A STUDY ON THE COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF MEDIA LITERACY AND ITS

INFLUENCE IN LIMITING MEDIA EFFECTS

NIGEL AW HENG LIANG

A RESEARCH PROJECT
SUBMITTED IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE BACHELOR OF MASS COMMUNICATION (HONS) JOURNALISM
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE
UNIVERSITI TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN

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NIGEL AW HENG LIANG

APPROVAL FORM

This research paper attached hereto, entitled "A Study on the Cognitive Development of Media Literacy and its Influence in Limiting Media Effects" prepared and submitted by Nigel Aw Heng Liang in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Mass Communication (Hons) Journalism is hereby accepted.

_____   Date: _____

Supervisor

POR HEONG HONG

ABSTRACT

In a society saturated by media messages, it is becoming increasingly difficult for audience to discern between positive and negative content. This is aggravated by the use of media knowledge to cleverly package media content to seem convincing and compelling. In such an environment, media literacy, the ability to critically analyse, evaluate and discern media content and its production is imperative. Through a survey of 200 degree students from Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) Kampar, Perak, this paper attempts to construct a means to measure media literacy based on theories provided by several scholars in this field. A correlation is then established to media effects and media usage in relation to media literacy level. The research found that individuals with higher media literacy can cope better with media effects in terms of behavioural change though it is limited in terms of change of perception. Furthermore the paper also found indications that among an already media literate population, the individual media usage behaviour is more significant than conventional media education in building up media literacy. The results suggest that there should be a review in the way media literacy education is approached.

DECLARATION

I declare that the material contained in this paper is the end result of my own work and that due acknowledgement has been given in the bibliography and references to ALL sources, be they printed, electronic or personal.

The word count of this research is 11,709 words.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Since the inception of the printing press, communication technology has experienced rapid development, evolving from plain text into mediums such as radio, television, and subsequently the internet. The introduction of these technologies has one thing in common, that it allows information to be distributed on a massive scale and increasingly in more interactive manner.

The ability of these media to reach large audiences has earned itself acknowledgement as a powerful tool in influencing public opinion and beliefs. Every form of mass communication technology has had its story that is testament to the former statement. The printing press played an instrumental role for Protestant propaganda during the reformation against the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century (Edwards, 1994, p.15). The Radio too can boast of its influence during the airing of a radio drama entitled 'War of the World's' in 1938 that simulated a news bulletins on an alien invasion, causing widespread panic among listeners (Willis, 2010, p.68).

The temporary coup of President Hugo Chavez in 2002 is a more recent example of the power of media. In this case, it is the television, when local networks collaborated to discredit Chavez's regime and in an instance broadcasted a news bulletin with partial footage, narrating that Chavez supporters were shooting on anti-government protestors. It was later revealed that anti-government snipers had killed 16 pro-Chavez supporters and they were returning fire (Castillo, 2003, p.153).

The internet, with tools such as Twitter and Facebook too has proven its power as a platform for sharing information and organising protest which is generally being acknowledged by the media as having played an important role in the presently unfolding

Jasmine Revolution that has spread across the Middle East and North Africa. An example is in the case of Egypt, as Twitter and Facebook were blocked by the government and subsequently a near-total shut down of the country's internet was done in an effort to prevent anti-government mobilisation (Kirkpatrick, 2011). In tandem with the development of mass communication technology, communication theory too has progressed over time. In early development of mass audience theories, studies were heavily focussed on the negative effects of mass media with the underlying assumption that audiences were homogenous and vulnerable to media influence (Baran & Davis, 2009, p.27-28). The subsequent transition led to a more heterogeneous audience-centric perspective, giving rise to ideas such as the uses and gratification model and reception theory (ibid, p.232).

However these theories are primarily focussed on how and why audience consume media but does not look at the correlating effects and more importantly the underlying factors for such behaviour. More recent approaches have sought to address these shortcomings. These theories have generally revolved around identifying the factors that affect audiences' behaviour in media usage with the hope of being able to exercise more control over media content and its effects.

While there are several underlying factors that could potentially affect media reception behaviour, namely age, geographical origin, education level and the likes, these factors are generally predictable as such demographics tend to form trends according to its category. As such audiences can be easily categorised and by extension predicted to behave when reacting to a media message. Furthermore, these factors are conveniently observable and measurable.

Another potentially important factor that affects media message reception behaviour but inherently more difficult to quantify is media literacy. Potter (2008, p.19) defined media literacy as a set of perspectives that we actively use to expose ourselves to the media to interpret the meaning of the messages we encounter. In plain words, media literacy refers to the different ways we view and interpret media messages. However this simple definition would reveal the inherent problems in trying to gauge media literacy as 'perspective' is an intrinsic characteristic that cannot be conveniently observed or measured.

Furthermore, Potter (2008, p.21) rightly puts it that media literacy is a continuum and not a category. Therefore unlike the previous mentioned factors in which audiences can be neatly grouped according to demographical trends, when it comes to media literacy, every individual is unique. It is due to the difficult nature in measuring media literacy that makes it challenging. What is even more significant is that unlike conventional demographics that are less fluid or even immobile, media literacy skills within an individual can be moulded and changed over time. While this means harder quantification, it is significant because the fluidity of media literacy means audience are more likely to be able to exercise control over media effects by tampering with this factor than they are likely through more rigid factors such as demographics.

In looking at media effects, there are a few forms of messages that we must consider. The most concerning form of media effects would come from persuasive message, in its most subtle form – advertising, and in its potentially dangerous form – propaganda. In its mild state, the concerns generally revolved around matters such as advertising impact on children or the effects of tobacco advertisements on health behaviour. However when used for political ends, it can subvert governments and trigger revolutions as the examples provided earlier would testify. Of course this rather bleak

view should not be misconstrued as subscribing to early mass communication theory that media is inherently harmful. The mass media does have its positive impact however it would be natural to want to gain control over media effects with the purpose of minimising the negative while retaining the positive, thus the focus on the negative.

Also, owing to the fluidity of the media literacy continuum, the factors affecting the development of media literacy should receive attention. The most conventional means of media literacy cultivation is through education on the nature of media and its effects, more specifically, who creates the media messages, why are the messages created, and so forth. However Potter (2004) argued that media literacy education should not only be constrained to rigid education on media, but instead the locus for media literacy development should be on the individual. What Potter (2004) is essentially suggesting is that the individual drives and goals as well as engagement of media content could potentially influence the development of their media literacy.

Based upon the notion that media literacy is malleable and its potential role in controlling media effects, the basis of this research paper would revolve around two research questions as follow:

1) The degree of influence media literacy has in limiting media effects.

For the first research questions, three hypotheses are derived:

(a) The higher an individual's media literacy level is, the less likely the individual will develop negative perception towards a subject instigated by media message.

(b) The higher an individual's media literacy level is, the less likely the individual will develop ill-will towards a subject instigated by media message.

(c) The higher an individual's media literacy level is, the less likely the individual

will succumb to aggressive action towards a subject instigated by media message.

(2) The significance of individual cognition in the development of media literacy.

For the second research questions, two hypotheses are derived:

(d) The more goal-focussed an individual's media usage is, the more media literate

the individual will become.

(e) The longer an individual's media usage is, the more media literate the individual

will become.

The first part of the research questions and hypotheses are developed with the
purpose of gaining insights into the significance of media literacy in curbing media
effects particularly in the case of propaganda which can potentially prompts negative
action and perception whereas the second part is to test the significance of the individual
in the development of media literacy based on Potter's (2004) approach in which he
argues media literacy education should be more than just on awareness of media content
and effects. He explained that media literacy development should be expanded to include
the individual for developing such skills. It is hoped that with greater insight into the
significance of media literacy and its development, audiences can better control the media
messages that they receive to limit its negative effects and that the latter objective will
furnish audiences with the means of achieving better media literacy.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The rapidly changing media environment means that audiences are living in an increasingly information saturated society. The limitless information and messages disseminated by media is diverse, making it difficult to differentiate between good and bad. This is particularly true when knowledge of the media is used to package those messages in convincing and compelling ways. In such an environment, the ability to critically analyse, discern and evaluate media messages and its origin is imperative for a competent media user. Such abilities come under the concept of media literacy. However media literacy is a broad concept with competing view from various groups making a universal definition difficult. The best way to define it then would be to consider the approach, particularly on which aspect of media literacy that is of interest. In this case, a communication approach with a focus on media effects and usage.

The Information Age

In modern society particularly in urban cities, the media landscape for mass communication is no longer limited to the traditional form of written text that is popularly circulated in the form of newspapers. Increasingly we are exposed to more and more media information from a myriad of mediums. According to a recent survey, the reach of Malaysian newspapers stood at 54 percent of the population aged 15 and above. The survey also found that television and radio reach both increased to 94 percent and 92 percent respectively whereas internet usage grew to 21 percent (AC Nielson, 2008). Furthermore, statistics also showed that for 2008, Malaysia internet penetration grew steadily to 55.8 percent of total population (World Bank, 2008). These trends suggest that

media penetration in Malaysia has not only remained stable but also emerging media such as internet is seeing steady growth.

The convergence of these technologies means that audiences are increasingly exposed to more comprehensive, detailed yet sometimes redundant information, giving rise to the issue of information overload. Potter (2008, p.6) rightly points out that we are all saturated with information as the mass media constantly attempts to convince us through persuasive messages and it would be hopeless to keep up with all the information available. The best solution he states would be to make good selections. Potter (2008, p.9) argues that media literacy helps one to navigate better in the media world so we can gain information that we want without being distracted by things that are harmful to us. This would of course be very convenient if we could simply ignore what is harmful to us, but what is really harmful to us? This is particularly true when it comes to messages cleverly disguised as a harmless piece of information. This is where media literacy functions more than just a means to improve media usage, but also to assist in critically analysing media content and resisting negative media effects.

The Power of Persuasive Message

The importance of media literacy is apparent if we were to consider the influence persuasive messages in the media can have, be it advertising or propaganda. A study by Buijzen and Valkenburg (2003) found that children who were more exposed to toy advertisements were more likely to demonstrate materialistic behaviour and increase parent-child conflict. Despite the fact that the objective of advertisements is normally to convince audiences to purchase its products, the unintended effects such as the development of materialistic values and parent-child conflict can be potentially harmful

and damaging. However an interesting point is that the study also noted that materialism in children were lower in families that often discussed consumer and advertising matters. The study concludes that instructive or evaluative parental mediation can help mitigate these effects. The central purpose of the paper was to look at the effects of advertising on children but the latter results proved the veracity of media literacy as a means to counter media effects. The earlier research showed how advertising could cause unintended behavioural changes and conflict, however the same can happen in propaganda with the exception that the said effects are very much intended and thus can be potentially and significantly more harmful.

In another research on the 2004 United States presidential election, Franz and Ridout (2007) found that political advertising does affect vote choice as well as attitudes towards candidates. However what is more important is that the paper found that those who are low in political information are more likely to be affected by the said advertisements.

Franz and Ridout's (2007) research points out a crucial distinction between ordinary advertising and political advertising. While ordinary advertising seeks to prompt action on the part of audience to buy their products, political advertising and by extension propaganda not only actively sought to prompt action when necessary but also to influence one's values and world view. However, in the mass media age, it is through media that we gain information and formulate a large part of our values and world view. Thus when it comes a propaganda, there is a paradox in the sense that the source in which we develop our defence against harmful messages resides together with those harmful messages – the media. Take Franz and Ridout's (2007) conclusion that those with low political information are more susceptible to political advertising. The said political

information also comes from the media therefore will audience be trapped in a spiral of susceptibility? Again, this is where media literacy intervenes as it trains the individual to filter information.

