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ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

An Investigation into the Relationship between Postgraduate Students' Digital Participation and New Media Literacy Skills (NMLs): A Correlational Study

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A huge portion of digital media users, known as digital natives and millennials, inappropriately consume and produce much online [new] media content in stark violation of media studies ethics and UNESCO guidelines. This has become a new reality, a norm, and worse the modus-operandi for many university students in many countries, including Morocco. This quantitative study deployed a correlational design. An online survey, a newly tested self-report assessment tool for media literacy developed by Literat (2014), based on the twelve new media literacy skills (NMLs) developed by Jenkins (2007) was utilised to investigate the extent to which the participants' digital participation correlates with the use of new media literacy skills. The sample (N=25) consisted of postgraduate students (2020-2022) belonging to the MA degree program, Applied Language Studies hosted by the faculty of art and humanities, Meknes, Morocco. In sharp contrast, with the available bulk of previous studies, key results pinpoint that there is a negative weak correlation between the participants' digital participation and the use of new media literacy skills. Higher levels of media literacy skills are not associated with a higher degree of digital participation in the study context. The results provide a basis for stakeholders to issue a wake-up call about the ascendancy to integrate new media literacy skills programs and interventions in various curricula across different departments at the tertiary level.

***Keywords*:** Media, Literacy, Infobesity, Info-Toxication, New Media Literacy.

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Introduction

Research on media literacy has a long tradition. Prior research suggests that the beginning of media literacy can be traced back to the first half of the 20th century. The first seminal contributions attempted to teach students how to distinguish [between] the high culture and the popular culture through [formal] education in the UK (Buckingham, 1998; Literat, 2014; Thompson, 2001; Zhu et al., 2021). In his insightful article," Media Education and the End of the Critical Consumer", Buckingham (2003) proclaimed that in this early protectionist approach, the advocates aimed at promoting high culture to fight against the increasing growth of popular culture in the printing media era.

In the 1950s, media literacy was introduced to the United States due to the increasingly positive and negative impact of mass media such as radio and television on people's daily life and schooling (Bordac, 2014; Silverblatt, 2013; Sperry & Baker, 2016). Joining the debate then, social studies required introducing students to the roles media technologies [the radio and the TV] have and do play in US history, economics, and civics. Markedly, this period put much emphasis on the need to bring media literacy back to the educational agenda amidst the rise of new machines and new media technology. The latter were scathingly criticised for inflicting collective anxiety in society (Lin et al., 2013). Thus, several authors have recognized that traditional literacy has been no longer sufficient for individuals [media users] to competently survive in this new media ecology due to the omnipresence of new media technologies at the beginning of the 21st century (Friedman & Friedman, 2008; Sundar & Limperos, 2013). This novelty has been discussed by a great number of authors in the broad literature. As has been previously reported in the literature, in the white paper, "Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century", Weigel et al. (2009) underscored the primacy of media literacy, stating that people in the 21st century live in a technology and media-driven environment, marked by [unprecedented] easy access to an avalanche of information.

Studies of the transition from "media literacy" to "new media literacy" are well documented, it is also well acknowledged that there was a [historically] smooth transition from classic literacy (e.g. reading and writing) to audio-visual literacy (e.g. related to electronic media) to digital literacy (e.g. related to digital media) and recently to a more comprehensive new media literacy (e.g. related to Internet and Web 2.0, 3.0, etc., (Andersen, 2002; Chen et al., 2011; Lin et al., 2013). Interestingly, some authors have also suggested that there are similarities between media literacy and new media literacy regarding the approaches to understanding media, the role of media in society, and the purposes of media literacy (Bordac, 2014; Friedman & Friedman, 2008; Lin et al., 2013; Livingstone et al., 2004; Sperry & Baker, 2016; Sundar & Limperos, 2013; Tyner, 2010). It is interesting to note that the convergence and divergence between "media literacy" and " new media literacy" have been amply discussed by the previous authors in the literature. This has thoroughly been explored in a prior study by Livingstone et al. (2004). The authors enunciated that media literacy and new media literacy differ in terms of implementation and purposes. They further stated that there are three compelling

reasons to implement new media literacy: (a) democracy, participation, and active citizenship, (b) knowledge economy, competitiveness, and choice, and (c) lifelong learning, cultural expression, and personal fulfillment.

For reasons of justified disparity, new media literacy has found its way to the hearts and minds of media users. The NML differs from previous media literacy models in that it envisions people as active participants in the new digital environment (Chen et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2013; Sundar & Limperos, 2013). The focus has been shifted from media consumption media to media production, addressing three aspects a) the moving away from extreme protectionist approach, b) the emphasis on the great socio-cultural impact of media, and c) the need for a balance between discrimination/protection and empowerment approaches (Buckingham, 1998, 2003, 2015).

Various Frameworks have been devised to account for the new media literacy skills (NMLs) vogue. In this respect, Jenkins (2006) suggested a great framework, illustrating new media literacies in detail in juxtaposition with corresponding rubrics and categories. A more recent framework was proposed by Chen et al. (2011). The authors generated a promising framework that unpacks NML as two continua from *consuming to prosuming literacy* and from *functional to critical literacy*. Specifically, the 'consuming' literacy was defined as the ability to access media messages and to utilize media at different levels, while 'prosuming' literacy ability to produce media contents (e.g., messages and artefacts). Besides, Chen et al. (2011) argued that an individual needs to become new media 'literate' to participate responsibly in the new knowledge society. Notwithstanding, many questions regarding the implementation of the frameworks suggested have not been thoroughly addressed yet. Various studies concluded that the existing tools [media literacy frameworks] do not capture the full spectrum of skills and propensities much needed and wanted to actively, ethically, and responsibly consume and produce new media content (Buckingham, 2015; Friedman & Friedman, 2008; Lin et al., 2013; Literat, 2014; Notley & Dezuanni, 2019; Sundar & Limperos, 2013).

