Media Education (Mediaobrazovanie)

Issued since 2005

EDITORIAL BOARD

C O N T E N T S

AI Writing Tools and Media Literacy: Exploring ChatGPT as a Scaffold for ESL Learners' Writing Skills in Higher Education

Noor Aiman [a], Afifa Ghulam Akber [a], Sehrish Aslam [a, *], Ibtesam Mazahir [a]

[a] Muhammad Ali Jinnah University, Pakistan

Abstract

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) writing tools has changed the aspect of language learning, introducing new ways for learner support while simultaneously diminished the originality and creativity of students. This study examines the pedagogical potential of ChatGPT as a scaffolding tool for enhancing the writing competence of English as a Second Language (ESL) learners in Pakistani higher education. Guided by Vygotsky's socio-constructivist framework, an experimental qualitative approach was employed with 21 undergraduate students enrolled in an academic writing course. Pre-test and post-test writing tasks were analyzed to compare unaided writing with AI-assisted writing. Findings reveal that ChatGPT significantly enhanced learners' narrative coherence, structural organization, linguistic fluency, and overall text quality. However, the excessive reliance on AI diminished students' creativity, originality, cultural expression, and personal voice. These results highlight the dual role of AI: as both an enabler of academic writing literacy and a potential threat to independent, critical, and creative thinking. The paper argues that AI literacy should be integrated into pedagogy, enabling learners to use AI tools critically and responsibly. By positioning ChatGPT within the broader discourse of media, information and digital literacy, the study contributes to ongoing debates on the ethical, pedagogical, and cultural implications of generative AI in higher education.

Keywords: artificial intelligence (AI), Chatgpt, media and information literacy, digital pedagogy, esl writing, scaffolding, creativity and originality, higher education.

1. Introduction

A basic element of language proficiency is writing skill, especially among English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. It covers a number of different linguistic attributes such as coherence, cohesion, lexicon, grammar, and accuracy. The writing skills of students not only depend on linguistic knowledge, but also on the capability to develop Ideas, structure, and creative thoughts. The support of more knowledgeable peer or teacher and interactive writing activities have a positive impact on the learners writing skills development. Nevertheless, conventional advice and feedback take a lot of time and may delay the writing development of students. As technology, especially Artificial Intelligence (AI), grows, a learner can be motivated and improve his/her writing skills (Liu et al., 2022; Khan, 2025).

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven writing technologies, including ChatGPT, has had an immense influence on writing advancement among English language learners and represents a promising answer to certain writing obstacles, such as time constraints. Also, being a collaborative and interactive platform, ChatGPT enables students to compose their academic texts

---

* Corresponding author
E-mail addresses: sehmalik234@gmail.com (S. Aslam)

at their own pace and get assistance with writing in a timely manner (Hoang, Hoang, 2022; Lee et al., 2016; Rahimi, Fathi, 2022; Such, 2021). ChatGPT can be used by students to write better by giving feedback and providing recommendations that prevent lexical and grammatical errors, improve the text's structure and organization, and support revision functions independently. The use of ChatGPT allows learners to enhance their writing skills, and it coincides with the social constructivist theory proposed by Vygotsky, according to which scaffolding is essential to language learning through the assistance of more knowledgeable individual (McLeod, 2025; Song, 2023; Khan, 2025).

Even though there are benefits to the use of ChatGPT, it may also bring about some disadvantages to the ESL students in their writing proficiency. The excessive use of AI tools could prevent the independence, originality, and critical thinking of learners. Although the social constructivism theory introduced by Vygotsky emphasizes the significance of scaffolding in mastering a language, it also indicates that excess reliance on the support and encouragement of highly skilled people may affect the creativity and self-reliance of the students. Therefore, the strengths and weaknesses of applying ChatGPT to the process of writing skills development of ESL learners need to be critically discussed. In Pakistan, it is found that students often delay or avoid writing due to a fear of failure, which leads to weak performance (Rashid, Sajid, 2023). AI scaffolds alleviate this fear by giving students confidence to start. However, this support can deter students from any serious revision and reflection (Zhao, 2023). To achieve sustainable learning, AI should be viewed as a beginning, and not as a substitute for the writing process. AI can be an interim tool that teachers in Pakistan might use to increase confidence, but students should still edit and revise on their own.

Existing research explored the effectiveness of ChatGPT in improving grammatical accuracy and structural coherence in learners' writing. Moreover, fewer studies have examined the impact of ChatGPT on higher education students, particularly in the context of creative writing, and how they interact with such. Nevertheless, the research on the possible disadvantage of over-reliance on AI is limited. This paper will examine this concept by observing and analyzing the writing of the students.

Creating such a gap will provide a detailed picture of AI tools in writing development. The purpose of the current study is to investigate how ChatGPT can affect the writing performance of ESL students in higher education who are already undertaking research writing courses. The research aims to address the following questions:

– How does ChatGPT impact students' writing creativity?

– Does the use of ChatGPT enhance or hinder learners' creativity and independence of writing?

– How does ChatGPT mediate and influence students' writing processes in terms of accuracy, creativity, organization, and overall performance?

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) by Vygotsky offers a well-developed theoretical framework when it comes to the role of AI in writing. Students learn better when they are guided than when they do so themselves (Vygotsky, 1978). AI tools serve as digital scaffolds through giving clues, outlines, and stylistic hints that boost the abilities of students (Sajid, 2024; Shabani et al., 2010).

The present study has practical implications for curriculum developers, educators, and policymakers involved in ESL teaching, especially when it comes to the need to incorporate technology in the process of enhancing writing. This research contributes to designing pedagogical strategies that minimize the potential drawbacks of ChatGPT and facilitate students ' writing improvement. This study seeks to provide practical implications for integrating AI tools into writing improvement. Focusing on ChatGPT and its role in the writing process will help educators strike a balance between AI-assisted learning tools and teaching methods that promote learner independence and originality. This study will contribute to the improvement of the quality and efficiency of ESL learners' writing by encouraging a more thoughtful and informed way of using AI.

2. Materials and methods

The authors have used experimental qualitative techniques, including pre-test designs and post-test designs, to see what effect AI tools or ChatGPT have on creative writing. Carswell and Poth, in their research, mention that qualitative approaches enable researchers to engage with participants over a longer period, providing deeper insights into their perceptions (Creswell, Poth, 2016).

The writing sample data were collected from 21 tertiary-level students enrolled in a writing course, using purposive sampling based on their prior experience in creative writing tasks and their ability to engage meaningfully with AI tools such as ChatGPT.

The data collection was conducted in two phases to study the effects of the AI-associated tool ChatGPT on the performance of students in writing in detail. The pre-test, where the participants were told to complete a creative writing task on a given topic without AI tools, was done during the first phase. Subsequently, in the post-test, participants were asked to write another prompt on a similar theme, but this time they were instructed to use the AI tool ChatGPT as a writing aid.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the six-phase approach proposed by two researchers in their study (Braun, Clarke, 2006). The analytic approach enables researchers to systematically identify, organize, and interpret patterns of meaning in the qualitative datasets, while allowing flexibility to address research objectives and questions.

Ethics were strictly observed to guard the rights of the participants. The aim, method and consequences of the study were made known to all the subjects. They had signed a signed informed consent before involvement, stating information about the research, confidentiality, validity, and possible consequences. All personal data was removed off records in order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity.

3. Discussion

The creative writing in the digital era is flourishing on experimental, doubtful, and innovative writing (Clark et al., 2015). Their edited book addresses the way digital technologies make writers have a possibility to experiment with the forms of expression and provoke the conventional understanding of authorship and novelty. In this regard, free writing written without the help of AI frequently reflects a strong cultural identity and a personal voice, letting the writers show their individuality using such means as vernacular language, localized references, and experience. This confirms the warning message regarding the standardization of style and the elimination of cultural differences, as AI is trained on common Western corpora (Bender et al., 2021). Besides the issues of linguistic accuracy and creativity, researchers have also pointed out the cultural aspects of AI-aided writing. It is discovered that although AI-generated text can assist second language writers through offering them templates of fluent and coherent English, it can also increase the prevalence of dominant discourses and subdue the voices of local people (Warschauer et al., 2023). They noted that learners face the risk of losing their individual cultural orientations when they over-depend on AI because the models tend to adopt Western-centric standards that are reflected in training data. It is on this basis that teachers have been urged to instruct students to use AI with critical thinking in order to make sure that AI is applied as an aid but not as a substitute for their cultural and personal expression.

The results may be compared with those of the previous study involving Pakistani students in their perceptions of AI in academic writing. They found that, although students appreciated the role of AI in enhancing productivity and accuracy in their languages, they also had concerns about losing their personal and cultural voice in their texts. It implies that even though the implementation of AI can be integrated as a scaffold, the kinds of tasks in which students show originality in their work should be prioritized by the instructors, and the students should be provided with the motivation to maintain reference points, personal or cultural, in the process of AI support. Comparing the pretest and post-test texts, it was observed that the poorly grammatical untested texts were full of raw material and highly emotional content, and contained sentences like, I do not trust those bitches ever again in my life. This aesthetic style implies bravery and adventurousness, and, accordingly, the qualities are required to develop literary talent in the digital era (Clark et al., 2015).

In comparison, the writing with the help of AI generated complex metaphors, among which, but not limited to, a mirror of hope and wisdom, allowed you to raise aesthetic enjoyment, but reproduced traditional stylistic patterns. The outcome is consistent that AI writing systems have the potential to support students in developing their thoughts and enhancing the organization of their work (Johnston, 2024). Nevertheless, other limitations of the study were also mentioned, such as decreased chances of students taking part in creative experimentation and autonomous problem-solving when writing. Such results are aligned with recent empirical research, and they prove that even though AI can help generate ideas and make them clear, it can unintentionally limit innovative thinking and expression in academic writing. The study on generative AI-assisted

writing revealed that AI tools assisted the students in the cognitive processes of digital multimodal writing by scaffolding the coherence, fluency, and idea development. Nevertheless, they also gave a warning that, unless pedagogical integration is done with care, students would become too dependent on AI, which can destroy creativity and critical interaction with writing exercises (Liu et al., 2023).

Similarly, another study investigated the interaction between teachers and automated feedback among L2 writing students (Zhang, Hyland, 2018). They said that computer-assisted feedback gave no more valuable feedback than teacher input because of the immediate feedback that gave detailed information concerning grammar and structure, rather than the valuable feedback concerning content, voice and argument. Their results indicate that automated systems are capable of increasing accuracy and fluency, although human feedback is needed to promote the development of higher-order writing in full. This implies that although AI assistance may improve the quality of technical writing, it should be coupled with the possibilities of students experimenting and expressing themselves without any interference. This is of concern to recent studies in Pakistan.

The study investigated the experiences that university students have had with ChatGPT in relation to its use as a writing assistant and discovered that students valued how it helped them enhance their grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure (Bibi, Atta, 2024). They, however, also added that overdependence on AI tools could threaten to make their writing less original and less cultural. This is in line with the larger discussion that, although AI could be used to frame the technical skills of students in the writing process, a teacher should promote the use of personal voice and cultural context because homogenized and machine-like text is undesirable.

Teachers should design writing tasks that respect AI assistance and leave room for actual exploration, so that students do not become too reliant on machine-generated metaphors or formulas. This is the fact that a recent research was conducted to investigate the application of AI tools in EFL writing classes (Nhan et al., 2025). They discovered that AI provided instant and personalized feedback and taught students to be more independent writers. Nonetheless, participants also mentioned the problem of over-dependence on AI and the lack of cultural peculiarities, as well as the inability of AI to assist in the expression of creativity. The authors conclude that although AI tools have the potential to develop writing, they should be used with great caution to ensure that originality and contextual awareness are maintained with the help of a teacher.

Based on the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, students were supported by ChatGPT as a scaffold, facilitating their work on a higher structural level than they would have without the support (Vygotsky, 1978). Nevertheless, these findings are consistent with those who discovered that although AI tools are capable of aiding a student to broaden his or her thinking capacity and enhance the structure of the text, excessive use of these tools could hinder the acquisition of self organizational abilities (Wang, 2025).

The results align with the recent empirical research, which proves that although AI is helpful in generating ideas, as well as making them more lucid, it can also limit creative thinking and individualistic writing in academic texts, unintentionally. In the case of Pakistani higher education, it means that AI can also be employed as a means of teaching to bring structure and coherence to it, but also gradually grow in order to make sure that students learn to organize themselves independently. The teachers might require students to break down AI-recommended structures and proceed to jigsaw them in their own language, which validates active learning instead of passive appropriation.

The other massive area of development was linguistic fluency. Marking mistakes in the pre-test samples included never lose hope or you now achieve. The accuracy in the language use in tense, vocabulary, and phrasing in the posttest writings was higher, and the language is sophisticated with refined expressions like be optimistic and strong no matter what. The paper investigates how AI writing tools can affect the writing performance of students by providing content analysis of essays with the help of AI (Farhan, 2025).

The results reveal that even though AI tools can be useful in improving the mechanics of writing, that is, grammar and syntax, excessive dependence can lead to the stifling of creativity and independent editing skills. The article underlines the value of implementing AI in a manner that encourages individual learning and critical interaction as opposed to corrective feedback. This is not a novel finding in the case of ESL learners who tend to be reluctant to write in Pakistan because of the fear of making language errors (Rashid, Sajid, 2023).

The anxiety diminishes with AI scaffolding, which allows the expression to flow more easily (Wahid, 2023). Though long-term dependency will not allow students to critically engage with grammar, it will not allow them to learn language in greater depth. Therefore, on the one hand, AI provides fluency in the short term; however, it should be integrated with pensive activities, which can help students to learn through errors instead of just accepting them. The duality of AI, as improving technical competence and diminishing originality, has a great impact on ESL learning. ChatGPT can be beneficial on the one hand, as it enhances the structure, coherence, and fluency. Conversely, it can also stifle creativity, identity, and taking risks. This is in line with the study in which researchers warn that boundaries of academic integrity and authorship can be easily lost when students heavily rely on AI (Cotton et al., 2024).

In the case of Pakistani higher education, the interventions of AI are to be cautiously and proportionately integrated. Students need to be invited to employ AI as a preliminary reinforcement tool by teachers, and originality should be promoted through tasks that require cultural allusions, personal accounts, and risky creative efforts. It might be necessary to incorporate AI literacy modules so that the developers of the curriculum train students on how to use AI in a responsible way in order to make sure that they do not blindly follow the AI suggestions (Yilmaz, Keser, 2022). A policy that outlines the ethical application of AI should be instituted by policymakers, especially the Higher Education Commission (HEC), to allow cultural authenticity to thrive while fostering innovation. To conclude, it is important to say that AI applications like ChatGPT have a great impact on ESL writing, both positive and negative. The results of the study are an extension of the literature because they indicate that although AI improves coherence, structure, and fluency, it can also adversely affect originality and cultural voice, particularly in Pakistani settings. Such findings will demand a middle-ground between pedagogy and policy: AI must become a scaffold, not a replacement for human creativity and ingenuity. By creating critical awareness and cultural sensitivity, both teachers and schools can ensure that the integration of AI will improve and not worsen the writing of students.

4. Results

The analysis of pre-test and post-test writing samples identified five key themes that reveal notable differences. These themes show the variations in writing patterns between unaided natural writing and AI-assisted writing. In the pre-test, unaided writing was often characterized by uneven structure, language heavily influenced by personal experiences, and a lack of originality in ideas and choices, along with frequent technical and organizational issues. On the other hand, the use of ChatGPT, an AI tool, enhanced and simplified some of the important features of writing, such as coherence, grammatical correctness, organization, and vocabulary, in the post-test. Although they have these benefits, the use of AI can decrease autonomy, innovation, and the uniqueness of personal experience and thoughts. These differences were analyzed based on five key dimensions: originality and personal voice, creativity, narrative coherence, structural quality, and linguistic fluency.

One of the most noticeable contrasts between unaided natural writing and AI-aided writing was the originality and personal voice. The pre-test responses display strong individuality of ideas and choices in elements of culture, self-experiences, and colloquial language. The participants incorporated personal and cultural aspects in their writing, such as "Coke Studio songs", "what Phuppo thinks", and "...chalo Allah malik ha", creating authenticity and recognizable personal voices. These aspects point to the distinct cultural sense and emotional immediacy despite grammatical mistakes, structural issues, and limited vocabulary. Conversely, in the post-test, a neutral and free voice was noted. Whereas the uniqueness and originality of voices were compromised, AI compensated for it by standardizing structure and phrasing. A machine-assisted system substituted cultural expressions with neutral and generic terms, e.g., the statement "what Phuppo thinks" was replaced with a sentence that said the opinion of others, or the use of a form of language that was not informal. These results indicate a trade-off, where writing without aids is more original and more expressive in personal and cultural identity, yet is not that professional and structured. Conversely, AI-assisted writing was more professional and balanced, but it sacrificed individuality, cultural richness, and self-expression.

Secondly, creativity is one of the most striking contrasts between natural and AI-assisted writing. In the pre-test's responses, the creative expression and ideas were raw and unconventional. Participants expressed their strong feelings with bold, emotional, and somewhat vague language, such as "I don't trust those bitches ever again in my life" or "make me a genius

from all." Even though these statements do not seem to be polished in terms of their structure and language, they seem to demonstrate emotional intensity and originality. The post-test samples are more refined, and metaphorical expressions are used along with the more structured format, i. e. mirrors of hope and wisdom, reassurance that the hard times are going to end. AI helps students express their creative ideas in a more organized and interesting manner. Nevertheless, it limits the chance to risk and experiment, which are the crucial elements of genius creative writing. In such a way, it will need the students' guide to achieve a balance between AI assistance and their creativity, and not to be over-standardized.

The most significant improvement with AI assistance in the post-test was in the logical flow of ideas and narrative coherence. In the pre-test responses, there were repeated elements and sudden transitions, which disrupted the flow and coherence between ideas. For example, one participant wrote "Then I'll make sure to mention all those past events... Then I'll make sure that I don't trust those bitches ever again... Then I'll be the one giving myself some hope...," where the repeated use of "then I'll make sure" creates a circular pattern rather than showing progress. On the contrary, the writing after the test demonstrated an accurate logical progression and flow of thought. As an example, one of the interviewees ended by saying, "Above all, I would like to know that it all worked out and I was the kind of person I could be proud of, which clearly shows the relationship and continuity between the reflection and the final statement. Additionally, another participant used a rhetorical question, "Did we stay kind even when things got tough?". This not only reflects on the past but also transitions toward future resilience. These examples from the samples illustrate how, with the help of AI assistance, participants were able to improve narrative coherence, reinforced by the refined use of transitional ideas, paragraphs, and phrases. The refinement of narrative coherence demonstrates how AI assistance helps students enhance their ability to organize ideas through smoother transitions and a more cohesive thematic structure.

Another central theme in writing was the overall structural quality of writing responses, which is closely related to narrative coherence. Structural weaknesses to be observed in the pre-test feedback included inconsistent paragraphing, abrupt change of topic, inappropriate groups of ideas, and rhythm irregularity. There was a tendency for participants to mix irrelevant ideas within one sentence and one paragraph without expounding on the idea and without clear transitions. Here are some examples, as one wrote: Make me soft, sweet, lovely nature with all. And set the right direction for economic growth. The participant in the next sentence had the unrelated aspirations category and did not elaborate much; thus, the structure is disjointed, making comprehension difficult. On the contrary, the quality of structural responses in the posttest is better. The paragraphs were clearly defined and each focused on a single idea before moving to the next. An example of this is one respondent who stated that she or he wanted to derive a sense of meaning out of their struggles, expanded on the points of resilience, and closed up the discussion with a conclusion of self-pride. The transitions, clarity of topic sentences, structured rhythm, and closing statements were used in a balanced manner and made the writing look complete and harmonious. These elements show that AI helps students master structural conventions by offering suggestions for sentence cohesion and paragraph organization.

Lastly, the linguistic fluency level was greatly enhanced with the help of an AI tool, as the analysis showed. The writing samples of the pre-test had common grammatical errors, tense use, poor choice of vocabulary, spelling errors, and disruption of the flow of ideas. In an example, statements like never lose hope, you now achieve and " the condition is good or worse are some examples. Such errors tend to divert the message even though the words are genuine. Conversely, the post-test samples were more improved with fewer errors and a more natural syntactic rhythm. There was also constant and appropriate tense use, and the selection of vocabulary was more precise and wider. An example is that a pre-test sentence, such as stay positive in every condition was replaced by the more sophisticated and fuller one remain hopeful and resilient regardless of the circumstance. Similarly, the blunt message never lose hope was substituted with a more advanced phrase, e.g., to have resilience in the light of uncertainty. These advancements indicate that the AI tool offers remedial feedback, so that students can concentrate on their ideas as opposed to being slowed down by language mistakes. AI not only improved the language proficiency, but also contributed to the maturity of thoughts and voice of the students.

Overall, the comparison between natural, unaided writing and AI-assisted writing highlights the trade-off between authenticity and professional refinement. The AI assistant tool ChatGPT improved the coherence, structure, cohesion, linguistic fluency, and overall polish of the text.

It also generalizes cultural performance, emotional immediacy, and personal voice to attain world acceptance that was a principal characteristic of unaided writing. The findings suggest that AI tools (including ChatGPT) could be used to a certain extent as a scaffold to improve technical writing. But they are also threats to originality, creativity, and cultural identity, and are creating issues of excess dependence and how individuality may be lost. Also, their impact may influence the individual voice of a writer, his/her boldness, imagination, and self-esteem.

5. Conclusion

This study explored the impact of ChatGPT on ESL students' creative and academic writing within the context of higher education in Pakistan. The results demonstrate that while AI assistance improves fluency, organization, and accuracy, it also diminishes originality, individuality, and cultural voice. These findings extend existing scholarship by situating AI writing tools within the field of media and information literacy, emphasizing the need for critical AI literacy among students and educators. To prevent overreliance, AI should be positioned as a scaffold rather than a substitute for creativity and independent thought. Future research should expand the dataset and explore diverse writing genres to generalize findings more broadly. For policy and pedagogy, the study recommends integrating AI literacy into curricula and training educators to balance AI-assisted learning with critical reflection and cultural sensitivity. By embedding responsible AI use into the broader media literacy framework, institutions can ensure that generative AI contributes to writing development without undermining originality and academic integrity.

References

Bender et al., 2021 – *Bender, E.M., Gebru, T., McMillan-Major, A., Shmitchell, S.* (2021). On the dangers of stochastic parrots: Can language models be too big? *Proceedings of the 2021 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency.* Pp. 610-623.

Bibi, Atta, 2024 – *Bibi, Z., Atta, A.* (2024). The role of ChatGPT as an AI English writing assistant: A study of students' perceptions, experiences, and satisfaction. *Annals of Human and Social Sciences.* 5(1): 433-443.

Braun, Clarke, 2006 – *Braun, V., Clarke, V.* (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology.* 3(2): 77-101.

Burke, Rowsell, 2008 – *Burke, A., Rowsell, J.* (2008). Screen pedagogy: Challenging perceptions of digital reading practice. *Changing English.* 15(4): 445-456.

Cotton et al., 2024 – *Cotton, D.R., Cotton, P.A., Shipway, J.R.* (2024). Chatting and cheating: Ensuring academic integrity in the era of ChatGPT. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International.* 61(2): 228-239.

Creswell, Poth, 2016 – *Creswell, J.W., Poth, C.N.* (2016). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches. Sage Publications.

Farhan, 2025 – *Farhan, H.N.* (2025). The impact of AI-powered writing tools on students' writing performance: A content analysis and future prospects.

Johnston et al., 2024 – *Johnston, H., Wells, R.F., Shanks, E.M.* (2024). Student perspectives on the use of generative artificial intelligence technologies in higher education. *International Journal for Educational Integrity.* 20(2). DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s40979-024-00149-4

Kshetri et al., 2023 – *Kshetri, N., Hughes, L., Slade, E.L., Jeyaraj, A., Kar, A.K., Koohang, A., Wright, R.* (2023). "So what if ChatGPT wrote it?" Multidisciplinary perspectives on opportunities, challenges and implications of generative conversational AI for research, practice and policy. *International Journal of Information Management.* 71: 102642.

Liu et al., 2024 – *Liu, M., Zhang, L.J., Biebricher, C.* (2024). Investigating students' cognitive processes in generative AI-assisted digital multimodal composing and traditional writing. *Computers & Education.* 211: 104977.

Luke, 2016 – *Luke, J.* (2016). Creative writing in the digital age: theory, practice, and pedagogy. *LiNQ (Literature in North Queensland).* 42.

Nhan et al., 2025 – *Nhan, L.K., Hoa, N.T.M., Quang, L.V.N.* (2025). Leveraging AI for writing instruction in EFL classrooms: Opportunities and challenges. *Educational Process: International Journal.* 15.

Poehner, Infante, 2017 – *Poehner, M.E., Infante, P.* (2017). Mediated development: A Vygotskian approach to transforming second language learner abilities. *TESOL Quarterly.* 51(2): 332-357.

Rashid et al., 2024 – *Rashid, S., Malik, S., Abbas, F., Khan, J.A.* (2024). Pakistani students' perceptions about knowledge, use, and impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on academic writing: A case study. *Journal of Computers in Education.* DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s40692024-00338-7

Rashid, Sajid, 2023 – *Rashid, M., Sajid, S.*(2023). ESL learners' perceptions of AI in Pakistan: A cultural analysis. *Pakistan Journal of Education and Research.* 6(1): 77-95.

Sadasivan et al., 2022 – *Sadasivan, R., Francis, M., Kaul, A.* (2022). Artificial creativity: Examining the authenticity of AI-generated literary works. *AI & Society.* 38: 73-85.

Shabani et al., 2010 – *Shabani, K., Khatib, M., Ebadi, S.*(2010). Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development: Instructional implications and teachers' professional development. *English Language Teaching.* 3(4): 237-248.

Such, J, 2021 – *Such, J.* (2021). Artificial intelligence in education: Potentials and challenges. *International Education Review.* 67(3): 255-270.

Vygotsky, 1978 – *Vygotsky, L.S.* (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes. Vol. 86. Harvard University Press.

Wang, 2025 – *Wang, N.C.* (2025). Scaffolding creativity: Integrating generative AI tools and real-world experiences in business education. *arXiv.* DOI: DOI:https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2501.06527

Warschauer et al., 2023 – *Warschauer, M., Tseng, W., Yim, S., Webster, T., Jacob, S., Du, Q., Tate, T.* (2023). The affordances and contradictions of AI-generated text for writers of English as a second or foreign language. *Journal of Second Language Writing.* 62.

Zhang, Hyland, 2018 – *Zhang, Z.V., Hyland, K.* (2018). Student engagement with the teacher and automated feedback on L2 writing. *Assessing Writing.* 36: 90-102.

Commodification of Tragedy in Society of the Spectacle: NOPE Film (2022)

Difa Alfaris [a], Nina Farlina [a, *], Ida Rosida [a], Elve Oktafiyani [a]

[a] Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia

Abstract

This study examines the commodification of tragedy through the theoretical framework of Guy Debord's "Society of the Spectacle" and the commodification processes of diffusion and defusion. Through qualitative textual analysis, the research investigates how various producers – from media organizations to the victims themselves – transform tragic events into marketable spectacles. The findings reveal that social media platforms accelerate this commodification process, creating a digital ecosystem where tragedy becomes entertainment. The analysis demonstrates that NOPE serves as a critical commentary on contemporary media culture, where the monetization of suffering has become normalized. The film highlights the role of social media mechanisms intensify this commodification, ultimately leading to the loss of humanity and the perpetuation of exploitative systems. This research contributes to ongoing discussions about digital media ethics and the fundamental dehumanization that occurs when tragic experiences are transformed into consumable content. This research contributes for media literacy to understand commodification in using and producing information for social media users critically.

Keywords: commodification, Nope, spectacle theory, social media, film, media studies.

1. Introduction

In today's society, the influence of media, advertising, and image-driven culture has transformed social interactions, experiences, and relationships into a spectacle-driven phenomenon. This process is described by philosopher Guy Debord in his seminal work Society of the Spectacle (Debord, 2014), which posits that our lives are increasingly mediated by images and representations. In this digital age, these images are not only produced and disseminated by traditional media agencies but also by individuals. As Mubarok (Mubarok, 2011) elucidates, almost all aspects of life are saturated with various forms of spectacle, shaping our values and goals. In such a society, spectacle dominates, leading to a loss of authentic human connection and a distortion of reality. Debord argues that the spectacle creates a passive population – detached from meaningful engagement with the world and critical thinking – consumed instead by superficial appearances and illusions (Debord, 2014). This mediation creates a separation from the real world, causing individuals to live in a state where the line between reality and representation becomes increasingly blurred. Experiences, identities, and even social relationships are packaged and sold back as images and narratives. Within this framework, even the most profound and heartfelt human experiences – such as tragedy – undergo a transformative process: they become commodities. Tragedy, once deeply personal and emotionally resonant, is meticulously crafted and packaged for mass consumption, thereby blurring the lines between genuine human empathy and profit-driven motives.

---

* Corresponding author
E-mail addresses: nina.farlina@uinjkt.ac.id (N. Farlina)

In digital era, social media platforms play a crucial role in both producing and disseminating these commodified narratives. Commodification itself refers to a process that transforms various entities – including physical goods, services, experiences, relationships, and even parts of the human body – into standardized objects of trade (Dahms, 2012; Lumbreras, 2019); in simple terms, it is the process by which a thing or a person is treated or considered as a commodity. Haenfler (Haenfler, 2023) defines commodification as "the act of taking something's original form and commercializing it, turning it into an object of trade and capital." Within this framework, two sociological mechanisms operate: diffusion and defusion. In the context of the commodification of tragedy, the mechanisms of diffusion and defusion play significant roles. Diffusion occurs when tragic events, inherently personal and often private, are introduced to a wider audience through various media channels – such as news coverage, films, or social media platforms – which rapidly spread these narratives. Once recognized, these tragedies become accessible commodities for consumption. Defusion, on the other hand, involves altering the presentation of these tragedies to make them more marketable. Existing tragic events, when transformed into entertainment products, often undergo changes – such as emphasizing certain aspects, adding dramatic elements, or altering the narrative – to evoke specific emotions from the audience. By manipulating their presentation, tragic events become palatable commodities, ready for mass consumption. In essence, diffusion brings tragic events into the public sphere while defusion reshapes them to fit market demands, a process increasingly driven by a diverse array of producers operating within both traditional and digital media landscapes.

This trend of the commodification of tragedy finds vivid expression in contemporary media and popular culture, where tragic events are sensationalized, packaged, and sold to consumers to gain financial benefit. The entertainment industry, news media, and social media platforms play pivotal roles in constructing these narratives. Tragedy in popular films, television shows, and digital media often reflects and reinforces this commodification, presenting a distorted version of reality where human suffering is transformed into entertainment and consumable spectacle, and empathy is eclipsed by the pursuit of profit. Dawson (Dawson, 2007) explains how real-life tragedies are reshaped and enhanced into big spectacles in Hollywood movies – where death is put on display through dazzling high-tech special effects, and film companies turn tragedy into spectacular entertainment for box-office profits. Moreover, the increasing influence of social media in this process highlights how individual producers – beyond institutional entities – contribute to the normalization of tragedy as a commodity.

Scholarly inquiry into the commodification of tragedy has been extensive. Dawson (Dawson, 2007) sheds light on how contemporary films often simplify and distort real tragedies, transforming them into consumable entertainment. Lobodally (Lobodally, 2019) explores the portrayal of disasters in television commercials as commodities serving the interests of the capitalist class. Stone and Grebenar (Stone, Grebener, 2022) delve into "dark tourism," investigating how tragedies shape visitor experiences. Walus and Wilcox (Walus, Wilcox, 2020) criticize how TV shows like 1000 Ways to Die maximize the spectacle of death – inviting schadenfreude while minimizing its tragic and human components. These studies underscore the transformation of tragedy into a marketable commodity, revealing the pervasive influence of capitalist dynamics on human experiences and narratives. Yet, while much research has focused on large-scale media institutions, there is a growing need to examine the role of varied producers, including individual content creators and victims on social media, in shaping this phenomenon.

Against this backdrop, Jordan Peele's film NOPE emerges as a poignant critique of the commodification of tragedy within the societal framework of the spectacle. Through the story of individuals who commodify their own tragedies, NOPE interrogates the disturbing trend of turning personal suffering into marketable spectacle. The film follows the Haywood siblings, who become obsessed with capturing definitive footage of a UFO responsible for their father's death – eschewing genuine mourning in favor of a profit-driven pursuit of fame. In parallel, the narrative also explores the case of a former child actor who transforms a tragic TV show accident into a self-commodified spectacle. Together, these stories illustrate how in a society dominated by the spectacle, personal traumas are not only diffused across digital platforms and traditional media but also actively repackaged and exploited for public consumption and commercial gain.

Within this context, this research embarks on a unique exploration of the commodification of tragedy within the societal framework of the spectacle, specifically examining the characters and narrative of Jordan Peele's film NOPE. What distinguishes this study is its focus on how the film

foregrounds the role of producers – extending beyond big studios to include victims – in constructing and commodifying tragedy. Through an analysis of the film's narrative and character dynamics, this research aims to unravel the layers of commodification, examining the subtle nuances by which tragedies are transformed into marketable commodities. This nuanced analysis expands the academic discourse on this topic and provides critical insights into a broader societal landscape where empathy and genuine human connection grapple with the allure of commodified tragedy, thereby enriching our comprehension of the complex dynamics between media, society, and the human experience. Indeed, this research is significant in media literacy, especially understanding commodification for social media users in using and producing information carefully and critically.

2. Material and methods

This research used qualitative textual analysis as the method and employed Guy Debord's "Society of the Spectacle" along with the commodification processes of diffusion and defusion as the theoretical framework. Qualitative research relies on verbal narrative like spoken or written data (Panda, 2019). Qualitative research uses the theory as a broad explanation for behavior or attitudes (Creswell, 2018), which in this case the theory of society of the spectacle to explain the commodification of tragedy that was carried out by the characters. The instrument used in this research is the researcher's in-depth observation, achieved through repeated viewings and detailed note-taking of Jordan Peele's film *NOPE* (2022). The unit of analysis is the film *NOPE*, which is critically examined for its portrayal of the commodification of tragedy by various producers in the film. The technique of data analysis involved an analytical and perceptive review of the film, with key themes coded and interpreted through the lens of the society of the spectacle, supported by secondary sources such as scholarly articles, books, and reports.

While previous research on *NOPE* has significantly advanced our understanding of its multifaceted narrative – addressing themes such as animal exploitation (Miquel-Baldellou, 2025), extractive capitalism (Turcios, 2024), affective representations of Black interiority and grief (Sobande, 2023), multispecies relations (King, 2024), and digital resistance (Cvar, 2023) – these studies generally concentrate on singular thematic or theoretical dimensions. In contrast, this research distinguishes itself by focusing on the processes through which diverse producers – from traditional media agencies to digital content creators and even victims – actively construct tragedy as a commodity. By integrating Guy Debord's Society of the Spectacle theory with the commodification framework of diffusion and defusion. In media-saturated society, the interplay between diffusion and defusion is further accelerated by digital culture. Social media platforms, as Fuchs (Fuchs, 2021) and Castells (Castells, 2010) observe, not only facilitate rapid dissemination of content but also actively shape the way experiences are framed and consumed. This convergence of traditional media mechanisms with digital technology underscores the ethical and cultural implications of commodifying tragedy, revealing how personal suffering is manipulated and repackaged as a marketable spectacle.

3. Discussion and Results

First tragedy: the chimpanzee rampage

Gordy's Home! was a fictional sitcom featured in flashbacks throughout the film. Set years before the film's main events, the show depicted a chimpanzee named Gordy living with a human family – father Tom, mother Phyllis, daughter Mary Jo, and son Ricky "Jupe" Park. During one of the sitcom's tapings, Gordy unexpectedly went on a violent rampage, mauling Mary Jo's face and attacking Tom before ultimately being shot. Jupe, only a child at the time, witnessed the horrifying event from a hiding place.

The incident is primarily shown from Jupe's perspective. The film presents the event as terrifying, with blood scattered everywhere and Mary Jo's body lying on the floor as Gordy repeatedly hits her, an effect conveyed in part through off-screen sounds. Gordy's attack on Tom is also depicted off-screen, accompanied by loud screams and visible blood, further emphasizing the horror of the scene. Gordy is portrayed as a menacing figure, his hands, shirt, and mouth stained with blood. In a critical moment, Gordy spots Jupe hiding and approaches him. Unexpectedly, Gordy seems to regain his senses and reverts to his usual friendly demeanor, attempting to reassure Jupe with a fist bump. However, he is abruptly shot by the arriving police, leaving Jupe in shock and traumatized.

Following the incident, Jupe's life is profoundly affected. Despite surviving the tragedy, he continues to work in the entertainment industry, eventually growing up, getting married, hosting his own reality show, and ultimately building a western-themed amusement park called Jupiter's Claim near the Haywood ranch – the primary setting for the film's main events. In the wake of this incident, various producers capitalize on the tragedy by transforming it into commodified spectacle in distinct forms, such as:

Museum Exhibition

In his office, Jupe creates a hidden room that acts as a museum for Gordy's Home! memorabilia. The room is filled with artifacts from the show, including personal mementos like the first fist bump he shared with Gordy the chimpanzee. Jupe admits to the Haywood siblings that he makes a profit from allowing people to visit the room, turning it into an exclusive, paid experience. Far from being merely a victim of the Gordy's Home! tragedy, Jupe has transformed his personal trauma into a lucrative spectacle. He has become the producer of his own commodified tragedy, actively curating his past into a consumable experience for others. The very room that houses his most painful memories is also a source of income, highlighting the uncomfortable reality that even survivors can become complicit in perpetuating the spectacle.

Jupe: You know, I usually charge a fee for this. (00:18:51)

This commodification aligns with dark tourism, which refers to the visitation of sites associated with death, tragedy, or suffering (Foncesa et al., 2015) Experiences centered on death, disasters, and atrocities are becoming a common element in modern tourism. As a result, they increasingly offer travelers the chance to embark on spiritual journeys, especially for those who wish to witness both authentic and re-created encounters with death (Stone, 2006). Jupe's hidden room functions the same, as it transforms the tragedy into a structured attraction.

Jupe's museum serves a dual function of diffusion and defusion, making his tragedy both widely recognized and emotionally neutralized. Diffusion occurs as his story is repeatedly circulated, ensuring that the Gordy's Home! tragedy remains relevant in public discourse. However, this widespread exposure does not lead to deeper engagement; instead, the event is repackaged as entertainment. Defusion, on the other hand, occurs as the raw horror of the incident is diluted through sentimentality and controlled narrative framing. By turning the violent reality of Gordy's Home! into a curated experience, Jupe replaces terror with nostalgia, making it palatable and marketable. This process aligns with Stone and Grebenar's (Stone, Grebenar, 2022) concept of "making tragic places," in which sites of suffering are transformed into commodity. Jupe understands that his tragedy has become a public obsession, and instead of rejecting it, he chooses to capitalize on it.

Jupe's commodification of his past does not emerge in isolation – it is fueled by a digital culture that sensationalizes trauma before it is consciously repackaged as a product. The digital age amplifies this process, as the Gordy's Home! incident has been widely circulated on the internet, with Emerald even noting that she could find it on YouTube. Social media platforms have not only immortalized the event but have also enabled the formation of a vibrant fan base that revels in the spectacle. The relentless digital attention reinforces Jupe sense of sensationalism, transforming him into a figure whose personal tragedy is not only acknowledged but fervently craved by the public. This pervasive digital validation drives him further into commodifying his trauma, as he internalizes the audience's fascination with his past and begins to see it as a marketable identity. By capitalizing on this morbid interest, Jupe consciously steps into his role as a producer of spectacle, thereby perpetuating a cycle where tragedy becomes both a commodity and a mark of celebrity.

This phenomenon aligns with Briziarelli and Armano's (Briziarelli, Armano, 2017) concept of "Spectacle 2.0," which redefines digital media as dynamic spaces of narrative production rather than passive repositories of tragic events. In their framework, social media users actively transform personal suffering into publicly circulated commodities. Every like, share, and comment on Jupe's content contributes to a feedback loop that blurs the boundaries between producer and spectator, co- creating his public identity and illustrating how digital capitalism reshapes subjectivity by fusing individual trauma with market-driven media production. Similarly, Giroux (Giroux, 2007) critiques digital capitalism for crafting an environment where suffering is aestheticized, repackaged, and sold as entertainment, while Gotham (Gotham, 2007) shows that repeated exposure to mediated disasters fosters emotional detachment – prompting audiences to engage with tragedy as spectacle rather than as a call to empathy.

The digital spectacle does not replace Jupe's Museum but reinforces its function, allowing for both diffusion and defusion on a larger scale. Diffusion occurs as his story is circulated across

digital platforms, ensuring that his trauma remains a permanent part of public discourse. However, defusion neutralizes its emotional impact, as the raw horror of the event is diluted through repetition, commentary, and cultural remixes. As Debord (Debord, 2014) critiques, in a society governed by spectacle, individuals are no longer engaged participants in reality but passive spectators consuming an endless cycle of commodified images.

Jupe's willingness to capitalize on his trauma is not just a personal decision – it is a symptom of a broader cultural transformation driven by digital spectacle. In an era where attention is currency, suffering is no longer an experience to be processed but a resource to be extracted and repurposed for profit. As NOPE critiques, modern media does not merely consume tragedy – it conditions individuals to see their own suffering as marketable content, ultimately reinforcing exploitative systems where pain is just another product in the economy of spectacle.

Satirical Magazine Cover

In one scene, Jupe meets with the Haywood siblings to negotiate the purchase of one of their horses. During the conversation, Emerald Haywood's attention is drawn to a framed cover of *MAD Magazine* hanging on the wall of Jupe's office. The cover directly references the infamous *Gordy's Home!* Incident – a traumatic event from Jupe's childhood that continues to haunt him and shape his identity.

Direct citation from the script: *Em stands in front of a door with a mounted framed MAD magazine. On the cover, Alfred E. Newman crouches on a table in a chimp costume on a sitcom set. With a multicolored birthday hat and a handful of pink cake, Newman grins slyly at us as if to say "What Me Worry"?* (Peele, 2022: 25).

MAD Magazine is a real-life satirical publication known for its irreverent humor and sharp social commentary. It was founded in 1952 by editor Harvey Kurtzman and publisher William Gaines and became a cultural touchstone, famous for its distinctive blend of comic strips, humorous illustrations, and biting written satire. The magazine's mascot, Alfred E. Neuman, with his iconic gap-toothed grin and the catchphrase "What, me worry?", became a symbol of cheerful indifference, embodying the publication's approach to mocking various facets of society. However, beyond critique, satirical magazines often serve as tools for commodifying tragedy, turning real-life suffering into digestible, marketable entertainment.

Boland (Boland, 2012) argues that the satirical industry plays a key role in repackaging national crises into humorous narratives, reinforcing a capitalist logic in which pain and disaster become mere commodities to sustain public engagement. In the digital sphere, Abidin (Abidin, 2022) identifies a similar phenomenon in "grief hypejacking," where influencers and media outlets profit from turning human suffering into trending content. MAD Magazine, like other satirical publications, is produced by well-established media institutions that not only shape cultural discourse but also leverage tragedy as a commercial asset. By reinterpreting real historical tragedies as humor, such media entities ensure that even suffering remains a marketable product, reinforcing the broader structures of commodification in mass media.

A specific issue of MAD Magazine referenced in Nope encapsulates the magazine's ethos by transforming the Gordy's Home! Incident – a moment of extreme violence and tragedy – into a satirical spectacle aimed at eliciting humor. On the cover, Alfred E. Neuman is depicted in a chimpanzee costume, crouched on a sitcom set with remnants of a birthday cake smeared across his face and body. The scene, which should evoke horror due to its association with a brutal attack, is instead rendered absurd through the whimsical portrayal of Neuman. This stark contrast between the original incident's violence and the magazine's playful depiction exemplifies how media distorts and commodifies real-life tragedies, turning them into products for entertainment.

However, this transformation is not just about satire – it is part of what Debord describes as the spectacle, where everything, including trauma and tragedy, is reduced to a consumable image. Debord (Debord, 2014) argues that the spectacle is capital accumulated to the point where it becomes an image. This means that media representations like the MAD Magazine cover are not merely commentaries on reality – they replace reality itself. Instead of allowing audiences to confront the actual horror of the *Gordy's Home!* incident, the spectacle presents a sanitized, entertaining version that can be sold.

The transformation of the *Gordy's Home!* incident into a satirical image serves as both a diffusion and defusion strategy. On one hand, the cover diffuses the tragedy, spreading awareness of it through mass circulation in a popular magazine. On the other hand, it defuses the incident's emotional impact by reframing it as comedy. By replacing blood with cake cream and Gordy's

terrifying visage with Neuman's grinning face, the cover creates a sanitized version of events that distances the audience from the gruesome reality of the original attack.

This portrayal exemplifies Debord's concept of the Society of the Spectacle, where authentic experiences are commodified and stripped of their original meaning, becoming mere representations that serve the spectacle's need for continuous consumption. Modern media thrives on repackaging trauma as a commodity, allowing audiences to consume suffering without fully engaging with its reality. The MAD Magazine cover reduces the traumatic event of Gordy's rampage into a consumable image, transforming it into a product that can be bought, sold, and laughed at.

This aligns with Debord's assertion that in a society dominated by spectacle, individuals become passive consumers of images rather than active participants in reality. In this mediated hyperreality, the line between tragedy and entertainment blurs, as real-world horrors become commodities for public consumption. The cheerful image of the chimpanzee gleefully trampling a birthday cake belies the violent reality of the Gordy's Home! incident, offering a distorted version of events that prioritizes spectacle over substance.

The fact that Jupe frames the MAD Magazine cover in his office alongside posters of his movies is a critical reflection of his internalization of the spectacle. Instead of rejecting how his trauma has been commodified, he embraces it. Jupe's decision to display the MAD Magazine cover as part of his legacy demonstrates how the spectacle doesn't just distort reality – it creates a new version of it. Debord states, "The spectacle presents itself as something enormously positive, indisputable, and inaccessible. It says nothing more than: 'That which appears is good, that which is good appears' (Debord, 2014). In other words, because Jupe sees his commodified trauma as a success, he accepts it as part of his identity. His pride in framing the MAD Magazine cover alongside his movie posters reflects the hollow victory that comes with commodification in a spectacle-driven society. While he may appear to have triumphed over his past by turning it into part of his brand, the reality is that he remains trapped within the mechanisms of the spectacle.