To further illustrate the potential harm of propaganda, we can consider a research by Straus (2007) concerning hate radio and the Rwandan genocide. The research attempted to correlate the period of radio broadcast of hateful messages and outbreaks of violence as well as interviewing convicted perpetrators. While the research dismissed 'conventional wisdom' that radio played a major role in the Rwandan genocide, it did acknowledge that radio was responsible for some of the violence, concluding that radio played still had a marginal role in the slaughter. The research stated that there were statistically significant correlations between radio incitement and higher levels of violence among perpetrators. This research proves the existence of such correlation, and while the significance of the correlation is not widespread, any level of violence that it can incite is still something to be taken seriously.

The first two researches mentioned earlier showed the existence of a factor that could mitigate and limit the effects of persuasive message, the former research being evaluative parental intervention and the latter being political information. These factors seem somewhat ambiguous however if we were to consider the definition of media literacy, those elements falls within the concept.

Such intervention is illustrated in a research on media literacy as a violence prevention strategy by Webb et al. (2010), the group implemented a survey test a week before and after an eight lesson media literacy curriculum concerning violence in television. The research found that students that underwent the curriculum scored better results in the post-test compared to the pre-test with an average of 31 percent

improvement of average score as opposed to the control group which saw a slight drop in average score. However the research notes that differences between intervention and control students with respect to changes in attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs were not as apparent as changes in knowledge, suggesting that a longer period of the curriculum may have more marked results. This research proves the correlation, however does not prove the significance of media literacy which will be the intention of this paper.

Competing Views on Media Literacy

In general, there are two leading groups that are concerned about media literacy, one being educationist and another being communication theorist. One view of media literacy is that it is an extension of literacy and that it is more so about education than it is about media. This view is espoused by Tyner (1998) (as cited in Thoman and Jolls, 2004). She argued that media education is an expansion of literacy that includes reading and writing through the use of new and emerging communication tools. She further pointed out that learning is what that demands critical, independent and creative use of information. This perspective is further backed by a study by Hobbs and Frost (2003) that found students who are exposed to a year-long media literacy course showed improved reading comprehension skills. The students were also found to be able to write longer paragraphs and make less spelling mistakes compared to the controlled group which is an indication of improved writing skills.

However arguments such as media literacy is more about education than it is about media would be making the same mistakes that some scholars often do by building walls around their respective fields of study. The education and communication approach both has its own objectives and agendas. An education approach to media literacy seeks

to influence education policy and develop students' literary skills while a communication approach is more concerned with the role media literacy plays in media effects. Furthermore educationists approach to media literacy development is an institutional one, in which they seek to develop effective means of improving media literacy through the education system while a communication approach looks more to the individual and how the individual can develop media literacy skills on their own through the use of media itself. Naturally, media literacy has its contribution in both fields thus its ambiguity in defining it. But instead of trying to categorise on which side of the divide media literacy falls into, it is more of a potential for cross-field studies that can be mutually beneficial to both fields. Nonetheless, for the purpose of this research, it should be noted that the focus is on media effects and individual development of media literacy, thus a communication approach is taken and should not be confused with literacy education. The framework and definition that will be used will be based upon communication theories.

Defining Media Literacy

While the essence of media literacy is not new, the consensus on the concept of media literacy first emerged in 1992 at the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy by Aspen Institute. Through the conference, a definition was agreed upon, calling media literacy as "the ability to access, analyse, evaluate, and communicate messages in a wide variety of forms" (Aufderheide & Firestone, 1993).

In this simple term, media literacy obviously seem like a concept that helps us to more effectively and efficiently use and select the myriad of media information that we are exposed to. But this simple view sees media literacy as a means to improve our media

usage but ignores its correlation with media effects. However it does identify the aspects or abilities in which we need to consider in operationalising the concept of media literacy.

Adding on to Aufderheide and Firestone (1993) definition of media literacy, Potter (2008, p.19) defined media literacy as "a set of perspectives that we actively use to expose ourselves to the media to interpret the meaning of the message we encounter". While these definitions provide a better idea of how media literacy is put to use in the interpretation of varied media text, Lewis and Jhally (1998) argued that the notion of media literacy should be expanded beyond the text to take in account a contextual approach. They stressed that the purpose of media literacy should not be to create sophisticated consumers but rather sophisticated citizens. They further argued that the understanding of mass media should not be merely through the act of deconstructing and analysing text but should be analysed as sets of institutions with certain social and economic structures. To drive their point, they quoted Herman and Chomsky (1988) that: "an analysis of the news should be concerned not only with the way stories are constructed, but also with who is and who is not allowed to speak".

There is no universal definition for media literacy however the textual approach by Aufderheide and Firestone (1993) and Potter (2008) as well as the contextual approach by Lewis & Jhally (1998) serve to create a more holistic definition for media literacy along communication lines. As Potter (2008, p.21) points out, media literacy is a continuum and not a category. This nature means that it is difficult to gauge an individual's media literacy level as every individual are unique and do not fall neatly into categories. Conceding to such realities, these definitions while giving a better idea of how media literacy works does not sufficiently provide the tools to define media literacy level which is essential if correlation to its ability to limit media effects is to be established.

While it would be virtually impossible to recreate a media literacy continuum and to pinpoint an individual's media literacy level on that continuum, it is possible to create something close to it if there are observable characteristic or behaviour that can be identified to denote media literacy competence. To this end, Silverblatt's (1995, p.2-3) five elements of media literacy can be very helpful. He defined the five elements of media literacy as (1) an awareness of the impact of media on individual and society; (2) understanding of the process of mass communication; (3) the development of strategies to analyse and discuss media messages; (4) an awareness of media content as a "text" that provides insights to contemporary culture; and (5) the cultivation of an enhanced enjoyment, understanding and appreciation of media content. These elements are not very different from the two textual and contextual definition of media literacy but rather it provides specifics to gauge media literacy.

A Model for Media Literacy Development

While these definitions explains what is media literacy and how to measure it, Potter's (2004) has expanded upon the definition of media literacy by arguing that it should not be limited only to making audience aware of how and why media messages are constructed and its effects. Similarly, he also proposes a model in explaining what constitute media literacy, with his being more towards the development of such characteristic as an individual matures. But what is of more interest is his developmental model of media literacy.

In the model, Potter's (2008, p12-15) proposed what he termed as "three building blocks of media literacy" that "are required to build an individual's wider set of perspective on media" which he lists as (1) personal locus; (2) knowledge structures; and

(3) skills. Unlike Silverblatt's (1995) five elements of media literacy that tried to systematically identify characteristics that are observable in media literacy, Potter's (2008) three building blocks of media literacy is more abstract and tries to explain the nature of media literacy acquisition through an intrinsic approach. So while the former contributes towards determining media literacy level, the latter further expands on the concept of media literacy development by going beyond mere awareness with an attempt to understand the individual's cognition process.

In the first building block of media literacy, Potter (2008, p.12) explained that (1) personal locus is composed of one's goals and drives. To him, goals shape our information processing task that facilitates in information selection and filtering whereas our drive determine the level of energy we expend in attaining those goals. Therefore if we are not aware of our locus, it is easier for us to revert to the default state of media control. Conversely, if we are consciously aware of our locus, then the more control we would have over the process of information acquisition and usage. He further pointed that in both situations where we are conscious or unconscious of our locus, (2) knowledge structures are formed when we are exposed to media (ibid, p.13). This is an interesting point as it shows that knowledge structure, being the second of the three fundamentals to media literacy development which is suppose to be a defence against media effects is in turn influenced by media usage and by extension media effects. Potter's (2008) expansion on media literacy acquisition shows that its development is not as simple as mere awareness and acknowledges an important mutually dependant state between media literacy and media effects.

Potter (2008) defined knowledge structures as sets of organised information in an individual's memory. He described knowledge structures as carefully crafted pieces of

information that fit into an overall design which will help us to see patterns or more simply functions as a map when we engage media messages. He further identified that for the purpose of media literacy development, there are five categories of knowledge structures that needs to be strengthened, namely (a) media effects; (b) media content; (c) media industries; (d) the real world; and (e) the self. Potter (2008) argues that knowledge in the said five areas would make audiences more conscious during the information processing, be able to make better decisions when seeking and working with that information and more skilful in constructing meaning from media messages that serve their goals. Simply, knowledge structure provides the context we use to make sense of new media messages and the more knowledge structures we have, the better we are at making sense of a variety of media messages across various forms of mass medium. However, it should be noted that different knowledge structures assist in the information processing of different forms of media (ibid, p.15). This point can be interpreted that the ability of media literacy to limit the effects of media is varied across various medium. Nonetheless, newspaper remains the earliest and most fundamental form of mass communication medium thus is best suited as a basis for the study of correlation between media literacy and media effects as well as media literacy development. The assumption, however, is that the more interactive and converged a media is, such as radio, television, and the internet, the more likely it is for whatever effects that may exist to be greater and more apparent.

While knowledge structures are derived from media exposure, the process of constructing those structures during media exposure requires a set of (3) skills which forms the basis of the third building block of media literacy development (Potter, 2008, p.13). Potter (2008) outlined seven skills that are not exclusive to media literacy but essential for constructing the knowledge structures. They are (a) analysis, the ability to

break down media messages into meaningful elements; (b) evaluation, judging the value of an element by comparing it to other standard; (c) grouping, the ability to categorise and differentiate similar elements, (d) Induction, the ability to recognise and generalise patterns in a set of elements; (e) deduction, the ability to utilise general principle to explain details; (f) synthesis, the ability to assemble elements into a new structure; and (g) abstracting, the ability to capture and summarise the essence of a message. Based on the three elements provided by Potter (2008), the concept of media literacy development has been expanded to include cognition to go along with awareness.

Owing to the complexity of the media literacy development structure as defined by Potter (2008) and complicated by its mutually dependant variable, the diagram below would best summarise the said model:

Goals + Drive ──► **PERSONAL LOCUS** ──────────►
SKILLS   Media literacy
+   ──► **KNOWLEDGE STRUCTURES** ──►   ▲
Media exposure ◄──────────────────────────────┘
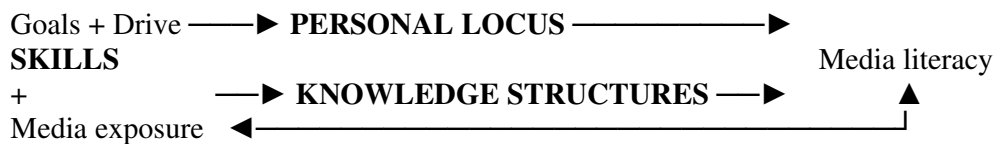
Figure 2.1: An illustration of Potter's three building blocks in the development of media literacy.

While establishing a correlation between media literacy and media effects would allow insight into the significance of media literacy, it would be of little use if media literacy cannot be manipulated. This is further aggravated by the lack of consensus on what contributes to media literary. While the definitions provided by scholars mentioned earlier such as Aufderheide and Firestone (1993) and Lewis and Jhally (1998) provides the basis for explaining media literacy, Silverblatt (1995) and Potter (2008) helps to provide the basis for the development of operationalised framework to measure media literacy. Silverblatt's (1995) five elements provides some means of systematic

determination of the level of media literacy based upon traditional notions of awareness towards media literacy whereas Potter (2008) provides, albeit its ambiguity, a cognitive expansion to that definition. This research is less concerned about the competing views on media literacy but more so on how to operationalise media literacy so that it can be studied in audience reception, therefore, the works of these scholars provide the basis to that end.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

To investigate media literacy development and its ability in limiting media effects, the instrument of this research, a survey, is broken into three parts. The first part was to develop a measurable score to determine the media literacy level of respondents. For the purpose of studying media effects, respondents were exposed a negative article on a particular subject and then asked a series of question on their view and attitude towards the subject. A correlation between media literacy level and media effects is then established. Similarly, to study media literacy development, respondents were asked questions on their media usage behaviour and subsequently a correlation between the answers and media literacy level is established.

