Media and Information Literacy in the Middle East and North Africa

Current & Future Prospects

A study produced by the Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation- PYALARA

2019

Media and Information Literacy

in the Middle East and North Africa

Current & Future Prospects

Seven specialized research studies 2019

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Published by: Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation –
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Research prepared in cooperation between Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership
and Rights Activation – PYALARA and DW Akademie – Germany
Printed by: Al-Ayyam Press, Printing, Publishing & Distribution Co. Ltd – Ramallah –
Palestine

Table of Contents

Chapter 7 Media and Information Literacy in Morocco- Field Study Dr. Salmane Terq El Allami	
Chapter 8 Challenges and Prospects of MIL in the Region	

Acknowledgements

To our beloved children

To the ministries of education in the Arab world "in a raised voice"

To everyone sowing a seed to sprout a flower

To researchers

Translators

Auditors

Supervisors

Supporters

To everyone who participated in the completion of this work.

Preface

The need to spread Media and Information Literacy (MIL) and empower individuals is an urgent, collective duty for governments, organizations, and individuals in light of the negative role media has played. It has spread messages with contradictory agendas, bullying, hate speech, racism, attempts to strip people of their environments, inflammatory rhetoric, fabricated and misleading news, as well as tracking governments and their agencies, Internet providers, and popular social media sites for economic promotion.

Some media outlets pursue what is known as "cultural exploitation," which leads to the disabling of individuals' creative capacity, especially those who lack the ability to analyze media messages. This turns them into consumers of culture, customs, and behaviors that mass media are trying to broadcast, particularly since the advent and spread of social media.

We have become targets for business advertisers and social media website programmers. They seek to form us through this space as they wish. It is not easy to prevent this, but it is not difficult either if we act vigilantly, intelligently, and are empowered permanently.

International efforts led by many organizations around the world, such as the German Deutsche Welle Akademie (DW) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), motivate governments, civil society organizations, journalists, educational and media institutions to work hard in targeting the new generations.

Studies are the starting point for disseminating MIL. DW Akademie, PYALARA and other organizations have implemented such studies in seven countries in the Middle East and North Africa: Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. These studies serve as a good indicator to evaluate the distribution of MIL among educational institutions, NGOs and media organizations. They are also a practical step in developing recommendations and proposing implementation mechanisms that ensure continuous efforts and promotion of MIL in these countries, not only in the educational institutions and youth centers, but also in the comprehensive targeting of all individuals.

In addition, these studies present one of the most important contemporary topics in the field of education that is Media and Information Literacy, "MIL" that deals directly with children and young people. Keeping this in mind, the present studies seek to achieve the following:

1. Review various experiences in the MIL field and disseminate them regionally and internationally.
2. Encourage governments to adopt approaches that promote MIL in their countries.
3. Promote human rights through the adoption of MIL in different regions.
4. Create a common language, coming to agreements, and planning complementary projects among different countries to develop a MIL concept.
5. Set recommendations that motivate those interested in MIL to implement their own programs.

6. Compare the understanding of MIL contents in different Arab contexts.

MIL is a way to encourage students to produce media content that deals with issues such as poverty, family dissociation, extortion, bullying, and exposure to racist and misleading speech and language: Thereby it is possible to reach children in particular and others in society whose thoughts and attitudes are susceptible to manipulation and deceit. It has become urgent to devote resources to MIL in order to transform students and individuals from passive citizens into active ones who draw attention to their issues.

As for the seven studies of research presented here, they are similar in terms of research methodology and titles. Differences are to be found in the results and recommendations. This serves the purpose of enabling countries and those concerned to draw up more relevant long-term policies and strategies needed for MIL in every country individually. I would like to thank all the researchers, staff and people interviewed for their time and valuable information.

I would like to express my pride in Dr. Sabri Seidam, Palestine's former minister of education, and the department of public and international relations that adopted and integrated nineteen (19) items related to MIL into the national Palestinian curriculum in October 2017, thus setting an example to be followed by other Arab countries in the region.

The Jordanian prime minister, Mr. Omar al-Razzaz, also issued his directive early in 2019 to form a governmental team headed by the minister of state for media and information, Ms. Jumana Ghunaimat, to follow up the MIL project after the government had decided to adopt a national strategic framework related to MIL starting in 2019/2020.

Thus, Palestine and Jordan have taken the lead. The remaining ministries of education in the Arab world can take the same approach. This is not only an important resource for the advancement of MIL in the Arab world, but it is also a decisive and wise response to the global conflict and controversy about who is responsible for reducing the negative aspects of the era of digital globalization. Should governments adopt a series of preventive and regulatory procedures? Or Internet suppliers and websites? Or is it the responsibility of media professionals and journalists? Or those who supervise education?

The Jordanian and Palestinian ministries of education have decided that the primary and most important responsibility is theirs, as they form the cornerstone of the education process. It means that addressing this conflict focuses on investing in the "individual," so that his/her e-choices and the impact on his/her life become a "lifestyle."

Hania Bitar

Director General – PYALARA

Forward

Dear Reader,

The digital revolution has reached almost all parts of the world and is having an impact on politics, the economy and society as a whole. As a result, people require the knowledge and skills to competently use media and new technologies for accessing, evaluating, sharing and generating information. Known as Media and Information Literacy (MIL), this is a prerequisite for citizens to responsibly participate in and shape society.

In an era rife with fake news, propaganda and hate speech, DW Akademie is conducting MIL projects around the world, including the Middle East and North Africa. Initiated by our Palestinian partner PYALARA, this collection of MIL mappings is the first comprehensive approach of its kind in the MENA region.

DW Akademie has supported PYALARA in the planning and implementation of the project. The result is a study that covers current MIL activities, and projects ideas as well as governmental and non-governmental strategies for advancing MIL.

We hope this MIL study offers you new insights and encourages all stakeholders – media makers and users, civil society actors, and policymakers in the MENA region – to jointly promote the advantages and tackle the challenges that the digital revolution has brought with it.

Bonn, June 2019

Markus Haake   Heike Thee
Country Coordinator, DW Akademie   Project Manager, DW Akademie

Introduction

Introduction test:

- *"The health situation of your family and yours would be better if you gave up smoking."*
- *"The health situation of your family and yours wouldn't be better if you kept smoking."*

Please think deeply of the above two sentences and select the behavior that best suits you.

Media and Information Literacy

Analyze…Think…Express…Participate

Technological development in the past three decades has led to a revolution in communications. Marshall McLuhan's quote stating that the world has become a global village does not capture the degree of people's participation, interaction, access to information, and different activities undertaken locally, regionally, and internationally. The world has turned from a global village into a small screen that we carry in our pockets. Losing it would mean losing a great part of our contacts, photos, videos, etc… That screen is called a smartphone. It has become essential not only for people but also for running media affairs.

Amidst the presence of contradicting intellectual ideologies, the media play a role in the development process to guarantee people a better life. Arabs suffer from internal and external challenges that directly affect their lives. They live under the negative practices of many media outlets whose main concern is entertainment and suspense, framing life as reality shows that take the viewer to another world away from his/her own reality that is full of challenges, difficulties, and frustration.

The world has been witness to dramatic events in the past two decades, such as the 9/11 attacks in the United States, the eruption of the second Palestinian Intifida after Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount in the year 2000, the Israeli prime minister's intrusion to the yards of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the toppling of Sadam Hussein's regime in Iraq, and horrible massacres that have been carried out under the pretense of fighting terrorism. Many of these massacres were directly linked to Arabs and Muslims and thus shaped their stereotyped portrayal in the West. US President George W. Bush added a religious aspect to the conflict after the 9/11 attacks. In addition, the Arab Spring that started in Tunisia and spread to Egypt, Libya, and other Middle Eastern countries was accompanied by widespread human rights violations.

Such events illustrate the need for Media and Information Literacy, which is perceived as a deterrent against misinformation and intrusion on the one hand, and against the influence such events have on children and youth's behavior on the other. Civil society organizations, together with media and educational institutions, have a strong interest in conducting awareness-raising activities, promoting analytical and critical thinking skills, and publishing media material to protect people from extremism, hate speech, and cyber-bullying. This is in addition to digital protection.

A deep and lengthy discussion on the issue of individuals' protection is currently taking place worldwide. Debaters are divided into three factions: A group that calls for adopting laws necessary to combat digital crimes; a group that thinks the crucial issue is exerting pressure on Internet

providers and those in charge of social media applications; and the third group which stresses the importance of raising people's awareness so they can protect themselves. That is exactly what MIL seeks to achieve.

How could we systemize social media platforms without violating freedom of expression and democracy?

Mathias Döpfner, the CEO of the Axel Springer media group and President of the Federation of German Newspaper Publishers (BDZV), indicated during his speech at the Global Media Forum held in Bonn in May 2019 that "there are 3 types of disorders: technological, economical, and values and leadership". According to Döpfner, we should not use technological risks as an excuse to justify isolation, since technology has opened up a number of possibilities, and those who own information are those with influence.

We live in a world full of contradictions. For decades we have asked for the right to circulate information as freely as we do today. Yet, information serves as a double-edged sword to those who hold it so that at the same time we suffer from a lack of freedom of expression.

We live in a world where we make deals with countries that violate human rights and which we perceive as terrorist and authoritarian states.

We live in a world where the "democracy" that people used to aspire to and dream of is at stake. Confidence, accountability, and credibility are the basics of democracy and it is journalists who are the main trustworthy source and reference of information. They sacrifice their lives to obtain information and share it with the world to the extent that we used to think of them almost as trusted friends. With the spread of social media, sources of information are so manifold, and the so-called journalists and fabricators of information and news and promoters of suspected agendas are so many, that this trustworthiness is in danger of being lost.

Based on what has been said, MIL has piqued the interest of researchers, educators, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and many governments worldwide. MIL is perceived in some circles as a medical plan, a treatment that could prevent the poison spread by certain media, public sites, and even private social media accounts.

This interest in MIL is not new. A few international organizations have been aware of it for a long time. In 1982, UNESCO stressed the importance of preparing new generations for the increasing power of media messages. This was followed by many studies that tackled issues related to media transformation and development and the relationship between media and audiences.

Thus, the need for promoting a MIL culture amongst school pupils, university students, and the general population emerged to identify suitable behavior amongst the presence of various media sources and a greater intensity of interrelated information. Such a situation increased the need for MIL as an approach for people from different age groups and sectors starting with the family, the education system at all levels, to journalists, specialists, and research centers.

In recent years, social media has turned the world into a virtual one. One can receive news in real-time without having to wait for a news bulletin or media report. Interaction with virtual friends

has become a trend. Media outlets are competing on how fast they can disseminate news. Media users have turned from recipients of information to media producers and this has led to the emergence of what is known as "citizen journalism." Whilst it provides the opportunity for news to be reported from everywhere at all times that traditional media sources cannot do, citizen journalism often lacks credibility and transparency regarding how news has been produced. As Mr. Khairy Qarabsa, a teacher at a school in Ramallah puts it "MIL has become a way of life."

New media and MIL make it easier to reach marginalized people and teach them how to use smartphones to make their voices and issues heard and integrate themselves into their communities through digital interaction. PYALARA has worked with pupils in marginalized and underprivileged schools and areas, making use of the "morning radio" and "wall magazines" as platforms for pupils to interact with their peers and present their issues.

Specialists summarize the main objective of MIL as equipping people with necessary information and skills; enabling them to analyze media content; reinforcing critical thinking; producing and sharing content and protecting media users, especially social media activists from cyber-bullying, fake news, and photos. Eventually, people should learn how to protect their privacy online and their personal safety in the digital world.

Since MIL has an impact on people's knowledge and behavior, it is important to know the role civic, media, and governmental organizations play in numerous areas, for example, how they disseminate MIL and what training they offer to improve people's ability to analyze media content. Another central question is whether audiences are aware of theories of communication used by media outlets to reach the public which determine the form and nature of media messages, including "agendas" and "media frameworks," (Ismail, 2003).

This leads us to methods of propaganda and media disinformation- the most prominent of which is exaggeration- which refers to obscurity, disregard, and selection bias, including the selection of deceptive information when interpreting ratios and public opinion surveys to push certain messages (Tweissi and Al-Hlalat, 2018).

Social media has created new forms of interaction that affect all levels. Caution about such sites has become an urgent necessity. MIL helps users by developing analytical and production capabilities when viewing comments and interacting with publications.

The theory of reliance on media indicates that media institutions form a reciprocal system with other systems (political, economic, etc.) in society. This makes it difficult to understand the role and influence of media without understanding the nature of their interdependence with other systems.

Previously communities depended on media to get information. The sender (i.e. media) controlled the amount, nature, and content of the information. This changed with the advent of social media. Individuals can now interact with and comment on the information they receive and discuss it with others around the globe (Abed Alhameid, 2004).

Barakat (2005) argues that the ability of individuals to log onto the Internet leads to their dependence on tools and techniques without using thinking and analyzing abilities. Al-Mufleh

(2015) stresses this theory and its importance. He takes into consideration that media divide the public into categories based on common needs and attitudes and considers this a characteristic of modern societies that look for the best offers. Thus, these strategies can categorize individuals based on common goals and interests. Al-Sa'di (2016) also confirms this, emphasizing that social networks have helped individuals move from the consumption to the production stage.

In this study conducted by PYALARA in cooperation with Deutsche Welle Akademie, researchers highlight the reality of MIL in seven Arab countries (i.e. Palestine, Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, and Lebanon). This allows for the identification of weaknesses and differences among countries with respect to MIL dissemination, application, and future plans.

Since research on MIL in Arab countries is scarce, this research represents a qualitative step where scholars and followers have access to seven studies in one place. It may also mark the beginning of a new phase characterized by ministries of education, universities, and civil society organizations in the respective countries promoting a MIL culture, teaching it in universities and schools, and passing it on to different target audiences, enabling them to effectively contribute to political and economic developments and to be responsible media producers (Abu Fadel, 2016).

Despite the similarity of research methodologies and tools, communities, and samples in the studies, the results vary from one country to another based on the degree of their (countries) and their institutional involvement in implementing MIL projects and programs. Below, we provide a general overview of each study's focus.

Researcher Slimane Aboulkacem, who is pursuing his doctorate in MIL at Sam Houston University in the United States, and his colleagues Fatiha Chaib, Master's student in communication and sociology at the University of Algeria, and Heike Thee, project manager at Deutsche Welle Akademie, faced difficulties in Algeria when communicating with the relevant ministries. Their study reveals knowledge disparities between teachers and students in the field of MIL, the ministry of education's fear of talking in-depth about strategies and the degree of acceptance of MIL programs at universities, and that Algeria is less aware of the MIL concept compared with the other countries researched. In addition, journalists have not received any training related to MIL. This is the responsibility of decision-makers, especially the ministry of education, which is responsible for adopting programs and projects promoting the dissemination and implementation of the concept in schools.

Journalists interviewed assert that their awareness of MIL comes from fieldwork, not university or educational institutions. They believe that as social media progresses, the relationship between the public and media grows closer. They stress that the government needs to adopt a policy aimed at spreading a MIL culture first, then comes the role of awareness media.

In Morocco, Dr. Salmane Terq El Allami and his colleagues Hajar Bukharwa'a and Othman Belghrissi- state that there is a clear lack of understanding of MIL among teachers and a lack of training for students and teachers in this regard. This is mainly attributed to the ministry of education not being interested in or not prioritizing MIL programs.

As revealed by the interviews, journalists in Morocco are interested in and require MIL training, especially since the widespread use of social media has increased the risk of potential negative media effects. However, despite journalists' interest, media institutions do not train their cadres.

In Tunisia, researcher Ghada Zeidan and her assistants Malek Sghiri and Taieb Henchir found that there is a lack of political will to guide education, although the ministry of education has demanded that the MIL program is implemented. The government's efforts do not extend beyond raising awareness of how to deal with digital media.

Despite the pressure Tunisian media face, a good proportion of journalists stress the importance of consolidating concepts of MIL, especially in the academic context, to exchange experiences, to reach an advanced stage in the field, and to break free from the authority of media producers.

Zeidan was also responsible for the study in Lebanon, noting that lack of technical equipment presents the greatest obstacle to the implementation of MIL and that there is a need to disseminate MIL in marginalized areas. On a more positive note, MIL is part of the curriculum at a number of schools. Moreover, there is a two-year training program aimed at qualifying teachers who are not aware of MIL concepts.

The *Youth Circles* foundation in Lebanon has implemented a MIL project as an extracurricular activity in schools. Similarly, The *Permanent Peace Movement* has implemented a project aimed at training young trainers and at strengthening teachers' MIL skills, including critical thinking, content analysis, hate speech, incitement to violence, peacebuilding, and nonviolence. A number of other institutions have focused on aspects such as child and youth online protection, digital security, and hate speech.

The Lebanese media views MIL as a need. The study shows that media professionals do not consider social media a threat to their profession. Older journalists argue that the dissemination of MIL is not their responsibility, while younger journalists believe the opposite. They, for example, raise the importance of interaction between the public and the media. Noteworthy here is the effort of journalists to raise awareness of MIL in Palestinian refugee camps.

In Egypt, the study conducted by Mohamed Ghamrawi shows universities' high level of interest in MIL. They work on disseminating MIL concepts using a separate curriculum, which contributes to teaching the basics of MIL. The government's role, in turn, is limited to training programs for educational media. However, there are directions to the inclusion of MIL in the curriculum.

The role of civil society organizations in Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco is similar. They are generally less aware of MIL and put less effort into its dissemination than other Arab countries. Training offered by civil society organizations in Egypt focus, for example, on the use of the Internet and on the verification of news, photos, and videos. Organizations in Tunisia and Morocco focus on spreading a culture of peace, non-violence, and confronting intolerance.

Media professionals in Egypt state that they do not receive training on MIL and that they consider social media a threat. The lack of credible sites online emphasizes the need for MIL to counter, for example, hate speech, cyber-bullying, and suspicious messages. They believe that the disadvantages of new media may lead to a revival of traditional media.

In Jordan and Palestine, Dr. Mahmoud Fatafta and Diya Shreitikh's study shows a general interest in MIL topics. They point to the existence of effective partnerships between the ministries of education and relevant civil society institutions and to serious efforts by civil society organizations and official institutions in Jordan and Palestine aimed at strengthening what PYALARA and others have started. Notably, media colleges are willing to offer MIL courses.

As for civil society organizations in Palestine, some of them work directly on the dissemination of MIL concepts with structured and permanent interventions. Such actions include, for example, the conceptualization of the MIL concept and training on MIL-related issues. PYALARA is one of the leading organizations working on the modern concept of MIL. It began its work in this field in 1998 by conducting media activities and workshops in more than 50 schools in Gaza and the West Bank, including Jerusalem. This led up to the launch of another MIL project in 2014.

Beyond PYALARA, other institutions involved in education and media and interested in and working on MIL elements include Tamer Institute, "Creativity of Teachers," Abdul Mohsen Al-Qattan, Birzeit, Jerusalem and Hebron University, Women Media and Development "TAM," Palestine TV and 24 FM Radio, The Palestinian News Agency (WAFA), Ma'an News Agency, Watan TV, Radio Ajyal, and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida newspaper. The Tamer Institute, for example, works on media literacy. The Arab American University offers a university subject on MIL in cooperation with PYALARA and DW Akademie. In addition, the journalists' syndicate is willing to cooperate in this field.

In Jordan, civil society organizations play a major role in disseminating the MIL concept and include it in their activities. There are institutions that have been working in this field for more than three years, giving priority to pupils in their interventions through school radios, analyzing media content, and enhancing the production of media content dealing with the domestic issues of the communities under study.

In general, the focus in Jordan is on university students. The Jordanian Media Institute (JMI), however, works on several levels of society, cooperating with both schools and universities, including Al al-Bayt University, which covers MIL in several of its courses and recently decided to integrate MIL in its curriculum starting in 2019.

Regarding Jordanian media institutions, the research shows that their role is modest in spreading a MIL culture. Many media institutions are concerned about citizen journalism, emphasizing the need to study its negative effects. During the interviews, calls for adopting MIL within the professional values of journalists emerged.

In the Palestinian context, media cadres are trained to keep up with the development of media and to maintain high standards of professionalism in dealing with information and its production. Children and youth are targeted by media organizations that consider the young generation to be most vulnerable to media messages.

Journalists do not play any clear role in raising awareness of MIL concepts. When something is done in this regard, it is only the efforts of specific parties. However, the journalists interviewed are highly committed and motivated, noting the need for MIL training.

In 2016, PYALARA issued the MIL training manual "Media and Information Literacy Guide for Teachers" in cooperation with the ministry of education. Two years later, the JMI issued a manual, consisting of multiple parts, each named after the theme it covered. It should be noted that there is a difference between the two manuals. The Palestinian guide is more interactive, combining practical and theoretical frameworks, while the Jordanian guide is characterized by the size and sequence of information, containing topics the Palestinian manual does not include as it was issued later.

Regarding the curriculum, Dr. Sabri Seidam, former minister of education in Palestine, has pushed MIL significantly. This is apparent in every single department of the ministry, including the curriculum department which integrated 19 MIL items in the grade 5 to 12 curriculum. In doing so, Palestine became the first Arab country to officially integrate MIL concepts into its curricula.

Abu Jamous (2017) says, "Everyone knows that our children are more experienced than we are in the digital field, so we have to provide them and their teachers with a guide to raise their awareness on media." In addition to what has been said, PYALARA has cooperated with the ministry of education, conducting training with, for example, the ministry's media and public relations staff and PYALARA's staff.

Hania Bitar & Helmi Abu Atwan

PYALARA

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The Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation- PYALARA

Established in 1999 by a group of Palestinian young professionals, the Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation (PYALARA) is a youth-oriented organization that seeks to empower young female and male Palestinians aged 13 to 25 in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza. The issue of youth rights, participation, social entrepreneurship, and inclusion in the decision-making processes at the local and national levels is at the core of PYALARA's work. We aim to activate and enhance the capacity of young Palestinians especially in peripheral and marginalized areas to serve as agents of social and political change inside their communities and society at large.

Since its establishment, PYALARA has been working at both the community and national levels, and in recent years has expanded its work at the regional level including Jordan and Egypt. PYALARA develops its programs based on a public/community achievement model which views children and youth as having the insights, capability, and talent needed to solve their problems and that of their communities and to contribute to the development of Palestine. Our approach focuses on practical work and community engagement techniques, equipping children and youth with the necessary skills and tools to diagnose issues and work together to affect political change. Our methodology is based on capacity building, community initiatives, local and national advocacy campaigns, including offering channels for youth to debate with Palestinian officials and decision-makers, using media whether visual, social or print as a means of awareness-raising and lobby and advocacy. We were one of the first youth organizations in Palestine to pilot and develop a model of youth-produced newspaper and television programming, as well as a forum for youth journalists.

Our programs, therefore, support children and youth to rebuild their resilience through activating their role in society to improve their living conditions and grant them independent media forums through which they can interact, express their issues and advocate for their rights. We believe that by fully engaging children and young people, we can both bring about immediate change in the targeted communities as well create a better future for children and young people in Palestine, thus contributing in the longer-term towards ending the occupation and creating stepping stones for democratic nation-building.

Our organization is governed by a nine-person Board of Directors that provides overall guidance and oversight. The members of the Board of Directors are elected once every three years by the General Assembly, the highest governing body at PYALARA in charge of deciding PYALARA's policies. In turn, the General Assembly is composed of 38 members qualified to monitor PYALARA's technical, administrative, and financial performance. PYALARA has 30 employees in its West Bank headquarters and Gaza field office.

Our Mission

PYALARA protects and promotes children and young Palestinians' rights as stipulated in national and international conventions and combat all sorts of ill practices against Palestinian children and

youth, including gender inequality, through capacity building, advocacy campaigns, and policy change.

Strategic objectives

- Develop civic engagement and participation skills in young Palestinians to affect social, political, and economic changes within their own communities.
- Contribute to enabling youth to articulate, lobby, and advocate for their issues and rights, instigate policy level changes, and hold duty-bearers accountable.
- Enhance media literacy of children and institutionalize media education in targeted schools.
- Position PYALARA for organizational growth and stronger impact.

About DW Akademie

DW Akademie is Germany's leading organization in international media development and the development of media. The largest part of the academy's operations is funded by the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development.

The academy operates in approximately 50 countries worldwide (Europe, Africa, South America, Central Asia, and the Middle East/North Africa).

DW Akademie always strives during its operations to respect the cultural identity of its partners and works closely with them to develop the details of their joint projects. It is of the essence for DW Akademie that the process should be innovative, renewable, interactive, and born out of practical reality. The Academy considers its operation a success when its partners can themselves implement the changes and reformations that they want.

As such, the academy supports and cooperates with its partners on the implementation of projects in many fields, including media literacy. This field has grown in importance over the last few years due to the development, widespread nature, and impact of digital media on our lives. The ability to understand the different kinds of media such as TV, broadcast, and digital media, in addition to newspapers, magazines, books, billboards, video games, and music has become imperative in the 21st century.

To create a "media culture," we must bolster the ability of youth to access and analyze the various media and to reflect on its impact and the production of its content. Only media-cultured youth can decode the encryption that covers the compound messages that we receive daily from a variety of media, critically respond to hate speech and fake news, and express themselves and their causes by producing media content.

Media-cultured youth and adults create, produce, and innovatively share media content. They develop critical thinking skills, use social media to support change in their communities, and know how to strike a balance between their use of media and its adoption as a tool of social interaction.

Research methodology in brief

This research is a result of cumulative work, aiming to keep pace with the development of MIL in seven of our Arab countries in the eastern Mediterranean and North Africa.

Types of research methodology

The researchers relied on both quantitative and qualitative approaches throughout their work.

Type of study

There are several types of studies such as experimental or theoretical research, comparative studies, and others. They are part of descriptive studies and are considered the most suitable for analyzing and describing the research's theme. The extent of knowledge on MIL was studied in Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Palestine, Jordan, and Lebanon.

Study population:

The study population consists of a random sample of school pupils and university students aged between 14 and 29 years. In addition, government officials and decision-makers, representatives of educational, academic, and media institutions, and civil society organizations were interviewed.

Sample of the study:

Intentional and random samples were drawn in each country consisting of:

- 40 male and female school pupils aged 12 to 17, attending public and private schools, distributed into four focus groups (random sample)
- 40 male and female university students aged between 18 and 29, distributed into four focus groups (random sample)
- Representatives of relevant civil society organizations (intentional sample)
- Journalists and media institutions (intentional sample)
- Representatives of the ministries of education (intentional sample)

Sources of data collection

In order to achieve the objectives of the study and to answer its questions, two sources of data collection were used:

Secondary sources: Researchers worked on the literature review through relevant Arab and foreign references, previous research papers and studies on MIL, and research on various Internet sites.

Primary sources including:

- Questionnaires: They were used to collect primary data and included three main points on MIL: awareness and perception; assess the role of the educational institution; and practice and participation in the media and its contents. Twenty-four questions emerged from these three points. The Likert criterion was used.
- Focus groups: For both school and university students; for more focused information, this tool complements the collection of questionnaire information.
- Interviews: With officials from civil society organizations, ministries of education, and media professionals.

Likert scale

As part of the data analysis, researchers relied on Likert (1-3 Scale). The percentages and scores indicated in the research are calculated based on the following table:

Score	Average	Percentage
Low	1.0-1.66	33%-55%
Average	1.67-2.33	56%-78%
High	2.34-3	79%-100%

Chapter 1:

Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in Jordan

Situation and Prospects

Researchers:

Dr. Mahmoud Fatafta

Mr. Diya Shreitikh

Dr. Mahmoud Fatafta

Dr. Mahmoud Fatafta holds a Ph.D. in International Relations from Al-Manar University in Tunisia. He has been working in the fields of media and research for 20 years. He teaches several courses in journalism, political science, and critical thinking in many Palestinian colleges and universities. Dr. Fatafta is the founder of the "Researchers without Borders" group in Palestine, as well as the "Thinking and Scientific Research Forum". He has published 20 books, in addition to eight books in print, and published more than 30 studies on journalism, international relations, Israeli and Islamic affairs, and development. He has participated in many academic and political conferences inside and outside Palestine.

Diya' Eldin Shretekh:

Diya' Eldin Shretekh holds a postgraduate degree in sustainable development, institution-building and human resource development from Al-Quds University and a bachelor's degree in management and leadership from Al-Quds Open University.

Mr. Shretekh is currently an independent researcher in the field of quantitative and qualitative research, in addition to his experience in scientific research methods and statistical analysis

based on the (SPSS) program, and has a research paper on "Characteristics of Social Capital in the Palestinian Countryside" which is expected to be published in the Arab Future magazine. Mr. Shretekh is a community activist and a member of the General Assembly of the Mazraa Qablieh Club, and a board member of the Mazraa Qablieh Association for Disabled Rehabilitation.

Introduction

The world is witnessing several challenges in the domain of information technology, communication, and media that include but are not limited to access to Internet (infrastructure) and the high cost of internet connection. These challenges have increased the influence of media messages on the way people interact, make decisions, and on their life in general. The production and dissemination of information have an impact on teaching and learning, on social, economic, and political participation, on domestic peace, social integration, and quality of life.

Experts in education and communication agree that overcoming the negative impact of media cannot be achieved through traditional laws and censorship but rather through knowledge and media and communication competence.

Enhancing people's awareness and understanding of media, and their ability to actively participate in public life cannot be achieved without MIL. MIL enables people to use media critically and thus restricts the negative impact media may have on people and society at large.

Given the rapid development and variety of mass media, people are increasingly aware of the importance of MIL. MIL can protect people from the negative influence of media by enhancing their awareness, resilience, critical thinking, and analysis skills and by increasing their media knowledge. Moreover, it enables them to deal with positive media messages. This, in turn, enhances their knowledge of human rights and democracy and helps them face racism and discrimination.

Due to the scarcity of literature on MIL in Jordan and given the importance of MIL, we found it of great importance to conduct a study that discusses and deals with a number of issues related to MIL in Jordan, enabling people to understand its content and tools.

Study methodology and tools

Methodology is the main tool that researchers use to achieve the principal objectives of a study, to define the study's measures, and obtain the required data to analyze and interpret.

In order to fulfill the study's objective and answer its questions, the researchers relied on the descriptive methodology that explains the study's theme, help in data analysis and interpreting the relationship between the study's variables. The researchers relied on two sources of data collection: Firstly, they used secondary sources, such as books, studies, and the Internet. Secondly, the researchers used primary sources, including 1) a survey composed of three sections (Section 1: Knowledge and Awareness; Section 2: The Role of Educational Institutions and Section 3: Participation in Media Content); 2) focus groups with school and university students; and 3) interviews with decision-makers, representatives of civil society organizations, academic and media institutions (see annex 1).

Study population

The study's population is comprised of school pupils and university students between the ages of 14-30. A random sample of 40 male and female school and university students were formed respectively. The sample was divided into two groups based on whether or not students had previously been involved in MIL. In addition, another group (an intentional sample) is comprised of decision-makers and representatives of civil society organizations, academic and media institutions.

Study Results

The study's results are as follows:

- Social media and TV are the most viewed outlets by school pupils and university students. 55% of school pupils use social media and 33% watch TV. Social media usage increases amongst university students to 70% and watching TV drops to 25%.
- The results indicate that TV is the primary source of political news for students followed by websites. While the number of TV viewers decreases, the number of social media users increases. The Arab Index report conducted by Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies notes that "the increase in the number of Internet followers is a significant one and predicts an increase in dependency on the Internet in the next few years" (Arab Index: 2018).

These results are in line with the book "Principles of MIL in Jordan" which indicates that "the primary activity for the majority of Jordanian youth is linked to a large extent with media and the Internet. Young Jordanians are exposed to the content and information of such outlets that leave their impact on how we view ourselves, view society and the way we interact with it" (Principles of MIL, 2017).

- According to the results, social and entertainment are the most popular genres among school pupils (27.5%). 32.5% and 25% of university students prefer social topics and entertainment respectively. The researchers believe that this has to do with the respondents' age, their interests, and availability of media outlets, namely TV and social media, which makes it easier for pupils to have access to such topics. Students generally have little interest in politics.
- The results show that the score for the presence of MIL at Jordanian schools is rated on average 72%. Section 1, "Awareness and analysis" scored above average and section 3 "Participation" scored below average. This indicates that the concept of MIL in schools is still in its early stages. This is in line with the study prepared by Ms. Bushra Arabiat which states that "MIL in Jordanian schools is still in its early stages with the absence of curricula and trained teachers which is perceived as a challenge for the Ministry of Education". However, this contradicts Shudaifat's study which argues that "the level of MIL inside private schools in Jordan is high" (Shudaifat, 2012).
- As for university students, the overall score for the presence of MIL at Jordanian universities is rated average with 77% in section 1, "Awareness and analysis", scored high and section 3, "Participation" scored average. This indicates that the MIL situation at Jordanian universities is better than that in schools, especially in Section 1, "Awareness and analysis".

Section 1: Awareness and analysis

This section has scored average with 69%. This implies that pupils have some awareness of and ability to analyze media content. 81% of pupils indicated that they search for credible information and 79% of them indicated that they claim to differentiate between true and fake news (see annex 2).

The results for university students indicate that they are aware of MIL and that they can analyze, criticize, and differentiate between true and fake news. 85% of respondents indicated that they can differentiate between true and fake news, 88% verify information by searching for more than one media source. 93% of respondents indicated that they are highly influenced by positive media. This is an indication that they resort to the right media outlets (see annex 3).

University students are fully aware of hate speech, incitement, extremism, discrimination and bullying, and they know how to protect themselves. This result is a good indicator of the positive impact MIL activities have on university students.

Section 2: Role of schools in MIL

This section sheds light on the role schools and teachers play in advancing MIL. 83% of respondents indicated that pupils are asked to do research on the Internet. 78% of pupils indicated that "the teachers discussed media inside the classroom". The study also confirmed that pupils are guided towards websites that are useful to them and media content is discussed inside the classroom (see annex 4).

The researchers note that MIL is based on several pillars that include teachers, the school, pupils, curricula, family, and education and family in general. Each party/pillar has its role in developing MIL at schools. The researchers believe that this is a cumulative process and each party has a specific task that complements the tasks of the others.

Section 3: Participation and digital interaction

Even though this section scored average, the indicators of the subsections indicate positive tendencies. 88% of the respondents noted that "they express their views on certain topics inside the classroom". 86% of them indicated that "they discuss what they view in media with their classmates". These subsections are related to expressing one's views.

The subsections related to actions that require certain skills and techniques scored average, such as "I participate in the morning radio" with 86%, "I listen carefully to the morning radio" with 64%, and "Have you ever participated in the wall magazine?" with 63%. These results indicate that pupils' abilities to produce media content and messages are limited. Professionals who are able to enhance pupils' MIL skills and support students to become producers rather than mere consumers are needed.

The researchers attribute these results to limited financial and technical resources at schools, limited budgets, and the high cost of media programs. Moreover, MIL is generally perceived as part of the daily routine. This, in turn, restricts innovation and keeps pupils and teachers from discussing issues particularly relevant to the school and society in general.

46% of pupils indicate that it is not safe to share personal content, e.g., photos, on social media. Pupils fear that their privacy will be violated and that they may become victims of blackmail or the like (see annex 5).

As far as results related to university students are concerned, they were similar to that of school pupils. University students are cautious of what is published on social media and warn people of fake news, i.e., 82% responded yes to "When I receive fake news I warn people about it".

The results indicate that university students do not publish anything that concerns their society on social media. This is obvious in their response to questions such as "Have you ever used media for lobby and advocacy?" (57%) and "Do you monitor events and phenomena in your neighborhood, and do you publish it?" (56%). The researchers attribute these results to the restrictions imposed on traditional and digital media in the country. 78% of students indicate that the government exerts censorship on certain groups on social media.

83% of the respondents use smartphones and social media to produce media content, to document and disseminate information, and to interact with their family members and friends. On the other hand, 57% of students use media for lobbying and advocacy, monitoring and publishing events that take place in their neighborhood. 66% of university students believe that censorship on digital media restricts freedom of expression and its objectivity (see annex 6).

As far as a difference in demographic variables for school pupils are concerned, the results indicate that there are differences based on the age group in the overall average and in the second section "The role of the school in MIL" for the age group 16-18 years. This implies that the older the pupils are, the more they acquire knowledge and experience to deal with media, the more aware they are of its content and messages. The school cares more about older pupils by involving them in the morning radio and in MIL training.

The researchers attribute the differences to the availability of new equipment with the older age group and censorship in the family that restricts younger pupils' usage of smartphones.

The results stipulate that there are no real differences in the interviewees' responses that are attributed to variables such as sex, training, media outlets most viewed, media content that gained the highest score, and elements of MIL.

As far as differences related to university students are concerned, the results show that there are real differences in favor of those reading political and scientific topics. This indicates that political and scientific topics help students to develop the concept of MIL and its principles as well as to develop analytical and critical skills through their experiences when they follow such topics directly or indirectly. They are better off than others who do not follow such topics. Results stipulate that

there are no real differences in relation to sex, training, media outlets most viewed, media content that gained the highest score, and elements of MIL.

Results of Focus Groups

- The results indicate that the most viewed media outlets are digital media and TV. Facebook is leading the way. It is easy to use, has the largest number of users, and is available to students.
- Students prefer to obtain credible news and information from official Jordanian TV. Facebook and digital media outlets lack credibility and transparency, and they promote rumors and fake news unlike traditional media outlets, i.e., newspapers are characterized as credible because they verify information. Despite the fact that students are aware that traditional media are more credible, they prefer to use digital media since they prefer photos and videos over reading.
- Students indicated that they can differentiate between credible and fake news by verifying their sources, their credibility, and verifying the person who publishes the news.
- When asked about the definition of MIL, the responses received from the group that has not received any previous MIL training were vague and far from the right definition. This contrasts with the responses received from the group that has had MIL training.
- The researchers noticed that participation at school was limited and topics that were discussed on the morning radio are also limited. The morning radio fails to attract pupils' attention and interest. Social issues and issues related to the school are not tackled on the morning radio, which in turn restricts media education. The results are in line with the results of another study which indicates that the efficiency of media education from the teachers' point of view is average on the different educational, personal and social levels (Jreisat, 2011).

Results of Interviews

Ministry of Education

The Jordanian Ministry of Education believes that MIL has been improving over the last two years and the ministry's strategic plans include a separate section on MIL. Mr. Khaled Muharib, head of general education at the ministry, says: "The ministry strategic plan for 2018-2020 which builds on the human resources national strategy includes a section on MIL, […] efforts related to MIL in Jordan started during the academic year 2017-2018 whereby a number of manuals and frameworks have been produced."

Mr. Muharib noted that the National Commission for Education, Culture & Science cooperated with the Arab Women Media Center in 2013 to integrate MIL into the educational curricula through empowering teachers and secondary school pupils to gather, analyze, and produce information, noting that "The project targeted 40 pupils both males and females between the age of 16-17 selected from four schools in northern, central, and southern Jordan."

Muharib indicated that the project was implemented in two phases: The first phase centered around training teachers, while the other centered around providing pupils with practical training

in journalistic writing, discussion techniques, searching the web, developing websites, and verifying and disseminating information in digital media. The project's output showed a positive impact on targeted pupils who expressed a high degree of tolerance and openness during the training on debating.

Muharib confirmed that the ministry has partnerships with concerned ministries and institutions working on MIL, especially the Higher Council for Media, the Jordan Media Institute, and other civil society organizations.

Muharib indicated that during the preparation of daily lesson schedules, the ministry ensured an extracurricular lesson was included that aims to form media committees including MIL ones. According to him, the educational curricula in its current structure encourages MIL especially in Arabic, Islamic, and national studies lessons. The curricula concentrate on training pupils and providing them with the necessary competencies, knowledge, and skills. Such competencies help in producing qualitative MIL media productions such as writing news, dealing with the news in a clear and objective manner, communication skills, media procedures, creativity, etc.

Academic Institutions

Jordan Media Institute

Dr. Basim Tweissi, Dean of Jordan Media Institute, sheds light on the emergence and development of MIL. He indicated that the interest in MIL goes back to the second half of the twentieth century when western organizations introduced what is known as "screen culture" and how to integrate movies and TV into the work of educational institutions. The international world realized the importance of joint efforts and exchanged their experience with MIL from the very beginning.

He added that between 2003 and 2005, the Prague statement followed by the Alexandria statement stressed the importance of information literacy as a basic right and the need to acquire lifelong learning skills. In 2007, Paris Agenda 12 was characterized by its comprehensive vision regarding MIL and its applicability on national, regional, and international levels. He indicated that in 2012, the Moscow Declaration was announced with the support of UNESCO to take place in 40 countries. It stressed the importance of integrating MIL on the national level in educational, cultural, media, and information policies.

