Media Literacy Skills of Seventh Grade Secondary School Students: The Predictive Power of Communication Skills

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Today's education systems aim to equip individuals with versatile, applicable skills rather than focusing solely on specific subject knowledge. By emphasizing skills training, individuals can better adapt to evolving global conditions and contribute to a more dynamic and competitive society through ongoing personal development. Reflecting this approach, many countries, including Türkiye, integrate skills training into their curricula. In the Social Studies Curriculum in Türkiye, communication and media literacy skills are among the skills aimed to be acquired by students in the learning area named 'Individual and Society' in the seventh grade. This study explores the relationship between these two skills. The research aimed to determine whether seventh-grade students' communication skills could predict their media literacy skills. Using a relational screening model, the study employed the "Communication Skills Assessment Scale" and the "Media Literacy Competence Scale" as data collection tools. Data analysis was performed through correlation and regression analyses. The study sample consisted of 416 seventh-grade students from 10 randomly selected secondary schools in Erzincan province, Türkiye, for the 2022-2023 academic year. The findings revealed significant relationships between communication skills and various sub-dimensions of media literacy. Specifically, communication skills were positively correlated with media literacy sub-dimensions and were identified as significant predictors for all aspects of media literacy.

Introduction

With the rapid advancement of technology and the spread of digitalization, media literacy skills have become increasingly important in individuals' daily lives and educational processes. Students use media tools intensively. This situation affects their skills in issues such as access to information, information sharing, and information production. For this reason, it is aimed at providing individuals with media literacy skills through education. In this process, students' ability to evaluate media content accurately and critically may be related to their communication skills. In this context, communication skills may have an important effect on students' understanding, interpretation, and evaluation of media.

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Today, it is aimed to raise individuals who do not receive information directly, but who research, analyze, criticize, interpret, and construct information and maintain this throughout their lives. In addition, individuals need to be more conscious due to the ease of access to information and the difficulty of understanding which information is correct. This situation brings up some literacies that individuals should have. These 21st-century literacy skills include computer, internet, network, web, information, science, and media literacies (Som & Kurt, 2012).

Media literacy, which has an important place among 21st-century skills, has emerged because of the opportunities provided by the media as well as the increasing diversity of the media and the power of this diversity to influence individuals of all ages (Kurt & Kürüm, 2010). However, the media uses techniques that are not easily understood by human beings through various technological tools and perception management. As such, it has become very important for individuals to be media literate (Dedebali et al., 2019). In this context, UNESCO also recognizes media literacy as a skill that should be addressed within the framework of lifelong learning (Altun, 2011a). In addition, media literacy is seen as one of the tools that will serve to achieve the goal of "creating a common European citizenship" (Altun, 2011b).

Media literacy is defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, communicate, and produce various media messages (Aufderheide, 1993). According to Hobbs and Jensen (2009), media literacy skills include active questioning and critical thinking about the messages received in the media. On the other hand, according to Hobbs (2010), the skills that media-literate individuals should possess are accessing, analyzing, evaluating, producing, sharing, and acting-activity.

Education plays an important role in raising awareness of children who are vulnerable to the media (Altun, 2009). Media literacy education is a process that starts in the family and continues in formal education institutions (Altun & Çakmak, 2013). Children, who are more receptive to the media, need to be made aware of the media from the beginning of their school life (Arslan, 2014). For this reason, many countries offer media literacy education under various names. This type of education aims to enable children to analyze the vast amounts of information they receive from media sources such as the internet, newspapers, television, and radio. Through media literacy education, children should also learn to create their own messages and recognize potential threats and risks (Karahisar, 2014).

In media literacy education, the skills of "access, analysis, evaluation and production", which are also included in its definition, are guiding (Altun & Çakmak, 2013). Media literacy aims to raise conscious individuals who read media messages correctly, analyze these messages, and evaluate them by considering the results of this analysis (Kurt & Kürüm, 2010). With media literacy, it is ensured that children are selective when using media tools, can distinguish between reality and fiction, are controlled, can be protected from negative effects, and can make comments (Hasdemir & Demirel, 2012). Media education aims to develop active participation. It enables students to make informed decisions as media consumers and become media producers on their own. Media education develops individuals' creative abilities (Frau-Meigs & Divina, 2006). By developing media literacy skills, students learn to recognize media messages that contain biases and hidden meanings. Media literacy helps students to view media skeptically and develop their critical thinking skills (Benzer, 2020).

