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# Beyond Media Education: Assessing News Media Literacy in Media Students of Public and Private Universities in Pakistan

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## ABSTRACT

Infiltration of mass media has increased the exigency of tools necessary for countering the hazardous effects of mass media. Media literacy is considered a tool essential in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for a democratic society that aims to empower the audience and provides autonomy over mass media messages. Media education plays a significant role in educating media students about theoretical and practical knowledge about media industries. The researcher has employed the “Cognitive Model of Media Literacy” proposed by Potter (2004) and seven skills of media literacy suggested by Potter (2019), particularly as related to news content. News media is supposed to be highly objective, but highlighting some news while neglecting others raises questions about the objectivity of news media. The study intends to explore the standard of media education in Pakistan in imparting news media literacy among media students enrolled in BS and Master’s degree programs. To analyze the level of theoretical and practical knowledge of media students regarding news media and their level of news literacy skills, the researcher has collected data using a cross-sectional survey of 300 students (N=300) enrolled in two public and two private universities in Pakistan, including 200 media students and 100 non-media students. Moreover, through content analysis of the curriculum of media studies mentioned in the prospectus of BS and Master’s degree programs, the standard of media education in Pakistan is also assessed. The study’s findings suggest that media students are more news media literate than non-media students, highlighting the significance of media education. Similarly, consciously and excessively consuming news media also positively affects the level of news media literacy in media students. Moreover, this study suggests that while performing information processing tasks, media students are equipped with skills to perform the task of news filtering comparatively better than meaning construction tasks. However, content analysis of the curriculum reveals that the majority of the courses related to news content focus on theoretical and practical knowledge while neglecting the significance of incorporating analytical courses crucial to harness critical thinking skills. The findings elucidate that universities offering analytical courses in their BS and Master levels scored higher in their news media literacy than those not offering analytical courses. Therefore, the study suggests the incorporation of analytical courses at BS and Master level media education curricula to develop essential skills for performing meaning construction tasks effectively.

## KEY WORDS

Analytical Courses. Critical Thinking Skills. Curriculum. Media Education. Media Literacy. News Media. News Media Literacy. News Literacy Skills.

# 1 Introduction

The inevitable role of media in the field of information, education, socialization, and entertainment is commendable. Among all the media contents, news media content is claimed to be the true representation of reality and provides factual information. News media plays a significant role in providing information to the audience about events around the world. It not only informs people but also educates citizens. However, an empirical study conducted by Schwarz<sup>1</sup> shows that news is not free from biasedness and that news content is constructed to serve the interest of news media organizations.

The pervasiveness and dominance of news media in Pakistan are offering a number of challenges to the audience. The credibility and authenticity of news have become mere fiction in the race between news media industries. Information influx destroys the audience's information processing, handling, retaining capacity, and analytical skills required to differentiate facts from fiction and truth from gimmicks.<sup>2</sup> So, in order to make people aware of hidden ideologies behind the creation of news content, components of media literacy are applied specifically to the news content, thus originating the concept of news media literacy.

News media literacy comes under the umbrella of Media literacy and is considered as a "sub-discipline" of media literacy, as pointed out by Mihailidis.<sup>3</sup> Broadly, News media literacy can be defined as the ability to identify credible and authentic information from the information flow and judge news content by using critical thinking skills.<sup>4</sup>

News media literacy has become vital for making citizens more vigilant and critical of news content. Empirical studies suggest that media literacy has become imperative and crucial in this media-saturated world. In order to transform citizens from "wired to wise"<sup>5</sup> and "couch potatoes to critical citizens"<sup>6</sup>, media literacy is necessary.

The term media literacy, generally, and news media literacy, particularly, is in its infancy in Pakistan. In contrast, the rest of the world is conducting research and proposing a plan of action to make media literacy a part of the curriculum in schools. The study aims to analyze the news literacy level and news literacy skills of media students and evaluate the significance of the media education system in Pakistan in promoting news media literacy. The researcher intends to suggest media academicians and policymakers to design a plan or strategy in order to promote news media literacy, at least at the level of media studies. In addition to this, the researcher also identifies and understands knowledge gaps in media students regarding news media literacy and makes suggestions to address these gaps in media education.

<sup>1</sup> See: SCHWARZ, F.: *Media Literacy and the News*. Zwolle : Windesheim School of Media in Zwolle, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> VASSILIOU, A.: *What's Your News? How Newspapers and News Media Drive Media Literacy*. [online]. [2023-03-24]. Available at: <[http://nieuwswijsheid.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/2013-10-13\\_ENPA\\_Whats\\_your\\_news.pdf](http://nieuwswijsheid.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/2013-10-13_ENPA_Whats_your_news.pdf)>.

<sup>3</sup> MIHAILIDIS, P.: New Civic Voices & the Emerging Media Literacy Landscape. In *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 2011, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> POWERS, E.: *Teaching News Literacy in the Age of New Media: Why Secondary School Students Should Be Taught to Judge the Credibility of the News They Consume*. [Master's Thesis]. St. Louis, MO : Washington University, 2010, p. 455, See also: VASSILIOU, A.: *What's Your News? How Newspapers and News Media Drive Media Literacy*. [online]. [2023-03-24]. Available at: <[http://nieuwswijsheid.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/2013-10-13\\_ENPA\\_Whats\\_your\\_news.pdf](http://nieuwswijsheid.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/2013-10-13_ENPA_Whats_your_news.pdf)>; KLURFELD, J., SCHNEIDER, H.: *News Literacy: Teaching the Internet Generation to Make Reliable Information Choices*. Washington, DC : Brookings, 2014. [online]. [2023-03-24]. Available at: <<https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Klurfeld-SchneiderNews-Literacyupdated-7814.pdf>>.

<sup>5</sup> See: POTTER, W. J.: *Theory of Media Literacy: A Cognitive Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage Publications, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> ROSENBAUM, J. E., BEENTJES, J. W. J., KONIG, R. P.: Mapping Media Literacy Key Concepts and Future Directions. In *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 2008, Vol. 32, No. 1, p. 343.