Dr. Tweissi noted that the second European MIL forum held in Latvia in June 2016 stressed the role MIL plays in supporting sustainable development, which requires a media scene characterized by freedom of expression, freedom of the press, the right to access information, and respect for individual privacy.

He noted that MIL efforts in the Arab world go back to the nineties, the majority of which were unofficial and non-academic initiatives launched by CSOs. He added that UNESCO has categorized the degree to which MIL is spread into three stages: Countries with no MIL presence where the concept is neither clear nor known; countries where the concept clearly exists but is

not known to people; and countries where official organizations adopted MIL and CSOs work actively on the concept.

As far as the spread of MIL in Arab countries is concerned Dr. Tweissi noted that it can be divided into two groups: countries where MIL does not exist, and another group where MIL has spread and is supported by activities. This is the case in Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Morocco, although it has not been adopted by official organizations and has not been integrated within the education and academic sectors.

He noted that MIL's situation in Jordan is making progress and will have a bright future as heads of CSOs and different stakeholders take an interest in it.

Dr. Tweissi noted that the institute has been cooperating with UNESCO since 2014, resulting in a number of activities that include:

- Establishing a media credibility monitor, AKEED, which is the first of its type in the Arab world.
- Implementing a two-phase project to introduce MIL at schools by forming pupil's clubs and by developing MIL curricula for schools and universities respectively.
- Developing a strategic MIL frame in Jordan. This is a general document that the government has adopted to be integrated into the strategic plan for 2018-2020.
- Cooperating with the National Center for Curricula in an attempt to integrate concepts of MIL in a number of textbooks, including social studies textbooks.

Al al-Bayt University

Dr. Reem al-Zoubi, a MIL instructor at Al al-Bayt University, admits that MIL and its applications have been developing slowly at academic institutions in Jordan due to cultural, financial, technical, and administrative hindrances, in addition to the recency of MIL experience.

She explained that the interest in MIL in Jordan started via media platforms that aimed to enhance people's knowledge of their rights and how to interact with mass and digital media. She noted that Al al-Bayt University is the only university in Jordan that teaches a special MIL course as a cultural lesson.

She added that Husein Ibn Talal University expressed interest in such a concept by establishing student clubs.

Dr. Al-Zoubi stressed the need to promote such a concept and integrate it in different schools and universities and within various sectors of society.

Yarmouk university

Dr. Khalaf al-Tahat, Deputy Dean of the mass media college at Yarmouk University, noted that the situation of MIL in Jordan is acceptable but that it requires more attention and should be disseminated within societal and academic institutions.

He stressed the importance of MIL, which can be used as a tool to create a generation equipped with the information and knowledge necessary to understand and analyze news and differentiate between true and fake news.

He added that his college pays a lot of attention to MIL through training sessions that aim to provide trainees with skills of objectivity, neutrality, pluralism, balance, verification, and documentation, all of which should work towards forming a public opinion based on real and actual sources. He added that the mass media college implements ongoing capacity building sessions on MIL issues, including digital safety, bullying, criminal law, and training sessions on traditional and digital media.

Dr. Tahat believes that those teaching MIL or those who provide training on the concept of MIL and its applications should pay attention to the four media theories which are social responsibility, free press, inclusiveness, and development of media theory.

Dr. Tahat explained that the college does not have an independent course on MIL: "The different courses we teach inside the college are related to MIL. Many courses, especially those that deal with ethics, legislation, and media law, are related to the concept of MIL. There is a course taught at the college called 'media culture' which is related to MIL to a great extent."

He stressed the importance of creating interaction and complementation amongst the different concerned parties to promote MIL, rooting it inside Jordanian educational and societal organizations. In turn, these will leave a positive impact on pupils and people in general.

Civil society organizations

Civil society organizations (CSOs) play an essential and vital role in developed and developing societies. CSOs are the most significant parties that have direct and positive contact with MIL and its principles as they can create real participation and interaction between beneficiaries and serve as a medium between society and the government.

The need for MIL increases in exceptional situations and the increased number of TV and radio stations that operate without control by an authority. Such a situation requires adopting the necessary rules, mechanisms, and methods to deal with the huge media content that targets children and youth, to protect moral and value systems, as well as the cultural heritage of Arab society. If the issue is left ignored, the new generation will be the victim of negative influences amidst the spread of racialism, extremism, and hate speech.

CSOs are able to promote and disseminate MIL to reduce risks and the negative impact of media messages. The feedback we receive from CSOs' representatives will provide us with an overview of the situation of MIL in Jordan and the role they play in disseminating and promoting MIL alongside raising people's awareness, especially that of children, youth, and women.

Family and Child Protection Society

Mr. Kathem Kfery, Director of the Family and Child Protection Society in Irbid, indicates that MIL has recently spread in Jordan. It is undergoing rapid development based on its importance to the different sectors of society and academic organizations.

He indicated that the Family and Child Protection Society was amongst the first organizations to adopt the concept of MIL and has been implementing several projects and activities for over three years. The primary target group according to Mr. Kfery are schools. Pupils are involved in training sessions that aim to enhance their ability to understand and analyze media content, promoting the advantages of digital media, and reducing their negative impact. This is in addition to enhancing their capacity on how to discuss important topics on the morning radio.

Mr. Kfery indicated that on the one hand, his organization cooperates with a number of official and civil society organizations in Jordan to activate the MIL role. On the other hand, it strives to achieve complementarity by adopting a clear and unified strategic plan on the kingdom's level to enrich the cognitive field with what is new. He believes that extracurricular activities help to sustain MIL along with creating a generation with positive thinking and critical skills. In spite of his efforts to promote MIL inside schools and universities, Mr. Kfery believes that directed and specialized activities would lead to better results and sustainability.

Mr. Kfery stresses the need to follow up the negative use of social media that threatens domestic peace as a result of incitement and hate speech.

Karakeb

Mr. Ashraf Qablawei is the director of Karakeb. This organization aims to empower and raise awareness of Jordanian youth through art and theatre. Mr. Qablawei noted that the training session he was involved in on the concepts and applications of MIL in Jordanian society has encouraged his interest in the new field and desire to integrate MIL into his artistic work.

He noted that employees of the organizations try to promote the concept of MIL through theatre and digital radio that targets young people and links MIL to media ethics.

Mr. Qablawei confirms that MIL transforms the individual from being inactive and marginalized to becoming an active member of society, aware of media content and its messages, constructive criticism, and ability to differentiate between true and fake news. At the same time, he warns of the agenda of mass media, especially digital media, in disseminating hate speech and incitement, encouraging sectarianism, and threatening domestic peace. He asks for training for non-media persons on principles of MIL and its applications based on the fact that all people are exposed to media messages.

Alia for Hope Society

Ms. Khitam Abu Msameh, director of Alia for Hope Society in Irbid, noted that despite the fact that her organization hasn't implemented any MIL initiatives, she will pay more attention to the issue

in the future. She considers that the Jordanian reality in particular and the Arab situation in general are in need of media that participates in development and unity, far from sectarianism and regionalism.

She stressed the need for modern media, namely digital media, to take into consideration professional ethics when dealing with news since fake news and fabricated rumors may create a state of chaos inside society that could threaten its future.

According to Ms. Abu Msameh, the situation of Jordanian women should be taken into consideration when teaching MIL. Women are the ones who raise children and educate them. If they are not aware of the concepts of MIL and its ethics, they would not be able to graduate a generation that is able to convey its messages and do its work in the best way possible.

Media organizations

The results indicate that media institutions have not paid enough attention to the concept of MIL, which can fulfill the requirements of the century and lead to cultural and technological openness. The MIL concept is still vague to representatives of media organizations to the extent that they confuse MIL and educational media.

Despite the dispersed MIL initiatives and activities implemented by such organizations, those behind such organizations realize the importance of MIL in strengthening career ethics and developing a societal and media environment that can create a well-informed generation aware of what is going on around it and in the world in general.

The following is an account of the interviews conducted with media professionals and those behind media organizations:

Roya Academy

Mr. Ramzi Al-Karami, head of the training unit at Roya Academy for Media, states that the goal of Roya academy is to provide Roya TV station as well as society with qualified and experienced journalists and media professionals. This should help meet the shortage of media training by providing training that is based on a complementary, pioneering, and multi-dimensional approach.

He states that those involved in the training have a solid educational background but lack practical experience. Moreover, many traditional journalists are not able to cope with the rapid development of digital media. He notes that the academy and the Crown Prince Foundation are currently working on an initiative called "Document" to raise awareness of citizen journalism, how to spread information in the right way, and how to verify rumors.

Al-Karmi adds that Deutsche Welle Akademie has conducted a training session for Roya Academy staff on digital media and fake news.

Rai newspaper

Mohammad Gdeasat, head of Rai newspaper office in Irbid, stressed the need to promote the concept of MIL as a result of the strong control of digital media which has, in his opinion, become reality due to technological developments and the information revolution that the world is witnessing. He continues: "We can't separate ourselves from the world. We should benefit from such a technology for the best interest of our country and its people."

He indicated that dealing with social media is still limited due to an absence of ethical discipline that could regulate media "chaos". According to him, Arab states are interested in adopting the necessary measures to regulate, frame, organize, and regulate media space through effective laws and measures.

Gdeasat admits that the failure in facing challenges imposed by digital media is not in the public's best interest. Overcoming challenges can be achieved through clever planning. He says, "When we talk about MIL, we are talking about a fruitful future for people. This requires integrating MIL in the educational curricula at schools and universities so that the coming generation can deal with digital media consciously."

Afaq Media organization

Mr. Fadi Haddad, photographer at the Afaq Media organization, indicates that the most important goal of media is consolidating the nation's identity and promoting media messages. According to him, media is a mission, not a mere career, so the journalist has to verify information and news before publishing it. He stresses the importance of taking into consideration ethical measures of media content and messages. This would promote a sense of belonging, develop media awareness, and a respect for privacy.

Jordan Radio

Mr. Fadel Muarik, director of the programs unit at Jordan Radio, raised two issues: Firstly, Jordan lacks radio stations specialized in MIL, and secondly, Jordan doesn't have specialists who are able to present educational programs. He notes that programs broadcasted on official and private radio stations in Jordan are neither educational nor do they raise awareness. They are service programs. He emphasized the need to activate the concept of school TV and radio stations to discuss educational and media topics in a modern manner.

Mr. Muarik noted that there are a few official initiatives on MIL that include "Your Interactive Forum" and "Your Right to Know". They aim to provide people with the necessary skills to distinguish between true and fake news. He stated that radio staff is not involved in MIL training, but the radio station hosts guests who talk about rumors, fake news, and digital security.

Mr. Muarik calls on the Ministry of Education in Jordan to instruct radio and TV stations to allocate a program for MIL.

Mr. Imad Sayda, program producer and presenter at Jordan Radio, indicates that he has heard of MIL, its role and application that help verify news and information, and develop analytical and critical skills. He expresses his interest to get involved in MIL training sessions.

AKEED

Mr. Osama Rawajfeh, the chief editor of Jordanian Media Credibility Monitor-AKEED, indicates that AKEED monitors rumors and news on the kingdom level. He says, "We don't produce content, but rather we monitor it and when we come across any violation, we report on it based on set measures."

He notes that the AKEED website helped in providing a large number of students and journalists with the tools and skills necessary to promote future MIL programs. He added that the website has managed to create a culture of awareness that would lead to greater accountability, right of access to information, and content analysis that would improve media standards. He stressed the importance of good school practices.

He added that 70% of the world's rumors are disseminated through social media and 30% are distributed through traditional media. He warned about the transfer of rumors from social media outlets to traditional media bearing in mind that 15% of rumors are disseminated in such a manner. He says that by reviewing and developing the right of access to information law, rumors will be halved in Jordan.

Amman Radio

Mr. Hasan Hjazi, the presenter of a morning program at Amman Radio, stresses the importance of obtaining news from official sources. He emphasizes the importance of conducting MIL training sessions to reduce the spread of fake news. Hjazi states that he has not been involved in any MIL training, but he hosts guests and specialists who discuss related issues.

He calls for the need to pay attention to the morning radio at schools which is part of pupils' life. According to him, the ministry should make use of the morning radio to promote MIL training and to integrate MIL ethics into the morning radio. This would inspire pupils to think outside of the box.

Mr. Ali Matar, a media and cultural activist, concentrates on individual or "citizen" media. Such media is spread in Jordan but not regulated so that ethics and media professionalism can be violated. He warns about the intensity of rumors and fake news in Jordan, a situation that leads to the mistrust of media and journalists on the one hand, and to increasing tension in Jordanian society on the other.

Mr. Matar notes that MIL programs help to improve reading skills, widening one's horizons, encouraging critical thinking, developing a curious mentality, encouraging the acceptance of others, freedom of expression, and respect for human rights.

He called on schools that have been involved in MIL projects to share their experience with other schools. They could also play a role in developing the MIL project along with informing people of its existence to get their encouragement and support.

Obstacles that hinder the promotion of MIL
- Scarcity of financial resources needed to purchase the necessary electronics to promote MIL.
- Limited skills and knowledge of teachers and pupils, keeping them from using modern technologies to develop and promote MIL.
- MIL is highly affected by customs and habits that may hinder developing and promoting MIL.
- Lack of qualified experts who can teach MIL at educational institutions.
- Mixing the concept of MIL with the concept of educational media.

Recommendations
- Institutionalize and develop MIL, followed by unifying the concept at the national level.
- Develop a national MIL strategy and policy supported by political will.
- Exchange experiences and enhance networks with different stakeholders.
- Develop training and education manuals for schools, universities, and civil society.
- Organize an annual conference for Arabs to evaluate MIL and work towards developing it.
- Establish an institute or a center specialized in MIL that focuses on conducting research and adopting initiatives and training programs from international experiences.
- Launch a campaign to encourage parents and CSOs to support MIL efforts in schools.
- Establish a digital platform under the supervision of the Ministry of Education or other concerned parties to teach MIL, assist supervisors to assess and evaluate the impact of the program, identify topics for discussion to enhance pupils' knowledge, and raise their awareness of hindrances caused by incitement, fanaticism, and hate speech.

Conclusion
Given rapid changes in the complexity and development of technology and science, especially in media and communication, there is an urgent need to understand the nature of media changes that affect all aspects of our life. Jordanians, like all people around the world, are exposed to various media messages with different shapes and tools. He/she is vulnerable to numerous media messages that carry harmful content, such as extremism, violence, incitement, and hate speech, and that portray stereotypical images of, for example, gender and race.

There is a need to counter these dangers and risks by empowering the recipient to understand media content and its structure. He/she must know how to identify the media outlet that best suits her/his and his/her family, amidst audiences' willingness to believe what is presented in traditional and digital media.

Based on the above, there is a need to raise the recipient's awareness of principles of media education, its techniques and ethics to protect him/her from negative media influences and provide him/her with media knowledge that enables him/her to understand, critique, analyze, evaluate, and produce media messages.

Promoting the concept of MIL is a citizen right. Proactive measures should be taken, and MIL should be considered as an empowering project, not a mere protective tool. This requires adopting national policies and strategies in participation with different organizations, whether educational, media, academic or civil society organizations, to create a well-informed generation able to actively participate in society and play a role in its development.

Annexes
Annex 1

(list of interviews)

#	Name	Title	Location of organization
1	Mr. Khaked Muharib	Head of general education at the Ministry of Education and Higher education	Amman
2	Dr. Basim Tweissi	Dean Jordan Media Institute	Amman
3	Dr. Reem Al-Zoubi	MIL instructor at Al-al Bayt university	Ramtha
4	Dr. Khalaf Al-Tahat	Deputy dean of Mass Media college at Yarmouk university	Irbid
5	Mr. Kathem Kfery	Director of family and child protection society	Irbid
6	Mr. Ashraf Qablawei	Director of Karakeb organization	Irbid
7	Ms. Khitam Abu Msameh	Director of Alia for Hope society	Irbid
8	Mr. Ramzi Al-Karami	Head of the training unit at Roya academy for media	Amman
9	Mohammad Gdeasat	Head of Rai newspaper office in Irbid	Irbid
10	Mr. Fadi Haddad	Photographer at Afaq Media organization	Irbid
11	Mr. Ali Matar	Media and cultural activist	Irbid
12	Mr. Fadel Muarik	Director of programs unit at Jordan Radio	Amman
13	Mr. Imad Sayda	Program producer and presenter	Amman
14	Mr. Osama Rawajfeh	Chief editor of Jordanian Media Credibility Monitor- AKEED	Amman
15	Mr. Hasan Hjazi	Presenter of morning program at Amman Radio	Amman

Annex 2

Average, standard deviation, and percentages for the first section "Awareness and analysis" at schools

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
When I come across a piece of information or a news item, I test its credibility by thorough research and testing.	2.43	0.81	0.59	high
Do you think that the media in general has left a positive impact on you?	2.43	0.81	0.64	high
Are you able to distinguish between true and fake news?	2.38	0.79	0.59	high
I discuss information I obtain from social media outlets with my parents.	2.28	0.76	0.60	medium
Are you able to discuss information you obtain through social media outlets?	2.28	0.76	0.72	medium
I rely on more than one source to obtain information and news (local media, international media, social media).	2.25	0.75	0.63	medium
I obtain information and news from more than one media source like (radio, TV, newspaper, websites, social media, etc.).	2.15	0.72	0.58	medium
I get affected by what I view in social media.	1.70	0.57	0.69	medium
Overall grade	2.24	0.69	0.37	medium

Annex 3

Average, standard deviation, and percentages for the first section "awareness and analysis" at universities

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
Do you agree that media influence individuals' behavior?	2.78	0.93	.42	high
When I come across a piece of information or a news item, I test its credibility by thorough research and testing.	2.65	0.88	.53	high
I am able to distinguish between fake and true news.	2.55	0.85	.50	high
I rely on more than one source to obtain information and news (local media, international media, social media).	2.50	0.83	.55	high
I possess the necessary skills to analyze and evaluate information I obtain from different media outlets	2.45	0.82	.55	high
I view local, regional and international media	2.38	0.79	.49	high
I obtain information and news from more than one source like (radio, TV, newspaper, websites, social media, etc.)	2.35	0.78	.48	high
Do you listen to news	2.05	0.68	.55	medium
Overall grade	2.46	0.82	.25	High

Annex 4

Average, standard deviation, and percentages for the second section "Schools' role in MIL"

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
Have you ever been instructed by your teacher to do research by searching the Internet?	2.48	0.83	0.68	high
My teacher urges me to search for information through different media sources.	2.35	0.78	0.74	high
Have you ever been directed to a certain media outlet that you can benefit from?	2.25	0.75	0.71	medium
Has your teacher ever discussed the content of media outlets that pupils view?	2.20	0.73	0.56	medium
Have you ever received media training?	2.15	0.72	0.83	medium
Has the teacher ever discussed media with pupils?	2.00	0.67	0.75	medium
Do teachers encourage you to produce media content related to the classroom?	1.90	0.63	0.78	medium
Overall grade	2.19	0.73	0.37	medium

Annex 5

Average, standard deviation, and percentages for the third section "Participation" in schools

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
During our discussion with our teachers we can express our views on certain issues.	2.63	0.88	0.54	high
I discuss what I hear or view with my school mates.	2.58	0.86	0.64	high
Have you ever published news, photos or downloaded videos on internet or any media outlet?	2.13	0.71	0.76	medium
I participate in morning radio.	2.05	0.68	0.68	medium
I listen carefully to the morning radio.	1.93	0.64	0.73	medium
Have you ever participated in wall magazine?	1.90	0.63	0.78	medium
I feel safe when sharing photos with my friends via messenger as it has more privacy.	1.63	0.54	0.77	low
The information I obtain from websites is always true because the sites are well known.	1.58	0.53	0.50	low
Overall grade	2.16	0.72	0.25	medium

Annex 6

Average, standard deviation, and percentages for the third section "Participation and digital interaction" at universities

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
I make use of my smartphone to produce, document and publish information.	2.48	0.83	0.51	high
When I receive fake news, I warn people about it.	2.45	0.82	0.60	high
I can introduce positive media content through media.	2.45	0.82	0.55	high
There is censorship exerted by governments and certain groups on the Internet.	2.33	0.78	0.62	high
Do you interact with groups and pages where you are a member?	2.23	0.74	0.53	medium
Internet censorship restricts expressing one views freely and sincerely.	1.98	0.66	0.73	medium
Have you ever used media for lobby and advocacy?	1.70	0.57	0.65	medium
Do you monitor events and phenomenon in your neighborhood, and do you publish it?	1.68	0.56	0.47	medium

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Chapter 2:

Media and Information Literacy
among Children and Youth in Tunisia

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Media and Information Literacy in Tunisia

Background

In the MENA region, MIL is of great importance in light of the current political and social realities. The role played by social media during the so-called Arab Spring, i.e. the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt in 2010/2011, demonstrated not only the agency of citizens, (particularly of the youth), but also the power of media as a driver of (social) change. On the other hand, the proliferation of information through traditional and new social media and the unlimited and overwhelming exposure and interaction of children and youth have a direct impact on their lives and can have harmful effects, particularly in a region where citizens are faced with multiple challenges, such as lack of democratization, lack of security and stability, growing poverty, repression, and the growing risks and shrinking space for human rights defenders and civil society actors (particularly youth and women's movements), all of which pose direct challenges to the right to access information and freedom of expression.

This study is part of research conducted by the Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation, PYALARA, in cooperation with DW Akademie in seven countries in the MENA region, i.e. Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. Its purpose is to assess the prevalence of MIL in these countries and the extent to which it is pursued by educational institutions or by civil society (and youth) organizations and to identify the different approaches and methodologies used to enhance MIL in each country. In doing so, a set of concrete and feasible recommendations are provided to further develop MIL education for children and youth in the region in general and in each country under study.

Stakeholders & Methodology

The MIL study in Tunisia was inclusive and engaged with various relevant stakeholders. Primary data generation included a survey for school children (age group 12-18) and university students (age group 18-30), in-depth semi-structured interviews with representatives of CSOs, journalists and representatives of media institution, and ten focus group discussions (i.e., one with youth CSOs; one with journalists and representatives of media institutions; four with university students; and four with school children).

Guided by the ToR, the study targeted the following sample of relevant stakeholders:

- 40 male and female school children aged 12-18 years from both public and private schools divided into four focus groups.
- 35 and 40 university students (male and female, age group 18-29) participating in four focus groups and one survey respectively.
- Six representatives of local youth civil society organizations, whereby four participated in a focus group discussion and two in interviews.
- Ten journalists and representatives of media institutions, including print, visual, and social media, whereby five participated in a focus group discussion, and the others were interviewed individually. This included an interview with Mr. Naji Bghouri, head of the National Tunisian Syndicate of Journalists.

- The head of the Journalism Department at the Higher Institute for Media and News Sciences.
- Non-official sources from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Youth and Sports and political and human rights activist.

The field study was conducted during the first half of January 2019 and coincided with a partial strike of public-school teachers, which started in December 2018 with teachers boycotting exams. The teachers' strike and protests were called for by Tunisia's High School Teachers Union with teachers demanding an increase in wages and educational reforms. This partial strike, in addition to official bureaucracy and some organizational problems, led to delays in conducting the survey and the focus group discussions among school children. Therefore, this part of the field research was conducted later by the local field research assistants. Moreover, to ensure reaching up to 40 university students (as per the ToR), a fourth focus group with university students was conducted by the field assistants at a later stage in January.

This report presents the key findings and conclusions of the field study. It starts by setting out the socio-economic and political context in Tunisia, followed by a presentation of the findings, and concludes with a list of recommendations.

The Tunisian Context in a Nutshell

Economic hardship sparked the uprising in Tunisia in December 2010, and Tunisia's stumbling economy was a major contributing factor to the revolution. However, the economic situation has not really improved since people protested on the streets and forced the government to step down. The World Bank reports[1] that general unemployment is currently around 15% and even higher among young people and women. Only 28 percent of women participate in the labor force. Economic growth remains below what is needed to lower unemployment. Since 2011, the Tunisian dinar has lost half of its value, and the inflation rate is 6.7 percent. The unstable security situation in Libya, Tunisia's second-largest economic partner after the EU, adds major challenges to the economy.

Poverty is widespread, particularly among youth and in rural areas. Some 80,000 students graduate from university annually and enter the workforce in a country with just over 10 million inhabitants. In 2017, more than 30 percent of graduates were unemployed. Forty percent of the population is less than 25 years old. The minimum wage amounts to less than 150 euros per month and governmental social insurance and benefit systems are, in most cases, insufficient to cover basic needs.[2]

Most economic activity is located in and around coastal cities. These regions receive most of the public investment, while Tunisia's rural areas are underdeveloped and suffer economically. About

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[1] https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tunisia/publication/economic-outlook-april-2018

[2] https://fanack.com/tunisia/economy/

40 percent of the Tunisian labor force works in the informal sector, in places such as street shops and domestic economic production and services, which account for approximately half of Tunisia's GDP. Informal trade across Tunisia's land borders has expanded considerably, depriving the state of significant tax revenues and diminishing its control over foreign currency.

The growing polarization between secular and religious parties following the revolution in 2013 was balanced by a coalition between the two biggest parties to prevent democratic collapse. Five years later, democratic principles have been undermined with over 80 percent of parliament in the ruling coalition and a lack of real opposition capable of exercising the necessary checks and balances on the government.[3] Consequently, Tunisians no longer feel represented by their politicians. The 2018 Afro-barometer survey found that 81 percent of Tunisians "do not feel close to any political party."[4] Municipal elections in 2018 only saw a turn-out of 34 percent. Disillusionment with political parties, absence of alternative political platforms, and lack of real public debate have led to frustration among Tunisians, particularly the youth, who express their dissent through protests. Regular popular activities and strikes affect the economy and contribute to the country's general economic malaise. Tunisians increasingly feel that the revolution has failed to transform their socio-economic situation.

Formally, the Tunisian legal system guarantees freedom of expression and freedom of journalism. However, civil society organizations and the National Syndicate of Tunisian Journalists are increasingly concerned about pressure and violence directed at journalists. Amnesty International reported that since 2011, bloggers, artists, and journalists have been prosecuted for peacefully criticizing the Tunisian security forces.[5] Furthermore, ownership of the media rests in the hands of a few powerful political actors and/or wealthy families.

Key findings

According to the ICT Development Index in 2017, the Tunisian ICT sector ranked 99/176.[6] Following the revolution, Tunisians enjoy faster, cheaper, and relatively unrestricted access to the Internet. Overall, Tunisia has a relatively high Internet penetration rate. According to Statcounter, Facebook has dominated social communication in Tunisia over the last ten years (73 percent, February 2019) followed by YouTube and Twitter.[7] A limited number of MIL programs exist in Tunisia. These are mainly implemented by CSOs and some media professionals with MIL expertise.

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[3] https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/10/12/tunisia-just-lost-its-anchor-of-stability-thats-a-good-thing/

[4] http://afrobarometer.org/countries/tunisia-0

[5] https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/02/tunisia-attack-on-freedom-of-expression-must-end/

[6] http://www.itu.int/net4/ITU-D/idi/2017/

[7] http://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/tunisia

MIL among children and youth

One of the objectives of the field study is to assess the level of MIL awareness and competencies among Tunisian youth and children. This was achieved by conducting a survey on a sample of 80 children and youth in the age groups (13-30). Parallel to this, eight focus group discussions were held with youth and children to gain more insight into their opinions and practices.

The survey was conducted among 40 school children: 20 girls and 20 boys of the age group 13 to 18. 30 of the respondents attend public schools and ten are at private schools. About 95 percent of them live in the city. The university respondents included 25 female and 15 male students. 85 percent of them study at a public university, and more than 90 percent live in the city.

Awareness and competencies

Both respondent groups are aware of the potential effects of social media on their behavior, and most of them feel they can distinguish between true and fake information, both males and females equally. University respondents demonstrated a high level of awareness in relation to cybersecurity risks and cyber-safety measures, understanding and dealing with cyber-bullying. Moreover, they are aware of hate speech, incitement to violence, and discrimination. Interestingly,

even though the government controls digital and social media, only 45 percent of the respondents perceive this as a tool used by the authorities to maintain political power.

Most of the child respondents have no association with 'MIL' as a concept, although they demonstrate knowledge of some aspects of it. They feel competent using digital and social media. They feel they can process, analyze and discuss media content partially, even with their parents. 83 percent feel that social media affects their behavior positively. Approximately 60 percent of the children respondents stated that they are affected by social media content, and around the same percentage believe that everything they come across on digital media is credible.

Participation and interaction

While about 95 percent of university students depend on digital and social media as a main source of information, 37.5 percent of school children depend on TV as their main media source in addition to social and digital media with a total percentage of 62.5. Social media is perceived by the respondents as a way to interact and exchange information with peers all over the globe.

An important difference between the two respondent groups relates to their fields of interest. 22.5 percent, 20 percent, and 17.5 percent of university respondents follow political, recreational, and social themes respectively. In contrast, 27 percent of child respondents are interested in recreational posts, followed by 15 percent being interested in social themes and 13 percent in political themes. The rest of the themes seem to be of less significance for this group. When asked about negative aspects of media the children interviewed mentioned corruption, violence, and radicalization.

Most interviewed young adults recognized that any type of government control or surveillance on social and digital media limits their freedom of expression. Many feel that while Tunisia has enjoyed relative freedom of expression since the revolution, conventional and digital media outlets are frequently controlled by powerful political and economic actors and are used to serve their interests. Therefore, students are skeptical about the role media play in the Tunisian context.

Interviewees of this group underlined the importance of Media and Information Literacy and developing their own competencies with regards to cybersecurity, privacy, and knowledge of the legal framework which guarantees freedom of expression and protection of the users of digital media. They are familiar with some of the measures to ensure cybersecurity, such as the use of passwords and closed communities. Moreover, they are well aware of their vulnerability in relation to Facebook, Google, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp exploiting the personal data of their users to create algorithms and sell data to third parties.

On average, young adult respondents share and interact with digital media content and produce their own content, and more than half of the respondents from this age group follow political and social developments and interact with them digitally. Moreover, 60 percent of them use digital and social media for mobilization and advocacy purposes. Most of them experience hate speech, incitement of violence, and discrimination on social media regularly, and many have experienced incidents of cyber-bullying. Most of them have consulted with their peers on ways to deal with it. In some cases, they involved their family and even consulted a lawyer. In general, university student informants do not feel their parents are competent enough to guide them on digital and social media.

Most interviewed school children said that they discuss the latest developments with their teachers and friends at school regularly. Moreover, they use social media to interact with their peers, discuss content with them and produce content themselves by using their smartphones. The majority of them post photos, videos, and news content on social media, and more than half of them feel safe exchanging their personal photos through Messenger. On the other hand, child respondents noted that they do not perceive Facebook as a free platform due to commercial ads, the nature of some pages, and social and parental control. They are also aware of the risks of fake accounts and avatars, and the risk of falling victim to cyber-bullying. Some children shared their experiences of cyber-bullying and how they dealt with it. For most of the interviewees, cyber-bullying remains a serious threat and they feel they cannot protect themselves from it. Young adults interviewed for this study also referred to social media surveillance by the authorities as one of the main reasons why they feel limited in expressing critical opinions. To protect themselves, many change their passwords regularly, interact only with their friends, and some refrain from posting any personal photos. Most children in the focus groups have experienced some sort of hate speech or discrimination on social media.

The study identified no gender differences in either of the two groups of respondents, both in relation to knowledge and awareness as well as the level of participation and interaction. Informants of both age groups indicated the lack of Media and Information Literacy in the education system in Tunisia and underlined the need to integrate it into the education system at all levels.

The Role of Schools

MIL is not officially part of school education. Information literacy is part of the school curriculum, but it focuses on technical aspects to help students access digital information sources. Child respondents indicated that they are sometimes requested to search for information on the

Internet, and 80 percent of them indicated that they get some kind of guidance regarding digital information sources and content production using digital sources. However, they do not receive MIL education as part of the curriculum or extracurricular activities.

Tunisian educational broadcasting is a public online (web) broadcasting service that falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. It offers various educational programs in the field of history and science. However, MIL is not part of its programs.

Journalists and Media Institutions

The media landscape in Tunisia has transformed from a regime-controlled propaganda tool to a tool for democracy characterized by a diverse and relatively free media since the 2011 revolution. Tunisian journalists and media professionals view the abolishment of the Ministry of Information in the aftermath of the revolution as a significant step in empowering freedom of expression. In light of the history of control over the media and harassment and suppression of journalists by the regime, the National Union of Tunisian Journalists (SNJT) and individual media professionals are against any regulatory media framework set up by the government. Instead, they advocate for a self-regulatory media. In 2017, an independent Tunisian Press Council was set up with a code of ethics for media and measures to ensure media ethics, transparency, and accountability. In addition, the right of citizens to access information is regulated by the Information Access Authority, and the protection of the privacy of individuals is regulated by the National Commission for the Protection of Personal Data.

Public media accounts for half of the media outlets in Tunisia, including nine radio stations, two TV stations, and two newspapers. Conventional public media therefore still play an important role in news coverage and public debate. However, privately-owned media outlets and digital and social media are becoming increasingly more effective than conventional media. Interviewed journalists agree that digital and social media have changed the nature of their profession, and journalists who fail to adapt to this new mode of communication will end up being marginalized. Media professionals who participated in either the focus group discussion or interviews stated that they interact with the public through their radio and TV programs regularly. However, interaction with the broad public through social media is limited.

Digital and social media are considered important by journalists. Journalists are aware that, like traditional media, social media can also be used as a space for propaganda, spreading false information and fake news, hate speech, and inciting violence. According to the President of SNJT (the Tunisian National Syndicate for Journalists), Mr. Naji Bghouri, "There is a need to foster a culture of awareness and accountability among traditional and social media alike. To achieve that, MIL initiatives need to have a broad outreach and target both content producers and consumers."

Furthermore, other interviewed media professionals emphasized the need for an inclusive approach towards media with the active participation of the public not only in social media but also in conventional media.

SNJT media training includes journalism skills, professional journalism (including hate speech and inciting violence), media ethics, and security of journalists (including cybersecurity). However, Media and Information Literacy as a concept and practice is currently not part of the training agenda. Many of the interviewed media professionals have had media literacy training and some of them have been involved as experts in MIL programs for youth, mainly organized by CSOs. Media professional respondents agree on the need to develop MIL expertise and skills among journalists across the board.

According to the respondents, the main challenges facing media in Tunisia today include the proliferation of privately-owned media outlets; conventional, digital and social media, which serve conflicting political parties; and the interests of powerful economic and political actors. Media outlets fail to live up to minimum standards of media ethics and professional guidelines. Therefore, it is necessary to go beyond the technical definition of Media and Information Literacy, to recognize its political dimension and use it as a tool of empowerment for disadvantaged citizens (particularly youth and women) in their struggle for justice, equality, and human rights. The respondents agree with Melki and Maaliki that "Digital and media literacy offers the requisite knowledge and competencies for marginalized individuals and disenfranchised communities to gain back the initiative and balance the power of big business, concentrated wealth, and unbridled authoritarian systems" (Melki, J and Maaliki, L 2017, p144). Another challenge is the growing unemployment among young media professionals and graduate journalists.

Media professionals consider themselves key stakeholders in relation to MIL education through their interaction with the public. They see a leading role for themselves in developing and implementing a national vision and effective strategy on MIL education for children and youth in Tunisia. They also stress that MIL education needs to be a joint effort between media and educational institutions. They also stress the crucial role of youth and human rights civil society organizations in reaching out to and working with youth and children on MIL. Finally, all agree that while it is good to learn from other experiences and cooperate with global and regional MIL actors, MIL education needs to be rooted in the Tunisian context and the curriculum needs to be adapted to meet the specific needs of Tunisian society.

AlMarsad Alwatani for Tunisian Journalists, a non-governmental media organization, held a national conference on media education in Tunisia in 2017 to highlight the challenges, risks, and needs of media education in the country. The conference was attended by representatives of the Ministry of Education, media professionals and experts, academics, and educators and produced a statement underlining the importance of developing a concrete strategy for media education. As a follow-up to the conference, ONJT developed a project proposal to introduce media education as an "optional" learning program for children at school, which was submitted to the ministry in 2018. The project is currently being discussed with relevant departments at the Ministry of Education and the minister's office. Although the minister's office seems interested, it is not clear whether the project will get the necessary approval. If approved by the Ministry of Education, this initiative might be a breakthrough in terms of introducing Media literacy programs at schools. It will also be the first collaborative effort between the ministry and media experts, CSOs, and organizations with MIL expertise to work in schools.

Media Higher Education

The Higher Institute of Journalism and News Sciences is part of the public University of Tunis. It has been the only higher media education institute since the 1960s. Although a few private media education institutes were launched after the revolution, the Higher Institute of Journalism is still the most reputable and most Tunisian journalists and media professionals are its alumni. The institute provides Bachelors, Masters, and Ph.D. programs in press, TV, and broadcasting journalism.

Conceptually, Media and Information Literacy as such is not part of the institute's programs. However, elements of MIL are included in the various courses offered by the institute. This includes competencies like cybersecurity, the use of social media, media ethics, principles of professional journalism, freedom of expression, and access to information.

The institute is keen on developing its programs and adapting them to keep up with the latest developments in digital and social media and provide its graduates with necessary professional skills. Social media is used regularly by faculty members to interact with their students and in their work in general. Curriculum development is based on regular assessments of the content of the courses by faculty members and students. Currently, the institute cooperates with French, American, and German media institutes and universities. The institute organizes many media training workshops. However, these are not directly related to MIL. Some elements of MIL are (indirectly) covered by topics such as cybersecurity, social media and journalism, and fake news. The institute also collaborates with national public media and journalism students who are undertaking their field training and internships in these institutions. It also works closely with national and international organizations and training institutes and organizes many activities in cooperation with them. These organizations include UNICEF, UNESCO, DW, Al Jazeera Training Institute, the Independent Commission for Audio-visual Communication, and the Tunisian Anti-corruption Association.

Some faculty members have attended regional or international ML events or participated in the training of trainers (ToT) workshops. The institute is ready for collaboration with national, regional, and International MIL actors.

Youth civil society organizations

MIL education is not widely spread in Tunisia. It is used by some active CSOs as a tool for civic education to empower citizens, promote peace and non-violence, and counter the radicalization of youth.

One of the main local actors is *Le Centre Africain de Perfectionnement des Journalistes et Communicateurs* (CAPJC), which launched a project in 2014 in collaboration with Swedish Radio's Media Development Office. In addition to MIL education for youth, the project aimed at developing a participatory MIL toolkit adapted to the Tunisian context. Another relevant actor who works on elements of MIL is the *Institute of War and Peace* (IWPR) a partner of *Tunisia Youth Media Network*.

During the field survey, representatives of four youth CSOs took part in the focus group discussion and one other CSO (Tunis Alfataa) was interviewed.

I Watch (أنا يقظ) is a non-profit CSO working on governance, transparency, and anti-corruption. It organizes campaigns and debates, partners with youth organizations, and provides training for youth on a regular basis. *I Watch* is active on social media and conducts social media literacy training for local communities across Tunisia.

Fanni Raghman Anni (FRA) is an innovative youth organization working with disadvantaged children and youth in both rural and urban areas. They focus on expression through art. Their main objective is to promote innovation and defend freedom of expression among Tunisian youth. In 2015, FRA worked in partnership with the Ministry of Education to create a cultural environment in 25 public schools in different locations. FRA also uses social media to reach out, promote, and implement part of its activities.

The Tunisian Forum for Socio-Economic Rights focuses on economic and social issues; organizes conferences and training workshops for youth, including social movements, cybersecurity, and classic and social media; and has different publications.

Tunisia the Dream works with young girls and boys who have dropped out of school and aims to re-integrate them into educational institutions and society.

Tunis Alfataa aims at enhancing the participation of youth in public life. It targets university students and organizes social, cultural, political, and literary activities.

All of the above CSOs recognize the crucial role that media, particularly social media, play in the lives of children and young people and the impact new social media have on their work as organizations. All of them use social media to interact with their target groups and their constituencies and for mobilization and advocacy purposes. Some deal directly with elements of MIL in their work or even train youth in various aspects of MIL.

Representatives of youth CSOs agree that social media represent an alternative forum for youth and other disadvantaged groups to raise their voice when mainstream conventional media fail to

do so. However, they are also aware of the challenges that come with social media usage. Youth (children in particular), and even many activists in the above organizations are not familiar with the concept of Media and Information Literacy. CSOs underline the need to raise awareness of MIL education among youth in general and CSOs.

There are some MIL initiatives carried out by certain CSOs in cooperation with media experts and international media organizations. CSOs recognize the added value of reaching out to and cooperating with other national and regional initiatives and experts in the field of MIL. They are open to learning from the experiences of other MIL actors, particularly in the field of cybersecurity, civic education, MIL in general, and how to use it as a tool for mobilization and advocacy.