Literature Review

Research on media literacy has a long tradition. Prior research suggests that the beginning of media literacy can be traced back to the first half of the 20th century. The first seminal contributions attempted to teach students how to distinguish [between] the high culture and the popular culture through [formal] education in the UK (Buckingham, 1998; Literat, 2014; Thompson, 2001; Zhu et al., 2021). In his insightful article," Media Education and the End of the Critical Consumer", Buckingham (2003) proclaimed that in this early protectionist approach, the advocates aimed at promoting high culture to fight against the increasing growth of popular culture in the printing media era. In the 1950s, media literacy was introduced to the United States due to the increasingly positive and negative impact of mass media such as radio and television on people's daily life and schooling (Bordac, 2014; Silverblatt, 2013; Sperry & Baker, 2016). Joining the debate then, social studies required introducing students to the roles media technologies [the radio and the TV] have and do play in US history, economics, and civics. Markedly,

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The aim of the study

Various studies concluded that the existing tools [media literacy frameworks] do not capture the full spectrum of skills and propensities much needed and wanted to actively, ethically, and responsibly consume and produce new media content (Buckingham, 2015; Friedman & Friedman, 2008; Lin et al., 2013; Literat, 2014; Notley & Dezuanni, 2019; Sundar & Limperos, 2013). The study was geared towards exploring associations between variables without controlling or modifying any of them in a correlational research design. The intensity and/or direction of the relationship between two (or more) variables is represented by a correlation. A correlation might have either a positive or negative direction (Curtis et al., 2016; Lappe, 2000; Seeram, 2019).

Material and Methods

The survey used in this study [partly adopted from Literat (2014)] includes three sections. The first section was designed to collect demographic information [sex and age], the second section sought the participants' perceptions and practices about digital participation and new media literacy skills, the third section tried to assess the participants' new media literacy [12] skills. The participants were assessed on a Five-Likert Scale (1=Strongly agree-5=Strongly disagree). The survey was made available online on Microsoft Forms. The link was distributed via a social media working site (WhatsApp). There were no incentives to take part in the study. The quiz was designed as a fun personality quiz. The latter has high reliability measured at $\alpha = .903$. 5 Statements for Each New Media Literacy Skill. The survey included both technology related, and non-technology related activities. The survey NML Skills are deemed as social and cultural competencies that go beyond media expertise or technological capability. See the survey link (Appendix 1). The participants were kindly requested to complete this Web-based survey to determine their new media literacy skills. The survey assessed the psychometric properties of a newly tested self-report assessment tool for media literacy, based on the twelve new media literacy skills (NMLs) developed by Jenkins et al. (2007). The survey consisted of 22 questions and took participants approximately less than 10 minutes to fill out.

Research Participants and Setting

The participants (N = 25, 9 males and 16 females) belonged to the 1st year master's degree Applied Language Studies (Department of English Studies, Faculty

of Letters and Humanities, UMI, Meknes, Morocco). Table 1 shows the distribution of participants by gender.

Table 1.

Distribution of Respondents by Gender

What is your gender?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	16	64.0	64.0	64.0
	Male	9	36.0	36.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

It is interesting to note that there are more female respondents (N=16) than their male counterparts (N=9). This variance is due to the sampling procedure adopted in the study [intact class sampling].

Data Analysis

The data collected from this survey were analysed using IBM's SPSS (Version 25). Various descriptive and inferential statistical procedures were carried out in line with the research purposes, questions, and hypotheses.

Results

1. The Nature of Postgraduate Students' Digital Participation

Based on Table 2, it can be seen that "all" students have a computer, be it a laptop or a desktop. The majority of students (23, 92%) have easy access to the Net at home. Relating to respondents' media practices on social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, My Space, etc), Figure 1 shows that most participants (10) spend 5 hours or more on the Net, followed by a great plurality (9) spending one or two hours on the Net. Interestingly, Figure 2 illustrates the respondents' familiarity with the concept 'Media Literacy'. 23 of the participants are familiar with the concept "Media Literacy".

Table 2

Response Categories and Percent Distribution with regards to Easy Access to Technology and the Net

Do you have a computer (a desktop / a laptop)?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	25	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 2

Response Categories and Percent Distribution with regards to Easy Access to Technology and the Net

Do you have access to the Net at home?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	23	92.0	92.0	92.0
	No	2	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

Figure 1

Respondents' media practices on social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, My Space, etc)