## 1.1 Media Literacy and Media Education

Since media literacy is a broad and diverse concept, no common definition, conceptual framework, or approach exists. In this modern era, the exponential growth of information and communication technologies has given impetus to other forms of literacies besides the general concept of literacy associated with reading and writing. Emerging forms of literacies include “computer literacy”, “internet or cyber literacy”, “new media literacy”, “digital literacy”, etc. Alam claims that the concept of media literacy is not novel in this era of technology. It is assumed that it evolved during the 1960s. Marshall McLuhan and John Calkin are considered the early proponents of Media literacy.<sup>7</sup>

Media literacy is a “multifaceted phenomenon”<sup>8</sup>, and different definitions have emerged according to researchers’ views belonging to different fields. Media literacy is usually associated with the acquisition of critical thinking skills.<sup>9</sup> The infiltration of mass media is giving pace to the importance of incorporating media literacy into the media education curriculum. Media literacy empowers the audience against the negative effects of media, thus providing them autonomy over the influence of media messages<sup>10</sup> and in developing critical thinking skills.<sup>11</sup>

Some scholars view media literacy and media education as akin to each other and stress that media education plays a vital role in imparting media literacy. In contrast, others claim that both are different approaches. Among the scholars, assuming media literacy and media education as two distinct branches, Lewis and Jhally view media education as a “textual approach”, whereas media literacy is seen as a “contextual approach”. So, they exert that media literacy is considered a reformative approach to media education and provides context to the text of media education.<sup>12</sup> Transformed media education is considered a vital component of the propagation of media literacy. Media literacy is also considered an “up-shoot of media education”, an advanced form of traditional media education.<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, Mihailidis focuses on reforming media education. He argues that Media literacy is an up-shoot of media education that makes the student able to “access, analyze, evaluate, critically think and produce media messages”. If these media literacy skills are not incorporated into media education, then media education will be failed to educate.<sup>14</sup> Banerjee and Kubej claim that “media literacy education” teaches us to understand the latent meanings of the media content and critically look into the media messages.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>7</sup> ALAM, A.: *Media Literacy in Pakistan*. Jodhpur City, Rajasthan : Institute for Research, Advocacy and Development (IRADA), 2012, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> See: MARTENS, H.: Evaluating Media Literacy Education: Concepts, Theories and Future Directions. In *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 2010, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 1-22.

<sup>9</sup> See: MASTERMAN, L.: *Teaching the Media*. London : Comedia, 1985.

<sup>10</sup> HOBBS, R. et al.: Learning to Engage: How Positive Attitudes About the News, Media Literacy, and Video Production Contribute to Adolescent Civic Engagement. In *Educational Media International*, 2013, Vol. 50, No. 4, p. 242. See also: AUFDERHEIDE, P.: *Media Literacy: A Report of the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy*. Washington, DC : The Aspen Institute, 1993; ŞIŞMAN, B., YURTTAŞ, Ö. U.: An Empirical Study on Media Literacy from the Viewpoint of Media. In *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2015, Vol. 174, p. 798-804.

<sup>11</sup> LIVINGSTONE, S. et al.: *Adult Media Literacy: A Review of the Research Literature*. London : London School of Economics and Political Science, 2005, p. 27; SCHMIDT, H.: Media Literacy Education at the University Level. In *The Journal of Effective Teaching*, 2012, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 69.

<sup>12</sup> See: LEWIS, J., JHALLY, S.: The Struggle Over Media Literacy. In *International Communication Association*, 1998, Vol. 48, No. 1, p. 109-120.

<sup>13</sup> MIHAILIDIS, P.: New Civic Voices & the Emerging Media Literacy Landscape. In *The National Association for Media Literacy Education's Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 2011, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 4-5.

<sup>14</sup> MIHAILIDIS, P.: *Beyond Cynicism: How Media Literacy Can Make Students More Engaged Citizens*. [Dissertation Thesis]. College Park, MD : Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Maryland, 2008, p. 189.

<sup>15</sup> See: BANERJEE, S. C., KUBEJ, R.: Boom or Boomerang: A Critical Review of Evidence Documenting Media Literacy Efficacy. In VALDIVIA, A. N., SCHARRER, E. (eds.): *The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies*. Hoboken, NJ : John Wiley & Sons, 2013.

It is evident from the above-mentioned studies that previous researchers were unable to develop a common definition and conceptual framework of media literacy, and no consensus has been developed on the relationship between media literacy and media education. After reviewing the literature on media literacy, Potter suggests that there are seven common themes upon which all the scholars of media literacy can agree. First, the impact of a single media message cannot be ignored. Secondly, its impact can be observed on social institutions. Thirdly, people using mass media passively are more vulnerable to being affected by media messages. Fourthly, the purpose of media literacy is to provide autonomy to people and assist them in changing themselves from “wired to wise”. The fifth common theme upon which scholars of media literacy agree is conscious development by the person if he/she agrees to develop. Another consensus is found that media literacy is multi-dimensional. The last theme upon which consensus is found is that acquiring skills is more important than acquiring knowledge to be deemed media literate.<sup>16</sup>

## 1.2 News Media Literacy and Skills

With the immense growth of information communication technologies, Cope and Flanagan note that students face information overload, which does not allow them to sift information and form their own decisions.<sup>17</sup>

Some scholars associate media literacy with news literacy.<sup>18</sup> Maksl et al. claim that news media literacy is the adoption of the model of media literacy in order to decode news media messages efficiently by keeping the journalistic practices of framing and the political economy of news media organizations, which shape the media content. He defines “news media literacy” as “*the knowledge and motivations needed to identify, appreciate and engage with quality journalism*”.<sup>19</sup> According to Vraga and Tully, news media literacy promotes an understanding of individuals towards the process of news construction and the media’s role in democracy. It makes them able to identify biased news content through critical thinking.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Vassiliou asserts that news media literacy authorizes people to identify “facts from propaganda”, “analysis from banter”, and “important news from coverage”.<sup>21</sup>

Some researchers define media literacy in terms of a specific set of skills that should be acquired in order to be deemed as media literate.<sup>22</sup> Klurfeld and Schneider define news literacy as the ability to judge the credibility and authenticity of news articles and sources by using critical thinking skills. While Schwarz defines news media literacy as “*the ability to critically evaluate, interpret and process as well as participate in news media and journalistic content to*

<sup>16</sup> POTTER, W. J.: Review of Literature on Media Literacy. In *Sociology Compass*, 2013, Vol. 7, No. 6, p. 425.

<sup>17</sup> See: COPE, J., FLANAGAN, R.: Information Literacy in the Study of American Politics: Using New Media to Teach Information Literacy in the Political Science Classroom. In *Behavioral & Social Sciences Librarian*, 2013, Vol. 32, No. 1, p. 3-23.

<sup>18</sup> See: KLURFELD, J., SCHNEIDER, H.: *News Literacy: Teaching the Internet Generation to Make Reliable Information Choices*. Washington, DC : Brookings, 2014. [online]. [2023-03-24]. Available at: <<https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Klurfeld-SchneiderNews-Literacyupdated-7814.pdf>>.

<sup>19</sup> MAKSL, A., CRAFT, S., ASHLEY, S.: *Measuring News Media Literacy: How Knowledge and Motivations Combine to Create News-Literate Teens*. Washington, DC : McCormick Foundation, 2013, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> VRAGA, K. E., TULLY, M.: News Literacy, Social Media Behaviors, and Skepticism Toward Information on Social Media, Information. In *Information, Communication & Society*, 2021, Vol. 24, No. 2, p. 162.