Policymakers: Ministry of Education and Ministry of Youth and Sport

Tunisian schools follow the French education system. Schools are mostly public and fall under the Ministry of Education and Training. Private schools account for only 5 percent of secondary schools in the country. The approach towards education is traditional, top-down, and does not encourage critical thinking. Lessons are standardized and thus do not allow for the integration of new elements. Moreover, extracurricular activities are rare.

The Tunisian Ministry of Education does not have a MIL policy or national strategy to integrate MIL in education. Information literacy education at schools is currently limited to technical skills, enabling children to access information digitally. It needs to be expanded to include critical thinking, content analysis, and the verification of information sources. Therefore, it is necessary to equip teachers and educators with MIL knowledge and competencies, enabling them to provide guidance to children.

Schools have to cope with many challenges in relation to media and technology: Most schools lack computers or internet connection. Many schools restrict computer and Internet access to school management, with teachers needing to request permission. In addition, the older generation of teachers has no information technology literacy. Hence, the use of information technology in schools is currently sporadic, basic, and limited.

In addition to schools, the integration of MIL in the education system needs commitment and resources on the decision-making level at the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education seems open to cooperation and partnership with national and international organizations and learning from the experience of others in the field, but bureaucracy and lack of resources remain the main obstacles. Other key public institutions and departments within the ministry are The *General Administration for Programs and Training*; The *National Center for Technology*; The *Department for Pedagogical and Educational Inspection*. All these institutions need to be on board and actively involved in the process of integrating MIL education at the school level.

Another relevant actor on the level of policy and programs in relation to MIL is the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MYS). MYS deals with the public youth sector and contributes to the informal education of youth in general. The ministry has a network of youth centers distributed throughout Tunisia. These centers were established during the 1960s as an important tool for education and recreation for youth. However, over the years, these institutions suffered from bureaucracy and

lack of financial and human resources and served as a propaganda tool for the regime before the revolution. These centers are still functional. Although they generally have limited resources and staff, they serve as a space for children's activities, particularly in disadvantaged areas. They are equipped with broadcasting studios, and in 2012 there was an attempt to develop web broadcasting activities in many of them. In 2014 and 2015, CAPJC and the Swedish Radio Institute implemented a joint MIL project in some of these centers. Hence, in collaboration with CAPJC, the MYS, and other relevant MIL actors, these centers provide an opportunity to reach youth, particularly in remote and disadvantaged areas.

The main challenges that are likely to undermine progress are administrative bureaucracy, lack of resources, and a lack of stability in the educational institution, and above all, the lack of political will for educational reform.

Recommendations
Based on the findings above, particularly in relation to the analysis of the needs and challenges facing MIL education among children and youth in Tunisia, the following concrete interventions are recommended:

On the level of policy and institutional framework:

•   To ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of MIL education for children and youth in Tunisia, it is important to integrate it into the educational system and allocate the necessary human and financial resources. Therefore, it is recommended that a MIL education and expertise center (MILEEC) is established under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education to provide the necessary institutional framework for this purpose.

•   Expanding the circle of MIL stakeholders: Engaging government and policymakers, media professionals and media institutions, and CSOs is a pre-requisite for developing an inclusive, effective, feasible, and sustainable MIL strategy for children and youth that meets current needs and is rooted in the Tunisian context.

On the level of programs and outreach:

•   Schools are very important stakeholders in achieving media and information literacy among children and youth. To achieve a successful MIL education at the school level, there is a need to integrate MIL in different school programs (curricular and extracurricular), to improve the technical facilities of schools, to build the capacities of teachers and educators, and to encourage close collaboration between schools, media professionals, and CSOs.

        MIL needs to be accessible to all. Therefore, there is a need to broaden the circle of MIL education initiatives among CSOs, particularly those who have a broad reach among youth and children outside the city and beyond the educated 'elite'. To achieve this, CSOs need to collaborate with other national MIL actors including policymakers, media experts and professionals, academics, and educational institutions, particularly schools and universities.

•   Coordination among stakeholders is crucial to achieving broader reach and impact. New initiatives need to build on what has been achieved so far and synergies need to be created

between different local, national, and where possible, international MIL initiatives and actors in the country (examples: the initiative of AlMarsad, the project of CAPJC, and initiatives of other CSOs).

On the level of training and capacity building:

•	MIL for all: A successful implementation of a MIL strategy for children and youth can only be achieved by raising the level of knowledge and competencies of the various stakeholders. This entails raising awareness on social and digital media risks and potentials, and training and capacity building for all those involved in the MIL education process e.g., content producers, media professionals, CSOs, parents, and educators.

•	Special focus on media professionals and institutions: As media professionals are key to MIL in Tunisia in general, and among children and youth in particular, it is recommended that a MIL strategy includes training and capacity building for media professionals, both on conceptual and competence levels. Training should also include professionals working in conventional media, such as TV and radio. In addition to training, MIL awareness needs to be raised among media professionals and institutions that work with children and youth.

•	Schools broadcasting media is an important outlet linked directly to and serving the educational system. It can thus be used to strengthen MIL education efforts in schools. It is recommended that a concrete, tailor-made MIL capacity building and programming plan for school broadcasting media is designed with the objective of equipping the people involved with MIL competencies and skills and helping them develop an action plan to integrate MIL education into their work.

 •	Another key aspect to MIL capacity building identified by various Tunisian stakeholders is networking, i.e. learning from experiences of other MIL actors and building partnerships with regional and global MIL experts and actors. Stakeholders are keen to explore possible cooperation and partnerships with PYALARA and learn from their experience in Palestine, including the training toolkit which can be easily adapted to the Tunisian context.

List of Resources

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MIL Survey Analysis for School Children and University Students

<u>For School Children</u>

Table: average, standard deviation, and percentages for the overall results on the situation of MIL inside schools.

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
Section 1: Awareness and analysis	2.21	0.74	0.34	medium
Section 2: The schools' role in MIL	2.21	0.74	0.42	medium
Section 3: Participation and digital interaction	1.77	0.59	0.26	medium
Overall grade	2.06	0.69	0.26	medium

Table: average, standard deviation, and percentages for the first section, "Awareness and analysis"

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
Are you able to distinguish between true and fake news?	2.48	0.83	0.55	high
When I come across a piece of information or a news item, I test its credibility by thorough research and testing.	2.40	0.80	0.55	high
I obtain information and news from more than one media source like radio, TV, newspaper, websites, social media, etc.	2.35	0.78	0.53	high
I discuss information I obtain from social media outlets with my parents.	2.23	0.74	0.66	medium
Are you able to discuss information you obtain through social media outlets?	2.20	0.73	0.56	medium
I rely on more than one source to obtain information and news (local media, international media, social media).	2.15	0.72	0.58	medium
Do you think that media in general has left a positive impact on you?	2.10	0.70	0.74	medium
I get affected by what I view in social media.	1.78	0.59	0.66	medium

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
Overall grade	2.21	0.74	0.34	medium

Table: average, standard deviation, and percentages for the second section, "The schools' role in MIL"

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
Have you ever been instructed by your teacher to do research by searching the Internet?	2.48	0.83	0.68	high
My teacher urges me to search for information through different media sources.	2.40	0.80	0.59	high
Have you ever been directed to a certain media outlet that you can benefit from?	2.38	0.79	0.67	high
Has your teacher ever discussed the content of media outlets that pupils view?	2.33	0.78	0.62	medium
Has the teacher ever discussed media with pupils?	2.15	0.72	0.53	medium
Do teachers encourage you to produce media content related to the classroom?	2.03	0.68	0.62	medium
Have you ever received media training?	1.73	0.58	0.82	medium
Overall grade	2.21	0.74	0.42	medium

Table: average, standard deviation, and percentages for the third section, "Participation and digital interaction"

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
During our discussions with our teachers we can express our views on certain issues.	2.48	0.83	0.55	high
I discuss what I hear or view with my school mates.	2.40	0.80	0.50	high
Have you ever published news, photos, or downloaded videos on the Internet or any media outlet?	2.10	0.70	0.63	medium

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
The information I obtain from websites is always true because the sites are well known.	1.88	0.63	0.65	medium
I listen carefully to the morning radio.	1.73	0.58	0.68	medium
I feel safe when sharing photos with my friends via Messenger as there is more privacy.	1.58	0.53	0.84	low
Have you ever participated in a wall magazine?	1.00	0.33	0.00	low
I participate in the morning radio.	1.00	0.33	0.00	low
Overall grade	1.77	0.59	0.26	medium

For Universities:

Table: average, standard deviation, and percentages for the overall results on the situation of MIL inside universities.

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
Section 1: Awareness and analysis	2.39	0.80	0.33	high
Section 3: Participation and digital interaction	2.11	0.70	0.33	medium
Overall grade	2.25	0.75	0.28	medium

Table: average, standard deviation, and percentages for the first section "Awareness and analysis"

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
When I come across a piece of information or a news item, I test its credibility by thorough research and testing.	2.80	0.93	0.41	high
Do you agree that media influence individuals' behavior?	2.43	0.81	0.59	high
I rely on more than one source to obtain information and news (local media, international media, social media).	2.43	0.81	0.50	high
I obtain information and news from more than one source like radio, TV, newspaper, websites, social media, etc.	2.43	0.81	0.71	high
I possess the necessary skills to analyze and evaluate information I obtain from different media outlets.	2.38	0.79	0.63	high

I am able to distinguish between fake and true news.	2.35	0.78	0.66	high
Do you listen to news?	2.30	0.77	0.61	medium
Do you follow local, regional, and international media outlets?	2.03	0.68	0.62	medium
Overall grade	2.39	0.80	0.33	high

Table: average, standard deviation, and percentages for the third section "Participation and digital interaction"

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
When I receive fake news, I warn people about it.	2.48	0.83	0.60	high
I make news of my smartphone to produce, document and publish information	2.43	0.81	0.68	high
Do you interact with groups and pages where you are a member?	2.28	0.76	0.64	medium
There is censorship exerted by governments and certain groups on the Internet.	2.10	0.70	0.71	medium
I can introduce positive media content through media.	2.03	0.68	0.58	medium
Censoring the Internet restricts expressing one's views freely and sincerely.	1.93	0.64	0.47	medium
Do you monitor events and phenomenon in your neighborhood, and do you publish it?	1.82	0.61	0.82	medium
Have you ever used media for lobby and advocacy?	1.80	0.60	0.72	medium
Overall grade	2.11	0.70	0.33	medium

Chapter 3:

Media and Information Literacy in Algeria: Perspectives from Students, Media Practitioners, and Government Officials

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This is a very important topic. We lack MIL. We are living the fourth wave of media. Today, video and information in motion on the web is one of the most prevailing means of media sharing. Content-management algorithms decide our consumption. Everybody has his/her own bubble, with less time to stop and think about the content. We need MIL. Information load is drowning everybody with a mobile device, and this is an extreme danger to individuals and society overall. (A participant in the study.)

Introduction

The study of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in Algeria is part of broader research conducted by the Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation (PYALARA) in partnership with Deutsche Welle (DW) Akademie from Germany. Besides Algeria, the project extends to six other countries from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region: Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, and Lebanon. The overall study goal is to assess the existence and spread of MIL and whether formal or informal education is pursued in these countries.

In Algeria, we sought to report the existing initiatives and the methodologies used to instill MIL in society. In an attempt to meet the study's goal, we designed mixed-method research and collected data using face to face interviews, focus groups, and surveys. In relation to the overall project carried out by DW Akademie and PYALARA, the chief goal was to provide a set of realistic implications for MIL education and its role in developing a strong and sustainable civil society in the MENA region, especially in the above-mentioned countries.

Why Media and Information Literacy?

In this research report, we will use Media and Information Literacy (MIL), Media literacy, and media education interchangeably to mean the same thing. Media literacy can be broadly defined as the "active inquiry and critical thinking about the [media] messages we receive and create … [it] develops informed, reflective and engaged participants essential for a democratic society" (National Association for Media Literacy Education, 2007, n.p.). In 2013, a UNESCO report posited that MIL is a key factor in today's societies and democracies. The authors wrote:

The ultimate goal of media and information literacy (MIL) is to empower people to exercise their universal rights and fundamental freedoms, such as the freedom of opinion and expression, as well as to seek, impart and receive information, taking advantage of emerging opportunities in the most effective, inclusive, ethical and efficient manner for the benefit of all individuals. (p.31)

Becoming media literate is to possess the necessary tools to access the media, raise appropriate questions, and follow through with solid critical thinking to synthesize and inform personal decisions. Therefore, the power of a sustainable MIL education is to enable individuals to freely express their opinion, inform their choices, and engage in their civil societies. MIL is deeply rooted in freedom of speech and democracy. It does not promote partisan politics. The power of media literacy inspires individuals to think critically for themselves and understand the way media generate and manage content.

21st-century media has grown in power. TV and radio used to be the chief mediums of information production and dissemination. Today, many other media, also called alternative, have appeared with the prolific advent and expansion of portable technologies. Social media, powered by highly sophisticated content management algorithms and artificial intelligence (AI), remains one of the main alternative media used around the world. For instance, it is estimated that global social

media users will reach 2.77 billion by the end of 2019 (eMarketer, n.d)[8]. Fast information has been repetitively stated by the current study participants as a feature of current citizen/social media. This is partially fueled by technology and users' hunger to try new apps to share information about themselves and others (Aboulkacem & Haas, 2018).

We live in a world where we want to see others and allow them to see us. We naturally appreciate sharing and have others share with us. All this, however, requires critical thinking. It needs media education, or as Stoddard (2014) claimed, living in an age of fast information requires the individual to know about "… the expertise or viewpoints of people contributing to the information [we] are accessing . . . the design of applications, databases, search algorithms, and web pages" (p. 1-2). MIL is all about critical media consumption. A solid MIL allows us to see and analyze for ourselves, rather than allowing various media with their objectives and ideologies paint the world for us.

Media Usage in Algeria

Internet Penetration in the Country

Internet penetration in Algeria remains below average and many regions still lack network coverage, especially the southern states and remote communities. According to WeAreSocial (2018), about half of the population (21 million) use or have access to the Internet, and 19 million individuals access the Internet using mobile phones. Additionally, mobile connections, i.e., sim card contracts, number 49.7 million of which 28.9 million have broadband (3G and 4G)[9].

Social Media Penetration

Social media (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, … etc.) is an important source of information and content dissemination. They are fast and convenient and deliver information with a finger-click. In Algeria, according to Statcounter (2019)[10], 62% of the population uses Facebook followed by 28% who are users of YouTube. According to WeAreSocial (2018)[2], 21 million Algerians—about half of the population—actively use social media. The number of users of social media in Algeria has grown by 3 million between 2017 and 2018 (WeAreSocial, 2018). It is important to note that 72% of Internet users access social media using mobile phones (Statcounter, 2019)[11].

Concerning the overall state of the press and media, the Algerian government monitors the circulation of information on TV and radio to a great degree. For instance, as of 2017, only five private satellite TV channels were authorized to operate in Algeria. Although there are other

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[8] eMarketer. (n.d.). Number of social media users worldwide. In Statista - https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/.

[9] https://www.slideshare.net/EveryLeader/digital-in-algeria

[10] http://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/algeria

[11] http://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/mobile/algeria

private TV channels that have offices in Algeria these operate from abroad (BBC News, 2017)[12]. Radio is entirely run by the government and most media outlets avoid government criticism. Many journalists, bloggers, and freedom of speech activists have been jailed without trial or convincing evidence. The French-based agency, Reporters Without Borders, said that journalists find it hard to operate freely in Algeria. The agency ranks Algeria 136/180 according to the world press freedom index, and notably, Algeria dropped two ranks in 2018 alone[13]. Freedom House (2017)[14] claimed that Algeria has a freedom of press index of 63/100 (with 100 being not free and 0 being the freest).

According to the Facebook Transparency report[15], Algeria has requested a service outage for a total of 14 hours nationwide during the period from July 13, 2017, to July 18, 2017. The Guardian newspaper (Henley, 2018) reported a nationwide Internet outage of up to three hours daily during the week of Baccalaureate exams in 2018 —a nationwide exam for graduating high school students to secure a seat at university.

Economic, Cultural, and Educational Context
Algeria is considered an upper middle-income country. The total population as of 2019 is 43.09 million, with 65% aged between 15-64[16]. Regarding unemployment, 24.3% of young Algerians aged 15 to 24 remain jobless[17]. The GDP of Algeria was 188.34 billion US dollars[18], and contributes 0.49% to world GDP[19]. Algeria is mostly Muslim, and Arabic, Berber, and French are spoken. The country is diverse, and a host of multiple traditions paint a diverse and special cultural landscape in North Africa.

Education in Algeria is mainly run and mandated by the government. The schools K-12, i.e., from Kindergarten to 12th grade, follow the curriculum and textbooks designed by the Ministry of Education. There are private institutions that teach in this segment of education as well. Concerning universities, they are mostly public and their administration, especially financially, is the responsibility of the Ministry of Higher Education. There are some institutes like *L'institut International de Management* (INSIM) or *Higher Management Institute* (HIMI) which offer higher education courses in management and related fields. These institutes are recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education and so are their courses and diplomas.

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[12] https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14118855

[13] https://rsf.org/en/algeria
[14] https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/algeria
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[18] IMF. (n.d.). Algeria: Gross domestic product (GDP). In Statista - The Statistics Portal.
https://www.statista.com/statistics/408059/gross-domestic-product-gdp-in-algeria/.
[19] IMF. (n.d.). Algeria: Share in global gross domestic product (GDP) In Statista - The Statistics Portal.
https://www.statista.com/statistics/408047/algeria-share-in-global-gdp-adjusted-for-ppp/.

Study Context, Population, and Method

The study took place in parts of Algeria, namely the northern and western regions (Algiers, Oran, Mascara, and Mostaganem). The population was recruited following convenience sampling for the surveys and focus groups. We administered the surveys and conducted focus groups with populations that are accessible and logistically available. We used snowball sampling for our face to face interviews by having the interviewees lead us to other key informants that are currently colleagues or whom they have worked with in the past.

The study is descriptive and exploratory. It follows a partially mix-methods sequential equal status design (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). We administered the surveys, as designed by the study sponsors, to 40 students from K 10-12 (i.e., high school years 1st, 2nd, and 3rd) and 40 university students, 20 with prior MIL education and 20 without.

Following the survey results, we generated the interview and focus group protocols to further investigate MIL in Algeria. Focus groups were conducted in series of 10 to 15 participants per group to reach 80 participants total—40 university students, and 40 K 10-12 students from public and private schools. A series of individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with journalists and media regulators (N= 10), media non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (N=5), university media department chairs (N=2), and both Ministries of Education (N=1) and Higher Education (N=1). Table 1 below summarizes the study population and research instruments used to collect data.

Population	Research instrument	Total of participants
University students	Survey	40
K 10-12 students	Survey	40
Journalists and Media Regulators	Face-to-Face Interviews	10
Media NGO representatives	Face-to-Face Interviews	10
Chairs of media and mass com. University departments	Face-to-Face Interviews	2
Ministry of Education representative	Face-to-Face Interview	1
Ministry of Higher Education Representative	Face-to-Face Interview	1
University students	Focus group	40
K 10-12 students	Focus group	40

Table 1. S*tudy population and data collection instruments.*

Key Results from the Surveys: School and University Students

School Survey Results (K 10-12)

The survey (see appendix 1) had 24 items/statements and on a 3-point scale: 1. Never, 2. Sometimes, 3. Always. To be able to evaluate the state of MIL in Algerian schools as well as the

students' level, we established the following values: (1- 1.66 as low), (1.67-2.33 as average), and (2.34- 3 as high).

The purpose of the survey was to paint a picture of MIL in Algeria. The survey had three themes: 1) media awareness and information analysis, 2) the role of schools in teaching/practicing MIL, and 3) participation in media production. Internal consistency analysis performed to calculate Cronbach's alpha (cf. Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) revealed a coefficient of 68, which is acceptable.

Students' Profile (*N*=40)

- The survey consisted of 17 males and 23 females aged 13-18.
- 36 students stated living in cities.
- 29 students used electronic websites to access information.
- 19 students said entertainment is their chief reason/topic behind media access/usage. (see more demographic information in Appendix. 2)

Key Results by Themes

The main question we aimed to answer through the survey was: What is the state of the art of MIL in Algeria from the students' perspective? To answer this question, we will first present the main themes in averages, then present the main findings from each theme. 75% of students (*M*=2.24), most of the time, feel able to access information as needed; are aware of the media effects, and are able to analyze and discuss media content with friends and family. Concerning the role that schools play in teaching MIL, 64% of students think the schools provide them with an average level of education (*M*=1.91). However, media production was low among K 10-12 students (*M*=1.70, 57%). Based on 65% of the answers, the overall survey result of MIL education among K 10-12 students in Algeria is average (*M*=1.95). Below are the main results by theme (for a complete set of results, please see appendix. 3)

Theme One: Media Awareness and Information Analysis

- 82% (*M*= 2.45) said they investigate and verify information and news truthfulness.
- 78% (*M*=2.35) believe they have the capacity to differentiate real and fake news.
- 78% (*M*=2.35) use more than one outlet to access news.
- 68% (*M*= 2.03) feel influenced by information he/she receives from social media.
- 73% (*M*=2.20) said media has a positive influence on them and their behavior.

Theme Two: The Role of Schools in Teaching/Practicing MIL

- 83% (*M*=2.50) stated the school requested them to research a topic using the Internet.
- 71% (*M*=2.13) said that teachers encourage them to research topics using multiple means/sources.
- 60% (*M*=1.73) responded that teachers discuss media contents which students follow/consume.
- 51% (*M*=1.53) posited the school encourages them to produce media products.

Theme Three: Participation in Media Production

- 76% (*M*=2.28) said they discuss media topics with their friends/classmates.
- 67% (*M*=2.00) consider what they get from well-known websites is always accurate.
- 73% (*M*=2.20) have already published news, pictures, or videos on the Internet.
- 46% (*M*=1.38) listen to the school radio.
- 49% (*M*=1.48) feel confident sharing pictures with friends through Facebook Messenger because it is private.

Findings from Focus Groups

The focus groups were conducted with 20 students from a private institution in the west of Algeria and 20 students from a public school in the north of Algeria. The focus groups took place in classrooms with the help of the teachers after obtaining the consent of both the school administration and students. The sessions were tape-recorded and transcribed for analysis. We used two coding cycles. We first used InVivo coding, and then applied thematic analysis steps (cf. Braun & Clarke, 2006) on the coded data to be able to generate key themes that reflect the students' perspectives and experiences with MIL.

Main Themes Supported by Quotes

1. Social Media … What else!

Students from both public and private schools showed similar tendencies towards social media and TV. They favor social media as their important means to access content because it is convenient. One student said, "Social media … has everything and is convenient." Social media also allows students to "Have [their] life shown to everyone," as another student commented. Social media enables students to see and be seen by others. TV as well has its place in the media ecology of Algerian high school students. A female student said, when asked about her favorite tool she uses to access media, she said it is "TV, as I think everyone's home has one and we watch the news on it." Remarkably, students favored their phones as a window to the digital world. To them, as summarized by a student, "mobile phones [are] … accessible and with us everywhere." Social media was favored by the vast majority of high school students with convenience, accessibility, and abundance of content being the top reasons for students' choices.

2. Media and Information Literacy? No clue what it is.

When we asked students whether they know about Media and Information Literacy (MIL) or have heard the term before, their faces showed a variety of expressions. Most of them were confused about what MIL is. However, they made some attempt to define the concept. A student said, "I did not hear about it … who is responsible for this?" Another student responded, "Is it education about social media?" A third student remarked, "It is probably education through social media … it maybe is social media control." The students kept trying to define MIL and one of them interestingly commented that MIL "…first appeared in the '80s to educate people about media." Other responses were similar to those and lacked precise definition or purpose, but some were close enough to bring the idea of media and teaching to our attention.

3. Politics … "too young, you can't talk about it."

In relation to government surveillance and involvement in the media, students were aware that their freedom of expression is limited. A student said when talking about social media, "Yes we are free to say what we want," however, as another student immediately responded, "You cannot say everything though." A third participant interjected and said, "They can always know who you are." When the participants were asked about their activities and whether they feel confident discussing any topic on social media, they responded that it depends on knowledge and how much they know about a given topic. Among the topics, the students mentioned daily issues, fashion, educational and scientific content, or personal matters. Importantly, many students said they do not feel capable of getting into political discussions. This is partly due to some of them say they receive comments such as, "You are too young to talk about this." Another student added, "We care about politics every now and then … we feel concerned, but we feel we cannot say or talk about politics." Immediately after that, a participant echoed this by remarking that "Some people do not like what we say or share and comment on us negatively." A participant summarized this theme with the following statement, "It depends on the topic … it depends on your knowledge as well."

4. **Social media has positive and negative consequences.**

Regarding social media, students shared a number of interesting thoughts. The topics ranged from family surveillance and control, freedom of speech, to bullying. When asked about surveillance and control, students' opinions were split among those who accept that their families control their activities on social media, and those who refuse to do so and feel old enough to take over their own social media activity. One student said, "I refuse to have anybody watch me, I know how to control myself and know what is good and what is bad." On the other hand, one student said, "I have my mom on Facebook as a friend; what I share is seen, [and] she checks my private messages."

Bullying was one of the topics we discussed. Some students expressed their frustration toward the amount of negative and nonsensical content that circulates across various social media spaces. A student summarized this feeling by stating, "Facebook has so much content that could make you laugh but really influence you negatively." The students were aware that signs of addiction could be seen through the amount of time they spend browsing the blue world (Facebook). Harassment and bullying were repeatedly mentioned by the students. A female student said, "I have been insulted many times … many people send me messages and if I do not respond, they insult me." Another female participant added, "Yes I sometimes share pictures of myself and receive mean comments." Students showed a positive attitude toward Facebook because they felt it allows them to say anything they want and voice their opinion. Also, they find it remarkably easy to share and spread content. A male student alerted his friends to the fact that, "…real freedom is when you voice words out face to face and in reality, not by hiding behind a screen." We feel the same could be applied to bullying, where having anonymous accounts encourages the freedom to bully and insult others.

University survey results

The survey (see appendix 4) had 20 items/statements and is on a 3-point scale: 1. Never, 2. Sometimes, 3. Always. To be able to evaluate the state of MIL in Algeria and the students' level, we established these values: (1- 1.66 as low), (1.67-2.33 as average), and (2.34- 3 as high).

The purpose of the survey was to tests university students' overall knowledge about MIL in Algerian universities. The survey had three themes: 1) Media awareness and information analysis, 2) media and information literacy principles, and 3) media and digital engagement. Internal consistency analysis was performed on 16 point-scale items to calculate Cronbach's alpha (cf. Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) and revealed a coefficient of 62, which is acceptable. The remaining 4 items were a series of true and false statements about cyber-bullying, digital privacy, hate speech, and government surveillance. We tested whether students are familiar with these four principles of MIL.

Students' Profile (*N*=40)

- The participants consisted of 21 males and 19 females aged 18-30.
- 31 students live in cities.
- 33 students use electronic websites to access information.
- 38 students did not receive formal MIL education (see more demographic information in appendix. 5).

Key Results by Themes

The main question we aimed to answer through the survey was: What is the state of the art of MIL in Algeria from select university students' perspectives? The entire survey result showed that 75% of students have an average knowledge about MIL (*M*= 2.26). Regarding theme one, media awareness and information analysis, 80% of students scored high (*M*=2.39). Theme one covered statements about media access, analysis, fake news detection, and media effects. Theme three encompassed statements about social media engagement, digital surveillance, and media and news production. 71% of students scored average on media and digital engagement theme (*M*=2.13). Concerning theme two, media literacy principles, which had a series of 'true or false' statements, we present the results below. In the following section, we will present the main results from each theme (for a complete set of results, please see appendix 6).

Theme one: Media awareness and information analysis

- 86% (*M*= 2.58) think media influence people's behavior.
- 84% (*M*=2.53) believe they have the necessary capacities to analyze information from various media outlets.
- 79% (*M*=2.38) watch and consult various media outlets to obtain daily news.
- 81% (*M*= 2.43) search and verify information whenever they receive it.
- 78% (*M*=2.33) said they are able to differentiate between fake and real/authentic news.

Theme two: Media and information literacy principles

Theme two had a series of 'true or false' statements and aimed to test the students' knowledge about the main topics and principles of MIL. Table 2 below displays the results.

Statement	True (n, %)	False (n, %)

I know about cyber-bullying.	n=25, 63%	n=15, 37 %
I can preserve my privacy online.	n=26, 65%	n=14, 35%
I know about hate speech.	n=29, 72.5%	n=11, 27.5%
I am aware of the government's surveillance of media institutions.	n=17, 42.5 %	n=23, 57.5%
Total repetitions and percentages /160	n= 97, 61%	n= 63, 39%

Table 2. *Theme two results: Knowledge about MIL principles.*

According to the total repetitions, the students overall level concerning the main principles of MIL is considered slightly above average with 61% and 97 correct answers versus 39% and 63 wrong answers. Interestingly, more than half the population are not aware of the governments' surveillance on media institutions; however, as shown below, most students think the government monitor them as individuals. The results showed that most students are familiar with hate speech, cyberbullying, and know how to preserve their digital privacy.

Theme three: Media and digital engagement

- 81% (*M*= 2.43) agree that the government and third parties monitor the Internet activity of individuals.
- 81% (*M*=2.43) use their phones to document events and share news online.
- 78% (*M*=2.53) alert their surroundings of distorted content or misinformation they received.
- 71% (*M*= 2.13) engage with social media groups and pages they subscribe to.
- 63% (*M*=1.88) said they document events in their area and publish them online to raise others' awareness.
- 49% (*M*=1.48) use media to gather others around common causes and defend them.

Theme three shows that the students are aware of digital surveillance. The results also reveal students' vigilance towards fake news and engagement with citizen journalism. However, it is noticeable how the students fail to use media to gather around common causes for change.

Findings from University Focus Groups

Themes

1. **Yes! TV, but the Internet is taking over**

Students from northern universities[20] expressed their opinions about TV being a media that combines motion, sound, and the visual aspects together, but also agree that the Internet is a powerful and convenient tool. One student said, "The Internet provides all mediums of communication." Another student remarked how the Internet can reach many people that TV could not, and said, "The Internet gathers people around several media, such as TV, radio, and

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[20] In this report, we abided by the CITI training/research regulations, especially the principle of "do no harm" to research participants. We de-identified the data and made sure it is anonymous and confidential. Both focus groups with university students were conducted at universities in the north of Algeria.

websites." It is the king of mediums. Importantly, many students clearly stated that social media is their favorite medium for reasons such as it is convenient, immediate, and easily accessible. One student said, "Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook … are quick and there is always something new." Social media's newness and freshness of information always keep its users connected and engaged. Another student added, "social media are followed by Algerians and information quickly gets into the hands of people." As a caveat for users of social media and the Internet for gathering information and news, one student assumed that, "social media has so much influence, but less credibility." We also discovered that the students are highly aware of the quality of information that circulates in and out of social media.

2. Media and information literacy in Algeria

When students were asked to define MIL, the students had different definitions and were close enough to uncovering the main mission of having a solid media education in Algeria. The students operationalized that MIL is a joint effort between journalists and educators. They opined that the main mission of MIL is to inform their knowledge about the media and spread tolerance. A student reasoned how some Algerian TV stations broadcast "empty content and spread hate and intolerance." Another student claimed that "media education happens when media content spreads positivity and enables people to think positively." Speaking of positivity, students identified a positive media outlet as one which raises awareness and fights propaganda. To one Algerian student, positive media should contain, a "diversity of content, political, social, and educational." In the same line of thought, a participant alluded to the fact that current media does not cover different topics and affirmed, "Media [in Algeria] focus on few topics and steer people's opinions towards select topics … [they] are negative and manipulative."

Media in all its forms, formal or informal, is powerful and exerts influence on individuals. Media could be positive or negative, depending on the message and goal of the piece of information. In this sense, a student enlightened us about "positive media [as] the one that produces journalists who fulfill their mission to awaken people and raise awareness." Another participant echoed this statement and added, "Media become negative when they use lies or propaganda to serve the interests of certain individuals and politicians like we see during election time." It is remarkable that university students are aware that media could be a powerful propaganda machine, and they hold the journalists responsible for any positive influence media content could have on individuals. Media need to be neutral, independent, and avoid "sensational or emotional journalism," ascertained a student. Interestingly a student attempted to summarize the state of the art of media in Algeria and posited, "Globalization led us to shift from media of purpose and education to a media of business and political interests." This remains a topic that certainly needs further research, but the signs of a partisan media might be present in Algerian society.

3. Freedom of speech perspectives

When it comes to the question of freedom of speech, Algerian students had divergent yet complementary views. Some think that they have the freedom to express themselves using online and alternative media such as social media. Others argued that freedom of speech is relative and is restricted by the government, societal conventions, religion, and race. "Social media gave me the freedom to speak and meet people of the same interests," said one participant. The students praised social media based on the fact that their opinions could reach many people quickly. Sharing and being able to let others know what one thinks was one of the most reported

advantages of social media. A student mentioned, "I can also spread my thoughts and my personal opinions."

Social media is on the one hand free and open to anyone, but it can also cause misunderstanding and conflict. A participant claimed that "social media became a public sphere for everybody to speak their opinions, but there is so much bullying and hate speech which limits freedom of expression." Freedom of expression could sometimes lead to mistreating others or attacking them. It remains true that "sometimes saying what we think can hurt others' convictions and beliefs," pronounced one student. Respecting others' beliefs and convictions is one limit of freedom of speech and one should not confuse between the two. We do not live in a vacuum. We do live and share our social spheres with others, and what makes media social is the fact that we can interact and exchange thoughts and opinions. Therefore, in social media, "There is an audience and a context." A participant in the focus group summarized the limits of freedom of speech, stating, "Every human is restricted, there are governments, traditions, and social responsibilities." Social responsibility includes one having to respect the other with his/her identity tenets such as religion, race, ethnicity, and freedom of thought. It remains, however, hard to organize open and public spaces such as social media, especially since it is a virtual world.

4. Hate speech and cyber bullying: The epidemic of the 21st-century digital world

Some participants in social media and online spheres misuse their freedom of speech to bully and insult others. Social media is an open space with regulations at a bare minimum. The problem is, as a student declared, "Everyone has a social media account [but] not everybody knows how to use it." Bullying is the conscious move to bring someone down, belittle, insult, or racially stereotype him/her, to name a few tactics. On Facebook, for instance, a student indicated that it usually happens "Through comments. The same people … some people who cannot accept your opinions or disagree with you … they do the most to turn your opinion against you and insult you at times." Intolerance to a diversity of opinion has been reported repeatedly by the participants as fuel for bullying. In this regard, another student reported, "I have witnessed bullying from anonymous people who insulted me, threatened to hit me … especially if we disagree or I post something that doesn't match their beliefs." A female student made a statement about the country overall and affirmed, "For sure, in Algeria whoever shows a different opinion will receive all types of insults." In response to this claim, a student explained, "It is just because we are different." In summary, a female student expressed her feelings about bullying and insults and mentioned, "We face it so often, especially when you talk about identity, history, and religion … we then receive insults and attacks or threats."

We asked students how they think this issue of cyber bullying could be fixed and their answers centered around positivity, education, and tolerance. There was an obvious need for positive criticism because people are able to address each other freely. In a tentative approach to fight bullying, a student suggested, "I try to make sure my comments are clean and don't hurt anybody." Others said they sometimes comment, and if they cause a negative reaction or insult, they go back and delete the comment. A female student told us, "I deleted many comments because of some users who insulted and disrespected me." Indeed, making sure the content is neutral and speaks one's opinion formally is one of the core values of MIL. Students have emphasized education and positive, constructive criticism between each other online and proposed that being able to criticize others requires knowledge and expertise. This can guarantee constructive

criticism and avoid insults. MIL could also stand as a reliable solution to bring awareness about and fight bullying, hate speech, and insults.

5. Government is on the watch more than family

Algerian university students exposed the fact that the Algerian government monitors and surveils their activities online, especially on social media. We asked students if they feel under surveillance from their families and/or the government. We also asked them what steps they take to protect themselves and their online privacy. A student started off the dialogue and stated, "For sure there is surveillance." Another one specified, "We sometimes do not speak [freely] as we see many people have been jailed … they are activists online." The government surveillance does not stop there. A participant assumed, "There is government surveillance as they follow bloggers and activists or whoever constantly spreads what activists share." According to the students, the Algerian government is "On the watch and we see that daily," a student claimed. We probed the students to see if they feel their family also control their online activity. A participant answered, "I do not think there is societal or family surveillance as we are grown-up men."

We wanted to know more about how students think the government surveils them and what they do to avoid it. Their answers were mostly unsure, but they had a couple of interesting ideas. A student asserted, "They use keywords and follow who said what." Another student added, "They can spy on us using our cameras on our devices." A participant told us, "There is also cybercrime police, and they watch hashtags and content that deals with politics." Analyzing the students' responses there is clearly surveillance, mainly on anything that criticizes the government or speaks about current politics, but how this is done remains unknown to the students.

Subsequent to government surveillance, we also discussed online privacy management with the participants. A student thought privacy is hardly attainable and said, "There are no more secrets now [and] there will always be surveillance." Abstaining from providing personal information online was a notable strategy that university students use. Another student mentioned that one needs to pause before sharing content. Reflection upon sharing could be a great strategy to avoid any unwanted consequences, and it is part of "the social responsibility or journalism ethics," a student interpreted. Style and saying things in a sleek way, i.e., use steganography, could also protect one's privacy. In this sense, a student commented, "government surveillance is always there, and we see it every day, so when we publish or write things, we avoid direct styles."

What do formal education stakeholders think?

Among the interviewed participants, we also spoke with two chairs of different university departments in the north of Algeria. Additionally, we interviewed two representatives, one from the Ministry of Education and one from the Ministry of Higher Education. In what follows, we will share their thoughts on Media and Information Literacy (MIL), how it is practiced in Algeria, and whether the education system has a place for it.

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education

The Ministry of Education mandates, funds, and assesses schools. It designs the curriculum and prints and distributes the textbooks for K- 12 education (from kindergarten to high school). The

Ministry of Higher Education, on the other hand, only manages the finances and logistics of universities across Algeria. Content is more the responsibility of each university, to build and to teach.

The Ministry of Education emphasized that currently there is a curriculum on basics of computing in place. The curriculum teaches the students parts of the computer and how to use the Microsoft Office package, such as analyzing numerical data using Excel. Additionally, the representative[21] mentioned that they do not run or participate in any MIL workshops or professional development specifically related to media education, but they are open to collaborate with any country or institution to implement effective MIL education programs. The representative, however, mentioned that some schoolteachers take personal initiatives to raise students' awareness about the pros and cons of using the Internet, especially social media. Regarding fake news, the ministry officer alluded to the fact that today's students are always connected and have more knowledge than their teachers or parents on how to manipulate technology. "They grew up with it," the representative observed.

The Ministry of Higher Education officer we spoke to was of high ranking and had a clear vision of how affairs are run inside the ministry. The officer refused to answer the questions and assumed this research may potentially mingle with the public policy of the country. He made it clear that Algeria does not collaborate, nor does it easily support research sponsored by foreign entities, as is this report. The officer then justified the lack of answers about MIL and said that the ministry's mission is to administratively manage public universities, make sure they are equipped, and resolve any potential conflict(s). It is out of the realm of the Ministry's duty to interfere with the curriculum. Therefore, the teaching content depends on universities. As a result, no global strategy or vision was shared with us.

The chairs of university media departments

We interviewed two different department chairs at two northern universities. They both chair departments of media production, journalism, and mass communication studies. The conversation treated topics such as MIL in Algeria, courses, and majors offered in this regard, professional development, and freedom of the press and individual speech. Below are the findings from a thematic analysis of the tape-recorded interviews.

1. Media and information literacy at Algerian universities

Although this is the case of two public universities, we believe the findings reveal problems and issues that many other universities might also have. During the face-to-face interviews, we asked the chairs about their definition of MIL. The following definition summarizes both interviewees' conceptions, as they were similar enough:

"Literacy has changed from reading and writing to how to use portable devices and … content management, understanding, and searching. MIL is a new concept. Today everything is digital, democracy is digital, propaganda is digital, education is digital and so is learning. MIL is to teach

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[21] We did not obtain consent from either ministry to mention names or the positions of the interviewees. It was difficult to get to interview both representatives and, in both instances, we were not allowed to tape-record the interviews. For stylistic purposes, we used the words office, representative, or stakeholder interchangeably.

and train students of all ages on how to use different media technologies in their schools and daily life. … We need to build MIL competencies and strategies and successfully teach them to our students. MIL is part of civic education as well. It enables us to interact with information, its flow, and news, which is pivotal to civic engagement."