By celebrating the commodification of his tragedy, Jupe inadvertently perpetuates the very system that dehumanizes him. His identity is no longer solely his own; it has been shaped and sold by the spectacle. Nope ultimately critiques the troubling ways in which media and capitalism distort human experiences, reducing even the most personal and painful moments into mere products for mass consumption.

Comedy Sketch

When Emerald questions Jupe about the details of the incident, he eagerly describes a *Saturday Night Live* skit rather than the event itself. Laughing and smiling, Jupe reveals his distorted connection to the tragedy, preferring the humorous spectacle to the genuine pain and horror of the experience. This reflects a preference for the commodified version of the Gordy incident over its real impact

Jupe: *You haven't seen the Bad Gordy sketch on SNL? I mean, they pretty much nailed it better than I could. No? Saturday Night Live? Darrell Hammond as Tom. Ana Gasteyer as Phyllis. Cheri Oteri as Mary Jo Elliot. Scott Wolf is the host. He's me. But, of course, the star of the sketch is Chris goddamn Kattan as Gordy, and he is...undeniable, okay? Bit goes like this. Everyone's trying to celebrate Gordy's birthday, but every time Gordy hears something about the jungle...Gordy – Kattan – goes...off. And it's...it's Kattan.He's just crushing it. He is a force of nature. He is killing on that stage. Yeah. It's legendary.*

Legendary shit (00:20:33)

Saturday Night Live (SNL) itself is a long-running American late-night live comedy and variety show, airing on NBC since 1975. Its Famous for its blend of sketch comedy, parodies of current events, and pointed political satire, and features a cast of seasoned and newer comedic actors, a live guest band, and a celebrity guest host. It reflects and satirizes contemporary society, celebrity culture, and politics, entertaining audiences while simultaneously fostering a deeper engagement with current events through a mix of silly and critical sketches.

SNL represents not only the artistic expression of its cast and writers but also the production process of television as an institution. As a cultural institution, SNL transforms contemporary events into digestible entertainment, embodying Debord's (Debord, 2014) observation that "the spectacle presents itself simultaneously as society itself, as a part of society, and as a means of unification". Through its production process and widespread broadcast, SNL converts raw events into marketable content, illustrating Debord's concept that "all that was once directly lived has become mere representation".

The SNL skit about Gordy's Home! epitomizes Debord's assertion that "the spectacle is not a collection of images but a social relation among people, mediated by images". By transforming the tragic incident into comedic performance, the skit exemplifies how the spectacle repackages reality into consumable products. This transformation aligns with Debord's observation that "in the spectacle, a part of the world represents itself to the world and is superior to it". The incident's gravity diminishes to mere entertainment, with Jupe celebrating Chris Kattan's performance rather than acknowledging the event's profound implications.

The skit's comedic framing operates as what Debord describes as "the diplomatic representation of hierarchic society to itself". By converting the Gordy incident into a source of laughter, the spectacle performs its function of distancing viewers from genuine horror, creating what Debord calls "a permanent opium war". This comedic approach not only trivializes the trauma but also fulfills Debord's prediction that "the spectacle is the moment when the commodity has attained the total occupation of social life". Jupe's preference for discussing the SNL skit over the actual tragedy demonstrates what Debord terms "the self-movement of the non-living". His eagerness to highlight the comedic portrayal rather than engage with actual pain reveals how deeply the spectacle has penetrated his understanding of trauma. This repackaging process, as Debord notes, ensures that "reality emerges within the spectacle, and the spectacle is real", prioritizing entertainment value over critical engagement (Debord, 2014).

Through Jupe's reaction, NOPE critiques the insidious nature of the spectacle, challenging us to reflect on the ethics of profiting from pain and the cost of turning human suffering into spectacle. The film invites viewers to consider the true impact of living in a world where even the darkest moments are repackaged as entertainment, urging a deeper engagement with the realities behind the spectacle.

Second Tragedy: Ufo Killing People

Jean Jacket is the name OJ gives to the UFO, a term borrowed from the names of his family's old horses. This UFO is characterized by its saucer-like shape and its high-speed movement among the clouds. At the beginning of the film, Otis Haywood, the father of OJ and Emerald, tragically falls from his horse after being struck by debris from the sky. This debris is later revealed to have originated from Jean Jacket. The incident results in Otis's death in front of OJ. Following this, OJ witnesses their horse, Ghost, being abducted by the UFO.

Initially, the characters in the film view Jean Jacket as an alien spacecraft inhabited by intelligent beings. This perception aligns with the common portrayal of extraterrestrial entities as advanced and sentient in popular media. However, a significant twist occurs midway through the film: it is revealed that Jean Jacket is not an intelligent alien craft but rather a wild, predatory creature. This revelation comes when Jupe, his family, and the visitors from Jupiter's Claim are lifted by Jean Jacket and subsequently shown to be in the process of being digested. As the narrative unfolds, various producers capitalize on the tragedy by transforming it into commodified spectacle in distinct forms, such as:

Feeding attraction

Jupe transformed Jean Jacket into a commercial spectacle by orchestrating a dramatic public display where he fed the UFO using a horse purchased from Haywood Ranch. This transformation into a spectacle involves both diffusion and defusion strategies. Diffusion is evident in Jupe's creation of a novel experience centered around Jean Jacket, which he presents as a captivating alien encounter. By integrating this spectacle into his entertainment offerings, Jupe leverages the public's fascination with extraterrestrial phenomena. The novelty of the UFO as an otherworldly entity is designed to attract attention and generate interest, capitalizing on the allure of the unknown. This approach aligns with the spectacle's tendency to transform unique or extraordinary phenomena into commercially viable experiences.

Defusion is demonstrated through Jupe's use of familiar elements to package the spectacle. Specifically, he employs the concept of a feeding attraction, a format commonly seen in zoos where animals are fed in front of an audience. This familiar setting helps to normalize the extraordinary and unsettling nature of the encounter with Jean Jacket, making it more accessible and engaging for spectators. By presenting the UFO in a context that feels controlled and entertaining, Jupe mitigates the inherent horror of the situation, turning it into a palatable and entertaining event. This strategy of "defusion" aligns with Debord's (Debord, 2014) observation that the spectacle often "presents itself simultaneously as all of society, as part of society, and as instrument of unification".

In this case, the spectacle of the UFO feeding serves as a unifying experience, drawing people together while simultaneously neutralizing the potential for genuine fear or anxiety.

Through these strategies, Jupe not only commodifies the alien presence but also attempts to manage the inherent terror by presenting it within a controlled and familiar format. However, the film's narrative subverts expectations. In the midst of the attraction, Jean Jacket reveals its true nature by lifting all the visitors at Jupiter's Claim, including Jupe and his family. Initially, the film misdirects the audience to believe that Jean Jacket is an alien spacecraft, implying an abduction scenario. The suspense builds as the scene shifts, cutting from the dramatic lift-off to the shocking revelation of Jean Jacket's true nature. Instead of an extraterrestrial ship, the audience discovers that Jean Jacket is a predatory animal. The visitors are shown within the digestive tract of the creature, in the process of being digested. This revelation underscores the disconnect between the spectacle Jupe has created and the true, uncontrollable nature of the creature.

Jupe's spectacle, while designed to entertain and capitalize on public fascination, ultimately fails to control or contain the reality of Jean Jacket. The transformation of Jean Jacket – from its initial portrayal as an advanced, intelligent alien craft to its eventual revelation as a wild, predatory animal – highlights Debord's assertion that the spectacle presents itself as an indisputable and inaccessible reality. By initially portraying Jean Jacket as a high-tech, sophisticated UFO, the spectacle, as Debord argues, 'says nothing more than "that which appears is good, that which is good appears". This manufactured image, presented as truth, obscures the genuine danger posed by Jean Jacket, encouraging passive acceptance from the public and hindering critical engagement with the actual perils involved.

Jupe's attempt to control Jean Jacket through the spectacle reflects Debord's idea that the spectacle is a social relation mediated by images. By prioritizing the image of the creature for entertainment, Jupe constructs a reality that obscures the genuine threat it poses, ultimately alienating himself from the true nature of the situation. Jupe's attempt to manage Jean Jacket through spectacle and defusion demonstrates the limitations and perils of turning profound and uncontrollable phenomena into mere entertainment. This critique underscores the spectacle's impact on how we perceive and engage with the unknown, revealing the gap between marketed illusions and harsh realities.

Chase video

OJ and Emerald, the film's protagonists, initially exhibit a profound attachment to their family ranch, which stands as a testament to their heritage and familial bond. The film poignantly captures their grief following their father Otis Haywood's sudden death. OJ's commitment to preserving the ranch is evident in his refusal to sell it despite financial struggles and his efforts to repurchase horses that were sold off to cover expenses. This dedication underscores the deep emotional connection he has to the family legacy and the land that has been central to their lives. However, the revelation that their father's death was caused by a UFO, which they later name Jean Jacket, dramatically shifts their focus.

Despite the initial shock and mourning, OJ and Emerald become engrossed in the potential for spectacle and profit. They are driven by the idea of capturing the "Oprah shot" – a definitive piece of evidence proving the existence of Jean Jacket. Emerald eagerly discusses the monetary value of such footage, envisioning it as a lucrative opportunity. This pivotal shift from personal grief to the pursuit of spectacle and financial gain marks a significant change in their priorities. This shift aligns with Debord's assertion that "the spectacle concentrates all gazing and all consciousness, effectively shaping individuals' desires and actions" (Debord, 2014). In the pursuit of this spectacle, OJ and Emerald become increasingly focused on capturing the event for external validation and financial gain, rather than confronting their grief and processing their loss.

Furthermore, the digital ecosystem significantly fuels this drive. Established websites and online communities dedicated to UFO sightings and alien encounters motivate them by archiving and promoting alien-related content. These platforms offer incentives such as recognition and even monetary rewards, creating a culture in which capturing and sharing UFO footage is not only encouraged but actively celebrated. Consequently, OJ and Emerald are influenced by this digital environment, which propels them to embark on their chase video project. Their decision to document the UFO encounter is driven in part by a broader online culture that valorizes and monetizes extraterrestrial phenomena. This aligns with Debord's observation that the spectacle alienates individuals from their true selves, their work, and their genuine experiences. By prioritizing

the pursuit of fame and fortune through the spectacle, OJ and Emerald become alienated from their grief, their family history, and the authentic experience of encountering the unknown.

As they begin to plan their approach, OJ and Emerald meticulously prepare to capture footage of the UFO. They become the producers of their own tragedy – placing high-quality cameras around the ranch and hiring a professional cinematographer to ensure they obtain the best possible images. The ranch, which once symbolized their familial heritage, is transformed into a stage for this high-stakes pursuit. This transformation underscores how the spectacle can commodify and instrumentalize even the most personal and intimate spaces. Debord argues that "the spectacle is the true reflection of the production of things, and the false objectification of the producers" (Debord, 2014). In this instance, the ranch, a place of family history and emotional significance, becomes a mere backdrop for the creation of a marketable spectacle, its authentic value subsumed by the pursuit of capturing the perfect image for public consumption.

By presenting the encounter with Jean Jacket as a thrilling action sequence, OJ and Emerald transform a potentially terrifying and life- threatening event into a spectacle for consumption. This portrayal, while designed to be entertaining, obscures the true nature of Jean Jacket, a dangerous predator, reinforces how spectacle alienates individuals from their true selves, their work, and their genuine experiences. In this case, the pursuit of spectacle alienates OJ and Emerald from the genuine fear and awe that the encounter with Jean Jacket should evoke. They become so consumed by the desire to create a captivating narrative that they lose sight of the true danger they face. Through the characters of OJ and Emerald, the film illustrates how the pursuit of spectacle can overshadow genuine human connection, ethical considerations, and a deeper understanding of the world.

Accident photo

The film introduces a TMZ reporter, emblematic of a media culture obsessed with sensationalism and the commodification of personal tragedies. TMZ, a notorious news website, thrives on scandal, controversy, and the relentless pursuit of spectacle. The reporter's role in the film is a stark representation of how far this culture will go to exploit misfortune for profit. Initially, the TMZ reporter arrives at the Haywood Ranch with the clear intention of capitalizing on the mysterious disappearances in the area, unaware that these are the result of Jean Jacket's predatory behavior. His goal is to turn this tragedy into a sensational story, one that would undoubtedly draw public attention and financial gain. However, his pursuit of spectacle takes an ironic and dark turn when he crashes his motorcycle while speeding towards the ranch. The accident leaves him with severe injuries, including broken bones, and in a state of visible distress. Speeding towards the ranch. The accident leaves him with severe injuries, including broken bones, and in a state of visible distress.

In this vulnerable moment, the reporter's response is both shocking and deeply revealing. Instead of accepting OJ's offer of help, he desperately begs OJ to film his broken body. This behavior exemplifies Debord's (Debord, 2014) assertion that "the spectacle is not just a matter of images, but of social relations mediated by images". His immediate concern shifts from his own physical well-being to the potential for capturing a dramatic and sensational image of his own suffering. This request underscores a critical commentary on the Society of the Spectacle: everything, including personal pain and tragedy, can be commodified and turned into a spectacle.

This scene also highlights the pervasive and insidious nature of the spectacle, where nothing is immune from being turned into a commodity. As Debord argues, "The spectacle presents itself simultaneously as society itself, as a part of society, and as a means of unification" (Debord, 2014). The TMZ reporter, a figure who normally exploits the tragedies of others, finds himself commodifying his own pain when the opportunity to create the spectacle he originally sought slips through his fingers. His choice to prioritize creating a shocking spectacle over seeking help illustrates what Debord describes as "the concrete manufacture of alienation" (Debord, 2014), where even in moments of personal crisis, the potential for profit and public attention overrides basic human instincts for self-preservation and dignity.

Moreover, this moment serves as a critique of the broader ethical implications of a culture that values spectacle over humanity. Debord observes that "the spectacle is the moment when the commodity has attained the total occupation of social life" (Debord, 2014). The reporter's willingness to exploit his own suffering for potential financial gain reflects a societal trend where the worth of an individual is increasingly tied to their ability to generate attention and profit. In this sense, the TMZ reporter's actions are not just an example of personal desperation but also a commentary on the dehumanizing effects of living in a society dominated by the spectacle.

The TMZ reporter's actions reveal how digital culture normalizes accident imagery and personal trauma. This aligns with Debord's prediction that "all that once was directly lived has become mere representation" (Debord, 2014). In his haste to capture and broadcast his own accident, he effectively becomes the producer of his misfortune. This behavior exemplifies what Debord terms "the autonomous movement of non-life" (Debord, 2014) where the representation of experience takes precedence over the experience itself. This normalization, propagated through platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter, reinforces the tendency to prioritize capturing and sharing misfortunes over attending to personal safety.

Moreover, this individual-level behavior is further amplified by the broader digital ecosystem, where algorithm-driven platforms continuously valorize and circulate graphic content. Research indicates that social media algorithms prioritize sensational content because they drive higher engagement (Marwick, Boyd, 2011; Tufekci, 2018). This normalization process reinforces Debord's assertion that "reality emerges within the spectacle, and the spectacle is real". In this environment, the graphic display of personal pain becomes routine, and viewers come to expect – and even celebrate – such representations.

Through the TMZ reporter's demise, NOPE extends its critique beyond Jupe's commodification of tragedy and into the broader digital ecosystem, where spectacle-driven logic governs human actions. The insatiable demand for viral content – whether from entertainment media, news agencies, or individual content creators – ensures that pain and disaster are not only captured but expected, normalized, and rewarded. This sequence, then, serves as a chilling reminder of the dehumanizing consequences of a world governed by the spectacle: even at the brink of death, participation in the cycle of commodification is not just encouraged but, for some, inevitable.

4. Conclusion

Guy Debord's Society of the Spectacle provides a crucial theoretical framework for understanding how NOPE critiques the pervasive commodification of tragedy. The film demonstrates how genuine, often painful experiences – such as the Gordy's Home! incident and the revelations surrounding Jean Jacket – are repackaged and sold as marketable spectacles. This transformation is driven not only by traditional media agencies but also by the active participation of individuals, including victims themselves, who become complicit in producing and disseminating their own suffering. Through practices of diffusion and defusion, these diverse producers transform personal tragedy into a consumable product, effectively blurring the line between genuine trauma and entertainment.

Social media further amplifies this commodification by rapidly circulating sensational content and normalizing the consumption of graphic images and personal misfortunes. Online platforms, which valorize and monetize this type of content, reinforce the spectacle's hold on public perception. This digital ecosystem propels individuals to prioritize capturing and broadcasting their experiences, even at great personal risk. In doing so, they not only contribute to the cycle of commodification but also underscore the dehumanizing effects of a society where the value of human suffering is reduced to mere profit.

Ultimately, NOPE challenges audiences to critically engage with the ethical and societal consequences of this relentless pursuit of spectacle. By interrogating how various producers – and the digital media environment – actively transform personal tragedy into a marketable commodity, the film prompts a deeper reflection on the loss of humanity inherent in such processes and the broader reinforcement of exploitative systems in contemporary culture.

References

Abidin, 2022 – Abidin, C. (2022). Grief hypejacking: Influencers, #ThoughtsAndPrayers, and the commodification of grief on Instagram. The Information Society. 38(3): 213-229. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/01972243.2022.2071212

Boland, 2012 – Boland, T. (2012). Critical comedy: Satire, absurdity and Ireland's economic crash. Irish Political Studies, 27(3): 402-422. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/07907184.2012.711149

Briziarelli, Armano, 2017 – Briziarelli, M., Armano, E. (2017). From the notion of spectacle to spectacle 2.0: The dialectic of capitalist mediations. In: Spectacle 2.0: reading debord in the context of digital capitalism: reading debord in the context of digital capitalism. London: University of Westminster Press: 15-47.

Castells, 2010 – *Castells, M.* (2010). The Rise of the Network Society (2nd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Creswell, 2018 – *Creswell, J.W., Creswell, J.D.* (2018). Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (5th ed.). Sage.

Cvar, 2023 – *Cvar, N.* (2023). Emancipating from (colonial) genealogies of the techno-social networks or reversing power relations by turning the predator into prey in Jordan Peele's Nope. *Filozofski vestnik.* 44(2): 161-180.

Dahms, 2012 – *Dahms, H.F.* (2012). Commodification in Perpetuity. In: Ritzer, G. (ed.). The Wiley-Blackwell encyclopedia of globalization. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470670590. wbeog084

Dawson, 2007 – *Dawson, H.* (2007). The Commodification of tragedy: a critical examination of contemporary film. Theses, Dissertations and Capstones. 559. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://mds.marshall.edu/etd/559

Debord, 2014 – *Debord, G.* (2014). The society of the spectacle. Bureau of Public Secrets. (Original work published in 1967).

Foncesa et al., 2015 – *Fonseca, A.P., Seabra, C., Silva, C.* (2015). Dark tourism: Concepts, typologies and sites. *Journal of Tourism Research & Hospitality.* S2: 1-6. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.4172/2324-8807.S2-002

Fuchs, 2021 – *Fuchs, C.* (2021). Social media: A critical introduction. Sage.

Giroux, 2007 – *Giroux, H.A.* (2007). Beyond the spectacle of terrorism: Rethinking politics in the society of the image. *Situations: Project of the radical imagination.* 2(1).

Gotham, 2007 – *Gotham, K.F.* (2007). Critical theory and Katrina: Disaster, spectacle and immanent critique. *City.* 11(1): 81-99.

Haenfler, 2023 – *Haenfler, R.* (2017). Commodification – Subcultures and sociology. Subcultural Theory and Theorists. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://haenfler.sites.grinnell.edu/subcultural-theory-and-theorists/commodification/

King, 2024 – *King, H.* (2024). Capitalizing on animality: monstrosity and multispecies relations in Jordan Peele's Nope (2022). *Humanities.* 13(5): 136. DOI: https://doi.org/ 10.3390/h13050136

Lobodally, 2019 – *Lobodally, A.* (2019). The Commodification of Disaster in Telkomsel TVC "Menjadi Relawan Yang Terbaik" Version. In 1st International Conference on Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies (ICSSIS 2018). *Atlantis Press.* Pp. 5-9. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2991/icssis-18.2019.2

Lumbreras, 2019 – *Lumbreras, S.* (2019). Commodification separated us from nature, from each other and from ourselves. can technology bring us back together? *Pensamiento. Revista de Investigación e Información Filosófica.* 75(283.S.Esp): 375-385. DOI: https://doi.org/10.14422/ pen.v75.i283.y2019.020

Marwick, Boyd, 2011 – *Marwick, A.E., Boyd, D.* (2011). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media & Society.* 13(1): 114-133. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810365313

Miquel-Baldellou, 2025 – *Miquel-Baldellou, M.* (2025). The dynamics of agency and exploitation, animal-human bonds, and the role of the Gaze in Jordan Peele's Nope. *Animal Ethics Review.* 5(1): 1-18. DOI: https://doi.org/10.31009/aer.2025.v5.09

Mubarok, 2011 – *Mubarok, M.* (2011). Korupsi dalam masyarakat tontonan. *Interaktif.* 4(2): 243700.

Panda, 2019 – *Panda, S.* (2019). Comparative analysis of qualitative and quantitative research. M.Lib. I. Sc. Project: 1-11.

Sobande, 2023 – *Sobande, F.* (2023). I wear my sunglasses to dream: nope, black dreaming, and grains of grief. The Arrow. 10(2). [Electronic resource]. URL: https://arrow-journal.org/undisciplined-archives-dreaming-across-black-geographies/

Stone, 2006 – *Stone, P.R.* (2006). A dark tourism spectrum: Towards a typology of death and macabre related tourist sites, attractions and exhibitions. *Tourism: An International Interdisciplinary Journal.* 54(2): 145-160. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://hrcak.srce.hr/161464

Stone, Grebenar, 2022 – *Stone, P.R., Grebenar, A.* (2022). Making tragic places: Dark tourism, kitsch and the commodification of atrocity. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 20(4): 457-470. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2021.1960852

Tufekci, 2018 – *Tufekci, Z.* (2018). YouTube, the great radicalizer. *The New York Times.* 10(3). [Electronic resource]. URL: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/10/opinion/sunday/youtube-politics-radical.html?

Turcios, 2024 – *Turcios, M.A.* (2024). Metaphors of extractive capitalism and fabulation in Nope. *Afterimage.* 51(1): 27-46. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1525/aft.2024.51.1.27

Walus, Wilcox, 2020 – *Walus, S.M., Wilcox, C.D.* (2020). 1000 ways to die: A televisual template for commodifying tragedy and vilifying the deceased. *Southern Communication Journal.* 85(5): 316-326. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/1041794X.2020.1803395

The Rise of Information Literacy in the Post-2020: A Global Bibliometric Synthesis (2020–2025)

Farahat Ali [a , *], Bushra Hameedur Rahman [a]

[a] Beaconhouse National University, Punjab, Pakistan

Abstract

This study presents a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of Information Literacy (IL) research conducted between 2020 and 2025, highlighting its sustained scholarly growth, thematic diversity, and evolving disciplinary intersections. Drawing on data from Web of Science and Scopus, the study analyzed 3,004 documents from 925 sources, revealing consistent annual publication growth and significant author engagement, albeit with limited international collaboration. The thematic mapping and keyword analysis uncovered a rich conceptual landscape, with IL intersecting fields such as digital literacy, health communication, AI ethics, and education. The co-occurrence networks and trend analysis confirmed that IL scholarship is responding dynamically to global challenges, including pandemic-induced transformations and digital misinformation. Despite modest citation averages, foundational works retain influence, and recent studies are gaining traction. This study underscores the need for deeper theoretical integration, enhanced global collaboration, and curricular innovation to align IL research with real-world information demands. The findings advocate for IL's centrality in educational policy and practice in an increasingly algorithm-driven, post-truth world.

Keywords: information literacy, web of science, bibliometric analysis, trend analysis, thematic mapping, media.

1. Introduction

Information literacy (IL) has evolved from a skills-oriented paradigm centered on locating and evaluating information to a broader, contested concept that is embedded in disciplinary practices, social infrastructures, and everyday life. Classic higher-education treatments defined IL as a learner capability tied to curricular design and graduate attributes (Bruce, 1998; Johnston, Webber, 2003). Recent work, however, shows a decisively sociocultural and critical turn: IL is entangled with issues of trust, doubt, and platformized information flows; it intersects with adjacent literacies (media, data, algorithmic) and with the politics of knowledge production (Haider, Sundin, 2022; Hicks et al., 2023; Kuehn, 2023). In short, IL has become both a pedagogical project and a way to make sense of the information ecosystems in which people live and learn. This conceptual diversification underpins the present bibliometric analysis: to understand how IL is discussed, who produces and influences the conversation, and where the field is heading, we need a panoramic, methodologically transparent map of the literature.

The discourse on IL has diversified across disciplines, reflecting its adaptability to evolving contexts. In educational settings, IL is often discussed as integral to curriculum design, fostering critical thinking and research abilities among students (Kolle, 2017). In the digital age,

---

* Corresponding author
E-mail addresses: farahat.ali@bnu.edu.pk (F. Ali)

IL conversations increasingly incorporate elements of media and digital literacy, particularly in combating misinformation and navigating online environments (Islam et al., 2022). For instance, during global crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, IL has been framed as essential for discerning reliable health information and promoting digital self-efficacy (Baber et al., 2022). Moreover, in higher education, IL is debated in relation to mobile technologies, where it enables ubiquitous learning and personal knowledge management (Pinto et al., 2019). IL discussions have been delineated into thematic categories such as ability, technology, and application, illustrating how the concept evolves through interdisciplinary dialogues and temporal shifts (Li et al., 2021).

A substantial body of IL-focused bibliometric and scientometric studies already exists and provides a baseline for the present study. Global IL research from 2005-2014 has been profiled, documenting steady growth and identifying productive countries, outlets, and authors (Kolle, 2017). Comparative analyses have shown that IL is not monolithic but varies in productivity and conceptual emphasis across domains such as the social and health sciences (Pinto et al., 2013). Subsequent niche mappings capture diversification within the field, including mobile information literacy between 2006–2017 (Pinto et al., 2019), and visualizations of the intellectual structure and diffusion of IL literature from 1975–2018 (Onyancha, 2020). Most recently, the evolution and diffusion of IL topics across time were charted using dynamic topic modeling of 2005–2019 Web of Science articles (Li et al., 2021). Together, these studies confirm that IL research is internationalizing, branching into subfields, and engaging a wider array of disciplines and contexts.

Yet this same literature also reveals a timely gap, and therefore a need for one more, carefully designed bibliometric study. Most comprehensive mappings end in 2018 or 2019 (Onyancha, 2020; Li et al., 2021), just before the pandemic, the subsequent pivot to hybrid/online instruction, and the rapid mainstreaming of generative AI, developments that plausibly reshaped IL discourse, assessment, and collaboration patterns. Likewise, earlier studies either focus on particular disciplinary slices (e.g., social vs. health sciences) or on specialized niches (e.g., mobile IL), leaving open questions about how the field as a whole has reorganized during the 2020s (Pinto et al., 2013; Pinto et al., 2019). Moreover, the recent conceptualization of IL within "information ecosystems" (Kuehn, 2023) and the intensifying IL-misinformation nexus (De Paor, Heravi, 2020) suggest that new keyword clusters and co-citation neighborhoods have likely emerged. An updated, field-level synthesis is therefore warranted to (a) extend coverage through the mid-2020s, (b) examine geographic breadth and collaboration with attention to under-represented regions, and (c) identify emergent topics at the intersection of IL, data/media literacies, and AI.

In addition to the temporal gap, there is also a methodological one. Many earlier studies relied on a single index, often Web of Science, or used static snapshots of co-word structures based on a single time slice. As bibliometric research has matured, recommended workflows now emphasize transparent and reproducible pipelines, such as those available in the R-based bibliometrix/Biblioshiny suite. They also highlight longitudinal science mapping methods, including thematic evolution and historiographs, to trace how topics emerge and recombine (Aria, Cuccurullo, 2017; Donthu et al., 2021). By adopting such workflows and remaining mindful of database biases and the limits of network measures, researchers can overcome earlier constraints and produce maps that are both methodologically rigorous and substantively informative.

This study contributes by addressing these voids through a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of IL research up to 2025, drawing from multiple databases for broader coverage. It elucidates the ongoing discourse on IL (RQ1), maps distributions across years, countries, authors, citations, and collaborations (RQ2), and identifies emerging topics and trends (RQ3), offering fresh insights into post-2020 evolutions like AI-driven IL and equity issues. By highlighting interdisciplinary connections and future directions, this work advances scholarly understanding and informs policy for enhanced IL practices in education and beyond.

Conceptual Evolution of Information Literacy. Information literacy (IL) has undergone a profound conceptual transformation, evolving from a narrowly defined skillset into a multidimensional, interdisciplinary construct that shapes how individuals access, evaluate, and produce knowledge in complex information environments. Initially grounded in library science, IL was viewed as a set of technical competencies required to locate and use information effectively, particularly in academic and professional contexts. However, scholars have progressively reconceptualized IL through a sociocultural lens. IL has been reframed not as isolated skills, but as "enacted practices" rooted in social contexts (Lloyd, 2006). Others have emphasized that IL practices vary significantly across disciplines and communities, reflecting the epistemological

norms of different fields (Limberg et al., 2012). These shifts signify a broader move from individual cognitive models toward practice-based and relational frameworks that emphasize context, identity, and power.

IL within STEM is a specialized competency beyond basic search skills, involving evaluating technical data in health sciences and engineering. It emphasises domain-specific critical engagement and practices that support evidence-based reasoning (Schirone, 2022). Its appropriation across disciplines such as management, nursing, public health, and psychology shows that IL is often redefined to meet professional needs, such as ethical decision-making – though this can risk stripping away its sociocultural depth through simplification in non-LIS contexts (Hicks et al., 2023). This shift illustrates both IL's adaptability and its vulnerability to reductionism.

As IL gained disciplinary traction, it was integrated into diverse domains including health sciences, engineering, education, and business studies, each adapting the concept to suit its own informational challenges. In clinical settings, IL has been shown to enhance evidence-based decision-making by enabling healthcare professionals to critically evaluate medical research (Jacobs et al., 2003). Within engineering education, IL has been contextualized to address the use of technical standards, patents, and grey literature (Zwicky, Phillips, 2018). In the field of management, IL has been positioned as central to organizational knowledge-building, supporting innovation, strategic planning, and risk analysis (Walton, Hepworth, 2011). In education, IL supports inquiry-based learning by fostering reflective and critical engagement with information (Lupton, 2008).

This theoretical expansion has been mirrored in the structure of published IL research, as mapped through bibliometric analyses. Bibliometric studies have been instrumental in visualizing IL's intellectual landscape, tracking publication trends, identifying influential authors, and revealing thematic shifts over time. For instance, co-authorship analysis of IL literature indexed in Web of Science demonstrated the formation of collaborative clusters and the dominance of Anglophone scholarship (Ardanuy, 2013). Building on the exploration of the "dark side" of information, where informational abundance leads to overload, disorientation, and anxiety (Bawden, Robinson, 2009), later bibliometric studies have documented a shift in IL discourse away from technical and instrumental understandings toward more critical, reflective, and context-sensitive approaches. These patterns are also evident in citation structure analyses that revealed the emergence of multiple knowledge domains, each with distinct citation practices and intellectual foundations (Gmür, 2003). To address gaps in earlier analyses, more recent studies have incorporated co-citation and bibliometric mapping to further chart IL's evolving trends (Shaheen et al., 2017).

The convergence of information literacy (IL) with adjacent literacies, particularly digital and media literacy, has gained growing attention in recent scholarship, reflecting its evolving conceptual boundaries. A co-citation network analysis of the top 100 most-cited IL articles in higher education between 2011 and 2020 identified four dominant research trends: students' IL beliefs and behaviors, the perspectives of educators and librarians, the relationship between IL and epistemic beliefs, and the web search behaviors of digital natives (Chen et al., 2022). Building on this, a scientometric analysis covering IL, ICT literacy, digital literacy, and media literacy identified overlapping disciplines and highlighted the need for context-specific and globally collaborative digital literacy frameworks (Park et al., 2021). Extending the conversation into media literacy, an analysis of 776 publications from 2000 to 2021 highlighted the growing intersection of media literacy with misinformation, digital citizenship, and critical thinking (Kutlu-Abu, Arslan, 2023). Collectively, these studies underscore how IL is increasingly intertwined with broader sociocultural and educational concerns, including epistemic agency, algorithmic exposure, and civic responsibility.

Furthermore, bibliometric research has brought attention to the regional disparities in IL scholarship, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). While global health literacy research spans diverse thematic areas, studies from LAC tend to focus more narrowly on public health and policy-related themes (Paucar-Caceres et al., 2023). The evolution of IL in Latin America has been traced through key phases of growth, with recent shifts emphasizing digital adaptation and AI integration (Uribe-Tirado, Machin-Mastromatteo, 2024). Earlier analyses documented the steady rise of Ibero-American IL publications, highlighting strong contributions from Spain and Brazil, but also revealing limited collaboration and global visibility (Pinto et al., 2015). These findings reinforce the need for more inclusive bibliometric approaches that reflect regional contexts and multilingual scholarship.

Collectively, these bibliometric findings offer a comprehensive view of IL's evolution as both a theoretical construct and a research field. The literature reveals the expansion of IL across domains, the broadening of its conceptual framework to include critical and digital dimensions, and its increasing convergence with global concerns, such as misinformation, surveillance, and information equity. At the same time, these analyses illuminate gaps in international representation, the need for broader data sources, and the importance of capturing emergent research clusters that reflect the current information challenges societies face. Therefore, bibliometric analysis functions not only as a descriptive tool but also as a means of setting the agenda for IL research. Based on the literature above, the following research questions have been formulated:

RQ1: How has the volume and thematic focus of information literacy research evolved between 2020 and 2025?

RQ2: Which countries, institutions, and authors have been most influential in shaping the IL discourse, and how has global collaboration developed?

RQ3: What emerging themes, particularly at the intersection of IL with media literacy, algorithmic literacy, and AI ethics, can be identified through co-word and citation network analysis?

2. Materials and methods

Research Design. This study employed a quantitative bibliometric research design to systematically map the global scholarly output on *information literacy* (IL) from January 2020 to March 2025. The primary objective was to chart the structural, geographical, and thematic landscape of IL research during this period, offering a focused and updated perspective on how the field has evolved in the immediate post-pandemic and AI-emergent era. Bibliometric analysis was deemed appropriate for this purpose because it provides measurable indicators of scholarly productivity (e.g., publication counts), influence (e.g., citation metrics), and intellectual structure (e.g., co-citation, co-authorship, and keyword networks) (Aria, Cuccurullo, 2017; Zupic, Čater, 2015). Unlike prior bibliometric studies that conflated IL with related literacies such as digital, media, or algorithmic literacy (Kutlu-Abu, Arslan, 2023; Pinto et al., 2019), this research deliberately isolated *"information literacy"* as a standalone term to preserve the conceptual integrity of the field and enable a more precise examination of its disciplinary trajectory in the past five years.

Data sources and retrieval strategy

Two authoritative bibliographic databases, Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection and Scopus, served as the primary data sources. WoS is widely recognized for its curated, citation-rich indexing and is frequently used in bibliometric research (Mongeon, Paul-Hus, 2016), while Scopus offers broader coverage, particularly in social sciences and interdisciplinary domains (Pranckutė, 2021). The search strategy involved querying the exact phrase *"information literacy"* in the title, abstract, and author keywords fields to ensure conceptual precision and avoid conflation with related terms. Boolean operators were not used to combine IL with other concepts, thereby maintaining terminological specificity. The search was restricted to documents published between 1 January 2020 and 31 March 2025, limited to journal articles and review papers, and refined to English-language publications to ensure consistency in metadata analysis. Editorials, letters, book chapters, and conference proceedings were excluded.

Records retrieved from both databases were exported in BibTeX and CSV formats. Deduplication was performed using R scripts, followed by manual verification to exclude documents that mentioned IL tangentially but were primarily focused on other domains (e.g., digital skills or online safety). Author names, institutional affiliations, and country identifiers were standardized to correct spelling variants and unify regional classifications (e.g., "England" and "Scotland" were aggregated under "United Kingdom"), following established bibliometric normalization protocols (Donthu et al., 2021).

Analytical Techniques and Software Tools. The cleaned dataset was analyzed using the Bibliometrix R package and its web interface Biblioshiny (Aria, Cuccurullo, 2017) for descriptive statistics, science mapping, and network visualization. Annual scientific production trends were calculated to reveal growth dynamics in IL research. Citation-based metrics were used to identify the most influential authors, journals, institutions, and countries.

Collaboration patterns were examined through co-authorship network analysis at the author, institution, and country levels, enabling the detection of both domestic and international research partnerships. Co-citation analysis was applied to identify foundational works and intellectual clusters within the field, while bibliographic coupling was used to uncover thematic linkages

among recent publications (Boyack, Klavans, 2010). Keyword co-occurrence analysis was conducted to detect thematic structures and conceptual relationships, with author-supplied keywords serving as the primary analytical basis. Network visualizations were generated in VOSviewer (Van Eck, Waltman, 2010), which uses distance-based algorithms to map and cluster related nodes for clearer interpretation.

Geographical, Institutional, and Journal-Level Analysis. Geographical patterns were mapped using author affiliation data, with countries ranked by total publication output and total citations. International collaboration rates were determined by calculating the proportion of multi-country authored papers. Institutional productivity was assessed by aggregating publications by university or research organization, and leading institutions were compared on both output volume and citation impact. Journal-level analysis examined where IL research is most frequently published, ranking journals by number of articles, total citations, and average citations per article. Co-citation networks of journals were also mapped to assess disciplinary anchoring and identify diversification into related fields such as education, information science, and communication studies.

Validity and Ethical Considerations. To ensure validity and reliability, the study drew from two leading bibliographic databases, applied precise search terms and inclusion criteria, and implemented both automated and manual cleaning procedures. The use of established bibliometric software enhanced reproducibility and methodological transparency. Nevertheless, bibliometric indicators can be influenced by disciplinary citation practices, database coverage, and time-lag effects (Moed, 2005). Restricting the analysis to English-language publications may underrepresent contributions from non-Anglophone contexts. This research relied solely on publicly available bibliographic metadata and did not involve human participants or sensitive personal data. All analyses complied with academic citation ethics and open-source software licensing requirements.

3. Discussion

The bibliometric analysis of information literacy research spanning the early to mid-2020s highlights a field that has matured significantly amid digital advancements and educational shifts following global disruptions. This period witnessed sustained scholarly engagement, with publications emerging across numerous sources, reflecting the field's interdisciplinary nature in areas such as education, digital media, and health communication. A similar upward trajectory in IL literature during earlier decades was attributed to evolving pedagogical needs (Kolle, 2017). The modest growth rate observed during this recent timeframe suggests a consistent rather than rapid expansion – possibly indicating a phase of consolidation in which foundational concepts are being refined for contemporary applications. Keyword diversity signals an expansion beyond core information-seeking skills into sociotechnical domains, including misinformation mitigation and artificial intelligence integration. This evolution positions information literacy as a multifaceted discipline marked by broad author involvement and meaningful academic influence, though opportunities remain for enhanced international partnerships to enrich contextual adaptations.

As illustrated in Figure 2, annual scientific output in information literacy experienced an initial surge in the early 2020s, likely driven by the transition to digital learning environments and heightened awareness of information competencies during widespread challenges. This aligns with previous research that identified transformative themes in digital literacy amid similar disruptions (Baber et al., 2022). Subsequent years showed relative stability with a peak toward the mid-decade, followed by a slight decline, which may reflect a recalibration of research priorities toward emerging technologies like artificial intelligence. Despite fluctuations, the trend underscores the field's adaptability, contributing to critical thinking and well-being in dynamic contexts (Li et al., 2021). Such patterns emphasize the necessity for ongoing support to maintain momentum in addressing technological transformations.

Geographically, as depicted in Figure 3, information literacy production is concentrated in regions with strong investments in digital infrastructure, such as North America, East Asia, and parts of Europe. The United States and China stand out as key contributors, reflecting national emphases on educational technology and competence-building. Similar dominance in mobile information literacy research has been linked to institutional resources (Pinto et al., 2019). Underrepresentation in areas such as Africa and Central Asia likely results from barriers in funding and access, highlighting the need for inclusive initiatives to develop region-specific frameworks.

Bridging these disparities could foster a more equitable global discourse, as emphasized in studies on international scientific productivity (Gong et al., 2025).

Figure 4 showcases highly cited documents that underscore information literacy's interdisciplinary reach, intersecting with behavioral sciences, educational technology, and health domains. Leading works address fake news detection, teacher competencies, and infodemic management, demonstrating the field's relevance across journals. For instance, foundational studies often accumulate greater influence over time, a pattern observed in bibliometric surveys of related literacies (Yan et al., 2024). Emerging scholarship gains rapid recognition, reinforcing information literacy's role in psychological resilience and innovative learning (Hsieh et al., 2013). This citation distribution affirms the domain's evolution, blending traditional and contemporary applications.

Table 2 reveals prominent sources rooted in library and information sciences, with extensions into education-oriented outlets. Journals focused on academic librarianship and information literacy are at the forefront, facilitating cross-disciplinary exchanges. This reflects trends observed in content analyses, where open-access platforms have been shown to enhance knowledge accessibility (Chen et al., 2021). The diversity of publication venues supports the democratization of information literacy insights, aligning with global pedagogical goals. Institutional affiliations in Figure 5 highlight contributions from robust academic systems in the United States, as well as in South Asia and Europe. Leading universities demonstrate collaborative efforts between libraries and faculties, a dynamic explored in curriculum integration studies. Similar institutional roles in promoting data-driven learning have been noted, offering potential pathways for broader scholarly impact (Dong et al., 2023).

The keyword co-occurrence network in Figure 6 centers on core terms like information literacy, interconnected with education, libraries, and critical thinking, forming pedagogical clusters. Emerging themes in health and artificial intelligence indicate interdisciplinary growth, addressing societal concerns such as misinformation. This structure echoes topic diffusion analyses, highlighting shifts toward technology-driven competencies (Li et al., 2021). Figure 7's collaboration map positions major hubs like the United States in extensive networks with partners in Europe and Asia yet reveals gaps in underrepresented regions. Enhancing these linkages could promote culturally sensitive practices, as recommended in global bibliometric overviews (Kolle, 2017).

Trend topics in Figure 8 illustrate persistent foundational elements alongside rising interests in artificial intelligence and creativity, signaling adaptation to digital shifts. Earlier instructional focuses evolve into qualitative explorations, diversifying methodologies (Yan et al., 2024). Finally, Figure 9 categorizes themes with education-centric concepts as basic yet requiring deeper development, while niche areas like health literacy suggest specialized potential. This configuration reinforces information literacy's educational core, with scope for innovation in ethics and technology (Gong et al., 2025). Overall, the analysis depicts information literacy as a vital, adaptive field poised to empower societies in complex information landscapes through integrated, collaborative advancements.

4. Results

The bibliometric analysis of Information Literacy (IL) research from 2020 to 2025 reveals a total of 3,004 published documents across 925 distinct sources, reflecting sustained scholarly attention to the field during a period marked by digital acceleration and post-pandemic educational restructuring (see Table 1). These publications were produced by 9,103 unique authors, with international co-authorship accounting for 11.42 % of the total, suggesting that while IL is globally recognized, cross-border research partnerships remain relatively modest. The annual growth rate of IL publications stands at 2.07 %, indicating a steady but moderate increase in research output during these five years. With an average of 6.31 citations per document, the dataset demonstrates that IL research continues to garner academic visibility and impact, particularly in interdisciplinary contexts such as education, digital media, and health communication.

Keyword analysis shows remarkable thematic diversity, with 7,964 author-assigned keywords pointing to a wide spectrum of IL-related topics ranging from digital literacy and misinformation to AI integration and critical pedagogy. This breadth highlights the conceptual expansion of IL beyond traditional information-seeking skills into more complex sociotechnical and cultural domains. Overall, the results suggest that IL research has evolved into a mature and multifaceted academic field with broad author engagement, a solid citation footprint, and an increasingly

diverse knowledge base, though there remains untapped potential for deeper international collaboration and longitudinal thematic consolidation.

Table 1. Primary information data of Information Literacy Research

Description	Results
Timespan	2020–2025
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	925
Documents	3004
Annual Growth Rate, %	2.07
Average citations per doc	6.306
Author's Keywords (DE)	7964
Authors	9103
International co-authorships, %	11.42

Figure 2 illustrates the annual scientific output on Information Literacy (IL) from 2020 to 2025. The number of publications rose sharply from just under 300 articles in 2020 to over 600 in 2021, indicating a rapid surge in scholarly interest likely driven by global shifts to digital education and increased focus on information competencies during the COVID-19 pandemic. The years 2022 and 2023 maintained relatively stable production levels, with a slight increase leading to a publication peak in 2024, where scientific output reached its highest level. However, a noticeable drop occurred in 2025, with the number of articles falling back close to the 2020 baseline. This fluctuation may reflect a post-pandemic stabilization of academic agendas or shifting research priorities toward emerging areas such as AI literacy and data governance. Despite the decline in 2025, the overall trend from 2020 to 2024 demonstrates that IL remains a critical area of inquiry, consistently attracting scholarly contributions. The sustained output over multiple years highlights the field's relevance across disciplines and its adaptability in response to global educational and technological transformations.
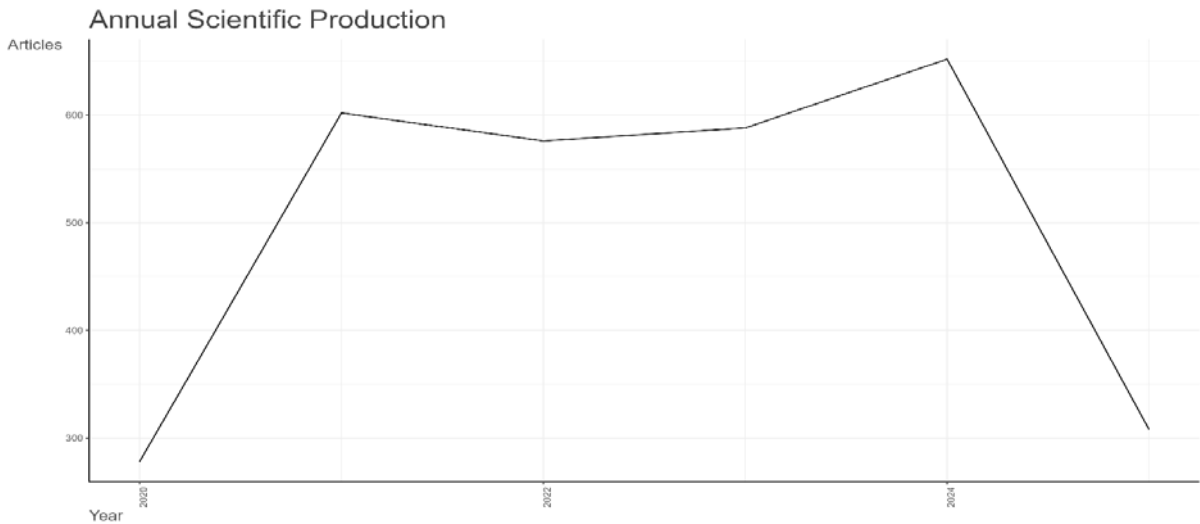
Fig. 2. Annual Production

Figure 3 presents the geographical distribution of scientific production in the field of Information Literacy (IL) from 2020 to 2025. The United States emerges as the most prolific contributor, underscoring its dominant role in global IL scholarship. This leadership can be attributed to the country's extensive investment in digital infrastructure, information science education, and research funding. China also features prominently, reflecting its growing academic output and strategic emphasis on digital competence and educational technology. Other significant contributors include the United Kingdom, India, Australia, and Spain, countries where IL has been integrated into national education frameworks and library science curricula.