Sampling

A purposive sampling is done with a survey of 200 respondents, 100 being from communication-based courses while another 100 coming from non-communication-based courses. The sampling pool comes from students who are pursuing a degree at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) Kampar, Perak, aged between 18 and 29. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed, and 212 or 84.8 percent were returned. Of these, 200 questionnaires that fulfilled the said criteria were chosen. The underlying assumption is that communication students are better trained to interpret, evaluate and analyse media messages as compared to non-communication students thus possessing a better level of media literacy. The split samples will ensure diversity among the sample and furthermore allows a comparison between the two groups to test the veracity of this assumption.

Instrument

A 17 question questionnaire was developed with the intention of gauging the media literacy level of respondents. To determine media literacy, a series of statements are developed in the questionnaire based on Silverblatt's (2003) five elements of media literacy. However, only four of five elements are used. This is due to the fact that the fifth element, the cultivation of enhanced enjoyment, understanding and appreciation of media content is too wide and difficult to gauge. Respondents are asked to rate how far they agree or disagree with the four statements provided using a Likert scale. This theory will be complimented with Lewis & Jhally's (1998) assertion that media literacy should not just be focussed on text but should take into account the context. Respondents are given an open ended question that points the respondent away from the conventional text, providing an opportunity to the respondent to go beyond the text and question the context, meaning that respondents are deliberately provided hints such as the lack of source and the existence of bias to question the credibility of the article.

Accompanied with this questionnaire is an article headlined "Minister killed in Indonesian naval attack". The article, designed to resemble a real news article, details the killing of a non-existent Malaysian Minister for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs by Indonesian navy near a disputed island claimed by both countries. Respondents are required to read the article before answering a series of questions to evaluate their reaction to the said story and will be used as a measure of media effects. The article is kept short, under 120 words to minimise exhaustion of respondent's attention span. The topic was chosen due to the often contentious relationship between Malaysia and Indonesia. The constant conflict between the two countries ensures that the topic has significant public attention and tends to provoke emotional reactions.

Having addressed the first research question which concerns measuring media

literacy and media effects, the second part will concern Potter's (2008) model on media

literacy development. There are only two questions for this part, one concerning media

usage length and another on the purpose of usage. This is based on two of the three

building blocks of media literacy development as provided by Potter (2008), namely

knowledge structure and personal locus. The third building block is not tested as it falls

within knowledge structure.

The following table will provide a brief explanation and justification for the

questions developed in the questionnaire. Please refer to Appendix A for full questions.

Table 3.1: Breakdown of survey questions according to theory and hypothesis.

Objective	Theory	Hypothesis	Questions
General Data	-	-	Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q6
Moderating Variable	-	Language limitation may affect interpretation of article	Q5
Research Question 2 (Media Usage)	Knowledge structure is a building block of media literacy. Knowledge structure is constructed through the use of skills and media exposure (Potter, 2008).	(e) The longer an individual's media usage is, the more media literate the individual will become.	Q7
Research Question 2 (Media Usage)	Personal locus, a building block of media literacy is composed of goals and drives. if we are aware of our locus, then we control the process of information acquisition and usage (Potter, 2008).	(d) The more goal-focussed an individual's media usage is, the more media literate he becomes. Information/entertainment denote goal-focussed usage; Hobby/avoid boredom denotes non-goal-focussed usage.	Q8

Research Question 1 (Media effects)		(a) The higher an individual's media literacy level is, the less likely the individual will develop negative perception towards a subject instigated by media message.	Q9, Q10
Research Question 1 (Media effects)		(b) The higher an individual's media literacy level is, the less likely the individual will develop ill-will towards a subject instigated by media message.	Q11
Research Question 1 (Media effects)		(c) The higher an individual's media literacy level is, the less likely the individual will succumb to aggressive action towards a subject instigated by media message.	Q12
Research Question 1 (Media Literacy)	Media literacy should not only concern the text but also the context (Lewis & Jhally, 1998).	Based on the hints dropped, respondents are given an opportunity to go beyond the content of the story and question the credibility of the article. Consider context scores 1, does not consider scores 0.	Q13
Research Question 1 (Media Literacy)	Elements of media literacy: An understanding of process of communication (Silverblatt, 1995).	Different newspaper means different encoder, thus it matters. Strongly agree that that different newspaper does not matter scores 1, strongly disagree scores 5.	Q14
Research Question 1 (Media Literacy)	Elements of media literacy: Development of strategy to analyse and discuss media message (Silverblatt, 1995).	Questioning news content constitute analysing. Strongly agree questioning not needed scores 1, strongly disagree scores 5.	Q15
Research Question 1 (Media Literacy)	Elements of media literacy: Awareness of impact of media on individual and society (Silverblatt, 1995).	Agreeing that media can influence thinking constitute awareness of it. Strongly agree scores 5, strongly disagree scores 1.	Q16

Research Question 1 (Media Literacy)	Elements of media literacy: Awareness of media content provides insight into contemporary culture and ourselves (Silverblatt, 1995).	Agreeing that media helps one learn about oneself constitute such awareness. Strongly agree scores 5, strongly disagree scores 1.	Q17

Data Analysis

There are five questions in the media literacy component of the questionnaire, four of which are Likert scale type and another is an open ended question. Answers for the four Likert scale questions will be compiled and collectively weighted based on how consistent the answers are to the elements provided by Silverblatt's (2003), with the least consistent scoring 1 and progressively, the most consistent scoring 5. This would create a minimum possible score of 4 and a maximum of 20. Adding on to this will be the open ended question which will evaluate if respondents question the credibility of the article based on the hints provided and it will simply be coded as a positive or a negative answer. A positive answer will score 1, and a negative answer will score 0. This will then be added to the total of the previous set of questions, bringing the possible total score to a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 21 with a midpoint of 12.5.

For the media effects component, there are three questions that are Likert scale type and one is an open ended. Respondents will be tested in the aspect of perception, aggression, and ill-will towards Indonesia after reading the article. For the Likert scale type, a correlation is created by calculating the mean media literacy score for each chosen answer in every question. However for the open ended question, it allow respondents to comment on the 'incident' and keywords will be derived from the comments and categorised as "very negative", "negative", "neutral" and "others". "Very negative"

would constitute strong language against the Indonesian authorities as well a tendency to deviate from the questions and launch attacks at the Indonesians. "Negative" would constitute general negative remarks on the Indonesian action that can be descriptively extended to Indonesians. "Neutral" would constitute negative remarks that cannot be descriptively extended to Indonesians as well as constructive suggestions, for example "unlawful" may describe the Indonesian action, but Indonesians cannot be described as "unlawful". "Others" would constitute expressing emotions such as shock or surprised, not answering the question at all or any other types of answers that do not fall into the former categories. The following table explains the coding process for this question:

Table 3.2: Categories of lexicons coded according to negativity.

Category	Keywords
Very negative	Cruel, Brutal, Senseless, Violent, Inhumane, Barbaric, Aggressive, Immature, Idiot, Brainless, Terrible, Animal, Immoral, Uneducated, Merciless, Dangerous, Wild, Indonesia unsafe
Negative	Ridiculous, Bad, Irresponsible, Irrational, Rash, Unreasonable, Unreliable, Stubborn, Action without thinking, Unethical, Inconsiderate, Poor, Impulsive, Unwise, Unsystematic, Selfish, Disrespectful, Unfair, Undemocratic
Neutral	Should appeal, Bad for relation, Should not kill, Should do legally, Unlawful, Misunderstanding, Unwarranted, Should compromise, Inappropriate, Need peace, Should apologise, Should take responsibility, Should communicate, should investigate, Unknown factor, Enhance security, Unconstitutional, Cannot agree
Others	Scary, Too bad for Malaysia, Poor security, Disappointed, Did not answer

For the developmental component of media literacy in the questionnaire, there are two questions. One concerning media usage and another concerning reason of media usage. Similarly, for both, a correlation is established by calculating the mean media

literacy score for each answer in the question. However for the question concerning reason of media usage, the answer are divided into two forms, one being goal-focussed answers (information, entertainment) and another being non-goal focussed answers (hobby, avoid boredom), allowing a comparison of mean media literacy score between the two. The rationale is that the first two answer options (information, entertainment) shows that respondents are clear on their intent of using media and know what exactly they want whereas the latter two (hobby, avoid boredom) explains why respondents use media but does not contain specific intent.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

The data gathered are divided into five parts with the first two parts serving to provide insight into the research sample while the remaining three forms the basis of this research. The first two concerns respondents' demographics and media usage behaviour, the data is intended for general information on the respondents and is not expected to have any significant impact on the results. For the first two parts, the only data that is worth noting in terms of the resulting accuracy of the research would be on the proficiency of respondents in the English language. The third part is where the dependant variable is obtained, providing an overview of respondents' media literacy level and its breakdown. The fourth and fifth parts, the core of the research, will correlate the obtained dependant variable to the independent variables, that being the correlation of media literacy score to media effects and media usage behaviour.

Demographics

Age
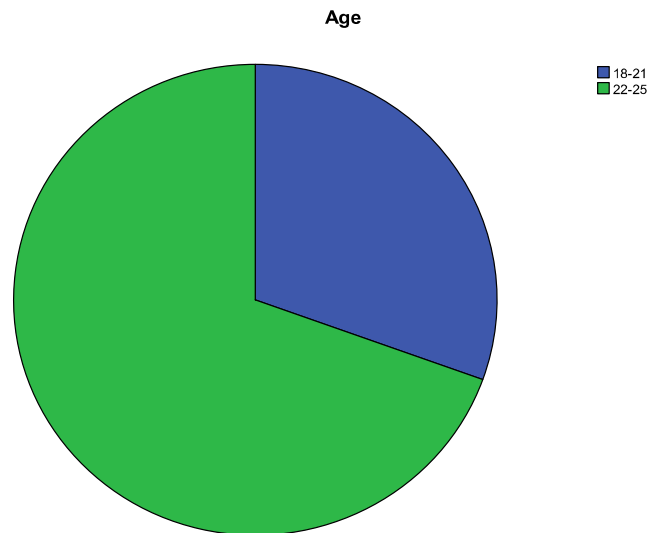
18-21
22-25

Figure 4.1: Breakdown of respondents according to age group.

Table 4.1: Breakdown of respondents according to age group.