As researchers, we wanted to learn more about the courses taught at Algerian universities and whether MIL is part of mass communication and journalism curricula. One professor and department chair mentioned, "We have some courses that are related to MIL. Citizen journalism and digital journalism. Data analysis courses, etc. These are related to MIL." The other professor and chair added, "We are working on adding more. We do not have MIL in Algeria yet." According to their answers, MIL in Algerian universities is a work in progress. Currently, there are many initiatives, courses, and seminars that teach MIL related topics such as fake news, propaganda, and citizen journalism. We deduced from the interviews that both department chairs have a strong will to include MIL and media critical thinking in university classes. They sensed a problem and a need for media education in Algeria that needs to be addressed. One of them contemplated saying, "Students have this technology. They come with it. They are always connected. Do they know how to use it? We are not sure."

One of the chairs gave a detailed situation about the Algerian society media epidemic, information overload, and technology invasion. He relates the problem to the adoption of technology, especially social media, without appropriate training. He suspected that "most users consume anything that is on Facebook without the least critical thinking or questioning." Alarmingly, the professor assumed that this is true about many university students as well. He said, "When you talk to [students], you feel they have so much information that is wrong. They obtain them from social network sites where about 90% of information needs to be verified." Social media may give the impression that one knows a lot, since the information load is huge, instant, and continuously flooding.

Information overload is, in the eyes of one media department chair, the reason behind students' recess in research and scientific curiosity. Convenience and information flow with a finger click gave students the impression that they know, and that they can confidently handle scholarship. "Many students cite YouTube and Facebook as their information sources … ask Google health problems, ask your doctor online … Google voice answers almost anything," said one department chair. Technology is convenient and obtaining information on the Internet requires the least effort. However, academic scholarship demands verification and trustworthiness of information.

The information speed and technology onslaught are thought to suppress organic and lively communication within Algerian families and friends alike. Today, much talking "goes with the machine," said a department chair. Opportunities for social interaction and advice are scarce. It is the age of the individual with the machine. "Public sphere negotiations and dialogue lead to community building, law, politics, and societal change," posited another department chair. Technology has created miniature individual bubbles governed by carefully crafted algorithms. When everyone lives in his/her own bubble, isolated from the rest of the world and society, then, they live in polarization and division. Personal digital bubbles, according to a media department chair, "widen the gap between generations and create hate speech, racism and the like." In closing this section, this quote gives hope and assurance that things could brighten eventually; "MIL

needs to be at universities, academies, in politics, and everybody should feel concerned," claimed one of the interviewed professors.

2. MIL challenges and opportunities

Change, especially when it involves many people, is a tedious endeavor. There are challenges and opportunities facing Algerian higher education about the current media ecology. Alternative or informal media such as social media is in the hands of everyone, and this requires skill and critical thinking. The core problem one department chair theorized is that "…everyone could be a media anchor, a journalist and spread information. Sharing mechanisms are quick and seamless. Most of the public lack knowledge about how content is managed, ideology, and media goals. Most people are just receivers … information sponges."

When it comes to local Algerian media, according to a media expert and chair of a media department, professional media institutions around the world do have research and development (R&D) departments. The latter prospects and plans the future of media activity. He told us, "No institution in Algeria has R&D, and the country lacks a research foundation and structure." We learned from the interview that "Journalists need to bring the public up to a higher level of professionalism, rather than delivering articles and news about negative day to day activities." He added, "The nature of news and the quality of journalistic analysis shared with the people can spread critical thinking and invite the rest of the public to know that not everything can be gobbled."

Both professors ascertained that national media outlets share a responsibility of MIL education through their work and the quality of the topics they share. Additionally, according to a department chair, "Not all media institutions in Algeria follow the ethics of journalism … some newspapers have turned into opposition loudspeakers. … content selection is negative. Content selection is skewed, and many newspapers or Algerian media make mistakes without apologizing." Another department chair remarked, "There is so much misleading of the public opinion by some media institutions. Many editors of news and media content need MIL. … journalists as well." Media work in Algeria needs improvement not only at the public level but also at the professional level. In this regard, the professor and chair pronounced, "In Algeria, there is a tension between media journalists, media owners/editors/ gatekeepers, and the government." But who eventually benefits from this tension?

At the university, things are different, but they still need improvement. The chairs said they have not participated in workshops that exclusively teach MIL, but they have touched upon topics such as fake news and cyberbullying in seminars and conferences both nationally and internationally. They also mentioned that teachers' development is fundamental to the application of MIL in Algeria. Teachers need updates through conferences, panel discussions, seminars, and summer schools. A department chair remarked that, "MIL as courses do exist, but we need more means, courses, and tools to spread it to a wider number of students." Internet content and information cannot be controlled, but what can be done, according to the professors, is to "teach and sustain the teaching of MIL." They admitted that Algerian universities do not have a complete MIL major, but they are open to collaborating with other universities or professional developers, nationally or internationally, to design and spread MIL. It is necessary and a matter of personal and national safety. Among the future projects are a lab for MIL research and a master's degree to teach MIL, declared a department chair.

Findings from field journalists

We interviewed 10 journalists and media (visual and written) producers. The sample population included reporters, investigative journalists, producers, anchors, radio, web journalists, and media regulation authorities. The length of their experience ranged from 5 to 30 years. The questions we asked were about MIL development in Algeria, their professional training, the effect of social media on their job, their engagement with the public, and the challenges facing MIL teaching in the country. We will present the journalists' perspectives below thematically.

1. **"It's the culture that we acquire by using various media."**
The journalists defined MIL as an old concept and one they learned about through their experience in the field rather than within the walls of a school. Some went further, questioning whether other journalists and media institutions have MIL education. The interviews were highly critical and engaging. We noted frustration and hope towards the way media as a profession is regulated in Algeria and the way people engage with various media—especially social media. A participant declared, "As a journalist who had 12 years of experience with visual and written media, we did not learn about media information literacy at school or university, but we learned about journalism ethics and media law." A media regulator informed us that Algeria has a curriculum that teaches the computing basics from elementary through to high school and wishes to design and implement a comprehensive media literacy education. She added, "media information literacy (or technology in general) in Algeria or other third world countries is noticeably underdeveloped, unfortunately." Media and information literacy to another journalist happens when, as he said, "I investigate information before I post it on my social media pages. I try to explain and change some stereotypes and let my audience know what happens behind the scenes of media production." The journalists were not sure exactly what MIL was, but their definitions were inspired by their field experiences. One investigative journalist mentioned that he has never "heard about MIL at the university." He added, "We know about media ethics and we need to have regulations and foundations for information and the way media content is shared today so we can protect individual users."

So, what is MIL? An experienced journalist said, "Deciphering media messages needs education and work … camera angle, content choice, language, etc., need critical thinking." He added that, "when it comes to the Algerian education system it is more of regurgitation … memorize and deliver information whenever asked." He succinctly summarized the problem claiming that, "the government is afraid of MIL because it carries democracy, freedom of speech, civic engagement, and critical thinking." Another web journalist told us that if I "think of media and information literacy in one word, I think it is responsibility. It is the investigation of the source, reliability, and making sure we deliver good news." The answers highly criticized the education system and showed that journalists bear a huge responsibility towards investigating content and delivering reliable information.

2. **"Social media do not have regulations, nor do they have any journalism ethics …"**
Journalists agreed that social media is highly important; it has changed the way they work, share content, and the way the public engages with news and media. A journalist commented on public education, "When asked to prepare a research article or project, most kids at school resort to online resources, be it Google or social media." Students, he added, "are on their own when it

comes to online surfing." This quote speaks to many Algerians who lack the skill necessary to manage the tremendous amount of information and news that bombards them every day. We also found through our survey that high school students mostly used Wikipedia or Google to prepare school assignments. A news anchor told us that social media has done, "havoc to Algeria … it made the society naked to the world and made individuals dream and escape their real world." Moreover, he posited that, "social media created a feeling of sadness as a result of people comparing reality to a fake world that glistens, where everything is perfect." Another journalist echoed this statement and remarked, "Social media has created a bubble and small communities … the individual tends to listen and follow what resembles him or her."

The constant presence of the public on social media has changed the way journalists diffuse information. A media reporter mentioned to us that good content is what, "Creates a buzz and goes viral … liked by many followers." She added, "We, as journalists, need to play by the rules of Facebook ecology through short and sweet content, with headlines that are attractive … to tease the audience and attract them." Social media has brought challenges but also opportunities to the journalists' work. Using social media to spread news seems convenient and cheap for media institutions and producers. As a journalist noted, "Social media is sometimes more powerful than other media. We sometimes spread news on social media before TV … social media is with the public all the time." Therefore, reaching the public in the age of social media has become easier and profitable. It is profitable in the sense that the public also curates news, and media crowdsourcing is another form of free labor that helps media institutions gain more ground.

3. **"We enjoy the way the public appreciates our content. We enjoy the way the audience responds to us."**

The journalists made it clear to us that they use social media metrics to measure the public's engagement with the news. They learn considerable amounts through the comments and feedback they receive from the public. The journalists stated clearly that social media has given them a platform to engage directly with the public and they evaluate their performance based on this. A journalist illustrated, "We do this through our pages and engage with the public, reading their comments and feedback. … Sometimes we even allow the public to send us news or videos that we then investigate and, often, publish." Feedback and interaction, to some journalists, is necessary. Journalists believed it is their responsibility to provide the public with feedback and discuss what is broadcast online. Regarding information and media literacy, a journalist gave his opinion and said, "We need research in the field of Information and Media Literacy, the effect of media on society, and statistics to help media organizations and companies and as well as helping media regulation." Social media interaction with the public seems to be not only necessary but compulsory. A journalist said, "The way things are going right now, the world has obliged us to interact and be social." She added, "We receive feedback and suggestions through social media most of the time."

4. **Media and information literacy for journalists**

All journalists, without exception, told us they did not have any formal MIL training. However, they took some courses during their university years, learned in their work debriefings, and through professional development sessions that touched on a few MIL topics, such as fake news and hate speech, are familiar with elements of MIL. A journalist pronounced, "I, myself, did not participate

in a [MIL] workshop." He continued, "I think it is necessary … when I analyze what's going on social media and see so much hate speech and bullying. I noticed so much fake news as well." Another journalist stated, "I did not participate in nor organize a [MIL] workshop, but I learned so much from my personal and professional experience."

We asked the journalists if they educate their audience about the wrongs of social media. A journalist said that the nature of their work and programs only rarely provide spaces to raise awareness about the incorrect use of social media. A journalist summarized this challenge saying, "We do not have such spaces, but we try through our programs and TV shows. … We, every now and then, bring awareness to the people about social media use. But it's tiny." It takes so much effort to educate everybody, and one journalist suggested, "The Ministry of Education is responsible and needs to design programs on this. They teach kids about the basics of using computers. I think they should add social media education as well. This cannot be the responsibility of media institutions per se. The government needs to get involved as well." Journalists wanted to emphasize that MIL should be the responsibility of all societal organizations and public administrations.

With regard to students' training and professional development, most institutions, according to the interviewed journalists, university students, and trainees, told us that they are ready to go to universities and collaborate to conduct workshops. Universities also need to take the initiative and collaborate with journalists. A journalist commented on the issue of universities not soliciting them to train the students and said, "We do not receive many students and the university does not send us many students. The Algerian university is closed to itself. … Though we sometimes receive students and make sure they receive quality training … we have noticed that trainees lack many things regarding journalism and their professional training."

How about misinformation and fake news? The journalists agreed that it is not in their capacity to educate and teach every individual, but they spread awareness whenever possible and do their best to make sure the news they deliver is reliable and well investigated. A TV news anchor emphasized, "My job is to deliver reliable news and investigate the news. I cannot be responsible for what happens on social media." Another one added, "We need to be gatekeepers and investigate information. Make sure the information is reliable. The public needs to pause whenever they read anything, including the news." Pausing before publishing permanent information is definitely a powerful MIL skill. It is a primary stage towards critical thinking.

Pausing before believing a piece of information is also a critical thinking skill. MIL is important and everyone should participate in its establishment. A journalist noted that, "Professional media need to allow a great portion of their content to talk about these topics. MIL is very important for the audience." MIL could be a solution to the spread of misinformation, cyberbullying, fake news, digital privacy breaches, among others. Regulating the media could be a solution to contain misinformation, bullying and the like, but that may impact individuals' freedom of speech. A journalist suggested that, "We have a government that controls the media. I stand for freedom of speech and against the negative use of media. There needs to be a balance. Media practitioners and lawmakers need to have a grounded understanding and reach a consensus that should both regulate the media and protect freedoms of speech." Priority should be given to the education of

the masses, as technology is already there and will keep developing. It will continue to raise issues related to information delivery and consumption.

5. Between freedom of speech and regulation of informal media spaces

We discussed the matter of freedom of speech and media regulation with the journalists and wanted to further examine what they think in light of an increase in misinformation, propaganda, bullying, and threats to cybersecurity. The answers were divided between whether there should be government regulation of free media to protect citizens, but also a fear that this regulation may turn into a dictatorship and a suppression of individuals' privilege of freedom of thought and speech. A journalist argued, "This is a problem where governments are stretched between imposing regulations on alternative media or protecting freedom of speech." Law and reform may be necessary to protect free spaces and individuals from misinformation, but "Technology moves fast, and laws take time to be passed," remarked a journalist. So, digital spaces' regulation is necessary, but laws and regulations are nonexistent and, if they are passed, may take time to be enforced. The digital age develops at a fast pace and requires lawmakers to jump on the wagon.

Indeed, we learned from the journalists that Algeria barely has clear laws that regulate digital media production/dissemination. The problem is a matter of maintaining balance. "I think the government needs to protect people and control the flow of information to fight fake news, racism, and sustain national safety. However, the government should not take this as a way to dictate freedom of speech. It is a relationship of balance between law and freedom of information," claimed a journalist. Algeria and the media have a notorious history of jailing journalists and mandating media voices. A journalist clarified, "Safe opinions should be promoted and protected. Unfortunately, today in Algeria, some journalists have been sued because they criticized the government. Journalism is a professional job and follows regulations." The ethics of journalism guarantee a safe trade of information, but this, sometimes, threatens governments.

As a solution, a journalist explained that "The line between freedom of speech and governmental regulation is too thin. This is not a government job per se. Regulating media needs an independent authority." We learned that an independent entity does exist in Algeria. Its name is *L'Autorité de Régulation de l'Audiovisuel* (ARAV).[22] Its chief mission is to regulate and impose freedom of media practices. However, as many journalists said, it is not effective yet and its work has not yet been validated by the Algerian authorities.

The state of professional media in Algeria is not the government's responsibility per se. It is important to know that news and content editors in chief also oppress their journalists. One journalist remarked, "Media editors play a huge role and restrict their journalists. Censorship happens not only at the government level but also at the institutional level. Many journalists are restricted and watched. Another journalist added, "Journalists operate under pressure, even on social media … on their own pages." A journalist suggested a solution that rests on the effective implication of MIL teaching. She said, "Media education, if taught well, can enable the public to have complete freedom using any media because they can decipher it for themselves." She added, "The right teaching of media education can have the individual choose and practice freedom of speech safely. … I think the Algerian citizen needs MIL."

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[22] http://arav.dz/fr/

6. **MIL challenges and opportunities: "It needs to be everywhere, from homes to schools to administrations and the government."**

Our last theme speaks to the thoughts and feelings journalists had about Media and Information Literacy and whether it would see the light in Algeria. There are initiatives, but they need more reinforcement and work. We summarized the journalists' views as follows:

- There is a lack of interest from the public, especially if they need to pay to learn about it.
- Algeria adopted ubiquitous Internet access only recently, so MIL is still new.
- Workshops are necessary because we see so much fake news and propaganda. We need MIL.
- MIL needs to be everywhere, from homes to schools to administrations and the government.
- Individuals pushing for MIL have not found the necessary support to carry on this type of education.
- There is so much educational media going on informally as a result of the broad distribution of portable devices. It needs to be supported.
- MIL needs to be the government's strategy and priority. It needs to be taught at schools and universities.
- Digital media law and regulations of digital spaces are unavailable and this needs to be addressed as soon as possible.
- The government sometimes uses the media for propaganda. Therefore, we expect lessons on MIL to fight this. The public needs to distinguish between propaganda and information.
- There is some governmental fear of digital media, and the public has endorsed portable technologies before the government.
- Some activists have been jailed because they spoke out on Facebook. Democracy is undermined as well. Current Algerian politics has made MIL difficult to be taught.
- Founding organizations, organizing gatherings, and practicing civic engagement in Algeria are challenging and highly monitored.
- Finally, we did not adopt technology as it evolved. We adopted it late, and the first thing was social media with an abundance of information.

Findings from NGOs

We visited five active media NGOs and interviewed them about MIL in Algeria, the impact of social media on their work, their visions, and challenges and opportunities facing MIL in Algeria. These organizations train youth on methods of media production. Some are professional producers with media products on the web and social media that are either audio or audio-visual.

1. **"Media education is a concept we do not master …"**

Among the topics of conversation was how do civil media agents view MIL and whether they carry out any educational work in this regard. The answer could be summarized under 'we feel we have some experience.' An NGO founder said, "Media literacy as a concept is new for us. We do practice it, but incidentally." Indeed, many enlightened us that they have launched initiatives regarding media education or have indirectly informed the public about it. This happens mostly

through gatherings and debates, conferences, meetings, or videos produced and products on social media. For instance, a founder of a media organization that focuses on cinema works stated, "We also talk about education through movies. ... We try to give both opinions about media and seek to paint a complete picture for our public. Cinema is a great lecturer." Another president of an organization said his organization uses radio podcasts to inform the public about MIL related topics such as fake news and racism. He told us, "Media is opinion mastery, and mastering public opinion is power." Another media producer declared that we, as a society, are new to the age of informal and social media. He informed us, "We organize podcast workshops for youth and kids as well." His organization has media production workshops for kids, where they learn about content making and distribution. This, according to the project initiator, helps them learn about consumption as well.

Youth media organizations felt the need to work on media and spread awareness because "Media is powerful. There is media manipulation and content editing … not everything on media is reliable and raw," explained a female media NGO founder. Other NGO founders and members told us that they often organize debates around fake news, cybersecurity, cyber-bullying, immigration stereotyping, and hate speech. We noticed many initiatives that need encouragement and sustainable financing.

2. "Social media is almost everything for us …"

We deduced from the interviews that social media has a large influence on Algerian society. An interviewee told us, "Social media is influencing people today more than anything else ever has." Being connected to social media also poses problems. An NGO owner argued that "Media in the hands of everybody is dangerous. Everybody can edit and share." This has caused lots of content to go unverified and a great amount of false information to circulate. Social media browsers, according to a media producer, have "The impression that they know so much and have knowledge. This feeling is fake, as so much information [on social media] is meant for entertainment and is not reliable." The problem is that "Social media can sway public opinion. Information grows and spreads quickly," said an NGO officer. Social media is powerful, and there is a need for MIL. An organization president claimed that "This [media ecology] needs education on how to deal with information. Families need media literacy as well."

However, this is not the only vision we gathered from the interviews. Some participants also praised social media as a great tool for making their voices and concerns heard—a great tool to exercise democracy. One NGO director posited "Social media is creating a platform for democracy and voiceless people, where good ideas take over bad ideas." He added that, "Positive social media participation challenges mainstream media that controls information." Information is no more in the hands of select media outlets, and social media has given voice to citizen journalism and enabled a wide public to have access to information that otherwise may have remained secret. Social media, if used properly, has great potential and helps spread good initiatives in society.

All the NGO directors interviewed in this study said they mainly use social media for their announcements and recruitment processes. They also mentioned that social media is where they deposit their content and receive feedback to improve their performance. A founder of an English-speaking radio station said "Our project became known through social media. Our application

announcement and reception of people's applications to participate was through social media."
Another NGO founder who focuses on kids' literacy and youth media production informed us that
his organization reached "3.5 million minutes of watch time in a month … [and] 60% of our people
watched our content on YouTube." Another said it is thanks to social media that "national media
has invited us onto TV and elsewhere." The positive effect of social media could be summarized
in this quote by one of the participants, "95% of the time we reach our audience through social
media. It is cheap, quick, and comprehensive."

3. "If we find experts, we will connect with them …"

NGO founders told us that they are always open for training regarding MIL and how they can
improve their media work. A founder expressed her interest in collaboration with MIL experts and
declared, "If we find experts, we will connect with them. We are open. … Especially training on
MIL. It is a new concept and we need it." Another one alluded to the fact that training opportunities
overseas are rare and mentioned that this is due to a lack of resources, especially of finances.
He said, however, that they organize MIL workshops with local journalists to learn more about
media work. A media producer and NGO director informed us that they have visited other
organizations overseas and received training. He said, "… we learned so much … [and] we are
always open for more exchanges with people who can give us knowledge." Importantly, the youth
organizations do not only wish to collaborate with other media organizations, but they also wish
"…to export [their] experience as well," mentioned a participant.

When we asked them about opportunities to collaborate with PYALARA and DW, and who we
could possibly collaborate with to implement MIL, we learned that "there is no specific entity that
does media training for youth in Algeria. Maybe a bit at university," remarked a female NGO
founder. Another organization officer echoed her opinion and said, "I don't think there are any
organizations that are specialized in media literacy. It's rare." We were told that there is no
particular entity, but they favored the youth or big media outlets. We assumed the government
could be involved in MIL training, but the founders of one NGO had a different opinion. He argued
that, "Currently the government does not have the will to regulate and protect the media against
misinformation and propaganda." Another added, "I think private schools will welcome media
literacy with warmth. Public education is still in the strategy of control. They do not venture onto
new media and do not update quickly." An NGO founder opined, "The government needs to have
a vision but also a political will regarding media education."

4. MIL challenges and opportunities

When we discussed the challenges and opportunities with NGO owners and representatives, they
revealed many issues such as bureaucracy, lack of media initiatives, and low Internet penetration.
An NGO owner that received funds from a foreign embassy to start her initiative said, "There is
so much bureaucracy, except it is through embassies of foreign countries." She added,
"Individuals find it a lot of hassle, unless you know someone at the ministry. … The main challenge
is to get the person or official in charge and those who could start or implement change." Another
participant mentioned that there is a lack of initiatives on behalf of big media outlets, but also
informed us that some media outlets, especially private ones, only recently started their work.

From a perspective of freedom of speech and its relation to MIL education, a president of an NGO
explained that "When we speak about media literacy, we talk about freedom of speech. Freedom

of speech means justice and democracy. Algeria has a deficit in these regards." He emphasized that, "This is the major obstacle against media literacy [and that there] is no political will to protect the media and allow freedom of speech." He suggested that, "We need to get together, as the public, to educate ourselves." In relation to the government, another NGO director commented on public education and stated, "The manuals of education are lagging behind. This is due to government strategy and curriculum designers." In the same line of thought, another officer posited, "The education system is the sick man of Algeria. We introduce a lot of reforms, but they are not enough. We need more work as much as we need media literacy."

It is not only the government though. Internet penetration and the newness of the digital world to Algerians is also a challenge facing MIL in Algeria. A media producer and NGO owner clarified that lacking MIL education in Algeria is related to the fact that "[t]he digital world is not new, but we just did not have access to it until recently." He explained that "Algerians are just now beginning to trust online shopping, for instance. We used to be skeptical about the digital world." He posited that "The problem is also Internet penetration. We did not access the Internet, as a public, until around 2014, with the arrival of 4G." It was with open access to the Internet, participation in social media, the quick flow of information, and the rise of several problems such as misinformation and hate speech that stimulated media NGOs to consider it necessary to have education and legislation that protects individuals.

To an NGO founder, MIL happens in fertile digital and communicative contexts. He remarked that the Algerian administration does not use technology to communicate with the public and the public is not yet used to digital communication. Expanding on this, he said, "Our infrastructure is not there yet, but there is a strong will to develop it. Our public administration has glitches on their websites and in general do not communicate online." He followed up with a suggestion that we need "campaigns about spreading digital communication awareness and get everybody to know how to participate in the online sphere." Only then, according to him, could we hope for MIL education. We also noticed a technology gap between generations. As an NGO director argued, "Today's informal learning worlds teach kids so much more than what is taught at school." He warned that, "Older generations have not followed up and integrated digital development." He believes that there is much that needs to be worked out between generations and that adults need MIL as well.

Recommendations and lessons learned

To answer the research question as to what the state of the art of media and information literacy is in Algeria, we believe that the country has great potential. More importantly, we noticed that informal media literacies are on the rise among the youth, with great initiatives using free and citizen media. Government and education, however, seem to lag behind and undermine the role fluid media plays in societies. The government is more into censorship than regulation and provision of guidance on safe media practice. This threatens democracy and freedom of speech. We also sensed a lack of media education talking to stakeholders, government, and education officials. Some claimed they were 'old school' and adhered to the basics of technological means,

whether in their personal or professional lives. This could be one of the reasons behind the slow changes in the education sector—stakeholder visions.

For journalists, Research and Development (R&D) departments need to be set up within their institutions. They feel pressured by their editors in chief, the government, and their academic knowledge that instructs them to carry out a reliable and ethical profession.

Remarkably, the outcry of social media is wide, and everyone knows it is a double-edged sword, but it does not seem to be a priority for the public to begin controlling and investigating information. There are symptoms of information fatigue among the students and an innocent adoption of technologies. The students seem to have mastery over the means of technology production and news dissemination, fake news detection among others, but their interviews showed contradictions with regard to their actual media practices (for similar results about MIL in Algeria, see Aboulkacem, Haas, & Winard, 2018). For instance, most high school students stated that they have the capacity to analyze and detect unreliable messages, yet they stated that they mainly use Wikipedia for their research projects.

We conducted a survey with university students and interviewed them. The students study mass communications, media studies, and related majors. They expressed a need for MIL. This leads us to think that other non-media majors may also need MIL. Media and information literacy are much needed in Algeria and many were excited about this research and contacted us for more information about MIL. We sensed a thirst from the surveyed and interviewed public to know more. The doors are open for collaboration and work in the field of MIL, especially with NGOs and civil society groups. We were also directed to seek collaborations with private institutions and schools. Moreover, the universities showed a desire to collaborate and implement more MIL in their majors.

The education system needs serious reforms to accompany the changes outside the school walls. Informal environments have a lot to teach and offer the students. There needs to be MIL training for teachers as well. Teacher professional development is necessary for a better implementation of MIL education. The Ministry of Education needs to establish bridges between its administration, media professionals, and the students to increase MIL training, opportunities, and implementation. The same bridges need to be established at university level. Moreover, youth NGOs need support from experts, projects, and financial resources. There are many initiatives that are worth sustaining.

Youth is the future. In 2015, Networks of Mediterranean Youth (NET-MED Youth), a UNESCO affiliate, conducted a study about youth representation and participation in Algerian media, mainly via TV and Radio. About 14 Algerian NGOs participated in designing the study. Findings showed a poor representation of youth aged 19-24 in the observed media. Young Algerians only appeared about 6% of the time on TV and radio. Young Algerians were rarely used as a source of information, and almost completely disappeared from media scenes whenever the situation was deemed serious, such as discussing political or economic matters. Youth are, however, present in media scenes when topics are meant to entertain the public or discuss sport-related activities. The report supplied many recommendations including diversifying media topics and allowing more youth to participate in media activities; establishing media monitoring to make sure that youth have their share of participation and representation in media; finally, conducting workshops

for young Algerians on how to express themselves in public, in media, and carry professional debates. We feel the same recommendations could be adapted to our report's findings.

As a follow-up initiative to the report, NET-MED Youth organized a two-day workshop for Algerian active NGOs. The workshop's theme was "Internal and External Communication: The Multiple Tools for NGO Communication."[23] Such initiatives may help the existing Algerian organizations to improves their media and information literacy skills. When more youth participate in media, the more their voice will have an impact on society. It is true that access to media is now ubiquitous and easy, but many users need training on media consumption and production.

It is important to understand the Algerian context where NGOs operate. It is a difficult and politically complex climate. Two main laws were decreed to regulate civil engagement (Law 90-31 of 1990; and Law 12-06 of 2012). Both laws give absolute authority to the government to regulate, restrict, determine the existence of or terminate an NGO's work. The 2012 law places several restrictions on NGO founders in Algeria, which makes it extremely difficult for them to obtain foreign funds. According to The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL), the law also "imposes heavy fines and criminal [charges] on members or leaders of informal associations … a number of associations have faced new obstacles in carrying out their activities, with some organizations opting to close down voluntarily rather than confront administrative and legal hurdles."[24] Moreover, the country has adopted a new information law in 2012 that obliges any NGO to go through a prior-to-publication/content dissemination review by media regulatory authorities. The law also limits access to information related to national identity, sovereignty, the economy, and national security.[17]

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[23] https://www.euneighbours.eu/en/south/stay-informed/news/net-med-youth-helps-algerian-youth-organisations-improve-their

[24] http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/algeria.html

Concluding thoughts

During nearly one and a half months of data collection, we grasped that navigating spaces and meeting with people in Algeria was tedious. Access to public administration and institutions was bureaucratic and there was a sense of skepticism towards research that is sponsored by foreign entities. A journalist and friend told me, "We [as a state] see conspiracies behind every media initiative or invention and think that Western inventions or media want to destroy us. This fear makes us a paranoid state." Indeed, we noted this in our dialogues with high ranking officials. Many of them refrained from supplying information needed and were extra cautious in interviews. Some interviewees refused to talk to us, be tape-recorded, and were slow to agree to meet us because they fear the government is watching. However, we must admit that we have met great participants and gathered comprehensive data about MIL in Algeria. Many have opened their hearts and followed us during the research process; they supplied us with contacts, directed us, and helped us navigate the media landscape in Algeria.

There is a great potential for MIL development in Algeria. Doors remain open for collaboration, especially with NGOs and universities. Like one of the participants in the study said, MIL is needed by the family, students, teachers, and everyone. The effort needs to be shared, and MIL needs to become the country's initiative rather than small initiatives here and there. Moreover, the small initiatives that exist in Algeria need encouragement and financial support to have a lasting impact.

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Chapter 4

Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in Palestine Situation and Prospects

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Introduction

Discussing the relationship between education and media is not new. Given technological developments, media has become part and parcel of the educational process. The need for Media and Information Literacy in the Middle East emerged upon losing control over live TV programs that have been substituted by social media.

The development of communication technologies in the past few decades has paved the way for the widespread usage of mass media. It has also paved the way for individuals to take part in different economic, social, educational, and cultural activities. The openness of educational institutions to mass media including newspapers, magazines, TV, and digital media aims at supporting the intellectual movement and promoting critical thinking amongst students and citizens in general.

Following the focus of a number of media outlets on entertainment, attraction, suspense, and excitement as well as other issues that hinder development, the concept of MIL has emerged, and the desire of academics to put media in the Arab world on the right track has increased.

MIL aims at providing students with the knowledge and tools needed to analyze content, think critically, participate actively, and produce new ideas. MIL focuses on citizenship and democracy because it enhances our understanding of media's role. It also develops basic skills, knowledge, and self-expression of people in a democratic society.

MIL helps to develop individuals, enhances their competency using media in a qualitative manner, promotes interaction with media, develops innovative and communicative analysis, interpretation skills, evaluation of media texts, and teaching all forms of self-expression through using media technology. MIL encourages observing personal ethics and leads to education reform, integrates new technologies in the educational process, and encourages dialogue inside and outside the classroom.

Based on the above, it is of great importance that societal and educational institutions in Palestine pay more attention to the environment that surrounds both students and individuals. The curricula and training manuals should include activities that target students and individuals, taking into consideration the need to assess the influence of media on people's personalities and their abilities to understand media messages in a critical manner. This is what has been addressed by MIL.

Since MIL leaves its impact on individuals' awareness and behaviors, we should assess its situation in our educational and academic institutions to raise students' awareness and empower them to get to know the concept of MIL, its tools, skills, and ethics.

Methodology & tools

In order to fulfill the study's objectives and to answer its questions, the researchers relied on a descriptive method that seeks to describe the phenomenon. The researchers relied on two

sources of data collection, namely secondary sources such as books, studies, the Internet, and primary sources. The latter includes (1) a survey composed of three sections (knowledge and awareness, the role of educational institutions, and participation in media content); (2) focus groups comprised of school and university students; and (3) interviews with decision-makers, representatives of civil society organizations, academic and media institutions.

Study population

The study's population is comprised of a random sample of 40 male and female school pupils and 40 male and female university students between the ages of 14 and 30. The sample's members were divided into two groups based on whether or not they have been involved in MIL previously. This is in addition to another group comprised of decision-makers and representatives of civil society organizations, academic, and media institutions.

Study's Results
First: Main results of quantitative survey
Results of the sample

1- The media outlet that recorded the highest rate of follow up amongst university students was social media at 65%, followed by TV with 35%. As for school pupils, social media comes first with 58% followed by TV with 42%. This reflects the role such outlets have in our life, especially among school pupils and university students. Both outlets are audio and visual at the same time which makes it easier for audiences to receive and understand messages than newspapers and the radio.
2- 30% of university students favor entertainment and social topics, followed by political topics with a percentage of 27.5%. As for school pupils, 38% of them favor entertainment topics, followed by political topics with a percentage of 22.5%. The exceptional situation Palestinian people are going through may explain people's interest in political topics regardless of their age. As for entertainment topics, these issues are related to students' interests and their ages on one hand and what social media and TV make available on the other.
3- The results show that the presence of MIL at schools was rated high with 79%. The same applies to "Awareness and analysis" and "The role of the school in MIL" (both 80%) and finally "Participation" with a percentage of 75%. Regarding universities, the overall rating was average (74%). "Awareness and analysis" stood at 78% and "Participation" at 71%.

Results of section 1 (Awareness and analysis)

75% of school pupils indicate that they check more than one media outlet to obtain news and information, while 78% of them rely on more than one media source to verify news and information they obtain. 79% of them believe that they can differentiate between true and fake news. 81% of university students indicate that they verify the credibility of information and news. (see annex 3).

82% of university students believe that they possess the necessary skills to analyze and evaluate information they obtain via different media outlets. This is a good indicator that students are aware of how to deal with media, understand its content, differentiate between true and fake information, are able to research information in more than one media source to verify its credibility, in addition to being courageous enough to discuss media content with their friends and families. (see annex 4).

According to the researchers, the results stress the positive role MIL can play, especially in providing students with knowledge about how to identify credible media outlets. It also develops students' personalities and their ability to express themselves and discuss general issues. It decreases the negative impact media may have on their attitude and future interests and thus, they become positive and active players in their societies. This is particularly important in the exceptional situation Palestinian people are going through with Israeli attempts to negatively influence Palestinian national identity and culture through the suspicious media messages it transmits inside Palestinian society. As a result, the need to promote MIL becomes a must, especially amongst school pupils who are exposed to the influence of social media.

The results also indicate that media left positive impacts on school pupils' behavior. 92% of school pupils and 83% of university students believe that media in general left positive impacts on them. This indicates that they can differentiate between which media outlets are good for them and which are not, what is useful to them and what is not. 78% of university students and 80% of school pupils say they discuss information they receive via social media with others, such as their parents.

Results of section 2 (Role of school in MIL)

The results indicate that 88% of pupils have been instructed by their teachers to research a certain topic using the Internet. This reflects the degree of interaction between teachers and pupils, the importance of scientific research, and of verifying information sources. 83% of pupils indicate that they receive guidance from their teachers in determining websites' trustworthiness. 85% of respondents indicate that teachers encourage them to produce media material.

While 70% of pupils agree that their teacher discusses media topics in general, 75% of them say that their teacher discusses specific media content with them. According to the researchers, there is a need for more intensified work to be done by teachers. (see annex 5)

Results of section 3 (Participation and digital interaction)

This section records an average score of 75%. 81% of pupils indicate that they have taken part in the morning radio, and 86% of them state that they share their views with their teachers. 84% of pupils confirm that they share media content with their colleagues. 40% of them are skeptical about the credibility of information published by digital media. 73% of respondents indicate that they have published media products, such as a news item, a photo, or a video, on the Internet or other media outlets. Such a low percentage is attributed to the fact that disseminating information on the Internet requires technical knowledge that many pupils lack. (see annex 6)

50% of pupils believe that sharing photos through social media sites is not safe. The absence of safety measures and digital security (e.g., hacking one's account, bullying, and manipulation) creates a state of fear amongst them regarding producing and sharing media products. (see annex 6)

As far as university students are concerned, we recorded that they scored an average of 71%. 81% of students can recognize fabricated media messages and say they warn others about them. 78% of respondents indicate that they make use of smartphone technology to produce and disseminate information. 72% of them believe that they can produce positive media content via digital media. University students note that they do not use media to discuss social issues that concern their society. This was obvious in their response to questions such as "Have you ever used media for lobby and advocacy?" with a percentage of 60% and "Do you monitor events and phenomena in your neighborhood, and do you publish it?" with a percentage of 58%.

84% of respondents indicate that the government censors the Internet. 73% of respondents say that such censorship restricts freedom of expression, democracy, and publishing media content with objectivity and credibility. 83% of university students are aware of cyber-bullying; 70% are aware of hate speech, incitement, and violence. (see annex 7)

Result of differences in demographic variables
- As far as participation is concerned, the results indicate that male school pupils exceeded their female counterparts.
- The results show differences based on age groups of respondents, especially in the overall section score and the section related to the role of the school in favor of the second age group (university students).
- There is a difference between respondents in the West Bank and those in Gaza. Respondents in Gaza expressed that they participate more in discussing media content with their teachers, in taking part in morning radios, in producing media content, etc. in comparison with their counterparts in the West Bank.
- There was a difference between those who received previous MIL training and those who had not in favor of the former.

Second: Results of focus groups
- There is conformity between the results obtained from the survey and those of the focus groups with only slight differences noted.
- The most popular media outlet for students is social media, especially Facebook, which is considered the major means of communication. According to students, this is attributed to the fact that smartphones are available all the time, which makes it easy to use Facebook anytime and to have access to news and information, a characteristic that traditional media such as TV and newspapers lack. Students do not consider digital media trustworthy in terms of both content and as a source. This stands in contrast to traditional media that provide enough space for analysis and reports, making it easier to understand the intended messages.
- Entertainment is the most viewed topic on TV and social media.

- Many students express their ability to differentiate between what is positive and what is negative, what is credible and what is fake by examining websites, reputation, and professionalism of the author or the journalist and verifying information from different sources.
- As far as the definition of the MIL concept is concerned, many definitions presented by respondents are similar to the correct definition. Such definitions include: Differentiating between true and fake news; considering more than one source to verify the credibility of information; information should be analyzed and not be accepted as a given, and critical thinking. We notice that such definitions miss one important element, namely participation and producing media content. Such issues should be taken into consideration through training sessions.
- Regarding participation and production of media content, the results of the focus groups show that pupils make the best use of media outlets available at schools, such as the morning radio and wall magazines. Pupils who have received MIL training use such outlets to discuss social and educational issues that concern their society, such as early marriage, hygiene, the preservation of cultural heritage, interviewing physicians, dental care tips, etc.
- The researchers noticed differences between pupils who have received MIL training and those who have not in terms of their understanding, their knowledge, their ability to produce media material, and the way they participate in discussion inside focus groups. This indicates that implementing MIL training sessions at schools and universities has a positive impact on students.

Third: Results of interviews

The interviews show a heightened interest of representatives of civil society organizations, academic and media institutions in MIL, the importance of promoting MIL to enhance awareness of students and media personnel on how to deal with media.

Interviewees confirm that the starting point for promoting MIL is agreeing on its elements, i.e. to conceptualize MIL in order to achieve the maximum benefit.

Interviewees highlight a MIL experience in Palestine that can be built on. They state that the main challenge regarding promoting MIL is the absence of a national strategy.

1) Academic institutions

Interviews with representatives of media institutions show that the situation of MIL at Palestinian universities has not reached the expected level, since all universities including media colleges do not offer a separate course on MIL.

Dr. Emad Abu Al-Hasan, head of the media and Arabic language department at the Arab-American University in Jenin, stresses the importance of media as the foundation for many specializations that include human or natural sciences. He indicated that media is not only a stimulator or influencer but rather a creator of culture, values, heritage, and public opinion.

He stated that MIL imposes itself on the young generation who are exposed to a huge set of information that distorts their way of thinking and one that sometimes causes serious deviations. He argued that MIL if taught in a correct and scientific manner, would enable students to understand and analyze media messages and graduate as well-informed students able to run their affairs.

Dr. Abu Al-Hasan stated that the college will be introducing the first MIL course in the next academic year. Efforts are going well in preparing a course that will be an elective for the first two semesters and become a requirement afterward.

