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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEDIA LITERACY, SMOKING MEDIA LITERACY AND SMOKING HABIT*

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to measure how messages pertaining to smoking scenes in movies were perceived by viewers according to media literacy knowledge. A total of 444 people (254 non-smokers and 190 smokers) were surveyed. The participants' media literacy and smoking media literacy levels were measured separately and the findings of how the audience perceives messages directed at smoking scenes in movies were compared according to participants' smoking habits, age, education and gender. The results of the research demonstrate that media literacy knowledge and smoking media literacy knowledge of the participants are not associated. As the level of education increases, the knowledge of media literacy also increases, but the knowledge of smoking media literacy remains unchanged. While smoking media literacy knowledge increases, smoking rates decline. The findings also show that young people have the lowest knowledge of smoking media literacy. The research did not find any significant difference between men and women in terms of smoking media literacy knowledge. On the other hand, the study also showed that the level of smoking media literacy knowledge of the smokers was lower than the non-smokers. According to the findings, it is necessary to increase smoking media literacy knowledge rather than media literacy knowledge in order to understand and interpret the smoking messages and to avoid negative effects of these messages.

INTRODUCTION

Every year, considerable number of people worldwide dies from cigarette-related causes. Turkey is one of the countries with the highest smoking rates in the world. According to the figures of the Ministry of Health of Turkey (2012:2), 27.1% of the population in Turkey use tobacco products. High mortality rates from tobacco consumption are seen in Turkey. The number is around a 100 thousand people every year (2012:1). Smoking-related deaths will continue to increase unless serious measures are taken. Turkey is also one of the countries where young people smoke the most. The average age for starting smoking in Turkey is 17.1, and 58% of smokers have started smoking before the age of 18 (2012: 2).

Reducing the rate of cigarette smoking also depends on the reduction of media messages targeted at audiences by cigarette companies. Therefore, smoking media literacy education is very important to understand and interpret smoking messages as well as to avoid the negative effects of these messages. Despite this fact, education on smoking media literacy is still limited in Turkey. Smoking media literacy education should be one of the most important tools for preventing smoking. Smoking media literacy education should emphasize how messages affect people, and how people perceive those messages without questioning. Smoking media literacy education can help individuals develop better decision-making skills, and people's resistance can be increased to such persuasive messages through smoking media literacy knowledge (Page et al, 2010, p. 455).

The aim of this research was to measure from the point of view of audiences, how messages pertaining to smoking scenes in movies were perceived according to smoking media literacy knowledge. Thus, it was aimed to provide the theoretical conclusions to understand and interpret the smoking messages and to avoid the negative effects of these messages. In this direction, the following research questions were asked within this study:

Research Question 1: *Is there a difference between media literacy knowledge and smoking media literacy knowledge?*
Research Question 2: *Will the participants' media literacy and smoking media literacy knowledges differ according to their education status?*
Research Question 3: *Will the participants' media literacy and smoking media literacy knowledges differ according to their age?*
Research Question 4: *Will the participants' media literacy and smoking media literacy knowledges differ*

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according to their gender?
Research Question 5: *Does smoking status affect smoking media literacy knowledge?*

THE STUDY

In the scope of the research, the study of Primack et al. (2009) and the study of Page et al. (2010) were used for creating a survey questionnaire. A total of 20 questions were used in the questionnaire, which included specific strategies for smoking media literacy knowledge (e.g. most movies show that people smoking make it look more attractive than it really is) and general media literacy knowledge (e.g. when you see a smoking advertisement, it is important to think about what was left out). 5 Likert scale was used for the measurement items (1. I strongly disagree; 5. I strongly agree).

Four questions were asked about the personal information of the participants, including gender, age, education levels and smoking status. Within the scope of the survey, a total of 444 people (190 smokers and 254 non-smokers) were surveyed. 47.3 per cent (210) of the survey participants were women and 52.7 per cent (234) of the survey participants were men. 55.9 per cent (248) of the survey participants had university educated whereas 44.1 per cent (196) of the survey participants did not have university education. There were 26 people in the age group 15-17, 196 people in the age group 18-25, 114 people in the age group 26-45, and 108 people were of an age of 46 or above. For the age group 15-17, the questionnaire was implemented by their parents or other family members. A careful selection of the sample was made in this age group considering that there might be people who hid smoking from their parents or family members. So, only 26 people could be included to the study from this age group.

FINDINGS

In the reliability analysis, the internal consistency of the 20-item scale for media literacy and smoking media literacy resulted in a good level, namely 0.773 according to the Cronbach's Alpha.

