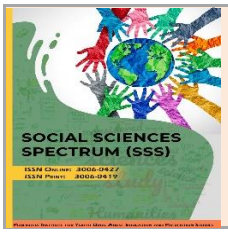

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Correlational Study Between Media Literacy Levels and Problem Solving Skills of Secondary School Teachers

Samreen Rasheed
M. Phil Scholar, Mirpur University of Science and Technology (MUST), Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan
Correspondence: i.samreenrasheed@gmail.com

Malik Zulqarnain Sadiqi
M. Phil Scholar, University of Kotli Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan
Email: zulqarnainsadiqi42@gmail.com

Ujyara Idrees
M. Phil Scholar, University of Kotli Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan
Email: ujyaraidress866@gmail.com

Waqar Ul Hassan Syed
Visiting Faculty, Department of Education, University of Kotli Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan
Email: waqarulh622@gmail.com

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Abstract

The study was conducted to check correlation between media literacy levels and problem solving skills of secondary school teachers**.** In this study, a correlational methodology is utilized in conjunction with a quantitative research strategy. The population of the study consisted of 240 secondary school teachers and 150 teachers were selected as sample by using simple random sampling technique. The data was acquired by the use of two questionnaires. With an internal consistency value of 0.837>0.486 and a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.837. The gathered data was examined using the suitable statistical software, SPSS. It found that there was no significant difference identified of the secondary school teachers in terms of gender. Whereas a significant difference was found in access level according to the gender. With the help of Pearson's correlation, it was found that there was a negative correlation between the lower levels of media literacy and the problem solving skills. Based on the findings of the study it is recommended that teachers may be provided with trainings that are media literacy and problem solving centered during the in-service trainings to enhance the use of technology and media in the 21st century.

Keywords: Media Literacy, Problem Solving Skills, Elective Media Literacy Course, Teachers, Technology and Media.

Introduction

In the current era, rapid technological progress, increasing demand for information, and the convenience of obtaining needed data have rendered information and technology extremely vital to people. An example of this phenomenon is our immediate awareness of global occurrences enabled by technological advancements. Communities looking to advance have acknowledged the significance of information and communication technology and have started to act promptly. In the field of academic research, the concept of 21st century skills have emerged as a comprehensive and inclusive notion. The classifications employed by Davis, et al., (2024) to categorize these talents include: creativity, innovation, critical thinking, information literacy, research and inquiry, problem solving, decision-making, digital citizenship, and media literacy. Media literacy refers to the capability to access, assess, analyze, and produce media in multiple formats. It encompasses grasping how media messages are created, identifying biases and viewpoints, and utilizing media suitably and ethically in personal and professional settings. Media literacy is essential for maneuvering through the intricate media environment of today, where information is plentiful and frequently unedited (Lee & Hong, 2023).

Media literacy includes the abilities and understanding needed to analyze and interact critically with different types of media. This encompasses the capability to comprehend the production methods of media content, identify bias and viewpoint, assess the reliability of information, and generate media messages with accountability. Media literacy seeks to enable individuals to be knowledgeable consumers and proficient creators of media, which is crucial in a digital era defined by fast information dissemination and various media types (Laugregan & Dorr, 2024). Media literacy is described as "the skill to access, analyze, evaluate, produce, and engage with all types of communication," per the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) in the USA. A notable aspect of these criteria, which often underpins media literacy programs, is their focus on the interpretive responsibilities that are specific to each person (Hobbs & Jensen, 2019).