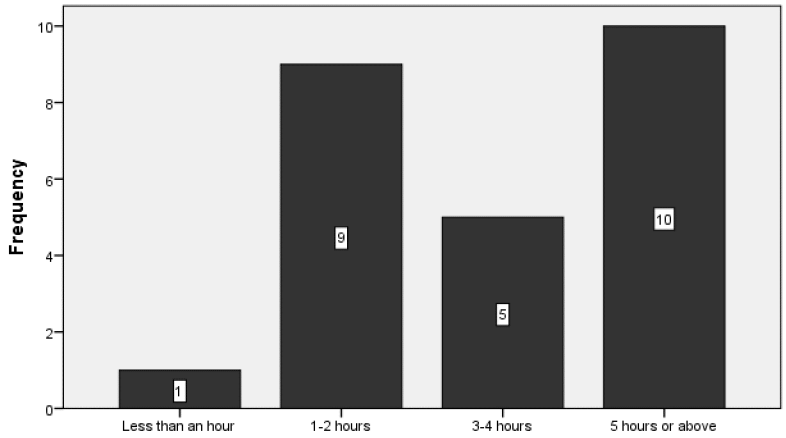
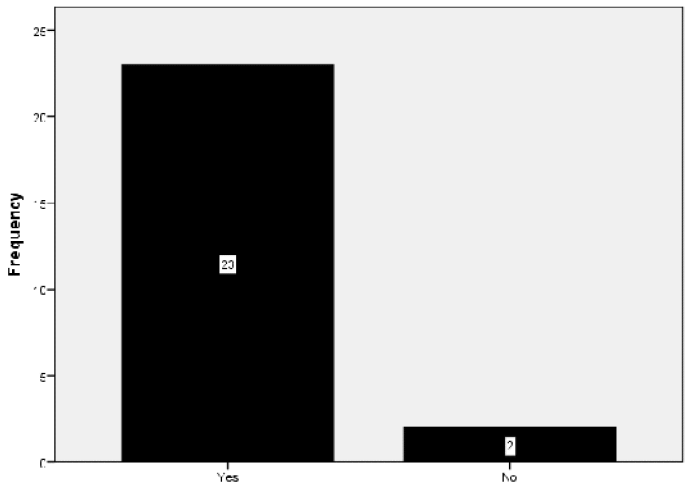


Figure 2

Respondents' Familiarity with The Concept 'Media Literacy'



2. The Postgraduate Students Perceptions of the Concept Media Literacy

The respondents provided clear definitions for the concept 'Media Literacy'. Most of the definitions included keywords, phrases, and operational verbs that bear much relevance to the field of media literacy. Figure 3 serves as a piece of evidence in this regard.

Figure 3

Respondents' Definition for the Concept 'Media Literacy'

Participant 1: It is the ability to use media and the internet effectively.
Participant 2: Media literacy refers to the ability to use different types of media provided by new technology, and it is the main focus in developed countries.
Participant 3: I think it is knowing about how to use media.
Participant 4: It is the ability to use technology in general.
Participant 5: It is the ability to identify the message and news that are decoded in different types of media and be critical in the evaluation of this information. This means it provides with the basic skills to not take every single word as the absolute truth, but it enables you to know what is behind the lines.
Participant 6: It is the ability to question analyse and evaluate all the messages conveyed by the media, and to absorb them.
Participant 7: It is the conscious use of media as a whole and the skills that help people analyse the content of media messages that they receive and send.
Participant 8: is the ability to know: meaning/types/process/aim... of media essentially how the message is conveyed since nothing is done arbitrary, how to be a critical thinker when it comes to media and not just a passive receiver.
Participant 9: To be able to use your critical mind when consuming media be it news, movies etc.
Participant 10: Media literacy means the ability to read, understand, analyse and evaluate information that we receive from media and also the ability to create media.
Participant 11: It is the awareness of students about all types of media in general namely magazines and newspapers.
Participant 12: Being able to effectively use the media.

3. Respondents Usage of New Media Literacy [12] Skills in their Digital Participation

Response categories and distribution percentages for New Media Literacy [12 NMLs] account for the usage of new media literacy skills in the respondents' digital participation (Tables 3-13).

For "**Play**", the capacity to experiment with their surroundings as a form of problem-solving, the respondents "agree" that they have taught themselves new things by seeing what happens when they play around computers (11, 44%). About 20, 80% of the participants declared that when faced with a [digital] problem, they

usually try out a few different ways of solving it before they give up. A plurality of respondents (11, 44%) stated that when they get stuck trying to solve a problem, they see it as a learning opportunity rather than a personal failure.

With regards to " **Simulation**", the ability to interpret and construct dynamic models of real-world processes, the majority of respondents (15, 60%) "strongly agreed" that it is important to have simulations of dangerous events like earthquakes or safety evacuations so that people know what to do in a crisis. They "strongly agree' that they think about how reality is represented in movies with computer-generated simulation, like Avatar, Inception, 300, Sin City, Iron Man, X-Men, etc. (17, 68%).

Relating to "**Performance**", the ability to adopt alternative identities for improvisation and discovery, the majority (18, 72%) of participants "agreed" that they had often taken on a different identity to experience something new or to solve a problem (online games, role-playing, theatre exercises). Another astonishing result is that about 18, 72% of the participants "strongly agree" that it is necessary to not be yourself in certain situations.

Regarding " **Appropriation**", the ability to meaningfully sample and remix media content, the respondents "strongly agree" that they have incorporated other people's public work to create my piece of art, like mixing music tracks, making an art college, or stringing together video clips (8, 32%). The majority of respondents (16, 64%) "neither agree nor disagree" about the possibility of making a fan video about their favourite celebrity, artist, or band and if the latter would probably be happy about that.

In terms of "**Distributed Cognition**", the ability to interact meaningfully with tools that expand mental capacities, about 13, 52 % of the respondents "agree" that the environment plays a big part in how smart they are. The majority (16, 64%) are neutral with regards to the need to keep learning from the surroundings to become smarter. The participants " agree" that it is important to use tools like spell check, a calculator, encyclopaedia, etc., to help me in my learning or work (12, 48%).

As far as " **Multi-Tasking**" is concerned, the ability to scan one's environment and shift focus as needed to salient details, the plurality of respondents (11, 44%) " strongly agree" that they manage to do their work successfully while doing other things like listening to music or texting. About 13, 52% of the respondents "agree" that they like to have different applications open at the same time when they work on their computers.

