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AWARENESS OF MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS AMONG POST-GRADUATE STUDENTS OF SELECT REGULAR DEPARTMENTS OF PUNJABI UNIVERSITY PATIALA

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Abstract: Technology's swift progress and its widespread adoption of media platforms have greatly expanded the availability and accessibility of information. Students must need adequate media and information literacy (MIL) skills to navigate and critically evaluate the vast amount of information in this digital age. This study is based on the awareness of MIL skills of post-graduate students of select regular departments of Punjabi University, Patiala. The study revealed that the awareness of post-graduate students' media and information literacy needs improvement. Integrating MIL into the educational curriculum is crucial for students to attain personal, educational, professional, and social growth.

Keywords : MIL Awareness, MIL Curriculum, Media MIL Skills, Critical Thinking

1.0 Introduction

We all need information for decision-making. Critical questions include why information is needed, how it is provided, and to whom it is provided. Fact-checking and verification are necessary for every citizen to find the truth behind a story in this era of misinformation, disinformation, mal-information, fake news, and conspiracy theories. A lot of disinformation on the internet misleads people across frontiers. Therefore, there is an urgent need to train information seekers to find, evaluate, use, generate, and communicate accurate, high-quality information for quality decision-making and good governance.

1.1 Background

Information literacy is a concept that has been in existence since 1974 and involves knowing how to carefully locate, use, and access accurate information. This term highlights the critical role and importance of accurate information in various contexts. Information literacy is crucial in daily communication, education, and decision-making. Proficiency in information literacy enables people to work efficiently, use critical thinking skills, and make sound decisions based on accurate information. Information literacy is a lifelong skill that remains relevant and essential in today's era of digital communication, where inaccurate information is abundant that requires careful analysis and evaluation.

2.0 Media and Information Literacy

The term "Media and Information Literacy" (MIL) refers to the ability to comprehend and use a variety of media, including music videos, television, smart phones, the internet, and other contemporary communication tools. Grizzle and Wilson (2011) state, "Media and Information Literacy imparts crucial knowledge about the functions of media and information channels in democratic societies, reasonable understanding about the conditions needed to perform those functions effectively and basic skills necessary to evaluate the performance of media and information providers in the light of the expected functions."

3.0 Statement Of The Problem

Information overloaded has made finding and accessing relevant information challenging in the digital era. Therefore, media and information literacy is becoming essential for everyone but is more critical for the academics. "UNESCO has left no stone unturned in ensuring that a systematic and comprehensive approach be employed in the preparation of this MIL Curriculum for Teachers" (Wilson et al., 2011). In the context of

prevailing disinformation and misinformation students must acquire media and information literacy skills to be critical thinkers and independent learners. Therefore, the present study examines the "Awareness of Media and Information Literacy Skills of Post-Graduate Students of Select Regular Departments of Punjabi University, Patiala."

4. 0 Objectives Of The Study

This paper aims to study the awareness of MIL skills of post-graduate students of select regular departments of Punjabi University Patiala. The objectives of the present study are as follows:

a) To find post-graduate students' awareness of media and information literacy.
b) To discover out how post-graduate students find, evaluate and use information.
c) To investigate the techniques and routines post-graduate students use for accessing information.
d) To find out if post-graduate students make use of information legally and ethically.
e) To determine the problems faced by post-graduate students in accessing and using information.

5.0 Scope Of The Study

The scope is limited to the post-graduate students of select regular departments of Punjabi University, Patiala. The names of the departments are:

a) Library and Information Science (LIS)
b) Education and Community Services (EDU)
c) Journalism and Mass Communication (JMC)
d) School of Management Studies (SMS)