Age Range	Frequency	Percent
18-21	61	30.5
22-25	139	69.5
26-29	0	0.0
Total	200	100.0

The sample of this research consists of students pursuing a degree's programme in Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR), Kampar. Of these students, 61 or 30.5 percent are from the age group of 18 to 21 with a remaining of 139 students or 69.5 percent coming from the age group of 22 to 25. There were no respondents from the age group of 26 to 29 (Refer to Table 4.1). Respondents can be classified as youths who are well-educated and have adequate access to information and media in a varsity environment.
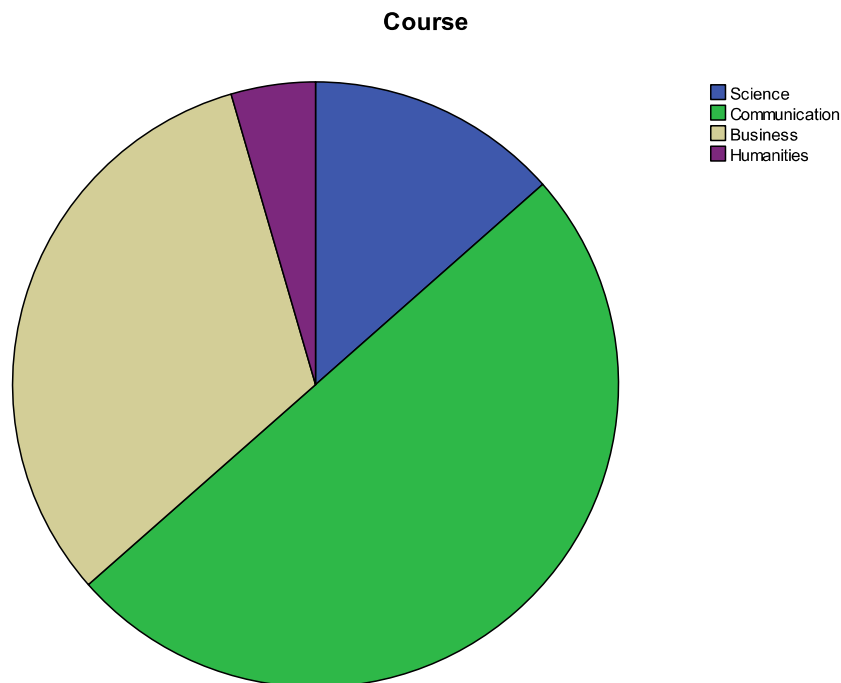
Course

Figure 4.2: Breakdown of respondents according to degree course being pursued.

Table 4.2: Breakdown of respondents according to degree course being pursued.

Course	Frequency	Percent
Science	27	13.5
Communication	100	50.0
Business	64	32.0
Humanities	9	4.5
Total	200	100.0

Of the 200 respondents sampled, half came from communication-based courses while another half are from non-communication-based courses. Among non-communication-based courses, they constitute those in the science, business, and humanities field, recording a total of 27 or 13.5 percent, 64 or 32.0 percent, and 9 or 4.5 percent respectively (Refer to Table 4.2).

Language commonly spoken
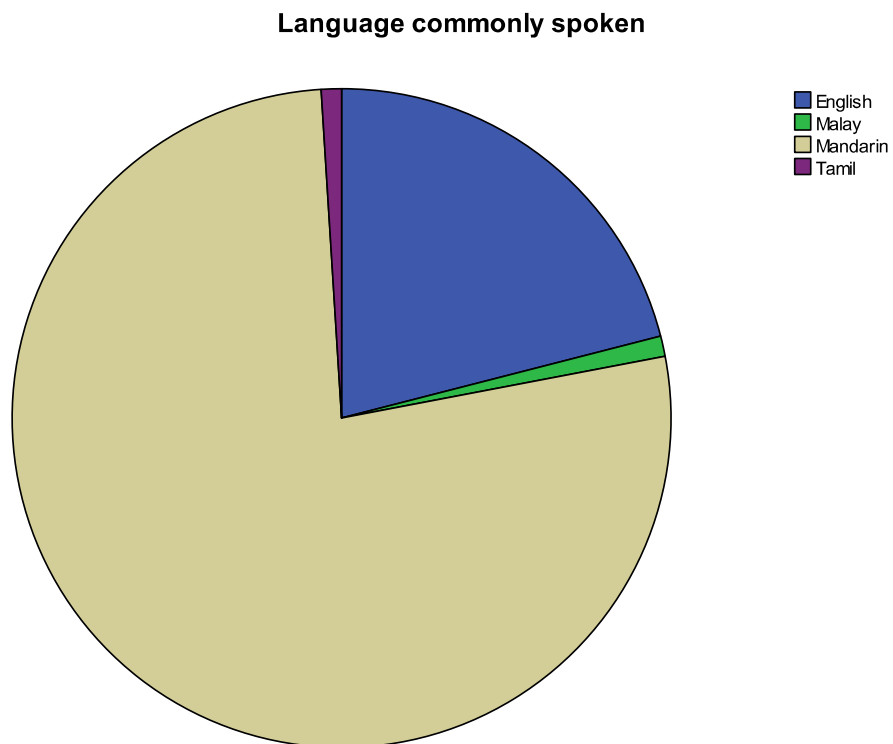
Figure 4.3: Breakdown of respondents according to language commonly spoken.

Table 4.3: Breakdown of respondents according to language commonly spoken.

Language commonly spoken	Frequency	Percent
English	42	21.0
Malay	2	1.0
Mandarin	154	77.0
Tamil	2	1.0
Total	200	100.0

Since respondents are required to read an article in the English language, language barrier is a concern. Among the respondents sampled, a majority of respondents normally speak Mandarin, recording a total of 154 respondents or 77.0 percent while those who normally spoke English made up of 42 respondents or 21.0 percent. Those commonly conversing in Malay or Tamil only had 2 respondents or 1.0 percent respectively (Refer to Table 4.3).

English Proficiency
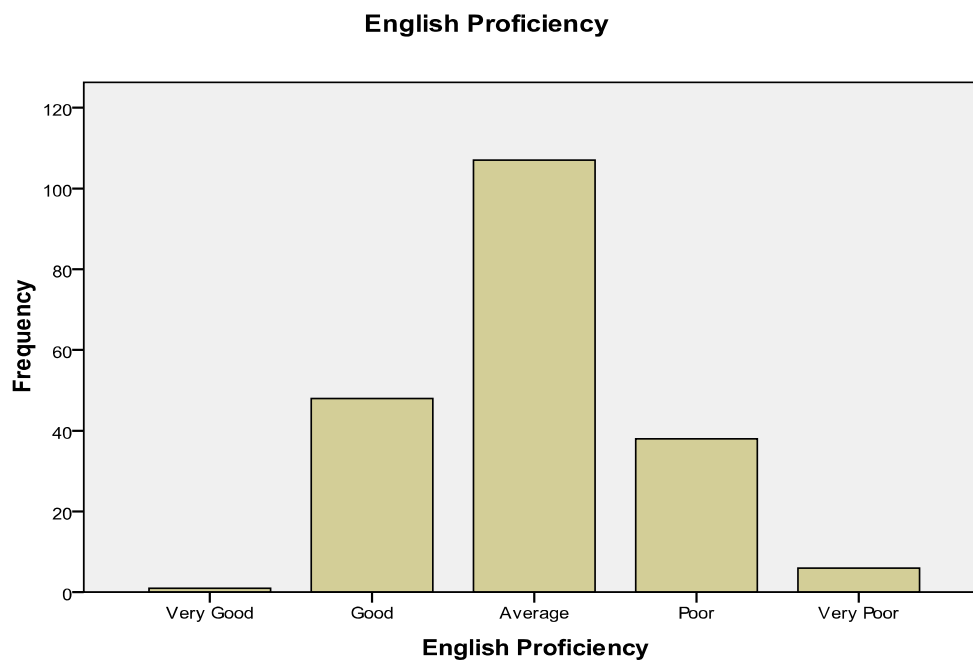
Figure 4.4: Respondents' self evaluation of English proficiency level.

Table 4.4: Respondents' self evaluation of English proficiency level.

English Proficiency	Frequency	Percent
Very Good	1	0.5
Good	48	24.0
Average	107	53.5
Poor	38	19.0
Very Poor	6	3.0
Total	200	100.0

Despite a large majority of students saying that they normally conversed in

Mandarin (Refer to Table 4.3), more than half, which are 107 respondents or 53.5 percent

rated their English proficiency level as average. A further 48 respondents or 24.0 percent

rated their English proficiency as good and 1 respondent or 0.5 percent as very good.

Only 38 respondents or 19.0 percent rated their English proficiency as poor and another 6

or 3.0 percent as very poor (Refer to Table 4.4). Based on these numbers, it can be

assumed that language barrier in the comprehension and subsequent answering of the

questionnaire – which will be a measure of media effects – will not be a serious factor.

Media Usage Habits
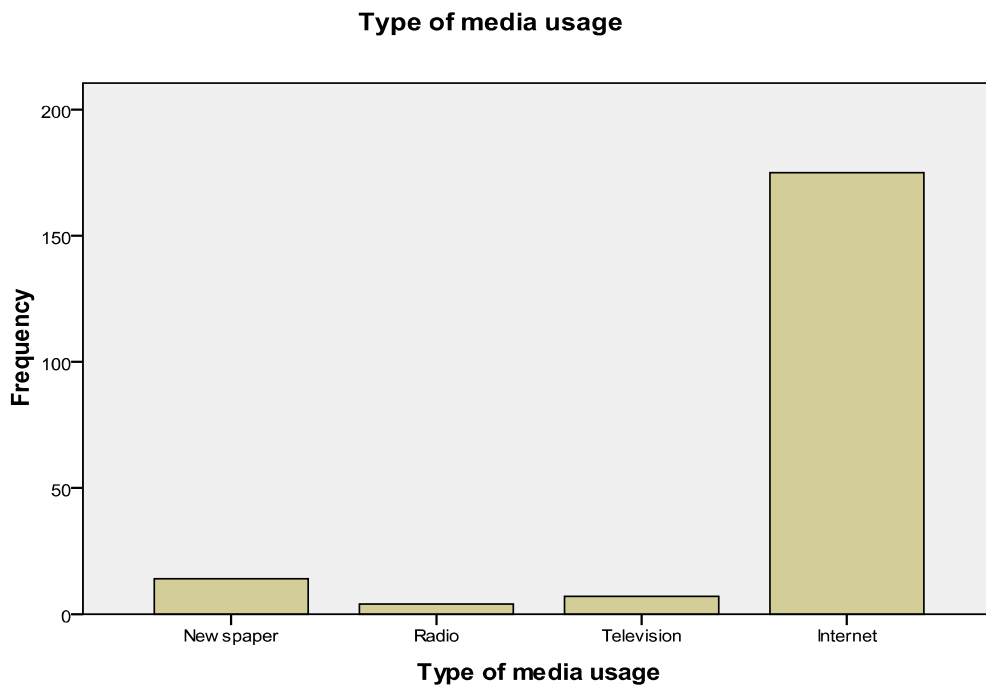
Type of media usage

Figure 4.5: Type of media that is most commonly used by respondents.

Table 4.5: Type of media that is most commonly used by respondents.

Type of media usage	Frequency	Percent
Newspaper	14	7.0
Radio	4	2.0
Television	7	3.5
Internet	175	87.5
Total	200	100.0

As observed, the university students sampled are generally media savvy, with 175 of respondents or 87.5 percent said that the media that they often use is the internet. Newspaper, radio and television garnered a total of 14 respondents or 7.0 percent, 4

respondents or 2.0 percent and 7 respondents or 3.5 percent respectively (Refer to Table 4.5).

Usage of chosen media

Figure 4.6: Length of usage time of respondents' most commonly used media type.

Table 4.6: Length of usage time of respondents' most commonly used media type.