Hobbs and Coiro, (2024) suggest that children are expected to "navigate the risks and opportunities of the online world with diminished levels of institutional backing from reliable information sources." Most scholars in the field advocate for a comprehensive vision of media literacy. The primary aim is for individuals to possibly provide a beneficial impact on their communities and to participate in significant behavioral transformation. Until the close of the 20th century, direct communication among individuals, groups, and institutions served as the main means for cultural exchange and social continuity. Currently, the media has started to influence individuals' lives by changing how they live and the entertainment they partake in. Mihailidis and Zorn (2023) claim that the media has surpassed being merely an influence on our culture and has become a core part of it. By utilizing all of our sensory organs across different mediums (television, computer, internet), the media be it written, visual, or auditory has emerged as the dominant force that shapes communication in society. According to Altun (2019), the media are utilized for a variety of reasons, including the dissemination of information, the provision of entertainment, and the instruction of individuals.

Aufderheide (2019) clarified the concept of media literacy by highlighting the four essential skills: access, analysis, evaluation, and transmission. Access denotes the capability to locate, obtain, and use different types of media content. It requires comprehending how to find and utilize media from various sources efficiently. Locating Sources: Knowing where to source media materials from digital, print, and broadcast channels. Navigating Platforms: Utilizing tools and technologies to reach media, such as search engines and media repositories. Technical Skills: Utilizing tools and applications required for media access. Proficient access abilities are essential for interacting with

media material. In the absence of the capability to identify and access media, additional media literacy activities cannot be conducted (Mihailidis & Cohen, 2019).

Analysis entails investigating and interpreting media content to grasp its significance, framework, and intent. This involves interpreting how media messages are created and what they communicate. Recognizing Methods: Identifying media methods like framing, narrative, and visual rhetoric. Comprehending Messages: Examining material to understand its purpose, target audience, and underlying biases. Situating Information: Embedding media within its wider social, political, and cultural framework. Examination is essential for grasping the intricate methods through which media messages are generated and how they shape perceptions (Leeder, 2022).

Evaluation pertains to determining the trustworthiness, dependability, and significance of media content. This includes assessing the reliability of sources and the correctness of the information. Evaluating Credibility: Analyzing the trustworthiness of media outlets, considering authorship and possible biases. Fact-Verification: Confirming information correctness by cross-checking with reliable sources. Spotting Biases: Acknowledging biases or propaganda methods that influence the neutrality of content. Assessment abilities are crucial for differentiating trustworthy media from unreliable outlets, allowing for informed choices grounded in factual data (Lewandowsky & Cook, 2023).

Creation emphasizes generating media content that is straightforward, impactful, and ethically accountable. It entails utilizing media literacy abilities to produce messages like articles, videos, or social media content. Content Creation: Developing media content that conveys a specific and intended message. Ethical Aspects: Complying with ethical guidelines, such as honoring intellectual property rights and steering clear of false information. Audience Awareness: Customizing content to align with the needs and likes of the intended audience. Creation abilities enable individuals to engage meaningfully in media discussions and guarantee that their messages are conveyed effectively and ethically (Kellner & Share, 2021).

According to Erdem (2021), media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate information from different media forms. Sternberg and Ben-Zur (2024) add that it involves questioning media messages, rejecting false information, and understanding both written and unwritten media content. It is essential to have a good understanding of the media since it is common knowledge that the messages sent by the media are not what they appear to be and that they conceal a variety of hidden meanings. Experts in the area of media literacy examine media literacy not as a classification but instead as a continuous and unchanging process and as a process that continues one's whole life. In other words, media literacy is not a category but rather a continuous and unbroken totality.

Learners are expected to develop key skills such as observation, research, communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, and participation in social and cultural activities. The aim is to help youth and adults become critical users and independent creators of media through proper assessment (Buckingham, 2021). However, in our country, media literacy is only taught as an elective in the later years of primary school, with limited time and scope. This falls short of the lifelong learning approach needed, highlighting the serious importance of the issue (Turner & Johnson, 2023).

Concerning the term "problem," there are several definitions available. According to Mayer (2019), “it is a problem that prevents a person from achieving a desired outcome as there aren't no specific guidelines or routines to resolve or end it”. This is just one definition of the problem. Problem-solving skills are cognitive abilities that enable individuals to identify, analyze, and

resolve issues effectively and efficiently. These skills involve several key processes, including understanding the nature of the problem, generating potential solutions, evaluating alternatives, and implementing the best course of action. Effective problem-solving requires critical thinking, creativity, analytical abilities, and the capacity to make informed decisions based on available information (Sternberg & Ben-Zur, 2024).