He stressed the importance of basing MIL training and teaching on scientific method, supported by an ethical system to enable students to assist society to overcome its troubles and crisis. He pointed out that developing MIL strategies should not be prepared in isolation from the people, but rather it should be perceived as a stimulator to other policies that include cultural and education policies for young Palestinians.

Dr. Abu Al-Hasan listed a number of MIL activities that his department has been executing. These include Media analysis, social media, social development, media and society, etc.

Dr. Nader Salhieh, head of the media department at Al-Quds University, relates mass media with human development sectors by saying that "Media constitutes an important basis for the different sectors so understanding and analyzing media messages and producing its content in an innovative manner require establishing a professional, scientific, real, and mature system of MIL." He stressed the importance of paying attention to children and youths through extracurricular activities that pave the way for a strong start in such a field, bearing in mind that children and youths use social media on mass.

He listed several MIL activities that the department executes to raise students' awareness on how to deal with media, analyze its content and messages, along with questioning mass media representations of issues that concern society.

He noted that in 2012 that the college started implementing a number of projects aimed at promoting justice and the rule of law by using digital media. In 2013, the college implemented a project that aimed at providing 30 marginalized young Palestinians in East Jerusalem, both males and females, (and many of them dropout students), with the necessary training to become citizen journalists.

Dr. Salhieh stressed that those promoting MIL should possess the necessary knowledge and qualifications. He said it was worth noting that the trilateral equation (data, information, and awareness) requires abilities and professionalism, otherwise we will fail to promote the MIL concept and its basic principles.

Ms. Sulika Al-Qadi, head of the media department at Hebron University, stressed the role of MIL in creating a well-informed generation aware of its rights and issues that concern society. She also stressed the importance of promoting MIL using a bottom-up approach that aims to fulfill the needs of females, youth, and marginalized groups. As for the top-down methodology, this aims

to introduce MIL in different educational institutions: elementary, secondary, and higher education, official and unofficial (private universities, private schools, etc.).

Al-Qadi noted that MIL is not a tool of control, but rather a platform for developing critical thinking, creating messages to oppose hate speech, incitement, and violence. She emphasized the need to adopt adequate tools that aim to make available the necessary resources for university professors to use while teaching MIL inside private and public institutions. Al-Qadi pointed out that the department has implemented a number of activities that fall under MIL including training sessions in digital security, on the impact of digital media, and how to use social media in media work.

Al-Qadi stressed the importance of inducing media curricula with the necessary theories, concepts, and MIL skills. She called universities to quickly adopt clear strategies to deal with MIL in developing students' skills and to graduate a generation able to understand media messages and content so that they can serve their society.

Al-Qadi recommended providing university students with the necessary training to analyze social media networks, conduct research on digital media, deal with data, and on involvement in MIL activities.

Mr. Naser Abu Bakr, head of the syndicate of journalists, expressed his pride and happiness about PYALARA's work in MIL saying "such a pioneering initiative would help promote principles and applications of MIL amongst the different sectors of educated people, media personnel, and the public in general, adding that the syndicate is ready to have full cooperation with PYALARA and other media and academic organizations to launch a national MIL initiative."

Abu Bakr underscored the importance of MIL as constituting the basis of awareness and societal development, noting that the interest in MIL lies in having better understanding and in-depth analysis of media content amongst the tremendous development of information and social media.

Abu Bakr noted that developing MIL requires experts, keeping in mind that such qualified experts are rarely found in the Arab world. Having qualified experts and teachers would lead to a strong start for MIL to achieve tangible and effective results.

Abu Bakr added that MIL can't achieve its goals amidst the existence of old and worn out curricula and media courses in our universities and colleges. Having modern courses along with reviewing legislation and media laws would support and promote MIL, he concluded.

Mr. Ala Hantash, a journalist and media researcher indicated that the interest in MIL has become an urgent need in Palestine especially amidst the struggle with the Israeli occupation and harmful media messages that have been broadcast by the Israeli media, the spread of fake news, and the spread of social media especially amongst children and youth.

According to Hantash, MIL should be integrated into the compulsory curricula from grade 1 onward, adding that this should be considered a way of raising awareness, and the emphasis should be on practice and encourage pupils to inquire, not to be dictated to.

Mr. Hantash noted that MIL in Palestine witnessed excessive development, calling for the need to promote MIL skills to the entire population. This would lead to creating a generation able to enjoy its rights, including the right to freedom of speech, a free media, and the ability to criticize media content.

There was a consensus amongst the above-mentioned experts about obstacles and challenges that hinder promoting MIL in Palestine. Such challenges include lack of awareness on the importance of MIL, lack of resources, poor funding, difficulty in integrating communication technology into the educational system, curricula and courses that cannot cope with current requirements and challenges, and poor MIL capacities of teachers and trainers.

The above-mentioned experts listed a number of recommendations to promote MIL in Palestine that include: promoting PYALARA's experience on different societal and educational institutions, reviewing and developing legislation and laws that concern media, and the ministry of education integrating MIL at schools and universities.

2) Civil society organizations

Civil society organizations (CSO) play an important and vital role in society. They are in direct contact with MIL and they are the major party promoting and disseminating MIL concepts, tools, and ethics. They can do this best because they can form networks and have strong interactions with target groups. Above all, CSOs serve as a "bridge" that connects people with the government.

The CSOs' interest in MIL has increased due to the current exceptional circumstances that include the widespread disinformation, fake news, rumors, etc. and the rapid increase of uncontrolled channels of communication. This reality requires coming up with the necessary measures to deal with the massive amount of media content that children and youth are exposed to, and protect our ethical, moral, and heritage structures. If we leave these issues unattended, the younger generation will be exposed to these negative influences at a time of rising extremism, incitement, and hate speech.

The data received from CSOs and their staff provide us with a clear picture of the situation of MIL in Palestine and the role CSOs can play in promoting the concept of MIL and raising awareness among different sectors of Palestinian society.

The interest and activities of CSOs in promoting MIL vary from one organization to another. While some organizations have worked indirectly on certain elements of MIL, using different names such as "media awareness-raising" and "media illiteracy", others have worked directly on the concept by providing MIL training. Organizations also differ in terms of their target groups, with some organizations targeting children and youth and others targeting families and women.

A number of interviews have been conducted with representatives and staff of a number of CSOs to discuss the situation of MIL.

a) PYALARA

The Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation (PYALARA) is a pioneer for MIL in Palestine. PYALARA aims to activate and empower young Palestinians between the ages of 13-25, providing them with the necessary skills and tools that enable them to discuss their issues, needs, and rights.

PYALARA was amongst the first organizations to work on MIL. It began its work in 1998 implementing media activities at more than 50 schools in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza.

PYALARA initiated its MIL project in 2014 in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and with the support of DW Akademie. The project mobilized school pupils who managed to attract public attention to their issues. The project also provided training to teachers in several schools to carry out monitoring and follow up tasks and to observe pupils' work.

The activities aim to provide pupils with the necessary skills to enable them to express themselves better through available school outlets, i.e., wall magazines and morning radios. They also aim to enhance their awareness about how to deal with the different media outlets such as TV, radio, press, and digital media, in a way that conforms with the concept of MIL and its goals. The activities also deepen their understanding of the influence media messages have on culture and society and thus, they can assess different opportunities and threats.

PYALARA has conducted numerous meetings with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to discuss means of cooperation to promote MIL in Palestinian schools. The ministry has stressed the importance of involving teachers in the MIL program along with enhancing pupils' capacities to have their voices heard, to prepare reports, etc.

The meetings have resulted in involving heads of public relation departments in the different educational directorates in the West Bank and Gaza to enhance their MIL capacities and reach new schools, especially those adjacent to the dividing wall.

The MIL program implemented by PYALARA consists of a number of components that include: the role and significance of media, news items, media reports, selection of media topics, journalistic research, photography, photo journalism, social and digital media, digital security, fake news, fabricated pictures, ethics of journalism, interviews, etc. PYALARA produced *Fosoul* magazine to provide pupils a platform to express their views and to have their voice heard. In 2017, PYALARA produced the first MIL training manual in Palestine. Most recently, PYALARA initiated the present study to assess the situation of MIL in seven Arab countries.

As for other civil society organizations, their interest and activities in MIL were neither comprehensive nor constant. Their work was restricted to limited and short-term initiatives.

b) Qattan organization

Mr. Nader Dagar is the head of the media and public relations department at Qattan organization, which works towards enhancing cultural and educational sectors. He indicated that the

organization provides teachers with training by using extracurricular tools that emphasize visual content.

He added that even though the Qattan organization has no MIL activities, it will try to integrate them in its strategy for the coming five years given its great importance.

c) TAMER institute

In 2018, the TAMER institute for community education launched an initiative entitled "Media and Identity" as part of the "promoting learning opportunities amongst youth" project funded by the Norwegian People's Aid. The project is aimed at raising young people's awareness on issues related to their identity, enhancing their participation in society along with promoting internal unity. One part of this is strengthening media literacy to enable young people to analyze and criticize media content, to express their concerns and develop media messages using different media outlets.

d) Women Media and Development (TAM) organization

MIL as a concept is still new for the Women Media and Development (TAM) organization. There have been a few activities conducted here and there that have certain MIL elements. Such activities include digital literacy, in addition to training sessions that target mothers and young females on the pros and cons of social media.

e) Teachers Creativity Center

Mr. Rif'at Sabbah, director of "Teachers Creativity Center", says that the center implements a number of initiatives related to MIL, adding that the center has established a website for teachers to interact and share their knowledge and experiences. This is in addition to capacity building activities that target media students at Palestinian universities which include: Digital media literacy, documentation, creating a citizen journalist, confidentiality in dealing with data and information, promoting citizenship and good governance, fighting corruption, etc.

All interviewees agree on the following: the importance of promoting MIL, the importance for media professionals to enjoy career ethics, the need for a complementary cooperation approach.

They also found many challenges that hinder the promotion of MIL: Internal political challenges; political partisanship that characterizes the Palestinian media scene, leaving a negative impact on professional and moral measures, objectivity, and neutralism; and restricting freedom of expression and speech. In addition, there is a shortage of funds and a lack of local and national MIL expertise.

The above interviewed people agreed on a number of recommendations: The need to have specialized organizations in the field of MIL that can make available the necessary expertise and

coordinate with stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, CSOs, and universities to unite efforts towards promoting MIL amongst the different sectors of society; the ability to organize an annual Arab conference to discuss issues related to MIL; to allocate part of the government's budget, especially the budget of concerned ministries, to develop MIL.

3) Media institutions

Palestinian media organizations emphasize the role media play in exposing Israeli policies and practices imposed on Palestinians.

Media professionals warn against fake news and rumors, as these phenomena harm domestic peace and the Palestinian cause in general. They noted that MIL can effectively contribute to raising international awareness of Palestinian rights and obtaining solidarity and support.

a) Media development center

According to Mr. Emad Al-Asfar, coordinator of Media development center at Birzeit university, the center has been working on promoting the concept of MIL since 2005 under the name "Media education". He noted that it aims to enable lay persons to "read between lines", understand editing policies and how to approach media to deal with their issues.

In, 2007, the center launched a media education project to enhance children and adolescents' understanding of media and to provide them with the necessary tools to criticize and analyze media messages. The center has developed the first media education manual for grade 7 as well as a manual for teachers. Both toolkits are based on interviews, meetings, and workshops with organizations specialized in child media, media professionals, teachers, educators, children, adolescents, and parents.

Ms. Nahed Abu Tu'imeh, gender coordinator at the center, indicated that the manuals have been developed based on national expertise, media material and Palestinian models and examples. The manuals were supported by scores of worksheets on media. The manual's content includes specialized interviews, theoretical information about media, and practical exercises. Abu Tu'meh noted that the manual was tested at eight UNRWA schools in 2009. Testing the manual resulted in introducing an extra chapter on the art of journalistic writing and practical exercises.

b) Palestine TV

Mr. Nizar Ghoul, director general of programming at Palestine TV, stated that traditional and digital media should complement each other. There is a need to have more media coverage on human development issues with an emphasis on the Palestinian national message and marketing the Palestinian narrative to the world. He stresses the role and status of MIL as a basis for developing the Palestinian media scene from different aspects whether they be message, technologies, content, outcomes, evaluation, and development.

Even though the TV staff had not received MIL training, Ghoul clarified that their work is dependent on the relationship between TV and social media, especially Facebook. He noted that

the administration is working on a training package to enhance employees' capacities to use the new applications to prepare documentaries and other programs.

c) FM 24 Radio

Mr. Ihab Jareri, head of FM 24 Radio station, says: "Radio programs target children and youth who are highly affected by their families in regard to media messages and content. They try to imitate their families and discuss media content with them."

Mr. Jareri stressed the importance of interactive media, especially in addressing societal issues. He points out that FM 24 Radio networks with international organizations to host trainees in smartphone journalism, investigative reporting, gender and story journalism.

d) Palestinian news agency Wafa

Mr. Bilal Gheith, correspondent for Palestinian news agency Wafa, said, "Fake news creates a state of anxiety and tension, especially if it comes from journalists." He expressed the need to verify news and information circulated on social media. He stressed the importance of credible and truthful sources, saying that Wafa consults three sources before publishing its news.

Gheith noted that Wafa avoids religious and racism terminologies and deals with news and information with objectivity. Wafa makes use of Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp in publishing news.

e) Watan TV

Mr. Faris Maliki, a TV presenter at Watan TV, said: "Watan TV is based on interactive technology, whereby the employees use their smartphones to cover certain events". He continued, stating that many stories circulated on social media are based on the concept "Solutions Journalism".

Mr. Maliki points out that the TV administration meets people's needs and wishes. A survey is published on a weekly basis on Facebook to assess audience needs. Watan TV worked on providing its employees with training on new media technologies and smartphone technology in addition to producing regular reports to raise people's awareness about social media and ethics.

Mr. Maliki believes that the major challenges that face media work in Palestine include an absence of access to information law. Information is obtained via personal connections and not through legislations or laws. This is in addition to putting in practice a digital crime law that would restrict freedom of media, as well as prevent the spread of rumors and fake or fabricated news in social media.

f) Al-Haya Al-Jadida newspaper

Mr. Rami Zaqout, head of public relation department at Al-Haya Al-Jadida newspaper, said, "employees at the paper haven't been involved in any MIL training sessions." He expressed the

interest of the newspaper's administration in using digital media platforms to publish its news and reports that this increases outreach.

Mr. Zaqout said that the editing policy implies verifying credibility of news items before being published because gaining readers' confidence is a top priority.

g) Ajyal radio

Mr. Rami Samara, a presenter of a social radio program at Ajyal radio station, stated that the station publishes its news on social media. It involved employees in capacity building sessions, especially since journalistic work requires keeping journalists' skills and qualifications up to date. He urged organizations specialized in MIL to enhance the capacity of media organizations' staff members.

h) MA'AN news agency

Mr. Karim Asakreh, head of news at MA'AN news agency, said, "MIL will have a big position in the near future for it enhances people's and media persons awareness." According to him, MIL summer camps, especially the international ones, would be attractive. Those who would receive training should be trainers who would help developing the program and promote it inside schools, universities, and society at large.

He adds that we should be careful when dealing with social media, especially media that circulates news and information that is personal, sensitive, and significant.

Major findings
- The results indicate that the concept of MIL at schools and universities is still in its early stages. Consequently, it does not meet today's needs. There is a need to institutionalize the MIL concept and to promote it on a larger scale by integrating it in teaching curricula.
- Those working on MIL argue that its concepts, skills, and ethics need to be prioritized to meet the needs of the 21st century. After all, MIL plays a crucial role in improving the quality of education, enhancing participation, and paving the way for active citizenship. Participants of a workshop organized by the ministry of education in cooperation with PYALARA called for the adoption, monitoring and evaluation of a MIL strategy and for the participation of all relevant stakeholders in developing the MIL concept.
- There is a need to promote the concept of MIL to overcome pupils' ignorance in dealing with media concepts and avoid falling into the trap of rumors and fake news.
- Integrating MIL in curricula would contribute to developing pupils' way of thinking and confronting the negative impact of media amidst tremendous development and innovations in the media sector.
- MIL should be perceived as a way of living which can be used to promote people's skills and enable them to analyze, criticize, and evaluate media content. It should be adopted and institutionalized by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) and integrated into the curricula of school and universities. The MoEHE should incorporate it into social and educational life in a systemized and clear manner, side by side with education technology.

Also, the MoEHE should invest in journalists' capacities and competences, organize MIL workshops that target youth, urge media departments at Palestinian universities to shed light on the concept of MIL and host MIL experts.

- MIL should become part of basic human rights in an era cluttered with confusing concepts. Integrating MIL in school and university curricula would help protect pupils from deception, negativity, and stereotypes, enabling people to understand the media culture that surrounds them so they can select what is suitable for them, learn how to deal with it and become active participants. The world is complex, and we should do everything to incur necessary changes. We have to teach our people how to live, understand, and analyze events around them and not to be ignorant and mere consumers, unable to criticize and thus becoming victims that can be easily controlled.
- Many respondents noted that MIL work should not be restricted to school pupils and university students, but it should also include municipalities, international organizations, ministries, etc. They also emphasized the importance of joint efforts to develop MIL not only within educational institutions but in civil society organizations and across different sectors, including the family.

Obstacles that hinder the promotion of MIL

The following obstacles to the promotion of MIL in Palestine have been identified:

- A shortage of financial resources needed to purchase the necessary electronics.
- Limited skills and knowledge of teachers and pupils on how to use modern technologies.
- A lack of MIL training manuals.
- A scarcity of qualified experts able to teach MIL at educational institutions.
- Mixing the concept of MIL and the concept of educational media.

Recommendations
- To institutionalize MIL.
- To develop a MIL national strategy and policy supported with political will.
- To exchange experiences and establish networks with different stakeholders.
- To make use of the MIL manual that PYALARA has developed.
- To develop training and educational manuals for schools, universities, and civil society based on a national strategy and with the participation of different stakeholders.
- To organize an annual conference for MENA countries to evaluate MIL and work towards developing it together.
- To establish an institute or a center specialized in MIL with the mandate to conduct research and implement initiatives and training programs.
- To establish a digital platform under the supervision of the ministry of education or other concerned parties to teach MIL, to help supervisors assess and evaluate the impact of the program, identify topics for discussion to enhance pupils' knowledge and raise their awareness on hardships caused by incitement, fanaticism, and hate speech.
- To promote morning radio and the need to have it systemized through clear policies and specified programs. Schools and representatives of the ministry of education should pay particular attention to this.

- The ministry of education should establish new departments to enhance teachers' MIL knowledge and provide instruction on how to promote and develop it inside schools.

Conclusion

The importance of MIL lies in protecting people from negative media influences and creating mature interactions with media messages. This is based on the importance of media, the increase of digital media outreach and its ability to change our understanding of the world and shape our personalities.

This cannot be achieved in the Palestinian context unless we join official and nonofficial forces to make the necessary changes in education by adopting a MIL curriculum that enables pupils to confront the media and its influences, prepare them for cultural, economic and political participation, and help them become independent, critical and active in producing content.

There is a need for CSOs to integrate MIL in their strategic plans and not just implement MIL activities on an occasional and temporary basis. CSOs should realize that emphasizing MIL and promoting it within national strategies would serve their activities and objectives. On the one hand, it would enhance their positive participation in human development. On the other hand, MIL promotes the respect of human rights and freedoms in general, along with enabling people to take mature decisions, participate actively in society, and help citizens become more aware and more committed to what is going on around them.

Based on the above and the fact that MIL is not integrated in the educational curricula nor are CSO's initiatives sufficient, there is a need to conduct serious discussions among the different stakeholders to adopt a joint vision and coordinate to achieve the necessary changes in MIL that would lead to desirable societal changes.

To conclude, and due to the peculiarity of the Palestinian situation and challenges the people face internally and externally, especially due to the Israeli occupation, we all should promote MIL that serves as a preventive measure and development and empowerment tool.

Annexes
Annex 1
(list of interviews)

#	Name	Title	Location of organization
1	Mr. Emad Abu Al-Hasan	Head of media and Arabic language department at the Arab American university	Jenin
2	Dr. Nader Salhieh,	Head of media department at Al-Quds university	Al-Bireh
3	Ms. Sulika Al-Qadi	Head of media department at Hebron university	Hebron
4	Mr. Naser Abu Bakr	Head of syndicate of journalists	Ramallah
5	Mr. Ala Hantash	Journalist and media researcher	Ramallah
6	Mr. Nader Dagar	Head of media and public relation department at Qattan organization	Ramallah
7	Mr. Rif'at Sabbah	Director of "Teachers Creativity Center"	Ramallah
8	Mr. Emad Al-Asfar	Coordinator of Media development center at Birzeit university	BirZeit
9	Ms. Nahed Abu Tu'imeh	Gender coordinator at Birzeit university	Birzeit
10	Mr. Nizar Ghoul	Director general of program section at Palestine TV	Ramallah
11	Mr. Ihab Jareri	Head of FM 24 Radio station	Ramallah
12	Mr. Bilal Gheith	Correspondent for Palestinian news agency "Wafa"	Ramallah
13	Mr. Faris Maliki	A TV presenter at Watan TV	Ramallah
14	Mr. Rami Zaqout	Head of the public relations department at Al-Haya Al-Jadida newspaper	Ramallah
15	Mr. Rami Samara	A presenter of a social radio program at Ajyal radio station	Ramallah
16	Mr. Karim Asakreh	Head of news at MA'AN news agency	Bethlehem

Annex 2
Corrective Key

Score	Average	Percentage
Low	1.0-1.66	33%-55%

Average	1.67-2.33	56%-78%
High	2.34-3	79%-100%

Annex 3

Average, standard deviation, and percentages for the first section "awareness and analysis" inside schools

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
I obtain information and news from more than one media source such as (radio, TV, newspaper, websites, social media, etc.).	2.25	0.49	0.75	medium
I rely on more than one source to obtain information and news (local media, international media, social media).	2.35	0.66	0.78	high
When I come across a piece of information or a news item, I test its credibility by thorough research and testing.	2.65	0.53	0.88	High
Are you able to distinguish between true and fake news?	2.38	0.59	0.79	high
Are you able to discuss information you obtain through social media outlets?	2.35	0.58	0.78	high
Do you think that media in general has left positive impact on you?	2.75	0.54	0.92	high
I discuss information I obtain from social media outlets with my parents.	2.4	0.55	0.80	high
I get effected by what I view in social media.	1.98	0.62	0.66	medium
Overall grade	2.39	0.24	0.80	high

Annex 4

Average, standard deviation, and percentages for the first section "awareness and analysis" inside universities

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
Do you agree that media influence individuals' behavior?	2.50	0.83	0.60	high
I possess the necessary skills to analyze and evaluate information I obtain from different media outlets.	2.45	0.82	0.60	high

I am able to distinguish between fake and true news.	2.43	0.81	0.68	high
When I come across a piece of information or a news item, I test its credibility by thorough research and testing.	2.43	0.81	0.64	high
I rely on more than one source to obtain information and news (local media, international media, social media).	2.40	0.80	0.59	high
I view local, regional and international media.	2.28	0.76	0.51	medium
Do you listen to the news?	2.18	0.73	0.64	medium
I obtain information and news from more than one source like (radio, TV, newspaper, websites, social media, etc.).	1.98	0.66	0.62	medium
Overall grade	2.34	0.78	0.31	high

Annex 5

Average, standard deviation, and percentages for the second section "the schools' role in MIL"

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
Has the teacher ever discussed media with pupils?	2.10	0.59	0.70	medium
Have you ever received media training?	2.28	0.88	0.76	medium
Do teachers encourage you to produce media content related to the classroom?	2.55	0.55	0.85	high
My teacher urges me to search for information through different media sources	2.38	0.59	0.79	high
Has your teacher ever discussed the content of media outlets that pupils view?	2.25	0.54	0.75	medium

Have you ever been directed to a certain media outlet that you can benefit from?	2.50	0.68	0.83	high
Have you ever been instructed by your teacher to do research by searching on the internet?	2.65	0.58	0.88	high
Overall grade	2.39	0.24	0.80	high

Annex 6

Average, standard deviation, and percentages for the third section "participation" in schools

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
I participate in morning radio.	2.43	0.59	0.81	high
Have you ever participated in wall magazine?	2.30	0.69	0.77	medium
During our discussion with our teachers we can express our views on certain issues.	2.58	0.55	0.86	high
I discuss what I hear or view with my school mates.	2.53	0.51	0.84	high
I listen carefully to the morning radio.	2.58	0.50	0.86	high
Have you ever published news, photos or downloaded videos on the Internet or any media outlet?	2.18	0.81	0.73	medium
The information I obtain from websites is always true because the sites are well known.	1.80	0.65	0.60	medium
I feel safe when sharing photos with my friends via messenger as it has more privacy.	1.53	0.68	0.51	low

Overall grade	2.24	0.26	0.75	medium

Annex 7:

Average, standard deviation, and percentages for the third section "Participation and digital interaction" at universities

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
There is censorship exerted by governments and certain groups on the Internet.	2.53	0.84	0.51	high
When I receive fake news, I warn people about it.	2.38	0.79	0.81	high
Censoring the Internet restricts expressing one's views freely and sincerely.	2.33	0.78	0.73	medium
I make use of my smartphone to produce, document, and publish information.	2.25	0.75	0.78	medium
I can introduce positive media content through media.	2.00	0.67	0.72	medium
Do you interact with groups and pages where you are a member?	2.00	0.67	0.68	medium
Have you ever used media for lobbying and advocacy?	1.80	0.60	0.79	medium
Do you monitor events and phenomenon in your neighborhood, and do you publish it?	1.75	0.58	0.71	medium
Overall grade	2.13	0.71	0.36	medium

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Chapter 5

Media and Information Literacy
among Children and Youth in Lebanon

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Study background and purpose

The media and the dissemination of information play a central role in our lives in a globalized world. The proliferation of information through traditional media outlets and new (social) media provides opportunities for citizens all over the world to access information and make their voice heard. Traditional media outlets and new (social) media also pose new challenges, particularly in contexts of conflict, repression, and violations of human rights. (Digital) Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is thus of crucial importance to empower citizens (including youth and women) and ensure their active and effective social and political participation in society. Specifically, MIL enables people to make informed choices with regards to accessing information, critically analyzing and utilizing available media products, and producing content that contributes to their aspired social change. Hence, the underlying principle of MIL is to support citizens as active agents of social change in their society.

The study of MIL in Lebanon is part of broader research conducted by the Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation (PYALARA) in cooperation with DW Akademie in seven countries in the MENA region, including Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Lebanon, assessing the prevalence and nature of MIL in these countries and the extent to which it is pursued by educational institutions, and civil society (and youth) organizations. The main objective of this regional study is to provide a set of concrete and realistic recommendations to further develop MIL education for children and youth in the region in general and in each of the countries under analysis.

Stakeholders and methodology

The MIL field study in Lebanon was conducted in January 2019 and adopted an inclusive and participatory approach, seeking to engage with the sampled target groups in the country. To achieve this, a combination of methods for data collection and analysis were used. Primary data generation included a survey of school children and university students between the ages of 12 and 25, in-depth semi-structured interviews with representatives of relevant stakeholders, and five focus group discussions.

It must be noted that the purpose of the field study was not to map the MIL activities in Lebanon or to evaluate the various existing initiatives. Instead, the fieldwork targeted a purposeful sample to meet the objectives, including the following relevant stakeholders:

- 18 school children, both boys and girls (ages 12-17) from UNRWA schools.
- 20 school children (all boys) (ages 12-18) from a Lebanese private school.
- 20 female university students (ages 18-25) from the Lebanese International University, LIU,
- 20 university students (15 male, 5 female ages 18-25) from mixed universities.
- Representatives of six local youth civil society organizations (CSOs) working with both Lebanese and Palestinian youth.
- 10 journalists and representatives of media institutions including print, visual, and social media in Tyre.

- Dr. Hussein Farhat, administrative director, LIU.
- Dr. Ali Derbaj, head of Media and Journalism Department at LIU.
- Dr. Alia Ghaddar, head of the Computer Science and IT Department at LIU (Tyre Campus).
- Dr. Olga Nekrasova, education dean assistant at the LIU (Tyre Campus).
- Dr. Nada Oweijane, president of the Center for Educational Research and Development, CRDP of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education; Karmen Chbib, head of Information and Public Relations Unit; and Dr. Nadia Bou Fayad Media Expert & Consultant Researcher Citizenship Education.
- Mrs. Pauline Yamine representing the Directorate of Coaching and Guidance of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
- Representative of the Lebanese National News Agency (also representing the Ministry of Information).

This report presents the findings and recommendations based on the field study. It starts with a short summary of the socio-economic and political context in Lebanon and introduces the traditional and social media landscape. Then, it presents the main findings and concludes with a list of concrete recommendations to enhance MIL education for children and youth in Lebanon.

Context
Although no official census has been conducted since the 1930s due to the precarious political and confessional environment in Lebanon, the current population is estimated at six million people according to the 2019 World Population Review of the United Nations. This includes around 450,000 Palestinian refugees registered by UNRWA since 1948 divided amongst 12 refugee camps and a number of gatherings across the country, and more than one million Syrian refugees since the beginning of the Syrian crisis in 2011. According to various sources, youth account for about 17 percent of the total population. The Lebanese society is a pluralistic, diverse society with clear confessional and political divisions.

The political context in Lebanon is highly volatile. Over the past few decades, Lebanon has suffered from internal instability, the worst of which led to a civil war in 1975 which lasted 17 years and led to the devastation of the socio-economic basis of the country, to the destruction of infrastructure, and to a wave of migration, particularly among young people. Religious sectarianism is institutionalized in the Lebanese political system and manifests itself in every aspect of life in Lebanese society. Politics, culture and even media and educational institutions are divided along sectarian lines.

The precarious situation in Lebanon is exasperated by the volatile geo-political situation in the region. The constant Israeli threat to Lebanon, the rise of religious extremism in the region, the wars in Iraq and Yemen, and particularly the war in Syria heavily impact Lebanon and add to its socio-economic and political challenges.

The Lebanese economy depends mainly on tourism and the banking service sector in addition to remittances, especially from the Gulf states. During the past decades, economic activity has managed to attract investment, again particularly from the Gulf states. However, high levels of

poverty and unemployment, particularly among youth, and growing inequality in income remain the major challenges. The influx of Syrian refugees since 2011 has posed new socio-economic challenges to the country, which already suffers from multiple chronic issues, including poverty and unemployment, widespread pollution, corruption, weak infrastructure and poor services, particularly in health and education. These services also have to cater to refugees in spite of the efforts of the international community to provide aid to refugees and their host communities.

Lebanon has a vibrant and widely diverse media landscape and is considered a regional media hub with relative media freedom. Most of its TV and radio stations are privately-owned and commercial. In addition to the traditional media outlets like press, TV, radio and news, Internet sites have become a main source of information. In general, Lebanese media outlets are affiliated with confessional and political groups across the political spectrum, thereby reflecting the sectarian divisions in society. Lebanon's constitution guarantees relative media freedom, freedom of expression, and access to information. Lebanese media legislation includes the 1962 Press Law, the 1994 Audiovisual Media Law, which allows private radio and TV broadcasting, and the Law on Satellite Broadcasting in 1996. However, in practice this regulatory framework is outdated, inefficient, and fails to guarantee the necessary media freedoms and protection. Attempts at reforming the regulatory framework have so far not been successful.

Internet usage is widely spread in Lebanon with around 5.5 million users (91 percent penetration), and 3.6 million Facebook subscribers (59.1 percent penetration) in December 2017. [i] New social media is popular especially among youth, particularly WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram.

Key findings
MIL among children and youth

To assess the level of Media and Information Literacy among children and youth, data was generated by conducting a survey and focus group discussions. The survey included questionnaires filled by 38 school children aged 13 to 18 and 40 university students of the age group 18 to 25.

Respondents to the school survey consist of 26 boys and 12 girls. 58 percent of them attend private schools, 39.5 percent UNRWA schools, and 2.6 percent public schools. 47.4 percent live in a village, 39.5 percent in a refugee camp, and 13.2 percent in a city. 25 female and 15 male university students took part in the survey, divided by city (37.5 percent), village (25 percent), and refugee camp (37.5 percent). 90 percent of them study at a private university.

To gain more insight into the level of knowledge and awareness, competencies, opinions, and practices of the respondents, four focus group discussions were held; two with university students with 20 participants each; and two with school children with 18 and 20 participants respectively.

The following is a summary of the main findings:

New social media is the most important medium for children and youth in Lebanon, used for interaction and as a main source of information, particularly Facebook, followed by Twitter and WhatsApp. It is affordable, accessible to most (young) people mainly (but not only) through their

smartphone and an effective and fast way to reach out and interact. Websites are also a widely used sources of information and news among respondents from both age groups.

Knowledge and Awareness

University students demonstrated a high level of awareness of the impact of social media on the lives and behavior of individuals. As for the child respondents, 66% of them think that social media has mainly a positive effect on their behavior.

In general, university students are aware that the political and confessional divisions in their society are reflected in the media landscape. The majority referred to the need to verify the source of information and not take media content at face value. 74 percent of them indicated that they have the skills to assess the credibility and worthiness of the content they receive through all sorts of media, and a similar percentage feel that they can differentiate between true and fake news. Child respondents, however, noted that it is not always easy to assess the credibility of the media content.

According to the survey, 87.5 percent of university students are familiar with cyber-bullying. Some of them have suffered it themselves and most of them know someone in their network who has been a victim of cyber-bullying. Among the respondents, female students were more open to discussing incidents of cyber-bullying they had faced, while male students referred mostly to incidents in their networks and indicated that women are more prone to cyber-bullying than men. Most of the respondents in this age group understand the principles of cybersecurity and are familiar with methods to protect themselves. However, many feel they still run risks on social media and that there is no way for them to protect themselves from some sort of cybercrime. Examples mentioned included stealing or faking their profiles or misusing photos or other content they or their friends have posted.

University respondents agree that parents have the responsibility to guide their children on social media, protect them, and provide them with a safe and positive learning environment. According to them, most parents are not vigilant enough and many of them fail or are unable to monitor their children's behavior online. They can use filters to ensure controlled access of their children and limit the time they spend online. Many of the children who took part in the focus group discussions do not get any guidance from their parents regarding social media and some children added that their parents lack the necessary MIL competencies.

University students who participated in the focus group discussions were generally aware of the difference between constructive criticism, hate speech and discrimination. Many of them had witnessed some form of verbal violence, hate speech, or incitement to violence on social media. Most of them indicated that they protect themselves by withdrawing or not interacting. A few respondents explained that in the case of cyber-bullying, hate speech, and incitement to violence, sources should be blocked, and parents or cybercrime authorities should become involved. Similarly, school children mentioned that they sometimes witness verbal violence, harassment, and gossip on social media and some of the problems which start on social media continue onto the school playground.

School children respondents use various media outlets and sources of information. The most popular medium is social media followed by websites and TV. 65 percent of them feel they can differentiate between true and fake content and 74 percent feel they are capable of interacting with all content they come across on social media. On the other hand, 60 percent of them stated that they are affected by what they see on social media, 69 percent of the child respondents believe the information they get through digital media is credible, and more than half of them feel safe sending and receiving photos and personal information through Facebook Messenger. Few participants in the focus group claimed that they discuss social media content with their parents on a regular basis, while others clearly indicated that they do not like their parents to intervene.

The results show significant differences in the level of MIL knowledge and awareness between university students (18-25 years) and school children (12-17). This underlines the need to introduce MIL education for children at school at an early age. Interviewed stakeholders also stressed the need for a collaborative effort between parents and schools to guide children and provide them with a safe learning environment on digital and social media.

Participation and digital interaction
In general, respondents consider social media to be a relatively free platform for expression. However, around 70 percent of university student respondents feel that control, surveillance, and censorship by government and other (political) non-state actors limit their freedom of expression on social media, particularly in relation to politics. Some feel as though some kind of surveillance is necessary to ensure individual and collective security. 65 percent believe that government control over media (and social media) is necessary to protect the privacy of individuals and for collective security. However, they noted that media control and censorship reflect negatively on democracy and limit active citizenship and citizen journalism.

Respondents of all age groups primarily use social media for recreational and social interaction with friends and peers. Around 78 percent of university student participants use their smartphones to produce and share content. Most of the content they produce and share is recreational and social. Only a few of them use social media for advocacy purposes. 78 percent of the sampled school children are active on social media; they produce and share mainly recreational content. Most school children respondents participate in class discussions and most of them discuss media content with their peers.

All four focus groups discussed the adverse impact of online gaming on children and youth. Online gaming is popular among all age groups of the respondents and is perceived as a means for interaction with young people all over the world. Mariam's game, Bob G, and the Blue Whale are some of the most popular games among the respondents. Most of them realize the dangers of these mostly violent games, and some mentioned a case or two of suicide among children in Lebanon related to these games.

The survey shows no significant differences based on sex, age, type of school, or place of residence among both respondent groups in relation to participation and digital interaction.

Role of school

The Lebanese educational system includes public, private and UNRWA schools that serve children of Palestinian refugees. There are almost the same number of public schools as private schools. In general, the educational system reflects the diversity of and the social and religious divisions in Lebanese society. While basic school curricula and central examination requirements are standardized in all types of schools, private schools have their own independent management and have a broader curriculum with more subjects and extracurricular activities, often including MIL elements. UNRWA schools follow the central UNRWA education department requirements. In general, public schools have fewer resources than private schools. Not all schools are technically equipped to use digital media in the education process. Some have no Internet and/or old computers. This is particularly the case for public schools, especially in remote areas. In general, private and UNRWA schools have ICT and some schools are equipped with smart boards. For these reasons, social media is not used systematically in the educational process at most schools.

75 percent of the child respondents indicated that they were requested by teachers to search for information on the Internet. 82 percent of them were requested to use the Internet in their research. Many indicated that they receive some guidance from their teachers, such as hints regarding useful websites and information sources on the Internet.

Children interviewed also mentioned that discussions of social media content and of children's experiences on social media (and with digital games) do not happen at schools on a regular basis. They added that most of them have neither received any awareness sessions from teachers about the impact of social media, their risks and possibilities, nor any (extracurricular) training to enhance their skills and competencies to use social media. Sometimes children are encouraged by their teachers to use social media to produce content for curricular and extracurricular activities.

School broadcasting and wall journals are not common in schools in Lebanon. Only UNRWA and a few public and private schools use some elements of school media.

The study concludes that digital and social media are not used systematically at the schools of the respondents and MIL is only sporadically touched upon by their teachers and educators.

MIL initiatives in Lebanon

The purpose of this study is not to map the various MIL initiatives in Lebanon. Instead, this part provides a summarized overview of the situation of MIL in Lebanon as encountered in the field research. It does not necessarily cover all MIL initiatives on the ground.

Reviewed literature and field research illustrate clearly that while there is no MIL national strategy in Lebanon, some important conceptual work has been carried out by Lebanese scholars and media experts. In his analysis of the prevalence of MIL in the MENA region, Grizzle maintains that Lebanon is among the countries in the region where "MIL is somewhat established within specialized programs and institutions and some citizens benefit from access to these initiatives" (Grizzle, 2016 p. 33). The field research revealed limited and fragmented but important initiatives

by NGOs and some individual initiatives of academics and media experts. School curricula include a few elements of MIL and universities provide elements of MIL and ICT/digital skills education.

UNESCO is a main actor in this field in Lebanon and in the MENA region in general. Its work includes launching an open MIL online course in partnership with American University in Beirut in Arabic. Another important initiative in relation to MIL is the Media and Digital Literacy Academy of Beirut (MDLAB), launched in 2013 by a group of Arab and international experts to advance MIL education in the MENA region by training educators in an annual summer academy program, by developing training curricula and by supporting individual MIL initiatives in the region. Other MIL initiatives include small-scale initiatives of Lebanese NGOs in schools supported by UNESCO and DW Akademie, some elements of citizen journalism led by youth media and civil society organizations, and some MIL initiatives, including workshops and conferences both regional and in Lebanon.

The work of other youth NGOs includes elements of ML or IL. A conceptualized MIL approach has been articulated or implemented in only a small number of programs. Some representatives of such initiatives were interviewed in the course of our fieldwork. In addition, a MIL toolbox is currently being developed and will be launched this year in four schools as part of the 'MIL 4 Peace' project led by DW Akademie in partnership with Permanent Peace Movement PPM and Jesus and Mary School.

Interviewees mentioned some of the main challenges they face: limited number of MIL experts and media practitioners with MIL competencies; lack of policies and overall strategy; fragmentation of initiatives and lack of coordination among stakeholders; and lack of sustainability.