Research Question 1: *Is there a difference between media literacy knowledge and smoking media literacy knowledge?*

Participants' media literacy and smoking media literacy knowledges were measured and compared for the purpose of answering the research question 1. The results indicated that smoking media literacy knowledge of the participants was lower than their media literacy knowledge, regardless of their age, gender, education level and smoking status. According to the analyzes done by using SPSS data techniques, the average media literacy score of 444 participants was measured as 4.00 with 0.55 standard deviation over 5.00, as demonstrated in table 1. Whereas, the participants' average smoking media literacy score was 3.49 with a standard deviation of 0.57 over 5.00.

Table 1: *Media Literacy and Smoking Media Literacy Average Scores*

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Smoking Media Literacy	3.4941	444	.57252	.02717
Media Literacy	4.0027	444	.55006	.02610

These results show that participants' smoking media literacy knowledge rates are lower than their media literacy knowledge. According to the T-test result, there was a significant difference between media literacy and smoking media literacy knowledges of the participants ($t(443) = -17.212$, $P = 0.000$).

Research Question 2: *Will the participants' media literacy and smoking media literacy knowledges differ according to their education status?*

The participants' media literacy and smoking media literacy knowledges were measured and compared according to their educational status to answer the research question 2. The average score for media literacy knowledge of the participants who didn't get university education was 3.90 with a standard deviation of 0.53. The average score for smoking media literacy knowledge was found 3.48 with a standard deviation of 0.58. The results are given in table 2. The T-test result showed that the difference between media literacy and smoking media literacy knowledges of the participants who didn't get university education was significant ($t(97) = 6.910$, $P = 0.000$)

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Table 2: *Comparison of Media Literacy and Smoking Media Literacy Knowledges of the Participants Who Didn't Get University Education*

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Smoking Media Literacy	3.4827	196	.57860	.04133
Media Literacy	3.9020	196	.52604	.03757

The average media literacy score of the people who got university education was found 4.08 with a standard deviation of 0.56 over 5.00. The mean score of smoking media literacy was found 3.50 with a standard deviation of 0.57 over 5.00. The results are shown in table 3. According to the T-test result, the difference between media literacy and the smoking media literacy knowledges of the university educated participants was significant (t (247) = -14.411, P = 0.000).

Table 3: *Comparison of Media Literacy and Smoking Media Literacy Knowledges of the Participants Who Got University Education*

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Smoking Media Literacy	3.5032	248	.56867	.03611
Media Literacy	4.0823	248	.55660	.03534

These results demonstrate that smoking media literacy rates of the people (whether they are university educated or not) are significantly lower than media literacy rates.

The university educated participants' smoking media literacy score was higher than the participants who didn't get university education, but the difference between them was not significant. "t(442) = -.376, p<707"

Research Question 3: *Will the participants' media literacy and smoking media literacy knowledges differ according to their age?*

The participants' media literacy and smoking media literacy knowledges were measured and compared by age groups for the purpose of answering the research question 3. The results are shown in table 4.

Table 4: *Comparison of Media Literacy and Smoking Media Literacy Knowledges of the Participants by Age Groups*

Age Group		Smoking Media Literacy	Media Literacy
15-17	Mean	3.3692	3.9308
	N	26	26
	Std. Deviation	.65774	.56197
18-25	Mean	3.4442	4.0513
	N	196	196
	Std. Deviation	.54617	.52732
26-45	Mean	3.5256	3.9491
	N	114	114
	Std. Deviation	.61989	.48697
46 +	Mean	3.6000	3.9641
	N	108	108
	Std. Deviation	.55939	.62545

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Media literacy knowledge of the participants of the age group 15-17 was measured as 3.93 with 56 standard deviations over 5.00, while smoking media literacy knowledge was measured as 3.37 with 0.66 standard deviations. According to the T-test result, there was a significant difference between them (T (25) = -4.088, P = 0.000).

Media literacy knowledge of the participants aged 18 to 25 was measured as 4.05 with .53 standard deviations over 5.00, while smoking media literacy knowledge was measured as 3.44 with .55 standard deviations. According to the T-test result, the difference between them was significant (T (225) = -14.295, P = 0.000).

Media literacy knowledge of the participants aged 26 to 45 was measured as 3.95 with .49 standard deviations over 5.00, while smoking media literacy knowledge was measured as 3.53 with 0.62 standard deviations. The T-test results showed that the difference between them was significant (T (113) = -6,728, P = 0,000).

Media literacy knowledge of the participants aged 46, or over, was measured as 3.96 with .63 standard deviations over 5.00, whereas smoking media literacy knowledge was measured as 3.60 with .56 standard deviations. The T-test results demonstrated a significant difference between them (T (77) = -6,479, P = 0,000).

Research Question 4: *Will the participants' media literacy and smoking media literacy knowledges differ according to their gender?*

Media literacy knowledge of the women participants was measured as 4.01 with .55 standard deviations over 5.00, whereas smoking media literacy knowledge was measured as 3.47 with 0.57 standard deviations. According to the T-test result, there was a significant difference between them (T (209) = -11.816, P = 0.000).