6. 0 Literature Review

To achieve the goals of the UNESCO Paris Agenda (2007), the Alexandra Declaration (2005), and the Grunwald Declaration (1982), the member States must implement the media and information literacy curriculum for teachers to help students to develop their capacity for critical thinking and well-informed decision-making. The ultimate objective is for the next generation to be equipped with these skills and positively influence a more secure, fair society with more access to information (Wilson et al., 2011). Kaur et al. (2017) focus on assessing information literacy (IL) awareness and usage. The study can help develop strategies to increase IL awareness and usage by offering insights into the IL habits of the population studied. Chanchinmawia and Verma (2018) examined the information literacy abilities of research researchers at Mizoram University. The ability to recognize information needs, find pertinent information, assess its quality, and apply it in a social or educational context is all included in information literacy. The finding shows that these students have sufficient information-handling abilities for their needs. Most scholars have a foundational understanding of retrieving information from libraries utilizing print and digital sources. Concerns over fake news have increased interest in media literacy, according to a study by Jang et al. (2021). The study aims to determine if increased digital, media, information, and news literacy may help identify false information. The study discovered a favourable correlation between information literacy and the capacity to identify incorrect information. Those proficient in navigating and locating reliable information are more likely to discern and avoid misinformation, enhancing their ability to make informed decisions. Logeswari et al. (2021) aim to ascertain how research scholars at Pondicherry University use media and information literacy tools and how aware they are of them. Most students conducted their studies using journals and papers that they have found online. According to the report, the research scholars of Pondicherry University are unaware of MIL initiatives in India. Wuyckens et al. (2022) covered the ideas of media literacy, digital literacy, and information literacy. The study draws attention to issues with rationalization in monitoring and evaluating these literacies, uncertainty regarding the constitutive characteristics of literacies, and persistent challenges in constructing theoretical articulations between contributions. Nasir and Ciroma (2023) discovered that students pursuing the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) in northern colleges lack the psychomotor skills necessary to independently or automatically verify fake news. Mansoor (2024) investigated strategies for reducing communication disorder and achieving balance in the interactions between the general people, the media, the powerful institutions, and the online influencers in society.

7. 0 Research Methodology

The survey method was used to collect data on students' knowledge of media and information literacy skills through questionnaires, interviews, and personal observations. The population included post-graduate students of

select regular departments of Punjabi University, Patiala. Simple random sampling was considered for post-graduate students. Two hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed in person to post-graduate students. The results of this study provide insights into the effectiveness of current media and information literacy education practices, and inform strategies to improve students' understanding and application of these skills in academic and professional contexts.

8.0 Data Analysis And Discussion

This segment presents the demographic information of the students. It presents answers to the research questions and discusses the findings. The following table reveals that out of a sample of 250 post-graduate students, 187 filled the questionnaires. The data were analyzed and presented with the help of tables. The demographic profile of the PG students is shown below:

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the PG Students Department-wise under Punjabi University, Patiala

Departments	Count	percentage
SMS	86	46.0
EDU	43	23.0
LIS	20	10.7
JMC	38	20.3
Total	**187**	**100**

Table 1. shows that 187 out of 250 students are pursuing post-graduate studies. Further, it indicates that post-graduate programs significantly contribute to the PUP students' population.

Table 2: Department-wise Gender Profile of the PG Students under Punjabi University, Patiala

Departments	Count (N = 187) (in per cent)	Male (per cent)	Female (per cent)
SMS	86 (46%)	44.2	55.8
EDU	43 (23%)	34.9	65.1
LIS	20 (10.70%)	30.0	70.0
JMC	38 (20.30%)	52.6	47.4

It is obvious from Table 2 that 44.2% SMS, 34.9% EDU, 30.0% LIS, and 52.6% JMC of PG students are male. However, 55.8% of SMS, 65.1% EDU, 70.0% LIS, and 47.4% JMC of PG students are female. The data indicates that a higher proportion of female respondents participated in filling out the questionnaire compared to male respondents. It is also seen that majority of the students from the management department have participated largely compared to other departments.

Table 3: Department-wise Age Profile of the PG students

Departments	Mean age (years)	Standard Deviation	Median age (years)
SMS	23.3	3.1	23.0
EDU	25.8	3.0	25.0
LIS	23.7	1.8	23.5
JMC	23.2	2.0	23.0
Overall	**23.9**	**2.9**	**23.0**

Table 3 shows that the mean age of students are 23 years in SMS, 26 years in EDU, 24 years in LIS, and 23 years in JMC. It is noticed that most of the students of the EDU department are slightly older than those in other departments. The departments are logically comparable.