The role of media literacy extends beyond the ability to use digital tools effectively; it involves a deep understanding of how media shapes perceptions, conveys information, and influences behavior. This understanding is particularly vital for secondary school teachers, who must equip students with the skills to critically assess media content and engage with information responsibly. As teachers face a rapidly evolving media landscape, their own levels of media literacy are likely to impact their effectiveness in problem-solving and adapting to new challenges in the classroom (Laugregan, 2024).

Hypotheses

H_0= 0: There is a significant relationship between media literacy skills and problem solving skills of secondary school teachers.

H_1: ≠ 0: There is no significant relationship between the media literacy skills and problem solving skills of secondary school teachers.

Methods and Materials

Quantitative method was carried out in order to fulfill the goals of this study. Quantitative research, particularly correlational research, is the type of research study that was used to carry out the research. One type of study that does not include experiments is known as correlational research. In this type of research, the researcher makes use of data acquired from factors that already take place. In this form of research, the variables are not subject to any kind of manipulation. In addition, correlational research is useful for a wide variety of inquiries across the board. In this particular study, the participants consisted of teachers working in secondary schools in Mirpur, AJ&K is the population of the study.

Population of the study were consisted on 281 teachers of secondary level in district Mirpur, AJ&K. In the light of L.R Gay's (2012, page 131) sampling method. One hundred and sixty-five teachers were selected as sample of the study by using simple random sampling technique. The two questionnaires that were being used in the study were adopted according to the need of the study. The problem solving inventory

For the purpose of the investigation, in 1982 Heppner and Pterson made an inventory for problem solving skills to utilize to ascertain the degrees of problem-solving expertise had by the teachers. In general, this scale consists of 35 items on Likert type 6-point scale, its purpose is to assess an individual's impression of their ability to solve problems. Items that were deemed to have items on the scale that were comparable to those that were being scored were not included in the scoring. The researchers that built the inventory for the entire scale discovered that the reliability of the instrument was .90. The second was media literacy skill scale. This scale was established by Erişti and Erdem (2017). It is a 5-point likert type scale that consists of forty-five items that were gathered under four different factors: access, analysis, assessment, and transmission. In this scale, a minimum of 45 points and a maximum of 225 points are both possible. According to the researchers that employed this scale in Turkey to assess the Multidimensional Social Skills (MLSS) of secondary school teachers in Nigde province, the reliability of the instrument was

determined to be scaled (α = 0.916). As the reliability of the scale is greater than .9 therefore, it can be said that the scale is highly reliable in dependability relevant to the investigation.

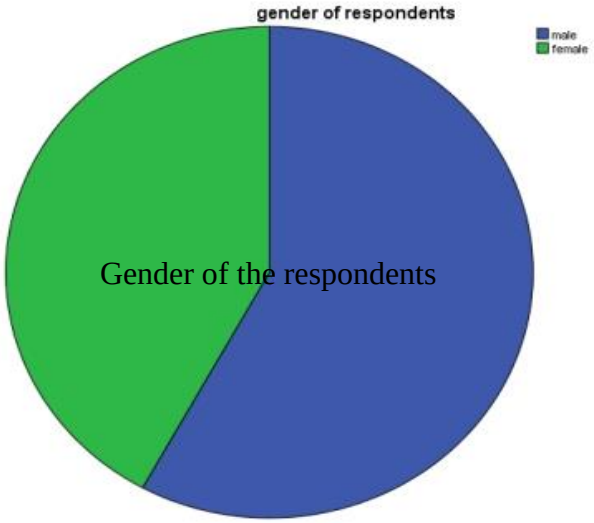
Beginning in March of 2023, testing on a pilot project was being carried out. Participants of the pilot testing were 30, both male and female teachers working in secondary schools in the Mirpur jurisdiction. The selection of these teachers was made on purpose since they have traits with the individuals who were chosen for the current dissertation. It was necessary to collect data in order to evaluate the instrument, as well as to investigate its validity and reliability.