<sup>21</sup> VASSILIOU, A.: *What’s Your News? How Newspapers and News Media Drive Media Literacy*. [online]. [2023-03-24]. Available at: <[http://nieuwswijsheid.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/2013-10-13\\_ENPA\\_Whats\\_your\\_news.pdf](http://nieuwswijsheid.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/2013-10-13_ENPA_Whats_your_news.pdf)>.

<sup>22</sup> SCHMIDT, H.: Media Literacy Education at the University Level. In *The Journal of Effective Teaching*, 2012, Vol. 12, No. 1, p. 67. See also: POTTER, W. J.: *The Skills of Media Literacy*. Santa Barbara, CA : Knowledge Assets, 2014; LIVINGSTONE, S.: *The Changing Nature and Uses of Media Literacy*. London : The LSE Department of Media and Communications, 2003.

be active citizens in a democratic society".<sup>23</sup> Maksl et al. note that if the audience is completely aware of news production techniques, they are better positioned to analyze news content.<sup>24</sup>

### 1.3 Scale for Media Literacy Assessment

Like media literacy skills, there is a lack of consensus on the set of skills required in order to be deemed as news media literate. News Media literacy is a very diverse concept and "multi-dimensional"<sup>25</sup>, so it is impossible to measure news media literacy on one scale.

A review of empirical studies reveals that only a few researches have been conducted to measure news media literacy. Furthermore, Cheung asserts that literature related to media literacy reveals that little has been researched on the media literacy skills possessed by media students when they enter and leave media education institutes. Also, more media literacy studies are carried out in the West compared to the East.<sup>26</sup>

Greater emphasis has been laid on the inclusion of critical analytical abilities and contextual approaches in media education. Many researchers conducted surveys to assess the audience's media literacy level and stressed that media literacy should be incorporated into the schools' curriculum. Only a few researches have been conducted which can suggest policies for the reformation of media education by incorporating media literacy. Maksl et al. have measured news media literacy. They designed a news media literacy scale based on Potter's *Theory of Media Literacy* and used it for news media only. The findings of their study suggest that news media literate teenagers are able to consciously process the news and possess knowledge about current affairs and the structure and ownership of news organizations.<sup>27</sup>

This study has explored new dynamics of media literacy by targeting news media content only, making its research related to news media literacy. It is evident from the literature that only a few researches have been conducted to evaluate media literacy in Pakistan. So the researcher attempts to evaluate the level of news media literacy of media students and assess the standard of media education in Pakistan. In addition, the researcher aims to explore the standard of media education provided at BS and Master levels in public and private universities by establishing a link between the knowledge about news media provided through media education and the inculcation of critical thinking skills in the form as specified by Potter.<sup>28</sup>

### 1.4 Objectives

The researcher intends to explore the following areas through this study.

1. To analyze the significance of media education at the BS and Master level in promoting news media literacy among media students.
2. To evaluate the standard of media education and the differences in the media education curriculum provided at public and private universities.

<sup>23</sup> See: SCHWARZ, F.: *Media Literacy and the News*. Zwolle : Windesheim School of Media in Zwolle, 2012.

<sup>24</sup> See: MAKSL, A., ASHLEY, S., CRAFT, S.: Measuring News Media Literacy. In *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 2015, Vol. 6, No. 3, p. 29-45.

<sup>25</sup> VRAGA, E. et al.: A Multi-Dimensional Approach to Measuring News Media Literacy. In *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 2015, Vol. 7, No. 3, p. 48.

<sup>26</sup> CHEUNG, C.: Education Reform as an Agent of Change: The Development of Media Literacy in Hong Kong During the Last Decade. In *Comunicar*, 2009, Vol. 16, No. 32, p. 99.

<sup>27</sup> See: MAKSL, A., ASHLEY, S., CRAFT, S.: Measuring News Media Literacy. In *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 2015, Vol. 6, No. 3, p. 29-45.

<sup>28</sup> See: POTTER, W. J.: *Theory of Media Literacy: A Cognitive Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage Publications, 2004. See also: POTTER, W. J.: *The Skills of Media Literacy*. Santa Barbara, CA : Knowledge Assets, 2014; POTTER, W. J.: *Seven Skills of Media Literacy*. Santa Barbara, CA : Sage Publications, 2019.



3. To investigate the difference between public and private sector universities' media education curricula and its impact on media students' news media literacy scores.
4. To identify loopholes in media education hindering the development of the critical thinking abilities of media students and make suggestions to address these gaps.

## 2 Theoretical Framework

The researcher has employed the inclusive approach of Potter's "Cognitive Model of Media Literacy" to news content in particular. It focuses on possessing seven media literacy skills and stresses acquiring knowledge about media industries.<sup>29</sup>

Potter conceptualizes media literacy as "at the foundation of media literacy, there is a set of five well-developed knowledge structures. We build these knowledge structures by using our skills to select information. Then we assemble those selections into meaningful designs. These knowledge structures inform our locus and provide context for the information-processing tasks."<sup>30</sup> The media literacy model comprises four major factors, including knowledge structures, personal locus, competencies, and skills, that are considered information-processing tools; the fourth factor deals with information-processing tasks. He argues that knowledge structure is comprised of five elements, including knowledge about media content, media industries, media effects, the real world, and the self. According to him, these knowledge structures can be developed through seven media literacy skills, including analysis, evaluation, grouping, induction, deduction, synthesis and abstraction.

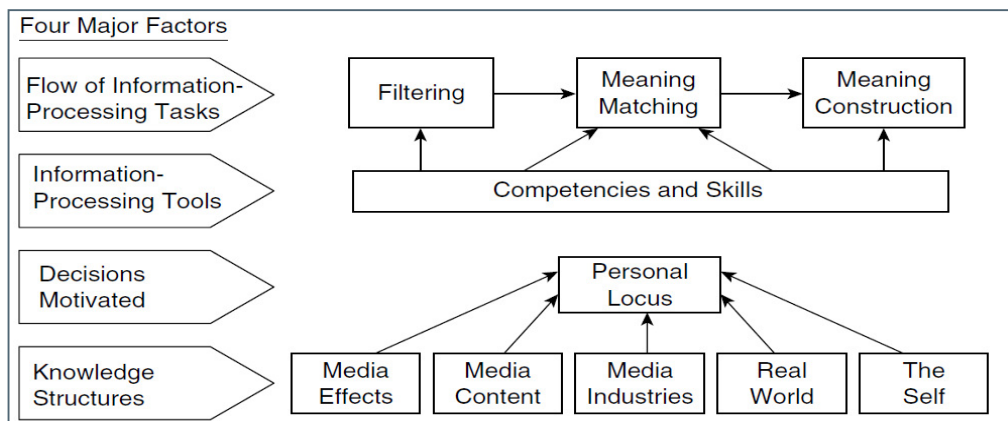


FIGURE 1: The cognitive model of media literacy

Source: POTTER, W. J.: *Theory of Media Literacy: A Cognitive Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage Publications, 2004, p. 68.