There are many factors that affect students' media literacy skills. One of these factors is

communication skills. Communication skills, which are related to literacy, enable listening, understanding the other party by looking from the perspective of others and sending a message to the other person by speaking or nonverbally (Kaya et al., 2019). In addition, communication skills are necessary for people to get along easily, social unity, peace, and success (Çelikkaya et al., 2019). Communication skills can be developed through education. It follows that communication skills are learnable and developable skills (Kutlu et al., 2007). For this reason, communication skills, like media literacy skills, are one of the basic skills that the education system wants students to acquire.

The relationship between communication and media literacy skills

With the rapid development of technology, access to and interaction with media content has become inevitable for children and young people. With the widespread use of digital media and communication tools, communication skills and media literacy have become important. In this process, media literacy and communication skills play an important role for students to interact with media content in a healthy and conscious way. Media literacy is a comprehensive field that includes the ability to understand and analyze media content, think critically, recognize, and interpret misleading information, evaluate the diversity of views presented by the media, and communicate effectively. Communication skills include the ability to communicate effectively and understand and convey information. Communication skills and media literacy skills interact with each other (Norazam, 2022; Tetep, 2019).

The development of information and communication technologies has brought speed and convenience to information access and communication to a different dimension. So much so that new tools are constantly being added to the communication tools that people use to convey their feelings and thoughts to each other. Through these technological tools, communication has transformed from an interpersonal dimension to a mass dimension where everyone is instantly aware of the events happening anywhere in the world (Aslan et al., 2019). Therefore, interpersonal communication is gradually losing its importance and mass communication is gaining great popularity. In addition to mass media such as radio, cinema, television, newspapers, internet technology, and mobile technologies, which have enabled the formation of the new media age, have a very important position in the increase of this popularity. All these new communication technologies are considered part of the media (Kırık, 2017), and as such, these technologies are now commonly defined as media (Aslan et al., 2019). Consequently, it can be said that media is deeply intertwined with the communication process (Kırık, 2017).

While the development of communication technologies provides positive conditions such as today's multiple and cross-border communication environment, rapid information flow, and freedom of communication, it also brings along some problems. Media literacy has emerged as a solution to this issue (Avşar, 2014). Individuals can encounter media messages at any time of the day. The necessity for individuals who encounter media messages intensively to perceive, question, and read these messages correctly brings the concept of media literacy to the forefront (Gömleksiz & Duman, 2013). In this direction, it is possible to raise individuals who can communicate effectively and solve problems by developing media literacy skills (Avşar, 2014). Media literacy skills contribute to the acquisition of communication skills (Görmez, 2017). With media literacy education, individuals will be able to take an active part in the phenomenon of communication by reaching a level of consciousness that can read the media and decipher the language of the media instead of being a passive receiver of media

(Arslan, 2014). Since media is the most powerful transmitter of attitudes, values, and beliefs in contemporary society, media literacy is necessary to understand communication (Cramer, 2015). On the other hand, communication skills are an important component that affects media literacy skills and supports media literacy skills.

Media is the product and tool for developing communication technologies. However, media literacy skills are directly related to language and expression skills, as it is ultimately a "literacy" (Sayın & Göçer, 2016). Communication skills strengthen skills such as understanding and interpreting media messages more effectively, evaluating accurate sources, verifying information, recognizing, and resisting misleading information, and analyzing information from the media. In addition, communication skills contribute to media literacy by developing the ability to understand and convey information, to communicate effectively while critically evaluating media messages, to understand different points of view, and to express one's thoughts accurately and effectively using media tools. For example, if an individual has good communication skills, he/she can evaluate the source of a news story while reading it, question the accuracy of the content, and try to understand different opinions. In addition, communication skills also help to critically analyze information shared on media platforms and recognize manipulative content. In this context, communication skills can be considered important for the development of media literacy skills.