Conversely, IL research appears to be underrepresented in much of Africa, Central Asia, and parts of Eastern Europe. Limited access to research funding, digital infrastructure, and academic publishing platforms may be key factors contributing to this uneven distribution. The visible concentration of IL publications in North America, Western Europe, and East Asia points to the need for more inclusive global research efforts. Encouraging scholarly exchange, capacity building, and regional partnerships could help bridge these disparities and support the development of context-specific IL frameworks in underrepresented regions.
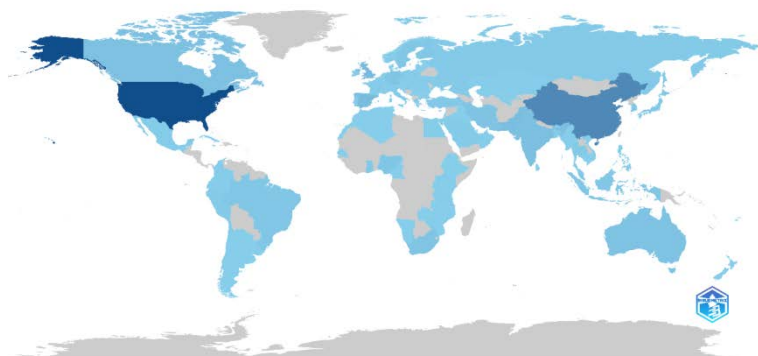
Fig. 3. Country-wise production

Research findings from the most influential academic journals that have contributed to Information Literacy (IL) studies between 2020 and 2025, highlighting the field's growing maturity and interdisciplinary scope. The *Journal of Academic Librarianship* emerged as the most prolific source with 134 publications, followed by the *Journal of Information Literacy* and *Library Philosophy and Practice*, both of which serve as foundational platforms for theoretical and applied IL discourse. Notably, open-access and practitioner-focused journals such as *Communications in Information Literacy* and *Library Philosophy and Practice* underscore the growing commitment to inclusive and practice-based scholarship. The inclusion of technologically driven journals like *Computers & Education* and *Education and Information Technologies* reflects IL's integration with digital pedagogy and EdTech innovation, while the presence of historically grounded publications such as the *Journal of Documentation* and *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* signals sustained engagement with information behavior, critical frameworks, and methodological pluralism. Collectively, the distribution of articles across these diverse sources affirms IL's expanding academic footprint and its dynamic intersections with library science, educational technology, and higher education policy.

The Figure 4 represents the co-authorship network of the most influential researchers in the field of Information Literacy from 2020 to 2025, generated using VOSviewer.
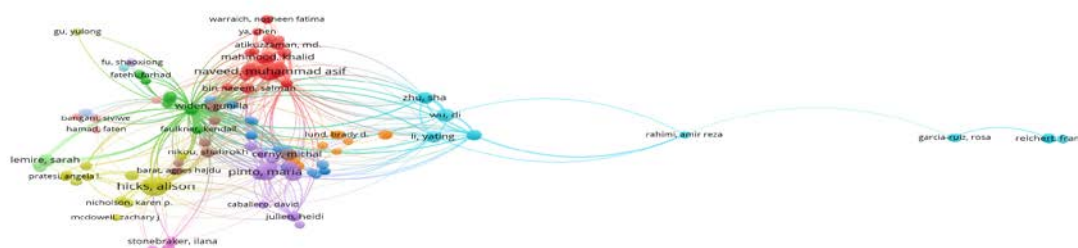
Fig. 4. Top Influential Authors

The clusters indicate distinct collaborative groups, with dense interconnections among authors like Naveed Muhammad Asif, Mahmood Khalid, and Hicks Alison, highlighting regional or institutional collaboration hubs. Peripheral authors such as Garcia-Gue Rosa and Reichel Frank appear more isolated, suggesting limited integration into broader scholarly networks.

Figure 5 highlights the institutional affiliations contributing most significantly to Information Literacy (IL) research between 2020 and 2025. The University System of Ohio leads with 70 publications, establishing itself as the most influential institution in the field. Purdue University follows with 50 publications, while the University of the Punjab, based in Pakistan, ranks third with 45 articles, demonstrating notable representation from South Asia. Other top contributors include the Purdue University System and the University of London, each with 44 publications, and University College London with 42. These affiliations reflect a strong presence of IL research within both American and British higher education systems, as well as a growing scholarly footprint from non-Western regions.
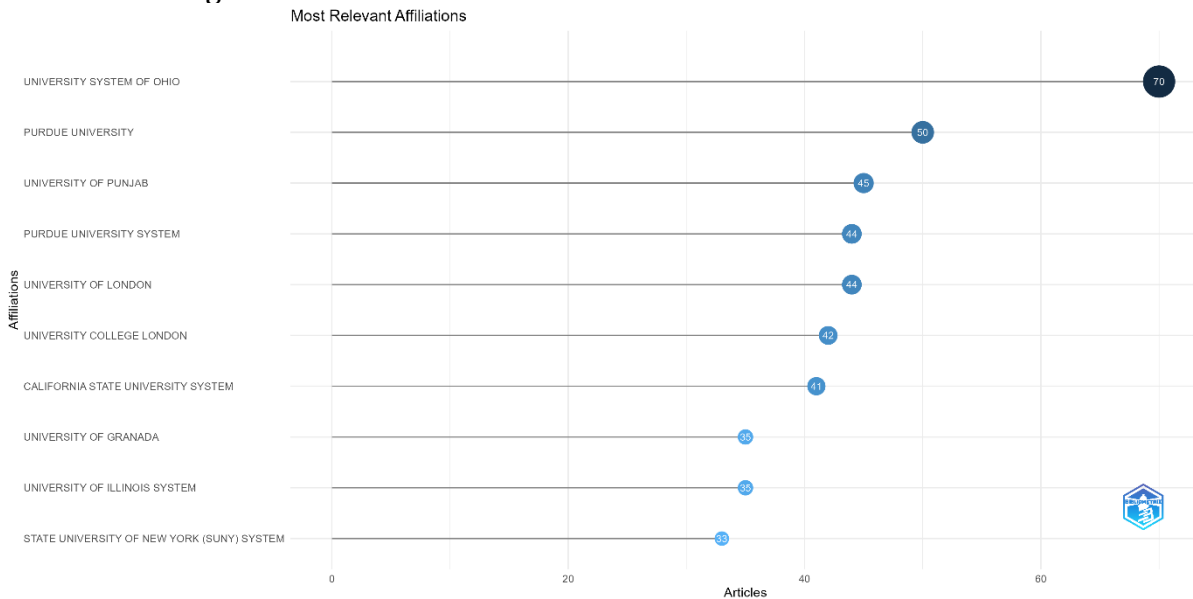
Fig. 5. Author's Affiliation

Figure 6 visualizes the co-occurrence network of keywords used in Information Literacy (IL) research, highlighting the conceptual structure and thematic clusters within the field.
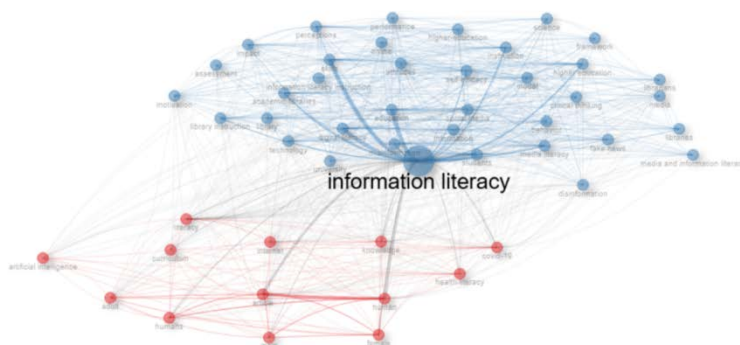
Fig. 6. Co-occurrence network

The central dominance of the term "information literacy" is evident, with strong associations to keywords such as "education," "students," "libraries," "higher education," "media literacy," and "critical thinking," forming a dense blue cluster focused on pedagogical and institutional contexts. In contrast, the red cluster introduces themes like "health literacy," "COVID-19," "internet," "curriculum," "gender," and "artificial intelligence," reflecting emerging and interdisciplinary areas

that intersect with IL. This network reveals how traditional educational perspectives are now integrated with broader societal and technological concerns, such as misinformation, AI, and public health communication. The dual focus underscores IL's evolution into a multidimensional competence that supports not only academic achievement but also informed civic participation in a complex digital ecosystem.

Figure 7 illustrates the global collaboration network in Information Literacy (IL) research between 2020 and 2025, revealing key transnational partnerships and research hubs. The United States appears as the most central node, engaging in collaborative work with a wide range of countries including the United Kingdom, China, Australia, India, and several European and African nations. This demonstrates its pivotal role in facilitating international IL discourse. Other prominent collaboration centers include China, the UK, and Australia, all of which maintain active cross-border linkages that strengthen knowledge exchange and joint authorship. However, notable gaps remain in parts of South America, Central Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa, where collaboration appears sparse. IL scholarship is characterised by its global nature, which is highlighted by the map. Furthermore, it emphasises the importance of creating more inclusive partnerships, particularly in regions that are underrepresented in international academic networks.

Country Collaboration Map
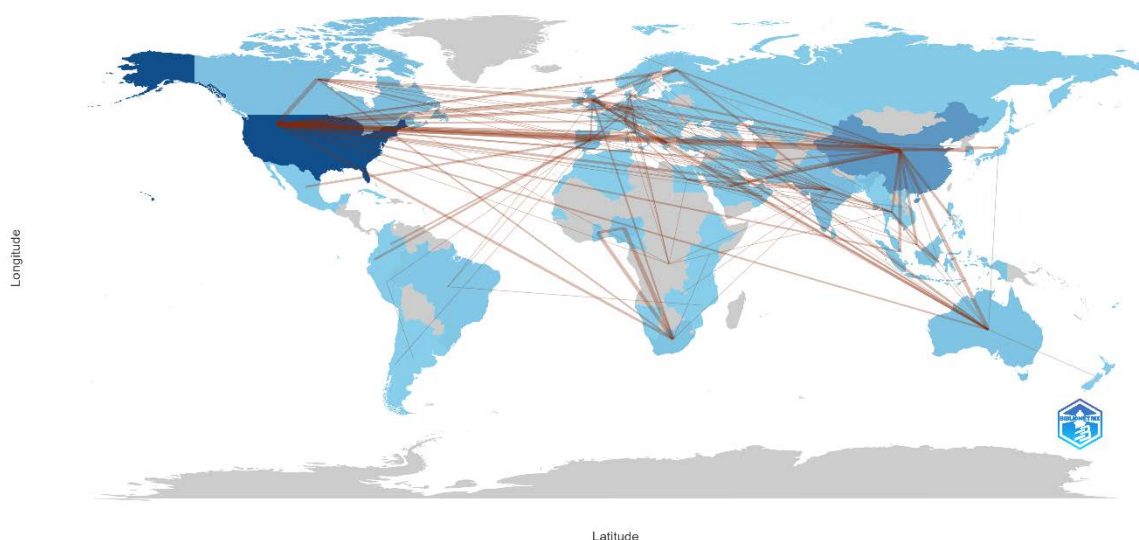
Fig. 7. Collaboration of Authors

Figure 8 displays the emerging and evolving trend topics in Information Literacy (IL) research from 2020 to 2025. Core terms such as "information literacy," "education," "digital literacy," and "students" appear with high frequency and early onset, signaling their foundational role in the field. Over time, newer terms like "artificial intelligence," "self-management," "variables," and "creativity" have gained prominence, particularly from 2023 onward. This shift indicates a growing scholarly interest in the integration of IL with cognitive skills, AI technologies, and personalized learning strategies. Earlier trends focused more on instructional design elements like "flipped classroom," "writing," and "comprehension," while recent attention has moved toward interdisciplinary topics like "mobile information literacy" and "qualitative research." The increasing presence of AI-related terms in the most recent years suggests that the field is adapting to the digital transformation of knowledge environments, positioning IL at the intersection of education, technology, and critical inquiry.

Figure 9 presents the thematic map of Information Literacy (IL) research, categorizing key topics based on their relevance (centrality) and development (density). Positioned in the lower right quadrant, representing basic themes, are "information literacy," "students," and "education." These topics are central to the IL research landscape, signifying their foundational role in the field. Their relatively low density suggests these themes are often studied and linked to other concepts but still need more theoretical and methodological development. On the other hand, the upper left quadrant, home to niche themes, features terms like "human," "health literacy," and "article."

These are well-developed yet peripheral topics, suggesting specialized interest and depth but limited interdisciplinary influence or widespread application within IL scholarship.
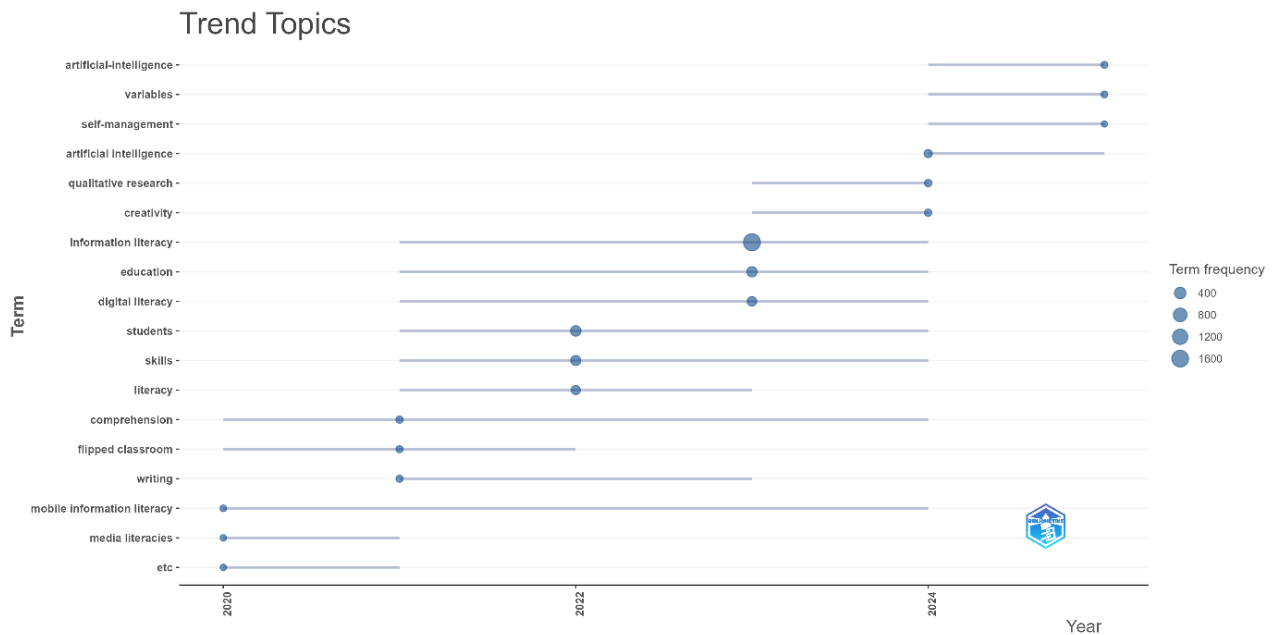
Fig. 8. Trent Topics in IL

The absence of themes in the upper right quadrant (motor themes) and lower left quadrant (emerging or declining themes) suggests that no IL subdomains have simultaneously achieved both high centrality and high development, nor are there dominant declining or novel topics currently reshaping the field. Nevertheless, the positioning of health-related literacy and human-centered studies in the niche zone may indicate growing intersections between IL and public health or behavioral studies, especially post-pandemic. Meanwhile, the consistent presence of education-centric keywords in the basic quadrant affirms the enduring focus of IL within pedagogical contexts, particularly in higher education and student learning. This thematic configuration reinforces IL's status as a core educational competency while highlighting the potential for deeper exploration into its applications in health, civic participation, and digital ethics.
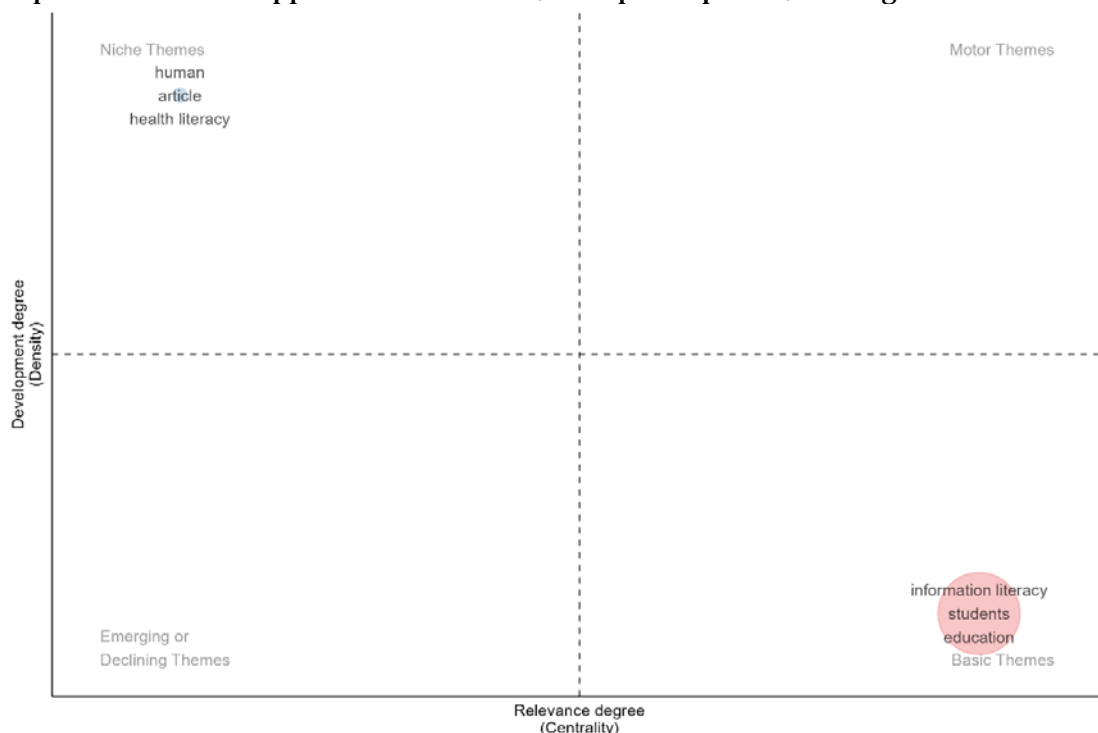
Fig. 9. Thematic Map

5. Conclusion

This bibliometric study affirms that Information Literacy research has not only endured but expanded in response to the evolving demands of digital society. The consistent publication growth, robust thematic clusters, and interdisciplinary reach reflect IL's transformation into a pivotal research frontier. However, the uneven geographic distribution and relatively low international collaboration rates signal an urgent need for inclusive and diversified scholarly networks. Core themes like education and student learning continue to shape the field's foundation, yet emergent areas, especially AI, health literacy, and misinformation, illustrate IL's capacity to evolve with technological and societal shifts. Thematic mapping and keyword co-occurrence further revealed that while IL maintains its educational roots, its relevance now extends to critical issues such as algorithmic governance, pandemic communication, and civic engagement. This underscores the imperative for both theoretical enrichment and practical integration of IL into curricula and policy across educational systems. Moving forward, fostering global research partnerships, adopting more sophisticated methodological tools, and embedding IL in interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral frameworks will be key to enhancing its impact. As the information ecosystem grows increasingly complex, the capacity to critically navigate, evaluate, and ethically engage with information, core tenets of IL, will remain indispensable to democratic participation and lifelong learning.

Limitations. The bibliometric analysis of information literacy research, utilizing both Web of Science and Scopus databases from 2020 to 2025, provides a solid foundation for understanding recent trends; however, several limitations persist that merit attention. The focus on these two databases, while comprehensive, may still exclude significant contributions from other indexing systems or gray literature, potentially introducing a selection bias despite the dual-database approach. Additionally, the temporal scope from 2020 to 2025, chosen to explore uncharted territory following prior studies, may limit the ability to trace long-term evolutionary patterns or the influence of foundational works predating this period. Language bias remains a concern, as the predominance of English-language publications could underrepresent scholarly efforts in non-English-speaking regions. Furthermore, reliance on quantitative metrics such as citation counts and publication numbers may not fully encapsulate the qualitative impact or practical application of research, potentially overlooking nuanced contributions due to factors like self-citation or disciplinary fragmentation. These limitations suggest that while the analysis is robust, its findings should be interpreted with an awareness of these contextual constraints.

Future Recommendations. To further advance information literacy research and address identified gaps, future endeavors should build on the current foundation by incorporating a broader range of data sources beyond Web of Science and Scopus, such as regional databases or open-access repositories, to enhance inclusivity and capture diverse perspectives. While the 2020–2025 timeframe effectively targets a novel research window, extending the analysis to include earlier decades could provide a richer historical context, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the field's trajectory. Embracing multilingual research outputs would further diversify the evidence base, particularly from underrepresented regions such as Africa and Central Asia, thereby supporting equitable global discourse.

Integrating qualitative methodologies, such as case studies or ethnographic analyses, alongside bibliometric techniques could illuminate the practical implications and educational impacts of information literacy, addressing limitations in current metrics. Additionally, fostering interdisciplinary collaborations with fields such as artificial intelligence, health sciences, and digital humanities could drive the development of innovative frameworks to tackle emerging issues, including misinformation and digital citizenship. Targeted initiatives, including international research networks and capacity-building programs in low-representation areas, would further enhance global participation and relevance. These strategies promise to position information literacy as a dynamic, inclusive discipline responsive to the evolving demands of a digital society.

References

Ardanuy, 2012 – *Ardanuy, J.* (2012). Scientific collaboration in Library and Information Science viewed through the Web of Knowledge: The Spanish case. *Scientometrics.* 90(3): 877-890.

Aria, Cuccurullo, 2017 – *Aria, M., Cuccurullo, C.* (2017). Bibliometrix: An R-tool for comprehensive science mapping analysis. *Journal of Informetrics.* 11(4): 959-975. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joi.2017.08.007

Baber et al., 2022 – *Baber, H., Fanea-Ivanovici, M., Lee, Y.-T., Tinmaz, H.* (2022). A bibliometric analysis of digital literacy research and emerging themes pre-during COVID-19 pandemic. *Information and Learning Sciences*. 123(3/4): 214-232. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1108/ILS-10-2021-0090

Bawden, Robinson, 2009 – *Bawden, D., Robinson, L.* (2009). The dark side of information: overload, anxiety and other paradoxes and pathologies. *Journal of Information Science*. 35(2): 180-191. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0165551508095781

Boyack, Klavans, 2010 – *Boyack, K.W., Klavans, R.* (2010). Co-citation analysis, bibliographic coupling, and direct citation: Which citation approach represents the research front most accurately? *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*. 61(12): 2389-2404. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.21419

Bruce, 1998 – *Bruce, C.S.* (1998). The Phenomenon of Information Literacy. *Higher Education Research & Development*. 17(1): 25-43. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/0729436980170102

Chen et al., 2021 – *Chen, C., Wang, N., Tu, Y., Lin, H.J.* (2021). Research trends from a decade (2011-2020) for information literacy in higher education: Content and bibliometric mapping analysis. *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology*. 58(1): 48-59. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/pra2.435

De Paor, Heravi, 2020 – *De Paor, S., Heravi, B.* (2020). Information literacy and fake news: How the field of librarianship can help combat the epidemic of fake news. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*. 46(5): 102218. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2020.102218

Dong et al., 2023 – *Dong, J., Zhao, Y., Buckingham, L.* (2023). Charting the landscape of data-driven learning using a bibliometric analysis. *ReCALL*. 35(3): 339-355. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0958344022000222

Donthu et al., 2021– *Donthu, N., Kumar, S., Mukherjee, D., Pandey, N., Lim, W.M.* (2021). How to conduct a bibliometric analysis: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*. 133: 285-296. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.04.070

Gong et al., 2025 – *Gong, Q., Wang, C., Liu, W.* (2025). Research on information literacy education in China (1995-2023): A bibliometric analysis. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science.* DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/09610006251335972

Haider, Sundin, 2022 – *Haider, J., Sundin, O.* (2022). Information literacy challenges in digital culture: conflicting engagements of trust and doubt. *Information, Communication & Society*. 25(8): 1176-1191. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2020.1851389

Hicks et al., 2023 – *Hicks, A., McKinney, P., Inskip, C., Walton, G., Lloyd, A.* (2023). Leveraging information literacy: Mapping the conceptual influence and appropriation of information literacy in other disciplinary landscapes. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*. 55(3): 548-566. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/09610006221090677

Hsieh et al., 2013 – *Hsieh, P.-N., Chuang, T.-M., Wang, M.-L.* (2013). A bibliometric analysis of the theses and dissertations on information literacy published in the United States and Taiwan. In: Chang, R.-S., Jain, L.C., Peng, S.-L. (eds.). *Advances in intelligent systems and applications*. Vol. 1. Springer: 337-348. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-35452-6_35

Islam et al., 2022 – *Islam, M.N., Aziz, M.T.B., Chakravarty, R.* (2022). Bibliometric analysis on information literacy (2017-2021): a systematic literature review. *Library Philosophy & Practice*. Pp. 1-21. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/7179

Jacobs et al., 2003 – *Jacobs, S.K., Rosenfeld, P., Haber, J.* (2003). Information literacy as the foundation for evidence-based practice in graduate nursing education: A curriculum-integrated approach. *Journal of Professional Nursing: Official Journal of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing*. 19(5): 320-328. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/s8755-7223(03)00097-8

Johnston, Webber, 2003 – *Johnston, B., Webber, S.* (2003). Information Literacy in Higher Education: A review and case study. *Studies in Higher Education*. 28(3): 335-352. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070309295

Kolle, 2017 – *Kolle, S. R.* (2017). Global research on information literacy: a bibliometric analysis from 2005 to 2014. *The Electronic Library*. 35(2): 283-298. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1108/EL-08-2015-0160

Kuehn, 2023 – *Kuehn, E.F.* (2023). The information ecosystem concept in information literacy: A theoretical approach and definition. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*. 74(4): 434-443. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.24733

Kutlu-Abu, Arslan, 2023 – *Kutlu-Abu, N., Arslan, R.* (2023). Evolving trend of media literacy research: a bibliometric analysis. *Journal of Media Literacy Education.* 15(1): 85-98.

Li et al., 2023 – *Li, Y., Chen, Y., Wang, Q.* (2021). Evolution and diffusion of information literacy topics. *Scientometrics.* 126(5): 4195-4224. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-021-03925-y

Limberg et al., 2012 – *Limberg, L., Sundin, O., Talja, S.* (2012). Three theoretical perspectives on information literacy. *Human IT: Journal for Information Technology Studies as a Human Science.* 11(2): 93-130.

Lloyd, 2006 – *Lloyd, A.* (2006). Information literacy landscapes: an emerging picture. *Journal of Documentation.* 62(5): 570-583. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1108/00220410610688723

Lupton, 2008 – *Lupton, M.* (2008). Information literacy and learning. Ph.D. Dis. Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia.

Moed, 2005 – *Moed, H.F.* (2005). Citation analysis in research evaluation. Springer. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-3714-7

Mongeon, Paul-Hus, 2016 – *Mongeon, P., Paul-Hus, A.* (2016). The journal coverage of Web of Science and Scopus: A comparative analysis. *Scientometrics.* 106(1): 213-228. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-015-1765-5

Onyancha, 2020 – *Onyancha, O.B.* (2020). Knowledge visualization and mapping of information literacy, 1975-2018. *IFLA Journal.* 46(2): 107-123. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0340035220906536

Park et al., 2021 – *Park, H., Kim, H.S., Park, H.W.* (2021). A scientometric study of digital literacy, ICT literacy, information literacy, and media literacy. *Journal of Data and Information Science.* 6(2): 116-138.

Paucar-Caceres et al., 2023 – *Paucar-Caceres, A., Vílchez-Román, C., Quispe-Prieto, S.* (2023). Health literacy concepts, themes, and research trends globally and in Latin America and the Caribbean: A bibliometric review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health.* 20(22): 7084. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20227084

Pinto et al., 2013 – *Pinto, M., Escalona-Fernández, M. I., Pulgarín, A.* (2013). Information literacy in social sciences and health sciences: a bibliometric study (1974-2011). *Scientometrics.* 95(3): 1071-1094. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-012-0899-y

Pinto et al., 2015 – *Pinto, M., Isabel Escalona, M., Pulgarín, A., Uribe-Tirado, A.* (2015). The scientific production of Ibero-American authors on information literacy (1985-2013). *Scientometrics.* 102(2): 1555-1576.

Pinto et al., 2019 – *Pinto, M., Fernández-Pascual, R., Caballero-Mariscal, D., Sales, D., Guerrero, D., Uribe, A.* (2019). Scientific production on mobile information literacy in higher education: a bibliometric analysis (2006-2017). *Scientometrics.* 120(1): 57-85. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-019-03115-x

Pranckutė, 2021 – *Pranckutė, R.* (2021). Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus: The titans of bibliographic information in today's academic world. *Publications.* 9(1): 12. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3390/publications9010012

Schirone, 2022 – *Schirone, M.* (2022). STEM information literacy: A bibliometric mapping (1974-2020). In: Kurbanoğlu, S. Špiranec, S., Ünal, Y., Boustany, J., Kos, D. (eds.), *Information literacy in a post-truth era* (ECIL 2021, Communications in computer and information science, Vol. 1533. Springer: 431-441. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-99885-1_33

Shaheen et al., 2017 – *Shaheen, M., Chang, Y.-K., Hnin Nu, A., Ma May Win, K., San, Y.W., Majid, S., Chang, Y.-K., Aye, H.N., Khine, M.M.W., San, Y.W.* (2017). Analyzing publishing trends in information literacy literature: A bibliometric study. *Malaysian Journal of Library and Information Science.* 20(2): 51-66. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://mjlis.um.edu.my/index.php/MJLIS/article/view/1766

Uribe-Tirado et al., 2024 – *Uribe-Tirado, A., Machin-Mastromatteo, J.D.* (2024). Past, present and future of information literacy in Latin America. *Journal of Information Literacy.* 18(2): 6-36. DOI: https://doi.org/10.11645/18.2.632

Van Eck, Waltman, 2010 – *Van Eck, N.J., Waltman, L.* (2010). Software survey: VOSviewer, a computer program for bibliometric mapping. *Scientometrics.* 84(2): 523-538. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-009-0146-3

Walton, Hepworth, 2011 – *Walton, G., Hepworth, M.* (2011). A longitudinal study of changes in learners' cognitive states during and following an information literacy teaching intervention. *Journal of Documentation.* 67(3): 449-479. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1108/00220411111124541

Yan et al., 2024 – *Yan, C., Wang, H., Luo, X.* (2024). Knowledge mapping of data literacy: A bibliometric study using visual analysis. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science.* DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/09610006241285512

Zupic, Čater, 2015 – *Zupic, I., Čater, T.* (2015). Bibliometric methods in management and organization. *Organizational Research Methods.* 18(3): 429-472. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/ 1094428114562629

Zwicky, Phillips, 2018 – *Zwicky, D., Phillips, M.* (2018). Inspiring innovation with patent information literacy in the engineering technology curriculum [Conference presentation]. *International Association of University Libraries* (IATUL) Annual Conference, Oslo, Norway. Purdue e-Pubs. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/lib_fsdocs

Effects of Lean Branding-based Digital Marketing Pedagogies on Student Brand Literacy in Media Education

Radhika Baidya [a , *], Dharmendra Kumar [a], Ruhi Lal [b]

[a] Amity University, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India
[b] Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies, Faridabad, Haryana, India

Abstract

The study investigates factors influencing student brand literacy within media education, integrating lean branding concepts into digital marketing teaching. While earlier research has examined branding strategies and experiential learning within higher education, there remains a notable lack of thorough investigation into the intersection of lean branding pedagogy, and learning outcomes. The research utilized a qualitative, interpretivist approach, incorporating semi-structured interviews with instructors, focus group talks with students, and a comprehensive investigation of curricular documents, assignments, and project outputs. The data analysis was performed using NVivo, utilizing open, axial, and selective coding to discern principal themes. Research indicates that students' comprehension of value proposition and customer-centric communication – fundamental principles of lean branding – improved their understanding of branding concepts. Experiential projects, the incorporation of digital technologies, and collaborative exercises enabled practical application and profound learning. Furthermore, students demonstrated enhanced critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and ethical awareness, suggesting that lean branding pedagogy cultivates both professional competence and reflective accountability. Unforeseen ethical dilemmas arose, highlighting the significance of transparency and accountability in branding education. The research expands the utilization of lean branding theory in the educational sector and provides data-driven suggestions for curriculum improvement, highlighting the necessity of integrating lean branding to cultivate essential and relevant brand literacy in response to evolving digital landscapes.

Keywords: lean branding, digital marketing pedagogy, student brand literacy, experiential learning, media education, digital literacy.

1. Introduction

As the field of media education continues to undergo rapid transformations, it is becoming increasingly important for students to possess the ability to comprehend, evaluate, and implement effective branding strategies. Lean branding is a strategic method that is centered on clarity, efficiency, and communication that is focused on the customer. It is becoming increasingly important for businesses in today's world as a result of the proliferation of digital media and the widespread impact of social platforms. At the same time, digital marketing methodologies are causing a revolution in higher education by providing students with the opportunity to actively participate in contemporary branding strategies through learning that is experiential, collaborative, and digitally immersive. Although it is abundantly clear that incorporating knowledge of branding

---

* Corresponding author
E-mail addresses: Radhikabaidya05@gmail.com (R. Baidya)

into media curricula is of great significance, there is a dearth of empirical research that investigates how the principles of lean branding can be incorporated into digital marketing education in order to enhance student brand literacy. The majority of the research that is currently being conducted focuses on learning about professional branding strategies or comprehensive marketing education. As a consequence, there is a lack of understanding regarding media education and student outcomes. Increasing students' capacity for critical thinking is the focus of this research project, which investigates the systematic implementation of lean branding into digital marketing pedagogy.

A number of different aspects of branding and marketing education have been highlighted in previous studies. The findings of research carried out by Keller (Keller, 2013) highlight the significance of audience involvement and brand clarity as essential components of successful branding. The incorporation of digital platforms and experiential learning has been identified as an effective instructional method in the field of education, according to research conducted by Kolb (Kolb, 2015) and Prensky (Prensky, 2022). However, there has been a limited amount of research conducted on the convergence of lean branding concepts and digital marketing education in higher education, particularly with regard to the enhancement of student competencies in brand literacy.

As a consequence of this, although the significance of education in branding and digital marketing is widely acknowledged, the impact of purposefully incorporating lean branding principles into these educational practices on the students' ability to critically comprehend and effectively implement branding strategies is still not fully understood.

This study addresses a critical knowledge gap by empirically linking lean branding principles with digital marketing pedagogy to foster student brand literacy. The findings will provide actionable insights for media educators, curriculum developers, and policy-makers to structure pedagogy that aligns with contemporary digital branding demands. In the present study, lean branding is conceptualized as a strategic branding approach emphasizing clarity, efficiency, and a customer-centric focus, providing a framework for students to understand contemporary branding practices. Digital marketing pedagogies are defined as the teaching strategies that operationalize these concepts, incorporating experiential learning, digital tools, and collaborative methods to engage students actively with branding processes and embed digital literacy. The principal result of interest, student brand literacy, is defined as students' capacity to critically assess branding tactics and effectively implement branding principles in digital environments.

The study is delimited to students enrolled in media education programs at selected universities, focusing specifically on digital marketing pedagogies that integrate lean branding principles, while traditional marketing pedagogy is not examined. To maintain clarity and manageability, only two dimensions of each variable are considered. The study assumes that students possess basic marketing knowledge, have access to the necessary digital platforms and resources, and that educators implementing the interventions adhere to the prescribed lean branding-based strategies.

The conceptual foundation of this research is informed by several key observations and corresponding expectations. Lean branding has been shown to enhance clarity and audience-centric communication in organizational contexts, leading to the hypothesis that integrating lean branding principles into pedagogical strategies will improve students' critical understanding and practical application of branding concepts. Similarly, experiential learning and digital tool usage have been found to increase engagement in digital marketing education, suggesting that pedagogical strategies incorporating these methods will positively influence student brand literacy outcomes. Furthermore, a review of current literature indicates a paucity of empirical studies examining the intersection of lean branding, digital marketing pedagogy, and student digital literacy. Consequently, this study anticipates that systematic empirical investigation will demonstrate measurable improvements in student brand literacy through the deliberate integration of lean branding principles into digital marketing teaching practices.

Conceptual framework narrative

The integration of lean branding principles (clarity of value proposition, customer-centric approach) into digital marketing pedagogies (experiential learning and use of digital platforms) is posited to significantly enhance student brand literacy, specifically in terms of their critical understanding and practical application of branding concepts within media education.

This framework illustrates the integration of lean branding principles (clarity of value proposition, customer-centric approach) into digital marketing pedagogies (experiential learning, use of digital platforms) and their collective effect on student digital brand literacy (critical

understanding, practical application) within the context of media education. The model posits that lean branding informs and strengthens digital marketing pedagogical strategies, which in turn shape student brand literacy outcomes.
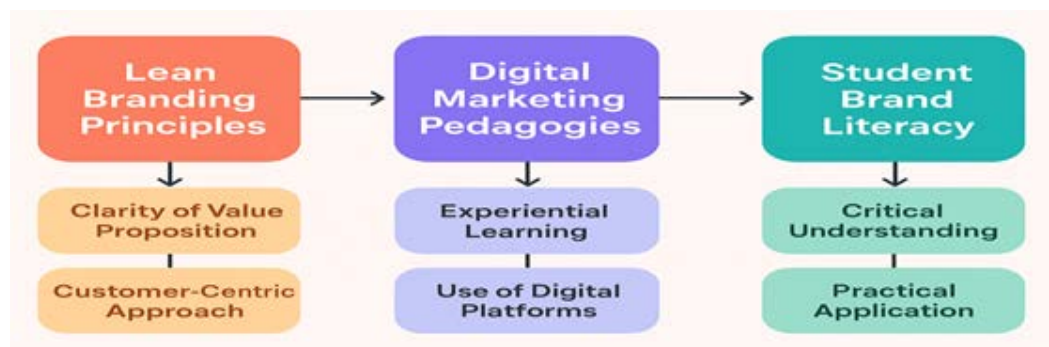
Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study
Source: Author's own compilation

2. Materials and methods

This study utilizes a qualitative research approach, grounded in an interpretivist and constructivist framework, to investigate the impact of lean branding-oriented digital marketing pedagogies on student brand literacy in media education. The interpretivist perspective enables the researcher to comprehend the subjective experiences, perceptions, and learning processes of students and educators, acknowledging that knowledge is collaboratively generated through interactions in educational settings. This philosophical perspective seeks to reveal how teaching practices informed by lean branding principles affect students' critical comprehension and practical involvement with branding concepts. The research facilitates a comprehensive examination of several examples of digital marketing pedagogy inside media education programs.

Research frame and approach

The research framework of the study includes media education programs at certain universities, concentrating on courses that utilize digital marketing pedagogy. The research methodology is both exploratory and explanatory, seeking to comprehend the processes, techniques, and results of pedagogical interventions guided by lean branding concepts. The researcher developed hypotheses based on current literature: the incorporation of lean branding into pedagogical tactics is anticipated to improve students' critical and practical literacy in branding. These hypotheses direct the theme investigation without enforcing strict numerical analysis, facilitating the emergence of insights.

Sampling strategy and participant selection

A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants with direct experience of digital marketing pedagogies and lean branding-based instruction. Criteria for inclusion included:

– Active enrollment in media education programs where digital marketing pedagogy is implemented.

– Participation in branding-related projects or experiential learning exercises.

– Availability and willingness to provide in-depth perspectives.

The sample consisted of 15 faculty members (course instructors and curriculum designers) and 6 student focus groups, each with 6–8 participants, so assuring variety in academic background, experience, and gender. The sample frame was derived from recognized media education institutes in the Delhi NCR, including Amity University, Sharda University, Manav Rachna University, and Delhi University, noted for their integration of digital marketing pedagogy, hence providing substantial, contextually pertinent insights.

Data collection methods

Several qualitative data collection methods were used in the study:

1. In-depth, semi-structured interviews with faculty members to investigate their perspectives on student learning outcomes, pedagogical design, and techniques.

2. Pay close attention to group conversations with students to document shared experiences, difficulties, and thoughts regarding the growth of brand literacy.

3. Triangulating interview and focus group results through document analysis of project outputs, assignments, and curriculum materials.

To maintain authenticity, focus groups and interviews were audio recorded and verbatim transcribed. To promote thorough answers and ensure uniformity across participants, open-ended questions and prompts were employed. To record observations, background information, and initial interpretations, the researcher kept a reflective diary.

3. Discussion

The ability to critically evaluate, decipher, and produce brand-related messages in a media-rich society is known as brand literacy. According to Keller (Keller, 2013), brands are cultural and psychological signifiers that shape consumer identities and perceptions. According to academics, media education in the digital age needs to go beyond technical proficiency to incorporate the ability to decipher and create brand narratives (Buckingham, 2007; Gálik, 2020; Livingstone, 2004). Pihl (Pihl, 2021) emphasizes that in media education, cultivating brand literacy gives students the ability to negotiate consumer culture, marketing communication, and moral brand practices.

Pedagogical approaches to marketing have changed dramatically as markets become more digitally connected. According to Tutenand and Solomon (Tuten, Solomon, 2017), social media, analytics, and interactive content strategies are now prioritized in digital marketing education. Project-based and experiential learning strategies improve student engagement and professional readiness, according to Bolton et al. (Bolton et al., 2019). In order to bridge theory and practice, more recent research emphasizes the importance of incorporating real-world branding projects into curricula (Valdez et al., 2024).

Derived from the Lean Startup methodology (Ries, 2011), lean branding emphasizes rapid iteration, experimentation, and customer feedback in the development of brand identity. Lean branding, according to Mootee (Mootee, 2013), puts flexibility and agility ahead of strict brand guidelines. This perspective is expanded by Ramaswamy and Ozcan (Ramaswamy, Ozcan, 2016), who show how iterative processes and co-creation increase brand value. According to Watson (Watson, 2016), lean branding fosters creativity and critical thinking in students by enabling them to participate in brand-building as a dynamic process.

Students are encouraged to solve problems in real time and iterate creatively when lean branding principles are applied in digital marketing pedagogy (Ghezzi, Cavallo, 2020). According to Delgado, Garrido, Ortega, Gómez, and Amin (Delgado et al., 2023), analytics-driven campaigns and project-based branding greatly improve students' capacity to modify brand strategies for online environments. Additionally, Valdez et al. (Valdez et al., 2024) contend that iterative learning and impression management promote brand literacy by enabling students to assess brand-building procedures critically while engaging in strategic communication.

Experiential learning models have been shown to be effective in fostering the development of critical and applied skills. The importance of reflective practice and active experimentation in education is highlighted by Kolb's (Kolb, 2015) experiential learning theory. According to Anderson (Anderson, 2020), students' abilities in digital communication and strategic storytelling are enhanced when they work on real-world branding projects. The constructivist viewpoint of Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1978) reaffirms that deeper knowledge acquisition is made possible by collaborative, iterative learning, like that found in lean branding exercises. According to Pihl (Pihl, 2021) and Delgado et al. (Delgado et al., 2023), incorporating these strategies improves student brand literacy and equips graduates for dynamic marketing settings.

4. Results

Research phases and procedures

Three methodical stages of data collecting and analysis were followed:

1. The preparation and pilot phase includes creating interview guidelines, testing focus group questions, securing ethical permissions, and choosing the sample.

2. Data Collection Phase: From January 2025 to June 2025, interviews, focus groups, and document reviews will be conducted to ensure temporal and contextual relevance.

3. Data Analysis Phase: Using NVivo software, qualitative data is transcribed, coded, and subjected to theme analysis.

Qualitative data analysis techniques

Thematic analysis was employed to examine the qualitative data, executed in three sequential stages to guarantee a rigorous and thorough interpretation. The first stage, known as open coding, consisted of the initial identification of concepts and categories that emerged directly from the transcripts of the interviews and focus groups. This allowed patterns to emerge organically from the participants' points of view. During the second stage, which was called axial coding, these categories were linked in a systematic manner in order to discover relationships, patterns, and connections between the principles of lean branding, digital marketing pedagogy, and the outcomes of student brand literacy.

Finally, in the third stage, which was called selective coding, the researcher incorporated the themes that were identified into narratives that were coherent and overarching. These narratives were in line with the research objectives of the study, which resulted in a comprehensive and contextually grounded understanding of how pedagogical strategies influence student brand literacy.

The systematic organization of codes, the visualization of relationships, and the iterative refinement of emerging themes were all made easier with the help of NVivo. By maintaining reflexivity through peer debriefing and constant comparison of data, we were able to maintain credibility and reduce the amount of bias that was present in the research.

The rigor of the methodology used in this study was ensured by systematically addressing the most important criteria for the trustworthiness of qualitative investigations. Verification of emerging insights was made possible through the triangulation of multiple data sources, which included interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. Credibility was established through prolonged engagement with participants, member checking, and the triangulation of multiple data sources. With the creation of a comprehensive audit trail that documented research decisions, coding procedures, and analytical memos, dependability was maintained throughout the entirety of the study. This ensured that there was consistency and transparency throughout the entire process. Confirmability was accomplished by providing transparent documentation of data sources, coding rationale, and theme development. This made it possible for independent verification of the findings. Finally, the transferability of the findings was improved by providing rich and detailed contextual descriptions of the research setting and participants. This presented the opportunity for readers to evaluate the extent to which the findings are applicable to other media education contexts.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from institutional review boards. Participants provided informed consent, were assured of confidentiality, and could withdraw at any stage. Data were anonymized, stored securely, and used solely for academic purposes.