Journalists and media institutions
Eleven journalists and representatives of media institutions took part in the media focus group discussion, representing the official Lebanese News Agency and local and national media outlets (both Lebanese and Palestinian). The makeup of participants reflected the media landscape in Lebanon, covering different political and sectarian groups.

Participants defined media as a tool to disseminate news in a "truthful manner". For this purpose, the journalist needs to be equipped with a set of principles, competencies, and skills. Participants recognize that the media coverage and media landscape in Lebanon reflect the confessional, sectarian, and political divisions of Lebanese society.

Participants representing traditional media institutions do not completely embrace digital media but rather see it as a threat to what they perceive as the "true journalism", yet all participants are present on social media and agree on the huge impact of new (social) media on their profession. According to the participants in the focus group discussion, the proliferation of news websites, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook, give rise to new unprecedented challenges and adds complexities to the media scene. Therefore, the media scene needs to be regulated which, they think, is done to some extent by the National Media Council, which was launched in an attempt to regulate the work of digital media news sites. On the Palestinian side, participants referred to a media code of conduct, which they think was developed to regulate media coverage in the

refugee camps, ensure professionalism, newsworthiness, and credibility. All participants agree on the role of the government monitoring and regulating the media scene in general. They also see an important role for parents and civil society in monitoring the behavior of children on social media, raising their awareness, and protecting them.

Participants representing traditional media outlets have limited interaction with the public and they perceive their role as professionals who produce and disseminate news. However, younger participants do recognize the importance of interaction with their audience through social media. 'Citizen journalism' is perceived as a negative development in the media scene by some participants due to "the lack of control over this medium [social media] and lack of basic journalistic professional norms". Younger journalists in the group, though, referred to it as "an important development" and stressed the importance of interaction between the media and the public.

Only three participants have taken part in training workshops on cybersecurity, cyber-bullying, and hate speech, and almost none of the participants cover these topics in their media programs. However, participants are able to define hate speech and are aware of the discourse around incitement of violence. This has to do with the multiple political narratives prevalent in Lebanon and the current geo-political context in the region.

Many of the participants do not feel that it is their responsibility as journalists to strengthen Media and Information Literacy among their audiences. Yet they all agree on the need to develop their expertise in this field through, for example, MIL awareness-raising workshops.

Media and information technology in higher education
In spite of the engagement of individual Lebanese academics in conceptual work around Media and Information Literacy, the engagement of some academic institutes at the program level like American University Beirut (AUB), and work done by MDLAB and few other initiatives, there is still a need to integrate MIL systematically in higher education in Lebanon as a tool to enhance critical thinking, promote digital knowledge and awareness, and develop media competencies among university students.

As part of the field research, interviews were conducted with the administrative director, the head of journalism department, and the head of the computer science & information technology department of the Lebanese International University (LIU). LIU is a private university with nine campuses across Lebanon. It is the second biggest university in Lebanon following the Lebanese University and the biggest private university in the country. In addition to Lebanon, the university has four campuses in Yemen, one in Mauritania, and one in Senegal.

The computer science & information technology and journalism departments are part of the school of arts and sciences at LIU. As computer science and IT include the technical aspects of information technology and digital literacy, MIL elements here are confined to the digital aspects of access and use of social media, the technical aspects of cybersecurity, and the ethical use of technology. The objective of the journalism department is to contribute to critical, investigative, and credible media in Lebanon. Journalism courses involve many MIL elements. Media ethics, media principles and regulatory framework, assessing credibility of news sources, fake news, content production, transparency and accountability, and newsworthiness are all part of the

curriculum. The media ethics course pays some attention to new social media and journalism. Teachers also touch upon themes like hate speech, freedom of expression, racism, and cybersecurity. Social media is used by faculty members to interact with students and some follow their students on social media, monitor their media contents, and coach them.

LIU is an international university with a broad network, including universities in the Middle East and Africa. LIU appreciates working with Arab and international universities in MIL. University leadership expressed interest in the latest MIL developments both regionally and globally. Only a few faculty members have participated in MIL related conferences and training workshops in Lebanon on their own personal initiative.

MIL and youth civil society organizations
In total, representatives from six youth CSOs and initiatives were interviewed individually. Most of them deal with some elements of MIL and some are involved in MIL projects inside and outside schools, generally in partnership with international MIL actors like UNESCO, UNICEF, and DW Akademie. The following is a brief presentation of the work of these organizations in relation to MIL:

- Dawa'er is a young organization established in 2015 by young Lebanese media professionals and activists. Its mission is building resilience, critical thinking and enhancing Media and Information Literacy among Lebanese youth. Dawa'er has worked on three MIL related projects supported by UNESCO so far. Their projects target children and youth in the age group of 14-19 years old. The projects include pilot extracurricular MIL activities at five public and private schools (reaching between 50-60 children in each training), and the launch of MIL clubs in two schools to encourage peer-to-peer education, develop MIL skills among youth, train them to create and edit content using their smartphones, and to encourage mobile journalism. Training includes media ethics and themes like hate speech, newsworthiness and cybersecurity. Dawa'er is keen on developing its expertise further in this field and its representatives have participated in a two-week training course at the Lebanese American University sponsored by DW Akademie. Networking and the exchange of experiences is also important for Dawa'er. They have participated in regional and international MIL conferences.
- Naastopia[25] **i**s a social media initiative of a group of young Palestinian media professionals in different refugee camps in Lebanon with the objective of strengthening Palestinian identity among youth, break stereotypes around Palestinian youth, and highlight their talents and the challenges they face. Naastopia has a digital media forum with 24 trained young reporters (14 females and 10 males) in the different Palestinian refugee camps across Lebanon. Their reporters have received training in caption and content writing, storytelling, video filming, media ethics, gender, cybersecurity, and cyberbullying. They mostly interact with youth on Facebook and WhatsApp. Naastopia's Facebook page has 13,000 followers. The Facebook engagement rate varies depending on the themes of their posts. Discussions and comments on Facebook are managed by the reporters themselves. Their posts focus on social and cultural issues, on challenges faced by the

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[25] https://www.facebook.com/pg/Naastopia/

Palestinian refugee community in general (and youth in particular), as well as on taboo themes such as drugs and sexual harassment.

- Initiate is a Lebanese non-sectarian, non-profit CSO established by a group of young volunteers in 2011. They work with Lebanese and Palestinian communities to enhance social cohesion and solidarity between and among communities. A particular focus is given to women and youth to enable them to uphold their rights and build a better future for themselves and their community. Initiate is a youth-based, youth-led project that seeks to increase citizen participation and raise the voice of the youth in their communities by developing their digital talents, breaking stereotypes, and highlighting human interest stories. To reach out to youth and the community, they use innovative methods including 'artvocacy' (advocacy through art), filmmaking and photography, and attractive content published on social media. Their projects include media literacy ToTs for 21 young leaders, each of whom has reached out to 300 youths in their activist network. Other activities are public meetings, dialogue activities, awareness campaigns, and group awareness sessions on child protection, positive parenting, psychological awareness, and psychological support for children. In its mini-studio, Initiate also provides production services (including documentary films) to other CSOs. The Initiate team has some MIL expertise, but they are keen to develop this expertise further and are looking forward to cooperating with local, regional, and international MIL actors for this purpose.

- PPM[26] is a Lebanese peacebuilding and non-violence organization. Its work focuses on 3 areas: Memory of the civil war, arms control in Lebanon and in the region, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Their target group is, but not limited to, youth. Among their current projects is 'MIL 4 Peace', a project implemented in partnership with DW Akademie. PPM brings a peacebuilding angle to the project. 'MIL 4 Peace' is implemented in four schools covering the confessional spectrum in Lebanon and in four NGOs and youth organizations working with Syrian refugees in Tripoli and Biqaa. The project entails ToTs for young professionals and capacity building for teachers aimed at strengthening their MIL skills, including critical thinking, content analysis and assessment, hate speech and incitement of violence, peacebuilding and non-violence skills, and dismantling fake news and recognizing propaganda. The main challenges facing the project are the commitment of those involved in the training and the motivation of the trainers and educators which ultimately determines the sustainability of the interventions.

- Al-Jana Arab Resource Center for Popular Arts[27] was established in Beirut in 1989 to celebrate popular art with a focus on marginalized communities, especially youth and children across the confessional divide. Al-Jana has a long history of reputable, innovative, popular, and artistic projects, including: creative learning and creative expression activities for children; an active memory program of 'Palestinian People's history and oral culture' (involving children in collecting and documenting oral testimonies from elders); training on photojournalism and filmmaking for children in Sabra and Shatila ; the documentation of personal stories of children in the form of photo voice books which are exhibited to educate

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[26] http://www.ppm-lebanon.org/

[27] http://al-jana.org/

children on the power of digital stories; Jana summer encounters for psycho-social support for marginalized children. In addition, the Jana Youth Media Center encourages youth creativity using its studio for recording. Al-Jana is also famed for its Biennial International Film Festival for children and youth, which aims at educating children in the field of critical thinking, film critique and innovation and at developing their media and writing skills.

- Nuun Cultural Center is an initiative of three young Palestinian women in the Al-Ma'shouq gathering in the area of Tyre. It started in 2016 with a call on Facebook, targeting school children in need of remedial teaching. It developed rapidly into a center with 100 children aged between 13 and 18. The center does not only provide remedial teaching, but also awareness sessions on radicalization, parenting, gender-based violence and sexual harassment, and psycho-social support for juvenile children and their parents. They use media (especially social media) as a tool to mobilize and raise awareness, touch upon taboo issues and break stereotypes.

Interviewed CSO representatives demonstrated a deep knowledge of the important role social media play in the lives of children and youth. They thus use digital and social media to interact with them. They also recognize the importance of MIL education for these groups.

CSOs are an important MIL actor in Lebanon. Many of them already play a role in promoting and implementing small MIL programs. Most of them have direct access to youth and children all over Lebanon, including in marginalized areas, and many of them work with children and youth across the confessional and political divide or with schools across the spectrum. The approach of most of them is innovative, participatory, and inclusive, and they use various forms of social and digital media to interact with youth. Many of them already provide MIL relevant training skills to youth. Some of them also implement programs that promote peace and non-violent social cohesion.

The main challenges these organizations face in relation to their MIL/ML programs are:

- the polarized political environment and politicizing youth activities,
- lack of resources and lack of sustainability of programs,
- commitment of the youth and its effect on sustainability of the initiatives,
- lack of critical thinking among youth,
- lack of MIL expertise both among media professionals and educators, and
- the need for sharing and learning, exchanging experiences, and networking with other national, regional, and global actors.

Ministry of Education and Higher Education

Two in-depth interviews were conducted with representatives of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. The first interview was conducted with representatives of the Center for Educational Research and Development (CRDP), head of Information and Public Relations Unit, and Media Expert & Consultant Researcher Citizenship Education. The second interview was conducted with a representative of the Directorate of Coaching and Guidance at the ministry.

CRDP is responsible for the formulation of education policies and for the quality of education in Lebanon. Its main tasks are conducting research, developing educational strategies and curricula,

and training educational staff. The directorate of coaching and guidance falls under the general directorate of education and is responsible for supervising the application of the curricula and providing educational and extracurricular activities guidance to teachers and students throughout Lebanon.

Some elements of MIL are included in school curricula, particularly in national and civic education lessons. This, for example, includes a chapter on media and globalization in grade 8 and 'Free and Responsible Media' (covering objectivity, newsworthiness, and media independence and freedom) in grade 12. In 2016, some elements of MIL were removed from the curriculum for various reasons, although some elements of information literacy are part of the education system, the lack of technical equipment in many schools, especially in public and remote schools, represents one of the main obstacles to enhancing MIL in schools.

Graduate trainee teachers follow one to two years of training at the education department of the Lebanese University, a public university which falls under the ministry of education and higher education. Teacher and educator training is the responsibility of the CRDP on the basis of yearly training plans. Teacher training includes some aspects of IT, but MIL is not included in teacher training.

In 2012, CRDP launched the Child Safety Project on the Internet, which includes a national study on the dangers of the Internet and social media for children in Lebanon. The aims of this study were (1) to identify risks, (2) to raise public awareness about children's safety on the Internet, (3) to develop the competencies of teachers, school counselors, and parents to deal with safety threats and guide children on the Internet, and (4) to encourage the Lebanese authorities to develop technical and legislative frameworks that ensure children's safety on the Internet. The project included an awareness campaign, the development of a curriculum, training material and educational tools, and training courses for teachers in public and private schools. In 2018, the study was presented at the national conference 'Digitalization in the Lives of Our Children' held in cooperation with the ministry of social affairs, IT and university experts, the Lebanese Security Forces, and UNICEF. The conference produced concrete recommendations for policymakers, IT companies, schools, law enforcement institutions, civil society, and parents to ensure online safety of children and youth and to support child victims of cybercrimes.

CRDP and the ministry of social affairs hope to develop this project further in cooperation with UNESCO and the other relevant stakeholders including national institutions, civil society organizations, universities, and educational institutions. The new phase of the project will target school children using peer to peer education in eight private and eight public schools coupled with an awareness-raising campaign for parents.

The main focus of the CRDP interventions in this field so far is the protection and safety of children and youth on the Internet. The Child Safety on Internet project included extracurricular teacher trainings on cybersecurity and cyber-bullying. CRDP also agreed on implementing "ProtectEd"[28]

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[28] For more info on "ProtectEd" in Lebanon and a list of all Lebanese schools participating in this program go to http://www.kidproofsafety.com/ourpartners/middle-east-north-africa/

at Lebanese schools which involves critical thinking, reflection, dealing with bullying, and safety on the Internet. For three years now, a plan to introduce new school curricula has existed, but it has not been implemented due to lack of funding.

The ministry of education and higher education is open for collaboration and exchange with Lebanese and International CSOs. The entry point to engage with public schools in an extracurricular activity is the general directorate of education. Since 2016, the ministry has collaborated with DW Akademie, PPM, and Jesus and Mary School to introduce a MIL program at four public and private schools across the confessional spectrum in different regions in Lebanon. The project, which also targeted four youth organizations, included training of trainers, capacity building of teachers and educators (particularly English and IT teachers), and a MIL toolkit launched in February 2019.

The main challenges for introducing MIL in schools in a systematic way are:

- lack of MIL expertise and competencies of teachers and educators and lack of motivation among teachers,
- lack of resources to develop and renew school curricula,
- lack of technical capacity, particularly at many public schools especially in remote areas,
- lack of innovative, holistic approaches towards education in general, and
- the need for commitment and follow-up by the management of the schools.

Conclusions and Recommendations
In light of the key findings discussed above, we have reached the following main conclusions and recommendations:

- Generally, stakeholders (ministry, CSOs, and universities) are aware of the importance of MIL for youth in Lebanon. However, advancement of MIL among children and youth in Lebanon requires developing an inclusive MIL strategy that engages all stakeholders and strengthens partnership between educators, parents, policymakers, media and civil society organizations.
- Engaging with and receiving a commitment from policymakers, particularly the ministry of education and higher education, is crucial to achieve meaningful progress in introducing MIL in schools. Although integrating MIL in school curricula is currently not on the agenda of CRDP, there is the intention to update and renew school curricula in the near future upon availability of funding, which should provide an opportunity for MIL integration.
- CRDP currently leads a child safety project on the Internet. CRDP and the ministry of social affairs hope to develop this project further in cooperation with UNESCO and other relevant stakeholders. The new phase of the project will target school children using peer-to-peer education in eight private and eight public schools coupled with an awareness-raising campaign for parents. This project, which aims at raising awareness, could provide another concrete opportunity to introduce other MIL elements, in addition to cyber safety for children in the future.

- To ensure that accessibility to MIL education is not limited to private middle class and elite schools. This requires broader outreach in addition to developing the technical capacity of the schools involved, training teachers and educators, and ensuring sustainability. It also requires a collaborative approach that involves school management, CSO and media professionals, the directorate of education at the ministry of education and higher education, parents and donors.

- MIL training for teachers and educators is an essential pre-requisite for introducing MIL successfully in schools. Graduate trainee teachers follow one to two years training at the education department of the Lebanese University. It is recommended that MIL be included in this training program. In addition, CRDP has a yearly training plan for teachers and educators. Teacher training includes some aspects of IT. It is also recommended that MIL be included in this training. It is also recommended that education departments at universities include MIL in their programs to provide new teachers with the necessary competencies needed to enhance MIL at school.

- According to the study interviewees, media in all its forms is crucial for MIL education. In light of the limited number of MIL experts among media practitioners, it is important to develop MIL competencies and expertise of media professionals. Furthermore, media and journalism university graduates can potentially fulfill the role of MIL instructors at schools if they acquire MIL competencies. This can contribute to bridging the gap between Media and Information Literacy and education on the school level. In addition, it can create employment opportunities for media graduates, which is especially relevant given the high unemployment among graduates. LIU expressed interest in learning about the latest MIL developments regionally and globally and in cooperation in the field of MIL.

- Younger media professionals expressed the need for MIL education among media professionals, particularly among young journalists. They suggested that MIL awareness-raising and training workshops are conducted among young media professionals. This can be done in cooperation with academic experts and CSOs.

- CSOs working with children and youth are an important stakeholder in developing a national MIL strategy in Lebanon and in implementing programs on the ground in cooperation with the ministry, schools, parents, and other stakeholders.

- Lebanese experts and some CSO representatives have participated in regional conferences on MIL, but there is a need for regional cooperation and partnerships for sharing and learning, building expertise, and addressing common MIL challenges. This need was articulated particularly by youth organizations and CSOs. They are also open to international and global partnerships and encounters. However, they underline the importance of contextualizing training content and approaches to fit the local needs and the socio-political context in Lebanon.

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MIL Survey Analysis for Pupils and Universities students

<u>For pupils</u>

Table: average, standard deviation, and percentages for the overall results on the situation of MIL inside schools.

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
Section 1: Awareness and analysis	2.18	0.73	0.31	medium
Section 2: The schools' role in MIL	2.01	0.67	0.38	medium
Section 3: Participation and digital interaction	2.00	0.67	0.36	medium
Overall grade	2.07	0.69	0.28	medium

Table: average, standard deviation, and percentages for the first section "Awareness and analysis"

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
Are you able to distinguish between true and fake news?	2.47	0.82	0.65	high
When I come across a piece of information or a news item, I test its credibility by thorough research and testing.	2.34	0.78	0.75	high
I obtain information and news from more than one media source such as radio, TV, newspaper, websites, social media, etc.	2.34	0.78	0.63	high
I discuss information I obtain from social media outlets with my parents.	2.21	0.74	0.74	medium
Are you able to discuss information you obtain through social media outlets?	2.21	0.74	0.66	medium
I rely on more than one source to obtain information and news, i.e., local media, international media, social media.	2.11	0.70	0.65	medium
Do you think that media in general has left positive impact on you?	1.97	0.66	0.64	medium
I am affected by what I view on social media.	1.79	0.60	0.62	medium
Overall grade	2.18	0.73	0.31	medium

Table: average, standard deviation, and percentages for the second section "The schools' role in MIL"

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
Have you ever been instructed by your teacher to do research by searching the Internet?	2.47	0.82	0.56	high
My teacher urges me to search for information through different media sources.	2.24	0.75	0.68	medium
Have you ever been directed to a certain media outlet that you can benefit from?	2.03	0.68	0.64	medium
Has your teacher ever discussed the content of media outlets that pupils view?	2.03	0.68	0.68	medium
Has the teacher ever discussed media with pupils?	2.03	0.68	0.59	medium
Do teachers encourage you to produce media content related to the classroom?	1.89	0.63	0.76	medium
Have you ever received media training?	1.42	0.47	0.55	low
Overall grade	2.01	0.67	0.38	medium

Table: average, standard deviation, and percentages for the third section "Participation and digital interaction"

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
During discussions with our teachers we can express our views on certain issues.	2.58	0.86	0.50	high
I discuss what I hear or view with my school mates.	2.42	0.81	0.68	high
Have you ever published news, photos or downloaded videos from the Internet or any media outlet?	2.34	0.78	0.71	high
The information I obtain from websites is always true because the sites are well known.	2.08	0.69	0.43	medium
I listen carefully to the morning radio.	1.97	0.66	0.82	medium
I feel safe when sharing photos with my friends via Messenger as it has more privacy.	1.61	0.54	0.79	low

Have you ever participated in a wall magazine?	1.47	0.49	0.69	low
I participate in morning radio.	1.47	0.49	0.69	low
Overall grade	2.00	0.67	0.36	medium

For Universities:
Table: average, standard deviation, and percentages for the overall results on the situation of MIL inside universities.

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
Section 1: Awareness and analysis	2.35	0.78	0.28	high
Section 3: Participation and digital interaction	2.06	0.68	0.28	medium
Overall grade	2.20	0.73	.0.23	medium

Table: average, standard deviation, and percentages for the first section "Awareness and analysis"

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
When I come across a piece of information or a news item, I test its credibility by thorough research and testing.	2.68	0.89	0.47	high
Do you agree that media influence individuals' behavior?	2.63	0.88	0.54	high
I rely on more than one source to obtain information and news, i.e., local media, international media, social media.	2.53	0.84	0.60	high
I obtain information and news from more than one source such as radio, TV, newspaper, websites, social media, etc.	2.40	0.80	0.59	high
I possess the necessary skills to analyze and evaluate information I obtain from different media outlets.	2.23	0.74	0.58	medium
I am able to distinguish between fake and true news.	2.20	0.73	0.52	medium
Do you listen to the news?	2.13	0.71	0.52	medium

Do you follow local, regional, and international media outlets?	2.05	0.68	0.55	medium
Overall grade	2.35	0.78	0.23	high

Table: average, standard deviation, and percentages for the third section "Participation and digital interaction"

	Average	Percentage	Standard deviation	Rating
When I receive fake news, I warn people about it.	2.70	0.90	0.52	high
I make news with my smartphone to produce, document, and publish information.	2.33	0.78	0.66	medium
Do you interact with groups and pages where you are a member?	2.15	0.72	0.58	medium
There is censorship exerted by governments and certain groups on the Internet.	2.13	0.71	0.61	medium
I can introduce positive media content through media.	2.10	0.70	0.55	medium
Censoring the Internet restricts expressing one views freely and sincerely.	2.08	0.69	0.69	medium
Do you monitor events and phenomenon in your neighborhood, and do you publish it?	1.60	0.53	0.50	low
Have you ever used media for lobby and advocacy?	1.43	0.48	0.55	low
Overall grade	2.06	0.68	0.28	medium

Chapter 6

Media Literacy among School Students, University Students, Journalists, and Media Professionals in Egypt

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An overview of the general context in Egypt

Political context

The Egyptian community experiences a state of political calm on an internal level, often close to silence. This comes after many developments and political changes have taken place in Egypt, specifically after the revolutions of January 25, 2011 and June 30, 2013 that contributed to changing the features of political life in Egypt. During this period, Egypt witnessed the adoption of the constitution of 2014, which paved the way for parliamentary and presidential elections, whereupon Abdul Fattah al-Sisi was elected as President of the Republic of Egypt and succeeded in winning two consecutive presidential periods, the most recent being in June 2018. The current constitution allows the president to only run for two terms, meaning al-Sisi's term is supposed to end in 2022. However, campaigns have recently been launched by parliamentarians calling for amendments to certain articles of the constitution, including extending the current president's term and allowing him to run again. This amendment may bring about political unrest once again.

Economic situation

The Egyptian economy has recovered significantly since the political revolutions earlier this decade. According to the Central Bank of Egypt, net foreign exchange reserves reached 43 billion USD in January 2019. In comparison, net foreign exchange reserves amounted to 18.1 billion USD and to 13.6 billion USD in January 2012 and 2013 respectively. The increase in cash reserves reflects the economic breakthrough in the current period.

In November 2016, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced that it had granted Egypt a 12 billion USD loan over a period of three years. Thus far, Egypt has received nearly 10 billion USD, stipulating a series of economic reforms to restructure the Egyptian pound against foreign currencies to gradually lift subsidies on fuel and electricity, and to adopt a number of laws to stimulate investment. However, these measures, which were implemented immediately after the announcement of the loan, led to higher prices and higher inflation.

The situation of education

The Ministry of Education began with the development of a pre-university education strategy at the beginning of the current academic year 2018/2019. This was approved by the Egyptian government in April 2016. The strategy aims to develop and promote the education system, adjusting the secondary school system, and the opening of Japanese schools and technological schools for students desiring technical education.

In March 2018, the Central Agency for Mobilization and Statistics reported that the number of school students in Egypt had reached 20.6 million. The total number of schools was 52,664, including 45,279 public schools and 7,385 private schools. Meanwhile, the number of university students was 3 million spread across 25 public universities, 23 private universities, and higher and middle educational institutes.

Press and media situation

According to the 2014 constitution, the position of Minister of Media is no longer in place and has been replaced by national media regulatory bodies and councils. The three media regulatory bodies were formed in April 2017, including the Supreme Media Council, the National Audiovisual Authority, and the National Press Authority. They are responsible for the Egyptian media and media legislation in Egypt, but these councils are to be reshuffled following the announcement of the Press and Media Regulation Law in September 2018. The law allows the monitoring of any personal website, personal blog, or personal social media account with numbers of followers reaching 5,000 or more. Moreover, the law allows the suspension or blocking of these personal sites, blogs, and accounts in cases of publishing or broadcasting fake news, calling and inciting breaking of the law or spreading violence and hatred. According to the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression, the number of blocked websites in Egypt has reached 497 since May 2017.

Civil society status

Civil society organizations are no longer playing their normal role, especially after the enactment of the law on organizing the work of NGOs in Egypt in May 2017, which limits and restricts the work of civil society organizations. The law criminalizes the receipt of any external funding or financial support, which has caused the disruption of the work of many organizations or the transfer of their work outside Egypt.

However, due to international and domestic demands, President Abdelfattah al-Sisi agreed to reconsider and amend the law in November 2018. The law is now subject to community discussions under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Solidarity and the House of Representatives.

Internet usage

According to the Integrated Marketing Foundation IMFND, the number of Internet and Facebook users in Egypt reached 50 million and 38 million respectively. In August 2018, the Cybercrime Act was ratified, imposing penalties ranging from imprisonment to financial fines for cybercrimes, including hacking of websites or accounts for the purpose of obtaining money of others or fraud, circulation of content that violates public morals, the practice of electronic piracy or the management of sites used to facilitate crimes such as disturbing the public order, national security or the national economy.

Prominent National Campaigns

The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM), with the support of UNICEF and the Ministry of Higher Education, launched a campaign entitled "I am against bullying" to address the phenomenon of bullying among students at schools in September 2018.

Key findings

- The concept of media literacy was new to school students, but not to university students. The results show that 95% of school students (total 38 in survey) have not received training on media or media literacy, while 42.5% of university students (total of 17 in survey) have received training on media or media literacy.
- It was remarkable that school and university students enjoy and have great freedom on social networking sites that represent a free platform for them to express their views and opinions.
- The concept of media literacy was not sufficiently clear to all journalists, except for journalists who hold leadership positions. Most media organizations do not care about providing trainings for journalists. Meanwhile, journalists suffer from the vacuum that was caused by the departure of many NGOs, which used to provide free training to journalists on journalism and media developments.
- Despite the negative impact of social networking sites on journalism, they have contributed to a revival of traditional media, especially after users realized that there is a lack of credibility on social networking sites.
- Egyptian journalists still have difficulty obtaining information. This is a challenge especially given the spread of fake and fabricated news on social networking sites, which have become a major source of news for many users as well as journalists.
- The newly enacted NGO law limits the role and work of NGOs and all media initiatives, putting them in danger and posing a security challenge.
- All media initiatives and media projects that are represented in the study sample cooperate with each other to disseminate and consolidate the concept of media literacy through various activities offered to journalists, students, and the public.
- Media literacy is an integral part of academic subjects offered to media students at different Egyptian universities where it is taught at several levels. The purpose is to produce educational outputs that benefit the surrounding community.
- Digital literacy and digital education are new concepts that will be of interest to media colleges in the near future to keep pace with the changes and developments in media.
- The Ministries of Education and Higher Education are interested in educating and teaching media literacy, but it hasn't been integrated either at schools or universities. This is evidenced by both the results of the questionnaire and the discussions with the focus groups.

Study details

Media literacy amongst school students

The sample included 40 students, specifically 26 males and 14 females, and 25 and 15 students from public and private schools respectively. Ages ranged from 13-18 years.

Questionnaire results

- The results of the questionnaire show that 95% of the students (n=38) have not received training on media or media literacy, which reflects the absence of the school's role in raising awareness and educating students on this topic.

- Television is the most popular medium with 52% saying that they watch TV. In comparison, 25% of the respondents use social media. This indicates that television surpasses social networking sites and continues to receive a great deal of attention. Newspapers are the least commonly used (2.5% of respondents, n=1). This indicates school students' reluctance to read newspapers, which is not surprising given current technological developments.

- Entertainment is the most popular genre (25%), followed by political and cultural issues (17.5% each).

Focus Groups – School Students

Focus groups were conducted with the same sample of school students in order to obtain the best results and gain more insight into school students' understanding and knowledge of the concept of media literacy. The results indicate the following:

- Social networking sites, especially Facebook and Instagram, are very popular among the students, because they are available instantly, can be accessed easily, and students use them for entertainment.
- Students are generally not able to distinguish between negative and positive content spread on social networking sites, especially if it is difficult to verify the content. When verifying, students resort to the process of research and comparison to check the accuracy of the content that is being transmitted to them over social networking sites. In addition, they check comments and the amount of interactivity. Students say that the greater the reach of news, the more credible it is.
- The concept of media literacy was new to all students bar two who had a clear understanding of the concept. In these cases, their mothers had a role in educating and informing them. This largely reflects the role of parents in boosting students' understanding of the concept of media literacy.
- Many of the students expressed a lack of interference by parents in what they publish or share on social networking sites, considering this within their personal privacy. This is contrary to what was expected since parental dominance is the norm in Arab societies, especially at this age. Some did point out that they resort to tricks, like creating new accounts that exclude their parents to get more freedom. Others pointed out that some parents have neither accounts on social networking sites nor the ability to use modern technologies such as mobile phones and computers. This reduces parental control and gives them more freedom.
- Some students have experienced threats and cybercrime. For example, one student was subjected to defamation on Instagram. Six students said that they were exposed to phishing after browsing malicious content. One student even admitted threatening one of his

colleagues, specifically creating a fake account on Facebook and then blackmailing the colleague.

- Hate speech and bullying were new terms to all students. However, they are aware of constructive criticism and positive change, which they learned at school.

- Everything that is new, strange, and trending drives students to share content on their social networking pages. However, this puts them at risk of rumors and fake news, as they explained that they retreat from publishing the content or delete it after discovering that the content is not credible. They added that they do notify followers about the false content and then publish the correct one.

- Absence of the role of morning radio and wall magazine. The pupils expressed their limited participation in the morning radio since it does not provide anything useful to them, while others explained that they do not have a wall magazine.

- Students do not believe everything that is published on social networking sites. It depends on the logic of the news itself. However, one student who has an interest in the Internet and computer science said that he sometimes checks the URL before checking the details of the content. Meanwhile, all students said that there is no need to confirm the news, as long as it is widespread among users.

- Students use smartphones to produce content that reflects and expresses their personal interest, but not for the purpose of raising awareness of a particular societal issue.

- Students use the Internet to conduct research as a study requirement, but not in their free time or without guidance. The students explained their inability to identify academic resources that should be used in their research tasks. Wikipedia was their main source of information and the basis of the search process.

Media Literacy among University Students

The sample consisted of 40 students, specifically 7 males and 33 females, 23 and 17 students from public and private universities respectively, and at different ages ranging from 18-22 years old (30 students) and from 23-30 (10 students).

Questionnaire Results
- The results of the questionnaire show that 42.5% of students (n=17) have received training on media literacy.
- Internet websites were among the most followed media by (50% of respondents), which was unexpected and contrary to what the discussion sessions indicated.
- Social and entertainment topics had equal percentages and were the most followed (35.5% of respondents each).
- The university is the main source of media training (32.5%).

Focus groups – University students

Focus groups were conducted with the same sample of university students in order to obtain the best results and to reach greater insight into university students' understanding and knowledge of the concept of media literacy. The results show the following:

- Television and social networking sites were among the most popular media among university students due to easy access and availability.
- A number of students expressed their ability to distinguish between positive and negative media contents. Some of them indicated that identifying the content is a relative issue that differs from one person to another.
- The students explained that as long as the content is intended to serve the community it is positive, and vice versa.
- Only two students stated that they have good MIL knowledge. They attributed such knowledge to their parents. This emphasizes the role parents can play in enhancing their children's knowledge especially in understanding media contents and MIL in particular.
- Social networking sites are free platforms for students to express their views, especially since it is considered impossible to uncover the identity of the user.
- The government and parents do not represent a supervisory or a control burden to students.
- Students cannot completely protect themselves online. Some resort to content censored programs, but they are not effective all the time.
- Some cases in the sample were subjected to cyberbullying, especially through comments on social networking sites.
- The more attractive the content and the more relevant it is to the user, the greater the desire to publish it.
- Students in the sample were caught in the trap of spreading fake news without their knowledge, which prompted them to delete it, warn people about it and publish the correct news instead.
- Using smartphones to produce content to raise awareness of community issues is not common among students. Only one student who has political affiliations said he uses his smartphone to produce videos to express his views.
- The term "hate speech" was not new to students, but not all respondents have been exposed to it. Some of the students explained that they were subjected to hatred and racial discrimination.
- The students were able to differentiate between hate speech, constructive criticism, and positive change. This reflects their understanding of and familiarity with these terms, despite some of them being new to them.
- Students demonstrate that they have the ability to discuss information and content posted on social networking sites, especially if they are familiar with the topic.

Media literacy among journalists and media professionals

We contacted and interviewed the following journalists and media professionals:

1 - Essam Kamel – Editor- in-chief of Veto newspaper

2 - Amer Mahmoud - Executive editor of Ahl Misr newspaper

3 - Mohammed Hawari - Secretary editor at Al-Masry Al-Youm newspaper

4 - Tamer Ibrahim – Journalist at Cairo 24 website

5 - Nadia Mabrouk - Investigative journalist at the Dostour newspaper

6 - Abdullah Abudeef - Journalist at Al - Sabah newspaper

7 - Ahmed Abu Laila – Independent journalist

8. Hind Al-Shennawi - Journalist at Mantiqti newspaper

9 - Mustafa Sami – TV Correspondent at Dream TV

10 - Hind al-Beheiri - Independent journalist

Results of the Interviews

- The concept of media literacy was not sufficiently clear to all the journalists in the study sample, except for journalists in leadership positions.
- Most media and press institutions do not care about training journalists on the topics of media literacy, such as the identification of bullying, hate speech, cybersecurity, and fake news. Journalists rely on self-training by attending or participating in workshops and training offered outside their press institutions.
- There are negative effects of social networking sites on journalism and on newsmakers. Traditional media cannot keep up with the amount of news and the speed of circulation that characterize social networking sites. Therefore, media frequently fall into the trap of fake and fabricated news. That is why news entities use mechanisms and tools to verify fake and fabricated news, photos, and videos, and communicate with primary and official sources.
- Social networking sites have contributed to the provision of raw material for traditional media, implicitly supporting these outlets by creating journalistic work on what is trending and popular.
- Each press and media institution has a team dedicated to sharing content on social networking sites, interacting with the audience, and following up on what is new on social networking sites with the purpose of turning it into a story.
- Surprisingly, there is a news website that corrects fake news on its website without notifying the audience of the correction. This reflects a lack of professional standards and appropriate verification mechanisms before broadcasting or disseminating news.
- Al-Masry Al-Youm newspaper has a unique experience called "Sharek or Share It"- a platform for citizen journalism, which aims to encourage ordinary people to make contributions and share their journalistic work.

- Some journalists believe that journalists should not interact with comments on social media sites about the journalistic content that is being shared. They emphasize that this should be an official rule.
- Some press and media institutions prohibit their journalists from interacting with the audience on social networking sites in terms of expressing political opinions and orientations.
- Journalists explained that the main reason behind the spread of fake news is the inability to access information. They noted that there are caveats they should be aware of before disseminating information.
- The vacuum left by NGOs has provided private training centers and media institutions with the opportunity to offer training for commercial purposes. This, however, has not led to journalistic or media teams familiar with international standards.
- The training opportunities were only available to journalists who hold leadership positions at their institutions. They had training on fake news, cybersecurity and hate speech, most of them through online seminars organized by Deutsche Welle.
- None of the journalists from the study sample have received training on cyberbullying.
- Journalists believe that training is not one of the priorities of press and media institutions. Instead, media institutions seek ready-prepared journalists.
- Journalists believe that the lack of training has a negative impact on their performance.
- There is a gap between what students learn at university and work requirements.
- With the spread of social networking sites, new patterns have emerged for journalists. One such pattern is the emergence of news that consists of only one line and is disseminated quickly. Journalists have started to broadcast or publish the news first and then deal with the truth. Therefore, some institutions have stopped producing news stories based on information that comes from social networking sites.
- All institutions provide training opportunities for media college students. The courses mainly cover various journalistic skills, including how to deal with news attributed to social networking sites and mechanisms of verification.
- Some news institutions broadcast or publish awareness-raising content indirectly to keep their audience.
- Journalists believe that they can play an important role in spreading the concept of media literacy arguing that this should be a lifestyle choice for journalists, as it will reduce the volume of spreading misinformation. They clarified that the individual journalist is not responsible for combating fake news alone, but that it is the responsibility of news institutions as a whole. Combating fake news is a huge challenge that cannot be done by an individual but needs to be transformed into a multi-stage institutional and community effort.
- Most journalists agreed that financial resources are not a challenge in the prevalence of media literacy, but the shortage of trainers is.
- The journalists of the research sample rejected imposing laws that undermine freedom of opinion and expression, but they suggested setting criteria for regulating freedom of expression.

Media Literacy and Media Initiatives Projects

We contacted and held interviews with the following people:

- Mustafa Fathi - Journalist and founder of Media Lancer Project
- Tarek Said - Journalist and coordinator of the Egyptian Editors Forum
- Ahmed Abu Al-Qasim - Founder of Digital Media Factory
- Mohammed Naji - Researcher at the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression
- Iman Mahmoud - Media Officer of the Media Club at the Danish-Egyptian Dialogue Institute

The results of the meetings were as follows:

Media Lancer

Media Lancer is a media project initiated as a non-profit initiative under the guidance of the International Journalists' Network (IJN). Its goal is to develop journalists' skills in the use of technology. It was launched in December 2017.

- The project does not receive any special funding, particularly since the new law that criminalizes the financing of civil society organizations was passed.
- The project focuses directly on the topics of media literacy, targeting journalists and ordinary people.
- The project has organized 10 self-funded trainings, 50% of which focused on the journalist's relationship to technology and how to properly use it to verify news and information.
- The project contributes to the production of content on its Facebook page, which is intended to raise public awareness about cybersecurity.
- Mustafa Fathi, the founder of the project, has received international and local training in addition to his own self-learning, which enabled him to launch the project.
- Mustafa Fathi writes articles about media literacy in participation with IJN. His articles do not deal directly with media literacy, but interact with this topic through resources integrated into the articles.
- The project focuses on training journalists on media translations, especially after the spread of incorrect translations.
- The project needs three things: 1) Increasing the number of trainers who can spread the concept of media literacy in Egypt as currently numbers are insufficient. 2) Adequate funding to hold courses on media literacy in a professional way and in a timely manner. 3) Bringing professional trainers to conduct train-the-trainer courses.
- The project seeks to network with foreign or Arab institutions, but the current security conditions prevent this. For example, a partnership with Deutsche Welle had been planned, but security concerns hindered the partnership.

Egyptian Editors Forum

The Egyptian Editors Forum was launched in June 2016, under the auspices of the Egyptian Program for Media Development - a specialized Egyptian media company. The forum aims to conduct media trainings and provide media advice to increase media awareness.

- The forum aims at not just teaching journalistic skills but training journalists and media students on how to produce professional content.
- The forum has a weekly newsletter which a total of 1,300 journalists have subscribed to. The newsletter deals with issues related to professionalism and presents successful media experiences.
- The forum publishes an annual book titled "Creativity in the Media" in multiple languages. Its primary focus is press and investigative journalism.
- In cooperation with the American University in Cairo, the forum has produced a glossary of terms, including all terms and expressions that ignite hate speech and have been used in the Egyptian media. They update and expand the glossary on a regular basis.
- The forum conducted a training in partnership with Facebook in 2018. Its purpose was to show how to use Facebook in journalism, and targeted journalists and students in various institutions and universities. The training was organized in Egypt, Jordan, Dubai, and Lebanon.
- The forum has organized a training in cooperation with the International Labor Organization to train individuals working in institutions and government ministries on dealing with the media.
- The forum focuses on providing media management trainings, targeting higher administrative bodies at press and media institutions.
- The forum does not focus only on training novice journalists but also decision-makers at press and media institutions, so that they have confidence to train the fresh journalists. This helps to avoid frustration among journalists by contributing to improvements in the decision-making process and the method of recruitment and training. This is particularly important as there are numerous press and media institutions that do not believe in the culture of training.
- The forum designs exercises according to the needs of the target organizations after surveying what kind of training is needed by the institution.

