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Proposing a Media Literacy Model for Teenage Girls Addicted to Instagram

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ABSTRACT

The world is experiencing a change at a rapid space with ever-increasing innovation and development in information and communications technologies. In fact, the modern world is controlled by the media, and many human relationships are driven by new technologies, especially social media which is growing and spreading at lightning speed. This type of media, including Instagram has incurring more negative impact on children and adolescents. Therefore, it is important to pay more attention to media literacy, which is considered in this research. It should be noted that media literacy does not occur spontaneously but is possible through an appropriate educational system. As such, there is a need to present a coherent and purposeful model in the media space surrounded by all kinds of celebrities and all kinds of content on the Instagram. This research method is qualitative-exploratory in nature. With the help of experts, the researchers intend to provide a media literacy model for teenage girls addicted to the Instagram. The Delphi method was used while the study population was selected from experts and professors in the field of communication and media literacy. Finally, the desired model of media literacy was organized around five areas of cognitive, technological, educational, research and policy making.

Keywords: teenage girls, media literacy, social networks, Instagram, celebrity

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INTRODUCTION

Rapid and stunning developments in new communications and information technologies have affected many aspects of cultural life. In other words, it won't be an exaggeration to say that the modern world is now being controlled by the media. Ubiquitous presence on social media sites will leave enduring effects on minds and beliefs of users and one of these effects which is currently on the rise have been pinpointing the so-called "celebritism" on the Instagram. Researchers have shown that among different demographics, Instagram has been most influential among the teenagers.

PURPOSE

The authors believe that there is a substantial lack of proper research on the subject of teenagers' use of social media and the extent to which they are fond of celebrities. Presence on social media sites and enjoying it necessitates a skill called media literacy. Most researchers believe that the best time to found skills of thinking and media literacy is during primary education. Hence, paying attention to develop a model which is not abstract but based on the field data is very important in Iran. The objective of this research is to develop such model and provide useful details as to how to cope with such a trend among teenagers by implementing such models.

METHODOLOGY

This is an explorative study, in which, the Delphi method is employed. Moreover, this is also an applied research since data were gathered both through survey and library studies. Opinions were taken through a questionnaire to experts who had studied teenage girls' usage of social media; that enabled researchers extract desired indices for teaching media literacy among Instagram-addicted teenage girls. Then, another questionnaire was designed and distributed among the Delphi task force to get their reaction.

The study population included experts and professors in the fields of communications and media literacy, especially those who had done work on teenage girls. There are two criteria to choose participants for the qualitative survey: First, relevance between their academic experience and the topic of the research they dealt with. Second, existence of what is called "good knowledge" for which the participant is known for his/her personal quality. Hence, a snowball sampling method was used to select experts. Snowball sampling is a technique in which participants are included in the research project to help researchers in finding other potential participants. Taking advantage of currently enrolled participants to find more research subjects, researchers were tasked with gradually completing both sampling and surveying. In order to minimize the risk, it is better to go over the preferred choice. For example, a researcher who studies patterns of media use in a

community may ask people to introduce others who are of the relevant in the same community or others. Anyway, we could find 8 people and obtained their consent for participating in our study.

FINDINGS

As mentioned, we developed a Delphi task force consisted of 8 experts from communications and media literacy fields and had done record researching and teaching in their fields. With their assistance, we were able to produce 133 important items. Participants enumerated important factors one should have in mind while designing a model for media literacy education to teenage girls in Iran. We categorized items with five central themes and after accomplishing a survey through close-ended questions, we built the desired model based on those five axes.

CONCLUSION

It would not be wrong to say that we are living in a complicated world where previous personal and public ethics on media usage are almost obsolete. That necessitates the implementation of more complicated and time-tuned policies. Based on a field work among experts, we organized the desired model of media literacy for teenage girls around 5 axes:

1) Cognitive dimension: This is broken into two sub-dimensions: ability to classify, ability to be able to evaluate the content on the Instagram.

2) Technological dimension: For this, two sub-dimensions were recognized: utilizing software and utilizing hardware, with both being identified interconnected and important. Lack of knowledge on how hardware works can have effects on how software is used.

3) Educational dimension: This has four sub-dimensions: Avoiding ideology in education, teaching analysis of the content structure, teaching actorship, and doing media research.

4) Research dimension: This includes two sub-dimensions: Media studies and audience studies. Some of our participants insisted that it is better if we call the latter user studies given the immense changes the so-called web 2.0 technologies have made in the way the -former- audiences interact with each other and with the technology itself.

5) Policy dimension: This is consisted of three sub-dimensions: Positive strategies, legal strategies, and long-term strategies.

NOVELTY

As can be seen, we have implemented innovations in our project. First, there are only a handful of field studies on how teenage girls in Iran use social media and



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attract with “celebrities” on them. (With a pessimistic approach, one can say they are consumed by those celebrities too, since their youth and energy are vital to the very existence and continuity of celebrity brand and business). Moreover, we didn’t stop as describing what exists in the field; we proceeded to provide a model for educating and empowering teenage girls in using social media to their own benefits.



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