Table 4: Awareness of the terms: IL, CL, DL, ML, CUL & MIL

Terms	Response	SMS	EDU	LIS	JMC

Information Literacy (IL)	No	11 (12.8%)	2 (4.7%)	0 (0%)	6 (15.8%)
	Yes	75 (87.2%)	41 (95.3%)	20 (100%)	32 (84.2%)
Computer Literacy (CL)	No	21 (24.4%)	0 (0%)	3 (15%)	10 (26.3%)
	Yes	65 (75.6%)	43 (100%)	17 (85%)	28 (73.7%)
Digital Literacy (DL)	No	31 (36%)	7 (16.3%)	11 (55%)	7 (18.4%)
	Yes	55 (64%)	36 (83.7%)	9 (45%)	31 (81.6%)
Media Literacy (ML)	No	33 (38.4%)	4 (9.3%)	13 (65%)	8 (21.1%)
	Yes	53 (61.6%)	39 (90.7%)	7 (35%)	30 (78.9%)
Cultural Literacy (CUL)	No	32 (37.2%)	7 (16.3%)	12 (60%)	10 (26.3%)
	Yes	54 (62.8%)	36 (83.7%)	8 (40%)	28 (73.7%)
Media and Information Literacy (MIL)	No	35 (40.7%)	2 (4.7%)	6 (30%)	10 (26.3%)
	Yes	51 (59.3%)	41 (95.3%)	14 (70%)	28 (73.7%)

Table 4 reveals that students from the LIS department have 100% awareness of IL, followed by EDU at 95.3%, SMS at 87.2%, and a low level of awareness at 84.2% in JMC department. The majority of students are aware of the term IL. Most students have 100% awareness about CL in EDU, 85% in LIS, 75.6% in SMS and nearly about the same level of awareness, 73.7% in JMC. A few students across four departments lacked awareness of DL, ML, CL, and MIL. Only the LIS department showed a low level of awareness in DL, ML and CUL, comparable to other departments. The students from SMS department have a 59.3% low level of awareness in MIL, and EDU has a 95.3% high level of awareness of MIL. The majority of EDU department students have a high level of awareness of all the components of MIL.

Table 5: Projects taken on IL, ML & ICT Skills, and MIL

Terms	Response	SMS	EDU	LIS	JMC
Information Literacy (IL)	No	50 (58.1%)	25 (58.1%)	13 (65%)	29 (76.3%)
	Yes	36 (41.9%)	18 (41.9%)	7 (35%)	9 (23.7%)
Media Literacy (ML)	No	61 (70.9%)	27 (62.8%)	18 (90%)	23 (60.5%)
	Yes	25 (29.1%)	16 (37.2%)	2 (10%)	15 (39.5%)
ICT's Skill	No	59 (68.6%)	21 (48.8%)	13 (65%)	31 (81.6%)
	Yes	27 (31.4%)	22 (51.2%)	7 (35%)	7 (18.4%)
Media and Information Literacy (MIL)	No	77 (89.5%)	26 (60.5%)	18 (90%)	25 (65.8%)
	Yes	9 (10.5%)	17 (39.5%)	2 (10%)	13 (34.2%)

Table 5 presents that students from SMS and EDU department have taken similar (41.9%) projects on IL. On the other hand, students from LIS and JMC departments took 35% and 23.7% of the IL projects, respectively. The students from the SMS, EDU, and JMC departments took 29.1%, 37.2%, and 39.5% of the ML projects, respectively. However, students from the LIS department took only 10% of the ML projects, which is quite low. Similarly, the students from SMS, EDU, LIS, and JMC took 31.4%, 51.2%, 35%, and 18.4% of the projects on ICT skills. Further, the students from EDU and JMC departments had taken only 39.5% and 34.2% of the projects on the MIL. However, the students from the LIS and SMS departments took only 10% and 10.5% of the projects on the MIL, which is extremely low. Overall, it is observed that the students from EDU department have taken more projects on the IL, ICT skills, and MIL, and the majority of students from the LIS have taken fewer projects on ML and MIL. The SMS department have taken fewer projects on MIL compared to EDU and JMC. Developing practical skills alongside theoretical knowledge is crucial for enhancing the learning process.