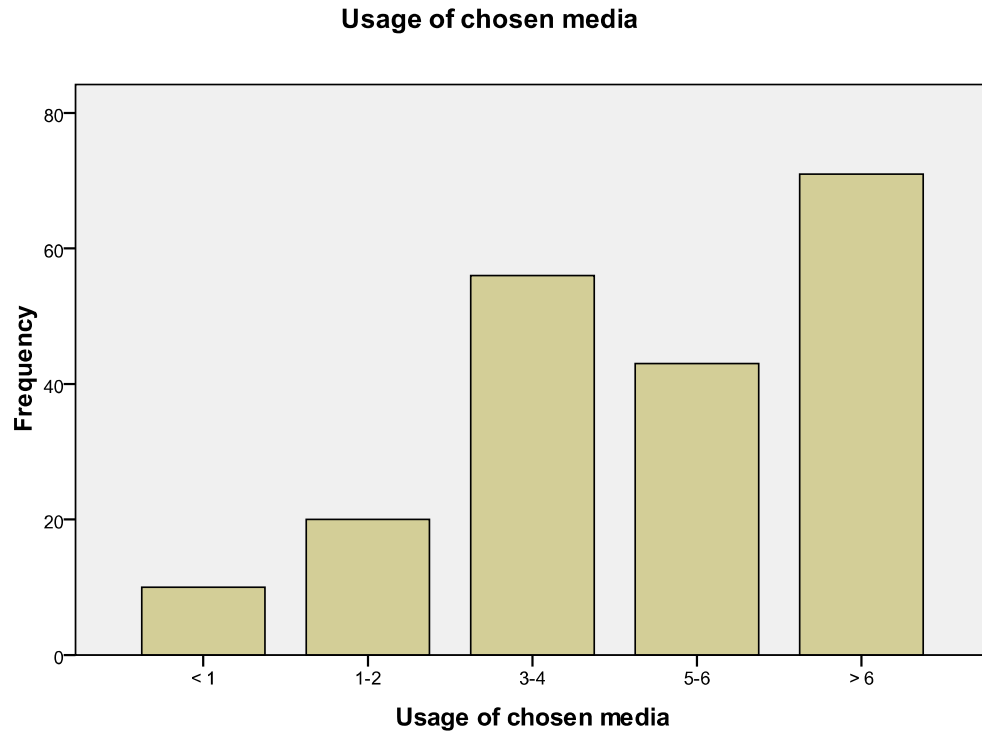| Usage of chosen media	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 hour	10	5.0
1 – 2 hours	20	10.0
3 – 4 hours	56	28.0
5 -6 hours	43	21.5
More than 6 hours	71	35.5
Total	200	100.0

It can be further observed that respondents are avid media users, with a majority

of respondents, which are 71 respondents or 35.5 percent saying that they spend more

than 6 hours using their chosen media. For the category of 5 to 6 hours and 3 to 4 hours,

they garnered 43 respondents or 21.5 percent and 56 or 28.0 percent respectively. Only 20

respondents or 10.0 percent said they used their chosen media for 1 to 2 hours and a

remaining 10 or 5.0 percent said they used for less than an hour (Refer to Table 4.6).

Based on the data from Figure 4.5 and Figure 4.6, we can conclude that respondents are

generally exposed to the same media environment in terms of accessibility and the

significance of digital divide can be ruled out.
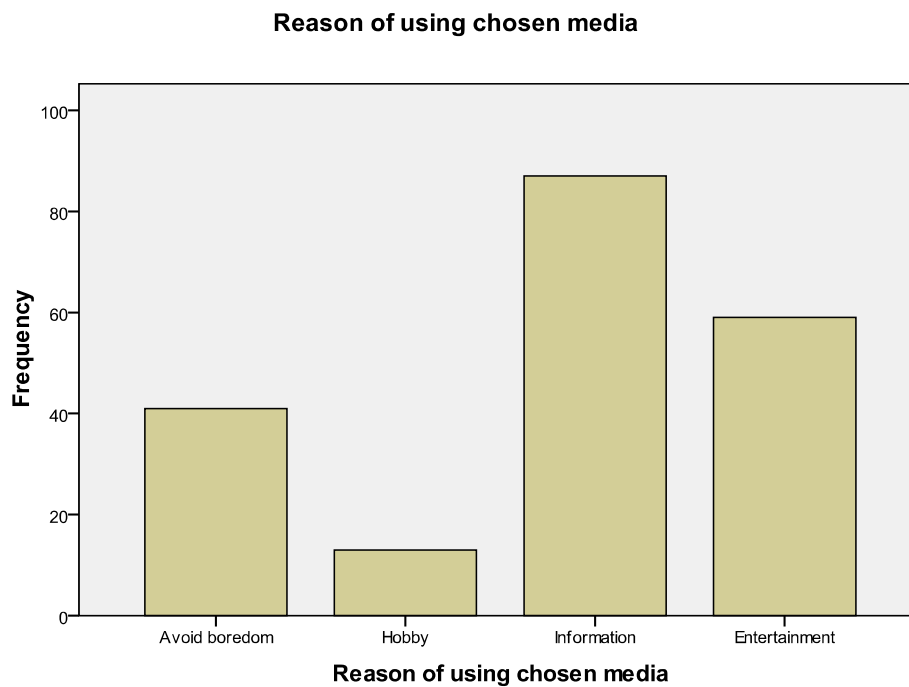
Figure 4.7: Respondents' reason for using their most commonly used media type.

Table 4.7: Respondents' reason for using their most commonly used media type.

Reason of using chosen media	Frequency	Percent
Avoid Boredom	41	20.5
Hobby	13	6.5
Information	87	43.5
Entertainment	59	29.5
Total	200	100.0

When respondents were asked why they used their chosen media, 41 respondents or 20.5 percent cited to avoid boredom as their reason while another 13 respondents or 6.5 percent cited hobby as a reason, both reasons of which are considered as non-goal-focussed answers. For the two goal-focussed options, 87 respondents or 43.5 percent gave information purposes as their reason and a remaining 59 respondents or 29.5 percent cited entertainment purposes (Refer to Table 4.7).

Media Literacy Level

Figure 4.8: Media literacy score distribution according to course type.

Table 4.8: Mean media literacy score according to course type.

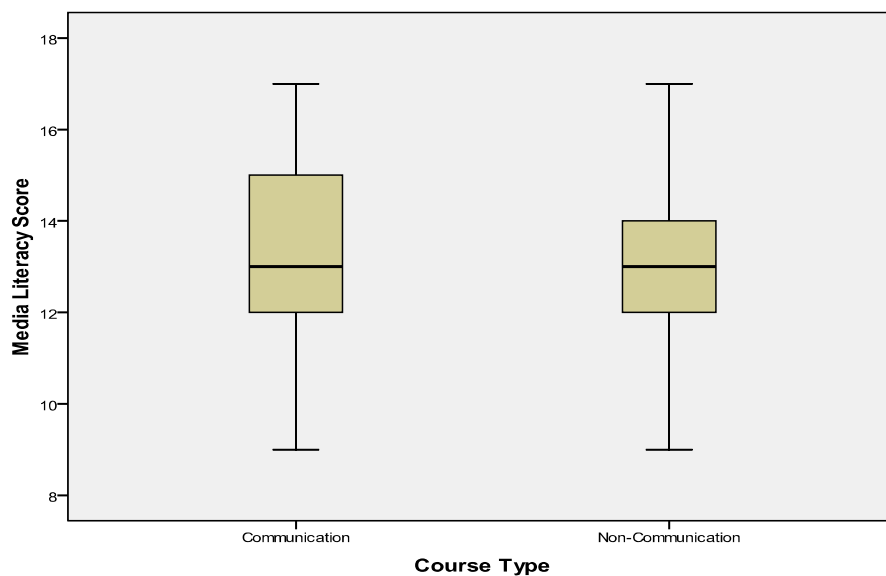| Course Type	Frequency	Mean Media Literacy Score
Communication	100	13.29
Non-communication	100	13.10
Overall	200	13.20

Having gained insight into the general demographic and media usage behaviour of the respondents sampled, it would be prompt to look into the dependant variable of this research, that being media literacy. Based on the data gathered, the average media literacy score of this sample of 200 respondents is 13.20. However when a comparison is made, the 100 communication students sampled scored an average of 13.29, slightly better than the other 100 non-communication students which scored an average of 13.10 (Refer to Table 4.8). At the beginning of this research, it was correctly assumed that communication students will have better media literacy than non-communication students. However the assumption was that the difference in media literacy level between the two groups will be significant due to the media-specific training that communication students have received. However the data gathered showed to the contrary, with the difference being marginal at best. This could be an indication that training in media analysis does little to help media literacy levels among a sample that is already well-educated and media saturated.
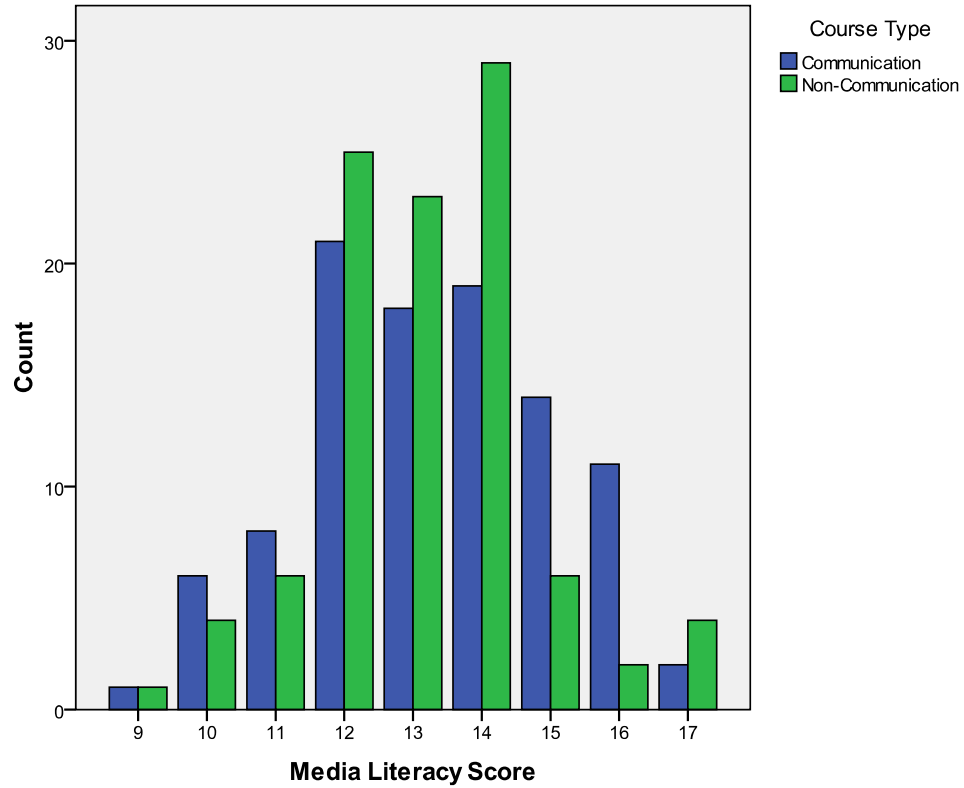
Figure 4.9: Comparison of media literacy score according to course type.

Table 4.9: Comparison of media literacy score according to course type.