Digital Media Factory

Digital Media Factory is a media project that provides training in journalism and media using virtual reality technology. It was launched in April 2017.

- The project aims to develop the skills of journalists beyond writing. It wants journalists to accept a different interactive view when using multimedia. Finally, the project wants to help journalists determine how best to verify news by using different verification techniques.

- The training includes programs on verifying news, photos, and videos using technologies in addition to training related to mobile journalism, cybersecurity, cloud data protection, and fake news.
- Grants and training courses are offered to students.
- The project does not include training related to bullying or hate speech.
- The project acts solely on its own because of the seriousness of the security situation, especially since the law was passed which effects NGOs by criminalizing external financing.
- They have no shortage of trainers but there are security (government censorship) and financing challenges.

Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE)

The Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE) is an Egyptian organization for human rights specialized in journalists and human rights defenders and digital rights, such as privacy on the Internet, freedom of the Internet, freedom of creativity, and access to information. The association was founded in 2006.

- AFTE focuses on issues related to hate speech, cybersecurity, digital rights, and rights and freedoms in relation to media.
- AFTE has issued a set of guidelines on how to protect social media accounts, digital rights, cybercrime and cybersecurity, and has held trainings on these topics. Due to current security concerns, it has stopped for the time being. It is, however, working on models related to online bullying.
- AFTE participates in a regional project in more than one Arab country in cooperation with Reporters without Borders association. The project seeks to determine the ownership of the media in the Arab world, including in Egypt. In other words, the goal is to identify media owners to understand the structure of the media and press institutions.
- From 2013 to the present, AFTE has been working on another project related to digital freedom and internet censorship in Egypt.

Media Club

Media Club is a media project affiliated to the Danish-Egyptian Dialogue Institute - a non-profit organization launched in September 2012. Media Club is a platform for Egyptian media professionals and journalists that holds discussion sessions and provides training services for the development of media in Egypt.

- The club focuses on holding monthly meetings with Egyptian media professionals and journalists to discuss media issues and to come up with solutions or recommendations that benefit the journalism profession.
- In 2015, the club launched its 'Editorial Guidelines' booklet for journalists in order to enhance and boost the professional skills of journalists. A series of training sessions were launched, including at several Egyptian media and press institutions, to raise awareness about these guidelines.

- The club has organized training for journalists and media students on fake news and how to verify it and on investigative journalism.
- Hate speech, cyberbullying, and cybersecurity are not on the club's agenda.
- The club is launching a new electronic learning platform called "Masar/Path", which includes a series of journalism courses targeting journalists and students.
- The club has cooperated with international and Egyptian organizations, such as Deutsche Welle, the Organization of News Ombudsmen and Standards Editors, and the Egyptian Al-Ahram Foundation.

Media Literacy amongst University Academics

We contacted and interviewed Prof. Adel Saleh – Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Communication and Mass Media at the British University in Egypt, and Prof. Mahmoud Aalam El-Din – Professor of journalism at Cairo University and member of the National Press Authority.

The results of the interviews are the following:

- Media literacy is an integral part of the curriculum offered to media students.
- Media literacy is taught at several levels and students are provided with different educational materials related to media literacy. The first level is the preparatory stage characterized by giving students background information on the concept of media literacy and its role. Students' understanding of media literacy develops with the academic progress. In the advanced stages of their study, the students' have their critical thinking developed and they start reading beyond the texts and media messages that they are exposed to.
- Students are trained to design media campaigns and activities aimed at serving the surrounding community. One of these activities this year included a campaign on bullying.
- The module titled "Media Ethics and Laws" addresses the concept of hate speech, fake news, rumors and verification mechanisms.
- "Digital literacy" or "digital education" was one of the concepts that has been emphasized and will be developed within the subjects of the master's degree program offered by the British University this year.
- Social media platforms played a significant role in the education and awareness-raising processes, due to the decline of traditional media in favor of social networking sites.
- Many practices carried out through social networking sites are not subject to the professional standards that are taught to students, like credibility, objectivity, and professionalism. This represents a challenge to media colleges.
- There is a need to regulate media space amidst the existing conflict that exists between openness to citizen journalism on one hand and taking advantage of the technology and outputs provided by social media platforms on the other.
- Media literacy programs can help restore discipline in online media practices.

Media literacy and Ministries of Education and Higher Education

We contacted and interviewed Mr. Hassan Khattab, Director General of the General Administration for Professional Development at the Central Administration of the Educational Leadership Development Center at Ministry of Education, and Dr. Adel Abdul Ghaffar - Media Spokesman for the Ministry of Higher Education.

The results of the interviews show the following:

Ministry of Education - Results

- There is an annual plan aimed at training the leaders of the Ministry of Education on educational media and media marketing. Specialists of the National Audiovisual Authority carry out and supervise the training.
- The training is limited to the leadership and is then passed to the students by their trained educational mentors.
- There are units inside the schools called "Educational Training Units in media education" that provide teachers and students with the necessary training.
- Educational media programs aim at correcting students' understanding, especially after the broad spread of misinformation in the media.
- There are no modules or subjects under the name of media literacy so far. However, the ministry recommends developing extracurricular MIL-related activities and incorporating media literacy in the curriculum.
- The training include programs on digital literacy and digital management to activate the ministry's Education Development Plan launched in April 2018.
- There is a partnership with the Goethe Institute to organize programs for leaders and teachers on bullying and digital security as well as new online applications.
- The ministry has given training programs on information security and has a specialized department for information security.
- The ministry has organized campaigns on fake news targeting students, especially after the spread of rumors on social networking sites.
- The ministry has partnered with the World Bank to update the curriculum. Moreover, the experience of Queen Rania School in Jordan in teaching MIL has been transferred to Egypt.
- The ministry is in the process of signing a protocol of cooperation with the National Audiovisual Authority to train leaders and students on media skills, modern writing, and marketing methods, and to discover talented students.
- The ministry does not face any obstacles or financial challenges with respect to the dissemination of media literacy at schools, especially to students who are interested in media activities.

Ministry of Higher Education – Results
- The concept of media literacy is spread at universities along four axes:

147

a. The Ministry of Higher Education's annual cultural plan, which is directed at addressing societal issues and challenges. Media is a key element of the cultural plan.
b. Activities and courses provided by the ministry's Leadership Development Center.
c. Seminars and activities carried out by each university, such as MIL-related activities organized by UNESCO.
d. Scientific research on media literacy.

- Some universities have initiated projects related to fake news and cybersecurity, such as the Al-Nahda University's initiative to monitor fake news and rumors.
- The ministry has launched the "You ask and the minister answers" initiative on social networking sites to receive complaints, suggestions, and inquiries.
- Social networking sites are an essential tool for the ministry to reach its target groups.
- The ministry issues periodic reports to respond to rumors and fake news.
- The ministry welcomes partnerships with any university or institution for the purpose of disseminating media literacy among university students
- Financial resources don't hinder the ministry from disseminating media literacy. The challenge is how to disseminate MIL in the correct manner.

Recommendations

- Since the concept of media literacy is new among school and university students and is not widespread, awareness campaigns on media literacy should be increased in the coming period. Media literacy should also be integrated into the curriculum as a basic subject, especially in light of the challenges faced by the media and its audiences, such as the spread of fake news and distorted media messages.
- Without exception, journalists need both training and guidelines on media literacy.
- The ban on civil society organizations must be lifted, as they carry an enlightening message to media and press workers, media students, and the public.
- Opening channels of communication and cooperation with the ministries of education and higher education in order to transfer experiences to them in relation to media literacy.
- Bringing professional trainers to conduct workshops and courses on media literacy and preparing local trainers to transfer experiences.
- Sending periodic newsletters to journalists and media students aimed at raising awareness of the latest developments in media literacy.
- Strengthening the role and capacities of young media initiatives and activities by providing training with specialized trainers and experts and by opening channels of communication between them and other similar experiences.
- Launching an online platform that includes a series of skills and activities for students and the public. This should be an electronic platform that contributes to the dissemination of the culture of media literacy in an interactive manner.
- Forming an association including journalists, students of media colleges, academic experts and professionals. The purpose of the association is to discuss media changes. This will contribute to enhancing the role of media literacy in a more positive and effective way.

- Developing a handbook on media literacy to be used by educational, academic, and press institutions that seek to teach or raise awareness about media literacy.
- Encouraging school and university students to produce media content and broadcast it on their social platforms, thus strengthening the culture of media literacy among them and enhancing their critical and creative thinking.
- Continuing to conduct studies and research on the prevalence of media literacy. This is especially important since this topic is new to Arab societies and is not yet sufficiently saturated.
- Media discourse needs to be further developed, so that more attention is given to the importance of media literacy and its impact on individuals and society.
- Encouraging schools and universities to spread the culture of media literacy through granting them incentive awards.
- Initiating initiatives at an international level to give greater importance to media literacy.

Personal Thoughts

The present study adds to current academic literature and research efforts. It provides an in-depth and analytical look at media literacy in schools, universities, educational bodies and institutions in order to come up with recommendations that contribute to creating an environment that promotes the concept and principles of media literacy and revives the media awareness of the Arab audience.

This study did face some challenges. For example, it was difficult to reach focus group participants, especially since this study was conducted during the half-year examination period. Therefore, it was not easy to coordinate with students, demanding the researcher to hold several meetings with different focus groups at different intervals to ensure that the best results were obtained.

The other challenge is the nature of the situation here in Egypt which is characterized by heightened sensitivity in dealing with the media in general. Perhaps the academic and research nature of the study prompted a lot of the research participants to participate to satisfy their desire to know more about media literacy and its role.

Therefore, this study will play a role in providing guidance for future studies. Practitioners are encouraged to build on the present study and thus contribute to the improvement of people's awareness of media literacy in accordance with the nature of the challenges faced by media and society, whether political, economic, social, or even technological.

Conclusion

The promotion of the concept of media literacy is still required among students at schools and universities, media professionals, journalists, and the public in general. The study showed that the concept was new to a large sample of school and university students and even some journalists who do not work in leadership positions and rely on their self-learning efforts. This

means that students need to be made more aware of media literacy through the development of curricula and training programs within the framework of the cultural and educational activities assigned to each educational institution. In order to do this effectively, educational institutions must be provided with solutions that will help spread the concept of media literacy among students, such as the development of the curriculum, integrating media literacy, or providing professionals who could contribute to the enhancement of expertise and the transfer of experiences. In addition, the role of NGOs that has been restricted by existing laws should be strengthened. Moreover, the leadership at different media and press institutions must develop the skills of their journalists in order to enrich journalistic content and to improve the role of journalism and media. This, in turn, would have a positive impact on the community.

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Chapter 7

MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY IN MOROCCO

Conducted by:

Lead researcher   **:** Dr. Salmane Terq El Allami
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Salman Tarek Allami:

Salman Tarek Allami was born in 1966 in Marrakesh, Morocco. He received his bachelor's degree in English studies from the Qadi Ayyad University in Marrakesh, and then received a diploma in advanced studies in English and American studies in 1991 from the Sorbonne University. In 1997, he carried out field research on the impact of politics and religion on the social, cultural and political life of Arabs in America, and obtained a doctorate from the Sorbonne University. Since 1999, Dr. Salman has been a professor at both public and private Moroccan universities in the fields of media, communication, and cultural studies. He founded the first institute for Film Studies in Morocco (ISCA), conducted researches and studies, and lectures in Morocco and abroad in the fields of media, politics, and other fields of human sciences.

"Rather than condemning or endorsing the undoubted power of the media, we should admit their significant impact and penetration throughout the world as a matter of fact, and also appreciate their importance as an element of culture in today's world. The role of communication and media in the process of development should not be underestimated, nor should the function of media as instruments for the citizen's active participation in society. Political and educational systems need to recognize their obligation to promote in their citizens a critical understanding of the phenomena of communication."

Excerpt from Grunwald Declaration

Abstract

The negative use of the media is alarmingly spreading in Morocco as in many countries around the world. Such misuse has given rise to new challenges and phenomena that impact on both individuals and societies. Therefore, any solution outside the realm of education will be a simple attempt that does not address the core problem in its depth and complexity. Hence, it is of paramount importance to set up Media and Information Literacy as a proactive and educative input and as a different approach in dealing with media and information. This study aims to shed light on the state of art of Media and Information Literacy in the Moroccan educational system and assess the extent to which it is understood and implemented. It also aims to identify the stakeholders' and target audiences' awareness of the essence and raison d'être of Media and Information Literacy, the degree to which they promote it and their stance vis-à-vis the effects of social media.

The present study reveals a number of findings. Firstly, the limited understanding of Media and Information Literacy hampers its implementation. Secondly, there is a rising awareness of its importance and a great desire to integrate it into the educational system and training programs. Also, the initiatives taken by some institutions are sporadic, limited in scope and do not cover the main components of Media and Information Literacy. Thus, these findings lead us to recommend the need for putting forward a new vision that integrates different actors within a participatory approach and reinforce capacity building and specialized expertise in the field of Media and Information Literacy. It is also highly recommended that international cooperation be strengthened in order to benefit from the best practices. The ultimate goal is to conceive of new policies to mitigate the negative impact of media, especially on the younger generations, by equipping them with the necessary tools to develop exhilarated, critical, vivid and creative minds.

Keywords: Media and information literacy, education in Morocco, social media.

Introduction

From Gothenburg to Zuckerberg, from printing to the virtual world, Man has been subjected to the hegemony of communication technology that has been essential in building societies. These ubiquitous media have various economic, political and cultural implications, and they control the thinking and behavior of individuals, groups and nations. There is, therefore, no doubt that these means cannot be dispensed with because they have become part and parcel of our everyday life in all its aspects.

The fundamental questions to be raised here are: How do we deal with this technology? How do we live with it? How can we empower citizens to handle the proliferation of information in a rational, effective and productive way? In other words, what is at stake is how to provide citizens with enhanced knowledge to enable them to become active consumers and producers of media rather than passive receivers who do not understand the background and implications of discourse? How can we decipher mass communication messages and narratives? How do we keep up with the excessive informational speed through a critical mind? How should we act as educators, decision-makers, civil society members, parents and media professionals to foster a media culture capable of developing good taste, critical evaluation, rational interaction and content production?

The challenge today is to educate, through Media and Information Literacy, a new citizen, actively involved in contributing to a new societal project based on respect for difference, intellectual freedom, critical and constructive thinking and the pursuit of knowledge as the main pillar of human development.

It is important to add here that the rationale behind Media and Information Literacy is to empower kids and young people and enable them to detect and analyze biased, fake or ungrounded news. Equally important is the necessity to empower and enable them to protect themselves from all types of hate speech, defamation and extremisms. Studies[29] indicate that 71% of students between 3 and 18 years use the Internet. How can we enable them to deal with different types of information? And how can we enable them to distinguish between right, wrong, fake and incomplete information?

All these questions are crucial and require careful analysis, reflection and rational planning. This will be possible only by, first and foremost, raising awareness to the importance of Media and Information Literacy, and by consolidating its culture in educational institutions. Any solution outside the sphere of education would be an incomplete attempt that does not deeply address the core issue[30].

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[29] The Condition of Education 2018,The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), U.S. Department of Education, page 33.

[30] Debunking: A meta-analysis of the psychological efficacy of messages countering misinformation, Man-pui Sally Chan1, Christopher R. Jones2, Kathleen Hall Jamieson2, Dolores Albarracín1, University of Illinois and University of Pennsylvania, https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0956797617714579First Published September 12, 2017.

Presentation of the study

This study is part of a research project that covers seven Arab countries and supervised by the Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation (PYALARA) in partnership with Deutsche Welle Akademie. The aim of this research is to investigate the state of art and perspectives of Media and Information Literacy in these countries, in order to contribute to effective policies for implementing this nascent concept.

Media and Information Literacy means "enabling the citizen to be fully apt to use and have access to the various types of media, to understand and analyze their content, to be able to interact with content creation, and to critically think about the content of the exchanged messages"[31]. In short, Media and Information Literacy means:

- ❖ sufficient and effective access to information.
- ❖ The ability to think critically.
- ❖ The ability to produce and share meaningful content.

Methodology and sample

This study was carried out in January 2019. It was based on qualitative and quantitative approaches, as well as participant observation and field experience in order to understand the status of Media and Information Literacy in Morocco through the views of university professors, education and media professionals, civil society leaders, as well as pupils and university students.

The sample:

The sample consists of two categories:

- A random sample: 80 pupils and university students were chosen randomly. The standard of parity between males and females and between students of the private and public sectors was adopted.

- 20 questionnaires were administered to pupils of a public school (aged between 13 and 15)
- 20 questionnaires were administered to pupils of a private school (aged between 16 and 18)
- 20 questionnaires were administered to students of a public university (aged between 18 and 25)
- 20 questionnaires administered to students of a private higher education media school (aged between 18 and 25)

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[31] Media and information literacy, DW academie, Sylvia Braesel, Thorsten Karg, 2018, page 10.

In addition to the questionnaires, open brainstorming discussions were held with these categories.

- A purposive sample: selected on the criterion of specialization in the fields of education, media and civil society. This sample comprises:

    - Civil society: 8 NGOs:
        - 5 NGOs working in the field of youth in general.
        - 3 NGOs working specifically in the field of media.
    - Media professionals: 10
        - 1 freelancer
        - 1 national radio journalist
        - 1 national TV journalist
        - 7 journalists from different websites
    - Media faculty:
        - 1 representative of a public media school
        - 1 representative of a private school
    - National and Higher education
        - 1 representative of the Ministry of National Education
        - 1 representative of the Ministry of Higher Education

This report is divided into two chapters. The first chapter will provide a brief overview of the Moroccan context, focusing on Media and Information Literacy. The second chapter will be devoted to data collection discussion of the findings. Finally, we will wrap up with recommendations on possible ways to promote Media and Information Literacy in Morocco.

CHAPTER ONE: THE SITUATION OF MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY IN THE MOROCCAN CONTEXT

With a population of nearly 34 million, Morocco is today a multicultural and multi-lingual country (Arabic, French, Tamazight, Hassani) located at the crossroads of Africa and Europe. This linguistic, cultural and geographic diversity gave Morocco an economic advantage by making the tourism sector one of the main sources of economic growth, in addition to agriculture, maritime fishing, phosphate, renewable energy and the automobile industry.

Since the beginning of the third millennium, Morocco has been witnessing political, economic and social transformations, the most important of which is the Equity and Reconciliation Commission in 2004 established to break, once and for all, with the Years of Lead, a period of the rule of former King Hassan II marked by State violence and oppression of dissidents. Another huge step in this process was the launching of the Human Development Initiative in 2005 to eradicate poverty and vulnerability. The 2011 constitution was also a great turning point, for it paid considerable attention to public liberties and human rights as well as highlighting the right of access to information and the respect of multilingualism.

Within the remit of the political change, the educational project remains the biggest challenge of Morocco's aspiration to achieve development and to redress social and economic conditions. This is clearly demonstrated by the launching of several reform projects aiming at adopting modern approaches to make education a central and strategic choice.

Information technology and the educational system in Morocco

The focus on information and communication technology in Morocco has begun with the **National Charter for Education and Training in 1999**[32]. There has been a trend towards the technical use of technology in the educational field, where media and communication were considered facilitating tools for teaching. However, many aspects of Media and Information Literacy were not included in the educational curricula.

According to this approach, equipping educational institutions has been carried out through the Generalization of Information and Communication Technologies in Education (GENIE), a program within the framework of The Digital Morocco Project 2009-2013, which aims at providing students and teachers with ICT information and knowledge[33]. This program coincided with the Emergency Plan (2007-2011), which was designed to promote social transformation by providing citizens with access to the Internet and to knowledge through ICTs[34].

However, the results did not meet the expectations as the program suffered from shortcomings associated with human resources training programs[35], in addition to other pitfalls in coordination

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[32] A strategy to reform the system of education and training. It was launched in 1999 in order to overcome the crisis of the Moroccan educational system. After that, another reform/project was adopted, "The Emergency Plan", which was announced in 2007 and was implemented between 2009 and 2012.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Digital Morocco 2009-2013, a national strategy for Information society and digital economy, page 21.
[35] The Higher Court of Auditors, report on Digital Morocco Strategy 2013, N° 05/13/CH4, February 2014, page 19.

and implementation. This hampered the project and, by extension, affected the integration of media literacy in the educational system.

Within the strategic vision of reform adopted by the Higher Council for Education, Training and Scientific Research (2015-2030), there was a tendency to move from the purely technical view of Media and Information in the educational field, at least in terms of orientation and objectives. This vision was based on the premise of "**investing in ICT, with a critical background[36]**" to achieve socio-cultural integration. The goal of this vision was to introduce information and communication technology and digital culture as fundamentals for educators to raise the level of teaching[37].

Beyond the technical view of media and information literacy

In the same context, a number of initiatives have been launched by international NGOs, especially UNESCO and other organizations, such as Deutsche Welle Akademie,[38] as well as local ones, namely human rights organizations. Other initiatives have been taken by governmental institutions such as universities[39], media schools, the Higher Authority of Audiovisual Communication[40] (HACA), and the Muhammadian League of Scholars.[41]

Despite all these initiatives, Media and Information Literacy has not yet been adopted in a systematized way and in accordance with the new conceptions. Furthermore, we notice the non-integration of Media and Information Literacy within the official curricula; this is due to the predominance of the traditional Top-Down approach that does not involve all education stakeholders in decision-making. Undoubtedly, the effective participation of these stakeholders is imperative for the real integration of media and information literacy in the educational system.

As a matter of fact, it is propitious time to examine Media and Information Literacy and the perception of all the stakeholders, namely pupils and students, media professionals, education officials and civil society activists.

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[36] Reform strategic vision 2015-2030, Higher Council for Education, Training and Scientific Research, page 55.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Launching of MIL program for trainers and teachers 2011, and the project of integration of media and information literacy in education, in partnership with UNESCO and the Ministry of National Education. This project aims to add 20-hour modules in the training centers targeting trainee teachers. Deutsche Welle worked on some private radio stations and civil society actors.
[39] There are initiatives at the level of higher education indicating that media and information literacy is on the agenda, especially with the introduction of media studies at the faculties of letters and human sciences in 2009. Additionally, some universities hold international conferences, workshops and study days on media and information literacy, namely the University of Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah, Fes.
[40] The Higher Council of Audiovisual Communication gives great importance to media and information literacy according to Jama Eddine NAJI, former Director General of the Council, which is set on three pillars: "protection, encouragement and participation", with the aim of achieving three objectives: "knowledge, comprehension and action". This objective is achievable through the will, partnership and efforts of all the involved parties i.e. schools, public and private media as well as content professionals, media regulators and ethics committees".
[41] The Muhammadian League of Scholars launched a digital strategy driven by religion, identity and national memory targeting students and youth. www.chabab.mawww.elfetra.ma

CHAPTER TWO: PRESENTATION OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

The study seeks to map the trends of Media and Information Literacy in Morocco, through the perception of various respondents concerned with this topic.

Questions of the Study

- To what extent are the targeted categories aware of the meaning and relevance of media and information literacy and the topics related it? [42]
- To what extent does each category play its role in disseminating Media and Information Literacy in all its dimensions?
- What are the value representations (positive-negative-neutral) that each category gives to social media?

Media professionals

In the midst of globalization, the proliferation of information and the convergence of media genres, the conflict between the so-called "traditional media" and "alternative media" or between "mass media" and "citizen media" has intensified. This debate requires looking at the areas, functions and modus operandi of each one of them.

How do media professionals perceive social media? What are the challenges facing them and their profession in light of the digital world? And what is the degree of their awareness of Media and Information Literacy?

In order to answer these questions, ten interviews were carried out with journalists working in different Moroccan media institutions: Salah Kori, Al Dar website; Samir Al-Raysouni, National Radio; M.S, Goud website; Reda Rahmaani, Le Site Info; Mohsen Bintaj, Moroccan public television journalist; Hisham Agnag, Goud website; S.Ch, Febrayer website; Abdelali Balnajeh, Independent journalist; Iman Mejibn, from Barlamane website, Mehdi Jouhari, La Vie eco newspaper.

The interviews reveal that these media professionals are relatively aware of the meaning of Media and Information Literacy. However, in their definitions, they fail to underline the elements of "the ability to detect bias and lying" as well as "interaction and content creation". This may be explained by the insufficient training related to Media and Information Literacy; only 5 of them had participated in training workshops on fake news, 2 had participated in a training on hate speech, and none of them had ever participated in any training on bullying. According to these media professionals, media institutions are not interested in integrating media literacy because these institutions are dominated by the logic of commercial competition.

As for their views on social media, they are also negative. They believe that these media "…provide nonsense to journalism and allow every user to engage in activities that are at the

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[42] Topics related to it such as : privacy, censorship, protection, bullying, hate speech and fake news …

heart of journalistic work."[43] Media professionals have to deal with the dominance of social media that negatively impact breaking news and the journalist's performance in general.

Concerning the media professionals' perception of the challenges facing the integration of media and information literacy, they can be summarized as follows:

- Lack of interest in this area on the part of media institutions.
- Lack of training on Media and Information Literacy.
- Lack of interest in work ethics within media institutions.
- Lack of institutions to combat the phenomenon of fake news.
- Absence or lack of funds for training in the field of Media and Information Literacy.
- Lack of experience and expertise.
- Lack of the media institutions' commitment to their duty to provide continuous training.
- The preoccupation of journalists with daily news and buzz to gain the highest number of followers, ignoring, thus, core issues.

To conclude, the attitude of media professionals vis-à-vis social media is negative, and their knowledge about Media and Information Literacy is limited, but they are aware of its importance and the need to incorporate it into training programs. They are also aware that educating the public is their duty and although imposing punitive laws to counter fake news is necessary, it must also be ensured that freedom of opinion and expression are not compromised.

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[43] Statement made by a media professional.

National and Higher Education officials

To understand the status of Media and Information Literacy in the educational system, we held meetings with an official from the Ministry of National Education and an official from the Ministry of Higher Education.

As far as the definition of Media and Information Literacy is concerned, we came to the conclusion that the higher education official is more familiar with the concept. For him, it means, "**empowering individuals with comprehension and analytical skills so as to deal with all types of media**." The Ministry of National Education representative, on the other hand, has no knowledge whatsoever of what Media and Information Literacy means, and his understanding is limited to "**using modern technology to facilitate the teaching process**" through the GENIE program, i.e., equipping schools with information and communication technologies. In other words, one refers to "learning about the media" while the other talks about "learning through the media."

Concerning the teachers' and professors' access to training programs, this training was only focused on the use of information and communication technology in teaching. According to the education officials, there are no training programs on bullying, hate speech, digital security, fake news or other issues related to Media and Information Literacy.

The two officials agree on the huge impact of social media. They are the most widely used by young people and by the ministries for administrative purposes in order to facilitate communication between the regional academies and departments of the two ministries. They also agree on the need to include Media and Information Literacy in the formal curriculum, and the need to persuade and mobilize teachers and professors to adopt it. In addition, they put heavy emphasis on cooperation and partnership with national and international institutions to benefit from global expertise and capitalize on best practices.

All in all, the officials of national education and higher education focus on the legal framework for the integration of Media and Information Literacy in the curricula, on the teachers' and professors' training and on the monitoring of financial means, in addition to mobilizing learners, professors and administrators, and the need to benefit from international expertise and competencies.

Civil society

Morocco abounds with diverse civil society networks that play vital roles in framing and opening up the debate on sensitive issues that are of great interest to citizens, especially the youth. In the aftermath of the Casablanca terrorist acts in 2003, Morocco took to supporting youth civil society organizations to take part in the coaching and training of young people and motivating them to engage effectively in the process of democratization and sustainable development.

In order to have an idea about the perceptions of civil society on Media and Information Literacy, five youth associations were selected (Hip Hop Family Association - the Forum of Moroccan Youth for the Third Millennium – Yedi Fi Yedek Association - Shababna Association - Moroccan Observatory for Youth and Democracy), as well as three associations specialized in the field of media.

Except the NGOs that operate in the field of media, civil society members are the least informed on the components of Media and Information Literacy. In comparison with all the interviewees in this study, the civil society actors are the least familiar with the concept of Media and Information Literacy, which, for them simply means "students' addiction to the Internet and its applications, especially during the period of exams." True to say that these NGOs happen to tackle, now and then, some issues related to Media and Information Literacy, such as ethics. However, these discussions remain spontaneous and sporadic, and do not fall under a clear vision of Media and Information Literacy. These NGOs suffer from a significant lack of training; only one association organized a workshop on extremism and another on countering rumor and hate speech. This explains the unbridled desire of the leaders of these NGOs to benefit from training in Media and Information Literacy.

On the other hand, the NGOs involved in audiovisual and electronic media are particularly interested in the production of television or film works and organize training sessions in this field. Yet, they mainly focus on technical capacity building. Other NGOs specialized in media, image and discourse analysis have ambitious projects to "eradicate visual illiteracy" through Media and Information Literacy. However, due to insufficient support, these NGOs are compelled to reduce and sometimes freeze their activities, as is the case of the Moroccan Observatory of the Image and Media.

In short, the civil society leaders we interviewed have no knowledge of Media and Information Literacy but have a great desire for training and sharing experiences and expertise. Specialized NGOs, on the other hand, are more aware of the importance of Media and Information Literacy and the urgent need to consolidate it, but their activities remain limited in time and space due to lack of encouragement and support.

Media schools

In order to explore the views of media schools representatives, we held meetings with Professor Abdellatif Bensfia, head of the Research Center on Media and Information Literacy at the Higher Institute of Information and Communication in Rabat (public), and Professor Fatima El Ifriqi, a journalist and responsible for studies at a journalism institute in Casablanca (private).

In comparison with the definitions provided by the other respondents, it is clear that the specialists of media teaching, i.e. the representatives of media schools, are the most informed and most knowledgeable about Media and Information Literacy.

As for the integration of Media and Information Literacy in educational programs, there is a slight difference between the representatives of the public and private sectors. According to the first one, Media and Information Literacy must be integrated in the core curricula, while the second one considers that Media and Information Literacy can be taught through case studies that present ethical dilemmas.

Concerning training, it is organized in public and private media schools too, but they are confined to fake news, journalism ethics, hate speech and some aspects of human rights. They do not include all the components of Media and Information Literacy. So, the latter, in its broadest sense, is still lagging behind due to the lack of specialized human resources.

During our meetings with the representatives of media schools, we noticed their awareness of the importance of Media and Information Literacy. This is manifest in the organization of activities and forums for school pupils to familiarize them with how media function. However, this has not yet reached the level of offering special courses on Media and Information Literacy. Nevertheless, the public institute envisages initiating Media and Information Literacy projects in partnership with the Ministry of National Education and other national and international institutions.

Pupils and students

In order to understand Media and Information Literacy as viewed by pupils and students, data was collected through a survey and focus groups. The survey included a questionnaire targeting 40 pupils aged 13-18, and 40 university students between the ages of 18 and 23.

Participants in the pupils' questionnaires were equally female (50%) and male (50%) divided between public schools (50%) and private schools (50%), all of whom live in Rabat city. The same holds true for university students who were evenly divided between male and female, and between public universities (50%) and private universities (50%), all of whom live in Rabat city.

In order to gain more insight into the pupils' and students' perception of Media and Information Literacy, brainstorming discussions were held with four focus groups: two with public and private university students, and two with public and private school pupils.

The first observation is that the vast majority of Moroccan pupils and young people are "digitizens", hyper attuned and connected to the Internet. Social networks are their most important means of communication and major sources of information and news.

Knowledge and awareness
At the overall theoretical level, there is no significant difference between the two groups when it comes to the definition of Media and Information Literacy. Pupils define the latter as "**the best**

way to use media, or a technique to make the best use of these media[44]" or, as one student put it, "**learning how to use and understand the contents of these media and to adopt critical thinking towards what they promote**."

University students have, in general, shown an advanced understanding of the impact of media on people's daily lives and behavior (65% state that media always affect behavior, while 35% say that media sometimes have such an effect.) However, 37% of school pupils believe that media have a positive impact on their behavior. At the same time, 67% of them think that media sometimes have a negative impact on their daily lives.

Do you agree that media affects the behavior of individuals (university students)?

		Percentage
	Always	65,0%
	Sometimes	35,0%
	Total	100,0%

Overall, university students are keen on content circulating on the Internet and social media. Accordingly, 67.5% of them emphasized the need to verify the information and news they receive. The same portion indicated the need to diversify the sources of news and information, which reflects their awareness of the spread of fake news on the net. With regard to the diversification of media when following news and accessing information, there is no significant difference between the two groups, as 70% of school pupils and 72% of university students **sometimes** try to diversify the media when following news and accessing information.

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[44] Statement made by a student.

I use more than one means to get news and information

30% Always
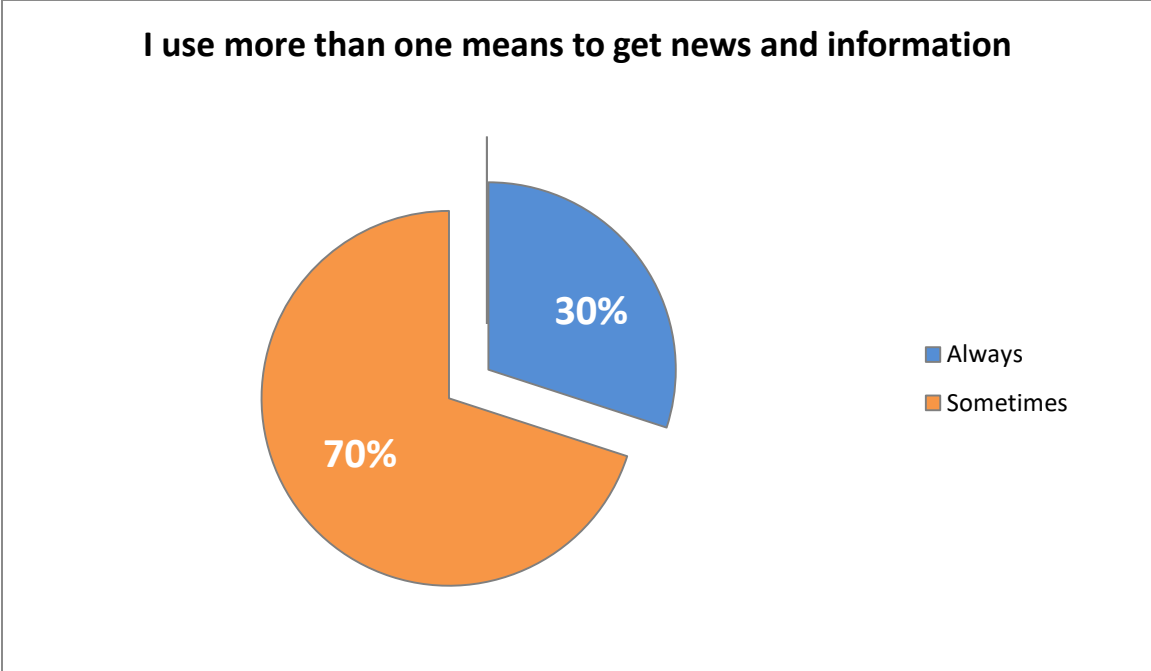
70% Sometimes

Besides, 57.5% of university students said they sometimes found it difficult to distinguish between true news and fake news, compared to 70% of school pupils (see chart). The question remains whether the "**belief" in the ability** to distinguish between true and fake news actually reflects this ability. Contrary to the expectations, we found that the higher the age and level of education, the degree of belief in one's ability to distinguish between true and fake news diminishes. This can be explained by one of the following hypotheses: either by the pupils' excessive confidence in their ability, as opposed to university students' vigilance and awareness of the risk of fake news; or that school pupils are more familiar with how to deal with news and information circulating on social media because they most frequently consume them.

Do you have the ability to distiguish between true and false news?
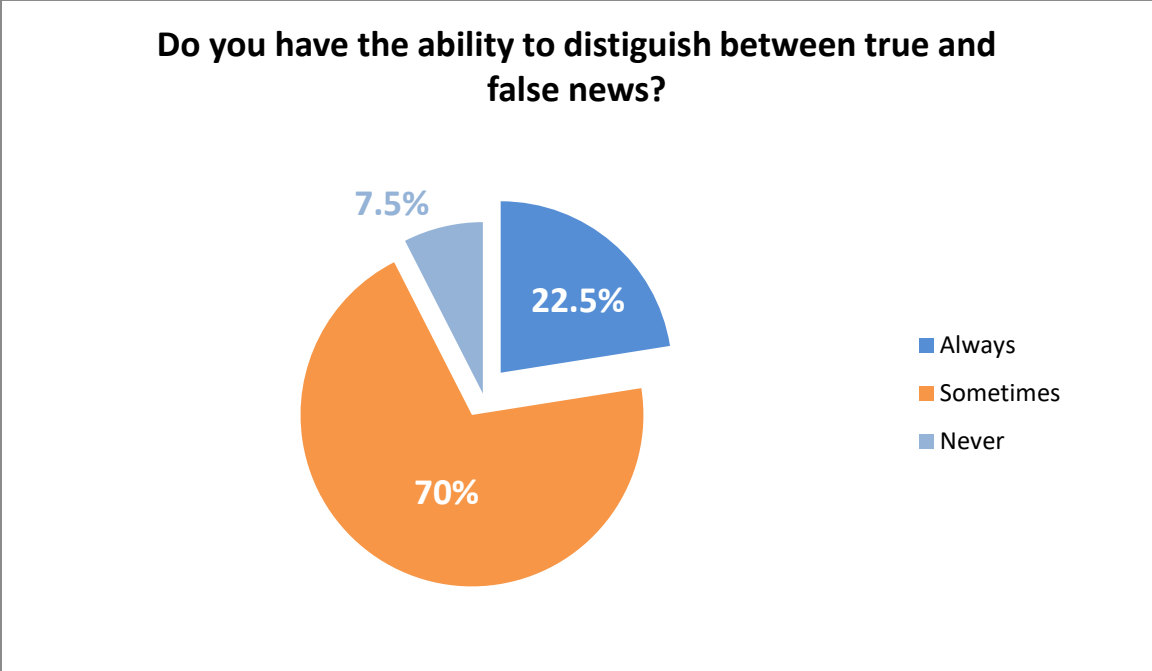
In addition, 60% of pupils who also seem to be aware of the news circulating on media expressed their willingness to verify the accuracy of the news. The level of awareness decreases if the news websites are known. While 85% of students trust these sites, 47.5% of them do not feel safe when sending private pictures to friends via Messenger.

From the results of the surveys, we can conclude that the majority of university students are aware of the meaning of hate speech and are able to distinguish it from the expression of opinion or criticism. They also understand the meaning of bullying, but most of them reduce it to mass attacks on some celebrities, sports and entertainment stars. It should be noted that pupils are more familiar with this phenomenon "targeting a person and underestimating him/her"[45] as they are more exposed to it.

The study also reveals that the level of knowledge demonstrated by pupils and students concerning the impact of media on individual behavior is linked to access to training on Media and Information Literacy. 52.5% of university students and 77% of school pupils have never received any training of this kind.

The results of the survey also show different levels of awareness among university students and school pupils. At the conceptual level, pupils demonstrated more understanding of the concept of media literacy and showed greater confidence in believing in their ability to deal with fake news. However, at the level of application and practice, university students have shown greater ability to diversify media sources than pupils.

Digital interaction and participation
The news and information received by young people and pupils through information and communication means are usually followed by interaction with people surrounding them. In this

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[45] Statement made by a pupil. High school teachers were not familiar with the concept of "bullying".

regard, there is no difference between pupils who discuss media content with their parents (57.5) and university students who warn people around them when they receive questionable or fake information (57%).