Table 6: Check the quality of Information, when obtained from the Internet

Terms	Response	SMS	EDU	LIS	JMC
Credibility	No	30 (34.9%)	19 (44.2%)	8 (40%)	7 (18.4%)
	Yes	56 (65.1%)	24 (55.8%)	12 (60%)	31 (81.6%)
Bias	No	39 (45.3%)	21 (48.8%)	16 (80%)	15 (39.5%)
	Yes	47 (54.7%)	22 (51.2%)	4 (20%)	23 (60.5%)
Accuracy	No	13 (15.1%)	9 (20.9%)	6 (30%)	9 (23.7%)
	Yes	73 (84.9%)	34 (79.1%)	14 (70%)	29 (76.3%)
Usability	No	43 (50%)	12 (27.9%)	7 (35%)	19 (50%)

	Yes	43 (50%)	31 (72.1%)	13 (65%)	19 (50%)

Table 6 shows that all the students have similar levels of skills in checking the quality of information from the Internet. 81.6% of students from the JMC department have shown a high level of skills in checking the credibility; again, 60.5% of students from the JMC have shown high skills, and LIS department only 20% have skills in checking bias information compared to other departments. The SMS department have shown 84.9% high skills in checking the accuracy of information from the web, and EDU, LIS, and JMC have almost equal levels of skills in checking the accuracy of information from the web. All the departments have shown good skills in checking the usability of information from the Internet. The study highlights that PG students need more training to evaluate the reliability of information sources. Students must evaluate information quality when working on academic tasks, such as projects and presentations, while online sources.

Table 7: Preference of social media sites for accessing information

Terms	**Response**	**SMS**	**EDU**	**LIS**	**JMC**
You Tube	No	49 (57%)	11 (25.6%)	3 (15%)	15 (39.5%)
	Yes	37 (43%)	32 (74.4%)	17 (85%)	23 (60.5%)
Twitter	No	61 (70.9%)	38 (88.4%)	19 (95%)	29 (76.3%)
	Yes	25 (29.1%)	5 (11.6%)	1 (5%)	9 (23.7%)
Terms	**Response**	**SMS**	**EDU**	**LIS**	**JMC**
Blogs	No	44 (51.2%)	31 (72.1%)	18 (90%)	24 (63.2%)
	Yes	42 (48.8%)	12 (27.9%)	2 (10%)	14 (36.8%)
News networks websites	No	52 (60.5%)	22 (51.2%)	7 (35%)	19 (50%)
	Yes	34 (39.5%)	21 (48.8%)	13 (65%)	19 (50%)

Table 7 reveals that 43% from SMS, 74.4% from EDU, 85% from LIS, and 60.5% from the JMC department searched YouTube to access information. The students in the SMS department use YouTube significantly less than their peers in other departments. Twitter is very less used by the students from all the departments for the information. It is evident from the table 7 that 29.1% students from SMS, 11.6% from EDU, 5% from LIS, and 23.7% from the JMC departments preferred Twitter for accessing information. The students from EDU and LIS departments use Twitter to a minimum extent. 48.8% of students from SMS, 27.9% from EDU, 10% from LIS, and 36.8% from JMC department preferred using blogs to access information. Respondents from LIS and EDU departments used blogs to a significantly lesser extent. In comparison to other departments, the LIS department has the highest percentage of students who used news networks websites for content evaluation, followed by JMC (50%) and EDU (48.8%). The SMS department uses them the least. It has been found that LIS students used Twitter and blogs much less, and preferred You Tube and news network websites much more for information. It has also been noted that You Tube and news network websites are the primary sources of information for most post-graduate students across all departments. Singh and Ramaiah (2021) examined how students perceived using media platforms. They discovered that many other media platforms are not popular among students, unlike YouTube, a very trustworthy and easily available media site.