Speaking of "**Collective Intelligence**", the ability to pool knowledge and compare notes with others towards a common goal, the respondents "agree" they enjoy working with others on projects and assignments (11, 44%). The majority of respondents "agree" that they use the Net or social media to connect with others and find what they are looking for when they cannot solve a problem or find a piece of information by themselves (16, 64%). The respondents voiced that they could learn a lot from their friends (14, 56%).

Moving to " **Judgment**", the ability to evaluate the reliability and credibility of different information sources, the participants "agree" that they can effectively

determine whether or not the information they find online is correct and reliable (11, 48%). About 14, 56% voice that they gather information from a bunch of different sources (like TV, radio, the Net, etc.) to try to get the full picture when interested in a topic. The majority of respondents proclaim that they can enter the right words in a search engine to find what I am looking for, and can identify prejudice or bias in media (e.g., racism on certain websites, prejudice against women in song lyrics, etc.

Regarding "**Transmedia Navigation**", the ability to follow the flow of stories and information across multiple modalities. 10, 40% of the participants " disagree" that they follow my favourite shows, actors, musicians, etc., across different platforms and media (TV, magazines, the Net, Facebook, Twitter, etc.). They "strongly agree" that they often visit the websites (either official or fan-created) f my favourite TV shows, bands, etc (9, 34%). The plurality of respondents' state that if they are curious about something they saw on TV, they will check it out online later (12, 48%). However, the majority (14, 56%) profess that they are happy when they can learn about their favourite things in different ways (on TV, on the Net, on Facebook, etc.).

Shedding some light on " **Networking**", the ability to search for, synthesize, and disseminate information, the respondents state that they feel like they are part of a community when they go online (14, 56%). Meanwhile, about 13, 52% declare that it is important for them to be able to stay in touch with their friends online too, and not only in real life.

Invoking " **Negotiation**", the ability to travel across diverse communities, discerning and respecting multiple perspectives, and grasping and following alternative norms, the majority of respondents (13, 52%) think that the Net offers a very important opportunity to get to know people from different backgrounds and different places, and confess that they have learned something new about another culture from surfing the Net, playing online games, participating in online communities or forums, etc. About 12, 48% of the participants think that using the Net and/or playing video games makes people more open to other cultures.

With reference to "**Visualization**", the ability to create and understand visual representations of information, the majority of respondents feel that they understand things better when they can think of them visually (13, 52%). The participants think they are pretty good at understanding information from images, graphs, diagrams, and other visual tools (14, 65%). The majority voiced that they like the fact that they can see all my friends on my Facebook profile (15, 60%), and find Google Maps and/or Google Erath to be extremely useful tools (11, 44%).

Table 3

NML Skill 1: Play

Play	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Play Q1: I have taught myself something new on a computer by seeing what happens when I play around with it.	16% (4)	4 % (1)	44 % (11)	36 % (9)

Play	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Play Q2: When I have a cell phone or an electronic device, I like to try out all the buttons to see what they do.	0 % (0)	24 % (6)	32 % (8)	44% (11)
Play Q3: I enjoy taking things apart and putting them back together to see how they work.	28 % (7)	12 % (3)	36 % (9)	24 % (6)
Play Q4: When I am faced with a problem, I usually try out a few different ways of solving it before I give up	0 % (0)	8% (2)	12 % (3)	80 %(20)
Play Q5: When I get stuck trying to solve a problem, I see it as a learning opportunity rather than a personal failure.	4 % (1)	32 % (8)	20 % (5)	44 % (11)

Table 4

NML Skill 2: Simulation

Simulation	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Simulation Q1:I try to put myself in other people's shoes to understand their problems or situations	4% (1)	20 % (5)	32% (8)	44% (11)
Simulation Q2: It is important to have simulations of dangerous events like earthquakes or safety evacuations so that people know what to do in a crisis.	8 % (02)	20 % (5)	12% (3)	60% (15)
Simulation Q3: I appreciate simulation games and activities like SecondLife, SimCity, The Sims, FIFA, Tiger Woods, PGA Tour, etc.	0 % (0)	24 % (6)	48% (12)	28 % (7)
Simulation Q4: I think about how reality is represented in movies with computer-generated simulation, like Avatar, Inception, 300, Sin City, Iron Man, X-Men, etc.	0 % (0)	16% (4)	16% (4)	68% (17)

Simulation	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Simulation Q5: I would like to participate in a simulation of something I cannot experience in real life, like flying a space shuttle to the moon or piloting a fighter jet.	0 % (0)	24 % (6)	36% (9)	40% (10)

Table 5

NML Skill 3: Performance

Performance	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Performance Q1: I have often taken on a different identity in order to experience something new or to solve a problem (online games, role-playing, theatre exercises)	4% (1)	0 % (0)	72% (18)	24% (6)
Performance Q2: I know what an Avatar is.	44% (11)	4 % (1)	24% (6)	28% (7)
Performance Q3: I feel I am a different person online than how I act in person.	12% (3)	28% (7)	36% (9)	24% (6)
Performance Q4: In certain situations, it is necessary to not be yourself.	0 % (0)	16% (4)	12% (3)	72% (18)
Performance Q5: Actors learn a lot from life from the roles they play in films and on stage	40% (10)	8% (2)	28% (7)	24% (6)

Table 6

NML Skill 4: Appropriation

Appropriation	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Appropriation 1: I have incorporated other people's public work to create my own piece of art, like mixing music tracks, making an art collage, or stringing together video clips.	28% (7)	12% (3)	28% (7)	32% (8)
Appropriation 2: I have created something new that incorporates stuff from popular culture, like	28 % (7)	12% (3)	28% (7)	32% (8)