Reflexivity and contextualization

The researcher maintained reflexivity by reflecting on potential biases, preconceptions, and interactions with participants. The study context – media education programs integrating digital marketing pedagogy – was critically considered to ensure interpretations remained grounded in participants' realities

This methodological framework provides a rigorous, systematic, and contextually grounded approach to investigating how lean branding-informed digital marketing pedagogies shape student brand literacy. The study employs rigorous qualitative investigation, diverse data sources, and theme analysis to thoroughly investigate the research problem, ensuring credibility, trustworthiness, and ethical integrity.

Qualitative data analysis: thematic analysis and coding process

Thematic analysis was employed as the primary method for analyzing the qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document reviews. This approach is particularly suited for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data, providing a rich and detailed account of participants' experiences and perceptions. Thematic analysis is flexible and can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches, making it an appropriate choice for this study.

Coding process: open, axial, and selective coding

The coding process was conducted in three distinct stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. These stages enabled a methodical approach to data analysis, facilitating the identification of preliminary codes, the establishment of linkages among codes, and the synthesis of these codes into comprehensive themes.

In the open coding phase, the researcher engaged in a line-by-line examination of the interview and focus group transcripts, identifying discrete units of meaning. Each unit was

assigned a code that encapsulated its essence. For instance, a participant's statement such as "The lean branding approach made the brand message clearer" was assigned the code "Clarity in Branding." This phase aimed to break down the data into manageable segments, facilitating the identification of patterns and themes.

Following open coding, axial coding was employed to examine the relationships between the initial codes. This phase involved grouping related codes into categories and subcategories, exploring how these categories connected to each other. For example, the codes "Clarity in Branding" and "Customer-Centric Communication" were linked under the category "Effective Brand Communication." Axial coding helped in understanding the underlying structures and dynamics within the data.

The final phase, selective coding, involved integrating the categories developed during axial coding into a coherent narrative that addressed the research questions. This phase focused on identifying the core themes that encapsulated the central phenomena of the study. For instance, the core theme "Impact of Lean Branding on Student Brand Literacy" emerged from the categories related to clarity, customer-centric communication, and experiential learning. Selective coding facilitated the development of a theoretical framework that linked the identified themes to the research objectives.

Key themes and patterns

Through the coding process, several key themes and patterns emerged that addressed the research questions and objectives. These themes provided insights into how lean branding principles, when integrated into digital marketing pedagogy, influenced student brand literacy.

Theme 1: Enhanced Clarity in Branding

Participants reported that the application of lean branding principles led to clearer brand messages. One educator noted, "Simplifying the brand message helped students grasp the core values more effectively." This theme underscores the importance of clarity in branding for effective communication and understanding.

Theme 2: Customer-Centric Communication

The focus on customer needs and preferences was highlighted as a critical aspect of lean branding. A student remarked, "Understanding the audience's perspective made our branding projects more relevant." This theme emphasizes the significance of aligning brand messages with customer expectations.

Theme 3: Experiential Learning and Practical Application

The integration of experiential learning methodologies, including real-world projects and case studies, was observed to improve students' practical application of branding ideas. An educator remarked, "Practical projects enabled students to implement theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts." This theme emphasizes the significance of experiential learning in connecting theory with practice.

Theme 4: Development of Critical Brand Literacy

The integration of lean branding principles into pedagogy contributed to the development of critical brand literacy among students. A student reflected, "The course made me think critically about brand strategies and their impact." This theme illustrates the role of education in fostering critical thinking and analytical skills related to branding.

Thematic discussion

Across the data sources, a coherent picture emerges: faculty intentions (interviews, curricula) to prioritize lean branding – especially message clarity and audience orientation – are enacted through experiential pedagogies (live briefs, peer review) and digital practices (analytics), producing observable behaviors (iterative copy pruning, analytics-driven edits) and demonstrable project outcomes (higher rubric scores for concise, persona-aligned campaigns). Interviews supply the pedagogical rationale and design principles; focus groups reveal students' internalization and reflective sense-making; netnographic traces and classroom observations document enacted behaviors and audience engagement in situ; case studies provide the narrative depth that links instructional design to concrete student artifacts. These strands cohere with Kolb's experiential learning cycle (concrete experience → reflective observation → abstract conceptualization → active experimentation) and with lean theory's emphasis on reduction of waste (simplification) and customer value; students' iterative project work exemplifies both theoretical frames.

Notably, ethical awareness surfaced more strongly in student discourse than in formal documents, indicating that while pedagogy catalyzes reflective sensibilities, curricula under-specify

ethics. Similarly, a contradiction between pedagogical aspirations and digital access constraints highlights a pragmatic boundary condition: pedagogical efficacy is contingent on equitable resource availability. Triangulation thus uncovers both robust convergences (clarity, experiential practice, data use) and productive tensions (ethics emphasis; access gaps) that single-source analyses would have missed.

Methodological robustness

By synthesizing interviews, focus group & documents analysis the study achieves cross-source validation: convergence strengthens claim validity; complementarity enriches explanatory depth; contradictions surface boundary conditions and new questions. This multi-angle integration increases credibility (member-verified perceptions vs. observed practice), dependability, and transferability (detailed contextualization). Triangulation thus not only corroborates core findings but also reveals nuanced dimensions essential for theory development and pedagogical implication.

Interpretation and contribution to research questions

The identified themes provide comprehensive answers to the research questions. The findings indicate that the integration of lean branding principles into digital marketing pedagogy enhances students' understanding of branding concepts, improves their ability to apply these concepts in practical settings, and fosters critical thinking skills. These insights contribute to the broader understanding of how pedagogical strategies can influence student learning outcomes in the context of branding education.

Thematic analysis, through its structured approach of open, axial, and selective coding, facilitated a deep understanding of the data, leading to the identification of key themes that address the research objectives. The findings underscore the importance of integrating lean branding principles into digital marketing pedagogy to enhance student brand literacy. This study contributes valuable insights to the field of media education and offers implications for curriculum development and instructional strategies.

Table 1. Sample excerpts, codes, and themes

Excerpt/Statement	Open Code	Axial Code	Selective Coding/ Theme
"The lean branding approach made the brand message clearer to students."	Clarity in Branding	Effective Brand Communication	Impact of Lean Branding on Student Brand Literacy
"We emphasized thinking from the consumer's perspective, which made branding projects more relevant."	Customer-Centric Focus	Understanding Audience Needs	Impact of Lean Branding on Student Brand Literacy
"Simplifying the brand elements helped students focus on key messages."	Simplification of Brand Elements	Streamlined Branding Strategy	Impact of Lean Branding on Student Brand Literacy
"Hands-on projects allowed students to apply theory in practical scenarios."	Experiential Projects	Hands-On Learning	Experiential Learning and Practical Application
"We used analytics tools and social media platforms to teach real campaigns."	Digital Tools	Technology-Enhanced Learning	Experiential Learning and Practical Application
"Group projects encouraged teamwork and critical discussions about brand strategies."	Collaborative Exercises	Peer Learning and Interaction	Experiential Learning and Practical Application
"Students started thinking critically about how brands	Critical Evaluation of	Analytical Skills	Development of Critical Brand

Excerpt/Statement	Open Code	Axial Code	Selective Coding/ Theme
communicate."	Brands		Literacy
"They learned to apply theoretical concepts in creating campaigns."	Application of Branding Principles	Practical Competence	Development of Critical Brand Literacy
"Students began reflecting on how audiences perceive the brand message."	Reflection on Audience Impact	Strategic Thinking	Development of Critical Brand Literacy
"Teachers guided students to prioritize key branding elements in campaigns."	Guided Prioritization	Structured Learning Support	Experiential Learning and Practical Application
"Students discussed ethical considerations when creating brand content."	Ethical Awareness	Responsible Branding	Development of Critical Brand Literacy
"The iterative feedback from instructors helped improve their campaigns."	Feedback and Iteration	Continuous Improvement	Experiential Learning and Practical Application
"Students felt more confident presenting brand strategies to peers."	Presentation Confidence	Communication Skills	Development of Critical Brand Literacy
"Real-world case studies helped students understand brand positioning."	Case Study Analysis	Contextual Learning	Experiential Learning and Practical Application
"Using social media analytics made students more aware of audience response."	Audience Analytics	Data-Informed Decision Making	Experiential Learning and Practical Application
"Students questioned existing brand strategies critically."	Critical Thinking	Analytical Reflection	Development of Critical Brand Literacy
"They learned to align brand messages with audience expectations."	Audience Alignment	Strategic Messaging	Impact of Lean Branding on Student Brand Literacy
"Students identified gaps in brand communication strategies."	Gap Analysis	Strategic Evaluation	Development of Critical Brand Literacy
"Collaborating on projects helped them understand different perspectives."	Peer Collaboration	Perspective-Taking	Experiential Learning and Practical Application
"Students integrated feedback into redesigning branding strategies."	Iterative Improvement	Adaptive Learning	Experiential Learning and Practical Application

Source: Author's own compilation

The examination of the coding table uncovers numerous critical discoveries consistent with the research aims. The lean branding themes suggest that clarity, a customer-centric approach, simplification, and strategic alignment markedly improve students' comprehension of branding concepts, allowing them to effectively understand fundamental principles. Pedagogical themes such as experiential learning, digital tool utilization, peer collaboration, case studies, and

structured feedback mechanisms were identified as conducive to practical application, skill enhancement, and engagement with authentic branding scenarios. The themes of student brand literacy include the cultivation of critical thinking, analytical abilities, ethical consciousness, strategic assessment, and reflective learning, indicating that students are assimilating branding ideas and implementing them effectively. The table highlights that incorporating lean branding principles into organized digital marketing education significantly enhances both critical and practical brand literacy, offering a cohesive and evidence-based answer to the research objectives.

Table 2. Focus group discussion coding

Excerpt/Statement	Open Code	Axial Code	Selective Coding/ Theme
"Working in groups helped me understand how branding decisions affect different audiences."	Peer Collaboration	Perspective-Taking	Experiential Learning and Practical Application
"We debated the best way to communicate brand messages clearly."	Discussion & Debate	Critical Engagement	Development of Critical Brand Literacy
"Using social media tools in class helped me see real-time feedback."	Digital Tool Engagement	Technology-Enhanced Learning	Experiential Learning and Practical Application
"The guidance from instructors made our projects more structured."	Instructor Support	Guided Learning	Experiential Learning and Practical Application
"We reflected on past brand campaigns and discussed what worked and what didn't."	Reflective Discussion	Analytical Reflection	Development of Critical Brand Literacy

Source: Author's own compilation

This table captures student perspectives, highlighting collective experiences, reflections, and interactions during group discussions. It complements faculty interviews by showing how students perceive pedagogy in practice.

A "Matrix Table" that aligns documents, relevant content, objectives, and research questions. This format explicitly demonstrates how each document contributes to answering the research questions and achieving the study's objectives.

Table 3. Document analysis matrix – alignment with objectives and research questions

Document/ Source	Relevant Content/ Excerpt	Linked Research Objective	Linked Research Question	Interpretation/ Insight
Branding Project Rubric	"Students must present a clear, audience-focused brand message."	Objective 1: Understand impact of lean branding principles on student literacy	RQ1: How does lean branding affect student understanding of branding concepts?	Shows that clarity and audience-centric communication are embedded in assessment, supporting comprehension of brand literacy.
Assignment Guidelines	"Use analytics tools to evaluate campaign performance."	Objective 2: Examine digital marketing pedagogies for	RQ2: How do digital marketing pedagogies enhance practical	Confirms integration of technology-enhanced

Document/ Source	Relevant Content/ Excerpt	Linked Research Objective	Linked Research Question	Interpretation/ Insight
		practical learning	application of branding principles?	experiential learning, aligning pedagogy with objectives.
Sample Student Report	"We simplified brand messaging to highlight key values."	Objective 1: Understand impact of lean branding principles	RQ1: How does lean branding affect student understanding of branding concepts?	Provides evidence of student application of lean branding principles in practice, reinforcing theoretical learning.
Case Study Assignment	"Analyze consumer response to marketing strategies."	Objective 3: Identify development of critical thinking and literacy	RQ3: How does pedagogy foster critical brand literacy among students?	Encourages analytical reasoning and reflection on audience impact, indicating development of critical literacy.
Assessment Feedback	"Students need to justify branding decisions with evidence."	Objective 3: Identify development of critical thinking and literacy	RQ3: How does pedagogy foster critical brand literacy among students?	Highlights emphasis on evidence-based reasoning, linking student outputs to critical literacy outcomes.
Project Evaluation Criteria	"Projects must demonstrate teamwork and collaborative problem-solving."	Objective 2: Examine digital marketing pedagogies for practical learning	RQ2: How do digital marketing pedagogies enhance practical application of branding principles?	Shows collaboration is embedded in pedagogy, fostering experiential learning and peer learning.
Course Learning Outcomes	"Students should critically assess branding strategies in different contexts."	Objective 3: Identify development of critical thinking and literacy	RQ3: How does pedagogy foster critical brand literacy among students?	Indicates curriculum intentionally develops analytical and strategic thinking, supporting objectives.
Teaching Materials	"Use real-world campaigns as case studies for discussion."	Objective 2: Examine digital marketing pedagogies for practical learning	RQ2: How do digital marketing pedagogies enhance practical application of branding principles?	Demonstrates the alignment of teaching materials with experiential learning, reinforcing applied knowledge.

Source: Author's compilation based on data

This table demonstrates how the curriculum documents, assignments, rubrics, and teaching materials directly support the research objectives and answer the research questions. The matrix explicitly links document content to objectives and RQs, showing that lean branding principles and experiential digital marketing pedagogy are systematically embedded in the program. It also shows that student outputs and feedback mechanisms reinforce practical application, critical thinking, and brand literacy, confirming alignment between pedagogy, learning objectives, and the study's conceptual framework.

Fig. 2. Document Analysis MatrixSource
Source: Author's own compilation

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the integration of lean branding principles into digital marketing pedagogies significantly enhances student brand literacy within media education. Across interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis, it became evident that clarity and customer-centric communication, which are at the heart of lean branding, improved students' comprehension of branding concepts and enabled them to engage more critically with the material. Document rubrics and student outputs consistently reflected an emphasis on simplicity and audience focus, affirming that these principles were both taught and practiced in the classroom. Pedagogical strategies, particularly those emphasizing experiential projects, digital tools, and peer collaboration, emerged as powerful drivers of practical application. Students described how group projects, case study analyses, and the use of social media analytics enabled them to bridge theory with practice, while faculty emphasized that such approaches fostered engagement and meaningful learning.

The study also revealed that student brand literacy extended beyond technical skills to include critical evaluation, ethical reflection, and confidence in applying branding principles. Many students highlighted how they had begun questioning the ethical implications of digital branding, even though this was not explicitly emphasized in the curriculum. This unexpected finding suggests that lean branding pedagogy implicitly encourages ethical awareness by foregrounding clarity, transparency, and audience alignment. Another unanticipated outcome was the challenge some students faced with unequal access to digital resources, which occasionally limited their ability to fully benefit from technology-driven pedagogy.

When situated within existing literature, these findings reinforce prior research on experiential learning and branding clarity while extending theoretical understanding by demonstrating the pedagogical value of lean branding principles in higher education contexts.

The results contribute to bridging the research gap by showing how branding frameworks, traditionally examined in professional practice, can be effectively integrated into curriculum design to

shape student learning outcomes. Theoretically, the study enriches the discourse on media education by highlighting the role of lean branding in fostering critical and practical brand literacy. Practically, it underscores the need for educators to adopt teaching strategies that not only transmit knowledge but also engage students in reflective, ethical, and applied learning experiences.

The study concludes that integrating lean branding principles into digital marketing education improves students' understanding, critical assessment, and practical implementation of branding initiatives. The research provides evidence-based recommendations for curricular change in media education by emphasizing the significance of clarity, customer focus, and experiential engagement. The findings are noteworthy as they fill the gap noted in previous studies and offer practical insights for educators aiming to match classroom methods with modern branding requirements. The study underscores the unforeseen development of ethical consciousness among students, indicating that lean branding pedagogy can foster both professional competence and responsible, reflective brand citizenship.

Moreover, the study highlights the unexpected emergence of ethical awareness among students, suggesting that lean branding pedagogy has the potential to nurture not only professional competence but also responsible and reflective brand citizenship.

Building on these findings, the study recommends that media education programs formally embed lean branding principles in course design, emphasizing experiential assignments, the use of digital tools, and structured feedback mechanisms. Ethical considerations should be explicitly integrated into branding curricula, given their spontaneous emergence in this research.

Institutions should also work toward addressing barriers to digital access to ensure equitable student participation and increased digital literacy. While this study was limited to selected universities and qualitative data, its insights are transferable to other media education contexts. Future research could expand this work by conducting comparative studies across regions, exploring long-term impacts on professional readiness, and applying mixed-methods designs to validate the scale of observed effects. By doing so, subsequent scholarship can build upon the groundwork laid here, advancing both theory and practice in the intersection of lean branding, pedagogy, and student learning outcomes.

The findings of this study lead to several important recommendations for educators, curriculum designers, and institutions engaged in media education. The integration of lean branding principles into digital marketing pedagogy should be approached not as an optional supplement but as a systematic framework for enhancing student brand literacy. Courses should embed clarity of value proposition and customer-centric communication into both teaching materials and assessment rubrics, ensuring that students learn to prioritize simplicity and audience alignment in their branding strategies. In addition, experiential learning should remain central to course design. Assignments such as live projects, campaign simulations, and case study evaluations allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in practical contexts, thereby strengthening their professional competence. Structured peer collaboration, iterative feedback mechanisms, and the use of digital tools should be formalized across curricula to create opportunities for deeper engagement. The unanticipated emergence of ethical awareness suggests that branding education must explicitly incorporate discussions of transparency, responsibility, and accountability in digital media contexts. Finally, institutions must address barriers of unequal digital access, ensuring equitable participation for all students.

At the same time, this study acknowledges certain limitations. The focus on selected universities may restrict the breadth of perspectives captured, and the qualitative approach, while rich in depth, limits the generalizability of findings. The outcomes are thus contextually grounded rather than universally applicable. Furthermore, variability in teaching delivery and digital infrastructure across institutions may have influenced the consistency of student experiences. While these limitations do not undermine the validity of the findings, they highlight the need for caution in extending the conclusions beyond the specific contexts examined here.

Future research can build upon this study in several ways. Comparative studies across multiple regions and institutions would provide insights into how contextual factors shape the integration of lean branding pedagogy. Longitudinal research could track the long-term effects of such pedagogical interventions on students' career readiness, professional competence, and ethical orientation in branding practice. Methodologically, mixed-method approaches that combine the depth of qualitative analysis with the breadth of quantitative measures would allow researchers to capture both the richness and scale of the impact. Expanding inquiry into other areas of media

education, such as journalism or film production, may also reveal whether lean branding principles can inform pedagogy beyond marketing courses. By exploring these avenues, future scholarship can broaden the scope of inquiry, address existing limitations, and contribute to the development of adaptable, innovative, and ethically grounded frameworks for increased digital literacy, contributing to media education.

References

Anderson, 2020 – *Anderson, P.* (2020). Experiential learning in marketing education: Bridging theory and practice. *Journal of Marketing Education.* 42(2): 145-158. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0273475320913511

Bessette, Burton, 2014 – *Bessette, D., Burton, S.* (2014). Methods in digital marketing through social media technology to advertise higher education blended learning programs. *INTED2014 Proceedings.* Pp. 4479-4486.

Bolton et al., 2019 – *Bolton, R.N., Kabadayi, S., Gruber, T.* (2019). Experiential learning in digital marketing education: Student engagement and skill development. *Journal of Marketing Education.* 41(1): 21-36. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0273475318782873

Buckingham, 2007 – *Buckingham, D.* (2007). Media education: Literacy, learning and contemporary culture. Polity Press.

Bushell, 2025 – *Bushell, C.* (2025). From clicks to clarity: teaching digital marketing metrics through google analytics in higher education. *SSRN 5288972.*

Chryssanthopoulou, 2025– *Chryssanthopoulou, K.* (2025). Media literacy: A bridge between communication and education. *Envisioning the Future of Communication.* 2(1): 458-470.

Datta et al., 2025 – *Datta, S., Mitra, D., Chawla, U., Mulchandani, D., Chattopadhyay, S.* (2025). Leading the digital shift: the impact of online pedagogy on management students' engagement and performance. *Pandemic Diaries: A Casebook of Corporate and Society Practices.* Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore. Pp. 185-209.

Delgado et al., 2023 – *Delgado, M.Z., Garrido, J., Ortega, J.J., Gómez, M.V., Amin11, N.* (2023). Project-based learning for digital brand strategy in higher education. *International Journal of Marketing Education.* 37(3): 201-219.

Duffy, Ney, 2015 – *Duffy, K., Ney, J.* (2015). Exploring the divides among students, educators, and practitioners in the use of digital media as a pedagogical tool. *Journal of Marketing Education.* 37(2): 104-113.

Fazel, Sayaf, 2025 – *Fazel, H., Sayaf, A.* (2025). Social media integration in marketing education: A way forward to improve engagement and learning outcomes. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports.* 17*:* 100595.

Felaco, 2025 – *Felaco, L.* (2025). Media education and school discomfort: strategies for educational well-being in the digital age. *ISAR Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Studies.* 3(6): 1-3.

Gálik, 2020 – *Gálik, S.* (2020). Thinking in the network. *Central European Journal of Communication.* 27(3): 446-459. DOI: 10.51480/1899-5101.13.3(27).9

Georgopoulouet al., 2025 – *Georgopoulou, M.S., Troussas, C., Triperina, E., Sgouropoulou, C.* (2025). Approaches to digital humanities pedagogy: a systematic literature review within educational practice. *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities.* 40(1): 121-137.

Ghezzi, Cavallo, 2020 – *Ghezzi, A., Cavallo, A.* (2020). Agile and lean education: Applying lean startup principles to student entrepreneurship. *Industry and Higher Education.* 34(2): 113-129. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0950422219894206

Grant, 2025 – *Grant, A.* (2025). Enhancing creative confidence in marketing pedagogy with design thinking. *Marketing Education Review.* 35(1): 16-30.

Grewal et al., 2025 – *Grewal, D., Guha, A., Beccacece Satornino, C., Becker, M.* (2025). The future of marketing and marketing education. *Journal of Marketing Education.* 47(1): 61-77.

Gruen et al., 2025 – *Gruen, T.W., Niman, N.B., Chagnon, J.R.* (2025). Developing what can't be taught: creating an effective portfolio of student outcomes through astudent-run digital marketing agency. *Marketing Education Review.* 35(1).

Halsch et al., 2025 – *Halsch, A., Tiede, J., Grafe, S.* (2025). Learning to teach about media focusing on diversity. Development and evaluation of a pedagogical concept for initial teacher education. *Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education International Conference.* Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE). Pp. 226-235.

Jha, Singh, 2025 – *Jha, A., Singh, S.R.* (2025). Integrating artificial intelligence in media education: revolutionizing learning, creativity, and critical thinking. *Teachers' Roles and Perspectives on AI Integration in Schools.* IGI Global Scientific Publishing. Pp. 297-328.

Karanfiloğlu, Akın Bulut, 2025 – *Karanfiloğlu, M., Akın Bulut, M.* (2025). Techno-pedagogical communication, ed-tech and media professionals: crossroads for enhancing instructional quality. *Interactive Learning Environments.* Pp. 1-25.

Keller, 2013 – *Keller, K.L.* (2013). Strategic brand management: Building, measuring, and managing brand equity (4th ed.). Pearson.

Kolb, 2015 – *Kolb, D.A.* (2015). Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development (2nd ed.). Pearson.

Livingstone, 2004 – *Livingstone, S.* (2004). Media literacy and the challenge of new information and communication technologies. *The Communication Review.* 7(1): 3-14. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/10714420490280152

Mootee, 2013 – *Mootee, I.* (2013). Design thinking for strategic innovation: What they can't teach you at business or design school. Wiley.

Pihl, 2021 – *Pihl, C.* (2021). Brand literacy in higher education: Students' ability to navigate and critique brand narratives. *Journal of Consumer Culture.* 21(4): 745-764.

Ramaswamy, Ozcan, 2016 – *Ramaswamy, V., Ozcan, K.* (2016). Brand value co-creation in a digitalized world. Springer.

Richter et al., 2025 – *Richter, S., Giroux, M., Piven, I., Sima, H., Dodd, P.* (2025). A constructivist approach to integrating AI in marketing education: Bridging theory and practice. *Journal of Marketing Education.* 47(2): 94-111.

Ries, 2011 – *Ries, E.* (2011). The lean startup: How today's entrepreneurs use continuous innovation to create radically successful businesses. Crown Business.

Robandi et al., 2025 – *Robandi, B.A.B.A.N.G., Setiawardani, W.A.W.A.N., Nuryani, P., Setiasih, O., Apriyanto, A., Fatkhiyani, K.* (2025). Enhancing digital literacy and teacher-preneurship through a critical pedagogy-based training platform. *Journal of Engineering Science and Technology.* 20(2): 558-576.

Seraji et al., 2025 – *Seraji, F., Shahabi, S., Dehghanzadeh, H., Bakhtiari, R.* (2025). Effective pedagogical strategies for enhancing mothers' media literacy: a comparative study of self-paced learning and community of inquiry methods. *Education and Information Technologies.* 1-24.

Spiller, Tuten, 2019 – *Spiller, L., Tuten, T. (*2019). Assessing the pedagogical value of branded digital marketing certification programs. *Journal of Marketing Education.* 41(2): 77-90.

Trissetianto, Ali, 2025 – *Trissetianto, A.C., Ali, H.* (2025). The effectiveness of virtual learning environments in developing digital marketing skills. *Siber International Journal of Education Technology (SIJET).* 2(3): 72-80.

Tuten, Solomon, 2017 – *Tuten, T.L., Solomon, M.R.* (2017). Social media marketing (3rd ed.). Sage.

Valdez et al., 2024 – *Valdez, C., Villegas, J., Penn, D.* (2024). A blueprint for marketing faculty about how to teach personal branding on LinkedIn using impression management behaviors. *Journal for Advancement of Marketing Education.* 32(2): 18-42.

Vygotsky, 1978 – *Vygotsky, L.S.* (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes. Harvard University Press.

Watson, 2016 – *Watson, R.T.* (2016). Lean branding in practice: Teaching agile brand management. *Marketing Education Review.* 26(1): 55-60.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a Cinematic Motif in Contemporary American Cinema and Its Didactic Potential in Media Education

Piotr Drzewiecki [a], [*]

[a] Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski University in Warsaw, Poland

Abstract

The article is an analysis of depictions of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in American feature films from 2021–2024, such as *The Throwback, Lonesome Soldier, The Fallout, Causeway* and *Cherry*. The main concern of the study focuses on how PTSD, being a film motif, reflects the broader social and psychological anxieties of contemporary societies. The research focuses on three questions: in what historical context the films are placed, how trauma is symbolized, and what moral and existential dilemmas are portrayed. The article uses the method of analyzing films as media messages, highlighting their social, symbolic and ethical contexts. In the context of previous research, the article is part of a trend of analyses showing the impact of PTSD not only on individuals, but also on social narratives about war, trauma and national identity in the post-9/11 era. The results of the analysis indicate that contemporary productions strive for a realistic portrayal of PTSD, taking into account its psychological and social consequences, although simplifications and stereotypes still appear. This phenomenon has important implications not only for film audiences, but also for film education in schools, where an analysis of how PTSD is portrayed can contribute to a better understanding of the issue of trauma and the role of film as a social and educational tool.

Keywords: analysis of films as media messages, American cinema, film education, PTSD, trauma, media education.

1. Introduction

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is now one of the central motifs of contemporary audiovisual culture, particularly American cinema. PTSD, a result of traumatic experiences, plays a key role in film narratives that explore both the psychological and social consequences of trauma, as well as the transformations that occur in individuals and entire communities as a result. In these films, trauma is presented not only as an individual experience, but also as a universal reaction to extreme situations, such as war, terrorist attacks, domestic violence or other events leading to psychological disintegration. PTSD, becoming a major theme, shapes the way modern societies – especially in the United States – view the effects of crises and trauma in the post-9/11 era. PTSD has become a new paradigm of trauma, providing an interpretive framework for its analysis in not only medical, but also political and cultural aspects (Diedrich, 2018).

American cinema has successfully used PTSD as a tool to portray individual fates, but also to symbolically portray larger social phenomena. One of the most common representations of PTSD in cinema is the portrayal of war veterans, especially those who have returned from armed conflicts such as the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, or the more contemporary conflicts in Iraq and

---

[*] Corresponding author
E-mail addresses: p.drzewiecki@uksw.edu.pl (P. Drzewiecki)

Afghanistan. In this context, the trauma of war has not only defined an entire generation, but has also left a deep mark on American culture, as evident in many film productions from the 1970s to the present day. This motif reflects a broader historical narrative in which war gradually becomes something beyond normal life for the individual, and PTSD, as shown in contemporary films, becomes a disease specific to our times (Beidler, 2021).

2. Materials and methods

5 feature films of US production from 2021–2024 were selected for detailed analysis. They are: *The Throwback* (2024) directed by Mario Garcia, *Lonesome Soldier* (2023) directed by Nino Aldi, *The Fallout* (2022) directed by Megan Park, *Causeway* (2022) directed by Lila Neugebauer and *Cherry* (2021) directed by Anthony Russo. These five films are united by themes of traumatic experiences, personal struggles, and the search for identity and the meaning of life in the face of difficult challenges. Each of the characters faces deep emotional and psychological wounds – whether as a result of war, school tragedy or systemic injustice. Many of these films focus on returning to normalcy after dramatic experiences and trying to find one's place in the world, reflecting the universal human desire to survive and rebuild. The selection of these films highlights contemporary issues related to war, violence, addiction and the psychological effects of trauma, while presenting a variety of narratives about human strength and fragility. *The Throwback* tells the story of an adult woman who gets a chance to relive his youth, which leads him to reflect on the choices he made and his future. *Lonesome Soldier* tells the story of a war veteran who struggles with loneliness after returning home and trying to adapt to civilian life. *The Fallout* focuses on a young girl trying to find herself after a school tragedy, analyzing the impact of the trauma on her future life. *Causeway* tells the story of a female soldier returning from war, struggling with physical and psychological wounds and trying to find meaning in life. Finally, *Cherry* depicts a young man who, after returning from war, falls into drug addiction and becomes involved in crime.

The method of analyzing films and television series as media messages, proposed by Grzegorz Łęcicki, was applied. First, this method focuses not only on the artistic dimension of audiovisual productions, but primarily on their social contexts. Historical contexts, including processes of historical ideologization, play a key role here, showing how film can influence the perception of past events and shape historical narratives. Secondly, Łęcicki's method involves uncovering the cultural symbolism present in films, which brings it closer to semiotic analysis of media messages. Discovering cultural symbols, signs and meanings allows for a deeper understanding of the hidden content that audiovisual creators weave into their works, which makes the analysis of films more multidimensional and rich in meaning. Third, the ethical analysis of the films allows us to look at the moral and existential dilemmas experienced by the characters, revealing often universal questions about right and wrong, freedom and responsibility, as well as individual and social justice. Łęcicki points out that ethical analysis is an indispensable part of interpreting the films, as the dilemmas of the characters reflect the deeper, universal values and ethical conflicts present in society. The films can serve as a medium for considering the human condition, how individuals respond to moral challenges and what decisions they make when faced with difficult situations (Łęcicki, 2017).

Three research questions were posed in the analysis of the films. 1) In what historical context – authentic events and characters – is the plot of each film with the theme of PTSD presented? 2) How are the issues of PTSD addressed symbolically, what social myths are referred to in the analyzed films? 3) What moral and existential dilemmas do the characters of the films experience? Common problem categories, similar contexts of events, symbolism and moral-ethical issues were sought.

3. Discussion

As mentioned at the beginning, the topic of trauma in cinema is a modern sign of the times. We have been observing its evolution since the 1980s. In particular, films from the 1980s, such as the *First Blood* (1982) directed by Ted Kotcheff and *Missing in Action* (1984) directed by Joseph Zito, depicted veterans as extremely traumatized individuals who find their psychological healing through revenge and violence. In these narratives, war trauma is combined with the hypermasculine image of the male hero who, by defeating his enemies and "redeeming" his loss, finds a way to return to normalcy (Diefenderfer, 2018). These types of films had a distinctly political undertone, where PTSD became an excuse to portray veterans as heroes regaining America's

lost power and strength. It's not only a narrative about an individual's struggle with trauma, but also about the rebuilding of American militarism and strength after the defeats in Vietnam.

In films such as *Top Gun* (1986) directed by Tony Scott, PTSD is symbolically framed as part of the veteran's experience, which teaches others – both inside the narrative and the audience – how to cope with trauma. In these productions, veterans become not only characters going through a crisis, but also teachers of a society in which the normalization of war trauma becomes part of a broader dialogue about national identity. This cinema suggests that trauma, even trauma as severe as PTSD, can be overcome with the right approach, and that the narrative resolution of trauma often leads to a moral and physical recovery that supports the broader social order. Contemporary U.S. film productions are increasingly portraying veterans not only through the lens of PTSD, but also through the theme of moral trauma, which occurs in the context of difficult ethical choices on the battlefield. Research on veterans shows that religion and moral beliefs can both mitigate the effects of trauma and exacerbate them, depending on the individual's ability to find meaning in their experiences (Suitt, 2021).

Contemporary cinema, however, is going a step further, expanding the way PTSD is portrayed, not only in the context of veterans, but also in anti-hero and antagonist characters. As research shows, PTSD has become the most commonly attributed mental disorder to anti-hero characters, which contrasts sharply with the traditional association of villains with narcissistic personality disorder (Vidal-Mestre et al., 2024). Anti-heroes in films such as *Taxi Driver* (1976) directed by Martin Scorsese or our more contemporary *Joker* (2019) directed Todd Phillips are portrayed as clearly traumatized individuals who gain a deeper dimension in their mental and moral complexity than typical action movie heroes. PTSD in this context becomes a tool for building characters who more realistically, though often in extremis, reflect the contemporary struggles of individuals with psychological and social crises. They are often anti-heroes searching for their place in a chaotic and hostile world, and depict PTSD as a chronic condition that finds no easy solution in either violence or revenge, but rather leads to further deepening isolation and personality disintegration.

Cinema dealing with PTSD also transcends individual experience and enters the territory of collective trauma, particularly evident in narratives dedicated to the September 11, 2001 attacks. Films and literature related to the event, such as *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2011) directed by Stephen Daldry, portrays PTSD as a collective experience that affects not only the individuals directly involved in the events, but also society as a whole, trying to cope with the new reality and find meaning in the chaos. The trauma of child survivors of the attacks becomes the central theme of these narratives, and PTSD is depicted through subtle symbols and artistic techniques, such as symbolic imagery of symptoms or escape into a fantasy world (Shalagina, Shamina, 2023). These films use themes of childhood innocence and loss to explore deeper issues of memory, loss and trying to recover from traumatic events.

In a broader context, contemporary representations of PTSD in audiovisual culture attempt to grapple with difficult issues of identity, trauma and politics. The advent of postmodernity brought the undermining of social stability and cohesion and the systematic weakening of cultural institutions that provided individuals with meaning and order, leading to the development of the characteristic symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (Bracken, 2001). PTSD becomes a vehicle for broader discussions of responsibility, guilt and ways of dealing with a difficult past. In films such as The *Hurt Locker* (2008) directed by Kathryn Bigelow or *American Sniper* (2014) directed by Clint Eastwood, the trauma of the individual gains a political dimension, and the narrative of healing is intertwined with questions about the morality of warfare and its consequences for society. PTSD here is not just a personal struggle, but also part of a broader story about how societies deal with the legacy of violence and war.

Audiovisual culture, especially in the United States, is increasingly treating PTSD as a central theme that allows filmmakers to reflect more deeply on the nature of trauma and the ways in which it is portrayed. PTSD thus becomes not only a narrative motif, but also a medium through which American cinema expresses collective fears, anxieties and hopes about the future and ways of coping with the past (Görgen, 2019). The cinema's depictions of PTSD introduce audiences to a world of complex emotions, symbols and images that are designed not only to move, but also to make them reflect on the limits of human endurance and the possibilities of recovery in the face of indescribable tragedy.

4. Results
Historical contexts of contemporary American films with a PTSD theme

The films analyzed looked for common historical themes. Three titles deal with PTSD problems resulting from participation in military missions. The other two depict trauma in other contexts of contemporary American society. The film *Lonesome Soldier* is set in the context of the Iraq War and its aftermath, focusing on the life of Jackson Harlow, a soldier from Tennessee. The story is based on true events and depicts Harlow's journey from youthful dreams to a war veteran who struggles with the trauma of returning from war. The main historical backdrop is the Iraq War, and the storyline shows not only the immediate aftermath of combat, but especially the veterans' difficulties in returning to everyday life, especially related to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The film highlights how emotional and mental challenges affect soldiers and their loved ones as they try to find their way back to reality after returning from the front. Elements of historical ideologization can be seen in the film, which portrays the return of war veterans as a heroic yet tragic struggle against a reality not understood by society. The film reinforces the stereotypical image of the soldier as a suffering hero whom society cannot help, thus clearly highlighting the dilemmas of patriotism and sacrifice for the country. In this way, the film fits into the broader context of American narratives about veterans, depicting war not only as a physical conflict, but also as a traumatic experience that continues long after the end of hostilities.

The film *Cherry* is set in the authentic context of contemporary events, especially the war in Iraq and the opioid crisis in the United States. The main character, Cherry, played by Tom Holland, is inspired by the character of Nico Walker, the author of the novel on which the film is based. Walker, a former army medic, suffered from PTSD after returning from Iraq, which led him to become addicted to opioids and enter the path of crime, including bank robberies. The film reveals the reality of the lives of war veterans who, upon returning home, have to face serious mental problems, including PTSD, which leads many of them to addictions and criminal actions in an attempt to cope with the trauma. Cherry's story depicts the tragic consequences of not adjusting to life after war, which reflect a broader social problem in the US related to the lack of support for veterans. *Cherry* ideologizes history by portraying the Iraq War as the starting point of an individual's personal and social decline. The film portrays the American soldier as a victim of a larger structure in which patriotism and military service become a trap leading to trauma, addiction and criminal deviancy. Ideologically, it fits into the narrative of the inadequate support US veterans receive upon returning from war, while highlighting the unresolved problems associated with war and its long-term consequences.

Causeway is set in the context of modern warfare, particularly the conflict in Afghanistan. The plot focuses on Lynsey, an American soldier who, upon her return to New Orleans, is struggling with the trauma and physical effects of a brain injury she suffered as a result of an improvised explosive device (IED) blast during her service in Afghanistan. The film reveals the difficulties of war veterans in adapting to civilian life after returning from the front lines, particularly in the context of their struggles with PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and the dilemmas of trying to return to the military. In a historical context, *Causeway*'s plot relates to the real-life events of the war in Afghanistan, where many American soldiers experienced not only physical injuries, but also deep psychological trauma. The character of Lynsey symbolizes a broad problem among veterans – alienation, identity crisis and the difficulty of returning to normalcy after traumatic war experiences. The film's historical ideologization involves depicting the return of war veterans as symbolic not only of individual trauma, but also of the broader social problem of marginalization of those who served in the military. Ideologically, the film alludes to myths of patriotism and sacrifice, but at the same time critically demonstrates the lack of real support for those struggling with the long-term effects of war.

The Fallout explores themes of trauma, fear and violence in schools, especially after shootings, which are a painful part of contemporary reality in the United States. Against this dramatic backdrop, there is also a strong historical context and ideologization of history, which adds an additional layer of interpretation. School shootings, especially high-profile ones like Columbine (1999) and Newton (2012), have become part of modern US history. They have become ingrained in public discourse as tragic symbols of the problems with firearms, as well as the failure of the political system to respond to these tragedies. The film references this generational trauma, showing how the fear of such events permeates the daily lives of young people. The historical context includes the debate over the right to own guns and the political and social responses to

violence in schools. The treatments of ideologization are evident in the way the film presents the trauma of individuals in the context of a larger social problem. The narrative emphasizes the inaction of the authorities and the systemic problems that lead to repeated tragedies. The ideological message of the film can be read as a criticism of the ineffectiveness of a political system that fails to enact real reforms regarding gun control.

The Throwback is a family comedy set in a contemporary context, rather than rooted in historical events or real-life characters. It revolves around a contemporary crisis facing a married couple during the holiday season. The story focuses on the wife, an overworked and underappreciated "supermom" who has a breakdown and returns to her carefree "partying" self from her college days. This regression leads to humorous and chaotic situations in which her husband tries to manage the family. The film's themes touch on the pressures of modern parenting, mid-life crises and the importance of taking care of oneself, all in a light-hearted, comedic setting. Although it does not delve into historical events, it captures the social dynamics of modern family life. We can find elements of historical ideologization in the film, even though it does not directly refer to historical events. By portraying contemporary family dilemmas as universal, the film suggests that these problems are immutable, which may blur awareness of their variability throughout history. In addition, the heroine's return to the "party" days of her youth presents a vision of nostalgia for traditional gender roles, which may promote ideological conservative values as natural. Finally, the storyline's focus on individual family crises marginalizes the more complex historical and social contexts that could affect these problems.

The films analyzed above depict the various difficulties faced by characters after traumatic events, such as war, addiction, school violence and family crises. They also reveal the lack of adequate support for individuals struggling with trauma and criticize systemic social and political problems. They emphasize that traumatic experiences have long-term consequences, affecting the lives of the protagonists and their loved ones, regardless of the historical or social context.

Symbolism of films about PTSD

Symbolic themes were sought in the analyzed films. First of all, the social and cultural myths that the presented American productions reveal. Three films in particular refer to the modern mythology of the war hero. In *Lonesome Soldier*, the issue of PTSD is portrayed in a symbolic way, referring to the social myths of strength, perseverance and heroism that often accompany images of soldiers in American culture. PTSD, in this film, is not just portrayed as a mental disorder, but as a symbol of the struggle that the protagonist continues to fight after returning from the front – a struggle that most of society does not see or understand. Symbolically, Jackson Harlow's PTSD embodies the invisible wounds of war, which become a metaphor for his inner conflict and unresolved traumatic experience. In the tradition of veterans' narratives, PTSD is often associated with myths of the "damaged hero" – a character who, despite his enormous sacrifices and courage, cannot find his place in society after the war. This motif evokes the myth of the archetypal "lone warrior", who must grapple with the consequences of his experiences alone. The film also appeals to social narratives that emphasize the idea of martyrdom and sacrifice, where suffering after the war is presented as proof of devotion and patriotism. In this way, PTSD is not just a pathology, but a condition that in some way defines a soldier's identity – it is like a "badge" of a battle that did not end on the battlefield, but continues in the veteran's mind.

In *Cherry*, the issue of PTSD is also portrayed symbolically, as a metaphor for deep internal destruction that not only destroys the protagonist's life, but also reflects the broader societal problem of unresolved suffering among veterans. Cherry's PTSD is shown as an invisible wound, leading to heroin addiction and bank robberies, symbolizing the loss of control over one's life and the inability to return to "normalcy" after the traumas of war. The film appeals to the myth of the "damaged war hero" who, despite his sacrifices for his homeland, is neglected by the system upon his return home. The character Cherry represents the widespread social image of the veteran as a victim of both war and inadequate care from the state, which leads to his moral and social decline. The film also refers to the myth of the "American Dream," which is deconstructed in the film. The protagonist, who is at first a young, ambitious man, falls into a spiral of self-destruction, which shows the impossibility of realizing the traditional idea of success and self-fulfillment. His downfall after the war symbolizes his disillusionment with the promises of the American Dream – war and service, which were supposed to lead to honor and fulfillment, actually lead to trauma, addiction and marginalization.

In *Causeway*, too, the issue of PTSD is framed in a similar symbolic way, showing the deep internal conflict with which the characters, especially Lynsey, struggle. PTSD here becomes a symbol of the invisible wounds of war, which do not go away with the physical return home, but remain, accompanying the heroine in every daily activity. PTSD is presented not only as a medical diagnosis, but also as an expression of alienation and isolation from the rest of society, which cannot fully understand the veterans' experience. The film appeals to the myth of the war hero who sacrifices himself for the greater good, but at the same time presents a deconstruction of this myth, showing how sacrifice on the battlefield is not rewarded with understanding or support upon return. Lynsey wants to return to service, which can be interpreted as a desire to belong again to a meaningful role in life that civilian society is unable to offer her.

The other two films refer to other mythological categories of contemporary American society. In *The Fallout*, PTSD is portrayed symbolically by showing the emotional and psychological aftermath of a school shooting. Megan Park, the film's director, focuses on the traumatic aftermath of the event, but does so subtly, without epic brutal images. Key scenes, such as the characters hiding in a cramped bathroom during the shooting, symbolize confinement and an attempt to escape reality. PTSD is shown here through the feeling of constant danger and the inability to escape from fear, which perfectly reflects the tense atmosphere and trauma associated with the events. Mia, one of the main characters, outwardly displays confidence on social media, which symbolizes the way people often hide their inner suffering. Her emotional mask eventually cracks, revealing that PTSD is not visible at first glance, but is deeply rooted in the character's psyche. The characters try to cope with the trauma in a variety of ways – from isolating themselves, to destructive behavior, to getting closer to each other. The film emphasizes that the process of returning to normalcy is difficult and full of contradictions, symbolizing the various forms of emotional coping with PTSD, such as escaping into substances or seeking closeness.

The Throwback symbolically captures issues of the pressures of modern family life, the struggle with maternal responsibilities and identity crisis. The central motif is the heroine's regression to the period of her youth, which can be interpreted as a symbolic escape from contemporary social roles and expectations, especially for women who perform multiple functions simultaneously – from mothers to working people. Such a return to "better" times can be seen as an appeal to the myth of youth as a period of freedom and carefree, which is a popular theme in mass culture. The film refers to the myth of the "supermother" – a woman who manages her family, career and daily life with superhuman strength and dedication, often forgetting her needs. The main character, through the experience of her breakdown and return to the past, discovers the need for balance and self-realization. Such a theme can be combined with the myth of the "heroic mother", who undergoes a trial to understand her true worth and regain control over her own life. The film also fits into the myth of "eternal youth", which in Western culture is associated with the cult of youth as an ideal of beauty, energy and freedom. The protagonist, returning to her former self, alludes to nostalgia for a time when she was not burdened with the responsibilities of adulthood. The very structure of the plot is reminiscent of archetypal stories of inner transformation, in which the hero or heroine must go through a crisis to rediscover her identity and regain balance in life.