Current work

Media tools such as computer games, the internet, and mobile phone applications have become an important part of children's lives at school and home (Çakmak, 2013). Media has become a means of education, entertainment, and socialization for children. This has also been reflected in children's media usage time and children have started to spend a lot of time in the media (Aslan et al. 2019). However, due to the high amount of unverified information in media sources, students should question the information and look at it with a skeptical eye (Benzer, 2020). It is necessary to interpret the messages in the media through a certain filter and evaluate them critically. In this context, media literacy education is important for raising awareness among individuals about media literacy (Som & Kurt, 2012).

The fact that media literacy is a lifelong skill to be developed starting from an early age makes it necessary to spread the education to be provided from preschool to adult education. At the secondary school level, the continuity of the media literacy education process can be ensured by associating media literacy with the existing curricula of courses such as language courses and social studies (Kubey, 2001). In addition, both in the literature and in other official education circles, it is emphasized that media literacy education should be provided by adding media literacy education to various course contents (Altun & Çakmak, 2013). In this context, the social studies course is one of the courses that try to provide students with media literacy skills. Within the scope of media literacy in the social studies course, the themes of 'media as a source of information, the effects of media, media as a technology and conscious consumer' are included. The course content includes topics such as using the media for purposes such as obtaining information, developing understanding, and especially communicating, collecting, sorting, comparing, evaluating, and interpreting the information obtained from the media (Altun, 2010; Altun & Çakmak, 2013).

In a period when media literacy is so important, communication skills may also be necessary for individuals to better evaluate the media. Understanding the impact of communication skills on media literacy can contribute to individuals' more effective evaluation of media

content. Communication skills can also support media literacy skills. In this context, one of the skills aimed to be acquired by students in the social studies course is communication skills (Mutluer, 2013). Communication skills are included in many elements of the Social Studies Curriculum. Some learning outcomes, skills, objectives, and learning areas are associated with communication skills (Atmaca et al., 2022; Tural & Duman, 2019). In addition, communication skills are one of the most common skills in the textbooks of social studies courses at different grade levels (Altay, 2020; Atmaca et al., 2022; Aydemir, 2017). The communication skills developed in the social studies course are aimed to bring richness and dignity to the life of both the individual and the society (Çelikkaya et al., 2019).

Media literacy has been one of the issues that have been intensively discussed, evaluated, studied, and constituted the agenda of various meetings since it came to the agenda (Hasdemir & Demirel, 2012; Som & Kurt, 2012). Issues such as what the media does, how it encodes the messages it wants to convey to the masses, how it spreads its messages, and how it directs social processes when necessary have been the subject of research (Çepni et al., 2015). Media literacy is an important concept that appears in different environments and forms and has been at the center of various studies and practices, especially communication skills (Hasdemir & Demirel, 2012). In this context, media literacy and communication skills have become the focus of many studies.

When the studies on media literacy and communication skills are examined; İlhan and Aydoğdu (2015) stated that primary school students should gain a critical perspective on the media and its contents. Semiz (2013) concluded that seventh-grade secondary school students' competencies in "critical view of the media" and "positive aspects of the media" were high, while their competencies in "media literacy knowledge" were at a medium level. Gömleksiz and Duman (2013) stated that primary school students realized most of the media literacy course outcomes at a high level. Elma et al. (2009) stated that according to the seventh-grade students who took the media literacy course, media tools did not show the necessary care in protecting values and that the media did not fulfill its function of providing news and information sufficiently. Regarding communication skills, Çelikkaya et al. (2019) found that communication skills are among the skills that eighth-grade students consider necessary to have. Karasu Avcı and Faiz (2020) stated that secondary school students see the social studies course as a course that can provide them with communication skills. Aydemir and Adamaz (2017) found that communication skills are included in the achievements and activities of the social studies course. Bilgin (2015) found that secondary school students have high levels of communication skills. Türkel (2010) found that the communication skill levels of secondary school students were similar in terms of gender. Köksal and Çöğmen (2018) stated that there is a significant and positive relationship between secondary school students' communication skills and critical thinking skills.