Appropriation	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
writing a short story based on a character in my favourite book, making a fan video, or a music remix				
Appropriation 3: When doing a creative multimedia project, I don't think it is wrong to rake samples from my favourite artists' songs or videos.	24% (6)	32% (8)	24% (6)	20 % (5)
Appropriation 4: If I would make a fan video about my favourite celebrity, artist, or band, they would probably be happy if they found out about it.	0 % (0)	64% (16)	28% (7)	8 % (2)
Appropriation 5: Young people need to learn how to use stuff from popular culture in their own creative ways	24% (6)	32 % (8)	24% (6)	20 % (5)

Table 7

NML Skill 5: Disturbed Cognition

Disturbed Cognition	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Disturbed Cognition Q1: I don't agree that smart people are born smart	32% (8)	16 % (4)	32 % (8)	20% (5)
Disturbed Cognition Q2: My environment plays a big part in how smart I am.	0 % (0)	8 % (2)	52 % (13)	40% (10)
Disturbed Cognition Q3: I have to keep learning from my surroundings in order to become smarter.	% (0)	4 % (16)	0% (5)	6 % (4)
Disturbed Cognition Q4: I am usually pretty good at knowing what to do or whom to ask if I want to find out more about a specific topic.	% (1)	% (2)	2% (13)	6 %(9)
Disturbed Cognition Q5: I find it important to use tools like spell check, a calculator,	% (0)	% (2)	8 % (12)	4 % (11)

Disturbed Cognition	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
encyclopaedia, etc., to help me in my learning or work.				

Table 8

NML Skill 6: Multi-tasking

Multi-tasking	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
Multi-tasking Q1: I manage to do my work successfully while doing other things like listening to music or texting.	40% (10)	0 % (0)	16% (4)	44% (11)
Multi-tasking Q2: I can usually prevent getting distracted and focus on tasks well when other things are happening around me, like people talking, TV, music, internet, etc.	24% (6)	16 % (4)	28% (7)	32% (8)
Multi-tasking Q3: When I work on my computer, I like to have different applications open at the same time.	24% (6)	4 % (1)	52%(13)	28 % (7)
Multi-tasking Q4: My generation is good at multi-tasking, i.e., doing several things at once.	16 % (4)	48% (12)	20%(5)	16 %(4)
Multi-tasking Q5: I don't think anybody should give me a hard time if I feel I can work on several things at once.	8% (2)	48 % (11)	24%(6)	24 % (6)

Table 9

NML Skill 7: Collective Intelligence

Collective Intelligence	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
Collective Intelligence Q1: I enjoy working with others on projects and assignments.	24% (6)	16 % (4)	44% (11)	16% (4)
Collective Intelligence Q2: When I can't solve a problem or find a piece of information by myself, I use the Net or social media to connect with others and find what I am looking for.	0% (0)	0 % (0)	64% (16)	36% (9)

Collective Intelligence	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
Collective Intelligence Q3: I enjoy the collaborative aspect of things like Wikipedia, team games, online fan communities, community message boards, etc	0% (0)	28 % (7)	44% (11)	28 % (7)
Collective Intelligence Q4: I think I can learn a lot from my friends.	4 % (1)	0% (0)	56% (17)	10% (4)
Collective Intelligence Q5: I don't think it's a sign of weakness or stupidity to ask a friend or a colleague for help on work assignments or other problems.	8% (2)	8 % (2)	44% (11)	40 % (10)

Table 10

NML Skill 8: Judgment

Judgment	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
Judgment Q1: I can effectively determine whether or not the information I find online is correct and reliable	20% (5)	4 % (1)	48% (12)	28% (7)
Judgment Q2: When I'm interested in a topic, I gather information from a bunch of different sources (like TV, radio, the Net, etc.) to try to get the full picture.	16% (4)	0 % (0)	56% (14)	28% (7)
Judgment Q3: When I search for something online and I accordingly get thousands of results, I can effectively decide which ones will be the most useful for me.	0% (0)	24 % (6)	40% (10)	36 % (9)
Judgment Q4: I am able to enter the right words in a search engine to find what I am looking for.	0 % (0)	0% (0)	60% (15)	10%(40)
Judgment Q5: I can identify prejudice or bias in media (e.g. racism on certain websites, prejudice against women in song lyrics, etc.	8% (2)	4% (1)	60% (15)	28 % (7)

Table 11

NML Skill 9: Transmedia Navigation

Transmedia Navigation	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
Transmedia Navigation Q1: I follow my favourite shows, actors, musicians, etc., across different platforms and media (TV, magazines, the Net, Facebook, Twitter, etc.).	40% (10)	8% (2)	32 % (8)	20% (5)
Transmedia Navigation Q2: I can imagine the same story being told in different ways, such as through music, acting, writing, drawing, etc.	12% (3)	16 % (4)	32 % (8)	40% (10)
Transmedia Navigation Q3: I often visit the websites (either official or fan-created) f my favourite TV shows, bands, etc.	24% (6)	8 % (2)	32% (8)	36 % (9)
Transmedia Navigation Q4: If I am curious about something I saw on TV, I will check it out online later.	4 % (1)	8% (3)	40% (10)	48%(12)
Transmedia Navigation Q5: I'm happy that I can learn about my favourite things in different ways (on TV, on the Net, on Facebook, etc.)	0 % (0)	4% (0)	56 % (14)	44 % (11)