Table 8: Enhanced Learning through Online Courses

Terms	**Response**	**SMS**	**EDU**	**LIS**	**JMC**
Online presentations	No	42 (48.8%)	25 (58.1%)	8 (40%)	21 (55.3%)
	Yes	44 (51.2%)	18 (41.9%)	12 (60%)	17 (44.7%)
Video lessons	No	28 (32.6%)	14 (32.6%)	10 (50%)	13 (34.2%)
	Yes	58 (67.4%)	29 (67.4%)	10(50%)	25 (65.8%)
Images and multimedia documents	No	47 (54.7%)	30 (69.8%)	15 (75%)	24 (63.2%)
	Yes	39 (45.3%)	13 (30.2%)	5 (25%)	14 (36.8%)
Apps like Google Classroom	No	67 (77.9%)	28 (65.1%)	19 (95%)	31 (81.6%)
	Yes	19 (22.1%)	15 (34.9%)	1 (5%)	7 (18.4%)

It is evident from Table 8 that 60% of students from the LIS department feel comfortable exploring through online presentations followed by 51.2% from SMS, 44.7% from JMC and 41.9 % from the EDU department. However, students from LIS department 50% said "Yes" and 50% "NO" learning through video lectures. The SMS, EDU and JMC students have an equal average of learning from video lessons. Students expressed similar and modest levels of interest from all the departments when it came to studying pictures, multimedia papers, and apps like

Google Classrooms. It has been observed that most students from various departments find online presentations and video classes to be more convenient and accessible. Post-graduate students can use various sources to enhance their learning through online courses. However, they require MIL skills to meet their academic objectives.

Table 9: Using information legally and ethically

Terms	Response	SMS	EDU	LIS	JMC
Aware of using information ethically and legally	No	10 (11.6%)	2 (4.7%)	10 (50%)	10 (26.3%)
	Yes	76 (88.4%)	41 (95.3%)	10 (50%)	28 (73.7%)
Believe in the ethical and legal use of information	No	34 (39.5%)	4 (9.3%)	4 (20%)	6 (15.8%)
	Yes	52 (60.5%)	39 (90.7%)	16 (80%)	32 (84.2%)
When you use information from the Internet for your project, do you think it is compulsory to check links for the accuracy of that information	No	14 (16.3%)	1 (2.3%)	12 (60%)	5 (13.2%)
	Yes	58 (67.4%)	38 (88.4%)	8 (40%)	27 (71.1%)
	Not sure	14 (16.3%)	4 (9.3%)	0 (0%)	6 (15.8%)

Table 9 demonstrates that 95.3% of PG students from the EDU department have the maximum level of awareness, 88.4% from SMS, 73.7% from JMC, and the lowest level of awareness of 50% from LIS. However, PG students expressed to be knowledgeable about utilizing information lawfully and ethically. It is also seen that 90.7% of PG students from EDU, 84.2% from JMC, 80% from LIS, and the lowest level, with 60.5% from SMS, believe in the ethical and legal use of information. It has resulted in most PG students from all the departments believing in the ethical and legal use of information. It is also seen that 67.4% majority of the students from SMS, 88.4% from EDU, 71.1% from JMC, and 40% from LIS said "Yes". In addition, 60% of students from LIS replied negatively, and none of them was sure when to use information from the Internet for their project. It is also found that PG students from the LIS department are not entirely confident in checking links for the accuracy of that information when retrieved from the Internet.

Table 10: Action violates the copyright laws

Terms	Response	SMS	EDU	LIS	JMC
Not giving reference to the source	No	51 (59.3%)	20 (46.5%)	14 (70%)	15 (39.5%)
	Yes	35 (40.7%)	23 (53.5%)	6 (30%)	23 (60.5%)
Copying more than 10% of a printed book	No	48 (55.8%)	32 (74.4%)	10 (50%)	32 (84.2%)
	Yes	38 (44.2%)	11 (25.6%)	10 (50%)	6 (15.8%)
Re-writing someone's work without acknowledging the source	No	45 (52.3%)	34 (79.1%)	10 (50%)	18 (47.4%)
	Yes	41 (47.7%)	9 (20.9%)	10 (50%)	20 (52.6%)
Converting an author's work into your own language for own use	No	52 (60.5%)	28 (65.1%)	16 (80%)	28 (73.7%)
	Yes	34 (39.5%)	15 (34.9%)	4 (20%)	10 (26.3%)