Looking at the studies on the relationship between communication skills and media literacy, Görmez (2017) found that students who had taken the media literacy course had some level of communication knowledge and skills. Again, Görmez (2014) found that secondary school eighth-grade students who took the media literacy course better understood the meaning of the concept of communication. Елубаева et al. (2023) stated that media literacy teaching contributed to the development of university students' communication skills. Norazam et al. (2022) stated that communication skills have a significant impact on university students' digital media literacy competencies. Burak and Durak (2021) stated that there was a significant relationship between media literacy and communication skills levels of preservice preschool teachers. In addition, Turgut et al. (2018) found that university students'

communication skills levels were related to their social media use levels and that students' social media use increased their communication skills. Çakmak and Müezzin (2018) revealed a positive relationship between social media use and communication skills in university students.

The framework underpinning this study focuses on the communication and media literacy skills aimed to be acquired by students in the "Individual and Society" learning domain in the seventh grade of the Social Studies Curriculum in Türkiye. Communication skills and media literacy are critical for students to adapt to the requirements of the digital age and communicate effectively in their social lives. Understanding the extent to which communication skills and media literacy are effective in students' exposure to and interaction with media content has been an important issue in the field of education. In this framework, the focus of this study is to understand, explain, and evaluate the interaction between these skills.

The aim of the study is to determine the predictive power of seventh grade secondary school students' communication skills for the sub-dimensions of media literacy and to examine the relationship between these skills. The study focused on the predictive power of seventh grade secondary school students' communication skills on media literacy skills. In this sense, the study can expand the existing literature by providing important information for understanding and developing the relationship between media literacy and communication skills, both at the theoretical and practical level. Understanding the effect of communication skills on media literacy can contribute to the development of strategies and curricula in the field of education. In addition, the results of the study are expected to contribute to educational practice and future research.

Method

Research Model

Since the relationship between seventh-grade students' communication skills and the sub-dimensions of media literacy skills was examined, the relational survey model was used in the study. In survey studies, a situation is explained within the existing conditions and as it is (Karasar, 2017). Survey studies allow the data to be described quantitatively or numerically (Creswell, 2016). In the relational survey model, the relationships, connections, and states of change between two or more variables are examined (Büyüköztürk, et al., 2018; Gürbüz & Şahin, 2018). This model allows for the estimation and interpretation of relationships (Büyüköztürk et al., 2018; Kıncal, 2017). This study examines the relationship between the communication skills of seventh-grade students and the sub-dimensions of media literacy skills, thereby falling within the scope of the relational screening model.

Study Group

The study group comprises 416 seventh-grade students from 10 different secondary schools in the Erzincan province of Türkiye, selected through a random sampling method for the 2022-2023 academic year. While determining the study group, care was taken to diversify the participants to represent various demographic characteristics. The descriptive information about the study group is presented in Table 1.

As illustrated in Table 1, the study group comprised 52.8% female and 41.8% male students. Most of the students' mothers were high school graduates (31.7%), while most of their fathers

were university graduates (38.7%).

Table 1. Descriptive İnformation about the Study Group

Variable		N	%
Gender	Female	242	58,2
	Male	174	41,8
	Total	416	100
Mother's level of education	Primary school	99	23,8
	Secondary School	98	23,6
	High school	132	31,7
	University	87	20,9
	Total	416	100
Father's level of education	Primary school	42	10,1
	Secondary School	66	15,9
	High school	147	35,3
	University	161	38,7
	Total	416	100

Data Collection Tools

The data were collected using the "Communication Skills Assessment Scale" and the "Media Literacy Competency Scale".

Communication Skills Assessment Scale

The scale developed by Korkut (1996) to understand how high school students evaluate their communication skills was adapted for secondary school students by Köksal and Çöğmen (2018). The scale is 5-point Likert-type and consists of 25 items. The scale is scored from never (1) to always (5). The high score obtained from the scale, which does not have reverse items, means that individuals evaluate their communication skills positively. According to the variance analysis results, the scale is unidimensional. The reliability coefficient of the scale was obtained as .76 (p<.001) because of the reliability study conducted with the test-retest method. The alpha value as internal consistency coefficient was found to be .80 (p<.001) (Korkut, 1996). In this study, cronbach's alpha value was found to be .84.