Media literacy knowledge of the men participants was measured as 4.00 with .55 standard deviations over 5.00, while smoking media literacy knowledge was measured as 3.52 with 0.57 standard deviations. The T-test result showed that the difference between them was significant (T (233) = -12.589, P = 0.000).

Table 5: *Comparison of Media Literacy and Smoking Media Literacy Knowledges by Gender*

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Smoking Media Literacy	Women	210	3.4667	.57035	.03936
	Men	234	3.5188	.57456	.03756
Media Literacy	Women	210	4.0105	.55076	.03801
	Men	234	3.9957	.55052	.03599

Although the male participants' smoking media literacy score was higher than that of the female participants, the difference between them wasn’t significant (F = 918, 0.339> 0.05).

Research Question 5: *Does smoking status affect smoking media literacy knowledge?*

For the purpose of answering the research question 5, smoking media literacy knowledge of the participants was measured and compared according to their smoking status. The average smoking media literacy rates of the smokers were 3.45 with a standard deviation of 0.65 over 5.00, whereas the average score of the non-smokers for smoking media literacy knowledge was 3.53 with a standard deviation of 0.51 over 5.00. The results are shown in table 6.

Table 6: Smoking Media Literacy Knowledge According to Smoking Status

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Smokers	3.4426	190	.64613
Non-smokers	3.5327	254	.50850
Total	3.4941	444	.57252

These results show that smoking media literacy rates of the smokers were lower than the non-smokers. However, the difference between them was not significant (F = 2.699, 0,101> 0,05). Smoking media literacy knowledge data for the smoking and non-smoking participants according to different personal characteristics are shown in table 7.

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Table 7: *Comparison of Smoking Media Literacy Knowledge by the Participants' Smoking Status*

	Smoking Literacy Knowledge
University Educated (Smokers)	3.35
University Educated (Non-smokers)	3.59
Non-University Educated (Smokers)	3.50
Non-University Educated (Non-smokers)	3.47
Ages 15-17 (Smokers)	3.20
Ages 15-17 (Non-smokers)	3.48
Ages 18-25 (Smokers)	3.44
Ages 18-25 (Non-smokers)	3.52
Ages 26-45 (Smokers)	3.41
Ages 26-45 (Non-smokers)	3.54
Ages 46 + (Smokers)	3.70
Ages 46 + (Non- smokers)	3.59
Male (Smokers)	3.52
Male (Non-smokers)	3.57
Female (Smokers)	3.25
Female (Non-smokers)	3.56

The lowest smoking media literacy knowledge by age groups was among the participants from the 15-17 age group. This age group's smoking media literacy score was 3.20 with a standard deviation of 0.65 over 5.00.

CONCLUSIONS

General media literacy rate of the participants gave a score above the average (4.00). However, the participants' smoking media literacy knowledge gave a lower score (3.49) compared to media literacy knowledge. Significant differences were found between the participants' smoking media literacy and media literacy scores. These findings show that media literacy knowledge cannot suffice to understand and interpret cigarette images and messages as well as to avoid the negative effects of these messages, and that smoking media literacy knowledge is needed.

Another important finding of this research on smoking media literacy is that there is a relationship between smoking media literacy knowledge and the age groups of participants. Although no significant difference was found between the age groups of the participants with regard to smoking media literacy, however, findings showed that as the average age of participants decreased, the smoking media literacy also decreased. Smoking media literacy knowledge is low especially in the 15-17 age group. Likewise, the people who did not get university education had lower smoking media literacy knowledge than those who got university education according to the findings. These results indicate that smoking media literacy knowledge should be given at an early age. The findings did not demonstrate any significant difference in smoking media literacy knowledge by gender either. Another finding of the study was that the smokers had lower smoking media literacy knowledge than the non-smokers.

It can be deduced that smoking habits can be reduced by showing actual information in movies. Therefore, smoking messages must be revealed by smoking media literacy education. The harms of smoking should be given within the smoking media literacy education. Thus, the meanings of cigarette images and messages should reveal and make people clearly understand that the harmful effects of smoking are on the health because cigarette companies hide these harmful facts of smoking and use many techniques and methods to motivate people for smoking.

Smoking media literacy knowledge can be considered as a preventive factor to understand and comment on smoking images and messages and to avoid the negative effects of these messages. Thus, smoking media literacy knowledge can be considered as an additional effort to prevent smoking habits. Yet, smoking media literacy knowledge studies in Turkey are unfortunately inadequate today.

In this study, smoking media literacy knowledge of the participants was measured by their age, smoking status, education level and gender factor. However, further personal characteristics of the participants should be also examined in future researches in order to obtain more detailed results. Moreover, this research was carried out

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only in one region, and therefore, it does not represent other regions in Turkey. Different additional studies on smoking media literacy should be done as this information may vary from region to region.

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