Table 10 highlighted that from the first statement, “Not giving reference to the source", majority of (60.5%) students from JMC department violates the copyright laws whereas LIS department with only 30% violates the copyright act as compared to other departments. From the second statement, “Copying more than 10% of a printed book”, LIS department showed a high level of response compared to JMC with 15.8% and EDU with 25.6%, thereby showing a low level of responses in violating the copyright laws. From the third statement, “Re-writing someone's work without acknowledging the source," 20.9% of students from the EDU department showed a low level of response whereas 47.7% SMS, 50% LIS, and 52.6% JMC showed almost similar levels of responses in violating the copyright laws. From the last statement, “Converting an author's work into your own language for own use”, majority of 39.5% of students from SMS, 34.9% EDU, 26.3% JMC and 20% LIS departments showed weak association. It is noticed that some students are aware of the act of violating the copyright act.

Table 11: Problems faced while accessing and using information on the Internet

Terms	Response	SMS	EDU	LIS	JMC
Choosing relevant information from the Internet	No	42 (48.8%)	20 (46.5%)	12 (60%)	21 (55.3%)
	Yes	44 (51.2%)	23 (53.5%)	8 (40%)	17 (44.7%)
Retrieving information which is free or paid on the Internet	No	44 (51.2%)	34 (79.1%)	16 (80%)	20 (52.6%)
	Yes	42 (48.8%)	9 (20.9%)	4 (20%)	18 (47.4%)
Skills to protect your device from virus	No	60 (69.8%)	28 (65.1%)	14 (70%)	26 (68.4%)

	Yes	26 (30.2%)	15 (34.9%)	6 (30%)	12 (31.6%)
Lack of budget/ funding problems	No	48 (55.8%)	35 (81.4%)	8 (40%)	30 (78.9%)
	Yes	38 (44.2%)	8 (18.6%)	12 (60%)	8 (21.1%)
Language barriers	No	65 (75.6%)	34 (79.1%)	13 (65%)	24 (63.2%)
	Yes	21 (24.4%)	9 (20.9%)	7 (35%)	14 (36.8%)

Table 11 shows that students with 51.2% from SMS, 53.5% from EDU, 40% from LIS, and 44.7% from JMC departments, need help in choosing relevant information from the internet. The students from SMS and EDU departments faced more difficulties than those of LIS and JMC departments. It is also evident from the table that 48.8% students from SMS, 20.9% from EDU, 20% from LIS, and 47.4% from JMC need help in retrieving information, which is free or paid on the internet. In this context, SMS and JMC faced more problems than EDU and LIS. Few students respond to protecting their devices from viruses, with 30.2% from SMS, 34.9% from EDU, 30% from LIS, and 31.6% from JMC. They all have weak skills to protect their devices from viruses. Further, it is found that 44.2% students from SMS, 18.6% from EDU, 60% from LIS, and 21.1% from JMC faced more budget-related problems. The majority of post-graduate students from the LIS department need help in overcoming their funding problems. The language barriers affect 24.4% of SMS, 20.9% of EDU, 35% of LIS, and 36.8% of JMC students.

9. 0 Conclusion and Recommendation

The purpose of the study was to determine the level of students' awareness regarding MIL. The findings indicated that post-graduate students faced several challenges in their academic work including the ability to access, retrieve, use, and generate authentic information on the internet; the awareness of using information in a way that is ethical and legal; violating copyright laws; awareness of retrieving information that is either paid or free on the internet; budgetary and funding issues; and how to overcome language barriers when accessing and using information. It is concluded that post-graduate students should be independent-learner,s critical thinkers, and quality decision-makers and to achieve their academic goals. The study recommended that the librarians and the faculty members must work together to promote and empower students on MIL skills. This collaboration will help students learn to navigate and critically evaluate the overwhelming amount of information available, allowing them to make informed decisions and participate critically in society. Efforts must continue to prioritize the development of media and information literacy skills by organizing workshops, conferences, and seminars in the departments and libraries. Such initiatives will help post-graduate students understand and navigate an increasingly complex media landscape. The colleges and universities must include MIL into the curriculum at all educational levels in order to assist students in achieving their academic goals. The University Grants Commission (UGC) should provide sufficient funding to support creating a learning environment that promotes MIL development. It will equip students with the necessary skills to navigate the complexities of the digital age and empower them with the knowledge needed for success in their academic work.

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