Potter elucidates that when a person is aware of their goals and drives while using media and consciously looks into the media content, then by using above mentioned seven skills, knowledge structures can be developed.<sup>31</sup> However, the researcher suggests that since the knowledge structure of media students is already developed, seven skills can be developed by critically utilizing the existing knowledge while consciously using media. The researcher adopted this theory specifically to measure news media literacy. As the researcher intends

<sup>29</sup> See: POTTER, W. J.: *Theory of Media Literacy: A Cognitive Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage Publications, 2004. See also: POTTER, W. J.: *The Skills of Media Literacy*. Santa Barbara, CA : Knowledge Assets, 2014; POTTER, W. J.: *Seven Skills of Media Literacy*. Santa Barbara, CA : Sage Publications, 2019.

<sup>30</sup> POTTER, W. J.: *Media Literacy*. Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage Publications, 2005, p. 39.

<sup>31</sup> See: POTTER, W. J.: *Theory of Media Literacy: A Cognitive Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage Publications, 2004.

to analyze the role of media education in promoting news media literacy in media students, Potter’s theory provides all those components that serve the research objectives.

| Skill       | Task   |
|-------------|--|
| Analysis    | Analysis is the skill used to dig beneath the surface of a message in search for particular elements or breaking down a message into meaningful elements.                              |
| Evaluation  | Evaluate the credibility and authenticity of news media content with existing knowledge.   |
| Grouping    | Combine the elements by comparing and contrasting. Through Comparing, determine the similarity of the elements, while by contrast, determine which elements are different in some way. |
| Induction   | Inferring a pattern across a small set of elements, then generalize it to the entire population.   |
| Deduction   | Deduction is using a few premises for logical reasoning toward a conclusion.   |
| Synthesis   | Synthesis is the assembling of pieces so that something new is created. That something new is a complex whole. Or the transformation of an older knowledge structure.                  |
| Abstracting | Abstracting is the skill of reducing a message into a shorter version that captures the essence of that message.   |

TABLE 1: The seven skills of media literacy

Source: POTTER, W. J.: *Seven Skills of Media Literacy*. Santa Barbara, CA : Sage Publications, 2019, p. 14.

This theoretical framework provides a foundation for this research, as the scale is designed according to its components. According to the proposed model of news media literacy, media education allows the students to understand news media industries and news media content. This understanding helps the students to critically look into the media content by using the seven media literacy skills proposed by Potter.<sup>32</sup> Using the seven skills of media literacy, students can perform information processing tasks of filtering and meaning construction effectively. In addition to knowledge structure and news media literacy skills, another factor drawn from Potter’s model of media literacy is personal locus.

In light of the above-mentioned theory, the researcher has adopted components of media literacy proposed in the model of media literacy and applied them to news content and developed the following model for news media literacy.

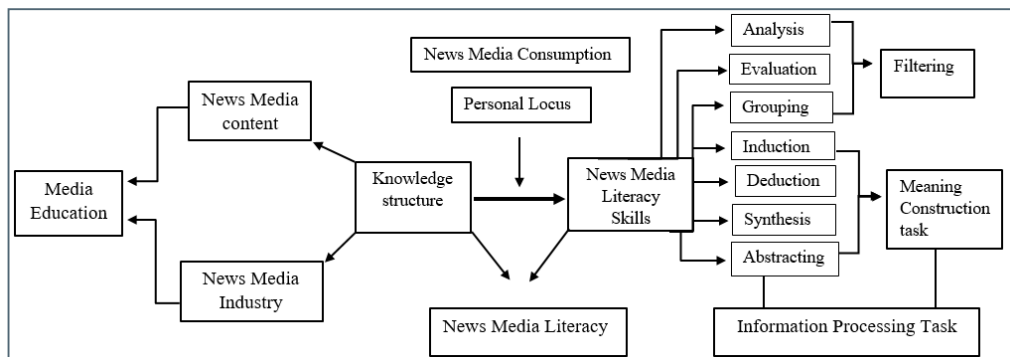


FIGURE 2: Proposed model of news media literacy used in the study

Source: own processing, 2023

<sup>32</sup> See: POTTER, W. J.: *Theory of Media Literacy: A Cognitive Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage Publications, 2004. See also: POTTER, W. J.: *The Skills of Media Literacy*. Santa Barbara, CA : Knowledge Assets, 2014; POTTER, W. J.: *Seven Skills of Media Literacy*. Santa Barbara, CA : Sage Publications, 2019.

## 3 Methodology

The researcher has employed two quantitative methods, i.e., survey and content analysis, and adopted mixed-method research design to provide an in-depth analysis.

In order to evaluate the level of news media literacy in media students and its correlation with media education, the researcher has used a cross-sectional survey method as an instrument to gather desired data from the targeted sample. The researcher designed a questionnaire based on Potter's "Cognitive Model of Media Literacy" specifically to measure news media literacy skills.

The researcher has selected those public and private universities whose department of media education was established at least more than ten years ago. Media students who are enrolled in two public universities, including Punjab University (PU) and University of Sargodha (UOS), and two private universities, including University of Management and Technology (UMT) and Superior University (SU), constitute the population of this research.

The research has selected a sample of 300 students, including 100 non-media students and 200 media students from public and private universities in Lahore and Sargodha, located in the Punjab province of Pakistan, through simple random sampling. The sample size of 300 students includes 75 students, comprising 25 non-media and 50 media students from each university.

In order to provide depth to the study and to evaluate the media education system of the selected four universities, the researcher has used quantitative content analysis of media studies curricula taught at BS and Master levels. In addition, the researcher has analyzed the courses related to news media and their course outlines mentioned in the prospectus and web pages of the universities under study. Through this quantitative research design, the researcher has investigated how the difference in curriculum among the universities under study affects the level of news media literacy of the media students.

### 3.1 Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a significant difference between news media literacy of media students and non-media students?

RQ2: Does news media consumption affect the level of news media literacy in media students?

RQ3: Is there a significant difference between news media literacy of media students enrolled in public and private universities? If yes, then,

RQ3a: Is there a significant difference in news media literacy scores among the media students enrolled in the four universities under study?

RQ4: How do news media literacy scores vary regarding knowledge structure and news media literacy skills among the media students enrolled in these four universities?

RQ5: Does the curriculum of media education at BS (Hons) and Master's level in public and private universities include courses for developing critical thinking abilities for imparting news media literacy skills along with theoretical and practical courses?

### 3.2 Hypotheses

H<sub>1</sub>: Media students having strong knowledge structure about news media are likely to possess strong news media literacy skills.

H<sub>2</sub>: Media students perform the information processing task of filtering comparatively better than the meaning construction task.

H<sub>3</sub>: Media students who are more aware of their personal locus are more likely to possess news media literacy.



## 4 Results and Discussion

In order to test the hypotheses and find answers to the research questions according to the objectives of the study, appropriate statistical analyses like Independent samples t-test, Paired sample t-test, Pearson correlation, one-way ANOVA, and MANOVA are applied by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 21.