When I recieve questionnable messages or news, I warn my entourage
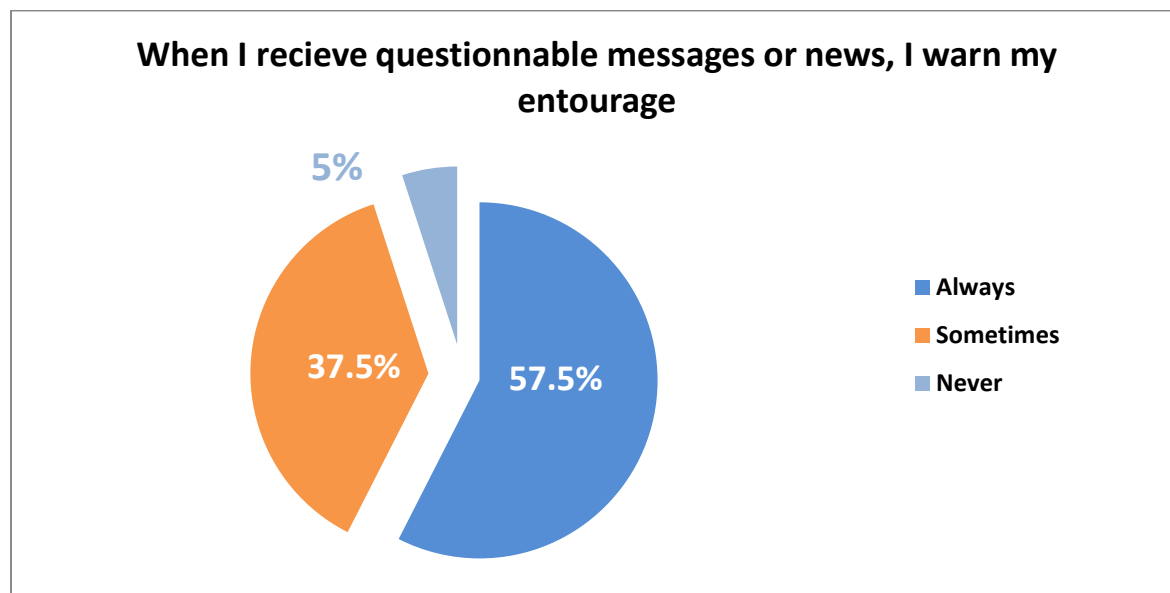
Participants of all ages use social media to interact and share content either sometimes (47%) or always (42%). It was noticed that the majority of the respondents interact on their personal pages and their friends' pages, and sometimes on the pages they like. Also, pupils are more interactive than students, as 62.5% of them cooperate with their mates to discuss what they hear and see on different media.

Digital interaction of the two groups focuses more on discussing popular ideas on social media and on disseminating content, but this interaction does not reach the level of using these means for advocacy and mobilization.
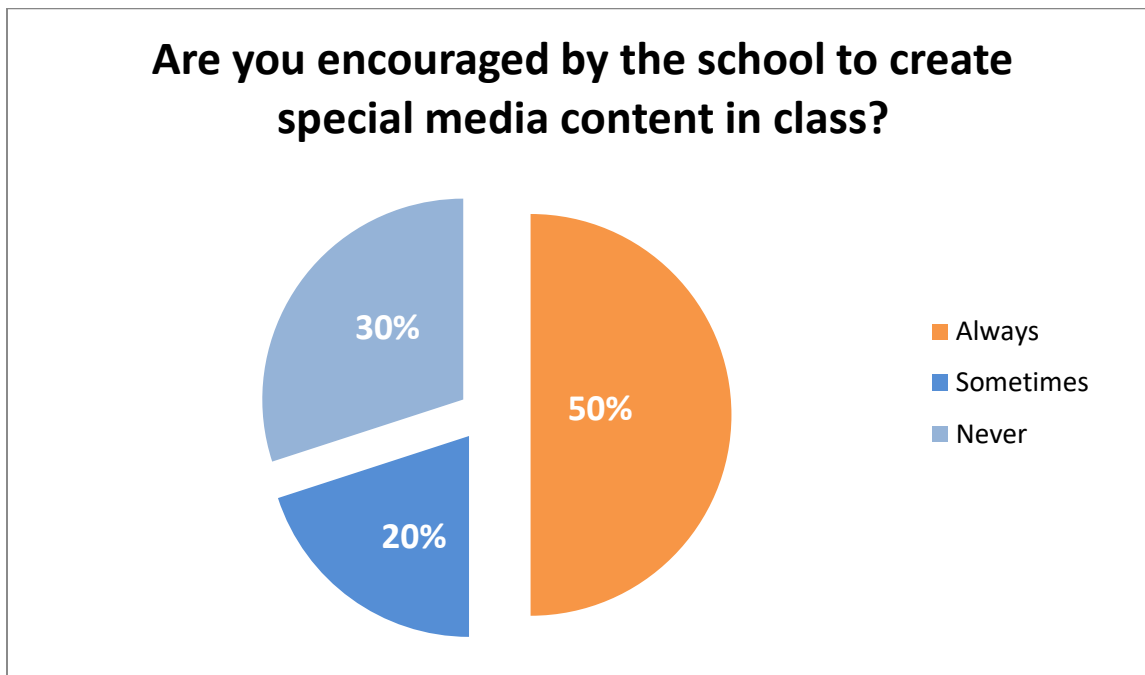
Censorship

University students consider social media a free space that is "relatively" open for expression. This relativity is determined by the commitment to social values and norms. At the same time, 47% of them sometimes feel that there is censorship by the government or by some political parties, which creates a partial fear of freely and openly expressing opinions among 65% of university students. A large number of young people believe in the existence of such censorship; 62.5% say that the government needs to track what circulates online to protect itself, while 32.5% of them believe that censorship serves primarily the Internet users as it enables governments to protect them from bullying and exploitation.

The results show that there is awareness of the existence of censorship on social media, but there is a difference between youth who see it as an obstacle to freedom of opinion and those who believe that it is necessary to counter internet misuse.

The role of the educational establishment

Both public and private schools often provide technological equipment, but this cannot raise the level of media literacy without efficient human resources that coach, train, guide, question and discuss the proper and ethical use of such equipment. We notice from this study that the teacher/professor plays a considerable role in triggering debates about media (sometimes according to 62.5%, always according to 20%). According to the respondents, the teachers encourage research on the Internet, (sometimes 57.5%, always 37.5%) and orients pupils to important websites (sometimes 52%, always 20%).

It is noted that the school encourages sharing and creating content (sometimes 50%, always 20%). Paradoxically enough, pupils do not participate in the wall magazine (55% sometimes, 37% never) or in the school radio (70% never participate).

Are you encouraged by the school to create special media content in class?

50%

30%

20%

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

The role of the teacher makes a huge difference in the embodiment of Media and Information Literacy in both categories. Yet, the teacher cannot play this role without adequate conditions and sufficient training to keep up with the developments in the digital world.

Toward the institutionalization of Media and Information Literacy in Morocco

Recently, talks about the institutionalization of Media and Information Literacy have begun to take place in many Moroccan civil society and academic circles. The most recent was a study day on

"The challenges and issues of Media Literacy in Morocco" held on February 22nd, 2019, at the Higher Institute of Information and Communication. The study day was organized by the Center for Research and Media Literacy in partnership with UNESCO and Friedrich-Ebert Foundation. The representatives of governmental institutions, namely the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Communication, as well as academic researchers and representatives of local and international NGOs participated in this study day. Such contributions boosted the development of a vision for the institutionalization of media education to immunize Moroccan youth in the age of digitization. Thus, all participants agreed on the importance of incorporating Media and Information Literacy in educational institutions.

However, the concept of Media and Information Literacy was still couched in vague terminologies. There emerged a diversity and confusion of concepts used by the participants: "media literacy", "digital education" or "media education", the latter being a translation of the French term "Education aux Medias". These terms are erroneously used interchangeably and refer to different activities. For instance, when talking about "Media Literacy", many participants evoked extracurricular activities, such as drama, film screening and poetry reading, or some courses related to communication, namely oral and writing skills.

Fouad Shafiqi, head of Curricula at the Ministry of National Education, pointed out the difficulty of integrating Media and Information Literacy as an independent subject, and even as part of other subjects, due to the lack of specialized teachers in this discipline and the lack of financial resources to train them. Thus, subjects associated with Media and Information Literacy do exist in the specifications regulating each course, according to him, but their implementation is still lagging behind.

According to Mohammed Hamoudo, an official from the same ministry, awareness of the importance of Media and Information Literacy is strong. The ministry takes part in many conferences on the subject, but all these initiatives remain, in his opinion, mere "fragments" that still do not reach the required level because, as he put it, "there is no political will to activate and consolidate this literacy".

In fact, The Higher Institute of Information and Communication attempts to introduce Media and Information Literacy within some journalism courses and media but setting up a complete Media and Information Literacy program is still a project to be tackled. However, the Center for Research and Education on Media has a great awareness of the need for Media and Information Literacy to be institutionalized. According to its director, Professor Bensfia, a partnership strategy with the Ministry of National Education is underway to turn the tide and consider the integration of Media and Information Literacy in the education system.

For the representative of the Ministry of Culture and Communication, Media and Information Literacy means, "**explaining the way in which media work, knowledge of the sender, the message, the addressee, and teaching children how to distinguish between reality and imagination in the means of information and communication**." He also mentioned using technology to facilitate education, noting the importance of promoting freedom of expression and citizenship. However, he neglected the aspects of interaction, participation and content creation

as essential elements of Media and Information Literacy. It seems that the Ministry of Culture and Communication has not yet elaborated a clear Media and Information Literacy vision.

From another perspective, the UNESCO representative, Mr. Mohammed Ghattas, gave a comprehensive definition as he stressed the fundamental components of Media and Information Literacy, namely critical thinking, participation, interaction and content creation and dissemination. He also referred to UNESCO's partnerships in Morocco with the National Council for Human Rights to create a thematic radio, with the Ministry of National Education to publish a guidebook for parents on how to deal with the digital world, and with the Higher Institute of Information and Communication to organize an international symposium on Media and Information Literacy.

To conclude, governmental institutions have a great awareness of the importance and role of Media and Information Literacy in dealing with the negative phenomena associated with media. However, this awareness comes with vagueness and fragmentation when talking about the delimitation of the concept of Media and Information Literacy. Also, poor coordination among the institutions is one of the biggest challenges facing the institutionalization of Media and Information Literacy in Morocco. Indeed, there is an urgent need for further debate and research in this field. In this respect, international organizations can play a considerable role in coordination between governmental and non-governmental institutions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The level of knowledge about the essence of Media and Information Literacy in the Moroccan education system is average to poor among the different categories, except the representatives of media schools. The concept of Media and Information Literacy is unfamiliar to most categories. In their definitions, most respondents neglect the interactive side: participation and content creation. As a result, their perception of Media and Information Literacy is incomplete and incomprehensive. Therefore, we should first and foremost delimit the concept and elaborate on a coherent vision. This definitional approach can only be done through academic research so as to investigate this nascent concept, its components and, eventually, conceive of strategies to implement it.

Awareness of the importance of Media and Information Literacy is great among the respondents, from pupils to officials. This is highlighted more when addressing the negative use of media. Therefore, the greater the awareness of the risks of media is, the greater the awareness of the importance and the need for the integration of Media and Information Literacy into educational programs. So, initiatives and efforts should be intensified in order to disseminate Media and Information Literacy in various media and educational institutions.

It is true that some public and private institutes and universities offer courses associated with Media and Information Literacy, such as discourse analysis, media and literary criticism, image analysis and professional ethics. Yet, there are no special courses specific to Media and Information Literacy in these institutions. Hence, there is an urgent need to develop such courses for all levels, from schools to universities.

The study concluded that Media and Information Literacy concerns not only students and pupils, but all social strata, including decision-makers, media professionals and parents. Therefore, the target audience of Media and Information Literacy should be broadened through raising awareness and training to reach all segments of society.

While conducting the fieldwork, we observed a significant lack of training in Media and Information Literacy at all levels, and a significant shortage of qualified human resources and expertise in this field. Therefore, more attention should be paid to training programs for teachers, professors and professionals of education, media and civil society. Special attention should be paid to centers devoted to training trainers and to schools of education, given the outstanding role these institutions can play in disseminating knowledge and know-how.

Given the results of the study, social media are a major problem for media professionals in their journalistic work, due to poor media literacy. Media professionals can play an important role in consolidating the culture of Media and Information Literacy. However, many obstacles prevent this, notably the poor training in this field and the lack of engagement on the part of media institutions. It is, therefore, necessary to intensify continuous training of media professionals as a fundamental right.

The desire for international cooperation is great (with governmental and non-governmental organizations) to integrate Media and Information Literacy into the educational system and in the policies of media institutions as well as in civil society action plans in order to target all social categories and segments.

One of the main findings of the present study is that, contrary to our assumptions, children/pupils are more aware of the negative phenomena associated with media in general and with social media in particular, more aware than other categories explored here, including teachers. We also noted that they were more enthusiastic to discuss topics related to social media in general, and Media and Information Literacy in particular. We expected them to have less knowledge about Media and Information Literacy, in view of their age and educational level, but the study revealed that they had a quite good understanding of it. This is due to the fact that they frequently use social media, to the point that some of them no longer regard the digital world as a virtual space, but rather as a reality that they experience on a daily basis. All this gives us reason to rethink and revise the paradigms that govern our perception of the younger generations. We have concluded that they are ahead in their use of social media and in their awareness of their risks. This should urge us to think about effective strategies and programs adapted to their needs; something which can only be achieved by listening to them, involving them in thinking and decision making to build Media and Information Literacy projects.

Conclusion

Media and Information Literacy in Morocco is still in its embryonic stage and has not yet been integrated into the education system or in civil society action plans. In universities, it is still modest, and this calls for reflection, debate and further research.

Limited initiatives have emerged from various stakeholders but did not have enough capacity to make a change in the field of media literacy. This requires unifying the vision and coordinating efforts within the framework of a holistic and integrated approach based on "convergence". Media and Information Literacy includes the cognitive, social, civil, technical and creative abilities of the individual. The latter, instead of being a mere consumer of media, should become a "prosumer" (producer and consumer) of discourse, news, messages and meaningful and purposeful content.

To sum up, Media and Information Literacy should transcend the discourse of condemnation towards that of understanding so as to come up with methods that ensure a rational handling of media within is a holistic and humanistic approach. Media and Information Literacy should be at the core of all disciplines and should prioritize humanities and ethics. Its ultimate goal is to educate the individual to be involved in a new society based on critical thinking, cognitive enrichment, constructive dialogue, respect for differences and the production and dissemination of meaningful content. In short, the aim of Media and Information Literacy is to provide a broad spectrum of skills, values and new paradigms; it is not about technology, but about humanity. In a word, it is a new soft revolution. Instead of condemning the media, which have become essential to modern life, we should equip the new generations with solid tools, knowledge and know-how to deal with these media.

"Teach me how to swim,

instead of building a wall before the sea."

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Chapter 8

Challenges and Prospects of MIL in the Region

Access to information is a right. MIL is a necessary tool to empower citizens by advancing their competencies not only to access information but to assess it, handle it, and to use it and produce content proactively. This field research was conducted in Jordan, Palestine, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, and Morocco. Its purpose was to assess the current situation and examine challenges and prospects of MIL education in the different countries, and the region. In doing so, the researchers engaged with youth and children, media professionals, CSOs, and representatives of official educational institutions and professionals. The studies' findings illuminate the need for both governments and civil society across the region to recognize the potentials, prospects, and challenges of MIL education and to implement concrete measures to integrate it in formal education and create an enabling environment for its further advancement.

Comparative analysis of the research findings indicates some similarities and differences between the countries, but it also highlights a number of commonalities in relation to the current MIL realities and challenges in the seven researched countries. The research concludes that while we are witnessing a gradual increase in awareness among governments and civil society in the countries in question about the central role that social media and the proliferation of information play in the lives of youth and children, concrete measures for the advancement of MIL education are lagging behind in most cases, with a few exceptions.

Media and information among youth and children in the region

Perspectives, practices, and experiences of youth and children with (new) media and information are central to this research. A random sample of 558 children and youth engaged with the researchers covering all seven countries. In total, 278 school children (135 boys and 143 girls) in the age group 13-18 years, and 280 university students (124 males and 156 females) in the age group 18-30 years took part in the research. Information was gathered by conducting a survey as well as focus groups to engage with the participants in an in-depth discussion about perspectives and experiences, and to assess level of knowledge, awareness, competencies, and digital participation of both groups in each country.
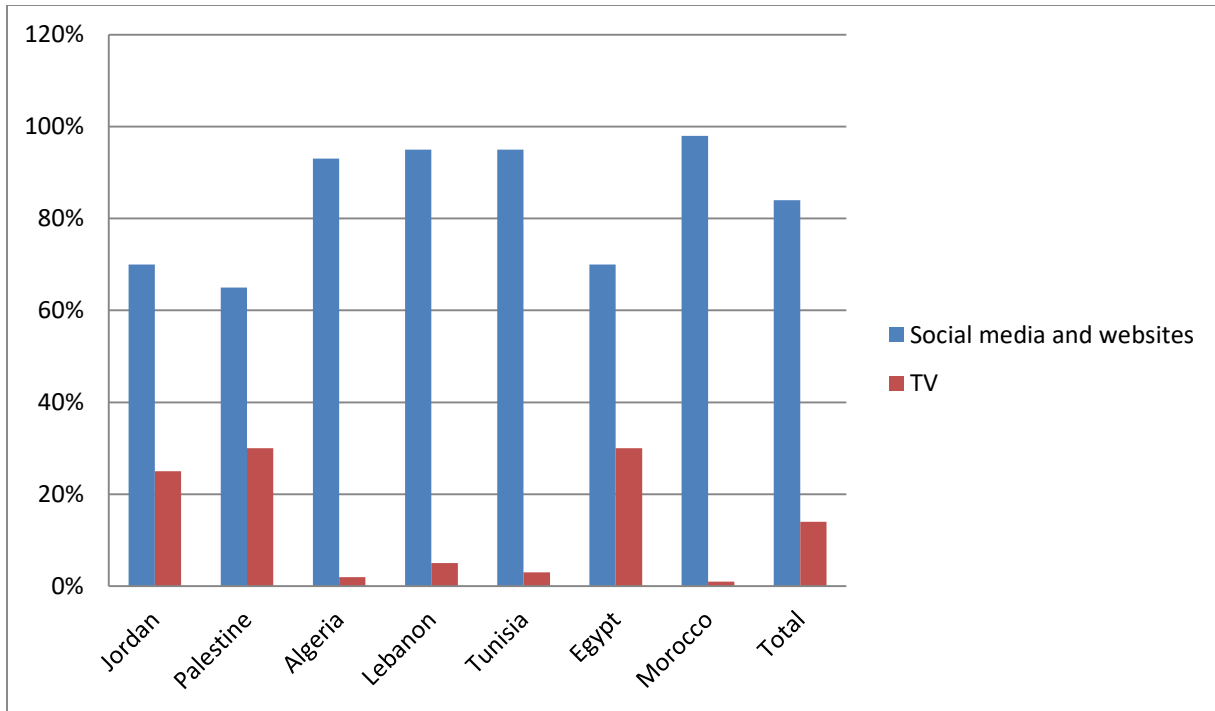
65 percent of the surveyed school children in all seven countries depend on digital and social media as a main source of information, followed by television (30 percent). These percentages are different between the individual countries with both Morocco and Algeria at 85 percent of the surveyed children depending on social and digital media, while Egypt came in lowest with 35 percent depending on social media (and 53 percent depending on TV as main source).

Graph 1 below illustrates the percentages of the most used media by surveyed school children per country:
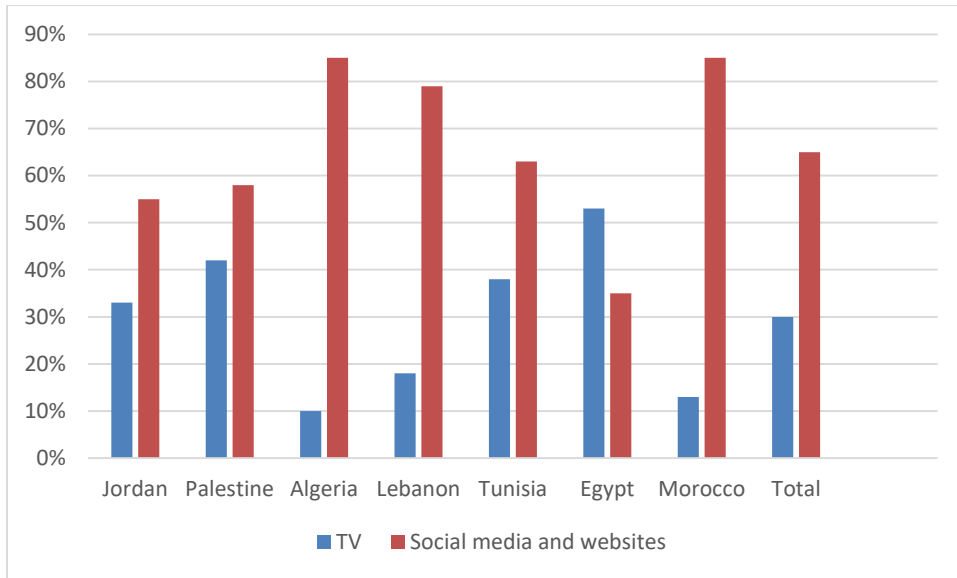
A similar percentage (84 percent) applies to surveyed university students, with Morocco scoring highest at 98 percent, followed by Lebanon and Tunisia with 95 percent scores, and Palestine scoring lowest with 65 percent depending on digital and social media as their main source of information.

Graph 2 illustrates percentages of most used media by university students in each of the surveyed countries:

In terms of the topics most followed by school children, entertainment/recreational themes scored highest with 35 percent, followed by social themes with a score of 15 percent, and economic topics ranking lowest with only 5 percent. The survey also shows a difference in the degree of interest in the various themes in the different countries. Whereby entertainment is the most popular genre among school children respondents in Algeria (48 percent), it scored lowest among children respondents in Egypt with 25 percent. Social themes scored highest among children respondents in Jordan (27 percent) and lowest in Egypt (5 percent). Political topics are most popular among Palestinian school children (23%), compared to only 1% among children in Algeria.

Table 1 indicates the percentages of themes followed by school children respondents per country based on popularity:

Country/ topics most reviewed	Political	Social	Entertainment	Educational/ Scientific	Cultural	Economic	Other
Jordan	7%	27%	28%	20%	7%	3%	8%
Palestine	23%	13%	37%	20%	5%	2%	
Algeria	1%	8%	48%	20%	18%	5%	
Lebanon	11%	18%	40%	15%	8%		8%

Tunisia	13%	15%	28%	17%	5%	13%	9%
Egypt	18%	5%	25%	25%	18%	8%	1%
Morocco	10%	20%	40%	13%	14%	3%	
Total	12%	15%	35%	19%	11%	5%	3%

Similar to school children, university students are most interested in entertainment and social themes (27 percent each), followed by politics with a score of 17 percent, and least interested in the economy (2 percent). While social themes scored highest among Lebanese students (43%), entertainment and politics achieved the highest ranking in Egypt (35 percent) and Palestine (27 percent) respectively.

Table 2 indicates the percentages of themes followed by university student respondents per country based on popularity:

Country/ topics most reviewed	Political	Social	Entertainment	Educational/ scientific	Cultural	Economic	Other
Jordan	18%	33%	25%	12%	12%		
Palestine	27%	30%	30%	5%	8%		
Algeria	24%	13%	15%	23%	13%	7%	5%
Lebanon	7%	43%	33%	5%	8%		4%
Tunisia	23%	18%	20%	15%	13%	5%	6%
Egypt	13%	35%	35%	5%	5%		7%
Morocco	5%	20%	30%	25%	20%		
Total	17%	27%	27%	13%	12%	2%	2%

The field research indicates differences in the level of knowledge and awareness of the different aspects of MIL as well as in competencies to deal with digital media, analyzing and producing content, both among children and youth/young adults in the different countries. In the survey, Palestine comes out with the highest score among school children followed by Jordan and Algeria, while Jordan scores highest among university students followed by Tunisia and Algeria. Similarly, differences were found between the countries in the level of participation and digital interaction,

both among university students and school children respondents, with Palestine ranking highest among school children and Jordan among university students.

School and higher education are key for the advancement of MIL in the region. The survey shows variations among countries in relation to the role played by schools in enhancing media and information literacy among children. However, in general, only a few elements of MIL exist in formal school education across the region mostly through extracurricular activities and mainly targeting middle class children. Some of the common challenges facing schools are lack of resources; lack of technical capacity; and lack of MIL competencies among educators. Despite the important conceptual work by academics and experts in many countries across the region, MIL conceptual education at higher education institutes still needs to be mainstreamed and structurally integrated. This is particularly true in media and journalism, communication, ICT, social and political studies, and education programs. The latter is of importance to prepare a generation of MIL competent educators to advance MIL integration in school systems.

The role of academic institutions in promoting MIL in the Arab world

The study showed that there is a difference regarding the interest of academic institutions in MIL. Beside the role ministries of education play in preparing and adopting curricula, they are in charge of selecting topics that leave a positive impact on people and society.

The researchers faced difficulty in coordinating with concerned ministries in Algeria. They, for example, never received satisfying answers. Despite the knowledge gap between teachers and pupils, there were only limited initiatives launched by teachers to raise pupils' MIL knowledge. The ministry of education in Algeria is open to new themes concerning MIL. This is not the case with the ministry of higher education. The interviewed representatives were hesitant to talk about the ministry's strategies and they expressed doubt over accepting such programs. The government restricts cooperation with foreign parties. In this specific case, there is a need to activate official and academic roles to integrate MIL programs.

The situation in Morocco is different. At the time of the research, there was a complete absence of MIL knowledge amongst schoolteachers, whereas MIL is well known at the highest levels of education. Despite the fact that the ministry of education is the responsible for this area, it is entirely absent from the MIL scene.

The absence of political will in Tunisia is the main obstacle to the integration of MIL in the education system. The role of the ministry is restricted to the field of digital media but not to a level that conforms with the latest digital development that the world is witnessing.

The situation in Lebanon, Algeria, and Egypt is similar. Universities do pay attention to training courses and seminars that discuss topics related to MIL. Some academics rely on social media sites to communicate and interact with university students and launch individual initiatives that target certain groups inside society. In spite the fact that MIL has been integrated in the Lebanese educational curricula, poor technical resources, including school facilities, hinders its activation and development.

Despite the fact that teachers in Lebanon undergo a two-year training course to develop their academic skills and despite the need for such trained educators, MIL is still not present notwithstanding its significance, especially in remote areas.

Egyptian universities show more interest in MIL than other universities in the researched countries and they offer a course that enhances students' understanding of the MIL concept, its principles and components, such as digital security, social media, analytical and critical skills. As for schools, there are efforts to have it integrated into the curriculum instead of offering training sessions.

As far as financial resources are concerned in Egypt, officials indicated that this is not an obstacle to the implementation of MIL and its adoption by universities and other concerned parties. The ministry of higher education cooperates with specialized organizations to raise people's awareness about news they come across through social media. Universities promote MIL through extracurricular activities.

In Jordan, there is a high interest in MIL. Interviewed organizations are aware of its significance and they are keen to implement activities related to it and develop a MIL curriculum through cooperation with the ministry of education and other CSOs. Currently, efforts are being made to form an official team to promote MIL.

The ministry of education in Palestine has been working on MIL for a long time. Two years ago, the curriculum department integrated 19 MIL topics in the teaching lessons of grades 5 to 12. The official role needs greater motivation to develop the initiative that the Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation, PYALARA, has started along with other CSOs. We notice that media colleges are very much interested in introducing special courses for media literacy. A number of universities, including the Arab American University, have expressed their interest in adopting a MIL course for media students, which could then be integrated in other programs at a later stage. For this purpose, the Arab American University is cooperating with PYALARA and DW Akademie.

The role of media organizations in promoting MIL

The media scene in the seven countries suffers from the focus of media organizations on commercials and advertisements rather than enhancing people's understanding of digital media, how to deal with it, how to face its risks, etc. Given the role media organizations can play in promoting MIL, their efforts to promote MIL have been assessed, including the role media professionals play in institutionalizing MIL.

Media organizations play a humble role in Jordan due to the progress of citizen journalism, which has a strong presence in media. There are calls to discuss the negative influence of citizen journalism on media. Moreover, media organizations play a limited role in promoting citizen journalism, despite their understanding of the significance of MIL in the different sectors of society.

There were calls to promote MIL, especially for it to play a significant role in defying attempts to shake people's confidence in media. This occurred in spite of a lack of knowledge in these countries on how to deal with digital media messages, limited number of specialists in such a

field, limited training courses for journalists, lack of emphasis on concepts related to fake news, and digital security that has no orientation on concepts of MIL.

There is a contradiction between the knowledge media personalities in Morocco have about the significant role MIL can play amidst the widespread use of social media platforms and the negative impact it has on information credibility. Despite having numerous media message creators and recipients, media outlets do not enhance the capacities of their staff to cope with MIL developments in light of the interest in scoops and illegal career ethics, which has left a negative impact on journalists' interest in MIL.

Despite the political affiliation of media in Tunisia, which are in line with the attitude of their owners as well as their own agenda in influencing the attitude of the general public, a number of media personnel stress the need to integrate MIL, especially in the academic context. They expressed their willingness to take part in formulating a strategy that would promote MIL and their readiness to exchange experiences in this regard on the local and international level. Tunisian children and youth/young adults are aware of MIL concepts and their impact on them, but the main challenge is around how to transfer such an interest to different sectors of Tunisian society.

The inclination towards MIL in Lebanon is both a need and a necessity. Unlike in other countries, Lebanese media personnel do not consider social media a threat to traditional media. They are fully aware of its negative influence, especially in deepening the political divide, and especially if it is associated with hate speech and bullying. Unlike younger media professionals, who consider promoting MIL one of their roles, older media personnel do not consider it their responsibility. Despite all of this, efforts were exerted to raise people's awareness of media and digital media in Lebanon, especially inside Palestinian refugee camps.

In Palestine, efforts have been made to empower trainers at media institutions to cope with social media developments, to produce media messages that support the Palestinian case, to be able to analyze media messages, fake news, hate speech, and to counter Israeli disinformation. Children and youth are the major target groups of media institutions since they are the sector most influenced by media messages.

Verifying sources of information is part and parcel of a number of official institutions' work. There is a need to adopt professional criteria for journalism, especially with regard to social media. Such institutions play a major role in raising people's awareness of MIL. However, their efforts are currently not systematic.

Media professionals in Egypt lack basic MIL training. The training is restricted to high ranking officers. While social media is perceived as a threat by nearly all journalists in all researched countries, what is peculiar about Egypt is that the spread of MIL at Egyptian universities will pave the way for the next phase as more media graduates enter the job market.

Amidst the scarcity of sites that verify information credibility, the need for MIL becomes an even greater necessity. As civil society organizations are not providing the necessary training, media organizations have started providing such training to gain financial return. There is a need to (re)train media persons to deal with new developments.

The MIL knowledge Algerian journalists have is acquired through fieldwork. All agree that academic institutions are interested in integrating MIL in their systems. The relationship between audience and media is closer due to the presence of social media.

There is a need to fully understand the concept of MIL before implementing it. There is also a need to obtain people's feedback through direct interaction with the audience. A majority of media personnel noted that governments and ministries of education should adopt MIL. As for media institutions, they carry the task of raising people's awareness. They are not expected to offer comprehensive MIL education. A number of media professionals admitted that it is their role to direct their beneficiaries towards principles of MIL amidst the spread of social media and the scarcity of training sessions and workshops.

Role of civil society organizations

The researchers conducted a number of interviews with representatives of civil society organizations in the countries researched in this study to discuss the situation around media and information literacy. Upon comparing the results of these interviews, we notice that there is a gap in the degree of CSOs' interest in promoting the concept of MIL. A number of CSOs have been working directly on promoting the concept of MIL with clear and sustainable activities, e.g., raising people's awareness of the concept of MIL along with enhancing their capacities on its themes, applications, and ethics. In Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon, CSOs have been working on certain components of MIL under different names, such as media education and media illiteracy. A number of CSOs targeted children and youth, while others targeted families and women. Other CSOs trained teachers and promoted a culture of peace and nonviolence. CSOs in the targeted countries have some things in common: they target children and youth, they have no difficulty in reaching their target groups, and they use social media as an active and effective tool to communicate with their beneficiaries.

An account of the main results follows:

In Palestine, the Palestinian Youth Association for Leadership and Rights Activation, PYALARA, was amongst the first organizations to integrate MIL in its modern conception. PYALARA started its work in 1998 by implementing a number of media activities and workshops in more than 50 schools in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. Moreover, PYALARA launched a MIL project in 2014. Other organizations have worked on certain elements of MIL. One group, TAMER, has worked on media illiteracy in addition to other initiatives that aim at creating citizen journalists, such as their Teachers Creativity Center.

In Jordan, CSOs have played a significant role in promoting the concept of MIL, which has become an integral part of their activities. Some organizations have worked in this field for more than three years, working, for example, with schools on MIL through the morning radio, analyzing media content, and encouraging pupils to produce media content that cover school and societal issues.

In Lebanon, the Dawa'er organization has worked on integrating MIL at schools as an extracurricular activity and on creating MIL clubs. The Permanent Peace Movement (PPM) has adopted a project that aims at ToT of young professionals and capacity building of teachers in MIL skills, including critical thinking, content analysis and assessment, hate speech and incitement of violence, peacebuilding, and non-violence skills. Other organizations have worked on the concept indirectly by tackling issues related to digital security, hate speech, and cybersecurity.

CSOs in Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco do not possess direct knowledge of MIL and thus they do not play a role in promoting it. In other words, there are no real and well-defined initiatives in this field. Based on the nature of the work and objectives of CSOs, they tackle certain MIL components. In Egypt, for example, there are workshops on how to use the Internet and how to verify news, photos, and videos. In Tunisia and Morocco, organizations have worked on disseminating concepts of peace, nonviolence, and combating extremism.

Algerian CSOs have the least knowledge of MIL. Neither CSOs nor journalists showed any prior MIL knowledge. They attribute the lack of knowledge to decision-makers, especially the ministry of education, which should adopt programs and projects that promote MIL.

Common challenges limiting the prospects for MIL advancement in the region

During the last few years, we have witnessed gradual progress in awareness of the importance of MIL advancement among governments and civil society actors in countries in the MENA region. In spite of the differences between countries in the region in terms of the attention given to MIL, its status in education, and the variety of approaches and methodologies, the following common challenges that limit MIL development prospects were identified:

1) **The political and socio-economic context**

Geopolitical conflicts, the rise of fundamentalism, and economic hardships constitute existential threats, particularly to young citizens in the region. The prevailing social norms, the lack of democracy, and the growing risks of shrinking space for social and political movements manifest themselves in repression, structural violence, and human rights violations. These factors pose serious challenges to the right to access information, freedom of expression, and the right to dissent. These freedoms lie at the heart of conceptualizing media as a tool for empowerment and social change.

2) **Necessary legal frameworks**

The purpose of the legal framework is to regulate the sector, protect individual rights, and lay the ground for transparency and accountability in relation to access to information, the right to privacy, and freedom of expression. In practice, much of the current legislation in countries in the region is either incomplete or it is used for surveillance purposes and/or repression. In combination with other sets of legislation (like the Law of NGOs in Egypt), these legal frameworks may contribute

to the growing risk of shrinking space for citizens and civil society and limit the prospects for MIL advancement across the region.

3) **Education systems and institutions**

The conventional and conservative ideological and pedagogical principles are at the base of the educational systems and institutions in the region. The traditional top-down approach of teaching and learning hinders innovation and the development of critical thinking skills among children. Therefore, critical reflection on the underlying principles and norms of the education system as well as reform of the education institutions in the different countries are essential. These are the first building blocks towards the advancement of a rights-based critical and innovative education system which prepares the grounds for effective MIL education in schools. For this to happen, the political will and commitment of policymakers are essential.

4**) Conceptual clarity**

Many of the interviewed policymakers, educators, media representatives, and civil society representatives in all seven countries lacked conceptual clarity over MIL or confused it with media literacy. In addition, policymakers tended to prioritize awareness of cybersecurity. Although this is important, they fail to recognize the essential role of social media for citizen empowerment, citizen participation, and as a tool to enhance democracy, freedoms, and social transformation. Therefore, MIL experts need to engage with policymakers and educators to create an enabling environment for the advancement of MIL education.

5) **Resources, knowledge, and competencies**

Other common challenges limiting the integration of MIL in formal school education in all countries are the lack of allocated resources, institutional bureaucracy, and the lack of MIL knowledge and competencies among policymakers, educators, and media professionals.

Main obstacles

The major obstacle that hinders the development of MIL in the region is the large gap between what is available and what is expected given the fast and vast spread of digital media, which are widely used by children and youth. Such gaps include:

1) Decision-makers, especially academic institutions, do not pay enough attention to the issue.
2) The infrastructure of the educational process is characterized by a lack of specialized and trained human resources. Without qualified people, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to promote the MIL concept. In addition, there is a lack of equipment and tools needed for MIL training. Finally, university and school curricula lack defined concepts of MIL.

Recommendations for advancement of MIL in the region

Findings of this field study highlight the urgent need to prioritize MIL education across the region. This requires concerted efforts on the national and regional level as well as concrete measures towards mainstreaming and institutionalizing MIL both in schools and higher education systems in countries across the region. To this end, the research concludes with summing up a number of recommendations for the advancement of MIL.

On the national level

1) **Engagement with governments and policymakers**

Awareness and commitment of policymakers is a pre-requisite for mainstreaming MIL education and integrating it into the formal educational process. Engaging with governments and policymakers is therefore crucial to gain the necessary political support and to facilitate reform of educational institutions and systems. Legislative bodies and educational institutions, particularly the ministries of education and higher education, are key components in this process.

2) **Development of national MIL strategies**

All countries will have to develop national MIL strategies which are inclusive and innovative. This requires creating synergies and enhancing partnerships between national MIL actors, including schools, educators, policymakers, media professionals & institutions, parents, and CSOs. It also requires developing and/or reforming institutional frameworks necessary to implement these strategies.

3) **Inclusive programs and broad reach**

The advancement of MIL requires inclusive programming and a broad reach. Interventions need to be accessible to all, and not limited to specific types of schools or specific geographic areas. This can be achieved through cooperation among the various actors, exchange of information, and coordination.

4) **Raising awareness and advancing knowledge and competencies of national MIL actors**

Work on knowledge and competencies includes: Awareness-raising of MIL among parents, training and capacity building of educators and educational institutions, media professionals and institutions, and representatives of CSOs. This requires allocating enough financial and human resources and collaboration between experts and practitioners, both on the national and regional levels, and with international NGOs supporting MIL programs.

5) **Developing a monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) framework**

Monitoring of the content and quality of the MIL programs is key to achieving the goals set for its advancement and for sharing and learning purposes. Therefore, designing a MEL framework with clear indicators to measure achievements is a key component of MIL programming on the national level.

6) Enhancing cross-country partnerships

Learning from each other's experiences and tapping into available resources in other countries in the region is also important. The study identified various successful examples of cross-boundary cooperation and partnerships. It also identified potential for further collaboration both on the formal and CSO level. Collaboration can take various forms, including sharing experiences and information, exchanges, developing joint projects, and adapting and using training and educational materials developed in another country. For example, CSOs and youth organizations and media professionals in some researched countries indicated their interest to collaborate with PYALARA and experts from other countries to adapt their MIL training handbook and use it in their own context.

On the regional level:

1) A shared vision of a MIL conceptual framework

On the conceptual level, MIL is central to the work of some academics and experts in the region. Hence, further dialogue and exchange among academics and professionals in the region remains a priority for its advancement. The focus of this regional exchange includes assessing the current realities, addressing common challenges, and, where possible, developing a shared vision.

2) Mapping current relevant MIL interventions and initiatives in the region

Although the purpose of this study was not to map or assess all current MIL interventions existing in each country, several highly relevant academic, professional, and practical initiatives and interventions were identified in each country. As a follow-up to this study, it is recommended that a mapping of the most relevant initiatives in the region is conducted for exchange purposes and to pave the way for enhancing collaboration and program partnerships nationally and on the regional level.

3) Networking and regional cooperation: sharing and learning

Most of the interviewed representatives of CSOs, media professionals, and representatives of education and higher education institutions indicated the need for regional exchange, dissemination of information, and sharing with and learning from actors from other countries in the region. This could be achieved through conducting regional meetings and other encounters between academics, experts, and practitioners from countries in the region.

4) A MIL regional hub and a digital platform

The research highlights the need for effective exchange and sustainable and structural collaboration on the regional level. To achieve this, establishing a MIL hub in the region is recommended to bring together policymakers, academics, media professionals, youth, and CSO representatives and practitioners. Key tasks of the hub may include encouraging further research; organizing regional encounters and facilitating dialogue and exchange; and disseminating information by creating a digital platform for exchange among MIL actors across the region.

5) Building regional and global partnerships and joint initiatives

Building global and regional partnerships with experts, international donors and professional institutions is key to reaching out to international actors and linking local and regional interventions to global initiatives.