When doing quantitative research, it is essential to make use of validity tests. Content validity of the instruments was assured by discussing it with Dr. Saira Farooq Shah and Dr. Razia Rizvi. In order to determining the reliability of the supplied questionnaire, the researcher utilized SPSS 17.0 to ascertain the reliability of the instrument being used. With an internal consistency value of 0.837>0.486 and a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.837, it is clear that came before it that the items met the criteria for reliability. As a result, the dependability of the questionnaire was evaluated and found to be satisfactory and is was categorized as having excellent reliability. Data were collected through personal visits of relative areas of the study. To evaluate whether or not there is a statistically significant difference in the levels of problem-solving skills and media literacy skills level possessed by secondary school teachers for each gender, Mann Whitney U test was being used.

Data Analysis

Table 01: *Gender of the Respondents*

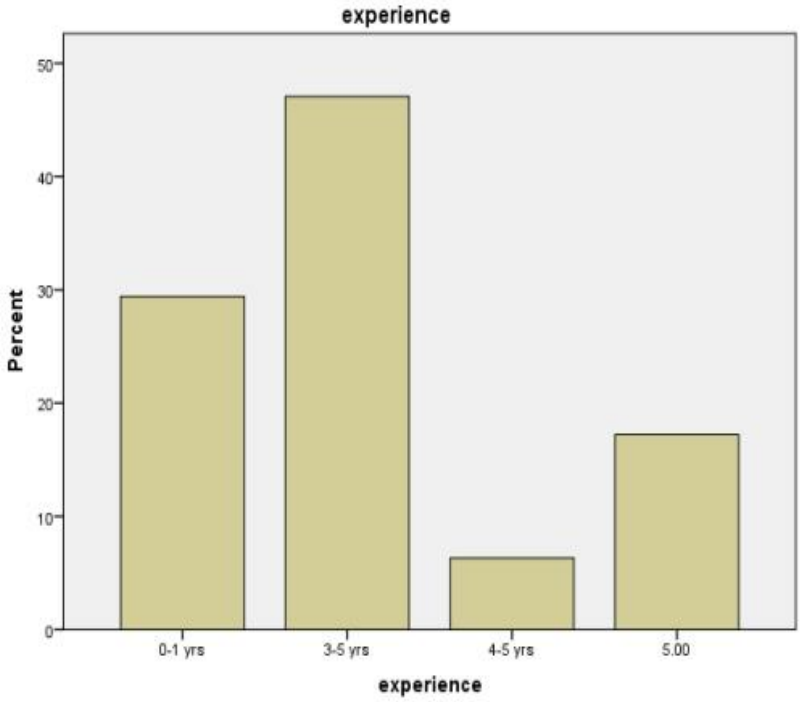
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Male	88	58.0	58.0	58.0
	Female	71	44.0	42.0	100.0
	Total	159	100.0	100.0	



This pie chart shows the results of the gender of 159 respondents are as shown in the table below. A total sum of 88 male participants (58%) and 71 female participants (42%) participated in the survey research. Therefore, it can be seen that the greater participation was made by the male secondary school teachers.

Table 02: *Experience of the Respondents*

Experience		Frequency	Percent
Valid	0-1 years	70	29.4
	2-3 years	112	47.1
	4-5 years	15	6.3
	5+ years	41	17.2
	Grand total	238	100.0



The given table shows that majority of the participants fell within the experience group of 2-3 years at a percentage of 47.1%. This is accompanied by the experience categories that 0-1 years, 4-5 years and 5+ years with percentages of 29.4%, 6.3% and 17.2% respectively.