### 4.1 News Media Literacy Comparison Between Media and Non-Media Students

To compare the news media literacy score of media and non-media students, an independent samples t-test is applied.

RQ1: Is there a significant difference between news media literacy of media students and non-media students?

| Dependent Variable  | Student Type       | N   | M      | SD     | T     | df     | Sig. (2- tailed) |
|---------------------|--------------------|-----|--------|--------|-------|--------|------------------|
| News Media Literacy | Media Students     | 200 | 154.18 | 16.890 | 5.532 | 290.66 | .000             |
|                     | Non-Media Students | 100 | 145.60 | 9.895  |       |        |                  |

**TABLE 2:** News media literacy of media and non-media students

Source: own processing, 2023

*Note:* In order to analyze the difference in the scores of news media literacy between media and non-media students, an independent samples t-test is applied. The scores of news media literacy for media students ( $M = 154.18$ ,  $SD = 16.890$ ) and non-media students, ( $M = 145.60$ ,  $SD = 9.895$ );  $t(290.66) = 5.532$ ,  $p = .000$  (two-tailed) are significantly different. However, the magnitude of the differences in the means is moderate (eta squared = .09).

The scores of news media literacy between media and non-media students indicated that there is a significant difference. Media students are more news media literate compared to non-media students. Hence, it can be inferred from the findings that media education plays a significant role in imparting news media literacy skills to media students.

The findings suggest that media education plays a significant role in making students aware of the evolution and historical development of the news media industries of Pakistan. They are aware of the founders and owners of news media giants in Pakistan. Similarly, knowledge structure about news media content is strong in media students. They are well aware of the different stages involved in the generation of news content and the influence of hidden ideologies on news construction. Therefore, media education provides insight to media students about the news media industry. Moreover, strong media education about news media empowers students with news media literacy skills. They analyze and evaluate the media content more efficiently, and they are able to group news media content on the basis of similarities and differences.

### 4.2 Correlation Between News Consumption and News Media Literacy

The Pearson correlation is used to investigate the association between news consumption and news media literacy.

RQ2: Does news media consumption affect the level of news media literacy in media students?

| ST.            | Measure                | 1     | 2     |
|----------------|------------------------|-------|-------|
| Media Students | News Media Consumption | –     | .169* |
|                | News Media Literacy    | .169* | –     |

\*p < 0.05

**TABLE 3:** Association between news media literacy and news consumption of media students

Source: own processing, 2023

*Note:* Using the Pearson product ~ moment correlation coefficient, the relationship between news consumption and news media literacy of media students is analyzed. A very small but positive association exists between the two variables,  $r = .169$ ,  $n = 200$ ,  $p < .017$ .

There is a small positive association between news media consumption and the scores of news media literacy of media students.

The results of this study reveal that those media students who excessively consume news media are news media literate compared to those who do not consume news media. Regular news media consumers can better analyze the media content and develop critical thinking, which helps them to develop news media literacy skills and build their knowledge structure. When a person regularly watches or reads news media, they can understand latent meanings and hidden ideologies of the media industries so that they do not abruptly make decisions. In fact, they critically analyze, evaluate, and group the news media content and then draw conclusions from it.

### 4.3 Association Between Knowledge Structure and News Media Literacy Skills

In order to examine the association between knowledge structure and news media literacy skills, the researcher has applied the Pearson correlation.

$H_1$ : Media students having strong knowledge structure about news media are likely to possess strong news media literacy skills

| ST.            | Measure                    | 1      | 2      |
|----------------|----------------------------|--------|--------|
| Media Students | Knowledge Structure        | –      | .420** |
|                | News Media Literacy Skills | .420** | –      |

\*\*p < 0.01

**TABLE 4:** Correlation between knowledge structure about news and news media literacy skills of media students

Source: own processing, 2023

*Note:* The Pearson product ~ moment correlation coefficient is used to determine and investigate the relationship between knowledge structure about news and news media literacy skills of media students. There exists a medium but positive association between the two variables,  $r = .420$ ,  $n = 200$ ,  $p < .000$ .

There is a medium, positive correlation between knowledge structure and news media literacy skills of media students. Hence  $H_1$  is accepted. It strengthens the claim that knowledge about news media industries, construction, and structure of news media content enhances news media literacy skills in media students. Knowledge structure empowers the individual to look critically into the media content and sharpen their news media literacy skills. In other words, it can be assumed that media education helps media students to build their knowledge structure and through which they can develop the seven media literacy skills that Potter proposes.

## 4.4 Comparison Between Information Processing Tasks

A paired samples t-test is applied to compare the performance of the media students on the information processing task of filtering and meaning construction task.

$H_2$ : Media students perform the information processing task of filtering comparatively better than the meaning construction task

| Information Processing Task | M     | SD    | t     | df  | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-----------------|
| Filtering Task              | 43.62 | 6.442 | 5.045 | 199 | .000            |
| Meaning Construction Task   | 41.30 | 4.279 |       |     |                 |

n= 200

**TABLE 5:** Comparison between the information processing task of filtering and meaning construction task

Source: own processing, 2023

*Note:* The performance of the media students on the information processing task of filtering and meaning construction task is assessed through a paired samples t-test. The scores of the media students on the information processing task of filtering (M= 43.62, SD= 6.442) are statistically significantly higher than the meaning construction task (M= 41.30, SD= 4.279),  $t(199) = 5.045$ ,  $p = .000$  (two-tailed). The magnitude of the difference between the two variables is moderate, eta squared (0.11).

Media students scored higher in performing the information processing task of filtering better than the meaning construction task. Hence  $H_2$  is proved. Analysis of news media literacy skills of the media students reveals that it can be inferred from the findings that out of the seven skills suggested by Potter, media students are good at analysis, evaluation, and grouping, which are used for performing filtering tasks. In contrast, they are weak in the skills used for performing meaning construction tasks, including induction, deduction, synthesis, and abstracting.

## 4.5 Association Between Personal Locus and News Media Literacy

Pearson correlation is used to investigate the association between personal locus and news media literacy.

$H_3$ : Media students who are more aware of their personal locus are more likely to possess news media literacy

| Student Type   | Measure             | 1      | 2      |
|----------------|---------------------|--------|--------|
| Media Students | News Media Literacy | –      | .186** |
|                | Personal Locus      | .186** | –      |

\*\* $p < 0.01$

**TABLE 6:** Relationship between news media literacy and personal locus of media students

Source: own processing, 2023

By applying the Pearson product ~ moment correlation coefficient, the relationship between news media literacy and the personal locus of media students is measured. A small but positive association exists between the two variables,  $r = .186$ ,  $n = 200$ ,  $p < .017$ .

There is a small positive association between Personal locus and the scores of news media literacy of media students, thus accepting  $H_3$ .