Media Literacy Score	Communication		Non-Communication	
	Frequency	**Cumulative**	**Frequency**	**Cumulative**
9	1	1	1	1
10	6	7	4	5
11	8	15	6	11
12	21	36	25	36
13	18	54	23	59
14	19	73	29	88
15	14	87	6	94
16	11	98	2	96
17	2	100	4	100
Total	100	-	100	-

Table 4.9 provides the actual media literacy score the respondents scored. Looking at data, it can be observed that most of the students from both groups of communication and non-communication students managed a higher than average score, with the midpoint of possible score being 12.5. For both groups, there were a total of 64 respondents respectively that gained a media literacy score greater than the midpoint, that being a score of 13 or more, putting the total at 128 or 64.0 percent of total respondents. While both groups had identical number of respondents scoring above the mid-point, there were more communication students that scored at a higher range above the midpoint (score: 15, 16) compared to non-communication students. However, non-communication students outnumbered communication students in the lower range above the mid-point (score: 13, 14) (Refer to Table 4.9). Again this data reinforces the fact that media training only provides marginal improvement in media literacy level among an already media savvy sample.
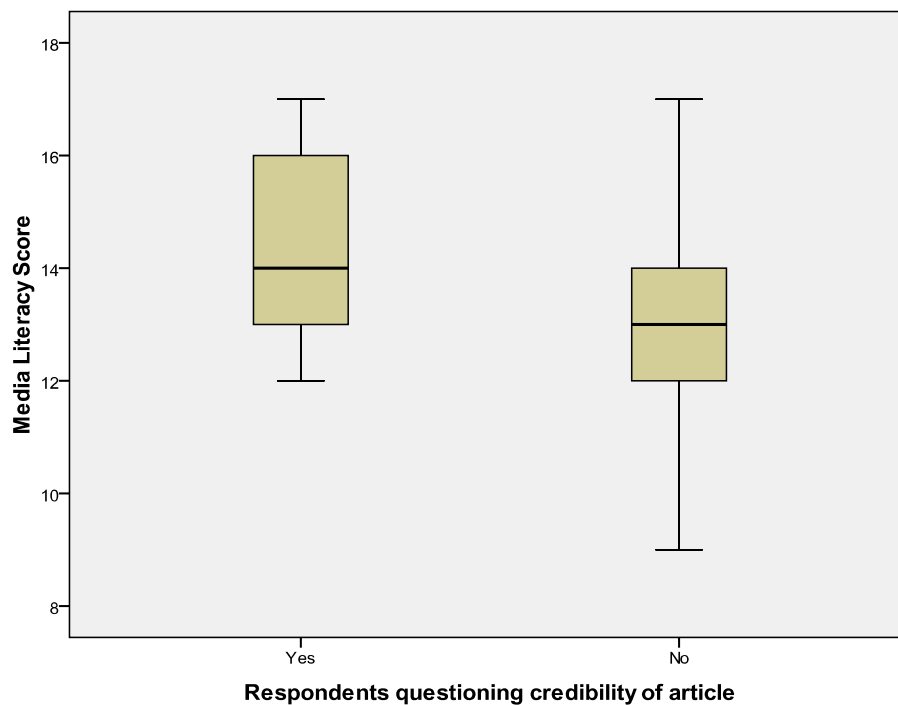

Figure 4.10: Media literacy score distribution according to respondents' ability to question credibility of article.

Table 4.10: Mean media literacy score according to respondents' ability to question credibility of article.

Respondents questioning credibility of article	Frequency	Mean Media Literacy Score
Yes	21	14.52*
No	179	13.04
Total	200	-

*True value is 13.52 as those answering 'Yes' are awarded a score of 1 which is factored into the overall media literacy score. Those that answered 'No' scored 0.

As mentioned earlier, a media literate person would be able to look beyond the text of the content and consider the context such as how the message is constructed and who is allowed or not allowed to speak. When respondents were asked what is their opinion of the article in an open-ended question tailored to lead them towards the context, a majority of respondents, that being 179 respondents or 89.5 percent remained focussed on the text, giving comments that closely resembled answers to a prior open-ended question that was already designed to be content-specific. Only 21 respondents or 10.5 percent actually questioned the credibility of the article, citing bias or source credibility issues. When a comparison is made, it can be observed that those who questioned the credibility of the article had a higher media literacy score, with an average of 14.52 compared to an average of 13.04 for those that did not (Refer to Table 4.10).

However it should be noted that this aspect is factored into the media literacy score with those questioning the credibility of the article scoring 1 and those that did not scoring 0. Therefore for a proper comparison, it is necessary that 1 is subtracted from the value of 14.52, which would give an average score of 13.52. Comparing the two once again, we can still see that those that considered the context of the article had a higher average media literacy score compared to those that did not. The data indicate that most

media users, even in this media savvy sample, while are active in their consumption fails to look beyond the text. The numbers suggest that while those with higher media literacy will not automatically consider the context of the article, they are more likely to do so, compared to those with lower media literacy levels.
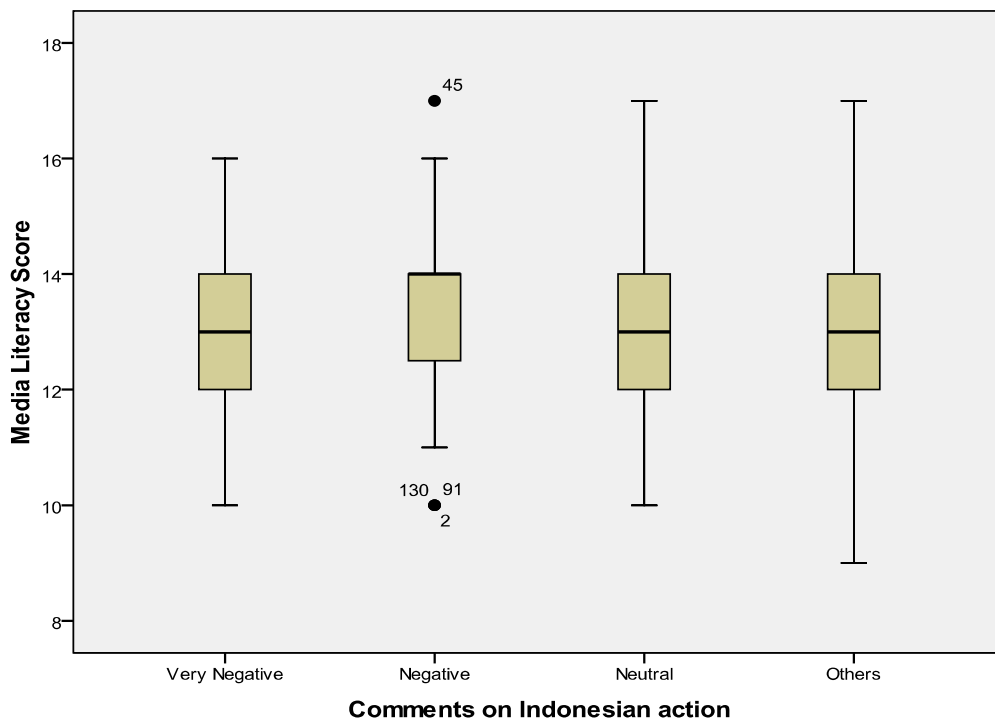
Media Literacy's Influence on Media Effects

Figure 4.11: Media literacy score distribution according to the negativity of respondents' comments.

Table 4.11: Mean media literacy score according to the negativity of respondents' comments.

Comments on Indonesian action	Frequency	Mean Media Literacy Score
Very Negative	50	13.12
Negative	43	13.47
Neutral	40	13.48
Others	67	12.91
Total	200	-

In this component of analysis, a correlation is established between media literacy and the independent variable, media effects. Respondents were asked to comment on the actions of Indonesian authorities based on the article provided in an open ended question. The answers were coded according to their negativity. 50 respondents or 25.0 percent and 43 respondents or 21.5 percent provided very negative or negative comments respectively. A further 40 respondents or 20.0 percent gave neutral comments. The remaining 67 respondents or 33.5 percent did not answer or provided comments that did not fall within the former categories (Refer to Table 4.11).

The data shows that those who provided very negative comments scored an average media literacy score of 13.12 while those that provided negative comments scored an average of 13.47. Those that were neutral in their comments scored an average of 13.48 while those in the 'Others' category scored an average of 12.91. The data suggests that while higher media literacy helps people to be more neutral, many that have higher media literacy level were still susceptible to media guided negative perception. However, those with lower media literacy would be more severely affected. Judgement is reserved for 'Others' category as an evaluation cannot be provided as answers were not given.
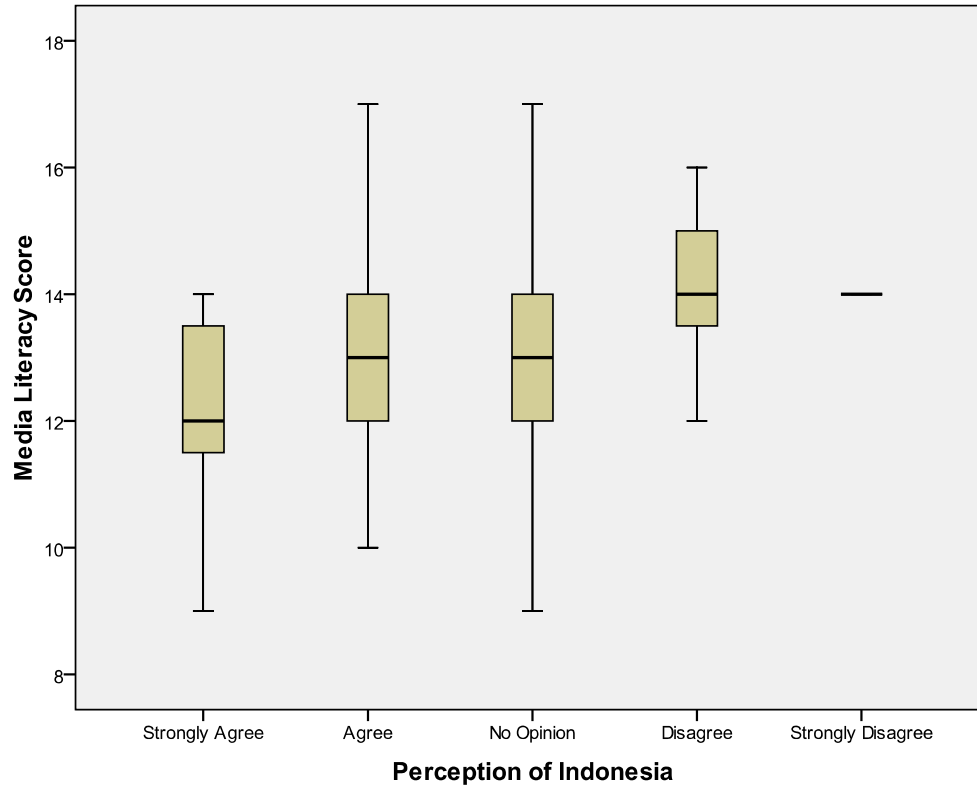
Figure 4.12: Media literacy score distribution according to respondents' opinion on how much their perception of Indonesia was affected.

Table 4.12: Mean media literacy score according to respondents' opinion on how much their perception of Indonesia was affected.

Perception of Indonesia affected	Frequency	Mean Media Literacy Score
Strongly Agree	11	12.18
Agree	68	13.19
No Opinion	109	13.18
Disagree	11	14.27
Strongly Disagree	1	-
Total	200	-

* Frequency for 'Strongly Disagree' insufficient for mean data to be generated

Figure 4.12 is a follow up to Figure 4.11 as it also deals with media literacy and perception issues, however this one is in the form of a close ended question. It is meant as a proof test for the earlier independent variable on perception. When respondents were asked if the news article had affected their view of Indonesia, 11 respondents or 5.5 percent and 68 or 34.0 percent said that they strongly agree and agree respectively. The majority of respondents which is 109 respondents or 54.5 percent were neutral while another 11 respondents or 5.5 percent disagreed. Only one respondent or 0.5 percent strongly disagreed (Refer to Table 4.12).