Table 03: *Media Communication Tool Used by the Respondents*

	Whats app	Instagram	YouTube	Facebook/ twitter	Websites	Newspaper/Magazines	Television/ radio
N Valid	159	159	159	159	159	159	159
Mean	4.6807	3.3992	3.6597	2.6176	3.1176	2.8193	3.6765
Std. Deviation	.62213	1.30736	.63456	1.43231	1.09603	1.37983	1.21539
Sum	1114.00	809.00	871.00	623.00	742.00	671.00	875.00

The table shows that the most frequently used media tool by the secondary school teachers is WhatsApp as it has the highest mean value of 4.6807 among other media tools. The other most used media tool by the respondents are you tube and television with the mean values 3.3993 and

3.6765. Whereas the least used media tools are face book/twitter and magazines/newspapers with the mean value of 2.6176 and 2.8193 respectively.

Table 04: *Descriptive Analysis of Media Literacy Skills of Teachers at Secondary Level*

	N	Range	Sum	Mean	%
Access level	159	13.00	5437.00	22.8445	23%
Analysis level	159	16.00	8894.00	37.3697	37%
Evaluation Level	159	8.00	5294.00	22.2437	22%
Sending level	159	9.00	3613.00	15.1807	15%

When table 04 is examined, it is shown that the media literacy levels of teachers at secondary level are high in terms of total and all sub themes. Highest level among secondary school teachers of media literacy is "analysis level" (37%) and lowest is sending level, demonstrating that teachers in secondary schools understood the messages they came across as well as doubted the veracity of the media.

Table 05: *Descriptive Analysis of Problem Solving Skills of Teachers at Secondary Level*

	N	%
Problem solving skills	159	51.5%

According to the findings of the analysis of Table 4.7.1, the problem-solving abilities of teachers were found to be high (51.5%), although they were relatively near to the level of the medium level. When they are confronted with challenges, it is reasonable to assume that the teachers at secondary level that were the part of the study were able to successfully lay out the solutions for the problems.

Table 5.1: *I am usually able to think up creative and effective alternatives to solve a problem.*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
I am usually able to think up creative and effective alternatives to solve a problem.	159	2.00	5.00	4.4706	.84017
Valid N (listwise)	159				

The mean value (4.4) of statement 1 shows that respondents agreed that they are mostly capable to think up creative and effective ways to solve a problem.

Table 5.2: I have the ability to solve most problems even though initially no solution is immediately apparent.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
I have the ability to solve most problems even though initially no solution is immediately apparent.	159	2.00	5.00	3.8697	1.04531
Valid N (listwise)	159				

The mean value (3.386) of statement 2 shows that respondents agreed that they have the skill to solve most of the problems even though initially no solution is immediately seen.

Table 5.3: *Many problems I face are too complex for me to solve.*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Many problems I face are too complex for me to solve.	159	1.00	5.00	3.8908	1.33306
Valid N (listwise)	159				

The mean value (3.890) of statement 3 shows that respondents agreed that many of the problems they face are very complex for them to solve.

Table 5.4: *I make decisions and I am happy with them later*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
I make decisions and I am happy with them later.	159	1.00	5.00	3.4370	1.43282
Valid N (listwise)	159				

The mean value (3.4370) of statement 4 shows that respondents agreed that they make decisions by themselves and are satisfied and happy with that later.

Table 5.5: *When I make plans to solve a problem, I am mostly sure that I can make them work*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
When I make plans to solve a problem, I am mostly sure that I can make them work.	159	2.00	5.00	4.2101	.87991
Valid N (listwise)	159				

The mean value (4.2101) of statement 5 shows that respondents agreed that when they make plans to solve a problem, they are mostly sure that they can make them work.

Table 5.6: *When given enough time and effort, I believe I can solve most problems that confront me.*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
When given enough time and effort, I believe I can solve most problems that confront me.	159	2.00	5.00	3.8487	1.31296
Valid N (listwise)	159				

The mean value (3.8487) of statement 6 shows that respondents agreed that they when they are given enough time and effort, they believe that they can solve most of the problems that they face.