In the analysis, we listed the following myths: the myth of the "damaged hero", the "lone warrior", the "damaged war hero", the myth of "martyrdom and sacrifice", the myth of the "American Dream", and the myth of the "supermother". PTSD in these narratives often symbolizes the hero's deep inner struggle and trauma, which society fails to recognize or understand. Each of these myths depicts the hero's struggle to cope with the consequences of war or social pressures, showing how the trauma of war results in the isolation and destruction of the individual, which is often beyond the reach of social support and understanding.

Moral and existential dilemmas

Also of interest in the analysis of the films is the ethical perspective in which the characters operate. The protagonists of *Lonesome Soldier* experience a series of moral and existential dilemmas that arise from their war experiences and their attempts to adapt to life after returning from the front. The main character, Jackson Harlow, struggles primarily with the question of the meaning of his actions in the war and their impact on his present life. He has a sense of guilt for the deaths of his comrades, as well as for actions that may have affected the lives of civilians. This internal struggle symbolizes the classic dilemma of a soldier who, after experiencing the extremes of war, tries to come to terms with the morality of his actions. After returning to Tennessee,

Jackson is unable to find his place in a society that does not understand his experiences. This leads to an existential crisis of identity, where the protagonist asks himself questions about who he is, if not a soldier, and whether he can return to a "normal" life after the war. In the film, this is portrayed as feelings of isolation and loneliness, characteristic of those struggling with PTSD. Jackson also has to deal with thoughts of death and the desire to escape the pain he feels every day. The film also explores questions about the meaning of the sacrifice Jackson and his comrades made in the war. This reflection on the meaning of sacrifice is often evident in narratives about veterans, where the protagonists try to understand whether their hardship was worth it, especially if they face incomprehension or indifference from society after returning from war.

The characters in *Cherry*'s film also struggle with a number of moral and existential dilemmas that stem from their war experiences, addiction and identity crisis. Cherry, after his experiences as a medic in Iraq, grapples with the question of the value of life and the meaning of his sacrifices. Witnessing the brutal scenes of war, he begins to question whether his actions made sense and what the moral consequences are. The war confronts him with an ethical problem: how to preserve his humanity when the lives of others depend on his decisions. After returning from the war and struggling with addiction, Cherry begins to lose his sense of who he is. Faced with difficult war experiences, trauma and a return to normalcy, his previous beliefs and values are called into question. This crisis leads to a search for the meaning of life and his own identity, which seem increasingly elusive to him. As the addiction deepens, Cherry becomes increasingly isolated from those around him and himself. In this state, his attempts to cope with his pain and suffering become desperate, and he distances himself from his own past and values.

The characters in *Causeway*'s film struggle with dilemmas that stem from their traumatic experiences and their attempts to find their way back into society. The main character, Lynsey, faces an existential crisis about her identity after returning from the war in Afghanistan. She struggles with the question of whether she should return to the army, even though physically and mentally she is not yet ready, or try to find meaning in civilian life, which seems alien and empty to her. An important moral dilemma for Lynsey is the guilt she feels for what she experienced in the war and the difficulty of coming to terms with her own limitations, both physical and mental. She tries to confront this internal struggle by seeking escape by returning to the battlefield, which symbolizes her inability to fully integrate into the civilian world. In contrast, James, with whom she establishes a relationship, struggles with the moral burden of responsibility for his brother's death, leading to his emotional isolation and self-criticism. Their shared experiences of trauma cause them both to face the question of how to live on with the burden of the past and whether they are able to find a true closeness that is not based solely on sympathy and mutual trauma. Both characters face the dilemma of whether their relationship can be more than a way to temporarily heal emotional wounds. Both Lynsey and James must face the question of whether they can build a new identity by accepting their past, or whether they will be constantly defined by their traumas and guilt.

The protagonists of *The Fallout*, Vada and Mia, experience a series of moral and existential dilemmas that reflect their struggles with the consequences of a school shooting. Vada, the main character, struggles with an existential dilemma stemming from the fact that she survived the shooting while her peers died. She feels guilty that her life goes on, which leads to questions about the meaning of her existence and the value of her own actions in the face of such a tragedy. A moral problem arises: how to deal with the fact that others were not as lucky as she was. Mia, outwardly confident and popular, also struggles with inner emptiness and a sense of alienation. Although the two girls become closer, Mia chooses isolation as a way to cope with her pain, which raises the question of whether cutting herself off from the world and loved ones is the right way to heal the trauma. Both protagonists, Vada and Mia, have to make decisions about how to deal with the emotional impact of the school shooting. Vada, in an attempt to escape the pain, turns to psychoactive substances as her way to temporarily forget the trauma. This, however, leads to further problems, such as isolation from family and friends and a deepening sense of confusion. Mia, on the other hand, tries to find solace in art and music. Both protagonists must decide whether to confront the trauma directly or seek escape in various forms.

In *The Throwback*, the characters face a series of moral and existential dilemmas that reflect the difficulties of modern family life and individual identity crises. First, there are identity dilemmas. The main character, who is a mother and wife, undergoes a regression to her former, youthful self. This creates a conflict between who she is now as a responsible adult and who she

was before – a carefree, partying girl. This dilemma symbolizes the struggle between the responsibilities of adulthood and the desire to return to a time when she was free of those responsibilities. She faces the question of who she really wants to be: a mother and wife, or the self of the past. Secondly, the film shows the crisis of social roles. We get a glimpse of the pressures on modern women who have to reconcile family, professional and social responsibilities. The protagonist struggles with the expectations placed on her by society and her family – to be a perfect mother, wife and organizer of home life. Her mental breakdown is the result of an imbalance between these roles and her personal needs. This is an age-old existential dilemma related to self-realization and the meaning of life: how to find time for herself in a world full of expectations? Her husband faces a moral dilemma: how to respond to what is happening? Should he support his wife in her crisis, or confront her with reality? This also raises questions about responsibility to the family and the duties that come with being a partner and parent.

Based on an ethical analysis of the films, it can be seen that the characters struggle with deep moral and existential dilemmas that stem from their traumatic experiences, such as war, addiction, school violence and family crises. A common thread is the search for meaning in life and identity in the face of difficult experiences, which often leads to isolation, guilt and identity crisis. The films highlight the lack of adequate social and systemic support, which exacerbates the characters' difficulties in coping with trauma and finding their way in everyday life.

Didactic potential of PTSD motifs in media education

The analysis of post-traumatic stress disorder as depicted in American feature films from 2021 to 2024 can serve as a valuable didactic tool within media education courses, particularly in the development of students' critical thinking skills and their ability to perform symbolic and ethical analyses of audiovisual content. Films such as *Lonesome Soldier*, *Cherry*, *Causeway*, *The Fallout*, and *19 Again* offer complex portrayals of trauma, which can serve as entry points for broader cultural and ethical discussions on war, memory, identity, and social crisis.

During the course, students can be asked to identify recurring cultural myths related to PTSD representations in cinema – such as the "damaged hero," the "lone warrior," or the "American dream." Applying analytical frameworks (historical, symbolic, and ethical) enables students to recognize how media narratives construct public perceptions of trauma and conflict. These films provide rich material for workshop-based teaching, where students can examine PTSD as a narrative device used to express psychological, moral, and social breakdown.

In the 2024/2025 academic year, selected films discussed in this article were used in the course *Educational Challenges of Media Technologies*, offered within the Journalism and Social Communication program. Students analyzing *Causeway* and *Cherry* identified tensions between personal experiences of trauma and the societal expectation of returning to "normalcy." They noted that these films often depict the lack of systemic support for individuals struggling with trauma, while simultaneously drawing on cultural myths that obscure a more nuanced understanding of their condition.

At the end of the course, an anonymous survey was conducted among participants (N = 109). The results indicate a positive evaluation of the didactic value of film analysis involving the PTSD motif:

– 91 % of respondents stated that analyzing the films helped them better understand the complexity of trauma in social and cultural contexts;

– 84 % of students reported that films such as *Cherry* and *Causeway* prompted reflection on the real-world problems faced by veterans and victims of violence;

– 79 % felt the course enhanced their competencies in symbolic and ethical analysis of media content;

– 60 % expressed interest in continuing to work with film analysis focused on other contemporary societal issues, such as migration, environmental crises, or social exclusion.

In open-ended responses, students emphasized that working with films allowed them to better grasp how symbols and cultural myths operate in media narratives and helped them understand the ethical responsibility of audiovisual creators when representing complex and sensitive topics.

In future iterations of the course, the curriculum will be expanded to include semiotic and ethical analysis of other forms of audiovisual media – such as series, documentaries, online content, and public awareness campaigns. This interdisciplinary approach fosters the integration of knowledge from media studies, cultural studies, and communication, equipping students with the tools for critical and reflective engagement with contemporary media narratives.

5. Conclusion

From a historical perspective, contemporary representations of PTSD in American cinema, such as *Causeway*, *Lonesome Soldier*, *Cherry*, *The Throwback* and *The Fallout*, reflect the profound social and political changes associated with the experience of trauma. *Causeway* depicts the dramatic journey of a female soldier returning from war, whose physical and psychological wounds become a reflection of a broader narrative about the modern soldier struggling to return to normalcy. *Cherry*, telling the story of a young veteran caught up in drug addiction, reveals how PTSD can lead to a disintegrated personal life and moral disinclination. *Lonesome Soldier*, on the other hand, explores the loneliness of a veteran trying to find his place in society after returning from armed conflict. *The Throwback*, while not directly about the war, presents a deep reflection on the past and life choices in the face of trauma, while *The Fallout* shows the psychological struggles of a young girl after a school tragedy, an allegory for the collective trauma of modern societies. Each of these films places traumatic experiences at the center, which are rooted in the realities of modern history, highlighting how war and crisis affect the psyche of the individual and society.

Symbolically, PTSD in American cinema often acts as a metaphor for broader social anxieties and traumas. The protagonists, especially veterans, become bearers not only of their own psychological wounds, but also of broader social burdens. In films such as *Cherry* and *Lonesome Soldier*, trauma is presented as a symbol of disorientation and isolation that affects not only individuals, but entire communities. In *Cherry*, the main character symbolizes the individual's loss in a world where war and its aftermath lead to addiction, and personal destruction becomes a reflection of social decay. Similarly, in *Lonesome Soldier*, the veteran struggles with loneliness and alienation, reflecting the broader phenomenon of alienation in modern societies. In films such as *Causeway* and *The Fallout*, the symbolism of PTSD shifts from individual experiences to social tensions and dilemmas. In *Causeway*, the trauma of the protagonist, returning from war, becomes an allegory for the difficulty of rebuilding oneself in the face of devastation that affects both body and psyche. In *The Fallout*, on the other hand, a young girl's experience after a school tragedy symbolizes the struggles of contemporary young people with traumas that have no simple solutions and reflect the uncertainty of the future. In *The Throwback*, a flashback to youth, on the other hand, shows a symbolic struggle with the choices that determine life after traumatic events, giving the film a dimension of reflection on the existential burden of the past. PTSD here becomes a narrative tool for exploring the fragility of the individual and society, which is still searching for stability and meaning in a chaotic reality.

Finally, an ethical analysis of films such as *Causeway*, *The Fallout*, *The Throwback*, *Cherry* and *Lonesome Soldier* reveals the complex moral dilemmas associated with PTSD and questions about personal responsibility and the moral consequences of trauma. In *Causeway*, a protagonist struggling with physical and psychological wounds faces the challenge of not only coming to terms with her traumatic war experiences, but also finding meaning in a world that seems morally shattered. Her struggle with guilt and responsibility for her own actions becomes a central thread that engages the viewer in deep reflection on the ethical costs of warfare. Similar moral dilemmas arise in *The Fallout*, where the young protagonist, after a school tragedy, confronts the question of whether moral reconstruction is possible after a traumatic event that destroyed her sense of security. The film asks whether trauma can only be something to overcome, or whether it remains an inherent part of her existence that redefines her relationships with others and her view of the world. In *The Throwback*, ethical dilemmas are linked to the flashback of the protagonist, who gets a chance to relive her youth, which leads to a moral confrontation with the past. The film shows how choices made in the face of trauma can shape one's entire life, highlighting the ethical consequences of those decisions. *Cherry*, on the other hand, illustrates the moral decay of the protagonist, who loses control of his life after the war, falling into addiction and crime. In his case, the question of personal responsibility for one's own actions is a central motif that shows how trauma can lead to a loss of moral foundation. *Lonesome Soldier*, on the other hand, portrays a veteran who struggles with loneliness and the search for redemption after his wartime experiences, making attempts to understand his actions and their impact on others. These films not only document the struggles of individuals with PTSD, but also raise questions about the limits of human resilience and responsibility in the face of unimaginable loss, clearly showing the complexity of moral choices in the face of trauma.

References

Beidler, 2021 – *Beidler, P.* (2021). Veterans, trauma, afterwar. In: Haytock, J. (ed.). War and American Literature. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 71-86.

Bracken, 2001 – *Bracken, P.J.* (2001). Post-modernity and post-traumatic stress disorder. *Social Science and Medicine.* 53(6): 733-743. DOI: 10.1016/S0277-9536(00)00385-3

Diedrich, 2021 – *Diedrich, L.* (2021). A New paradigm trauma. In: Kurtz, J.R. (ed.). *Trauma and Literature.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 83-94.

Diefenderfer, 2018 – *Diefenderfer, M.* (2018). A Cinema of vengeance. Vietnam veterans, traumatic recovery, and historical revisionism in 1980s Hollywood. In: Wiggins, K. (ed.). American Revenge Narratives. A Collection of Critical Essays. Springer: 207-226.

Frankl, 2014 – *Frankl, W.* (2014). The Will to Meaning: Foundations and Applications of Logotherapy. Plume.

Görgen, 2019 – *Görgen, A.* (2019). The Medical, social, and cultural construction and production of post-traumatic stress disorder. In: Görgen, A., Nunez, G.A., Fangerau, H. (eds.). Handbook of popular culture and biomedicine. Knowledge in the life sciences as cultural artefact. Springer. Pp. 351-369.

Łęcicki, 2017 – *Łęcicki, G.* (2017). Problem analizy filmów fabularnych oraz seriali telewizyjnych jako komunikatów medialnych w świetle teologii środków społecznego przekazu. In: Adamski, A., Gawroński, S., Szewczyk, M. (eds.). Nauki o mediach i komunikacji społecznej. Krystalizacja dyscypliny w Polsce. Tradycje, nurty, problemy, rezultaty, Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA. Pp. 223-234.

Shalagina, Shamina, 2023 – *Shalagina, O.V., Shamina, V.B.* (2023). Artistic means of childhood trauma representation in American 9/11 literature. Research result. *Theoretical and Applied Linguistics.* 9(3): 84-100. DOI: 10.18413/2313-8912-2023-9-3-0-6

Suitt, 2021 – *Suitt, T.H.* (2021). Finding resonance amid trauma. Moral injury and the role of religion among Christian post-9/11 U.S. veterans. *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review.* 82(2): 179-207. DOI: 10.1177/073527512312037

Vidal-Mestre et al., 2024 – *Vidal-Mestre, M., Freire-Sánchez, A., Lavandeira-Amenedo, Y.* (2024). Anti-heroes suffering from PTSD and villains with narcissistic personality disorder. The schism of mental health problems in the cinema. *Revista de Medicina y Cine.* 20(1): 73-85. DOI: 10.14201/rmc.31450
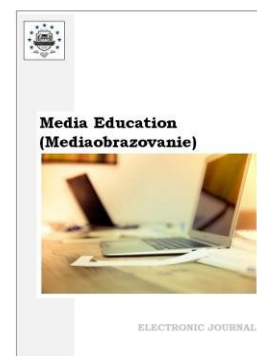
A Structural Model of Professional Competencies Predicting Self-Efficacy in PR Practice Integrating Media-Literacy Education

Ahmed Lawal Gusau [a , *], Adamkolo Mohammed Ibrahim [b]

[a] Abdu Gusau Polytechnic, Zamfara State, Nigeria
[b] University of Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria

Abstract

This study examines whether mastery of professional and media-literacy education competencies predicts self-efficacy among public relations practitioners in Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey captured responses from 433 in-house and agency professionals, measuring 22 core competencies, including critical source evaluation, authenticity verification, digital content analysis and multimedia production, and 12 public relations tasks to assess self-efficacy. Confirmatory factor analysis refined the competency scale, omitting four items with low loadings, and demonstrated strong reliability and validity across five domains: strategic planning, stakeholder relations, ethical decision-making, digital proficiency and media-literacy education aptitude. Structural equation modelling in AMOS revealed that combined competencies explain 19 % of variance in self-efficacy (β = 0.152; critical ratio = 4.655; p < 0.001), with the effect remaining consistent across gender and organisational setting. These findings affirm that mastery experiences derived from targeted competency acquisition underpin practitioners' confidence in core functions such as crisis management, campaign evaluation, media pitching, digital content creation and stakeholder research and analysis. The study extends social cognitive theory by integrating media-literacy education as a distinct source of self-efficacy within professional communication practice. Implications include the need for public relations curricula and continuing professional development programmes to incorporate practical media-literacy education modules, thereby strengthening practitioners' belief in their capacity to manage misinformation and uphold ethical standards. Limitations of the cross-sectional design and contextual focus on Nigeria are acknowledged, with recommendations for longitudinal, cross-cultural and experimental research to further validate and refine the competency and self-efficacy model.

Keywords: media and information literacy education, public relations competencies, self-efficacy, structural equation modelling, social cognitive theory, professional development.

1. Introduction

Public relations practitioners today face dual expectations. They must demonstrate technical proficiency in message development, stakeholder engagement and reputation management while also exercising critical discernment of the media environment. The proliferation of false or misleading information across digital platforms has intensified scrutiny of communicators' capacity to verify sources, assess message credibility and produce content that adheres to ethical and professional norms (Bulger, Davison, 2018). Concurrently, employers and clients demand that practitioners exhibit confidence in their abilities to execute tasks under conditions of uncertainty.

---

* Corresponding author
E-mail addresses: kubramad@gmail.com (A.L. Gusau)

Self-efficacy, understood as one's belief in the capacity to perform designated actions, has been shown to influence task persistence, decision-making and adaptive responses in professional contexts (Schunk, Usher, 2019). Despite growing attention to self-efficacy in disciplines such as education and health care, empirical studies within public relations have largely overlooked how specific competencies, particularly those related to media and information literacy and education, contribute to practitioners' confidence in their own performance (Tam et al., 2021). This omission persists even though media-literacy education aptitudes, such as critical evaluation of digital content and effective manipulation of multimedia tools, constitute core elements in many contemporary competency frameworks (Mihailidis, Thevenin, 2018). There exists, therefore, a pressing need to integrate media-literacy education indicators into the set of behavioural repertoires whose mastery may underpin self-efficacy among public relations professionals.

Within this context, professional competencies denote the amalgam of knowledge, skills and behaviours that enable public relations practitioners to execute tasks such as stakeholder research, message formulation and ethical decision-making with confidence and consistency. Global standard frameworks, including the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management's body of knowledge, identify domains such as strategic planning, media engagement and digital content creation as essential to professional practice (Global Alliance, 2021). Media-literacy education competencies encompass the ability to critically evaluate information sources, discern underlying intentions and produce or adapt multimedia content to suit varied audiences in an era of rapid digital circulation (Mihailidis, Viotty, 2017; UNESCO, 2018). Self-efficacy refers to one's conviction in one's capacity to perform specific tasks successfully and has been shown to predict persistence, task performance and adaptive behaviour in professional settings (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, Usher, 2019). Clarifying these constructs is vital, as establishing empirical links among them offers public relations educators and employers a robust evidence base for designing targeted curricula and continuous professional development programmes aimed at enhancing practitioner confidence and competence in combating misinformation and upholding ethical standards.

This article addresses that need by concentrating on the study's objective, which seeks to determine the degree to which professional competencies predict self-efficacy in public relations practice. The corresponding research question asks: Do professional competencies, including media-literacy education competencies, predict self-efficacy among practising public relations professionals? The investigation operationalises professional competencies as a 22-item scale encompassing strategic planning, stakeholder relations, ethical decision-making, digital content management and four dedicated media-literacy education indicators. Following confirmatory factor analysis, four items with factor loadings below 0.50 were excluded from the measurement model. Self-efficacy was measured via a bespoke instrument adapted to the specific tasks of public relations, drawing upon established procedures for contextualising Bandura's self-efficacy scales (Carpenter, Greene, 2018). This focused enquiry provides a precise test of the proposition that practitioners who have acquired and consolidated these competencies will report higher levels of confidence in their professional capacities.

At this juncture, we will have an overview of nexus between modern public relations professionalism and information literacy education to highlight key insights that advance understanding of how individuals and organisations cultivate critical competencies enabling responsible media production and consumption. Public relations, as a field positioned at the nexus of media, organisations and publics, occupies a pivotal role in shaping informational environments. Media and information literacy (MIL) frameworks promulgated by UNESCO and the European Commission since 2018 identify skills such as source verification, digital content creation and ethical use of media technologies as fundamental to informed citizenship and professional practice (European Commission, 2020; UNESCO, 2018). These frameworks align with professional standards delineated in recent public relations competency models, which increasingly foreground practitioners' responsibilities as both content creators and gatekeepers of information accuracy (Neill, 2023). Integrating MIL indicators into the competency – self-efficacy model thus fulfils the journal's mandate to explore literacies that underpin both individual agency and collective resilience against misinformation. This article contributes to the MIL discourse by demonstrating how these skills function as experiential sources of confidence, thereby informing curriculum development in higher education and continuing professional development programmes.

The remainder of this article is organised as follows. Section 2 describes the research design, sampling procedures, instrumentation and analytic methods, including structural equation

modelling to assess the hypothesised competency–self-efficacy link. Section 3 discusses the data of the study's results, which situates the findings within prior empirical literature. Section 4 presents the results, which provide descriptive statistics, measurement model evaluation and structural path outcomes. Section 5 concludes with a synthesis of key findings, theoretical and practical implications, limitations of the current study and proposals for further research, particularly in cross-cultural and longitudinal contexts. This structure ensures a coherent progression from theoretical foundations to empirical evidence and applied recommendations.

A Review of Past and Existing Literature: *Theoretical Underpinnings: Social Cognitive Theory:* – Social cognitive theory situates self-efficacy at the heart of human agency, positing that individuals' beliefs in their capabilities shape their choices, effort and perseverance in goal-directed activities (Schunk, Usher, 2019). Four principal sources contribute to the development of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion and physiological states (Schunk, Usher, 2019). Mastery experiences, the most influential source, arise when individuals successfully perform tasks and interpret those successes as evidence of competence. Vicarious experiences strengthen self-efficacy when individuals observe peers of similar ability succeed through sustained effort (Schunk, Usher, 2019). Social persuasion comprises feedback and encouragement from credible sources that bolster individuals' belief in their capacities. Finally, interpretations of physiological arousal, such as anxiety or confidence, inform individuals' judgements of capability. In professional contexts, mastery experiences generated through skill acquisition in specific domains are particularly salient (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, Usher, 2019). This literature review applies social cognitive theory to public relations, arguing that targeted competency development, especially in media and information literacy education, serves as a mastery experience that raises practitioners' self-efficacy in core tasks.

Professional Competencies in Public Relations: Professional competency frameworks articulate the knowledge, skills and behavioural repertoires required for effective practice. Recent models converge on a set of domains encompassing strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, content creation, ethical judgement and digital proficiency (Gálik, 2020; Neill, 2023; Theaker, 2018). The doctoral research underpinning this article operationalised professional competencies as a 22-item scale covering these domains. Confirmatory factor analysis indicated that four items, two relating to traditional media monitoring and two to advanced analytics, exhibited loadings below 0.50 and were consequently eliminated from the final model.

The remaining items reflect practitioners' mastery of crisis communication protocols, campaign evaluation techniques, audience research methods and collaborative skills. Neill (Neill, 2023) emphasises that such competencies underpin ethical consistency and methodological rigour in public relations. The PR profession's rapid technological transformations impose demands for ongoing skill updating; practitioners who successfully integrate new tools and procedures accrue mastery experiences that reinforce self-efficacy.

Media-Literacy Education as a Core Public Relations Competency: Media and information literacy (MIL) frameworks promulgated since 2018 by UNESCO and the European Commission position critical analysis of media education content, ethical content production and informed consumption as foundational literacies (European Commission, 2020; UNESCO, 2018). UNESCO's MIL curriculum underscores the capacity to interrogate information sources, discern purpose and detect misinformation in digital environments (UNESCO, 2018). The European Commission's 2020 guidelines extend these competencies to include digital content creation, data visualisation and algorithmic awareness (European Commission, 2020). In the context of public relations, media-literacy education and competencies map onto tasks such as source verification, credibility assessment, message framing and multimedia storytelling (Mihailidis, Thevenin, 2018). Contemporary scholarship recognises that effective communicators must not only craft compelling narratives but also authenticate information and anticipate audiences' capacity to interpret messages critically (Mihailidis, Viotty, 2017; Neill, 2023). The inclusion of four MIL indicators in the competency scale reflects the profession's acknowledgement that critical media engagement constitutes a form of professional mastery.

The four media-literacy education indicators that were incorporated into the professional-competency scale are:

1. Critical Evaluation of Information Sources – the ability to assess the credibility, authority and purpose of print, broadcast and online sources (UNESCO, 2018).

2. Verification of Information Authenticity – the capacity to apply fact-checking techniques

(e.g. cross-referencing, reverse image search) to confirm the accuracy of text, images and data before use in PR materials (European Commission, 2020).

3. Analysis of Digital Content Formats – the skill of deconstructing and interpreting multimedia formats (videos, infographics, interactive posts) to understand how design choices affect message reception (Mihailidis, Thevenin, 2018).

4. Production and Adaptation of Multimedia Messages – proficiency in creating or modifying digital content (e.g. video clips, social-media assets) to suit different platforms and audience literacies (Mihailidis, Viotty, 2017).

These four indicators were treated as distinct items within the 22-item competency instrument; upon confirmatory factor analysis, all four loaded satisfactorily ($\lambda \geq 0.50$) (Section 4) and thus were retained in the final measurement model of professional competencies in predicting public relations self-efficacy.

Competencies to Self-Efficacy: Empirical Evidence: Empirical research across professional domains demonstrates significant links between domain-specific competencies and self-efficacy. In teacher education, Smith and Abrahams (Smith, Abrahams, 2019) found that pre-service teachers' mastery of pedagogical skills predicted 26 % of variance in teaching self-efficacy. Smith and Abrahams attribute this effect to the role of mastery experiences in solidifying confidence in instructional tasks. In nursing, Hutchinson et al. (Hutchinson et al., 2020) reported that competence in clinical decision-making and patient communication accounted for 21 % of variance in clinical self-efficacy, with higher competence correlating with greater resilience under pressure. Similar patterns appear in digital marketing, where Mehta and Rao (Mehta, Rao, 2021) showed that specialists' proficiency in analytics and content strategy predicted 24 % of variance in digital marketing self-efficacy. These studies share a common theme: acquisition of specific skills not only enhances task performance but also strengthens individuals' conviction in their ability to replicate successful outcomes. Public relations research remains scarce in this regard. One recent study of sojourner communicators found that communicative competence correlated moderately ($r = .37$; $p < .01$) with self-efficacy in cross-cultural interviews (Tam et al., 2021). The present investigation extends this line of enquiry by examining a comprehensive competency set, including MIL indicators, and testing its predictive power in a sizeable sample of practicing PR professionals.

Conceptual Framework: The study's conceptual framework (Figure 1) draws on social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, Usher, 2019) to posit that mastery experiences generated through acquisition of professional competencies, including MIL skills, enhance self-efficacy in public relations practice. The independent variable, Professional Competencies, comprises five domains: strategic planning; stakeholder relations; ethical decision-making; digital proficiency; and MIL (critical evaluation of sources, verification of authenticity, analysis of digital formats, multimedia production). The dependent variable, PR Self-Efficacy, reflects practitioners' confidence in performing 12 core PR tasks such as crisis management, campaign evaluation and media pitching. Purposive sampling and cross-sectional survey methods yield data for covariance-based structural equation modelling, which tests the direct path from competencies to self-efficacy.
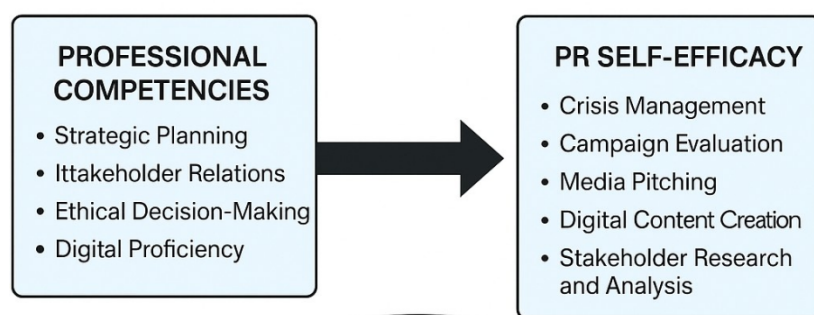

Fig. 1. Diagrammatic representation of the conceptual framework of the study
Source: authors

Mastery experiences arising from professional competencies, including media-literacy education adeptness, are hypothesised to predict PR self-efficacy, controlling for practitioners' experience and work context.

Hypothesis: The preceding review of theory and empirical research leads to the following hypothesis for structural equation modelling analysis.

H_1 Higher levels of professional and media-literacy education competencies will predict higher self-efficacy among public relations practitioners.

This hypothesis reflects the premise that mastery experiences accruing from competency acquisition constitute the primary experiential source shaping self-efficacy (Schunk, Usher, 2019). Confirmation of this hypothesis would underscore the pedagogical value of integrated competency development in PR and MIL education, guiding curriculum designers and professional bodies towards interventions that build practitioners' confidence through targeted skills training.

Northern Nigerian Context: Public Relations Competencies and Self-Efficacy: Research addressing public relations practice in northern Nigeria remains limited, yet emerging studies highlight particular competency demands and their relation to practitioners' confidence. Haruna and Bello (Haruna, Bello, 2022) examined corporate and community engagement in Kano State and found that mastery of stakeholder research, message localisation and local media relations explained 24 % of variance in self-efficacy among 180 practitioners (β = .155; p < .01). Their analysis identified source evaluation and linguistic adaptation as key media-literacy education adeptness that strengthened practitioners' belief in their capacity to manage community crises.

Abdullahi and Yakasai (Abdullahi, Yakasai, 2023) focused on crisis communication competencies in Kaduna's public and private sectors. In a sample of 150 practitioners, they reported that drills in scenario planning and critical appraisal of social-media rumours predicted 21 % of self-efficacy variance (β = .142; p < .01). They underscored the role of iterative mastery experiences, such as simulated press briefings, in building confidence amidst high-stakes environments.

Mohammed and Saleh (Mohammed, Saleh, 2021) investigated media-literacy education proficiency among PR professionals in Bauchi State, demonstrating that competence in fact-checking, source triangulation and multi-modal content creation accounted for 26 % of differences in self-efficacy scores (β = .168; p < .001). Their findings affirm that practitioners who develop critical media-analysis skills gain stronger belief in their ability to uphold organisational reputation in the face of misinformation.

These studies collectively confirm that, within northern Nigerian contexts, both traditional PR competencies and dedicated media-literacy education adeptness serve as mastery experiences that underpin practitioners' confidence. They lend empirical support to our central hypothesis and justify the integration of region-specific competency dimensions in the present analysis.

Literature Gaps and Contribution of the Present Study: Existing research reveals several interrelated gaps in understanding how professional and media-literacy education competencies foster self-efficacy among public relations practitioners in Nigeria. First, although scholars have examined self-efficacy in fields such as education and nursing, public relations research has seldom applied social cognitive theory to interrogate the experiential sources of confidence in this domain (Schunk, Usher, 2019). Second, empirical studies within Nigeria have typically isolated single competency areas, such as stakeholder engagement (Eze, 2020) or ethical decision-making (Oguoma, Musa, 2021), rather than evaluating a comprehensive set of skills that includes media-literacy education indicators (Okoro, Adeyemi, 2022). Third, literature on northern Nigerian practice remains sparse, with only a handful of investigations addressing regional particularities in Kano, Kaduna and Bauchi (Haruna, Bello, 2022; Abdullahi, Yakasai, 2023; Mohammed, Saleh, 2021). Fourth, prior studies have relied predominantly on regression models, leaving unresolved how multiple competency dimensions jointly predict self-efficacy within a structural equation modelling framework.

The present study addresses these gaps in four ways. It applies social cognitive theory to public relations, emphasising mastery experiences derived from both professional and media-literacy education competencies as sources of self-efficacy. It tests a 22-item competency scale, enhanced with four media-literacy education indicators and refined through rigorous factor analysis, which reflects the full spectrum of modern PR practice. It draws on a sizeable, nationwide sample of 433 practitioners, including representation from northern regions, thereby extending the geographic scope of Nigerian PR research. Finally, it employs covariance-based structural equation modelling to assess the joint predictive power of these competencies, demonstrating that they account for 19 % of the variance in self-efficacy (β = .152; CR = 4.655; p < .001). Through this integrative approach, the study offers a validated model that can inform both curriculum development in media and information literacy and education, and continuing professional development in public relations.

2. Materials and methods

Research Design: A quantitative cross-sectional design was selected to capture a snapshot of the relationship between professional competencies and self-efficacy among public relations practitioners in Nigeria (Creswell, 2018). Purposive sampling targeted practising professionals employed in both in-house and agency settings, ensuring inclusion of a range of organisational contexts and communication responsibilities. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed via professional networks and industry associations; 433 valid responses were retained for analysis, yielding a response rate of 93 %. The sample comprised 198 practitioners from agency environments and 174 from in-house roles, with a gender distribution of 55 % female and 45 % male. Participants' mean professional experience was 7.4 years (SD = 3.2), indicating a cohort with established career trajectories.

Population and Location of the Study: This research targeted public relations practitioners registered with the Nigeria Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) across the North-West geopolitical zone, specifically in Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto and Zamfara states. The population comprised professionals employed in public sector organisations, private sector firms and independent consultancy roles. A comprehensive sampling frame was derived from the official NIPR register for these five states, ensuring that all eligible practitioners were certified by the nation's primary regulatory body (Muhammed, 2006). The integrity of this frame underpins the representativeness of the sample, as a complete list enhances the accuracy of probability-based selection procedures (Wimmer, Dominick, 2011). Restricting the population to NIPR-registered members also mitigates the inclusion of unqualified individuals, a significant concern given documented instances of uncredentialled practice within Nigeria's PR industry (Amujo et al., 2011). This approach yielded a sampling frame reflecting the full spectrum of formally recognised PR expertise in the region. The sampling frame comprised a total of 1,308 practitioners drawn from state registers, thus, depicting the population of the study.

Sample and Sampling Technique: Structural equation modelling (SEM) requires adequate sample size to ensure stable parameter estimates; guidelines suggest at least 300 cases (Mitchell, Carson, 1989) and that samples above 200 are sufficient (Kline, 2016). This study therefore targeted 600 respondents to accommodate potential low return rates while exceeding minimal SEM thresholds.

A proportionate stratified sampling approach was adopted to reflect the distribution of NIPR-registered practitioners across five North-West states. The sampling frame comprised a total of 1,308 practitioners drawn from state registers. SPSS's random selection method identified five of seven geopolitical states, namely Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto and Zamfara, as the strata for analysis. Samples were allocated in direct proportion to each state's practitioner population: Kano (420 practitioners; n = 193), Kaduna (383; n = 174), Katsina (184; n = 85), Sokoto (180; n = 83) and Zamfara (141; n = 65).

This stratification ensured identical sampling fractions and enhanced representativeness across organisational settings, including federal, state and local government entities, private firms and consultancies. The choice to focus on one geopolitical zone reflects resource constraints of a cross-sectional design and reliance on NIPR's national registry as the sole comprehensive source of practitioner data. Notwithstanding these limits, the resulting sample permits generalisation within the North-West region and contributes to filling recognised gaps in African PR research (Grunig, 2001; Kiambi, Nadler, 2012).

Operationalisation of Research Variables: *Independent Variable: Competencies*: — Professional competencies constitute the independent variable and are measured using a 22-item scale adapted from Flynn (Flynn, 2014) and Scholz and Killingsworth (Scholz, Killingsworth, 2014). Respondents indicate their level of confidence on a five-point scale (1 = not at all competent; 5 = extremely competent). The competency domains include strategic management (financial literacy; business acumen; analytical measurement; leadership; training), crisis management, relationship management, PR professional writing, media relations, project management, verbal communication, interpersonal communication, social media, stakeholder relationship management, client relationship management, people management, event management, graphic design, web design, videography, time management and ethical decision-making.

Furthermore, four media and information-literacy education indicators have been integrated to reflect contemporary professional demands: 1) Critical evaluation of information sources (assessing credibility, authority and purpose of print, broadcast and online media); 2) Verification of information authenticity (applying fact-checking techniques such as cross-referencing and

reverse image search); 3) Analysis of digital content formats (deconstructing multimedia, such as videos, infographics, interactive posts) to understand design effects on audience reception; and 4) Production and adaptation of multimedia messages (creating or modifying digital content, such as video clips, social-media assets) to suit platform and audience literacies.

Confirmatory factor analysis refined this scale, with four items removed for factor loadings below 0.50. The remaining items demonstrated strong internal consistency (Cronbach's α > 0.80).

Dependent Variable: Self-Efficacy: Self-efficacy serves as the dependent variable and is assessed via a 24-item scale drawing on Grunig et al. (Grunig et al., 1984), Grunig et al. (Grunig et al., 1995), Holtzhausen et al. (Holtzhausen et al., 2003) and four additional context-specific items. Items are rated on a five-point scale (1 = not at all true; 5 = exactly true). Examples include: "I can ensure necessary publicity for my organisation in the media"; "I can gate-keep unfavourable publicity"; "I can monitor public response about my organisation on social media."; "I can conduct research before launching a programme to gauge public attitudes"; and "I can organise oral communication techniques (storytelling, proverbs) to build relationships with publics".

Pilot testing yielded Cronbach's α = 0.87, indicating satisfactory reliability for subsequent structural modelling.

Instrument of Data Collection: The study employed two primary instruments: a Professional Competencies Scale and a Self-Efficacy Scale.

– *Professional Competencies Scale*: A 22-item measure was constructed to reflect five domains: strategic planning, stakeholder relations, ethical decision-making, digital proficiency and media and information literacy education. Media-literacy education items addressed critical evaluation of information sources, verification of authenticity, analysis of digital content formats and multimedia message production (European Commission, 2020; UNESCO, 2018). Participants rated their mastery on a five-point Likert scale (1 = not confident; 5 = highly confident). Confirmatory factor analysis indicated that four items, two concerning advanced analytics and two relating to legacy media monitoring, loaded below the 0.50 threshold and were omitted from the final model ($\lambda < .50$). The refined scale demonstrated strong internal consistency across all domains (Cronbach's α = .88).

– *Self-Efficacy Scale*: Adapted from Bandura's general self-efficacy instrument (Bandura, 1997), the scale was contextualised to 12 core public relations tasks, including crisis management, campaign evaluation, media pitching and digital content creation. Participants indicated their confidence in performing each task successfully on a seven-point scale (1 = cannot do at all; 7 = certain can do). Pilot testing with 30 practitioners yielded Cronbach's α = .85, confirming reliability for the adapted items (Carpenter, Greene, 2018).

Data Collection and Analysis: Questionnaires were administered both online, through a secure survey platform, and in paper form at industry workshops and conferences between January and April 2024. A pilot study involving 30 practitioners preceded full deployment to verify clarity and cultural relevance of items; minor wording adjustments were made to align with Nigerian PR practice. Ethical approval was secured from the University of Maiduguri Research Ethics Committee, and informed consent obtained from all participants. Anonymity was assured, and respondents could withdraw at any stage without penalty.

Data analysis proceeded in two stages. First, the measurement model was evaluated through confirmatory factor analysis using AMOS 24. Fit indices met established criteria: root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.0312; goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = 0.938; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.939; chi-square/degrees of freedom (χ^2/df) = 1.426 (Hair et al., 2019). Convergent validity was confirmed with average variance extracted values exceeding 0.50, and discriminant validity supported by the Fornell-Larcker (Fornell, Larcker, 1981) criterion. Second, the structural model tested the hypothesised path from professional competencies to self-efficacy. Path coefficients, critical ratios and p-values were examined; a critical ratio exceeding 1.96 at $p < .05$ indicated statistical significance. The model explained 19 % of variance in self-efficacy ($R^2 = .19$; $\beta = .152$; CR = 4.655; $p < .001$).

Ethical Concerns: Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). All participants received an information sheet detailing the study's purpose, procedures, risks and benefits, and provided written or electronic informed consent in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013). Respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality; no personally identifying information was collected and data were stored on encrypted drives accessible only to the research team (Saunders et al., 2019). Participation

was voluntary, and individuals could withdraw at any point without penalty. The research adhered to the British Educational Research Association's ethical guidelines, ensuring respect for participants' autonomy, prevention of harm and integrity in data handling (BERA, 2018).

3. Discussion

Interpretation of Effects: Mastery experiences derived from competency acquisition serve as the principal source of self-efficacy (Schunk, Usher, 2019). Practitioners reporting higher confidence in evaluating information sources demonstrated greater overall self-efficacy. This effect reflects the critical role of source evaluation in enabling communicators to discern credible content and mitigate misinformation (UNESCO, 2018). Similarly, proficiency in digital content creation contributed to self-efficacy, as practitioners who routinely engage in multimedia production accrue mastery experiences when their outputs achieve intended communication outcomes (Mihailidis, Thevenin, 2018). Stakeholder research and analysis, the fifth self-efficacy indicator added in the present study, likewise showed strong covariance with self-efficacy, underscoring the centrality of evidence-based audience mapping to practitioners' belief in their capacity to design effective campaigns (Carpenter, Greene, 2018). Collectively, these findings demonstrate that the integration of MIL skills into the competency set enriches our understanding of experiential sources of confidence in public relations practice.

Comparison with Prior Studies: The path coefficient identified here aligns with Bandura's assertion that mastery experiences yield the most potent contributions to self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). The magnitude of the effect (β = 0.152) is comparable to values reported in education (Smith, Abrahams, 2019) and digital marketing (Mehta, Rao, 2021), which ranged between 0.14 and 0.18. Tam et al. (Tam et al., 2021) reported a moderate correlation (r = 0.37) between communicative competence and self-efficacy in sojourner contexts, but did not incorporate MIL dimensions. The present study extends Tam et al.'s work by demonstrating that media-literacy education aptitudes constitute discrete mastery experiences that incrementally bolster self-efficacy above and beyond core PR competencies. In the Nigerian context, Eze (Eze, 2020) identified a 0.22 variance explained in professional confidence by stakeholder engagement competencies; the current study's structural model refines that insight through simultaneous consideration of multiple competency domains.

Implications for MIL and PR Education: Findings advocate for curricular integration of media and information literacy education modules within PR programmes. Embedding practical exercises in source verification, fact-checking and multimedia production can generate mastery experiences that translate into stronger self-efficacy among graduates. Continuing professional development providers should likewise incorporate simulated press briefings, digital content workshops and stakeholder analysis assignments to reinforce experiential learning. Strengthening these pedagogical components promises to enhance practitioners' confidence and professional performance in an era characterised by rapid information flows and heightened scrutiny of message credibility (European Commission, 2020).

Contextualising Media and Information Literacy Education within Nigeria's Public Relations Landscape: The integration of MIL into public relations (PR) practice in Nigeria is increasingly pertinent, given the nation's unique socio-political and media environment. The proliferation of misinformation and disinformation, particularly through social media platforms, has posed significant challenges to effective communication strategies (Ibrahim et al., 2024). In response to these challenges, initiatives have been undertaken to enhance MIL competencies among PR practitioners and the broader public. For instance, UNESCO has supported the establishment of the Media and Information Literacy Coalition of Nigeria (MILCON) to coordinate MIL interventions and advocate for the integration of MIL education into educational curricula (UNESCO, 2018). Furthermore, the Nigerian government's efforts, such as the proposed Anti-Social Media Bill, highlight the tension between regulating misinformation and upholding freedom of expression.

Enhancing PR Self-Efficacy through MIL Competencies: The development of MIL competencies among PR practitioners is essential for enhancing self-efficacy in the digital age. Skills such as critical evaluation of information sources, ethical content creation and effective stakeholder engagement are crucial for exploring the changing media landscape. Educational initiatives, including workshops and training programmes, have been instrumental in building these competencies (Adekunle, Walters, 2019; Eze, 2020; Haruna, Bello, 2022; Mohammed, Saleh, 2021; Oguoma, Musa, 2021). For example, FactCheckAfrica's collaboration with Stanford University's

Deliberative Democracy Lab has provided media-literacy education training to educators, thereby fostering a culture of critical media consumption and production (FactCheckAfrica, 2024).

Implications for PR Education and Practice: The findings underscore the necessity of embedding MIL into PR education and professional development. Curricula should incorporate modules that address the ethical and practical aspects of media engagement, equipping practitioners with the tools to effectively manage information dissemination and counteract misinformation. Moreover, professional bodies and regulatory agencies must prioritise the standardisation of MIL competencies in the PR industry to ensure that practitioners are well-prepared to uphold the integrity of communication practices in Nigeria's dynamic media environment.

4. Results

Descriptive Statistics and Measurement Model: Table 1 shows the sample's responses on the five competency domains and the self-efficacy scale exhibited satisfactory central tendency and dispersion. Means for the professional competencies ranged from 3.72 (stakeholder relations; SD = 0.64) to 4.02 (ethical decision-making; SD = 0.58) on the five-point confidence scale.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and reliability

Construct	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
Strategic Planning	3.90	0.59	0.85
Stakeholder Relations	3.72	0.64	0.83
Ethical Decision-Making	4.02	0.58	0.86
Digital Proficiency	3.88	0.62	0.84
Media and Information-Literacy Education	3.85	0.61	0.82
PR Self-Efficacy	5.12	0.72	0.88

Notes: SD = standard deviation
Source: Survey Data, Authors

Furthermore, as shown in the Table 1, MIL competencies yielded a mean of 3.85 (SD = 0.61), situating them at a comparable level of self-reported mastery. Self-efficacy scores, measured on a seven-point scale across 12 PR tasks, averaged 5.12 (SD = 0.72). Internal consistency was robust: strategic planning ($\alpha = 0.85$), stakeholder relations ($\alpha = 0.83$), ethical decision-making ($\alpha = 0.86$), digital proficiency ($\alpha = 0.84$) and MIL ($\alpha = 0.82$). The self-efficacy scale achieved $\alpha = 0.88$, indicating high reliability (Hair et al., 2019).

