The Pervasive Problem of Media Illiteracy

Shikha Soni

25.5%, no, that isn't the statistic stating how many people wash their hands after using the restroom, but rather the accuracy rate of American news outlets, according to the Social Science Research Council at Media Well; And yes, it is more common for a male adult to wash his hands than it is for an American news outlet to tell the truth in a newspaper. Being media literate is the skill of being able to understand mass media in a way that you can understand and be aware of the implications and the embedded authenticity. Ever since the media was formed centuries ago, there has always been a possibility of deceit within the realm of online communication. Not only does the awareness of media deceit have to be recognized, but the veracity of the situation should be analyzed in addition to simply reading the article and declaring it nonfactual. Media literacy is also an essential skill, especially when considering consequences in relation to public opinion and behavior. Media literacy is crucial in today's digital age, downplaying the significance in education, individuality, and democracy keeping our society running in a healthy way, however, there are issues that are debated like censorship that can be seen as a negative aspect of media, but in actuality is a huge part of literacy in relation to the media. So today, we'll shed light on important parts of the digital world and show why media literacy is an important part of today's society and world in general.

Now that we have established the critical need for media literacy, let's explore the fundamental concept of media literacy and how it provides individuals with the abilities to navigate this digital age effectively. Nevertheless, there is more to media literacy than simply being able to tell when there is biased content like aforementioned, there are multiple key components of media literacy that play a huge role in understanding: critical thinking,

information evaluation, and digital literacy. The first part of being media literate is the ability to critically analyze the situation or study that is presented to you. Critical analysis has a big role in the understanding of media. Since each person's perspective on a situation is different, this leads to a variety of analysis on a single subject. This variety can provide guidance for people who are just beginners on said subject, which can lead to a development of more and more perspectives which can continue in an endless cycle of information. Information evaluation is the next important component of media literacy. Information evaluation may sound similar to critical analysis, but they are both very different. While critical analysis is the ability to analyze the citation, information evaluation is the ability to analyze the facts (including graphs) that are provided. Distortion of data is not as common, but still important to recognize when possible. For example, researchers at NYU School of Law have said "*Designers and communicators are utilizing the power of data visualization to augment their messages, which in turn has an effect on how users perceive the original message.*" There are many ways to distort data, which makes it extremely easy to simply forget to look at the axes, which can lead to a critical analysis that is based on false data. The shift in media towards the digital world has been on an upward trend for the past couple of decades. So, when looking at digital literacy in comparison to media literacy it is essential to understand the other. Digital literacy is important since being able to analyze the truth on any digital platform directly correlates with the same skills just translated into mass media. Digital literacy also provides people with a general understanding of all media online as opposed to simply just media. So by now understanding the key factors of media consumption and analysis, we can now understand how and why said media is so relevant and prevalent. In recent years, digital media use has increased ultiamely leading to more exposure of media. Media

usage has been seen at ages as young as 13 (the minimum age for many applications) meaning we have to expose these young kids to the untruthful part of the internet.

      While media literacy gives individuals the skills necessary to come to their own conclusions, it's essential to recognize the challenges that we face because of the widespread diminishing of the truth, which we can also call the pervasive problem of misinformation.

Works Cited

- https://mediawell.ssrc.org/articles/just-how-accurate-are-american-news-media

- https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/Papers.cfm?abstract_id=2566968