Table 5.7: *When I face a difficult situation I have the confidence that I can handle problems that may occur.*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
When I face a difficult situation I have the confidence that I can handle problems that may occur.	159	1.00	5.00	3.5336	1.29137
Valid N (listwise)	159				

The mean value (3.5336) of statement 7 shows that respondents agreed that when they face a difficult situation they have the confidence that they can handle problems that may occur.

Table 5.8: *I trust my ability to solve new and difficult problem.*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
I trust my ability to solve new and difficult problem.	159	2.00	5.00	3.3571	1.42409
Valid N (listwise)	159				

The mean value (3.3751) of statement 8 shows that respondents agreed that they have the trust on their ability to solve new and different problems.

Table 5.9: *When confronted with a problem, I am not if I can handle the situation or not.*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
When confronted with a problem, I am not if I can handle the situation or not.	159	4.00	5.00	4.2101	.40823
Valid N (listwise)	159				

The mean value (4.2101) of statement 2 shows that respondents agreed that when they are confronted with a problem, they are not sure if they can handle that problem or not.

Table 5.10: When I become aware of the problem, the very first thing I do is to try finding out what exactly the problem is

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
When I become aware of the problem, the very first thing I do is to try finding out what exactly the problem is.	159	2.00	5.00	4.0546	1.06792
Valid N (listwise)	159				

The mean value (4.0546) of statement 10 shows that respondents agreed that when they become aware of a problem, the very first thing they do is to try finding out what exactly the problem is.

Table 06: *Correlational analysis of media literacy skills and problem solving skills according to the gender of the teachers at secondary level.*

	Gender of the respondents	N	Mean rank value	Sum rank value	U	p (sig.)
Problem solving skills	Female	71	99.57	9558,00	4902.00	.195
	Male	88	110.51	12597,00		
Access level	Female	71	90.84	8720,00	4065.00	.002
	Male	88	117.86	13435,00		
Analysis level	Female	71	92.82	8910,00	4255.00	.005
	Male	88	116.19	13245,00		
Evaluation level	Female	7881	97.05	9316,00	4661.00	.63
	Male		112.63	12839,00		
Sending level	Female	71	99.99	9598,00	4943.00	.225
	Male	88	110.15	12557,00		

The findings table 06 showed that the problem solving skills of the teachers at secondary school level had no significant difference in terms of the gender variable [U=4902., p>0.05] and evaluation level [U=4661, p>0.05] and sending level [U=4943, p>0.05], which are the sub themes of media literacy skills. It is possible to assert that teachers of both genders at secondary school have comparable features at two lower levels of problem-solving abilities and media literacy skills. This is the case in this particular instance. It has been observed that there exists a noteworthy differential in the levels of media literacy according to the gender variable in terms of access level [U=4065, p<0.05] and analysis level [U=4255, p<0.05]. It was discovered via the examination of the mean rank scores that the media literacy abilities of male teachers were higher in the access level and level of analysis as compared to the average of female secondary school teachers. It was the case in both the access and analysis levels. In this particular scenario, it is possible to assert that male teachers in secondary schools have greater accessto media.

Table 07: *Correlational analysis of determining the relationship between problem solving skills and media literacy skills of teachers at secondary level.*

		Problem Solving Inventory	Access level	Analysis level	Evaluation level	Sending Level
Problem Solving Inventory	Pearson Correlation	1	-.181	-.169	-.184	-.163
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.009	.015	.008	.019
	N	159	159	159	159	159
Access level	Pearson correlation	-.181	1	.582	.566	.597
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.009	000	.12	.009	.20
	N	159	159	159	159	159