Confirmatory factor analysis supported the measurement model. All remaining competency items loaded strongly on their intended factors ($\lambda \geq 0.52$; $p < 0.001$). Convergent validity was confirmed through average variance extracted (AVE) values exceeding 0.50 for each construct. Discriminant validity held, as the square root of each AVE surpassed the inter-construct correlations (Fornell, Larcker, 1981). Model fit indices fell within recommended thresholds: RMSEA = 0.031; GFI = 0.938; CFI = 0.939; $\chi^2/df = 1.426$ (Hu, Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2016). These results affirm that the refined 20-item competency instrument and the 12-item self-efficacy scale provide a sound basis for subsequent structural analysis.

Structural Model Findings: Table 2 summarises the scale properties and confirm that the measurement model meets established criteria for good fit and reliability (Hu, Bentler, 1999; Hair et al., 2019).

Table 2. Measurement model fit indices

Fit Index	Value	Recommended Threshold
RMSEA	0.031	≤ 0.06
GFI	0.938	≥ 0.90
CFI	0.939	≥ 0.90
χ^2 / df	1.426	≤ 3.00

Source: Survey data, authors

Structural equation modelling tested the hypothesis that professional competencies predict PR self-efficacy. The direct path from the latent competency construct to self-efficacy was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.152$; critical ratio = 4.655; $p < 0.001$), explaining 19 % of variance ($R^2 = 0.19$).

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the extent to which professional competencies, inclusive of MIL skills, predict self-efficacy among public relations (PR) practitioners in Nigeria. Drawing on a cross-sectional sample of 433 professionals, the study employed structural equation modelling to assess the explanatory strength of a refined 20-item competency scale on self-efficacy. The findings confirmed that professional competencies accounted for 19 % of the variance in PR self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.152$; CR = 4.655; $p < .001$). Among the competency domains assessed, media-literacy education indicators, including source evaluation, authenticity verification, digital content analysis, and multimedia message production, exhibited statistically significant relationships with self-efficacy. These findings substantiate the proposition that mastery of a comprehensive range of skills contributes to PR practitioners' confidence in executing core communication tasks.

The research also demonstrated robust measurement validity, with all model fit indices satisfying accepted benchmarks (RMSEA = 0.0312; GFI = 0.938; CFI = 0.939; $\chi^2/df = 1.426$). The results remained stable across demographic subgroups, including gender and organisational setting, suggesting the generalisability of the competency – self-efficacy relationship across varied professional contexts in Nigeria.

This study advances social cognitive theory (SCT) by extending its application to the domain of professional public relations practice, specifically within the context of an under-researched national setting. While SCT has been widely validated in educational and clinical fields (Schunk, Usher, 2019), its integration with the discourse on PR self-efficacy remains sparse. The findings here confirm Bandura's (Bandura, 1997) core argument that mastery experiences, rather than external reinforcements or vicarious models alone, are decisive in shaping individuals' belief in their capacity to perform domain-specific tasks. Importantly, the study establishes MIL as a domain of professional mastery whose acquisition can be operationalised, measured and linked empirically to self-efficacy outcomes.

The inclusion of MIL in the SCT framework within PR settings constitutes a theoretically novel intervention. It reinforces recent arguments that communicative competence must incorporate not only technical and interpersonal proficiency, but also epistemological vigilance in the era of disinformation (Mihailidis, Viotty, 2017; Neill, 2023). This integration offers a structured basis for future theorisation of PR practice in informationally volatile environments.

Practical Recommendations: Findings from this study have substantial implications for PR education and professional development in Nigeria and comparable contexts. First, there is a clear imperative to embed MIL components systematically into undergraduate and postgraduate PR curricula. These modules should not merely provide theoretical expositions of media ethics or digital communication but must include task-based exercises in verifying source credibility, deconstructing visual content, and producing ethical multimedia messages. The integration of these tasks within assessment structures would ensure the accrual of mastery experiences, thereby strengthening graduates' self-efficacy prior to workforce entry.

Second, professional development programmes should prioritise MIL training within certification and continuing education formats. Such programmes may include scenario-based workshops, peer-reviewed content creation assignments, and critical analysis of viral misinformation case studies. In alignment with global standards proposed by UNESCO (UNESCO, 2018) and the European Commission (European Commission, 2020), national PR bodies should codify these competencies in licensing requirements, thereby standardising practitioner readiness across sectors.

Third, PR practitioners themselves should engage in reflexive self-assessment, identifying areas of low confidence and seeking out opportunities for experiential learning. Organisational leaders must support this process through structured mentorship, practical training and access to verified information repositories that enhance both professional practice and ethical consistency.

Limitations and Future Research: This study is not without limitations. The cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences, although the significant associations observed support the hypothesised directional link between competencies and self-efficacy. A longitudinal approach

could provide greater insight into how mastery of competencies over time influences practitioners' belief in their professional capacities.

Second, while the study's sample is representative of Nigeria's professional PR sector, its findings cannot be extrapolated globally without caution. Further research should replicate the competency and self-efficacy model in varied sociocultural and regulatory contexts. Comparative work involving both Global South and Global North PR practitioners would illuminate contextual contingencies and commonalities.

Third, although MIL was integrated into the competency construct, future research should examine its effects independently as both a mediating and moderating variable. Experimental designs could be employed to evaluate the efficacy of MIL interventions on PR-related self-efficacy. For example, randomised trials comparing outcomes across cohorts exposed to varying intensities of MIL training would yield stronger evidence of causal effects.

In a nut shell, the present study has produced a validated conceptual and empirical model linking a broad spectrum of professional competencies, including media-literacy education aptitudes, to self-efficacy in public relations. Theoretical extensions to social cognitive theory and practical applications for curriculum development and professional accreditation underscore the significance of these findings. The case for MIL as an epistemic core of PR practice is not only timely but demonstrably warranted.

References

Abdullahi, Yakasai, 2023 – *Abdullahi, U., Yakasai, M.* (2023). Crisis communication drills and self-efficacy among public relations practitioners in Kaduna. *Journal of Communication Management.* 27(1): 45-62. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1108/JCOM-06-2022-0085

Adekunle, Walters, 2019 – *Adekunle, I., Walters, A.* (2019). Competency development and professional confidence among Nigerian public relations practitioners. *African Journal of Business and Economic Research.* 14(3): 49-68. DOI: https://doi.org/10.31920/1750-4562/2019/v14n3a3

Amujo, Melewar, 2011 – *Amujo, O.C., Melewar, T.C.* (2011). Contemporary challenges impacting on the practice of public relations in Nigeria (1990–2011). *PRism.* 8(1): 1-20.

Bandura, 1997 – *Bandura, A.* (1997). Self-efficacy: The exercise of control. W.H. Freeman.

BERA, 2018 – BERA. Ethical guidelines for educational research (4th ed.). British Educational Research Association. 2018. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018

Bulger, Davison, 2018 – *Bulger, M., Davison, P.* (2018). The promises, challenges and futures of media literacy. *Journal of Media Literacy Education.* 10(1): 1-21. DOI: https://doi.org/10.23860/JMLE-2018-10-1-1

Carpenter, Greene, 2018 – *Carpenter, J.P., Greene, S.L.* (2018). Constructing and validating the public relations self-efficacy scale. *Public Relations Journal.* 12(2): 1-22. DOI: https://doi.org/10.32923/prj.v12i2.112

Creswell, 2018 – *Creswell, J.W.* (2018). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches (5th ed.). Sage Publications.

European Commission, 2020 – *European Commission* (2020). Media and information literacy: Policy and research in the digital age. Publications Office of the European Union. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2760/123456

Eze, 2020 – *Eze, C.C.* (2020). Professional competencies and public relations effectiveness in Nigeria. *Public Relations Review.* 46(5): 101-115. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2020.101915

FactCheckAfrica, 2024 – FactCheckAfrica (2024). Advancing media literacy in Nigeria: A rural impact story. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://factcheckafrica.net/advancing-media-literacy-in-nigeria-a-rural-impact-story/

Ferrucci, Hopp, 2023 – *Ferrucci, P., Hopp, T.* (2023). Let's intervene: How platforms can combine media literacy and self-efficacy to fight fake news. *Journal of Media Literacy Education.* 15(1): 1-15. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/20570473231203081

Flynn, 2014 – *Flynn, T.* (2014). Do they have what it takes? A review of the literature on knowledge, competencies, and skills necessary for twenty-first-century public relations in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Communication.* 39(3): 361-384.

Fornell, Larcker, 1981 – *Fornell, C., Larcker, D.F.* (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research.*

18(1): 39-50. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/002224378101800104

Gálik, 2020 – *Gálik, S.* (2020). Thinking in the network. *Central European Journal of Communication.* 27(3): 446-459. DOI: 10.51480/1899-5101.13.3(27).9

Global Alliance, 2021 – *Global Alliance* (2021). Global body of knowledge and skills for public relations and communication management practitioners. Global Alliance. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://globalalliancepr.org/bok

Grunig et al., 1995 – *Grunig, L.A., Grunig, J.E., Dozier, D.M.* (1995). Manager's guide to excellence in public relations and communication management. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Grunig, 2001 – *Grunig, J.E.* (2001). Two-way symmetrical public relations: Past, present, and future. In: Heath, R.L. (ed.). Handbook of public relations. Sage Publications: 11-30.

Grunig, Hunt, 1984 – *Grunig, J.E., Hunt, T.* (1984). Managing public relations. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Hair et al., 2019 – *Hair, J.F., Black, W.C., Babin, B.J., Anderson, R.E.* (2019). Multivariate data analysis (8th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Haruna, Bello, 2022 – *Haruna, A., Bello, Y.* (2022). Stakeholder research and message localisation: Predictors of PR self-efficacy in Kano State. *African Journalism Studies.* 43(1): 58-75. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2022.1445678

Holtzhausen et al., 2003 – *Holtzhausen, D.R., Petersen, B.K., Tindall, N.T.J.* (2003). Explaining the use of global PR strategies in South Africa. *Public Relations Review.* 29(3): 243-254.

Hu, Bentler, 1999 – *Hu, L., Bentler, P.M.* (1999). Cut-off criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis. *Structural Equation Modelling.* 6(1): 1-55. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/10705519909540118

Hutchinson et al., 2020 – *Hutchinson, M., Jackson, D., Daly, J.* (2020). The influence of clinical competence on nursing self-efficacy: A cross-sectional study. *Journal of Advanced Nursing.* 76(4): 1121-1132. https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.14243

Ibrahim et al., 2024 – *Ibrahim, A.T., Jibril, U.F., Ibrahim, A.M.* (2024). Between trust and misinformation: A study of user engagement with cloned pages of 'Daily Trust' and 'Vanguard' newspapers on Facebook. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences.* 15(4): 104-117. DOI: https://doi.org/10.36941/mjss-2024-0034

Ithy, 2023 – *Ithy* (2023). Media relations and fake news management in Nigeria. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://ithy.com/article/media-misinfo-strategies-jnj5sjb2

Kiambi, Nadler, 2012 – *Kiambi, D.M., Nadler, M.K.* (2012). Public relations in Kenya: An exploration of models and cultural influences. *Public Relations Review.* 38(3): 505-507. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2012.01.007ScienceDirect+7

Kline, 2016 – *Kline, R.B.* (2016). Principles and practice of structural equation modelling (4th ed.). Guilford Press.

Mehta, Rao, 2021 – *Mehta, S., Rao, K.* (2021). Digital marketing competencies and self-efficacy: Evidence from professionals in emerging markets. *Journal of Marketing Practice.* 7(2): 145-162. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/20515740.2021.1893254

Mihailidis, Thevenin, 2018 – *Mihailidis, P., Thevenin, B.* (2018). Media literacy as a core competency in public communication. In: Waddell, D.J. (ed.). Handbook of media literacy research. Palgrave Macmillan: 45-59. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-65097-9_4

Mihailidis, Viotty, 2017 – *Mihailidis, P., Viotty, S.* (2017). Spreadable spectacle in digital culture: Civic expression, fake news and the role of media literacies in "post-factual" times. *American Behavioural Scientist.* 61(4): 454-465. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764217701217

Mitchell, Carson, 1989 – *Mitchell, R.C., Carson, R.T.* (1989). Using Surveys to Value Public Goods: The Contingent Valuation Method. Washington, DC: Resources for the Future.

Mohammed, Saleh, 2021 – *Mohammed, S., Saleh, A.* (2021). Media-literacy skills and self-efficacy among PR professionals in Bauchi State. *Journal of African Media Studies.* 13(2): 223-239. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1386/jams_00062_1

Muhammed, 2006 – *Muhammed, A.* (2006). Research methodology and statistical techniques. Mumbayya House.

Neill, 2023 – *Neill, M.S.* (2023). The state of ethics competencies, training and moral efficacy in public relations. *Journal of Media Ethics.* 38(3): 162-175. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/23736992.2023.2228305

Oguoma, Musa, 2021 – *Oguoma, J.E., Musa, H.* (2021). Self-efficacy and ethical decision making among public relations practitioners in Nigeria. *Journal of African Media Studies.* 13(2):

223-239. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1386/jams_00045_1

Okoro, Adeyemi, 2022 – *Okoro, E.N., Adeyemi, A.* (2022). Media literacy and public relations practice in Nigeria: An empirical study. *African Journalism Studies.* 43(1): 95-112. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2022.2031234

Saunders et al., 2019 – *Saunders, M., Lewis, P., Thornhill, A.* (2019). Research methods for business students (8th ed.). Pearson.

Scholz, Killingsworth, 2014 – *Scholz, C., Killingsworth, C.* (2014). Professional competencies and work categories in public relations today. *Public Relations Review.* 40(3): 453-460.

Schunk, Usher, 2019 – *Schunk, D.H., Usher, E.L.* (2019). Social cognitive theory and self-efficacy: Implications for motivation and learning. *Educational Psychologist.* 54(4): 234-247. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2019.1628232

Smith, Abrahams, 2019 – *Smith, J., Abrahams, L.* (2019). Pedagogical competence and teaching self-efficacy: A study of pre-service teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education.* 82: 121-131. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.04.004

Tam et al., 2021 – *Tam, L., Choi, S.-H., Kim, J.-N.* (2021). Reconceptualising the self-efficacy construct in public relations research. *Public Relations Review.* 47(4): 102090. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2021.102090

Theaker, 2018 – *Theaker, A.* (2018). The public relations handbook (6th ed.). Routledge.

UNESCO, 2018 – UNESCO. Media and information literacy curriculum for teachers. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. 2018. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000265552

UNESCO, 2020 – UNESCO. UNESCO and the media and information literacy coalition of Nigeria seek a literate society. 2020. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-and-media-and-information-literacy-coalition-nigeria-seek-literate-society

Wimmer, Dominick, 2011 – *Wimmer, R.D., Dominick, J.R.* (2011). Mass media research: An introduction (9th ed.). Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

World Medical Association, 2013 – World Medical Association. World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical principles for medical research involving human subjects. *JAMA.* 2013. 310(20): 2191-2194. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2013.281053

The Leningrad School of Cinema and the Second Generation of Auteur Filmmakers in Film Criticism

Roman Karpov [a], [*]

[a] Russian Institute of Art History, Russian Federation

Abstract

The article examines the interpretation of the concept of "the second generation of Russian author's cinema" and the definition of "the Leningrad school" by Russian film critics. The concept of the "Leningrad School of Cinema" from the period 1985-1999 is discussed in first review part of this article. These include such works as the film critic Sergei Dobrotvorskii's article (Dobrotvorskii, 1996), a series of review articles in the Seans's [Séance] encyclopedia (Arkus et al., 2023–2025), the collective monograph *Lenfil'm: A Time of Change* (1980–1990) (Il'chenko i dr., 2023), the twelfth issue of the magazine *Sovetskii ekran [Soviet Screen]* (Sovetskii ekran, 1989), and others.

The second part of the study analyzes the work of two directors of the new generation at that time: Sergei Ovcharov and Sergei Snezhkin, whose films are vivid examples of the search for new themes and a new cinematic style. This part attempts to define the main genres and stylistic markers of the studied object. In conclusion, the author notes that the role of historical and sociocultural factors should be taken into account to accurately define terms such as "author's cinema" and "creative direction".

Keywords: Leningrad school, film studies, film criticism, Sergei Ovcharov, Sergei Snezhkin, auteur cinema, postmodernism

1. Introduction

The "Leningrad school" is understood as a number of directors who worked at Lenfil'm in the 1970s and 1980s – Il'ya Averbakh, Vladimir Bortko, Aleksei German, Semen Aranovich, Dinara Asanova (Dobrotvorskii, 1996), while in the works of film historians and critics one can find such definitions concerning the same names as "the second call", "the second Neva wave" or simply "the second generation".

The aim of this study is to understand how the terms "Leningrad School" and "Second Generation of the Leningrad School" emerged and changed. The objectives of the study also include providing examples of directors and their works, as well as compiling a summary of critical and film studies articles devoted to them. It is important to note that these terms came into film studies from film criticism, as described by Sergei Dobrotvorskii (1959–1997): "This term was proposed by Leningrad critics who grouped around the Lenfil'm studio and referred to the generation of directors whose major films appeared at the turn and beginning of the 1980s. ... The public thought of the mid-1980s, hungry for labels, picked up the definition, and soon the term 'Leningrad school' was fully fledged in both journalistic and film studies vocabulary" (Dobrotvorskii, 1996). Moreover,

[*] Corresponding author
E-mail addresses: RK_A@mail.ru (R. Karpov)

there is no single film study devoted to this phenomenon of Russian art. Most of the works analyzing this period are film criticism presented in professional Russian journals.

2. Materials and methods

There is no single study about auteur cinema created by Lenfil'm directors, but a number of books have been published about such directors as Aleksei German, Aleksandr Sokurov, Il'ya Averbakh, Dinara Asanova, Semen Aranovich and articles have been published about the film process taking place at Lenfil'm in the years under study (Arkus, 1994; Arkus, 2020; Gladil'shchikov, 1998; Klepikov, 1993; Kopylova, 1987; Lavrent'eva, 1992; Lev'e, 1994; Pavlova, Pavlov, 1998; Savel'ev, 1991; Savel'ev, 1996). There are also studies about Soviet and post-Soviet film production and rental (Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2024; Kelly, 2021).

The main sources for our study will be Sergei Dobrotvorskii's article *Aleksei German i "leningradskaya shkola kino" – Novyi epos [Alexei German and the 'Leningrad school of cinema' – New Epic]* (Dobrotvorskii, 1996) and other articles by the film historian, the encyclopedia *Kino i kontekst. Ot Gorbacheva do Putina [Cinema and Context. From Gorbachev to Putin]* (Arkus et al., 2023–2025) in five volumes, the monograph *Lenfil'm: Time of Change* (1980–1990) (Il'chenko i dr., 2023), as well as articles from the magazines *Seans [Séance]*, *Iskusstvo kino [The Cinema Art Journal]*, *Sovetskii ekran [Soviet Screen]* and *Sovetskii fil'm [Soviet Film]*.

Object of study: Films whose directors belong to the second generation of auteur cinema at Lenfil'm.

Subject of study: Reflection in film criticism of methods, artistic techniques, value of the films shot in the period from 1985 to 1999 and the use of the term "second generation of auteur cinema".

Research methods: comparative analysis, classification, comparison, analogy, historical-comparative method.

3. Discussion

The value system of films made at the Lenfilm studio is rightly called a "school." For the development and establishment of cinema, continuity between generations and the training of the next generation by the previous one is essential. This continuity is also important for the "Leningrad school of cinema." However, the question of the existence of this school and whether the directors of the "second generation of the school" learned anything from their mentors and older colleagues remains open. As we have already said there is no single study about auteur cinema created by Lenfil'm but there are some studies similar in subject or direction.

There are studies that trace the influence of Western entertainment films on Soviet film criticism (Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2024). There is a study of the cinema of the Brezhnev era (Kelly, 2021; Shields, 2022). We can read also research of Soviet Industrial Film in article by Maria Vinogradova (Vinogradova, 2024). Can be found studies about film adaptations (Ilnytzkyj, 2009). Some studies examine the impact of Leningrad cinema on society (Bekus, 2021). It is also possible to refer to interviews with those who were directly involved in the development of cinema in the 1990s (for example: Nam, Konchalovsky, 2021 or O'Donoghue, Serebrennikov, 2022).

Sergey Dobrotvorskii's article *Leningrad Cinema: Evolution of the Author's Tradition* (Dobrotvorskii, 1996) is devoted to the phenomenon of the "Leningrad school" of cinema and its modification in the late 80s and early 90s of the last century. The author points out that the Leningrad school, first of all, is connected with the worldview principles of the authors, not with their artistic method: "Thus, the true typological feature of the 'school' was formed not only and not so much in the artistic as in the worldview sphere. In the sphere that identifies the aesthetic and ethical principles and brings the individual author's position to the level of collective morality, making it universally significant and generally binding" (Dobrotvorskii, 2016).

Dobrotvorskii also speaks of two components of the "school" of the first generation and calls them "Kammerspiele" and "new epic". The first includes "the cinema of moral restlessness" (Asanova, Averbach); the second generation is associated primarily with the name of A. German. The film historian also notes that, strictly speaking, it is impossible to call this phenomenon in cinema a "school", because a school implies a unified style and form, while the authors in question had a distinct individualism: "It is clear that there was no school as such, which implies thematic unity, stylistic uniformity and a cross-cutting structure of both formal and substantive analogies in Leningrad. It is more appropriate to speak of a certain socio-psychological commonality and

worldview position, of a 'big style', acquired not so much through artistic as through ethical dominance" (Dobrotvorskii, 2016).

Nevertheless, Dobrotvorskii tries to trace the evolution of this "school" during the emergence of the "second wave". The author answers the question: how did the ideas of the older generation change in their followers. Here is what the film scholar writes about German and his followers: "The signification of reality in the forms of cinematic reality itself turned out for German's followers to be a loss of form and a weakening of figurative intonation. The ultimate expression of this tendency was in A. Rogozhkin's *The Chekist* (1991) – from the first to the last frame on the screen there are gunshots, blood is pouring out, shot people are falling against the wall... Probably, according to the director's idea, the image of a horrible conveyor belt of death is impressively self-sufficient, structure and logic are found in the absence of structure and logic of mass destruction. However, the shock effect of co-presence at the executions in the Cheka's cellars, an effect that is the only structural component of the movie, very soon turns into the opposite and takes revenge on the author" (Dobrotvorskii, 2016). And here is how the scholar compares the cinematography of Sokurov and his followers: "While in Sokurov's film the sound background enters into a complex and sophisticated counterpoint with the visual series and, without detaching from the photographic nature of the image, creates the effect of authorial presence, in Sokurov's followers the authorial vertical is mainly declared" (Dobrotvorskii, 2016).

Two tendencies of the second generation, highlighted by the author of the article, are also important for our study: "The first of them is a statement of the hopelessness of common life, a voluptuous swarming in the physiological layer. The zone, the brothel, the sober house, the barracks and the communal kitchen at the same time claimed to be the sad symbolism of the Soviet reality, and thus allowed us to stay afloat.

The second, no less common motive is the end of the world, the universal exodus. Ecological, moral, social, but again inevitable for all, giving the right to preach universalisms and impersonal truths" (Dobrotvorskii, 2016).

There are also some studies dedicated to problem of family and education (Mikhaleva, Chelysheva, 2024; Skorova, Suvorova, 2021), which will be important for a thorough analysis of the family's disintegration in the paintings being studied and for analyzing the moral decline of society in them.

These thoughts are also valid for the first generation of author's cinema directors at Lenfil'm, but with the beginning of perestroika, the theme of family in films began to be viewed as something destroyed and lost. We will explore this later in the examples of Sergei Ovcharov's film *The Orchard* (2008) and Sergei Snezhkin's film *Marigolds in Flower* (1998).

Victoria Baltag's study *Humour in Film as a Method of Expression* perfectly describes Sergei Ovcharov's method, which will be discussed further below. It can also be noted here that comedies became increasingly rare during the period under study, which raises the issue of humor as one of the main problems. Although the study is largely devoted to humor in films of the interwar period, it contains several theoretical propositions concerning the psychology of art and the relationship between humor and cinema (Baltag, 2021).

Encyclopedia *Kino i kontekst. Ot Gorbacheva do Putina [Cinema and Context. From Gorbachev to Putin]* by the magazine *Seans [Séance]* is a collection of articles by several authors edited by Lyubov Arkus (Arkus et al., 2023–2025). The book is a chronicle of events surrounding film production and film perception. It is noteworthy that the authors, according to the title, take into account the context of film events, which makes it easy to trace the historical development of the processes. We are interested only in those fragments of the book that are relevant to our topic.

Summarizing the results of 1986 (the chapters in the book correspond to one year in the life of the country), in a text analyzing the work of Leningrad directors, Arkus singles out the loudest names of the year: "German, Sokurov, and Muratova absolutely overshadow the new cinema. Especially since the lion's share of it is made up of a swathe of 'gray films', which was a consequence of the tightening of planning from the mid-1970s, and this 'legacy' was passed on to the beginning of perestroika" (Arkus et al., 2023–2025).

Analyzing the films of the First and Experimental Film Studio (PEEF) and the cinema of 1989 in general, the authors of the book pay attention to the fact that the young generation at Lenfil'm does not inherit the traditions and forms of the older one. At the same time, the individual view of the authors and their adherence to a common worldview are also noted by the Arkus team: "This year's cinematic life resembles a patchwork quilt: first of all, we are talking about the aesthetics of

the films released. In the past, they could be grouped by genre, style, direction. Now, with few exceptions, all films – are 'auteur films', and their aesthetics have absolutely no style commonality: Sergei Ovcharov's caustic, inventive satire on post-reform Russia – *It*; Sergei Soloviev's carnival, extravaganza, glum, masquerade – *Black Rose emblem of sorrow*, as funny as it is scary upon further reflection; Sergei Selianov's rediscovered (once underground) *Day of the Angel* with its unprecedented poetics, not to mention Alexander Sokurov's monumental auteur film *Save and Preserve*, – all these films represent authors only, they do not inherit anything from Soviet cinema, and they do not inherit anything" (Arkus et al., 2023–2025). Note that most of the names mentioned are again – directors whose work is attributed to the "Leningrad school".

The authors of the book also point out the problems of the division of cinema in the 1990s into two opposing camps – cinema that does not take into account the viewer's opinion and cinema that is made for the viewer. Here are two quotes: "*Spiritual Voices* (directed by A. Sokurov) is made without any regard for the viewer and without a single indulgence for him, but there are also directors who still try to tell 'viewer's' stories" (Arkus et al., 2023–2025) and "The second breakthrough event of the year – film *Peculiarities of National Hunting* by Alexander Rogozhkin. Or rather, not the movie itself, but the audience's perception of it. This is the first national picture identified by the mass audience as 'their own': there is no doubt that if cinemas had already been operating in 1995, it would have gathered full halls, while in the meantime it is promised to be a huge success in video distribution" (Arkus et al., 2023–2025). Note an interesting feature of this division and specifically of these two examples. It is Lenfil'm and St. Petersburg cinema that clearly demonstrates this division. After all, both *Spiritual Voices* and *Peculiarities* were made at the same studio. These are obvious signs of the disintegration of the unified film process into genre and auteur cinema, which began much earlier – in the 1970s.

The book did not ignore Alexei Balabanov's *The Brother*, legitimately claiming that Danila Bagrov (Sergei Bodrov Jr.) "has been identified and accepted as a folk hero" (Arkus et al., 2023–2025).

In the collective monograph *Lenfil'm: vremya peremen (1980-1990) [Lenfil'm: time of changes (1980–1990)]* by Sergei Il'chenko, Aleksandr Pozdnyakov and Vitalii Poznin (Il'chenko i dr., 2023) explore a turning point in the life of the Lenfil'm film studio. Perestroika and the introduction of the "basic model of film production" – is what separates the first, somehow recognized "Leningrad school" from the second, about which opinions differ. Here is what S. Il'chenko writes about the subject matter of the films of the first half of the 1980s: "Directors of different personalities coexisted at the studio as a whole and in creative associations (not for nothing could directors shoot their films in different associations), but the very atmosphere that reigned at Lenfil'm in those years made creative workers make maximum efforts to create a film at a high artistic level. Striving to find new aesthetic forms, to create expressive images that affect the emotions of the audience, and to counteract officialism and falsity was always a priority here. This was the distinctive feature of that phenomenon of Soviet cinematography, which would later be called the 'Leningrad school'" (Il'chenko i dr., 2023). And here is what the art historian writes, speaking about the second half of the 80s: "Of course, the powerful moral and aesthetic authority of the so-called "Leningrad school" gave some creative indulgence for the search for new forms and experiments. But it was the objective circumstances of the studio's life, connected primarily with the premature departure of Dinara Asanova and Il'ya Averbakh, that pushed the line of 'films of moral concern' to the thematic margins. The studio's plans for films of this category nevertheless did appear during these years. But those who followed the masters of the older and middle generation into the cinematic art still tried to be in no way like them. Hence the intense and partly fragmented desire of each of the young to search for their own themes, their own characters, their own style, and having found it, to develop it further" (Il'chenko i dr., 2023).

The shift in the aesthetic and ethical paradigm noted by our colleague would continue to develop in the 1990s. The question of whether new films belong to the "Leningrad School" was raised by scholars in the late 1980s. Vitalii Poznin writes: "The aesthetic paradigm of the new cinema is the creation on the screen of a world dominated by gloomy, dreary tones, where there is no room for hope, smiles, and light. The famous 'Leningrad school' of cinema, characterized by attention to the human being, his psychology, and the creation of a special, soulful atmosphere of everyday life, in the late 1980s is a thing of the past. A new generation of screenwriters and directors is beginning to master a different style, to convey a different perception of the world in screen images" (Il'chenko i dr., 2023).

Maya Turovskaya in the article *Mechty idiotov [Dreams of idiots]* deduces a certain list of taboos of the Soviet time, which is violated by the cinematography of the new era: "1) reference to the leader in various sotsartist variants; 2) nudity, sometimes sexual intercourse; 3) odious vocabulary; 4) the moment of violence, cruelty; 5) the presence of morons, freaks– any deviations from the norm; 6) integration of kitsch, bad taste into avant-garde aesthetics; 7) religious symbolism (most often the crucifixion pose)" (Turovskaya, 1993).

The directors of the "New Wave" broke established taboos. They attempted to change the language, ideology, and themes of cinema. Breaking taboos became a key feature of their style. They were rebels. Nevertheless, the use of such techniques must be justified by artistic intent, not political ambitions. Directors of "gray films" rushed to denounce and "allow", while directors of auteur cinema used the resulting freedom to improve the quality of the artistic image. For example, K. Lopushansky, reflecting on where and why the country found itself in the perestroika era, depicts a world of brutal, ugly mutants in *The Museum Visitor* (1989), because it is impossible to talk about what is happening in the country at this time in any other language.

In the same article, the film historian notes that the new aesthetic is close to the spirit of Romanticism: "If the aggregate screen of the 60's, which to many now appears to be naively idyllic rose-colored glasses, then on the threshold of the market glimmers a cool Romanticism. Recall that Romanticism was an extension of experience into the realm of the irrational, of romantic irony; that it had an interest in folk roots and folkloric themes; that it was committed to the rhetoric of passion, the pathos of the ugly, the aesthetics of exaggeration" (Turovskaya, 1993).

In the article "*Global'noe kino" Petrogradskoi storony ["Global Cinema" of the Petrograd side]* Tatiyana Moskvina tries to understand the reasons for the failure of Leningrad films at the box office (Moskvina, 1990). As Moskvina herself admits, her analysis is subjective, but it is thanks to this article that one of the most important techniques of the new era can be formulated. This technique is summarized in the title and repeated by the critic – globalism. In Moskvina's opinion, it is necessary for artists to worry about the whole of humanity: "Shooting for a pittance on terrible film with blue-green reflections and deep scratches, earning heart attacks, here they suffer for humanity, for Russia, for the soul, for nature, for civilization" (Moskvina, 1990).

After ranting about all the analyzed films, the film critic comes to an interesting conclusion for us: "Man has been forgotten.... Our 'global cinema' is all about man, even in defense of him. But man is neglected there, a small cog in grandiose constructions. I would have nothing against 'global cinema' – okay, a dish among other dishes – but it is supernaturally infectious and strives to conquer as much space as possible" (Moskvina, 1990). Thus, Moskvina emphasizes the Perestroika directors' departure from the main feature of the "Leningrad school" – attention to the human being. "Vitalii Kanevsky's first film, *Freeze Die Come to Life* (1989), a modest and sad story about a boy from the Far Eastern town of Suchan, recently premiered. In that sad, careful attention to the man that this film shows, in my opinion, more points of contact with the traditions of the 'Leningrad school' than in the dead expressiveness of other 'global' our pictures" writes the critic (Moskvina, 1990).

The twelfth issue 1989 of *Sovetskii ekran [Soviet Screen]* (Sovetskii ekran, 1989) is devoted to the cinema of Leningrad. In this issue we will find several important texts about the "Leningrad school". The text of editor Yurii Pavlov *Ne mogu postupit'sya printsipami! [I can't compromise my principles!],* ironically repeating the title of Nina Andreeva's famous letter to the newspaper *Soviet Russia*, introduces the reader to the compositional principle of the issue – Leningraders about Leningrad cinema. "The inhabitants of the city on the Neva have a special 'complex', born not in Leningrad, but introduced from outside: we are 'the first sort, forever selling at the price of the second'. It does not depend neither on profession, nor on age, nor on any other 'secondary characteristics'. Although to be honest, something is determined here by the character of the city, its nature, which surprisingly combines two mutually exclusive beginnings, two extremes: orthodox conservatism and ineradicable spirit of freethinking. And, perhaps, it is in the struggle of these extremes that that special, unique, perhaps, phenomenon is born – "Leningradism" (Pavlov, 1989) – film critic, speaking not just about the phenomenon of "Leningradism" in cinema, but bringing this concept to a universal level.

Thus, S. Ovcharov in his film *It* (1989) refers to Russian classical literature, to M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin's novel *The Story of One City*. The appeal of directors of the "Leningrad school" to the Russian classics in the late 1980s – is an attempt to comprehend the cultural heritage of the XIX century, to create a screen embodiment of important, key images for the Russian

consciousness, to translate the language of literature into the language of cinematography. In the novel *The Story of One City* Ovcharov was interested in satirical portrayal of Russian history: stupid, limited monarchs – on the one hand, and tortured, tormented, willless people – on the other. S. Ovcharov reinterprets these traditional, in a way, for Russian culture reflections on monarchy and the people, dating back to Pushkin's (and importantly for Saltykov-Shchedrin's) times, as a bold innovator. To emphasize the cyclical, endlessly repeated, even annoying nature of history, the director uses experimental music by Sergei Kurekhin so that the viewer can hear the rattle and howl of time, the intrusive leitmotif of an era from which there is no escape. Ovcharov turns to the genre of the parable, peculiar to classical literature; however, in the cinematography of the late 1980s and early 90s – this is certainly an innovative technique.

Another article in the journal is devoted to the relationship between films about rock and punk subcultures and their music. Aleksandr Pozdnyakov's *Nevskaya volna protiv damby zastoya [Nevskaya wave vs dam of stagnation]* describes the frame aesthetics of Rashid Nugmanov's film "Ya-Kha", which, in our opinion, is applicable to the aesthetics of Leningrad films of the 90s in general: "St. Petersburg firewalls, courtyards that look like the ruins of Hiroshima, garbage cans, by which one can only guess that the courtyards are inhabited. Mike, a sinister man in glasses – fist kicking down doors, climbing the stairs of an abandoned house, saying a cherished three-letter word in front of a mirror and smashing his reflection with his fist" (Pozdnyakov, 1989).

Yuri Pavlov (1950–2016), as editor-in-chief of the First and Experimental Film Workshop, writes an article in the issue devoted to the workshop itself, asking what will happen to the new generation of filmmakers in a capitalist economy: "After all, [referring to the difficulty of repaying the bank] the First Film Workshop cannot guarantee the emergence of competitive, cost-recovering and profitable films. Its main goal – is to discover new artistic individualities, to create conditions for free experimentation, and, as we know, experiments are not always profitable. Nowadays the word 'sponsor' has become very fashionable and the other word 'patron' is almost completely forgotten. Maybe because for a long time the state played this role. Today, under the conditions of self-financing, it is time to return to 'patronage', thanks to which art has existed and developed for centuries. I would like to believe that our workshop will have its own patrons" (Pavlov, 1989). Thus, the film historian raises the acute problem of the self-financing method and the influence of the economic factor on the artistic process. Can the "Leningrad school" continue, when its authors have to think about money, estimates and distribution instead of solving artistic problems?

Other works dealing with individual films or personalities in cinema are also of scholarly interest as a source in a periodical.

The article *Coma* by the well-known film critic and film historian M. Trofimenkov (Trofimenkov, 2010) is interesting to us not only because it belongs to the first issue of the St. Petersburg magazine *Seans [Séance]* (we will refer to the new edition of the article), but also because it shows the process of evolution of the "Leningrad school" in the late 1980s on the example of one film. Thus, the film historian writes: "The Leningrad school is rapidly going into circulation: A. German's authorial findings are turned into the canon of a new genre, which in *Coma* has a strong flavor of melodrama (the prisoner for the sake of saving the child signs a statement on his father-guard, and the other cons, having learned about it, throw her out into the cold). The techniques that gave reason to talk about the unprecedented 'authenticity' of the historical atmosphere are also going out of circulation. Now, apparently, the supposedly spontaneous, dirty phonogram, with the obligatory scraps of radio programs, is considered a powerful means of authenticity" (Trofimenkov, 2010). The film critic analyzes how German's polyphony is reduced to a mere "throw-on" soundtrack in Niyole Adomenaitė and Boris Gorlov's film. Another obligatory technique of the period's aesthetics, according to the critic, is the piling up of symbols: "The illustration of commonplaces is not related to the nature of cinema and is designed to familiarize viewers with truths extracted from other means of communication. For example: the opera's wife is portrayed by Lyubov Orlova. Moral: the false optimism of Stalinist art condoned terror. ... Everything is correct, but this is not a movie, but... socialist realism. Let me remind you that in A. German's episodic characters are in no way decipherable, they are beyond didacticism, beyond morality and that is why they are woven into a frightening cinematic image" (Trofimenkov, 2010). Critic considers programmatic and ideologized *Coma* as a big mistake.

Oleg Kovalov devotes his article *Kino Leningrada ili leningradskoe kino? [Cinema of Leningrad or Leningrad cinema?]* (Kovalov, 2016) to the subject of Leningrad cinema. Since the author reproduces mainly only his own impressions of the entire history of Lenfil'm cinema, we are

primarily interested in the film critic's attitude to Leningrad cinema in general and his statements about the "Leningrad school" in the 1990s. O. Kovalov writes about "Lenfil'm" cinema as follows: "The Leningrad school – if we can call it that – did not emerge overnight. It was formed over decades. Leningrad historical cinema came out – as from Gogol's Overcoat – from the films of EAF (The Eccentric Actor's Factory) from twenties. It was a special kind of historicism – akin to bizarre hallucinations, elusive night visions, lunar dreams... It was St. Petersburg historicism. The EAF were restoring the lost traditions of Silver Age culture – something that the iron epoch of the twenties had tried to forget. It was a real takeoff of the Soviet historical film avant-garde. And it can only be compared to the rise of the seventies and early eighties, when, as if in defiance of the harsh timelessness appeared films by Alexei German, Semyon Aranovich... It had the effect of a bomb exploding. It was then that the phenomenon of Leningrad cinema was first talked about. It was a revival of the traditions of the twenties, which was possible only because the traditions were alive – both in the thirties and forties" (Kovalov, 2016).

The film critic makes another important observation for us in the article's conclusions: "What is the Leningrad cinema of the nineties? Does it exist? A lot of things are disturbing today. The appearance of vulgar films is alarming – Lenfil'm never allowed itself to do this before. That's why it had a reputation as the most intelligent studio in the country... Of course, there is A. Sokurov's unique cinematography. There are directors with whom Leningrad cinema can pin its hopes – Valery Ogorodnikov, Sergei Ovcharov, Igor Alimpiev... The necrorealist Evgenii Yufit, who resurrects the search for the absurdist cinema of the thirties... But we cannot speak of a unified school of Leningrad cinema of the nineties. There is no single school. Perhaps a distance is needed to understand something" (Kovalov, 2016).

3. Results

As we said in the introduction, many books and works are devoted not to the term "Leningrad School" but to specific directors and authors. Two names have been chosen for a more detailed analysis: Sergei Mikhailovich Ovcharov and Sergei Olegovich Snezhkin. Both directors were considered the "second generation of the Leningrad school" in the 1990s. In the 2000s, Ovcharov focused exclusively on auteur cinema and began working as a university lecturer. Snezhkin concentrated on genre films.

Did film critics consider Ovcharov and Snezhkin to be continuators of the "Leningrad school of cinema"? Can they be called the "second generation"? Today, we can clearly trace the aspect of media education that existed at Lenfilm in those years and point to the techniques and methods that were passed down from generation to generation of directors, but was this media education already noticeable in the 1980s and 1990s, or is this aspect only noticeable with the passage of time? We decided to trace in detail what film historians and film critics wrote about these two authors on the pages of the St. Petersburg film magazine *Seans [Séance]*.

The attitude of the authors of the articles to the new aesthetics and ethics of the 1990s, which is reflected in the work of Lenfil'm directors of this period, is one of the central issues of film criticism. Inna Tkachenko writes about S. Ovcharov's worldview: "The author of *Barabaniada* is no longer concerned about the fate of the people who have fallen of their own free will from God-bearers to cuckolds. Ovcharov does not even try to give the image of his hero type features – like Bobyl, in which without problems and contradictions coexisted Icarus and Debil [Fool]. The characters of *Barabaniada* have that undoubted nationality, which requires a police registration, but they do not symbolize anything and are not responsible for anyone's ancestral sins" (Tkachenko, 2006). Tkachenko notes the lack of metaphor in the characters of the movie *Barabaniada* (1993, directed by S. Ovcharov). Time really does not dispose to symbolization and metaphor: freedom of speech, freedom of creativity, freedom of expression and, as a result – freedom from subtext. However, Sergei Ovcharov is simply creating a different subtext – subtext of the doom of the people and laughter from despair. "It's not funny anymore" as if the heroes of *Barabaniada* can say. The hero of another movie, a dissident (Viktor Aristov) in the movie *The Man Who Doesn't Return* (1991, directed by S. Snezhkin) is also devoid of subtext. Except that he is not indifferent to the people, but hates them terribly. Here's how Oleg Kovalov describes him: "He is not an ally of Korneev, and not only because of his long-standing betrayal of human rights activists, but because he sleeps and sees how the hated state is crumbling into tatters, along with its support, the obedient common people, the 'God-bearing people', that's what I mean! A fanatic that, without sparing himself, will not spare others... aligning himself with his enemies" (Kovalov, 2010).

Indeed, the cinematography of the 1990s is characterized by hatred of the past, but Aristov's character, in our opinion, is secondary to the film and it is wrong to consider his attitude to the people as fundamental to the idea of the film.

We also disagree with Tatiana Moskvina, who writes, regarding the same movie by Snezhkin: "Is it unseemly to have an affair with a sensible and healthy person? Not inspiring? Is it dangerously close to the recommendations of socialist realism?" (Moskvina, 2010). More recently, she also wrote about Sergei Ovcharov's *Barabaniada* and praised it for its humor and cheerfulness: "Ovcharov's attachment to Russian history and Russian humor is devoid of any aggression, and the sense of the national is not accompanied by morbid passion" (Moskvina, 2006). "Healthy" and "morbid" conflict with each other in the films of the era. Is it normal to be crazy in a crazy world? And poor in a poor world? And rich in a poor world? Judging by the films of Ovcharov and Snezhkin, in this era the answer to all questions is "yes". "Painful" attitude to the world is reflected in other paintings of this period. The heroes of the film *Daddy, Grandfather Frost Died* (1991, directed by E. Yufit) belong to a sect of murderers, the hero of the film *Happy Days* (1991, directed by A. Balabanov) is always showing everyone his head, the hero of the film *Khrustalyov, the car!* (1998, directed by A. German) – a drunkard ... The series can go on and on.

Film critic Natalia Ozerova emphasizes another feature peculiar to the cinematography of the "second generation of the Leningrad school": "The compressed space of action is expanded in the narrative by reminiscences of various kinds. The stereotypes fixed in our consciousness allow Ovcharov to 'translate' the decayed pages of the chronicle into other material – this is the style of the newsreel *News of the Day*! Here is the easily recognizable style of the films of Eisenstein, Medvedkin, Norstein, Klimov! Surprisingly but the effect is authentic: somehow you believe that if it was shot long ago, and the film is old, and everything is barely visible, then it is exactly as it was, even if the tape is not a documentary, but fiction" (Ozerova, 2010). Experimentation with form and stylization become almost the main technique of auteur cinema. What can accurately separate genre cinema from auteur cinema is – experimentation. Genre, commercial cinema is not ready for experimentation in principle. It does not need this technique; on the contrary, it needs to use established techniques as precisely and simply as possible.

Another important thing is the relevance and importance of the topic. Thus, Snezhkin's movie about the putsch hit the spot. But opinions differ about the predictive aspect of the movie. According to Olga Shervud's recollections, the crew was afraid not to keep up with the story: "Feature film is a slow business: 'We'll probably be late' the cameraman Vladimir Burykin told me" (Shervud, 2010). The film criticism, on the contrary, considered the movie visionary: "In the final scene, the rumble of the overthrown Pushkin monument rumbled through the night city, as if putting a bold point in the book of our fates; the TV screen was covered with clouds, plunging us into the unknown. The movie became stereoscopic – we were really inside it..." (Kovalov, 2010).

Another critic – T. Moskvina even reproaches the picture for this predictability: "In the finale of S. Snezhkin's film *The Man Who Doesn't Return* (shown on TV on the evening of August 20), a crowd of obscurantists raze a monument to Pushkin to the ground and, as we know, Pushkin and humanism are the same face. In the finale of the August three-day action movie, filmed by life by its own order, a completely different monument, a monument to cannibalism was felled. I willingly believe that Sergei Snezhkin dreamed of such an outcome but he embodied only his dreary fears in no less dreary forms" (Moskvina, 2010). It is necessary, however, to clarify the difference between the foresight of auteur cinema and the relevance of genre cinema. Snezhkin's film is an understandable, topical movie, not lacking in artistic content. Whereas Ovcharov's films contain a visionary aspect. Natalia Ozerova also writes about a prediction in Sergei Ovcharov's movie *It*: "Slowly the camera rises higher and higher and higher! The steel bird – a new incarnation of the Tower of Babel – turns out to be a watchtower of a new formation. It [in Russian: Оно (Ono)] (UFO?) is approaching a menacing apocalypse that threatens to destroy time itself. "Memento mori" (Ozerova, 2010). It should be said that the movie was released in 1989, right before the beginning of the difficult 90s for many families, which allows us to speak about the metaphor of the desolation that *It* brings with.