Table 12

NML Skill 10: Networking

Networking	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
Networking Q1: I think that reading other people's recommendations on sites like Amazon or Yelp is useful in helping me make decisions.	0% (0)	32% (8)	36 % (9)	32% (8)
Networking Q2: I like to share my favourite links or creative work on social media sites like Facebook, YouTube or Twitter.	20% (5)	36% (9)	16 % (4)	28% (7)
Networking Q3: I often share links on Facebook, Twitter, my	56% (14)	8% (2)	20% (5)	16% (4)

Networking	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
blog, etc.				
Networking Q4: When I go online, I like to feel like I am part of a community.	8% (2)	24% (6)	56% (15)	8% (2)
Networking Q5: It is important for me to be able to stay in touch with my friends online too, and not only in real life.	8% (2)	24% (6)	52% (13)	16 % (4)

Table 12

NML Skill 11: Negotiation

Negotiation	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
Negotiation Q1: My experience on the Net and/or in videogaming has made me more understanding of those different from myself.	0% (0)	44% (11)	40% (10)	16% (4)
Negotiation Q2: I think the Net offers a very important opportunity to get to know people from different backgrounds and different places.	0% (0)	0% (0)	52% (13)	48% (12)
Negotiation Q3: I am happy that I can interact online or on Facebook with people from all over the world.	0% (0)	44% (11)	20% (5)	36 % (9)
Negotiation Q4: I have learned something new about another culture from surfing the Net, playing online games, participating in online communities or forums, etc.	0 % (0)	16% (4)	32% (8)	52%(13)
Negotiation Q5: I think that using the Net and/or playing video games makes people more open to other cultures.	0 %(0)	28% (7)	24 % (6)	48 % (12)

Table 13

NML Skill 12: Visualization

Visualization	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
Visualization Q1: I feel I	0% (0)	4% (1)	52 %	44% (11)

understand things better when I can think of them visually.			(13)	
Visualization Q2: When I prepare a project for work or school, I like to use as many images, graphs, diagrams as possible.	8% (2)	32% (8)	44 % (11)	16% (4)
Visualization Q3: I think I am pretty good at understanding information from images, graphs, diagrams, and other visual tools.	0% (0)	8 % (2)	65% (14)	27 % (7)
Visualization Q4: I like the fact that I can see all my friends on my Facebook profile.	8% (2)	12% (3)	60% (15)	20% (5)
Visualization Q5: I find Google Maps and/or Google Erath to be extremely useful tools	0 %(0)	24% (6)	32 % (8)	44 % (11)

4. The difference between the postgraduate students' New Media Literacy Skills and Gender

To crosscheck if there is a significant difference between the postgraduate students' New Media Literacy Skills and Gender requires [inferential] statistical procedures. In so doing, the assumption of normality needs to be checked for many statistical procedures, namely parametric tests because their validity depends on it. Table 14 pinpoints the Tests of Normality carried out to check out if the variables of interest [**Digital Participation and New Media Literacy Skills**] are normally distributed.

Table 14

Tests of Normality [Digital Participation and New Media Literacy Skills]

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
New_Media_Literacy_Skills	.129	25	.200*	.927	25	.073

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Digital_Participation	.224	25	.002	.893	25	.013

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Based on Table 14, the Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality was used to check the normality of data seeing the sample (*N=25)* is less than 50. Based on Shapiro-Wilk's output table one variable of interest [Digital Participation] is not normally distributed. The Significance value of Digital Participation is .013. However, the second variable of interest [New Media Literacy Skills] is normally distributed. The Significance of value of New Media Literacy Skills is .073. In this case, it is preferable to make use of the Mann-Whitney Test.

With reference to Table 15, *N* indicates the number of participants in each group and the total number of participants. The Mean Rank indicates the mean scores within each group. The Sum of ranks indicates the total sum of ranks within each group. If there were no differences between the groups' ratings. i,e. if the null hypothesis were true, we would expect the mean rank and the sum of ranks to be roughly equal across the two groups. We can see from the output table that the two groups do not appear to be equal in their ratings of the **New Media Literacy Skills**. The Mean Rank of Female respondents (11.25) is lower than the male respondents' Mean Rank (16.11). It can be concluded that there is a difference in the Mean Rank of **New Media Literacy Skills**. In order to determine whether the difference in the ratings is significant. the Test Statistics table below must be observed.

Table 15

Mann-Whitney Test

Ranks

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
New_Media_Literacy_Skills	Female	16	11.25	180.00
	Male	9	16.11	145.00
	Total	25		

Table 16

Test Statistics [Mann-Whitney]

Test Statistics[a]

	New_Media_Literacy_Skills
Mann-Whitney U	44.000
Wilcoxon W	180.000
Z	-1.590
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.112
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.121[b]

a. Grouping Variable: Gender

b. Not corrected for ties.

Although we can see by initially examining the mean Ranks that male respondents report a higher mean ranking of New Media Literacy Skills than female respondents, Table 16 [Test Statistics] tells a different story. The probability value is ascertained by examining Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed). A figure of less than .05 is considered to be indicative of significant differences. Relating to the same table, *U=44.000; p=.112*. It can be concluded that there is no significant difference between the ratings of female and male respondents, thus refuting our hypothesis.