Media Literacy Competency Scale

Developed by Semiz (2013), the 5-point Likert-type scale consists of 29 items and three factors (critical view of media, media literacy knowledge and level of knowledge about the positive aspects of media). There are 11 items in total under the first factor and the factor loadings of these items vary between .34 and .77. The variance explained by this factor was 17.39. The factor loadings of the items gathered under the second factor, which included 9 items in total, ranged between .35 and .61 and the variance explained by this factor was 13.58. Under the third factor, there are nine items with factor loadings ranging between .42 and .69 and the variance explained by this factor is 12.59. The total dimension variance explained by these three factors is 43.56. Cronbach Alpha coefficients were calculated as .86 for the first factor, .79 for the second factor and .78 for the third factor. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach Alpha) for the whole scale was determined as .92. In this study, cronbach alpha values were found to be within acceptable values (.69-.82). The scale items were scored from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5).

Data Collection

Before the study was conducted, the necessary permissions were obtained from Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University Human Research and Educational Sciences Ethics Committee (decision dated 30/05/2023 and numbered 05/08). The communication and media literacy skills that are the subject of the study are aimed to be acquired by students in the Individual and Society learning area of the seventh-grade social studies course. For this reason, the data collection phase started after the relevant learning area was covered. After obtaining the necessary permissions, consent was obtained from the families of the students included in the study. Participants were included in the study voluntarily and with explicit consent upon providing information. The data collection process was organized to allow students to fill out the questionnaires in a comfortable and safe environment. The data were collected face-to-face from students who volunteered to participate in the study. The necessary information and time were given to the students by the researcher for filling out the scales and necessary explanations were made.

Data Analysis

Before analyzing the data in the study, it was examined whether the data were suitable for normal distribution. First, normality distribution was evaluated with the Kolmogorov Smirnov test, and it was determined that the data sets belonging to communication skills and media literacy sub-dimensions showed a normal distribution ($p > .05$). Afterwards, skewness and kurtosis values were examined, and it was seen that these values were between -1 and +1. These values were found as (skewness: -.253; kurtosis: -.273) for the Communication Skills Assessment Scale and (skewness: -.106; kurtosis: -.260) for the Media Literacy Competency Scale. Finally, the histogram graph of the data sets belonging to the scales was drawn and it was determined that a curve close to normal was formed. As a result of the normality analysis, it was determined that the data were suitable for normal distribution. In this context, parametric tests were used. The relationships between communication skills and media literacy sub-dimensions were evaluated with Pearson correlation analysis. The correlation coefficient, which takes a value between -1 and +1, is a measure of the relationship between two variables (Aydoğdu et al., 2021). A correlation coefficient between 0-0.29 indicates a weak relationship; between 0.30-0.64 indicates a moderate relationship; between 0.65-0.84 indicates a strong relationship; between 0.85-1 indicates a very strong relationship (Ural & Kılıç, 2013). Regression analysis was conducted to determine to what extent students' communication skills affect their media literacy levels. Before the regression analysis, outliers were checked, and it was determined that the regression analysis met the assumptions of linearity and normality.

Findings

In this section, correlation, and regression analyses for the prediction of seventh grade secondary school students' communication skills on the sub-dimensions of media literacy skills are presented. The results of Pearson correlation analysis to determine the relationship between students' communication skills and media literacy sub-dimensions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Analysis Results to Determine the Relationship Between Students' Communication Skills and Media Literacy Subdimensions

		Media Critical Overview	Media Information	Positive Aspects of Media
Communication Skills	r	,261**	,385**	,376**
	p	,000	,000	,000
	N	416	416	416

As seen in Table 2, significant relationships were found between communication skills and media literacy sub-dimensions. Accordingly, there was a positive and weak relationship between communication skills and critical view of media (r=,261, p<0,05), a positive and moderate relationship between communication skills and media knowledge (r=,385, p<0,05), and a positive and moderate relationship between communication skills and positive aspects of media (r=,376, p<0,05). The results of the regression analysis to determine the effect of communication skills on media literacy are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of the Regression Analysis to Determine the Effect of Communication Skills on Media Literacy