Analysis level	Pearson correlation	-169	.143	1	.148	.162
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	.002	000	.006	.011
	N	159	159	159	159	159
Evaluation level	Pearson correlations	-.184	.233	.273	1	.251
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.008	.13	.10	000	.006
	N	159	159	159	159	159
Sending level	Pearson correlation	-.163	.244	-.152	.243	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.19	.17	.003	.15	000
	N	159	159	159	159	159

The examination of Table 07 reveals that the relationship between lower levels of media literacy levels and problem solving skills of secondary school teachers are negatively low. This relationship is demonstrated by the fact that the relationship is negative. [r=.180, $p<0.05$, r=.168, $p<0.05$, r=.183, $p<0.05$, r=.162, $p<0.05$] in the statistical analysis.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive insight into the gender distribution, experience levels, media tool usage, media literacy, and problem-solving skills of secondary school teachers. It was found that more male teachers (58%) participated in the survey than female teachers (42%), showing a higher representation of males in the sample. Most respondents had teaching experience between 2–3 years, making up 47.1% of the sample, while fewer participants had experience beyond 4 years, suggesting that many of the teachers in this study were relatively early in their careers. In terms of media tool usage, WhatsApp emerged as the most commonly used platform by secondary school teachers, followed by television and YouTube. On the other hand, platforms like Facebook/Twitter and traditional sources such as newspapers and magazines were among the least used. This indicates a shift towards more interactive and accessible digital tools for both communication and possibly teaching-related tasks.

Media literacy levels among teachers were generally high, with the "analysis level" being the strongest area. This shows that teachers are well-equipped to understand and evaluate the messages they receive through media. However, the "sending level" was the lowest, pointing to a need for improvement in teachers' abilities to create and share content. The findings also showed no significant gender difference in most aspects of media literacy and problem-solving, except that male teachers scored higher in access and analysis levels of media literacy, suggesting that they may be more confident or experienced in using media tools. Regarding problem-solving skills, the overall skill level was high, although some responses showed uncertainty when dealing with complex problems. Most teachers expressed confidence in planning and executing solutions, with a majority believing they could solve problems if given enough time and effort. Nonetheless, some felt that certain problems were too complex, indicating areas where support or further training could help enhance their problem-solving confidence.

Lastly, a weak but significant negative relationship was found between lower levels of media literacy and problem-solving skills. This suggests that while the two skills are related, improving one may not directly lead to a significant improvement in the other. However, the findings still highlight the importance of enhancing both media literacy and problem-solving abilities, as they are key competencies for modern educators navigating digital and classroom challenges.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, several important observations can be drawn regarding the gender distribution, media usage habits, media literacy skills, and problem-solving abilities of secondary school teachers. The survey revealed that male teachers participated in the study in greater numbers than female teachers, accounting for 58% of the total respondents. Most of these participants had between 2 to 3 years of teaching experience, highlighting a relatively early stage in their professional careers.

In terms of media usage, WhatsApp was found to be the most frequently used tool among secondary school teachers, followed by television and YouTube. On the other hand, Facebook/Twitter and print media such as newspapers and magazines were among the least utilized. This shows a clear preference for instant and digital communication platforms over traditional media channels.

The study also found that teachers exhibited a high level of media literacy overall, with the "analysis" skill being the most developed among them. This suggests that secondary school teachers are capable of understanding, interpreting, and questioning media content effectively. Similarly, their problem-solving skills were generally high, indicating that most teachers feel confident in handling complex situations and finding creative and effective solutions to challenges.

Finally, gender did not significantly affect problem-solving skills or certain sub-skills of media literacy such as evaluation and sending abilities. However, male teachers showed slightly higher proficiency in accessing and analyzing media compared to female teachers. A weak negative correlation was observed between lower levels of media literacy and problem-solving skills, suggesting that while the two abilities are somewhat related, improving one may not necessarily lead to significant improvements in the other. These findings underscore the importance of continuous professional development for teachers in both media literacy and problem-solving domains.

Conflict of Interest

The authors showed no conflict of interest.

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