5. The Correlation Between the Postgraduate Students' Digital Participation and New Media Literacy Skills

To test this hypothesis, Spearman ranked order correlation, a statistical measure of correlation and strength of the direction of the monotonic relationship between two continuous or ordinal variables was used. Moreover, Spearman's correlation applies to ranks and so provides a measure of a monotonic relationship between two continuous random variables. It is also useful with ordinal data and is robust to outliers (unlike Pearson's correlation). It is the non-parametric alternative of Pearson correlation, and it was used because the study data violated the assumptions of Pearson a) the data was not normally distributed, b) there were outliers, and c) both of the variables are ordinal [Digital Participation and New Media Literacy Skills].

Table 16

Spearman's rho Correlations

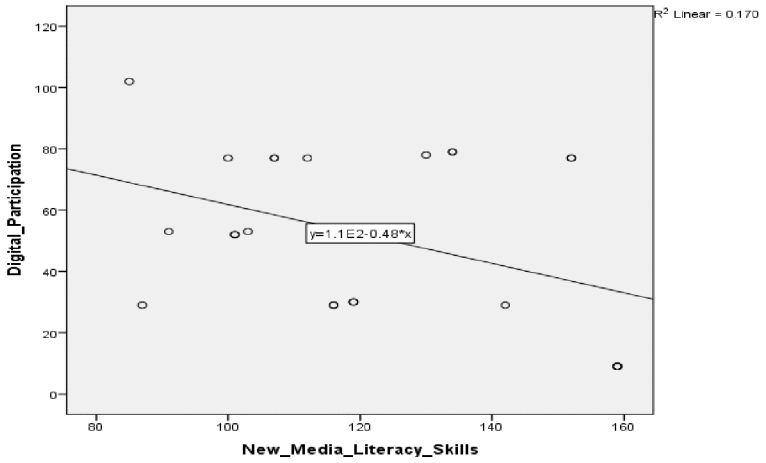
Correlations

			Digital_Participation	New_Media_Literacy_Skills
Spearman's rho	Digital_Participation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.358
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.078
		N	25	25
	New_Media_Literacy_Skills	Correlation Coefficient	-.358	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.078	.
		N	25	25

The Spearman's rho correlation tests statistic =-.358. The negative sign indicates a negative correlation between the two variables of interest [**Digital Participation and New Media Literacy Skills**]. The actual p-value is shown to be .078. By observing the Spearman correlation output matrix, it can be seen that Digital participation is not correlated with New Media Literacy Skills. The results $r_{s=}$ *-.358, N=25, p<.078*. This indicates that while **Digital Participation** increases, however, **New Media Literacy Skills** decrease. A scatterplot (See Figure 4) is used to support this correlation. It can be concluded that there is a negative weak linear pattern between the variables of interest [**Digital Participation and New Media Literacy Skills**].

Figure 4

A Scatterplot as Illustrative Statistic



Based on the scatterplot, one variable [of interest] was monotonically related to the other. As one variable of interest increases, the other variable of interest did not increase. The scatterplot clearly illustrates this monotonic relationship.

Discussion

The current study was designed to investigate possible links between postgraduate students' digital participation and new media literacy skills using a newly developed survey instrument measuring new media literacies (NMLs) following the theoretical framework proposed by (Jenkins, 2006, 2007). It was hypothesized that there was a) a significant difference between the participants' digital participation and new media literacy skills based on gender, and b) a significant relationship between the participants' digital participation and new media literacy skills.

Relating to the first hypothesis, the difference analyses revealed that there was no significant difference between the participants' digital participation and new media literacy skills based on gender. Therefore, it is concluded that the Null Hypothesis is accepted as justified by the non-significance level which is larger than the p-value (.05). In line with the second hypothesis, the score (degree) of students' digital participation is not related to the students' (degree) new media literacy skills. The insignificant correlation disclosed is more likely to be linked to other mediating variables. Therefore, it is concluded that the Null hypothesis is accepted as justified by the non-significance level which is larger than the p-value (.05).

Surprisingly enough, the reported results do not support the work of previous studies in this area (Ait, 2016; Andersen, 2002; Chen et al., 2011; Hobbs, 1999; Hobbs & Frost, 2003; Hobbs & Jensen, 2009; Jenkins, 2007; Jones-Jang et al., 2021;

Koltay, 2011; Lin et al., 2013; Silverblatt, 2013; Wilson et al., 2011; Zhu et al., 2021). The results of this study do not substantiate the long-standing connection between digital participation and media literacy as proved in earlier as well current work. It was hypothesized that the more the participants digitally participate, the more NML skills they use. However, these results do not tie well with previous studies wherein the more the participants digitally participate, the more NML skills they use. A previous study by Phang and Schaefer (2009), titled, "Assessing Singaporean Media Literacy Awareness in the Era of Globalization", found that the ability to participate digitally through creating and disseminating multimedia should strongly correlate with high levels of media literacy. A more recent study by Literat (2014), titled " Measuring New Media Literacies: Towards the Development of a Comprehensive Assessment Tool" asserted that individuals, media users, who consume and produce new media extensively tend to have the highest new media literacy skills. Referring back to the current study results, it is worth bearing in mind that they do not corroborate the ideas and guidelines put forward by leading figures in this field, [new] media information literacy (Bittman et al., 2011; Gans, 2010; Jenkins, 2007; Kahne et al., 2012; Koltay, 2011; Lusk, 2010; Pavlik, 2008; Verčič & Verčič, 2013).