Sub-dimensions	Variable	B	Standard Error	B	t	p	Value
Media Critical Overview	Constant	22,827	2,732		8,354	,000	**R**=,261 **R²**=,068 **F**=30,346
	Communication Skills	,162	,029	,261	5,509	,000	
Media Information	Constant	11,655	2,362		4,935	,000	**R**=,385 **R²**=,148 **F**=72,184
	Communication Skills	,215	,025	,385	8,496	,000	
Positive Aspects of Media	Constant	13,191	2,145		6,152	,000	**R**=,376 **R²**=,141 **F**=68,138
	Communication Skills	,190	0,23	,376	8,255	,000	

When Table 3 is analyzed, it is seen that communication skills reveal a significant relationship with the sub-dimensions of media literacy. Accordingly, communication skills explain 6.8% of media critical view, 14.8% of media knowledge and 14.1% of media positive aspects. When the significance tests of the regression coefficients are considered, it is seen that communication skills are significant predictors of all sub-dimensions of media literacy (p<0.05). As a result, it can be said that as students' communication skills increase, their media literacy levels will increase.

Conclusion and Discussion

The study aimed to determine the relationship between communication skills and media literacy sub-dimensions and to evaluate the predictive power of communication skills on the sub-dimensions of media literacy. Therefore, the study examined the relationship between communication skills and media literacy skills of seventh grade secondary school students and the predictive power of communication skills on media literacy skills.

In the study, significant relationships were found between communication skills and media literacy sub-dimensions. It was found that communication skills are positively correlated with the sub-dimensions of media literacy. Media literacy, which is about accessing accurate and

reliable information (Aufderheide, 1997; Benzer, 2020), is an important skill that individuals should have due to the widespread and effective use of media today (Hobbs, 2010). Developing this skill is critical to reduce the risk of exposure to misleading or harmful content. Since communication and technology affect almost all our lives, media literacy education contributes to individuals becoming conscious media consumers (Solmaz & Yılmaz, 2012). Communication skills, on the other hand, play a fundamental role in effectively interacting with media content, understanding, interpreting, and critically evaluating media content. These two skills, which are also among the 21st century competencies, complement each other in terms of personal and professional development (Burak & Durak, 2021). In this context, the results of the study emphasize the importance of the relationship between communication skills and media literacy.

In the study, it was observed that there was a positive and weak relationship between communication skills and critical view of media, one of the sub-dimensions of media literacy. This result shows that as communication skills increase, students examine media content from a more critical perspective. Therefore, communication skills are closely related to the receiver's ability to understand, interpret, and critically evaluate the media. Like the results of the current study, Köksal and Çöğmen (2018) also found a positive relationship between the communication skills of seventh and eighth grade secondary school students and their critical thinking skills, one of the thinking skills. In this direction, it can be said that communication skills contribute to the development of critical thinking skills (Han & Kim, 2016). According to Akınoğlu (2003), children's thinking skills can be improved by giving them opportunities to develop communication skills. Individuals with good communication skills should be highly competent in critical media production and consumption. When individuals have enough of these skills, they can criticize various media messages (Tuğtekin & Koç, 2020). All these situations show that students' critical interaction with media content is closely related to the development of their communication skills. This plays an important role in ensuring that students are more consciously protected against misleading and harmful media content.

In the study, a positive and moderate relationship was found between communication skills and media knowledge, one of the sub-dimensions of media literacy. Therefore, it can be said that students with high communication skills have more knowledge about media content. According to Tetep (2019), communication skills are very necessary in today's digital media and low communication skills will cause the problem of information processing skills in the media. Developing communication skills and increasing media knowledge can help individuals understand media content more effectively and interact with it in a more informed way. Communication skills can have a positive impact on the ability to understand and interpret media content. Communication skills can strengthen efforts to understand media content not only superficially, but also the underlying messages and purposes. Communication skills can help to develop the critical thinking ability necessary to examine and analyze media content in more depth. Communication skills allow for a better appreciation of information related to news, articles, advertisements, and other types of media. A good communicator can have the ability to read and understand media content in a more informed way. This can contribute to an increase in media knowledge. On the other hand, media literacy, which provides a conscious reading of the media, is also important in terms of creating awareness to support people to express themselves freely (Arslan, 2014). Such relationships suggest that by focusing on improving communication skills, educators can also help students increase their media literacy.

