advertisements that appear in the sites addressing children should be controlled; even legal arrangements should be done.

Suggestions to the Ministry of National Education:

- 1. Class teachers should be given in-service education related to media literacy.
- 2. All families must be given digital media literacy training.

Suggestions to families:

- 1. They should participate in training courses teaching them how to direct their children to media literacy.
- 2. They should be an example to their children as a parent by using media literacy tools correctly.
- **3.** Parents should be careful about spending quality time with their children.

Suggestions to researchers:

- **1.** Research can be applied to a bigger group of students via the mixed method.
- 2. In another study, family and teacher dimensions may also be included.

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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