News Consumption and Sharing Behaviors of Individuals in the Post-Truth Era

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It is now said that we live in a post-truth era, the most salient features of which are information overload, proliferation of ambiguous information, fractionated media landscape, increased polarization, heuristic thinking, and algorithmic bias. In this era, individuals increasingly believe information that appeals to their emotions and beliefs instead of information that is factual and objective (Cooke, 2018). Dis/mis-information has always existed, however, in today's increasingly complex information landscape, the amount and the speed of dissemination of ambiguous information is at an alarming rate (Vosoughi, Roy & Aral, 2018). Consequently, skills for evaluating the credibility of information/news, sifting fact from falsehood, understanding of search-engine rankings and of how algorithms cull and conceal content (Cisek & Krakowska, 2018), setting aside one's preconceived notions (confirmation bias), recognizing weak arguments and common traps in arguments, disclosing affiliations and conflicts, and developing fact-checking abilities gradually become indispensable components of information literacy instruction.

The main aim of this study is to investigate news consumption, news production, and sharing behaviour of young individuals to find out about the general patterns of news use and delivery as well as needs for training and gaps in critical approach to news. Empirical research in this field seems to be increasing and data in hands have indications that, among other factors, cultural differences, country specific conditions, education level and the age of individuals might have an impact on news behaviour (see Gottfried & Shearer, 2016; Silverman & Singer-Vine, 2016; Nic Newman et al., 2018; Head et al., 2018). However, more empirical data is needed from different countries and education and age groups to reach sound conclusions. Findings of this study, exploring news behaviour of university students in Turkey, is expected to contribute to the existing research findings in the literature, in this regard.

A quantitative method will be used and data will be collected through a survey instrument. A minimum of 500 university students will be selected based on the convenient sampling approach to receive the survey. It is expected that findings of this study will fill in a gap regarding empirical data about how Turkish university students engage with news. Recommendations drawn towards the development of information literacy instruction are expected to be useful beyond the borders of the country.

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