In the study, a positive and moderate relationship was found between communication skills

and the positive aspects of the media, which is one of the sub-dimensions of media literacy. According to this result, it can be said that students with high communication skills perceive and recognize positive messages in media content better. According to Semiz's (2013) study, secondary school students think that the media has positive aspects. Media includes information flow, education, communication, entertainment, increasing cultural understanding, social awareness, culture sharing and many other positive functions. Media is a critical tool that can fulfill many positive functions in terms of reaching different segments of society, raising awareness on important issues, raising awareness, and sharing information. Media literacy, on the other hand, has objectives that will positively affect individuals such as reading media messages correctly, analyzing these messages, and evaluating the results of this analysis (Kurt & Kürüm, 2010). To read, analyze and evaluate media messages, individuals need to have well-developed communication skills. Good communicators have the potential to better understand the positive contributions of the media and use these positive aspects more effectively. Therefore, individuals with good communication skills can better understand and use the positive aspects of the media.

In the study, it was found that communication skills were significant predictors of all sub-dimensions of media literacy. It was determined that with the increase in communication skills, students evaluate media content more critically, their level of media knowledge increases, and they better recognize the positive aspects of media content. This result revealed the existence of a relationship between students' communication skills and media literacy and the power of communication skills to predict the sub-dimensions of media literacy. Therefore, it can be said that as students' communication skills increase, their media literacy levels will increase. As a matter of fact, the media, which has taken up a lot of space in our lives in recent years, is a communication tool (Çalışır, 2015; Eroğlu, 1996; Köksal & Özdemir, 2013) and one of the purposes of the media is to facilitate communication (Eroğlu, 1996). Therefore, it can be said that communication and media literacy are complementary skills. Like the current study, Norazam (2022), in his study with university students, stated that communication skills have a significant effect on digital media literacy competencies. According to Tetep (2019), communication skills are important variables for students to have media literacy skills. Media literacy is a part of communication skills. In the current study, the result that communication skills are a significant predictor of the sub-dimensions of media literacy reveals the importance of focusing educational processes on the development of these skills. Developing communication skills will help students to interact with media content more consciously.

Recommendations

In secondary school, language, and social studies courses can provide students with knowledge and skills in developing communication skills, evaluating media content critically, being aware of misleading information, and using digital media. The curricula of these courses could include more comprehensive content and strategies for developing media literacy and communication skills. Educational materials can be diversified to improve communication skills and media literacy. It is important to focus on digital media education in the process of developing communication skills and media literacy. Communication and media literacy skills should cover digital media content as well as print media. Students' ability to understand and effectively use different types and platforms of digital media should be developed. Teachers should improve their communication and media literacy skills through various trainings. Teachers should learn to use appropriate strategies to guide students more consciously and critically in their interaction with media content. Schools

should provide opportunities for students to develop their communication and media literacy skills. Media labs, libraries, and digital resources can help students to actively engage with media content and develop themselves in this area. Designing and implementing educational programs to increase students' media literacy by improving their communication skills can be considered. Educational methods and course content created in this direction can help students increase their media literacy by improving their communication skills.

Limitations of the Study

The generalizability of the results may be limited since the data obtained in the study were obtained from only one province's secondary school seventh-grade students. Therefore, the current study may need to be supported by other studies including participants from different regions and age groups. Since the data are based on students' self-reports, the objectivity of the data may be limited. Therefore, different data collection methods can be used in different studies. Since only correlation and regression analyses were performed in the analysis of the data in the study, a definite conclusion about the causal relationship may not be reached. Therefore, concluding that communication skills predict media literacy does not necessarily mean that there is a direct cause-and-effect relationship. A significant relationship between the two variables may require the effect of other independent variables to be considered. Communication skills and media literacy may differ among students and may change over time. Although an instantaneous measurement was made in this study, a longer-term and dynamic perspective may need to be evaluated in terms of process and variability.

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