Media literacy score wise, those who strongly agreed that their perception was affected gained a mean score of 12.18. As for those who answered 'Agree' or 'No Opinion', they gained an almost similar average score with 13.19 and 13.18 respectively. Those that strongly disagreed scored an average of 14.27. Parallels can be drawn to Table 4.11 as Table 4.12 demonstrated similar patterns whereby those with similar average media literacy score were neutral while some others were negative, suggesting that higher than average media literacy does not guarantee immunity to media guided negative perception but those with lower media literacy would be more adversely affected. However those with markedly higher media literacy would appear to be better able at shielding themselves from media guided negative perception.
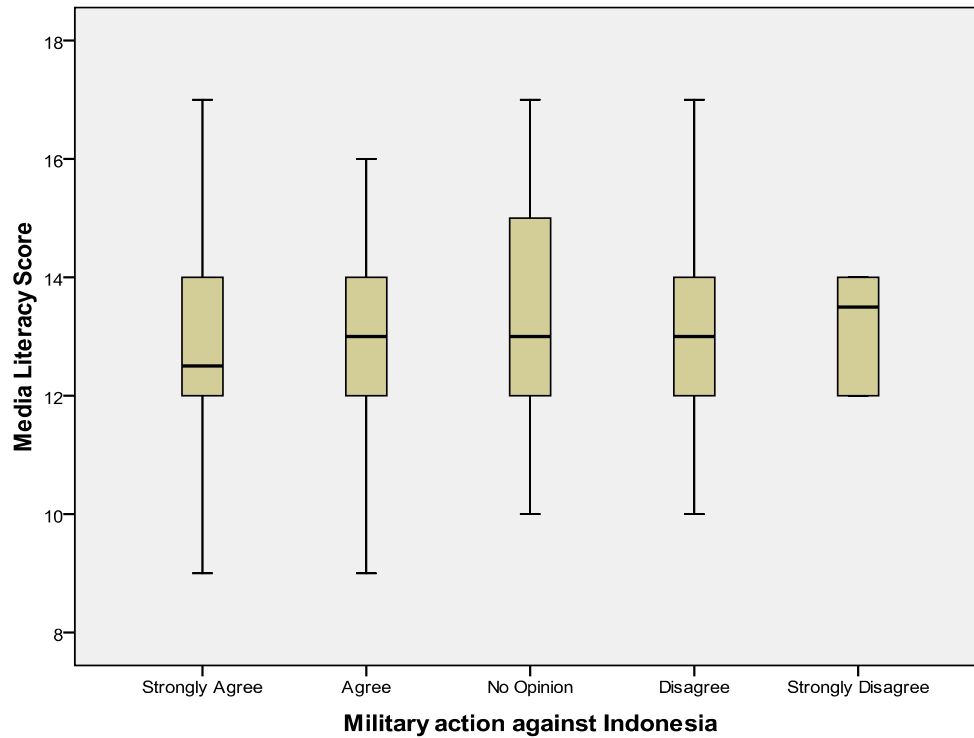
Figure 4.13: Media literacy score distribution according to respondents' opinion if military action should be taken against Indonesia.

Table 4.13: Mean media literacy score according to respondents' opinion if military action should be taken against Indonesia.

Military action against Indonesia	Frequency	Mean Media Literacy Score
Strongly Agree	12	12.75
Agree	39	12.85
No Opinion	58	13.29
Disagree	85	13.35
Strongly Disagree	6	13.17
Total	200	-

In another question in which respondents were asked if military action should be taken against Indonesia, another independent variable to measure media guided

aggression against a subject, 12 respondents or 6 percent and 39 respondents or 19.5

percent strongly agreed or agreed respectively to the suggestion. Another 58 respondents

or 29 percent were neutral while a majority of respondents which is 85 respondents or

42.5 percent disagreed to the suggestion. Another 6 respondents or 3 percent strongly

disagreed (Refer to Table 4.13).

Those who strongly agree or agree to military action against Indonesia garnered

an average media literacy score 12.75 and 12.85 respectively. Meanwhile those who were

neutral or disagreed to the suggestion scored an average of 13.29 and 13.35 respectively.

Those who strongly disagreed scored an average of 13.17, though care should be taken to

note its low frequency. The numbers suggest that unlike in the case of negative perception,

media literacy is much more effective in curbing aggression towards a subject incited by

media. Do note that the threshold, the point in which there is a mark difference in media

literacy score between categories begins at 'No Opinion' compared to Table 4.12 which

was at 'Agree'. So based on the data gathered, it would be safe to say that those who have

higher media literacy is much less likely to be susceptible to media guided aggression
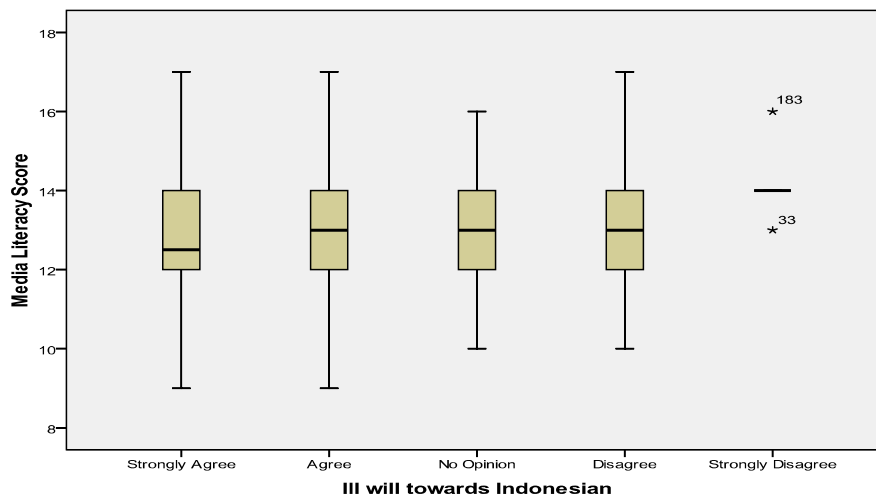
against a subject.

Figure 4.14: Media literacy score distribution according to respondents' opinion if Malaysia should halt intake of Indonesian immigrants.

Table 4.14: Mean media literacy score according to respondents' opinion if Malaysia should halt intake of Indonesian immigrants.

Ill will towards Indonesians	Frequency	Mean Media Literacy Score
Strongly Agree	10	12.80
Agree	45	12.87
No Opinion	49	12.96
Disagree	91	13.47
Strongly Disagree	5	14.20
Total	200	-

In another evaluation of media effects, respondents were asked if Malaysia should stop accepting Indonesians immigrants, a means to measure the independent variable of potential ill-will generated against fellow Indonesians residing in Malaysia. 10 respondents or 5.0 percent strongly agreed to the suggestion while 45 respondents or 22.5 percent agreed. Another 49 respondents or 24.0 percent were neutral. Slightly under half of total respondents, that being 91 respondents or 45.5 percent disagreed while a further 5 respondents or 2.5 percent strongly disagreed. Again, note that the threshold begins at 'Disagree' with an average media literacy score of 13.47, higher than the overall mean of 13.20 for total respondents. Those that strongly agree, agree, or were neutral to the suggestion scored an average of 12.80, 12.87 and 12.97 respectively. The respondents that strongly disagreed with the suggestion scored an average of 14.20 (Refer to Table 4.14). The data suggests that higher media literacy is very effective in curbing media guided ill-will against a subject. The threshold point for media literacy score in this question is the best among the four questions used. The fact that the threshold point is even better than Table 4.13 even though military action should be considered more severe than halting immigrant intake is likely due to the fact that the issue of immigrants is closer to respondents, where there are more engagement with fellow Indonesians in daily

life as compared to the issue of war which would involve the Indonesian nation that is

seemingly distant.

Individual Cognition of Media Literacy

Figure 4.15: Media literacy score distribution according to respondents' length of usage time for their most commonly used media type.

Table 4.15: Mean media literacy score according to respondents' length of usage time for their most commonly used media type.

Usage of chosen media	Frequency	Mean Media Literacy Score
Less than 1 hour	10	12.50
1 – 2 hours	20	12.60
3 – 4 hours	56	13.23
5 – 6 hours	43	13.35
More than 6 hours	71	13.34
Total	200	-

Considering media literacy score, those who said they used their favourite media for less than an hour and 1 to 2 hours scored an average media literacy of 12.50 and 12.60 respectively. Meanwhile for those who said they used their favourite media for 3 to 4 hours, 5 to 6 hours and more than 6 hours a day, an average score of 13.23, 13.35 and 13.34 were recorded respectively (Refer to Table 4.15). The data indicates that media usage length contributes to the development of the individual's media literacy, though there appears to be a saturation point.

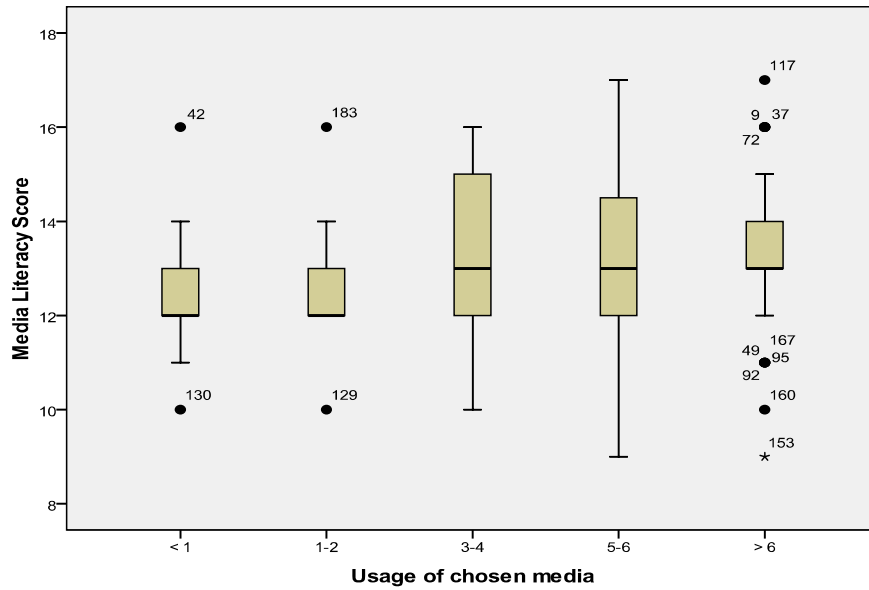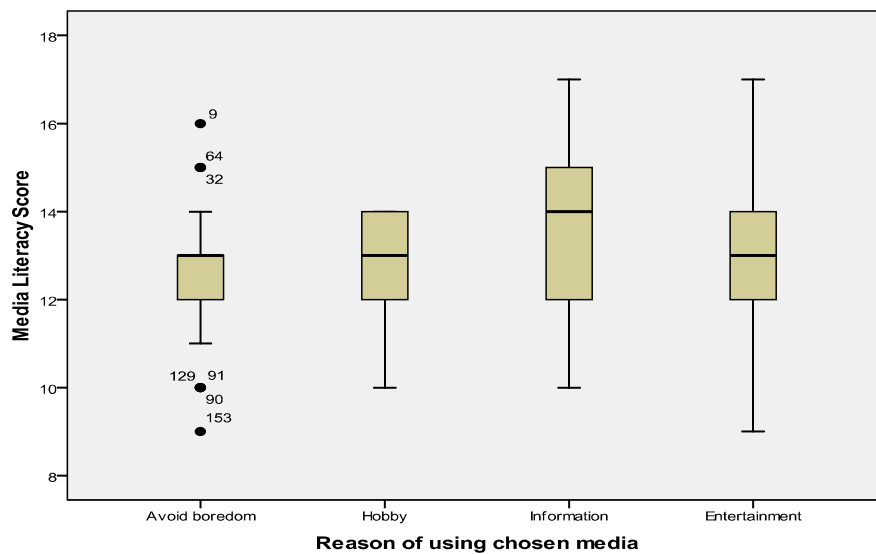*Figure 4.16: Media literacy score distribution according to respondents' reason for using their most commonly used media type.*

Table 4.16: Mean media literacy score according to respondents' reason for using their most commonly used media type.