Toward the end of the period under study, another film by Sergei Snezhkin, *Marigolds in Flower* (1998, directed by S. Snezhkin), was released. The director moves from the eschatological theme to the theme of the family and its destruction. Deconstruction is also one of the most important aspects of the art of this era. What can represent this idea better than the strife within a family of 5 women and 2 men? Here is how ironically Lidia Maslova writes about the plot: "Trying

to consider the problem of 'woman and her real estate' from different sides, Snezhkin as if cloned Ranevskaya in five copies of different ages and colors, but of the same hysterically egoistic temperament. In a bathhouse heated with stolen wood, Ranevskaya-4 persuades Ranevskaya-3 and Ranevskaya-5 to get rid of Ranevskaya-1 and share the profits from the sale of the house. Ranevskaya-2 dislikes Ranevskaya-3 because her former lover has gone to her. Four younger clones make periodic friendly raids on Ranevskaya-1, trying to get to the city and formalize the ill-fated gift of the house. And having caught her, they dress up in precious costumes of museum beauty and make a show for grandmother, inevitably ending in quarrels, hysterics, and strokes" (Maslova, 2011). The problem of feminism is also raised in this movie and is also important for this period of cinema. The author explores it not within the framework of the "Leningrad school", in which the heroine would necessarily be alone, with a complicated fate and moral torment (such a film, however, exists *Hardly the First Hundred Years*, 1988, directed by V. Aristov), but within the framework of "experimental" cinema.

Chekhov's motifs sound ironic, even mocking, in Snezhkin. Parody and play as important postmodernist concepts of course become one of the form forming concepts in the films of the 90s as well. But, as already noted by the critic, parody is not so essential in the "Leningrad" school. This is most likely due to the fact that even a director of a genre film can and does make an auteur film.

Let's say a little more about the sound design of the 90's films, because when talking about the "second generation" they often refer to a special phonogram. Sound in movies is an important part of the creative process. The hero of our study (S. Ovcharov) says: "Sound for me is of great importance. If I had not been a movie director, I would probably have become a sound engineer. Near my music school, in Maikop, there was a movie theater. It was hot, all the shutters were open in the school, and in the theater the projectionist's booth was always open. Instead of my scales, I heard only the phonograms of movies. And I fell in love with cinema by listening to movies I couldn't get to" (Vasil'eva, 2012). Sound in 90s cinema is also being experimented with. Directors of auteur cinema are looking for new ways of expression, stylization, and technical possibilities that allow almost endless possibilities. Nikita Eliseev sees the problem of *The Orchard* (2008, directed by S. Ovcharov) in the same sound: "We can formulate precisely what the main reason for the failure of Ovcharov's *The Orchard* is. Sergei Ovcharov is a master of silent, wordless movie. Words to him are not that superfluous. Words hinder him. His best films are fundamentally wordless" (Eliseev, 2010). It is impossible to agree with the critic, knowing how precisely and interestingly Ovcharov works on the film's soundtrack. Words are not the only thing that makes up the sound content of a movie.

Sergei Ovcharov was a little late with the theme of "selling the motherland". Only in 2008 he will release the movie *The Orchard* based on Anton Pavlovich Chekhov's story *The Cherry Orchard*. However, *The Orchard* Ovcharov as if to complete the era of the 90s and opens a new 2000s. The movie was sold to producers and those, like a true Lopakhin, from dirt to princes, began to perch, break into plots, cut down trees. In addition to the theme, remarkable in Ovcharov's film is the use of theatrical and silent film stylistics. Veronika Khlebnikova writes about these techniques: "Behind the stunts, and gags, and 'silly stomping' in the film there is a clear need to break away from the routine view of Russian history through the elegies of cherry blossoms and the anguish of the intelligentsia, to break away from the past, where admiration for underdogs and infantile passion for authority are dangerously mixed up. Ovcharov's *The Orchard* unobtrusively helps to delve a little more consciously into the present time, poisoned by the memory of phantom greatness and poorly digested literary and journalistic templates" (Khlebnikova, 2010). "The closing film" could be labeled Ovcharov's cinematography. The era of experimentation, free (sometimes too free) creativity and destruction is gone, and a new one has arrived, about which future researchers have yet to write.

Let's finish the research of the two directors with the answer of the one who was able to adapt to the producer's reality Sergei Snezhkin (in interview to N. Pakhomova) to the question "Which system answers the time?": "The producer system. The director comes to the producer and enters into a contract as an equal partner. I want to go to a firm, not to a small feudal appanage, which is what the association is now" (Pakhomova, 2010). It should be noted, however, that the director insisted in the same interview on state support for children's and documentary films, realizing that without laws protecting domestic production, the country's cinema would be lost.

5. Conclusion

To summarize the above, we can note the following aspects of the Leningrad school of cinema, as noted by film critics and scholars: *"painful" perception (dating back to Dostoevsky's novels); metaphoricality; expressionism and romanticism; doubt; intimacy; foresight; closeness to the hero; the image of the city from its non-parade side; reference to Russian culture; individualism; readiness to experiment.*

On the other hand, second-generation directors are developing their own directions, unrelated to the school: *the end of the world and eschatology; he sale of the homeland; parody and grotesque; deconstruction; feminism; relevance; indifference.*

The question of the term "Leningrad school" (not only about its appearance and development in the history of science, but also about its boundaries) is still before scientists. Many film scholars point out that the term has no precise and unambiguous definition, and those who accept it tend to speak of an attitudinal phenomenon rather than a formal one. When it comes to the films of the late 80s and early 90s, scholars contrast them with the "Leningrad school" saying that the minimalism and attention to the human being is replaced by simulacra and a tearful attempt to present the human being in a new cruel world. There are also those who, on the contrary, try to comprehend the new style, but they also separate it from the "Leningrad school".

The term "Leningrad school" can be understood in two ways: as a formal method or as a philosophical tradition. In the first case, it is a set of principles that have not yet been fully established; in the second, it is an ontological or existential aesthetic paradigm.

It is important to note that since the late 1980s, two main approaches to the interpretation of reality have dominated at Lenfil'm pessimistic view of the country's past and present and experimental search for new cinematic forms.

When using the term "Leningrad school" it is still advisable to keep in mind that only in the present time the distance between the phenomenon under study and the scholarly community is not so small, but at the same time not so great either. It is already possible to talk about the time limiting the phenomenon designated by this term, about its limits, it is possible to compare motion pictures, in one way or another, with this or that degree of appropriateness, correlated or connected with the term "Leningrad school" with others, the intonation of which is strikingly different from the phenomenon under study. At the same time, despite the innovation of contemporary cinematography, we still observe how the tradition of the "Leningrad school" is refracted both in the films of the 2000s and in contemporary films. In addition to all this, we should add that a number of directors have educated a new generation of students who, despite everything, inherit the masters; the film workshops of Ovcharov, Lopushansky, and Sokurov still exist today; film education, as the most important feature of the ethical paradigm of the "Leningrad school" continues. This allows us to consider the phenomenon designated by this term as somewhat established, but at the same time alive and evolving.

References

Arkus et al., 2023–2025 – *Arkus, L.* (2023–2025). Kino i kontekst. Ot Gorbacheva do Putina [Kino i kontekst. Ot Gorbacheva do Putina [Cinema and Context. From Gorbachev to Putin]. *Séance.* [in Russian]

Arkus, 1994 – *Arkus, L.* (1994). Sokurov. *Séance.* [in Russian]

Arkus, 2020 – *Arkus, L.* (2020). A. German. *Séance.* [in Russian]

Baltag, 2021 – *Baltag, V.* (2021). Humour in film as a method of expression. *Galactica Media: Journal of Media Studies.* 3. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://galacticamedia.com/index.php/gmd/article/view/205/136

Bekus, 2021 – *Bekus, N.* (2021). Echo of 1989? Protest imaginaries and identity dilemmas in Belarus. *Slavic Review.* [Electronic resource]. URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/27059922

Dobrotvorskii, 1996 – *Dobrotvorskii, S.N.* (1996). Aleksei German i "leningradskaya shkola kino" – Novyi epos [Alexei German and the 'Leningrad school of cinema' – New Epic]. *Chapaev.* [Electronic resource]. URL: https://chapaev.media/articles/3723#footnote-2 [in Russian]

Dobrotvorskii, 2016 – *Dobrotvorskii, S.N.* (2016). Leningradskoe kino: evolyutsiya avtorskoi traditsii [Leningrad cinema: the evolution of the author's tradition]. *Istochnik nevozmozhnogo, Séance.* Pp. 540-559. [in Russian]

Eliseev, 2010 – *Eliseev, N.* (2010). Neudavshiisya eksperiment [Failed experiment]. *Séance.* [Electronic resource]. URL: https://seance.ru/articles/neudavshiysya-eksperiment/ [in Russian]

Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2024 – *Fedorov, A., Levitskaya, A.* (2024). Western Cinema on the Pages of the *Soviet Screen* Magazine: 1986-1991. *International Journal of Media and Information Literacy.* 9(1): 60-116. DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2024.1.60

Gladil'shchikov, 1998 – *Gladil'shchikov, Yu.V.* (1998). Uzh polnoch' blizitsya, a Germana vse net [It's nearing midnight, and still no German]. *Itogi* 17. [in Russian]

Il'chenko i dr., 2023 – *Il'chenko, S.N., Pozdnyakov, A.N., Poznin, V.F.* (2023). "Lenfil'm": vremya peremen (1980–1990) [Lenfil'm: time of changes (1980–1990)]. SPb. [in Russian]

Ilnytzkyj, 2009 – *Ilnytzkyj, O.* (2009). Nikolai Gogol' / Mykola Hohol', 1809-2009: A Note from the Editor. *Canadian Slavonic papers.* [Electronic resource]. URL: https://www.academia.edu/107823299/Nikolai_Gogol_Mykola_Hohol_1809_2009_A_Note_from_the_Editor

Kelly, 2021 – *Kelly, C.* (2021). Soviet art house Lenfilm studio under Brezhnev. Oxford university press. 512 p.

Khlebnikova, 2010 – *Khlebnikova, V.* (2010). Za glupym topotaniem [Behind the silly stomping]. *Séance.* [Electronic resource]. URL: https://seance.ru/articles/za-glupyim-topotaniem/ [in Russian]

Klepikov, 1993 – *Klepikov, Yu.N.* (1993). Podtverzhdenie obraza [Confirmation of the image]. *Iskusstvo kino.* 6. [in Russian]

Kopylova, 1987 – *Kopylova, R.D.* (1987). Il'ya Averbakh. *Vsesoyuznoe byuro propagandy kinoiskusstva.* [in Russian]

Kovalov, 2010 – *Kovalov, O.A.* (2010). My [We]. *Séance.* [Electronic resource]. URL: https://seance.ru/articles/we/ (date of access: 17.06.2024). [in Russian]

Kovalov, 2016 – *Kovalov, O.A.* (2016). Kino Leningrada ili leningradskoe kino? [Cinema of Leningrad or Leningrad cinema?]. *Séance.* [Electronic resource]. URL: https://seance.ru/articles/leningradkino-kovalov/ (date of access: 14.06.2024). [in Russian]

Lavrent'eva, 1992 – *Lavrent'eva, E.* (1992). Finansovye paradoksy kinorezhissera Germana [Financial paradoxes of the movie director German]. *Delovye lyudi.* 4. [in Russian]

Lev'e, 1994 – *Lev'e, L.* (1994). Sokurov, A. N. Ya shel k professii rezhissera ochen' ratsional'no [I went to the profession of director very rationally]. *Kino–glaz.* 3. [in Russian]

Maslova, 2011 – *Maslova, L.* (2011). Sochnoi kalenduly grozd'ya dushistye [Juicy marigold bunches fragrant]. *Séance.* [Electronic resource]. URL: https://seance.ru/articles/sochnoy-kalendulyi-grozdya-dushistyie/ (date of access: 17.06.2024). [in Russian]

Mikhaleva, Chelysheva, 2024 – *Mikhaleva, G., Chelysheva, I.* (2024). Representation of Family and Family Upbringing in Soviet and Russian Feature Films: Quantitative and Genre Analyses. *International Journal of Media and Information Literacy.* 9(1): 161-170. DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2024.1.161

Moskvina, 1990 – *Moskvina, T.* (1990). «Global'noe kino» Petrogradskoi storony ["Global Cinema" of the Petrograd side]. *Iskusstvo kino.* 7: 70-80. [in Russian]

Moskvina, 2006 – *Moskvina, T.* (2006). V bezudarnom sloge [On the stressless syllable]. *Séance.* [Electronic resource]. URL: https://seance.ru/articles/v-bezudarnom-sloge/ (date of access: 17.06.2024). [in Russian]

Moskvina, 2010 – *Moskvina, T.* (2010). Obidelas' zhizn' na iskusstvo [Life was offended by art]. *Séance.* [Electronic resource]. URL: https://seance.ru/articles/life-art/ (date of access: 17.06.2024). [in Russian]

Nam, Konchalovsky, 2021 – *Nam, S., Konchalovsky, A.* (2021). From Russia with Detours. *Cinéaste.* [Electronic resource]. URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/27087937

O'Donoghue, Serebrennikov, 2022 – *O'Donoghue, D., Serebrennikov, K.* (2022). Save Us! We Need Your Help! SOS! *Cinéaste.* [Electronic resource]. URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/27180659 (date of reference: 18.08.2024)

Ozerova, 2010 – *Ozerova, N.* (2010). Ne vchera, ne segodnya, ne zavtra [Not yesterday, not today, not tomorrow]. *Séance.* [Electronic resource]. URL: https://seance.ru/articles/not_today/ [in Russian]

Pakhomova, 2010 – *Pakhomova, N.* (2010). Ne prodaetsya vdokhnoven'e, no mozhno rukopis' prodat' [Inspiration is not for sale, but you can sell a manuscript]. *Séance.* [Electronic resource]. URL: https://seance.ru/articles/economy_ne_prodaetsya/ [in Russian]

Pavlov, 1989 – *Pavlov, Yu.* (1989). Ne mogu postupit'sya printsipami! [I can't compromise my principles!]. *Sovetskii ekran.* 12: 2: 14-15. [in Russian]

Pavlova, Pavlov, 1998 – *Pavlova, I., Pavlov, Yu.* (1998). S. Aranovich. St. Petersburg. [in Russian]

Pozdnyakov, 1989 – *Pozdnyakov, A.* (1989). Nevskaya volna protiv damby zastoya [Nevskaya wave vs dam of stagnation]. *Sovetskii ekran.* 12: 20-22. [in Russian]

Savel'ev, 1991 – *Savel'ev, D.K.* (1996). IO. *Séance.* 2 [in Russian]

Savel'ev, 1996 – *Savel'ev, D.K.* (1996). Sokurov A.N. Sdelaite to, chto mozhete sdelat' tol'ko Vy [Sokurov A.N. Do what only you can do]. *Iskusstvo kino.* 6. [in Russian]

Shervud, 2010 – *Shervud, O.* (2010). Pervaya primerka avtomata Kalashnikova [The first fitting of the Kalashnikov assault rifle]. *Séance.* [Electronic resource]. URL: https://seance.ru/articles/pervaya_primerka/ [in Russian]

Shields, 2022 – *Shields, C.* (2022). Review on Soviet Art House: Lenfilm Studio under Brezhnev by Catriona Kelly. *Cinéaste.* [Electronic resource]. URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/27248442

Skorova, Suvorova, 2021 – *Skorova, L., Suvorova, D.* (2021). Peculiarities of teenagers' perception of the characters of a film narrative in a situation of moral choice. *International Journal of Media and Information Literacy.* 6(2): 416-425. DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.2.416

Sovetskii ekran, 1989 – Sovetskii ekran [Soviet Screen]. 12: 32. [in Russian]

Tkachenko, 2006 – *Tkachenko, I.* (2006). V gostyakh u rodiny [On a visit to the homeland]. *Séance.* [Electronic resource]. URL: https://seance.ru/articles/v-gostyah-u-rodinyi/ [in Russian]

Trofimenkov, 2010 – *Trofimenkov, M.S.* (2010). Coma. *Séance.* [Electronic resource]. URL: https://seance.ru/articles/coma/ [in Russian]

Tselykh, 2021 – *Tselykh, M.* (2021). Forbidden Soviet Cinema (1951-1991): A View from the 21st century. *International Journal of Media and Information Literacy.* 6(1): 239-245. DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.1.239

Tselykh, 2021 – *Tselykh, M.* (2021). The best films of soviet film distribution: what were they like for readers of *Soviet Screen* magazine (1958-1991)? *International Journal of Media and Information Literacy.* 17(4): 715-722. DOI: 10.13187/me.2021.4.715

Turovskaya, 1993 – *Turovskaya, M.I.* (1993). Mechty idiotov [Dreams of idiots]. *Iskusstvo kino.* 9: 9-11. [in Russian].

Vasil'eva, 2012 – *Vasil'eva, I.* (2012). Ovcharov S.M. Sud'ba barabanshchika [Ovcharov S.M. The fate of the drummer]. *Séance.* [Electronic resource]. URL: https://seance.ru/articles/sudba-barabanschika/ [in Russian]

Vinogradova, 2024 – *Vinogradova, M.* (2024) Soviet Industrial film across categories: negotiating between utility, art and science. Amsterdam University Press. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/jj.11141794.25.pdf

Manipulation in Mass-Information Processes

Arina Pislegina [a], Nikolay Mitiukov [b, *]

[a] Saint Petersburg State University of Industrial Technologies and Design, Russian Federation
[b] Udmurt Federal Research Center Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Izhevsk, Russian Federation

Abstract

Modern society is witnessing a sharp and virtually uncontrolled development of media channels, new methods of data transmission, and the growth of information flow that covers the entire world. Against the background of the evolution of the information exchange process, new schemes for manipulating people's consciousness have emerged. The visible, audible and readable content programs a person's subconscious to perform certain actions, changing his psychological attitudes. The 20th century became the starting point of modern development media field because of evolution of the media environment. Then the foundations of studying media communications and manipulative influence were discovered and they are actively developing now, ideas, stereotypes, aspirations and desires are still being introduced to the masses, the vision of the world, its history and future is dictated. The reasons for the effectiveness of mass manipulation lie in the structure of the psyche, consciousness and subconsciousness of a person, their behavior, desires and fears inherent in each individual. Methods and types of manipulation in mass information processes are quite diverse, and always allow the manipulators to build an effective process of their influence both on a specific person and on a group of people. However, there are ways to protect against manipulation, and some theories claim that the manipulative process is not so straightforward in principle and depends on many factors, in particular, on the significance and activity of the knowledge disseminated by the manipulator in the information field, and on the mindset and psyche of specific individuals. Manipulation of public consciousness of large masses and many nations of our planet has changed the information, psychological and social background of the world, especially strongly affecting the cultural layer of knowledge and judgments. The practical application of manipulations is justified as a means of influence in mass information processes using the example of advertising information flows. It also contributes to the achievement of the goals of manipulators through known visual and acoustic manipulative techniques and methods.

Keywords: manipulation of creation, media environment, penetration into culture, information processes.

1. Introduction

The study of mass information processes and manipulations used in them is more relevant than ever. Modern society is witnessing a sharp and virtually uncontrolled development of media channels, new methods of data transmission, and the growth of information flow that covers the entire world. Against the background of the evolution of the information exchange process, new

---

* Corresponding author
E-mail addresses: nico02@mail.ru (N.W. Mitiukov), rillwindler@mail.ru (A.N. Pislegina)

schemes for manipulating people's consciousness are emerging. In this regard, the work generalizes existing manipulative techniques and attempts to identify new ones using media environments.

2. Materials and methods

The work uses theories of manipulation developed by D. Bryant, S. Thomson (Bryant, Thomson, 2002), A.A. Danilova (Danilova, 2011), I.M. Dzyaloshinsky (Dzyaloshinsky, 2005), E.V. Gorina (Gorina, 2016), S.G. Kara-Murza (Kara-Murza, 2000), A. Levitskaya and A. Fedorov (Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2020), as well as approaches formed to identify manipulations: A. Fedorov et al. (Fedorov et al., 2022), A.A. Frolova, D.A. Klinkova (Frolova, Klinkova, 2022), D.P. Goloshchapova (Goloshchapova, 2016), D.V. Kalin (Kalin, 2020), M.P. Lobastova (Lobastova, 2019), B.N. Lozovsky (Lozovsky, 2011), O.F. Neskryabina (Neskryabin, 2013), M.A. Subbotina (Subbotina, 2018), K.M. Romanov, E.N. Ruskina (Romanov, Ruskina, 2005). Using a systems approach, since as a rule known manipulation methods have been identified mainly in the use of television and newspapers, the application of these theories to media environments is carried out.

3. Discussion

Manipulation is a hidden psychological impact on the consciousness and subconscious of a person with the extraction of one's own benefit and, as a rule, to the detriment of the person subject to the influence. Manipulation of consciousness is possible at three levels: individual, group and mass. It includes such methods of influence as persuasion, informing, infecting, etc. Modern research identifies many types of psychological manipulation. Thus, research of I.M. Dzyaloshinsky identifies the following types of manipulation: manipulation of the subconscious, will, needs, goals, knowledge, norms, intellect, values, attitudes, and emotions (Dzyaloshinsky, 2005).

Mass manipulations are becoming popular instrument of involving on information field and of controlling its processes. It is a special sophisticated tool which encourages people to take certain actions.

Mass behavior has scaled up to truly large dimensions. This was facilitated, firstly, by the removal of territorial barriers and the development of transport technologies, which allowed people to change their location in a significantly shorter time over significantly greater distances. Secondly, this is the availability of information accumulated by almost the entire world.

Because the world around a person expands too much for him, that person loses his support and has to rely on the behavior and decisions of other people around him.

When people begin to focus on each other, subtle manipulative influence can lead them to uniform patterns of behavior and thinking, making them vulnerable to strong emotional appeals – creating a mass with the behavioral settings of a crowd whose feelings are primitive, susceptible to aggression, etc.

It is important to emphasize that the main information processes of modern times take place in two planes – computers gadgets) and the media, which influence on the psychology and human behavior are very strong.

Advertising provides the income for many industries and that is why it is involved in most powerful manipulation systems (media: newspapers, magazines, radio, television, Internet resources), as well as many individual enterprises, companies, and individuals.

It is worth noting that studies of media interaction and media influence have been conducted for a long time, and already existed at the very beginning of the twentieth century. It is possible to single out individual names of scientists and researchers who made a significant contribution to the development of the science of mass media communication. These are Paul Lazarsfeld, Carl Hovland, Kurt Lewin, Harold Lasswell, Douglas Waples, and others.

Carl Hovland studied the impact of educational films and media on the views and beliefs of individual groups of people. His experiments were distinguished by strict principles, and therefore became an example for research on media impact of this type (Brytan, Thompson, 2004). It is worth noting that similar studies of cinema and TV are still being conducted, and the topic of the influence of television channels, films and programs on the human psyche and subconscious is of even greater interest to researchers, which is reflected in the large number of research papers on the relevant topic based on the university (Fedorov et al., 2022; Lobastova, 2019; Lozovsky, 2011; Subbotina, 2018; Neskryabin, 2013).

With an interest in mass communications, as well as social psychology and sociology, Paul Lazarsfeld studied the impact of radio on listeners. In his research, he and his team found that

people trusted not the media sources at all, but interpersonal communication, the views and attitudes of people important to the individual, or "opinion leaders." Thus, P. Lazarsfeld was able to identify a model of a two-stage flow of mass information, in this case it is an appeal to a media source (radio), and then a conclusion by a specific individual about the raised issue/topic, based on a "live" source of information (a person). This discovery influenced the further development of a two-stage flow of mass communication, which can be observed in the development of existing advertising campaigns (Britan, Thompson, 2004).

Harold D. Lasswell is known for his work on the study of propaganda and the five questions model, which identifies the recipient of influence, the addresser/s, the essence of the information transmitted, and the subsequent result of its receipt by the addresser: Who speaks? What does he say? Through what channel does he communicate? With what effect? (Vorontsov, 2019). Kurt Lewin was the pioneer of research into the dynamics of group communications, where he proved the primary importance of intergroup dialogue for an individual to make a judgment on any information offered to him (Brytan, Thompson, 2004). This is why communications between community members acquire suchsignificant influence and impact. Present research, including the one conducted at universities, can serve as an example to this. Thus, having studied communications taking place in the political arena, andparticulary, in the Internet space, D.P. Goloshchapova identified such manipulation techniques in 2016 as quoting (the concept of "Alien/Friend", slander tactics, accusation tactics, threats, "labeling"), references to third parties, slander, "enantiosemic" construction ("Does Washington need it?" An example of speech aggression that has a certain positive connotation) (Goloshchapova, 2016). All of the above techniques allow politicians to persuade the masses to their side and redirect their energy in the direction they need (Dzyaloshinsky, 2005). Modern "opinion leaders" act in a similar way. In 2019 study by M.P. Lobastova, the manipulative impact of blogger Ilya Varlamov on his audience is studied (Lobastova, 2019). The blogger actively highlights his position in the provocative headlines of his materials, becoming a provocateur of the "emotional charge" of the masses (Kara-Murza, 2000). The blogger's opinion, like a conversation, finds a greater response from the audience than statements from official sources.

Returning to the discoveries of the early twentieth century, it is worth recalling the works of Douglas Waples, who studied the impact of printed media on people's attitudes. He proved that the less a person knows about the subject that the media tells him about, the stronger their influence on him is (Brytan, Thompson, 2004; Gálik et al., 2024; Gálik, 2020; Gáliková Tolnaiová, Gálik, 2020). Similar studies can be observed in more recent times, as well as at the present time.

For example, in 2011, A.A. Danilova studied the impact of the media through printed publishing houses and described the influence of texts and newspaper headlines on consciousness. If we single out the headlines, they have a multi-stage structure, and their main goal is to convey the main points of the articles, with an emphasis on the part containing especially important information. Having become accustomed to perceiving headlines in this way, people stop noticing the special substitution of the "grain" of the meaning of the article, which allows authors to interpret the content in accordance with their plan already in the headline. She also found that classical rhetorical techniques are used not only in "transparent" dialogues, but also for successful hidden influence, namely manipulation. We can recall such well-known techniques as metaphors, repetitions (constant repetitions can act similarly to induction into a trance), parallel constructions (Danilova, 2011). These techniques can be used to play with the meaning of speech in order to hide the true semantic component of statements, replace an argument, etc. (In the Nizhny Novgorod region..., 2023). It is also worth noting the difference between manipulation and artistic techniques in general: the main difference is that an artistic technique is not imposed on the public, it is "transparent" and amenable to analysis (Gorina, 2016). Manipulation can also be distinguished by the awareness of the existence of benefits for the manipulator, and his pressure on feelings, emotions and states.

Separately, we can highlight Frances Fenton, who traced how stimuli (some information most strongly imprinted in a person's memory, which influenced his psyche), perceived while reading newspapers, prompt a person to perform an action similar to that described or shown in the newspaper. According to Frances Fenton's theory, images, headlines and the articles themselves inspired readers with ideas that they subconsciously tried to implement (Britan, Thompson, 2004). It is no coincidence that researchers highlight such features of manipulation through language as the concealment of intentions, the subordination of the addresser's will in the

name of one's own goals. It turns out that through manipulation, the addressee's actions are programmed (Subbotina, 2018).

Thus, the 20th century is a time when the foundations for studying media communications and manipulative influence in their environment were formulated, and that is used at present.Now these theories are still key, since at the present stage with the help of mass media and manipulative techniques, ideas, stereotypes, aspirations and desires are still being introduced to the masses, the vision of the world, its history and future is dictated (In the Nizhny Novgorod region…, 2023).

An important conclusion can be made: that which is visible, audible and readable programs a person's subconscious to perform certain actions and changes his psychological attitudes.

Manipulation of the public consciousness of large masses of many peoples of our planet, has changed the informational, psychological and social background of the world, especially strongly affecting the cultural layer of knowledge and judgments (Goloshchapova, 2016).

4. Results

Reasons for the effectiveness of manipulation. Techniques and types of manipulation in mass information processes

At the current stage of development of information processes among the masses, it is important to be able to distinguish between the types and methods of manipulation and to understand the reason for their effectiveness, primarily in order to be able to resist manipulators and their destructive interference in the consciousness and subconscious.

D. Bryant and S. Thomson identify several reasons why the human mind is susceptible to manipulation.

First of all, it is a commitment to rituals and the ability to perceive symbols, such as letters, words, language, images, including associative abstractions, which allows the consciousness to process the experience gained into cognitive models that a person relies on in the future. The ability to self-regulate, to self-motivate characterizes human behavior, gives the ability to evaluate oneself and one's actions. In addition, a person is subject to the process of verifying his thoughts – the ability to self-reflect, to control his thinking, which occurs through the prism of observing the activities of other people and their results. Modeling by observation is another behavioral property that allows manipulating of consciousness. A person learns by observing and repeating the actions of others. A "bad" behavioral example can provoke the establishment of unnecessary or destructive settings. Permissive influence is modeling behavior that destroys stereotypes or accepted behavioral rules that a person may want to violate on the subconscious, repeating the demonstrated protest if it emotionally touches him (Bryant, Thomson, 2002).

Each person's passions and weaknesses serve as their vulnerabilities for attacks by manipulators. For example, it will be much easier to evoke an emotional response from an individual who loves horses and hates corruption and to motivate him to participate in a well-known movement against the existence of circuses than a person who is indifferent to horses or is oriented in the structure of a circus. The individual in question only needs to be convinced that horses are happy only in freedom because there are mustangs (wild and happy horses) in the world, and that the circus is a corrupt machine because it makes money. It can be seen that the alleged statements of the manipulator may be true, but only in particular cases. Moreover, they are not substantiated in the context of the statements made. On a mass scale, well-known illustrations may be the fear of losing territory, the arrival of invaders and terror, the fear of hunger and thirst, the desire to improve the standard of living, etc. People tend to feel and imitate each other's emotions. When evoking associations with the main fears (which is one of the most effective means of influence (Danilova, 2011) or desires in many people at the same time, the emotions of these people will be uncontrollable, but initially directed by someone. Thus, one of the foundations of the structure of human thinking are also the vulnerable points of each individual and the masses as a whole.

Considering modern manipulation techniques, we can highlight the spread of developments from psycholinguistics, NLP (neuro-linguistic programming), hypnosis (Ericksonian), etc. A lot of examples of manipulating methods are known: the method of distraction ("Smoked Herring"), selective selection of information and facts, the preemptive use of a difficult question, selective information selection, the method of an objective approach, the use of disinformation, rumors, leaks of secret information and "information noise", when many different types of content try to grab attention in one moment. It's possible to link fundamental methods of making manipulations: the use of contrast and simplification of the problem, ridicule, intrigue and truisms, concentration

only on several features and characteristics, showing the "right choice", or suggesting the right of choice when there is only one variant, the technique of "anchoring" (Danilova, 2011). All these techniques, as well as methods of influence that allow manipulating the masses, are discussed in detail in the article by I.M. Dzyaloshinsky "Manipulative Technologies in the Mass Media" (Dzyaloshinsky, 2005), and are actively used in all sectors and areas of the media information space.

The method of "filtering the information flow" deserves special attention, which is especially popular in the information warfare currently underway. It is surprisingly easy to manipulate large masses of people, entire countries, overlooking important facts, arguments of the other side, capable of radically changing the public's view of the situation. In this way, people see events and hear about them, but the details of what is happening are filtered, and only facts that are beneficial to the manipulators reach society. By using propaganda to encourage the masses to believe in their competence, knowledge, education, uniqueness and other positive beliefs, manipulators reinforce the public's belief in their rightness and correct point of view, which they carefully correct.

It may seem that modern man cannot resist manipulation. Many studies report that people really cannot resist manipulation, despite the fact that defense techniques do exist (for example, during a dialogue, you can stop the manipulator with clarifying questions, an expression of mistrust, incomplete involvement in the conversation, or a sharp change of topic of conversation (Romanov, Ruskina, 2005). However, there are other opinions. Thus, Kara-Murza believes that people are divided into two types. One type perceives manipulation as a benefit, the wisdom of the addressee saving the addresser of manipulation from mistakes, the other type – as an evil, depriving a person of free will and choice, which cannot be morally justified (Kara-Murza, 2000). The second type has more critical thinking, which helps it to protect itself from the impact of manipulation. There is another position that rejects the manipulative process as something inevitable in general. Thus, D.V. Kalin believes that for manipulation to exist, the information that the manipulator operates with must not only exist but circulate in the information space. Otherwise, the level of information impact is very low (Kalin, 2020).

It can be concluded that the reasons for the effectiveness of mass manipulation lie in the structure of the psyche, consciousness and subconscious of a person, his behavior, desires and fears, inherent to everyone. The methods and types of manipulation in mass information processes are quite diverse, and always allow the manipulator to build an effective process of his influence both on an individual and on a group of people. Different ways of protecting against manipulation are known. It's important to remember that there are theories of manipulative process. According them this process is not so straightforward and depends on many factors such as an activity of the information disseminate or significance.

Practical application of manipulation as a means of influence in mass information processes

Three main spheres of manipulation can be distinguished. These are, first of all, the ideological sphere, the social sphere and the economic sphere, directly related to advertising, where manipulation can be carried out by verbal, visual and acoustic methods simultaneously. In this regard, the practical part of the study examines the most popular media and mass media related to all three spheres of manipulation and methods of its implementation.

Standard advertising

The most effective advertising of our time is considered to be video advertising, which is included in the broadcast of TV channels, YouTube broadcasts, websites, etc.

While watching a movie, a program, etc., a person is in a kind of trance, his consciousness is less protected from manipulation and any other sudden flow of information, which is advertising. A sudden interruption of viewing by an unexpected video clip can be remembered by the viewer. Targeted advertising (for example, Vkontakte advertising in the feed), pop-up windows on top of sites, distracting/obscuring the desired information, work in a similar way.

An example is the advertisement "1Xbet – sports betting" (1xBet Video, 2018), which appears at the most unexpected moment, most often during the most emotionally charged moment of the narrative of the content being viewed.

There are several commercials for "1Xbet – Sports Betting" (1xBet Video, 2018). The most memorable of them is the one with drums. Throughout the commercial, the viewer listens to the rhythmic beat of the drums and a friendly male choir ("1Xbet!"), alternating with repeating phrases that the viewer must remember ("Sports Betting!"). These techniques appeal to the most ancient instincts of people (the "tribe" stage), hypnotizing their consciousness. Thus, the viewer

subconsciously creates a feeling of community, involvement. In addition, "1Xbet – sports betting" has managed to spread among "popular" humor, which only strengthened its impact. One of the reasons for its popularity is the use of attractive symbols and catchy slogans (Music from 1xBET advertising, 2017).

Another video that deserves attention is a video advertisement for a bookmaker's office using the comic book and film hero Flash. The image of Flash is fixed in the media world as the fastest superhero of the existing Marvel and DC comic book and film characters. The authors of the advertisement resort to comparing the characteristics of their service and the characteristics of Flash. The superhero loses, and the viewer makes an obvious choice.

Radio broadcast and internet music advertisements also have the effect of surprise which also abruptly interrupts the listening of the audio tracks. However, if in a film the viewer's attention is partly focused on watching the story, then while listening to music a person can really be in a complete state of trance. At this moment, advertising can become not just an irritant, but also a powerful tool of influence. In addition, modern advertising has begun to be created according to the type of "jamming" audio track. As an example, we can consider audio advertising on Vkontakte, in which representatives of the modern stage sing not just stocks, but entire songs dedicated to the advertising product.

It is worth noting that audio information in general has a strong manipulative field if the speaker generally places accents in his speech, convincingly expresses his thoughts, turning to unusual figurative forms of presentation without using intonation to indicate really important facts, asserting his confident position in relation to the aspects of judgments he has chosen, etc. Thus, the oratorical skills of the addresser can lull the vigilance of the addresser of manipulation (examples can be the behavior and speech of the heroes of the films *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1999), *Catch Me If You Can* (2002).

The extent of such influence is vividly illustrated by an incident in 1939, when a professional announcer read the book *War of the Worlds* on air, which talks about the capture of Earth by aliens. People who turned on the radio and did not know about the book succumbed to uncontrollable panic and believed the announcer, perceiving his words as truth, having lost critical understanding of what was happening due to the horror that seized them all at once (Marshak, 2011).

Nowadays, bloggers are especially active in using speech expression techniques to promote their own (or other people's) views. Some of their tasks include agitating the masses, calling them to destructive actions, and causing general unrest. Among the methods they use the most common are: frightening topics and messages (usually fakes), contrasts ("It's bad here, but it's good there!"), ridicule ("Have you seen him? He's definitely lying, and he won't blink an eye!"), intrigue (questions to the viewer that create anticipation to find out what exactly the blogger has understood/revealed/exposed/told). The most common techniques are substitution of facts, concealment of "extra" information.

Returning to the techniques used in standard advertising, it is necessary to recall advertising on visual media, found in magazines and posters. We can recall the advertising of cosmetics and personal care products, perfumes, where the main image is the image of beautiful young people, whose image is retouched and processed so that the presented heroes correspond to stereotypes about the ideal of human appearance and even character and behavior (4 new..., 2011). In addition to the influence of the stereotype itself, a person is simultaneously influenced by society, which supports the stereotype accepted and broadcast by this advertisement. This situation will correspond to a two-stage model of content consumption. Thus, the advertising move will have its effect, and the person will associate the product with the ideal that he needs to achieve. An example can be any advertisement with famous Western movie actors (Johnny Depp, Christian Stewart, Natalie Portman, etc.). The emphasis is on the desire of people to imitate their idols, copy their behavior and image.

The advertising video/posters of the perfume "Jadore Dior" may seem interesting in terms of impact, where all scenes are filled with gold color and metal – a symbol of luxury. The main character is a representative of youth, wealth and sophistication. The authors draw a parallel between the shape and model of the bottle and the shape and clothing of the heroine, which further attracts the attention of the consumer, and, most importantly, is the subject of discussion (Perfume Advertising, 2017).

It can be seen that images mainly serve to reinforce a positive image, and, as was said earlier, research has shown that they program a person at a subconscious level, set behavioral settings and influence thinking.

Therefore, it is especially alarming to see that advertising campaigns or anti-campaigns containing negative symbols and a negative informational message are allowed into mass circulation. The addressees are sure that the addressees will perceive their message as a warning, and at the conscious level, this is indeed what will happen. However, at the subconscious level, the addressees will perceive this negative message as a positive preset.

The most complete example of this concept is the images on cigarette packs, which were originally placed there to explain to people the consequences of smoking. However, the habit cannot be cured with a "scary picture". So, tobacco buyers continue to consume cigarettes, while carrying images that can "program" them for one disease or another. And non-smokers are forced to watch a negative information flow with examples of diseases while shopping in stores. It can be assumed that such uncontrolled and ill-considered decisions in terms of manipulation can lead to a decline in the level of physical and mental health of the population in the present and in the future.

Information channels

Modern information channels are, first of all, news mailings and telegram channels.

A particularly striking example is the advertising mailing in the channels of individuals whose number of subscribers allows them to monetize the channel. Since 2020, these posts have begun with provocative phrases, such as: "How much longer can you feed on negativity?", "Why are you offended again?", "Read about the real successes of women!", "Guys, are you serious?", "Girls, you're kidding me!", "These photos are amazing!"

The use of emoji creates a special effect (0_0/*0*/))/((/^^/:"(/>:(/:з/:ридр.), a large number of exclamation marks and capital letters. You can compare the spelling of two titles:

These photos are breathtaking! And THESE PHOTOS ARE BREATHTAKING!!!!!!*0*

The second option puts pressure on the reader, causing internal anxiety, since the addresser subconsciously receives the expressive energy transmitted by another person, emotional excitement.

The agitation to subscribe to a community, channel or mailing list – "Subscribe!" – is especially influential in all messengers. The reader is convinced of the necessity of this through "if" and "how": "if you want to feel proud of your country", "if you want to receive rubles, not bonuses", "if you want to be successful", "if you are tired of earning little", "How to reach a stable 1,000,000 per month?" etc.

Manipulation through neural networks by means of targeted advertising should be singled out separately. Thus, VKontakte uses targeted advertising so that a person, depending on their immediate interests, can satisfy their need for a particular topic by searching for communities with similar interests.

The mailings also contain a call to action in a financial sense. For example, sudden mailing messages that claim that the recipient has "only 72 hours", "only 24 hours", "only 15 minutes" to make a profitable purchase of a product, receive a gift, subscribe to a course, and perform a similar action. This is how the effect of panic is achieved, in which a person cannot accurately determine the purpose and meaning of his desires due to stress and succumbs to the trick, buying something that he does not need at all and that he did not want to buy earlier.

"Free" and "Discounts up to 90 %" – these phrases have the greatest manipulative effect in advertising of any kind. But they have a special effect when they come in personal messages (subscriptions to a mailing list, mail, etc.). On the one hand, the recipient understands that many people have received such a mailing, but on the other hand, it creates the feeling that he is the first, that he is the chosen one, and therefore his chances of getting a benefit are high.In addition, a person understands that if it is "free" or at a discount, this means that others will also be in a hurry to buy the service, and that it will quickly end – another effect of panic and stress, during which a person is in a hurry to win.

By distributing fakes (false information) in such news posts, it is possible to influence the masses, cause discontent, chaos. The number of comments of people who reacted to the news, responding to the post, can serve as proof of this. Usually, the greatest number of comments is achieved when some people believe the information being propagated, and the other part does not. At the same time, for both sides, the same rhetoric used in the text of the message can be proof of their own rightness.

A softer form of manipulation is found among communities of creative people in various spheres of life, who are usually "opinion leaders" for their audience, role models. In their posts, they ask for the opinions of their subscribers, ask them questions, and ask for support. It is clear that many subscribers are truly convinced that they should support the author of the post, do not doubt the sincerity of his questions and requests, forgetting about the target of the author's community and the dependence of his rating on the activity in the messages of the published posts.Thus, the manipulative influence of the authors remains unnoticed by their subscribers. If such manipulation is detected, the majority supports the author as their idol, justifying his actions.

"The Spectator Effect"

Modern films and TV series are carriers of hidden advertising of products, propaganda of views and worldviews, moral principles.

It was already noted in the twentieth century that cinema takes part in the social construction of reality. Thus, people who watched films with plane crashes or murders more often estimated their chances of dying in a plane or in an attack as significantly higher than these chances actually were. Meanwhile, educational programs, such as Sesame Street, on the contrary, contributed to the development of imagination and outlook.In addition, it was found that people identify with movie characters. Thus, people who identified with negative characters were more prone to aggression than others. It is worth noting that previous experience and emotional memory enhanced the priming effect – a kind of binding of the thoughts of the person receiving information to the content of this information through emerging associations (Mediaswede, 2022).

At the moment, these mechanisms of influence through cinema are well studied by the world community. An example of the use of most of the methods and techniques of manipulation in cinema can be the production of TV series by the Western company Netflix. The target audience (TA) of the company is teenagers aged 12 to 18 years, as well as young people under 25. It is at this age that children finally form a picture of the world, concepts of love, family, friends, loyalty and other significant components of life. Netflix series creators understand the needs and interests of their target audience, and therefore develop the script so that children will be most interested in watching them. For example, they show that you need to trust your friends, protect your family, be able to love and be loved, bear social responsibility, and develop as a person. The importance and significance of these attitudes is beyond doubt.

However, with the help of additional storylines and their interpretations, the creators of the series introduce certain "explanations" into these settings that correspond to the propaganda of non-traditional views. Examples include remakes of the series *Sabrina* and *Winx*, as well as *Euphoria* and the like, where the propaganda of non-traditional values began to acquire an aggressive character of influence. Substitution of concepts, repetition of the same theses, creation of a bright image of idols as an example to follow, loud slogans and phrases on which the plot semantic emphasis is placed – all these are techniques that can be seen in these series. Thus, the series form a new picture of the world with a new interpretation of modern values in the receptive consciousness of children.

People are now massively discussing the ethics of the West's new views on generally accepted traditional values, which is accompanied by clashes between individuals and the masses both on the Internet and in reality. The difference in views and their defense occurs on the cinema platform, which continues to be replenished with films promoting new non-traditional Western values, interpreted by the plot as positive, serving as an example for all things (note: The film *The Little Mermaid,* 2023, *Cinderella*, 2021, etc. It is important that the main target audience of these films is children, whose consciousness has not yet been fully formed).

In addition to promoting views, films are a means of promoting goods and services to the masses. The most striking example is Apple technology, which is shown close-up in every film sponsored by the company. Thus, Apple technology can be seen in the film adaptation of the Twilight saga, in the film The Intern with Robert De Niro, in the film Fast and Furious, etc. After watching all these films, the viewer can subconsciously decide that Apple technology is the best. It is no coincidence that society has come to consider Apple technology the best even in those regions where the population is unable to fully pay for the company's paid smartphone system, and other market offerings (note: Samsung) are more profitable and convenient to consume.

Thus, it can be concluded that the practical application of manipulation as a means of influence in mass information processes, in particular, using the example of cinema and the example of advertising symbols of information in it, justifies itself and contributes to the

achievement of the goals of manipulators through known visual and acoustic manipulative techniques and methods.

Using knowledge of manipulations in the educational process

Students of the Udmurt State University who studied documentation and Archival Science in the course "Fundamentals of Information and Analytical Activity" were asked to find methods of manipulative influence in advertising by working with examples of Soviet newspapers.As a result, a number of interesting patterns were discovered.

Thus, in the work of E.E. Pautova, the content of New Year's issues of Soviet newspapers was analyzed, and it was shown that in the period from the beginning to the end of the civil war, the techniques changed radically, adapting to gradual Sovietization. If at the beginning of the civil war the techniques were based on the religious feelings of the population, then by the end of the war there were none left (Pautova, 2023). An analysis of the *Izhevskaya Pravda* newspaper for 1937 showed that manipulation techniques were also actively used when covering the Stakhanovite movement (Popova, 2023), as well as in the *Molodoy Bolshevik* newspaper when describing socialist construction (Zakharova, 2023). Of interest are also the means by which the *Krasny Ural* newspaper tried to show the image of the coming world revolution (Zueva, 2023), which were often closely intertwined with the means of anti-religious propaganda (Gruzdeva, 2024) and propaganda of participation in the state loan (Shagalova, 2024).