The results suggest that along with strong media education, it is necessary that media students should be aware of their aims and objectives while using news media. In order to be deemed as news media literate, media students should know the purpose behind using news media content, be aware of the need which they are trying to gratify from the news media, and what are the objectives they are trying to accomplish by watching the news. They should be an active consumer and transform themselves from wired to wise.

## 4.6 Comparison Between News Media Literacy of Media Students of Public and Private Universities

An Independent sample t-test is applied to investigate the difference in the scores of news media literacy between public and private universities.

RQ3: Is there a significant difference between the news media literacy of media students enrolled in public and private universities?

| Independent Variable | Dependent Variable  | Sector  | N   | M      | SD     | t      | df  | Sig. (2- tailed) |
|----------------------|---------------------|---------|-----|--------|--------|--------|-----|------------------|
| Media Students       | News Media Literacy | Public  | 100 | 151.76 | 18.029 | -2.042 | 198 | .042             |
|                      |                     | Private | 100 | 156.60 | 15.380 |        |     |                  |

**TABLE 7:** Comparison of news media literacy of media students enrolled in public universities and private universities

Source: own processing, 2023

*Note.* By applying an independent-sample t-test, the news media literacy scores for public and private media students are assessed. The scores for media students of public universities ( $M = 151.76$ ,  $SD = 18.029$ ) show a significant difference from media students of private universities ( $M = 156.60$ ,  $SD = 15.380$ );  $t(198) = -2.042$ ,  $p = .042$  (two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means is small ( $\eta^2 = 0.02$ ).

The scores of news media literacy of media students enrolled in public and private universities showed that they were significantly different.

### 4.6.1 Level of News Media Literacy in the Media Students Among Universities

In order to analyze the scores of news media literacy of media students of each university and the standing of each university compared to other universities, the researcher has applied a one-way ANOVA test.

RQ3a: Is there a significant difference in news media literacy scores among the media students enrolled in the four universities under study?

| Name of the Universities              | N  | M      | SD     | F      | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---------------------------------------|----|--------|--------|--------|----|-----------------|
| Punjab University                     | 50 | 162.64 | 15.207 |        |    |                 |
| University of Sargodha                | 50 | 140.88 | 13.560 | 22.912 | 3  | .000            |
| University of Management & Technology | 50 | 160.76 | 15.638 |        |    |                 |
| Superior University                   | 50 | 152.44 | 14.073 |        |    |                 |

**TABLE 8:** Level of news media literacy in the media students in four universities

Source: own processing, 2023

*Note:* One-way between-groups analysis of variance is applied to analyze the difference in news media literacy of the students among all four universities. The news media literacy scores of universities with  $F(3, 196) = 22.912, p = .000$ , confirm a statistically significant difference. Media students of Punjab University and University of Management and Technology scored highest in news media literacy, Superior University stood second, and University of Sargodha scored lowest.

On the broader level, findings reveal that media students of Punjab University and University of Management and Technology are highly news media literate as compared to the media students of Superior University and University of Sargodha. It can be assumed that Punjab University ranked highest among public universities, whereas the University of Management and Technology ranked highest among private universities.

The reason behind this hierarchy can be understood from the fact that Punjab University is one of Asia's largest universities and considered as Pakistan's oldest university, established in 1882. As Ashraf and Chaudhry's study reveals that the department of mass communication in Punjab University is the "oldest seat of learning, and it is positioned at the top in Pakistan".<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, the University of Management and Technology was established in 1990, older than the Superior University in 2000 and the University of Sargodha in 2002. University of Management and Technology is older than the remaining two universities, possesses a creative road map of BS and Master's curriculum for media students, and provides better opportunities for students to interact with media professionals.

High socio-economic status and relevant social contacts<sup>34</sup>, suggested by Donohue et al., can also be assumed as the basic reason behind the difference in news media literacy scores. It can also be considered as an important factor contributing to the level of news media literacy. As students enrolled in University of Management and Technology come from high socio-economic status because it is one the most expensive universities, so they have better opportunities in terms of technology, access to the media world, and contacts with media practitioners. Hence, this ultimately increases their understanding of news media and make them more news media literate than other universities.

## 4.7 Difference Between the Media Students' Knowledge Structure and News Media Literacy Skills

To investigate the difference between the knowledge structures and news media literacy skills of media students enrolled in universities, the researcher has applied MANOVA.

RQ4: How do news media literacy scores vary regarding knowledge structure and news media literacy skills among the media students enrolled in these four universities?

| Dependent Variable  | Source                                | N  | Mean   | SD     | F      | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|----|--------|--------|--------|----|-----------------|
| Knowledge Structure | Punjab University                     | 50 | 117.24 | 21.640 | 17.854 | 3  | 0.00            |
|                     | University of Sargodha                | 50 | 91.19  | 23.531 |        |    |                 |
|                     | University of Management & Technology | 50 | 119.52 | 21.954 |        |    |                 |
|                     | Superior University                   | 50 | 106.48 | 19.203 |        |    |                 |

<sup>33</sup> ASHRAF, A., CHAUDHRY, N. I.: Media Education in Pakistan: Curricula, Facilities and Practices in Public Sector Universities. In *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2013, Vol. 3, No. 20, p. 190.

<sup>34</sup> DONOHUE, G. A. et al.: Mass Media and the Knowledge Gap a Hypothesis Reconsidered. In *Communication Research*, 1975, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 13.



|                            |                                       |    |        |        |        |   |      |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|----|--------|--------|--------|---|------|
| News Media Literacy Skills | Punjab University                     | 50 | 112.32 | 9.427  | 12.866 | 3 | .000 |
|                            | University of Sargodha                | 50 | 101.74 | 7.666  |        |   |      |
|                            | University of Management & Technology | 50 | 109.46 | 10.100 |        |   |      |
|                            | Superior University                   | 50 | 106.74 | 8.091  |        |   |      |

$N = 200$

Wilk's Lambda ( $p = 0.00$ )

**TABLE 9:** Comparison between the knowledge structure and news media literacy skills of media students

Source: own processing, 2023

*Note:* A one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance is conducted to analyze the difference among universities on the basis of knowledge structure and news media literacy skills. Two dependent variables are used: knowledge structure and news media literacy skills. The source of the independent variable was the universities under study. Regarding the combined dependent variables,  $F(3, 390) \sim 11.322$ ,  $p \sim .000$ ; Wilks' Lambda  $\sim .725$ ; partial eta squared  $\sim .148$ , there is a statistically significant difference among universities. Separate results of the dependent variable show that the differences reaching statistical significance are knowledge structure,  $F(3, 196) \sim 17.85$ ,  $p \sim .000$ , partial eta squared  $\sim .215$  and News Media Literacy Skills,  $F(3, 196) \sim 12.86$ ,  $p \sim .000$ , partial eta squared  $\sim .165$ .

The knowledge structure of media students enrolled in Punjab University, University of Management & Technology, and Superior University is the same, whereas the University of Sargodha scored the lowest. News media literacy skills of media students of Punjab University and University of Management & Technology scored highest, and Superior University is higher than University of Sargodha.