Conclusion

The paper concludes by arguing that media users in the 21st century are exposed to an unprecedentedly large amount of data, known among field experts [such as Renee Hobbs, Judith Rosenbaum, David Buckingham, and William Covington], as information load (infobesity). This study raised many question marks over digital media users' readiness to assess the credibility of information, interpret, and make informed judgments [as users of information and media] in the digital era. The current study asserted that it is getting more and more difficult to verify and double-check the information you find online due to the widening gap between informed digital participation and new media literacy skills in use. This paper avers that the participants, a major category of today's students, do not use their judgment to access, evaluate, and use information effectively. This study underscores that stakeholders are under the obligation to introduce postgraduate students to new media literacy skills. The latter is of the essence to build and sustain active digital participation and informed new media literacy practices in an era wherein the digital media industry has entirely reshaped the media users' world in service of apparent and hidden agendas and discourses. .

Suggestions

Broadly, the results of the study will be of great help for researchers, policymakers, and educators to reconsider the huge potentials of NML skills courses. Specifically, this study urges the main stakeholders, universities, to design new media literacy programmes that sharpen postgraduate students' abilities to face the risks associated with new media [Screen Dependency (Digital heroin), Information Chaos, and Junk Journalism], and pave the way for them to be responsible media content consumers and producers. This [New Media Literacy] is a

panacea to mould active and responsible digital citizens, and future ethical decision-makers.

This humble piece of research attempts to invite new media literacy course designers and experts to team up to create and make already-in-place [new] media courses more meaningful, practical, and enjoyable at the tertiary level. This paper calls upon stakeholders to create more learning opportunities that encourage participation in the digital environment and find ways to overcome a set of setbacks that stand in the way of incorporating media and information programs, namely unequal access to technological devices and the Net, the scarcity of online learning opportunities, and the digital divide. Regarding the literature, if the former obstacles are adequately addressed, university students will gain much insight into how media shape users' perceptions in the digital age.

This study posits that postgraduate students will reap many benefits if they are offered a scope wherein, they can acquire new media literacy skills. The tertiary curriculum can contribute to enhancing graduate and postgraduate university students' potential for participation in digital media. The study emphasises that the acquisition of new media literacy skills can remarkably improve media users' social, cultural, civic and economic participation in everyday life. To recapitulate, the study at hand is a good contribution to the body of knowledge on new media literacy and digital participation in the Moroccan context.

The study put forward three main recommendations: a) seek ways to officially integrate new media literacy [NML] in the curriculum, b) invest more efforts in media literacy initiatives and partnerships, and c) design NML syllabi based on Needs Analysis and UNESCO Guidelines.

This study has two main limitations. On the one hand, the recruiting of participants was a bit biased due to the nature of Intact Sampling]. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that there are shortcomings of using quantitative approaches, designs, and methods (deploying surveys, scales, and tests) to measure subjective skills, media literacy skills.

Regardless, future research could continue to explore and invoke new variables for example Civic Engagement], and new demographics [for instance, socio-economic status, other departments, etc.]. Prospective research is invited to deploy new research approaches and designs (Qualitative & Mixed-method research designs), new research instruments (data collection & analysis. In this regard, Factor Analysis and MANOVA are needed to further investigate the link between the postgraduate students' [particular] new media literacy skills and digital participation in the Moroccan context. Also, prospective research should target new stakeholders (take for example university teachers, administrative staff, and NML experts.

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Appendix I. The Survey Link: https://forms.office.com/r/G5z4PrUtxA

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بخش عظیمی از کاربران رسانه‌های دیجیتال، که به‌عنوان بومی‌های دیجیتال و هزاره‌ها شناخته می‌شوند، به‌طور نامناسبی محتوای رسانه‌ای آنلاین [جدید] را مصرف کرده و تولید می‌کنند که نقض آشکار اخلاق مطالعات رسانه‌ای و دستورالعمل‌های یونسکو است. این برای بسیاری از دانشجویان دانشگاه در بسیاری از کشورها، از جمله مراکش، به یک واقعیت جدید، یک هنجار و بدتر از آن تبدیل شده است. این مطالعه کمی از یک طرح همبستگی استفاده کرد. یک نظرسنجی آنلاین، یک ابزار ارزیابی خودگزارش‌دهی جدید برای سواد رسانه‌ای که توسط لیترات (۲۰۱۴)، بر اساس دوازده مهارت جدید سواد رسانه‌ای توسعه‌یافته توسط جنکینز (۲۰۰۷) توسعه یافته است، برای بررسی میزان مشارکت‌کنندگان مورد استفاده قرار گرفت. مشارکت دیجیتال با استفاده از مهارت‌های جدید سواد رسانه‌ای ارتباط دارد. نمونه (تعداد ۲۵ نفر) شامل دانشجویان کارشناسی ارشد (۲۰۲۰-۲۰۲۲) متعلق به برنامه کارشناسی ارشد، مطالعات زبان کاربردی به میزبانی دانشکده هنر و علوم انسانی، مکنس، مراکش بود. در مقابل، با حجم قابل توجهی از مطالعات قبلی، نتایج کلیدی نشان می‌دهد که یک همبستگی ضعیف منفی بین مشارکت دیجیتالی شرکت‌کنندگان و استفاده از مهارت‌های سواد رسانه‌ای جدید وجود دارد. سطوح بالاتر مهارت‌های سواد رسانه‌ای با درجه بالاتری از مشارکت دیجیتالی در زمینه مطالعه مرتبط نیست. نتایج، مبنایی را برای ذینفعان فراهم می‌کند تا فراخوانی در مورد برتری برای ادغام برنامه‌ها و مداخلات مهارت‌های سواد رسانه‌ای جدید در برنامه‌های درسی مختلف در بخش‌های مختلف در سطح سوم صادر کنند.

واژه‌های کلیدی: رسانه، سواد، اطلاعات‌زدگی، مسمومیت اطلاعاتی، سواد رسانه‌ای جدید.

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