Reason of using chosen media	Question Type	Frequency	Mean Media Literacy Score
Avoid boredom	Non-goal-focussed	41	12.54
Hobby	Non-goal-focussed	13	12.62
Information	Goal-focussed	87	13.39
Entertainment	Goal-focussed	59	13.49
Total	--	200	-

Another correlation that was attempted was with regards to the reason respondents use their chosen media. For those who said they use their chosen media to avoid boredom or for hobby, they scored an average score of 12.54 and 12.62 respectively, both answers which are considered non-goal-focused options because the exact intent is unclear. As for those who chose information or entertainment as their choice, an average score of 13.39 and 13.49 were achieved respectively. Both of the latter options are considered to be goal-focussed options as the intent is explicit (Refer to Table 4.16). From the numbers collected, it can be gathered that those who are actively aware of their goals and drive when using media would be able to significantly develop better media literacy compared to more passive users.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The research shows that media literacy is indeed effective in limiting media effects specifically in terms of behavioural changes, though to varying degree. Also, the results shows that media usage habits may be more significant in development of media literacy as compared to conventional media literacy training among an already fairly media competent sample. The specifics of the findings will be discussed below and subsequently the limitations and recommendations will be provided should there be a desire to expand upon this research.

Media Literacy in Limiting Media Effects

Based on the research results, it can be said that media literacy has the ability to limit media effects but to varying degree, depending on what form of effects. Two of the three hypotheses of the first research question can be confirmed, that better media literacy will make an individually less likely to develop ill-will or succumb to aggression against a subject instigated by media. However the results for the two hypotheses raise some other questions. Using the average media literacy score of the overall sample which stands at 13.20, it was found that those with higher than average mean media literacy on the independent variable of ill-will mostly fell in the category of disagreeing to the halting of the intake of immigrants whereas on the independent variable of aggression it fell within the category of neutral and disagree. This is an indication that media literacy is more effective in the aspect of ill-will than it is in the aspect of aggression. However it should be noted that in this research, the aggression is directed at the Indonesian nation and not on Indonesians in Malaysia, thus creating the perception of being distant.

Drawing from this, it can be theorised that media literacy is particularly effective in limiting effects concerning actions on things that are closer to us.

However before delving into the issue of 'distance', it would be prone to first address the last hypothesis on perception. In the two questions developed to measure the independent variable of perception, both demonstrated similar patterns, in which those with close to or above average of the overall mean media literacy score fell into the category of agreeing that their perception of Indonesia was affected or were neutral, both categories had almost identical mean scores. This means that the hypothesis that the higher an individual's media literacy level is, the less likely the individual will develop negative perception on a subject instigated by media message cannot be accepted. It is found that on the issue of perception, media literacy was effective for some while not for others. So, the conclusion would be that media literacy has only marginal effectiveness in limiting negative perception on a subject generated by media. This outcome may be connected to the issue of 'distance', a scenario in which the development of perception does not involve physical action or will have any impact on those that are near us. It is a wholly intrinsic process thus media literacy having less effectiveness. The collective results for the three hypotheses would suggest 'distance' may have played a factor. However this research is limited and the significance of this factor or its potential replication is not known but it should be noted, should there be a future research on this topic.

Individual Cognition in the Cultivation of Media Literacy

This component of the research largely revolves around Potter's (2008) concept of media literacy development. Dealing with first hypothesis of the second research question, there are indications that those who used media for longer period of time did have a

higher media literacy score, though it also appeared that it had its limit and the difference was small at subsequent higher usage time frames. Therefore it would not be accurate to concur to the hypothesis that the longer an individual's media usage is, the more media literate the individual will become. It would be more appropriate to conclude that increased media usage facilitates in the development of media literacy but a saturation point exists. Media usage is coupled with the individual's skill to develop their knowledge structure, which in turns contributes to the development of media literacy.

With regards to the final hypothesis that the more goal-focussed an individual's media usage is, the more media literate the individual will become, the results points towards a confirmation. The research showed a clear distinction in terms of media literacy score, with those who chose non-goal-oriented reasons for using the media having a significantly lower score as opposed to who provided goal-oriented reasons. The two results reinforces Potter's (2008) assertion the individual as a locus is important in the development of media literacy on top of the conventional media training. Media literacy development is contingent upon the individual's thought process and how that thought process affects the choices they make in the use of media. This assertion holds more merits if we were to consider the comparison that was made between communication students and non-communication students which scored a mean media literacy score of 13.29 and 13.10 respectively, not a significant difference, suggesting that training in analysing media content and its production did little to help media literacy levels, giving credence to the individual's role in their own development of media literacy.

Conclusion

In an increasing media saturated society, selectivity would not suffice as it would be impossible to completely avoid negative information, the better solution would be mitigation. The research shows that individuals with higher media literacy can better manage media effects where they are less inclined to develop ill-will or aggression against a subject despite a media message designed specifically to that end. While media literacy is less effective in curbing the development of negative perception caused by media, it still has a mitigating role to play.

Also, the research results show that there should be a re-evaluation in the way media literacy education is approached. The results indicated that longer media usage up to an extent can assist in developing better media literacy. However a more important factor is the individual's goals and drives when using media. Those who were more goal-oriented in their usage of media had higher media literacy, and the difference is quite distinct. In contrast, there was only marginal difference in media literacy when a comparison is made between those who had media training and those that did not. The results suggest that media literacy development should not be overly focussed on education alone, but cultivation on proper media usage habits would be essential in optimising media literacy development. This means that the individual should be guided to learn and understanding their own media usage habits. This is not to say that media literacy education is unimportant, but rather among a sample that is already fairly media literate, further improvement can be achieve through proper media habits.

Limitations of Study

The main challenge in this study involves the sample. Firstly the sample comes from a pool that is already fairly media literate, being in a varsity environment. While this has the advantage of keeping the media environment factor of respondents constant, it also means that the data generated from this sample would have smaller disparity, making patterns harder to detect. Furthermore the sample comes from a pool of mostly Mandarin speaking respondents, raising the possibility of language barrier influencing the accuracy of the result as respondents are required to read an English language article before answering the questionnaire. While most of the respondents rated their English proficiency as average, it is wholly a self evaluation and the true extent in which language barrier may affect the accuracy of the results cannot be properly determined.

Another issue concerns the sample size of this research. A sample size of 200 may be satisfactory if they are analysed collectively, however this research involves breaking respondents according to categories based on their answers and then calculating a mean value for those categories. In doing so, the sample is diluted with each category having a lower sample size thus potentially reducing the reliability of the mean value for each category as it is more heavily influenced by outliers. For example, a comparison between communication and non-communication students essentially means splitting the sample and generating a mean media literacy score for both groups. This means that both mean values are actually derived from a sample of 100 each.

Also as it is the case for any survey-based research, the level of commitment and participation of respondents towards filling up the questionnaire is essential. While the article that accompanied the questionnaire for this survey is kept as short as possible, it

may still be a turn off for some and reduce their commitment to the survey. The attention span of the respondents could potentially affect the accuracy of the research.

The most difficult problem would still be the nature of media literacy as it is a broad concept with a myriad of factors contributing to its development. For this research, two factors were tested in relation to media literacy development but the fact remains that there could be several other factors that are interacting with media literacy concurrently thus making it difficult to determine which factor is actually more significant.

Recommendations

Significantly increasing the sample size would be greatly beneficial in allowing more accurate comparison between categories and between answers as the mean value can be generated from a large sample as the effects of outliers can be lowered despite the overall sample being split. Depending on the direction of the research, drawing sample from different sample pools in terms of media environment exposure could also be beneficially in showing more distinct differences in media literacy.

In terms of the calculation of media literacy level, future research can increase the criteria that will be considered in a media literacy score on top of developing multiple questions for a particular criterion. Perhaps one could develop a number of questions tailored in different ways but yet is based upon the same principle or element of media literacy. This should be able to mitigate errors should one of the questions be poorly design to reflect a particular element.

Similarly in terms of evaluating media effects, the idea of 'distance' should be taken into account where the definitions should be more rigidly define. For example if the

same instrument from this research is used, future research should clearly differentiate

Indonesia and Indonesians, far and close. Again repetition of similar questions can be

used for each criterion, just in case if one of the questions was poorly developed. These

recommendations are in fact an expansion of this research paper and would be very

tedious but it is necessary should the desire be to attain better accuracy.

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APPENDIX A: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

I am a year three undergraduate student who is currently pursuing a Bachelor Degree in Communication (Hons) Journalism in Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) Perak Campus.

The following survey is carried out in partial fulfillment of my final year project. The objective of this survey is to seek out the opinion of university students on news content and news media. Your kind assistance would be deeply appreciated.

All the information collected is for academic purposes and will be kept private and confidential.

– SURVEY START –

Based on the questions provided, kindly __circle__ your most relevant answer.

1. How old are you?
   A. 18-21
   B. 22-25
   C. 26-29
   D. Others (Specify:_____)

2. What is the current education level that you are studying?
   A. Foundation
   B. Degree
   C. Others (Specify:_____)

3. What field of course are you studying?
   A. Science
   B. Communication
   C. Business
   D. Humanities
   E. Others (Specify:_____)

4. What is the language that you normally use?
   A. English
   B. Malay
   C. Mandarin
   D. Tamil
   E. Others (Specify:_____)

5. How would you rate you English proficiency?
   A. Very Good
   B. Good
   C. Average
   D. Poor
   E. Very Poor

6. What kind of media do you normally use?
    A. Newspaper
    B. Radio
    C. Television
    D. Internet
    E. Others (Specify:_____)

7. For how long a day do you use the media chosen in Q6?
    A. Less than 1 hour
    B. 1 – 2 hours
    C. 3 – 4 hours
    D. 5 – 6 hours
    E. More than 6 hours

8. Why do you use the chosen media in Q6?
    A. To avoid boredom
    B. Hobby
    C. Information
    D. Entertainment
    E. Others (Specify:_____)

*Kindly read the news article **attached behind** and answer the following questions.*

9. What is your opinion towards the actions of Indonesian authorities?
_____
_____

		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10	Has this news affected your view of Indonesia?	1	2	3	4	5
11	Should Malaysia take military action against Indonesia?	1	2	3	4	5
12	Should Malaysia stop taking Indonesian workers because of the attack?	1	2	3	4	5

13. What is your opinion of the news article that you have just read?

_____
_____

*Based on how far you agree with the following statements, kindly **<u>circle</u>** your most relevant preference.*

		Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
14	*"It does not matter if the same story I just read appeared in a different newspaper."*	1	2	3	4	5
15	*"I do not need to question the stories in newspapers because newspapers are reliable."*	1	2	3	4	5
16	*"Media can influence the way I think."*	1	2	3	4	5
17	*"Media content can help me learn more about myself."*	1	2	3	4	5

– SURVEY END. THANK YOU. –

Minister killed in Indonesian naval attack

Setangkai, March 3 - Malaysian Minister for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, Datuk Seri Mohammad Ishak was killed today following an attack from the Indonesian Warship KRI Garuda off the coast of Johor.

Mohammad had led a delegation to survey the disputed Island of Setangkai which is also claimed by Indonesia but was confronted by the Indonesian Navy.

The delegation's vessel had refused demands by Indonesian authorities to surrender and return to Indonesia with them.

However, the KRI Garuda pursued the Malaysian vessel and subsequently fired a barrage of bullets at it after the vessel re-entered Malaysian waters.

Among the dead are also Director General of Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, Datuk Habib Khalid and Mohammad's political aide, Zahrain Nordin.