## 4.8 Curriculum Analysis of Media Studies BS (Hons) Taught in the Four Universities

In order to evaluate the curriculum of media education offered at BS and Master Level in public and private universities, content analysis was employed, and the findings are presented in the following tables.

The researcher has analyzed the curriculum of BS (Hons) in media studies taught in the four universities taken under study through quantitative content analysis.

RQ5: Does the curriculum of media education at BS (Hons) and Master's level in public and private universities include courses for developing critical thinking abilities for imparting news media literacy skills along with theoretical and practical courses?

| Name of the universities              | Courses at BS level | Courses related to news media<br>f% | Theoretical courses<br>f% | Practical Courses<br>f% | Critical courses<br>f% |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Punjab University                     | 42                  | 14 (33.3%)                          | 6 (42.9%)                 | 7 (50%)                 | 1 (7.1%)               |
| University of Sargodha                | 42                  | 14 (33.3%)                          | 7 (50%)                   | 7 (50%)                 | -                      |
| University of Management & Technology | 42                  | 13 (31%)                            | 6 (46.2%)                 | 6 (46.2%)               | 1 (7.6%)               |
| Superior University                   | 40                  | 14 (35%)                            | 7 (50%)                   | 6 (42.9%)               | 1 (7.1%)               |

**TABLE 10:** Frequencies of the courses at BS (4 years degree program) in the universities

Source: own processing, 2023

*Note:* The content analysis of the course outlines of BS (4years degree program) in the universities under study reveals that 42 courses are taught at BS level at Punjab University, University of Sargodha, and University of Management and Technology, whereas 40 courses are taught at Superior University. The researcher has not included final research projects, theses, or internships in the total number of courses. The analysis of the course outline of BS (4 years degree program) suggests that the number of courses related to news media or journalism, including print and electronic media, at Punjab University, are 14 out of 42, constituting 33.33% of the course outline. Punjab University offers 6 out of 14 theoretical courses constituting 42.85%, 7 out of 14 practical courses constituting 50%, and 1 out of 14 critical course, constituting 7.14% of the courses related to news media.

Similarly, the analysis of the course outline of BS (4 years degree program) suggests that the number of courses related to news media or journalism, including print and electronic media in University of Sargodha are 14 out of 42, constituting 33.33% of the course outline. University of the Sargodha offers 7 out of 14 theoretical courses constituting 50%, and 7 out of 14 practical courses constituting 50% of the courses related to news media. However, it does not offer any critical course related to the news media at the BS level.

Likewise, the analysis of the course outline of BS (4 years degree program) suggests that the number of courses related to news media or journalism, including print and electronic media, in University of Management and Technology are 13 out of 42, constituting 31% of the course outline. University of Management and Technology offers 6 out of 14 theoretical courses constituting 46.2%, 6 out of 14 practical courses constituting 46.2%, and 1 out of 13 critical courses constituting 7.69% of the courses related to news media.

In the same way, the analysis of the course outline of BS (4 years degree program) suggests that the number of courses related to news media or journalism, including print and electronic media, at Superior University are 14 out of 40, constituting 35% of the course outline. Superior University offers 7 out of 14 theoretical courses constituting 50%, 6 out of 14 practical courses constituting 42.85%, and 1 out of 14, critical courses constituting 7.14% of the courses related to news media.

| Name of the universities              | Courses at Master level | Courses related to news media f% | Theoretical courses f% | Practical Courses f% | Critical courses f% |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Punjab University                     | 21                      | 6 (28.6%)                        | 2 (33.3%)              | 3 (50%)              | 1 (16%)             |
| University of Sargodha                | 20                      | 4 (20%)                          | 2 (50%)                | 2 (50%)              | -                   |
| University of Management & Technology | 21                      | 5 (23.9%)                        | 3 (60%)                | 2 (40%)              | -                   |
| Superior University                   | 20                      | 5 (25%)                          | 3 (60%)                | 2 (40%)              | -                   |

**TABLE 11:** Frequencies of the courses at Master (2 years degree program) in the universities under study

Source: own processing, 2023

*Note:* The analysis of the course outline of the Master (2 years degree) program proposes that the number of courses related to news media or journalism, including print and electronic media in Punjab University are 6 out of 21, constituting 28.6% of the course outline. Punjab University offers 2 out of 6 theoretical courses constituting 33.33%, 3 out of 6 practical courses constituting 50%, and 1 out of 6 critical course constituting 16% of the courses related to news media.

Similarly, the analysis of the course outline of the Master (2 years degree) program describes that the number of courses related to news media or journalism, including print and electronic media, in University of Sargodha are 4 out of 20, constituting 20% of the course outline. University of Sargodha offers 2 out of 4 theoretical courses constituting 50%, and 2 out of 4

practical courses constituting 50% of the courses related to news media. However, it does not offer any critical course related to news media at the Master level.

Likewise, the analysis of the course outline of the Master (2 years degree) program shows that the number of courses related to news media or journalism, including print and electronic media, at University of Management and Technology is 5 out of 21, constituting 23.9% of the course outline. University of Management and Technology offers 3 out of 5 theoretical courses constituting 60%, and 2 out of 5 practical courses constituting 40% of the courses related to news media. However, no course related to the development of critical thinking abilities is offered.

In the same way, the analysis of the course outline of the Master (2 years degree) program reveals that the number of courses related to news media or journalism, including print and electronic media, in Superior University are 5 out of 20, constituting 25% of the course outline. Superior University offers 3 out of 5 theoretical courses constituting 60%, and 2 out of 5 practical courses constituting 40% of the courses related to news media. It does not offer any course related to critical analysis of news content.

## 5 Conclusion

The growing infiltration of mass media has given pace to the inclusion of media literacy in media education<sup>35</sup> and in the curriculums of schools, as it is considered an indispensable 21<sup>st</sup>-century skill<sup>36</sup> that is needed for the propagation of democracy and active citizenship. In order to conclude the findings, the study claims that media students are more news media literate than non-media students. The study confirms the significance of media education in the propagation of news media literacy.

Media education sharpens the critical abilities of media students and enhances their news media literacy skills. It plays a significant role in building a strong knowledge structure about the historical development of news media industries, how news media content is generated, and what factors influence the construction of news media. So it enhances their ability to analyze the media content in terms of its structure and placement, which helps them evaluate news' credibility and authenticity. Hence, it sharpens the analysis, evaluation, and grouping skills needed for the information processing task of filtering in media students. On the other hand, the results indicate that media students are not able to interpret news content and infer meanings from news media, hence are weak in the information processing task of meaning construction. The findings of the study conducted by Memon et al. to assess the news literacy of students of the Sindh province of Pakistan also note that most students are aware of news production techniques.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, generally, the results of the study indicate that media students of private universities possess strong news media literacy as compared to the media students of public universities. On the other hand, detailed analysis reveals that news media literacy scores of media students enrolled in Punjab University are highest in public universities, while in private universities, University of Management and Technology scored highest.

Additionally, the results show that media students are more adept in performing the information processing task of filtering as compared to the meaning construction task. One of the reasons behind it can be inferred from the fact that the curriculum of the media education

<sup>35</sup> BRYNILDSSSEN, S.: *A Review of Trends in Journalism Education*. [online]. [2023-03-24]. Available at: <<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED470713.pdf>>.

<sup>36</sup> VASSILIOU, A.: *What's Your News? How Newspapers and News Media Drive Media Literacy*. [online]. [2023-03-24]. Available at: <[http://nieuwswijsheid.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/2013-10-13\\_ENPA\\_Whats\\_your\\_news.pdf](http://nieuwswijsheid.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/2013-10-13_ENPA_Whats_your_news.pdf)>.

<sup>37</sup> MEMON, B. et al.: *News Literacy and Content Contribution: A Survey of University Students in Pakistan*. In *International Journal of Media and Information Literacy*, 2021, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 174.

offered at BS (Hons) and Master degree programs focuses on imparting theoretical and practical knowledge on news media, but neglecting the significance of critical courses in the curriculum. The results suggest that those universities which are offering critical courses such as media seminars at BS and Master levels scored higher in their news media literacy compared to those universities which do not offer media seminar at BS and Master levels. So the inclusion of critical courses like media seminars can increase the news media literacy of media students and enhance the critical thinking abilities necessary for news media literacy skills. In order to cope with the challenges of the infiltration by news media, media students, in particular, and the audience, in general, should be empowered with critical thinking skills so that they can interpret and generalize the news media content more appropriately. So, in order to be deemed as media literate, a person should adopt a “holistic, critical and contextual perspective”.<sup>38</sup>

Similarly, the study’s results propose that a conscious and active mode of consuming news media, i.e., a person aware of their desires and motivations for the news and the number of hours spent on news media, also affects the scores of news media literacy. So, media consumption or usage of media should also be considered an important component in the model of media literacy. By watching news media regularly, the critical thinking skills of media students are enhanced, enabling them to relate their theoretical knowledge with the real world, hence making them news media literate compared to others who consume less news media.

Succinctly, formal media education plays a significant role in imparting media literacy. So the importance of media education in developing media literacy cannot be ignored, and it should be considered a vital component of the media literacy model.

## 5.1 Suggestions and Recommendations

The researcher suggests the following recommendations for the propagation of news media literacy and the improvement of media education in Pakistan. Firstly, the course outline shows that courses taught at BS (Hons) and Master levels in these universities are media-centric, which means that they teach the students about the evolution of news media industries, the working of media organizations, and the creation of news media content. It does not include audience-centric courses which can empower the students with critical thinking skills in order to cope with the negative influence of news media content. Courses related to meaning construction tasks should be introduced into the curriculum so that media students can become active consumers of news media and make decisions wisely.

Secondly, the study results suggest that Pakistan’s media education needs to be upgraded according to the international standards of media education. Besides teaching courses related to the development and working of media industries, and content generation, courses related to the meaningful deconstruction of news content and how to avoid faulty inductions and deductions should be taught. Contextual-based<sup>39</sup> media education will develop media literacy skills in media students through which they can perform meaning-construction tasks more effectively. Critical thinking skills-based courses should be introduced into the curriculum to polish and inculcate critical thinking skills in media students. Along with theoretical and practical courses, critical courses like media discourse analysis, media debates, narrative building, political-economy of mass media<sup>40</sup>, and media critique should be included in the curriculum at BS as well as Master

<sup>38</sup> DURAN, R. L. et al.: Holistic Media Education: An Assessment of the Effectiveness of a College Course in Media Literacy. In *Communication Quarterly*, 2008, Vol. 56, No. 1, p. 51.

<sup>39</sup> See: LEWIS, J., JHALLY, S.: The Struggle Over Media Literacy. In *International Communication Association*, 1998, Vol. 48, No. 1, p. 109-120.

<sup>40</sup> DURAN, R. L. et al.: Holistic Media Education: An Assessment of the Effectiveness of a College Course in Media Literacy. In *Communication Quarterly*, 2008, Vol. 56, No. 1, p. 52.

level. Zainab asserts that media literacy facilitates audiences of all ages to interpret media content correctly and urges policymakers to formulate a media literacy policy in Pakistan.<sup>41</sup>

In this media-saturated world, the significance of media literacy is irrefutable. Media literacy is a very novel term in Pakistan, whereas, at the international level, countries have designed policies for the inclusion of media literacy in the curriculum at the level of K-12. Organizations like UNESCO<sup>42</sup>, Ofcom<sup>43</sup>, and the European Union<sup>44</sup> have vested their efforts in the propagation of media literacy.

While keeping in mind the significance of media literacy, the researcher makes the following recommendations for future research:

1. More research can be conducted in order to assess the level of media literacy of media students in particular and the audience in general.
2. Task-based activities and focus groups can be conducted to measure media literacy.
3. Like news media literacy, media literacy related to other media contents such as advertisements and entertainment can be assessed.
4. Information communication technologies offer challenges to the audience, “new media literacy”, in general, and “social media literacy”, in particular, should be measured, aiming to suggest policies for the dissemination of new media literacy.

## 5.2 Limitations of the Study

This study has a few limitations which should be kept in mind for future research. Limitations mainly arise from the sample. The selection of universities from the public sector limits the results to being generalized on the media education of public sector universities. The researcher aimed to compare public and private universities situated in urban and suburban areas, but unfortunately, there is no private University in Sargodha offering mass communication. Moreover, only Punjab University offers media education among public universities in Lahore. Other public universities offering media education are women’s universities, so to keep gender balance, the researcher has chosen the University of Sargodha. For generalization, a comparative analysis of more universities could have been added for evaluating media education at public and private sector universities.

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<sup>41</sup> ZAINAB, S.: *Media Literacy Policy in Pakistan*. [Master’s Thesis]. Ankara : Hacettepe University, 2019, p. 8.

<sup>42</sup> See: TORNERO, J. M., VARIS, T.: *Media Literacy and New Humanism*. Moscow : UNESCO, 2010.

<sup>43</sup> EDWARDS, L. et al.: *Rapid Evidence Assessment on Online Misinformation and Media Literacy: Final Report for Ofcom*. [online]. [2023-03-04]. Available at: <www.ofcom.org.uk>. See also: BUCKINGHAM, D. et al.: *The Media Literacy of Children and Young People: A Review of the Research Literature on Behalf of Ofcom*. London : Center for the Study of Children Youth and Media Institute of Education, 2005.

<sup>44</sup> PETRANOVÁ, D., HOSSOVÁ, M., VELICKÝ, P.: Current Development Trends of Media Literacy in European Union Countries. In *Communication Today*, 2017, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 55.



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