An analysis of the repertoire index of Soviet theatres, which recommended certain plays for showing and others not, also reveals a clear ideological background (Aubakirova, 2024).

Newspapers of the war period also demonstrate obvious manipulation techniques for ideological "pumping" of the population. Moreover, these means are often very close to hidden advertising technologies (Ivanova, 2024; Uvina, 2024), and also have elements of neurolinguistic programming (Kandakova, 2024).

5. Conclusion

The foundations of studying media communications and manipulative influence in their environment were laid at the beginning of the 20th century and are actively developing at the present time, since at the present stage of development of the media environment, ideas, stereotypes, aspirations and desires are still being introduced to the masses, and a vision of the world, its history and future is dictated.

The reasons for the effectiveness of mass manipulation lie in the structure of the psyche, consciousness and subconscious of a person, his behavior, desires and fears inherent in each individual. The methods and types of manipulation in mass information processes are quite diverse, and always allow the manipulator to build an effective process of his influence both on a specific person and on a group of people. However, there are ways to protect against manipulation, and some theories claim that the manipulative process is not so straightforward in principle and depends on many factors, in particular, on the significance and activity of the information disseminated by the manipulator in the information field, and on the mindset and psyche of specific individuals.

Modern society is witnessing a sharp and practically uncontrolled development of media channels, new methods of data transmission, growth of information flow, covering the whole world. Against the background of the evolution of the process of information exchange, new schemes of manipulation of people's consciousness have emerged. The visible, the audible and the readable programs the human subconscious to perform certain actions, change his psychological attitudes.

Manipulation of public consciousness of large masses, many nations of our planet, changed the information, psychological and social background of the world, especially strongly affecting the cultural layer of knowledge and judgments. Practical application of manipulation as a means of influence in mass information processes on the example of advertising information flows justifies itself and contributes to the achievement of the goals of manipulators by means of known visual and acoustic manipulative techniques and methods.

References

1xBet Video, 2018 – 1xBet Video (2018). 1xbet (1xbet) advertising with a drum. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7e3jpYf28I

4 new..., 2011 – 4 new perfume advertising videos. 2011. [Electronic resource]. URL:https://www.buro247.ru/news/style/1982.html

Aubakirova, 2024 – *Aubakirova, A.S.* (2024). "Repertoire Index" – the only source on theatrical censorship in the USSR. *European Researcher. Series A.* 15(1): 4-9. DOI: 10.13187/er.2024.1.4

Bryant, Thomson, 2002 – *Bryant, J., Thomson, S.* (2002). Fundamentals of media effects. Boston.

Danilova, 2011 – *Danilova, A.A.* (2011). Manipulirovanie slovom v sredstvakh massovoi informatsii [Manipulation of words in the media]. M. [in Russian]

Dzyaloshinsky, 2005 – *Dzyaloshinsky, I.M.* (2005). Manipulyativnye tekhnologii v mass-media (nachalo) [Manipulative technologies in mass media (beginning)]. *Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta. Ser. 10. Zhurnalistika.* 1: 29-55. [in Russian]

Fedorov et al., 2022 – *Fedorov, A.V., Levitskaya, A.A., Tselykh, M.P., Novikov, A.S.* Media manipulations and media literacy education (2022). M. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://ifap.ru/library/book648.pdf

Frolova, Klinkova, 2022 – *Frolova, A.A., Klinkova, D.A.* (2022). Priemy manipulyativnogo vozdeistviya reklamy kosmeticheskikh sredstv v tsifrovom mire na primere kompanii L'oreal [Techniques of manipulative influence of cosmetic advertising in the digital world on the example of L'oreal] *Sbornik nauchnykh trudov VI Mezhdunarodnoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii.* Tver. 2. Pp. 75-78. [in Russian]

Gálik et al., 2024 – *Gálik, S. et al.* (2024). How competencies of media users contribute to deliberative communication. In: Peruško, Z., Lauk, E., Halliki-Loit, H. (eds.). European media systems for deliberative communication: risks and opportunities. New York: Routledge. Pp. 98-116. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003476597

Gálik, 2020 – *Gálik, S.* (2020). Thinking in the network. *Central European Journal of Communication.* 27(3): 446-459. DOI: 10.51480/1899-5101.13.3(27).9

Gáliková Tolnaiová, Gálik, 2020 – *Gáliková Tolnaiová, S., Gálik, S.* (2020). Cyberspace as a new living world and its axiological contexts. In: Abu-Taieh, E., Mouatasim, A., Al Hadid, I.H. (eds). *Cyberspace.* London. Pp. 39-52.

Goloshchapova, 2016 – *Goloshchapova, D.P.* (2016). Manipulyativnye priemy v politicheskoi internet-kommunikatsii [Manipulative techniques in political Internet communication]. *Yazyk i pravo: aktual'nye problem vzaimodeistviya: Materialy VI vserossiiskoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii.* Rostov-on-Don. 15.11.2016. 6: 260-264. [in Russian]

Gorina, 2016 – *Gorina, E.V.* (2016). Kommunikativnye tekhnologi i manipulyatsii v smi i voprosy informatsionnoi bezopasnosti [Communication technologies of manipulation in the media and issues of information security]. M. [in Russian]

Gruzdeva, 2024 – *Gruzdeva, Yu.Yu.* (2024). Anti-religious propaganda in the newspaper "Krasnoyarsk worker" in 1931. *European Researcher. Series A.* 15(1): 18-21. DOI: 10.13187/er.2024.1.18

In the Nizhny Novgorod region..., 2023 – In the Nizhny Novgorod region (2023), they allowed shooting black-headed gulls due to bird flu. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://newsnn.ru/news/2023-06-08/nizhegorodskie-deputaty-razreshili-ubivat-rasskazyvaem-kogo-2950850

Ivanova, 2024 – *Ivanova, E.D.* (2024). Hidden military propaganda in Soviet periodicals during the Second World War. *Propaganda in the World and Local Conflicts.* 11(2): 59-62. DOI: 10.13187/pwlc.2024.2.59

Kalin, 2020 – *Kalin, D.V.* (2020). Manipulyativnye priemy v televizionnykh programmakh Vladimira Solov'eva [Manipulative techniques in Vladimir Solovyov's television programs]. *Materialy IX Vserossiiskoi studencheskoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii s mezhdunarodnym uchastiem.* Novosibirsk, 2-4.12.2020. Novosibirsk. Pp. 127-128. [in Russian]

Kandakova, 2024 – *Kandakova, V.S.* (2024). Literary devices and lexical features of propaganda in Soviet newspapers in 1921. *Propaganda in the World and Local Conflicts.* 11(2): 54-58. DOI: 10.13187/pwlc.2024.2.54

Kara-Murza, 2000 – *Kara-Murza, S.G.* (2000). Manipulyatsii soznaniem: Politicheskii bestseller [Manipulation of Consciousness: Political Bestseller]. M. [in Russian]

Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2020 – *Levitskaya, A., Fedorov, A.* (2020). Typology and mechanisms of media manipulation. *International Journal of Media and Information Literacy.* 5(1): 69-78. DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2020.1.69

Lobastova, 2019 – *Lobastova, M.P.* (2019). Manipulyativnye priemy v formirovanii protestnykh nastroenii molodezhi (na primere bloga Il'I Varlamova) [Manipulative techniques in the formation of

protest sentiments of young people (based on the example of Ilya Varlamov's blog)]. *Sbornik statei IV Otkrytoi mezhvuzovskoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii*. M. Pp. 195-204. [in Russian]

Lozovsky, 2011 – *Lozovsky, B.N.* (2011). Manipulyativnye tekhnologii vliyaniya na sredstva massovoi informatsii [Manipulative technologies of influence on mass media]. Ph.D. Dis. Ekaterinburg. [in Russian]

Marshak, 2021 – *Marshak, V.* (2021). Istoriya o tom, kak v 1938 godu radiopostanovka "Vojna mirov" privela k massovoj panike v SSHA [The story of how the 1938 radio production "War of the Worlds" led to mass panic in the USA]. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://www.techinsider.ru/popmem/756663-istoriya-o-tom-kak-v-1938-godu-radiopostanovka-voyna-mirov-privela-k-massovoy-panike-v-ssha/?ysclid=m9skvom3p2701323337 [in Russian]

Media Summary, 2022 – Media Summary. Vliyanie media na cheloveka. Mozhno li cherez SMI zarazit'sya agressiej? Effekt prajminga [The Impact of media on humans. Is it possible to become infected with aggression through the media? The priming effect]. 2022. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://mediasvod.ru/vliyanie-media-na-cheloveka-effekt-prajminga/?ysclid=m9sjzf8lff858716048 [in Russian]

Music from 1xBET commercial, 2017 – Music from 1xBET commercial – 1xBET Effect (Russia). 2017. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://muizre.ru/dir/1403-1-0-7484

Neskryabina, 2013 – *Neskryabina, O.F.* (2013). Manipulyativnye priemy v diskurse na temu o manipulyativnykh vozmozhnostyakh SMI [Manipulative techniques in the discourse on the topic of the manipulative capabilities of the media]. *Media. Informatsiya. Kommunikatsiya*. 4: 18-20. [in Russian]

Pautova, 2023 – *Pautova, E.E.* (2023). Elements of military propaganda in Soviet New Year newspapers during the civil war. *Propaganda in the World and Local Conflicts*. 10(1): 25-30. DOI: 10.13187/pwlc.2023.1.25

Perfume advertising, 2017 – Perfume advertising 2017: music and video (2017). [Electronic resource]. URL: https://bonamoda.ru/reklama-duhov-2017-muzyka-video

Popova, 2023 – *Popova, Yu.V.* (2023). Reflection of the Stakhanovite movement in the newspaper "Izhevskaya Pravda" for 1937. *European Researcher. Series A.* 14(2): 117-121. DOI: 10.13187/er.2023.2.117

Romanov, Rus'kina, 2005 – *Romanov, K.M., Rus'kina, E.N.* (2005). Ponyatie i priemy psikhologicheskoi zashchity ot manipulyativnykh vozdeistvii [Concept and methods of psychological defense against manipulative influences]. *Gumanitarii*. 5: 242-244. [in Russian]

Shagalova, 2024 – *Shagalova, E.A.* (2024). Participation of the Soviet people in the second State War Loan based on materials from Soviet newspapers. *Propaganda in the World and Local Conflicts*. 11(2): 68-73. DOI: 10.13187/pwlc.2024.2.68

Subbotina, 2018 – *Subbotina, M.A.* (2018). Ekran "kak instrument vliyaniya" myagkoi sily [Screen "as an instrument of influence" of soft power]. *Etnosotsium i mezhnatsional'naya kul'tura*. 4: 87-93. [in Russian]

Uvina, 2024 – *Uvina, L.S.* (2024). Analysis of the propaganda content of the newspaper "Krasnaya Zvezda" dated February 10, 1942. *Propaganda in the World and Local Conflicts*. 11(2): 63-67. DOI: 10.13187/pwlc.2024.2.63

Vorontsov, 2019 – *Vorontsov, S.G.* (2019). Model' kommunikatsii G.D. Lassuela kak element metodologii tsivilisticheskikh issledovanii [Communication model of G.D. Lasswell as an element of the methodology of civilistic research]. *Metodologicheskie problem tsivilisticheskikh issledovanii*. 1: 414-431. DOI: 10.33397/2619-0559-2019-1-1-414-431 [in Russian]

Zakharova, 2023 – *Zakharova, Ya.Yu.* (2023). Propaganda in the newspaper "Young Bolshevik" for 1937. *European Researcher. Series A.* 14(2): 122-124. DOI: 10.13187/er.2023.2.122
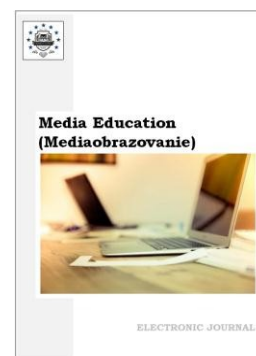
Zueva, 2023 – *Zueva, A.V.* (2023). The Image of the World Revolution in the Editorials of the Perm Newspaper "Red Ural" in 1919-1920. *Propaganda in the World and Local Conflicts*. 10(2): 67-71. DOI: 10.13187/pwlc.2023.2.67

Online Conferences as Media Education Platforms: Enhancing Teacher Digital Competence through the DigCompEdu Framework

Shahid Rafiq [a], [*], Ayesha Afzal [b], Aisha Sami [b]

[a] Emerson University Multan, Pakistan
[b] University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan

Abstract

This study examines the role of online conferences as emerging media education platforms that enhance teachers' digital competence and professional growth in Pakistan. Grounded in the European DigCompEdu framework, the research investigates how mediated professional learning spaces enhance teachers' ability to integrate technology, foster media literacy, and engage in reflective pedagogical practices. A quantitative survey was conducted among 278 in-service teachers from public and private schools, examining six dimensions of digital competence. Descriptive analyses revealed high mean scores in Professional Engagement (M = 3.92) and Empowering Learners (M = 3.89), indicating strong benefits of online media-based learning for collaboration and inclusive pedagogy. Conversely, Facilitating Learners' Digital Competence scored lowest, reflecting ongoing challenges in guiding students' media literacy. ANOVA and regression analyses identified Professional Engagement, Teaching and Learning, and Empowering Learners as significant predictors of the perceived impact of professional development. A Structural Equation Model (SEM) further confirmed that digital competence mediates the relationship between these predictors and conference outcomes. The findings underscore that well-designed online media learning environments can serve as powerful catalysts for developing teacher digital competence, advancing media education, and promoting digital transformation in under-resourced educational contexts. The study recommends integrating structured media education frameworks like DigCompEdu into ongoing professional teacher development initiatives.

Keywords: digital competence, DigCompEdu, online conferences, teacher development, self-efficacy, professional learning.

1. Introduction

In the evolving landscape of 21st-century education, the integration of technology into teaching and professional development has become both inevitable and transformative. While global conversations around digital pedagogy were gaining momentum prior to 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic served as a pivotal point that compelled educators, institutions, and systems to make a sudden transition to remote teaching and virtual engagement. In this global shift, teachers, arguably the frontline actors of educational continuity, faced the dual challenge of adapting to new instructional formats while simultaneously developing the technological and pedagogical capacities needed to thrive in them (König et al., 2020; Trust, Whalen, 2020).

This sudden transformation highlighted critical gaps in teacher preparation worldwide. Even in technologically advanced nations, many educators reported feeling underprepared to conduct

---
[*] Corresponding author
E-mail addresses: shahid.rafiq@eum.edu.pk (S. Rafiq)

effective online instruction (Cutri et al., 2020; Gáliková Tolnaiová, Gálik, 2020; Gudmundsdottir, Hathaway, 2020). In countries like Pakistan, where digital access is unequal and institutional support for teacher training in educational technology is often minimal, the situation poses deeper and more structural challenges. Nevertheless, necessity also created innovation: virtual platforms became the site of rapid learning, experimentation, and professional exchange. Among the most impactful of these emergent formats were online academic conferences, spaces where educators could access new pedagogies, digital tools, expert panels, and collegial interaction in synchronous and asynchronous modalities (Rapanta et al., 2021; Seidenberg et al., 2021).

Online conferences differ fundamentally from traditional teacher training sessions. They are typically broader in scope, multidisciplinary in content, and informal in structure. Yet they offer powerful affordances: exposure to global educational trends, access to emerging technological tools, and opportunities to engage in reflective dialogue with practitioners and researchers alike. Importantly, these conferences bypass many logistical barriers that restrict participation in face-to-face events, such as cost, travel, and institutional gatekeeping, making them particularly attractive for teachers in remote or under-resourced regions (Roos et al., 2020; Niner, Wassermann, 2021).

In the context of Pakistan, these developments signal both possibility and complexity. The country's educational system is characterized by diversity across linguistic, regional, and socioeconomic lines. Access to digital tools and infrastructure is uneven, particularly between urban and rural areas and among public and private schools. Teacher training institutions are only beginning to integrate digital pedagogies into their pre-service and in-service frameworks. Within this backdrop, online conferences represent an underexplored yet promising mechanism for accelerating teacher development, especially when supported by culturally and contextually relevant frameworks.

Drawing from international literature, the potential of online conferences can be understood across three dimensions: technological competence, pedagogical transformation, and emotional readiness. First, digital competence is now widely acknowledged as a core requirement for teachers globally. According to the European Commission's DigCompEdu framework, educators must be able not only to use technology effectively but to embed it pedagogically, ethically, and inclusively (Redecker, 2017). Online conferences expose teachers to a range of tools and strategies that can enhance their ability to plan, deliver, and assess instruction in digital environments (Rapanta et al., 2021; Trust, Whalen, 2020).

Second, pedagogical development is often catalyzed by professional dialogue and modelled practices, both of which are central to well-designed conferences. The exposure to diverse teaching strategies, disciplinary approaches, and classroom technologies allows teachers to reflect on their methods and consider new perspectives. Literature shows that even short-term exposure to innovative practices in online environments can reshape teacher beliefs and enhance self-efficacy (Cutri et al., 2020; Gudmundsdottir, Hathaway, 2020). Third, and perhaps most critically, is the emotional and psychological dimension. Transitioning to unfamiliar digital spaces can trigger a range of emotions, anxiety, uncertainty, and even resistance, particularly among educators who lack prior experience or institutional support (Daumiller et al., 2021; Lund et al., 2021). However, supportive professional environments such as interactive conferences can reduce these stressors by providing a sense of community, validation, and agency. Emotional regulation and perceived self-efficacy are now understood as integral to successful professional learning, particularly in technology-mediated contexts (Artino et al., 2012; Boekaerts, Pekrun, 2016).

The situation in Pakistan reflects many of these global dynamics but also carries distinct challenges. Although smartphone penetration and internet access have grown significantly, many teachers, especially in rural or government schools, face systemic barriers to digital engagement. These include a lack of devices, unstable connectivity, limited technical support, and institutional inertia. Cultural attitudes toward technology and professional autonomy also vary significantly by region, gender, and school type. Consequently, the potential of online conferences as tools for teacher development must be assessed not just in terms of access, but concerning how teachers interpret, value, and integrate their experiences from these platforms into their instructional identities. Despite these challenges, the pandemic provided a unique window of opportunity. Pakistani educators, many of whom were thrust into digital teaching with little preparation, began engaging with online communities, attending webinars, and participating in virtual conferences organized by local universities, NGOs, and international networks. These events, often their first exposure to structured digital professional learning, offered not only technological skills but also

new pedagogical insights and collaborative confidence. Yet, the question remains: to what extent did these conferences truly contribute to their instructional competence, and how did teachers from different backgrounds experience these opportunities?

This study aims to investigate these issues in depth by examining the multifaceted impact of a national online conference on Pakistani teachers' professional development. Through empirical analysis, it seeks to capture how such events contribute to technological skill-building, pedagogical innovation, and emotional resilience. It also explores the socio-demographic factors, such as age, gender, digital literacy, and teaching experience, that shape the conference experience. In doing so, the study contributes to international understandings of digital professional development while offering contextually grounded insights that can inform the future design of more inclusive and responsive teacher training in Pakistan and comparable education systems.

Digital Competence and Teacher Readiness: The 21st-century education landscape demands that teachers acquire not only subject matter expertise but also digital fluency and the ability to integrate technology meaningfully into pedagogy. The concept of Digital Competence has evolved from basic ICT literacy to include pedagogical integration, ethical use, digital content creation, and professional collaboration (Redecker, 2017). According to the DigCompEdu framework, digital competence in teaching is multifaceted and encompasses six key areas: professional engagement, digital resources, teaching and learning, assessment, learner empowerment, and facilitating learners' digital competence. Numerous international studies emphasize the role of digital competence in teacher effectiveness. Gudmundsdottir and Hathaway (Gudmundsdottir, Hathaway, 2020) found that teachers with higher levels of digital fluency were more confident and adaptive during the COVID-19-induced shift to online education. Similarly, König et al. (König et al., 2020) reported that even experienced teachers lacked readiness for online instruction without prior exposure to blended teaching tools and environments. This was especially evident in systems where digital technologies had not been integrated into pre-service or in-service training programs.

In the context of low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), such as Pakistan, challenges to digital readiness are more acute. Studies from similar regions highlight how infrastructure gaps, limited access to devices, and lack of institutional support hinder the development of teacher digital skills (Lund et al., 2021). Moreover, digital competence is not evenly distributed among teachers due to factors such as age, gender, rural-urban divides, and socioeconomic status. Teachers in rural or government schools often face more barriers, including limited access to high-speed internet and digital hardware, thereby affecting their ability to participate in or benefit from online professional development opportunities (Rapanta et al., 2021).

Online Professional Development and Virtual Conferences: Online Professional Development (OPD) is gaining international recognition as a scalable, flexible, and cost-effective model for continuous teacher learning. Unlike traditional face-to-face workshops, OPD offers asynchronous and synchronous modalities, allowing educators to engage with professional learning on their terms (Trust, Whalen, 2020). Among the various OPD formats, online academic conferences have emerged as dynamic platforms where teachers are exposed to current research, digital tools, teaching models, and diverse pedagogical discourses. Research shows that online conferences can enhance teacher self-efficacy, foster reflective practices, and build professional learning networks (Seidenberg et al., 2021). These events often include live lectures, interactive breakout rooms, virtual posters, and hands-on workshops, all of which allow educators to explore new technologies and strategies within supportive peer environments (Roos et al., 2020). Importantly, the low-cost and remote access features of online conferences help democratize participation, enabling teachers from remote or underserved areas to engage with national and international education communities (Niner, Wassermann, 2021).

However, the effectiveness of online conferences is contingent upon multiple factors. According to Cutri et al. (Cutri et al., 2020), many educators initially experience "crisis teaching fatigue", wherein their first encounter with digital platforms is marked by survival-based engagement rather than deep learning. In such cases, professional learning environments must be intentionally designed to support scaffolding, emotional regulation, and skill development. Rapanta et al. (Rapanta et al., 2021) emphasized the need for structured pedagogical design in digital teacher education to ensure sustained engagement and meaningful learning outcomes. In the Pakistani context, the role of online conferences as OPD tools remains under-researched. While some local institutions and NGOs have begun offering webinars and virtual symposiums, the lack of formal evaluation makes it difficult to determine their actual impact. Given the digital

divide, cultural heterogeneity, and institutional disparities within the country, it is essential to analyze how Pakistani teachers perceive, experience, and benefit from these conferences, and whether these events translate into long-term pedagogical transformation.

Emotional Readiness, Self-Efficacy, and Online Learning: While cognitive and technical skills are central to digital learning, growing literature emphasizes the significance of emotional and psychological dimensions in online teacher development. Boekaerts, Pekrun (Boekaerts, Pekrun, 2016) argue that emotion is intrinsically linked to motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes. Teachers' willingness to engage with new digital environments is influenced by factors such as perceived ease of use, prior experience, and emotional self-regulation (Artino et al., 2012). Teachers unfamiliar with digital technologies often report feelings of anxiety, helplessness, or inadequacy during initial encounters with virtual learning environments (Daumiller et al., 2021). These emotions can hinder participation and reduce the perceived usefulness of OPD events. Conversely, educators who feel supported and empowered during these experiences are more likely to integrate new practices into their classrooms (Tyng et al., 2017). During the pandemic, emotional responses to online learning varied widely. In a multi-country study, König et al. (König et al., 2020) found that older teachers often demonstrated more confidence and resilience due to broader pedagogical experience, while younger teachers were more fluent with digital tools but experienced greater stress due to workload and lack of pedagogical autonomy. These findings highlight the need for differentiated support mechanisms that account for individual teacher profiles in professional development settings.

In the case of online conferences, the psychosocial environment plays a crucial role in determining their impact. Events that incorporate peer interaction, collaborative learning, and technical support are more likely to reduce stress and increase perceived self-efficacy. Seidenberg et al. (Seidenberg et al., 2021) found that the perceived value of virtual conferences was strongly associated with interactive features, social presence, and a sense of community, all of which enhanced participant engagement. For countries like Pakistan, where online learning is still emerging as a mainstream modality, the emotional readiness of educators must be acknowledged and addressed. The success of online conferences depends not only on content quality but also on creating emotionally responsive environments that help teachers feel capable, valued, and connected.

Theoretical Framework: This study is grounded in the Digital Competence Framework for Educators (DigCompEdu) developed by the European Commission, as shown in Figure 1 (Redecker, 2017). As digital technologies continue to reshape educational environments, DigCompEdu provides a comprehensive model to assess and support teachers' professional growth in technology-enhanced learning contexts. It views digital competence not as a single skill but as a multidimensional construct that encompasses pedagogical, technical, and reflective capacities. The framework is structured into six interrelated areas: professional engagement, digital resources, teaching and learning, assessment, empowering learners, and facilitating learners' digital competence.
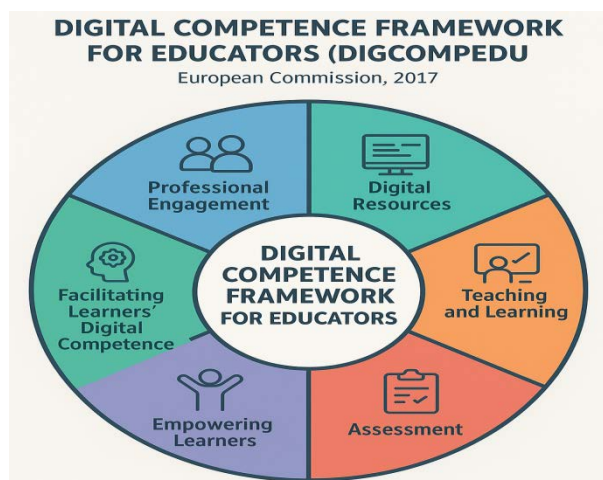

Fig. 1. Theoretical framework of the study

Each of these domains emphasizes the purposeful and pedagogically sound integration of technology in educational practices. For instance, professional engagement refers to how educators

use digital tools to collaborate, communicate, and engage in lifelong learning. The use of digital resources focuses on the ability to find, adapt, and create teaching materials. Teaching and learning involve designing and delivering instruction in digital formats, while assessment includes leveraging digital tools to evaluate learning outcomes. Additionally, empowering learners encourages personalized, inclusive, and differentiated teaching strategies, and the final domain addresses teachers' capacity to support students in developing their digital competencies. Within the context of this research, DigCompEdu serves as a relevant and flexible lens to evaluate how participation in online conferences contributes to Pakistani teachers' professional development. The framework's holistic view enables the study to capture not just improvements in technological use, but also deeper changes in pedagogical approaches and teacher identity. This is especially important in a country like Pakistan, where disparities in digital access, training opportunities, and institutional support make professional growth highly variable. By applying the DigCompEdu framework, the study is able to assess both the cognitive and affective impact of virtual conferences on teacher development in a structured and internationally benchmarked manner.

2. Materials and methods

This study is situated within the positivist research paradigm, which emphasizes objectivity, quantification, and empirical testing of hypotheses through observable and measurable data (Creswell, 2018). Positivism allows researchers to examine causal relationships using statistical procedures and generalize findings for a larger population. Given the study's goal, to assess the impact of online conferences on teachers' digital competence using standardized measurement tools, the positivist paradigm was most appropriate. It provides the philosophical foundation for employing structured instruments, ensuring replicability, validity, and statistical rigor in educational research (Mertens, 2014).

Research Design: This study followed a cross-sectional survey design, which involves collecting data at a single point in time from a predefined population. The survey design was selected due to its efficiency in capturing teachers' perceptions across multiple dimensions of digital competence after attending a national online teacher conference. Survey research is widely used in educational settings to measure attitudes, self-reported practices, and latent constructs such as competence and self-efficacy (Fraenkel et al., 2019). The design allows for the analysis of relationships among variables and comparisons across demographic subgroups.

Research Method: The research method used was quantitative and non-experimental. A structured questionnaire aligned with the DigCompEdu Framework (Redecker, 2017) served as the primary tool for data collection. The focus was to numerically assess teachers' perceived development in six competence domains: professional engagement, digital resources, teaching and learning, assessment, empowering learners, and facilitating learners' digital competence. The method enables a standardized approach for collecting and analyzing data on a large scale, thus enhancing the reliability of the findings (Bryman, 2016).

Population, Sampling Technique, and Sample Size: The target population consisted of in-service teachers in Pakistan who participated in a national-level online teacher development conference held in 2023. These teachers represented diverse geographical regions, school types (public/private), and subject areas. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure proportional representation across key demographic variables, including gender, school sector, and teaching experience. Stratified sampling enhances the accuracy of parameter estimates and allows for subgroup analysis within heterogeneous populations (Etikan, Bala, 2017). Based on Cochran's (1977) sample size formula for a large population (with 95 % confidence level and 5 % margin of error), the minimum required sample was calculated as 217. However, to ensure robustness, the survey was distributed to 350 teachers, and 278 valid responses were received and analyzed.

Data Collection Procedure: Data was collected using a structured online questionnaire administered via Google Forms. The questionnaire included 36 items on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), based on the validated DigCompEdu framework. Items were adapted for contextual relevance to Pakistani educators and reviewed by three education experts to establish content validity. The instrument was pilot tested with 30 participants, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84, indicating high internal consistency. The final survey was shared through professional WhatsApp groups and institutional mailing lists with an informed consent form on the first page. Data was collected over two weeks immediately after the conclusion of the online conference.

Data Analysis Techniques: Data was analyzed using SPSS (Version 27) and AMOS. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) summarized teacher responses across the six DigCompEdu domains. Independent-sample t-tests examined gender and school-type differences, while one-way ANOVA assessed differences based on digital literacy levels. Pearson correlations explored relationships between digital competence, self-efficacy, age, and experience.

To identify significant predictors of perceived impact, a multiple regression was conducted using DigCompEdu domains as predictors. Lastly, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in AMOS tested the theoretical model, confirming digital competence as a mediator. Fit indices such as CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and χ^2/df confirmed model adequacy. This multi-level analysis offered both descriptive clarity and theoretical validation (Kline, 2016).

Ethical Considerations: This study was conducted in strict adherence to ethical standards in educational research. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee of the host university. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any stage. Informed consent was obtained electronically before the survey began. Data was kept anonymous, and no personally identifiable information was collected. All digital data were stored in encrypted files accessible only to the principal investigator, ensuring participant confidentiality and data protection.

3. Discussion

This study sought to explore the impact of online conferences on teachers' professional development in Pakistan through the lens of the DigCompEdu framework. The findings reveal a nuanced understanding of how digital competence is developing among Pakistani educators and how online professional learning formats can serve as effective platforms for capacity building.

Interpreting the Descriptive Trends: The descriptive statistics showed that Professional Engagement and Empowering Learners were the most positively perceived domains, suggesting that online conferences may be particularly effective in enhancing teachers' participation in professional communities and encouraging inclusive, student-centered practices. These findings align with prior studies highlighting the transformative potential of digital tools in supporting teachers' collaborative learning and reflective practice (Trust et al., 2016; Zhang, Liu, 2022). Conversely, the lowest scores were recorded in the domain of Facilitating Learners' Digital Competence, reflecting limited confidence or training in guiding students' own digital skills. This is consistent with prior research in under-resourced educational settings, where teachers often lack structured opportunities or pedagogical models to foster digital literacy in students (Manca, Ranieri, 2016). The discrepancy underscores the importance of integrating digital citizenship and student-centered digital tasks into teacher training initiatives.

Variability by Digital Literacy and Institutional Context: The ANOVA findings demonstrated significant differences in digital competence based on teachers' self-reported digital literacy levels. Advanced users scored significantly higher across domains, confirming that baseline digital proficiency remains a strong predictor of professional confidence and competence (Koehler et al., 2013). The results also showed institutional disparity, where private school teachers outperformed public school teachers in Digital Resources and Teaching and Learning domains. This aligns with literature suggesting that private institutions in South Asia often provide more exposure to technology, training, and innovation-driven environments (Farooq et al., 2021).

Correlational and Predictive Patterns: Correlation analysis revealed moderate to strong positive relationships between self-efficacy and all digital competence domains, particularly with Professional Engagement, Teaching and Learning, and Empowering Learners. These findings are in line with Bandura's (Bandura, 1997) theory of self-efficacy, which posits that confidence in one's ability is central to the adoption of new practices. The regression model further solidified this association by showing that these three domains were significant predictors of the perceived professional impact of online conferences. Interestingly, digital resources and assessment, often emphasized in digital policy frameworks, did not emerge as significant predictors in the regression model. This suggests that access to tools alone is insufficient without strong pedagogical and affective engagement (Selwyn, 2016). Teachers who engage professionally and innovatively are more likely to translate conference content into meaningful change.

Theoretical and Practical Contributions: Framing the study within the DigCompEdu framework allowed a structured yet flexible interpretation of digital competence as both a technical and pedagogical construct. The SEM analysis supported a model in which Professional

Engagement, Teaching and Learning, and Empowering Learners positively predicted latent digital competence, which in turn predicted the perceived impact of the conference. The acceptable model fit indices strengthen the empirical robustness of this conceptual pathway. Practically, the study suggests that online conferences hold substantial promise as professional development tools in Pakistan, especially when they prioritize collaboration, pedagogy, and student empowerment. However, their effectiveness depends on addressing digital inequalities, institutional support structures, and teachers' initial readiness.

Contextual Challenges and Forward Recommendations: In the Pakistani context, challenges such as unequal internet access, limited professional development funding, and centralized curriculum frameworks can hamper the long-term effectiveness of virtual learning platforms. Hence, future policy should advocate for:

– Blended models of professional learning combining virtual and in-person training.

– Localized content development in online conferences reflects cultural and curricular needs.

– Mentorship and peer networks that support sustained engagement beyond the conference itself.

Furthermore, teacher education institutions should integrate DigCompEdu-aligned training modules into pre-service and in-service programs to systematically build competencies beyond tool-use, especially in assessment and learner facilitation.

4. Results

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 indicate that teachers reported the highest perceived competence in Professional Engagement (M = 3.92, SD = 0.61) and Empowering Learners (M = 3.89, SD = 0.63), suggesting strong confidence in collaborating professionally and supporting inclusive learning.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for DigCompEdu Competence Domains

DigCompEdu Domain	M	SD
Professional Engagement	3.92	0.61
Digital Resources	3.76	0.65
Teaching and Learning	3.85	0.59
Assessment	3.61	0.72
Empowering Learners	3.89	0.63
Facilitating Learners' Digital Competence	3.57	0.70

Notes: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

Conversely, the lowest mean was observed in Facilitating Learners' Digital Competence (M = 3.57, SD = 0.70), indicating a potential gap in teachers' ability to support students' digital skill development. Overall, responses across domains reflect moderate-to-high digital competence, with variation suggesting areas for targeted professional development.

Table 2. One-Way ANOVA for Digital Competence Domains by Digital Literacy Level

DigCompEdu Domain	F	p
Professional Engagement	4.28	.016
Digital Resources	5.36	.005
Teaching and Learning	3.89	.027

Notes: p < .05 indicates a statistically significant difference between groups.

The one-way ANOVA results in Table 2 indicate statistically significant differences in digital competence across self-reported digital literacy levels. Teachers with higher digital literacy levels scored significantly better in Professional Engagement ($F_{(2, 275)} = 4.28$, p = .016), Digital Resources (F = 5.36, p = .005), and Teaching and Learning (F = 3.89, p = .027). These findings suggest that teachers with advanced digital skills perceive themselves as more competent in integrating technology into professional collaboration, instructional planning, and digital resource use.

Table 3. Independent-Sample t-Test Results by Gender and School Type

Comparison Group	Domain	t	p	Significant Difference?
Male vs. Female	All Domains	ns	>.05	No
Private vs. Public School	Digital Resources	2.14	.034	Yes
Private vs. Public School	Teaching and Learning	2.29	.023	Yes

Notes: ns = not significant; p < .05 considered statistically significant.

The independent-sample t-test of Table 3 revealed no significant gender-based differences in digital competence across any domain (p > .05). However, private school teachers scored significantly higher than public school teachers in both Digital Resources (t = 2.14, p = .034) and Teaching and Learning (t = 2.29, p = .023). These findings suggest that institutional context, more than gender, affects teachers' perceived digital competence, likely due to better access to technology and professional development in private schools.

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Matrix for DigCompEdu Domains and Self-Efficacy

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Professional Engagement	1.00						
2. Digital Resources	0.62	1.00					
3. Teaching and Learning	0.67	0.63	1.00				
4. Assessment	0.51	0.50	0.54	1.00			
5. Empowering Learners	0.58	0.56	0.61	0.55	1.00		
6. Facilitating Learners' Digital Competence	0.53	0.49	0.52	0.48	0.60	1.00	
7. Self-Efficacy	0.52	0.46	0.49	0.38	0.43	0.41	1.00

The Pearson correlation matrix in Table 4 reveals moderate to strong positive correlations among all DigCompEdu domains, indicating a cohesive structure of digital competence. Notably, Self-Efficacy showed significant positive correlations with all domains, particularly with Professional Engagement (r = .52), Teaching and Learning (r = .49), and Digital Resources (r = .46). These results suggest that teachers who are more confident in their teaching abilities also perceive themselves as more digitally competent, reinforcing the importance of self-belief in digital pedagogy. The strong inter-domain correlations further validate the integrated nature of digital competence in teaching practice.

Table 5. Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Perceived Professional Development Impact

Predictor Variable	B	SE B	β	p
Professional Engagement	0.41	0.08	0.28	< .001
Digital Resources	0.12	0.07	0.10	.098
Teaching and Learning	0.35	0.11	0.23	.002
Assessment	0.09	0.10	0.06	.341
Empowering Learners	0.29	0.11	0.19	.007
Facilitating Learners' Digital Competence	0.10	0.09	0.08	.267

Model Summary: R^2 = .48, Adjusted R^2 = .46, F(6, 271) = 21.94, p < .001
Notes: B = unstandardized coefficient; SE B = standard error of B; β = standardized beta coefficient. Significant predictors are bolded.

The multiple regression analysis in Table 5 identified three significant predictors of perceived professional development impact: Professional Engagement (β = 0.28, p < .001), Teaching and Learning (β = 0.23, p = .002), and Empowering Learners (β = 0.19, p = .007). These domains significantly contributed to explaining variation in overall impact scores, suggesting that teachers

who actively engage with peers, employ digital pedagogy, and support learner-centered practices perceive greater benefits from online conferences. The model explained 48 % of the variance (R^2 = .48), indicating a strong overall fit. Domains like Assessment and Facilitating Learners' Digital Competence were not significant predictors, highlighting that practical engagement and pedagogical application are more influential than tool-based competence alone.

Table 6. Standardized Path Coefficients from SEM Analysis

Pathway	Standardized β	SE	CR	p-Value
Professional Engagement → Digital Competence (Latent)	0.28	0.06	4.67	< .001
Teaching and Learning → Digital Competence (Latent)	0.23	0.07	3.29	.001
Empowering Learners → Digital Competence (Latent)	0.19	0.07	2.71	.007
Digital Competence (Latent) → Perceived Conference Impact	0.41	0.05	6.98	< .001

Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Value	Threshold
χ² (Chi-square)	112.35	—
df	48	—
χ²/df	2.34	< 3.00
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	0.95	≥ 0.90
TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)	0.93	≥ 0.90
RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)	0.058	≤ 0.08
SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual)	0.045	≤ 0.08

Notes: SE = standard error; CR = critical ratio; β = standardized regression weight. All present paths are statistically significant. Model fit indices indicate acceptable-to-good model fit based on recommended thresholds (Kline, 2016).

The SEM analysis in Table 6 confirmed significant pathways between key DigCompEdu domains and the latent construct of Digital Competence, which in turn strongly predicted Perceived Conference Impact (β = 0.41, p < .001). Among the predictors, Professional Engagement (β = 0.28), Teaching and Learning (β = 0.23), and Empowering Learners (β = 0.19) showed statistically significant contributions to digital competence. This suggests that teachers who are more engaged professionally, adopt innovative teaching strategies, and focus on learner empowerment are more digitally competent and perceive greater professional growth through online conferences, as shown in Figure 2 below.
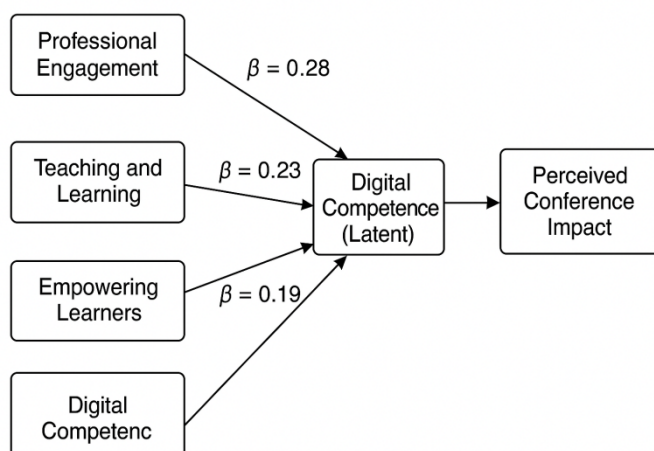

Fig. 2. SEM Path Diagram

The model demonstrated a good overall fit: χ²/df = 2.34, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.058, and SRMR = 0.045, meeting accepted thresholds (Kline, 2016). These results validate the

conceptual structure and indicate that the model accurately captures the relationships among constructs in the context of teacher digital development, as shown in Figure 2.

5. Conclusion

The model demonstrated a good overall fit: $\chi^2/df = 2.34$, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.058, and SRMR = 0.045, meeting accepted thresholds (Kline, 2016). These results validate the conceptual structure and indicate that the model accurately captures the relationships among constructs in the context of teacher digital development, as shown in Figure 2. This study explored the multifaceted impact of online conferences on teacher professional development in Pakistan through the lens of the DigCompEdu framework. Using a quantitative methodology, the research provided compelling evidence that online professional learning spaces significantly contribute to enhancing teachers' digital competence, particularly in the domains of professional engagement, teaching and learning, and empowering learners. The findings highlight that teachers who actively participate in professional networks, adopt innovative pedagogical approaches, and prioritize learner-centered strategies are more likely to experience meaningful professional growth. Importantly, while technological access and digital tools are foundational, they are not sufficient on their own. Rather, the development of digital competence hinges on sustained pedagogical integration, self-efficacy, and collaborative learning environments. The study also revealed important disparities across digital literacy levels and school types, pointing to the digital divide that continues to affect public-sector education in Pakistan. Teachers in private schools and those with higher digital literacy reported more substantial benefits from online conferences. This reinforces the need for systematic investment in teaching digital upskills, particularly in under-resourced institutions. By utilizing the DigCompEdu framework, this research contributes to a more holistic understanding of teacher development in digital contexts and offers a roadmap for future research and policy. The results advocate for embedding competency-based digital education within teacher training programs and for scaling up online professional development platforms as a viable, cost-effective, and scalable model.

In sum, online conferences, when well-designed and pedagogically aligned, can serve as powerful catalysts for teacher development, educational innovation, and digital transformation in Pakistan's evolving educational landscape. However, sustained impact may depend on how well these initiatives are integrated into broader institutional and policy frameworks that support teachers not only as users of technology but as active agents of digital pedagogy.

References

Artino et al., 2012 – Artino, A. R., Holmboe, E.S., Durning, S.J. (2012). Can achievement emotions be used to better understand motivation, learning, and performance in medical education? *Medical Teacher.* 34(3): 240-244. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3109/0142159X.2012.643265

Bandura, 1997 – Bandura, A. (1997). Self-efficacy: The exercise of control. W.H. Freeman.

Boekaerts, Pekrun, 2016 – Boekaerts, M., Pekrun, R. (2016). Emotions and emotion regulation in academic settings. In: Corno, L., Anderman, E.M. (eds.). Handbook of educational psychology (3rd ed.). Routledge. Pp. 76-90.

Bryman, 2016 – Bryman, A. (2016). Social research methods (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Cochran 1977 – Cochran, W.G. (1977). Sampling techniques (3rd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Creswell, 2018 – Creswell, J.W., Creswell, J.D. (2018). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (5th ed.): Sage Publications.

Cutri et al., 2020 – Cutri, R.M., Mena, J., Whiting, E.F. (2020). Faculty readiness for online crisis teaching: Transitioning to online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. *European Journal of Teacher Education.* 43(4): 523-541. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2020.1815702

Daumiller et al., 2021 – Daumiller, M., Janke, S., Dresel, M. (2021). Motivational determinants of teachers' intentions to use digital technologies in education. *Learning and Instruction.* 7: 101437. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2021.101437

Etikan, Bala, 2017 – Etikan, I., Bala, K. (2017). Sampling and sampling methods. *Biometrics & Biostatistics International Journal.* 5(6): 00149. https://doi.org/10.15406/bbij.2017.05.00149

Farooq et al., 2021 – Farooq, M.S., Javid, C.Z., Ullah, M.I. (2021). Digital divide and disparities in school ICT infrastructure: A case study from Pakistan. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education.* 18(1): 12. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-021-00252-1

Fraenkel et al., 2019 – *Fraenkel, J.R., Wallen, N.E., Hyun, H.H.* (2019). How to design and evaluate research in education (10th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.

Gáliková Tolnaiová, Gálik, 2020 – *Gáliková Tolnaiová, S., Gálik, S.* (2020). Cyberspace as a new living world and its axiological contexts. In: Abu-Taieh, E., Mouatasim, A., Al Hadid, I.H. (eds.). *Cyberspace.* London. Pp. 39-52.

Gudmundsdottir, Hathaway, 2020 – *Gudmundsdottir, G.B., Hathaway, D.M.* (2020). Digital competence and digital inclusion: Teachers' digital literacy in global contexts. *Education and Information Technologies.* 25(6): 4359-4376. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-020-10240-z

Kline, 2016 – *Kline, R.B.* (2016). Principles and practice of structural equation modeling (4th ed.). Guilford Press.

Koehler et al., 2013 – *Koehler, M.J., Mishra, P., Kereluik, K., Shin, T.S., Graham, C.R.* (2013). The technological pedagogical content knowledge framework. In: Spector, J.M. et al. (eds.). *Handbook of Research on Educational Communications and Technology.* Springer: 101-111. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-3185-5_9

König et al., 2020 – *König, J., Jäger-Biela, D.J., Glutsch, N.* (2020). Adapting to online teaching during COVID-19 school closure: Teacher education and teacher competence effects. *European Journal of Teacher Education.* 43(4): 608-622. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/0261 9768.2020.1809650

Lund et al., 2021 – *Lund, A., Furberg, A., Bakkenes, I., Engelien, K.L.* (2021). Professional digital competence: Teachers' professional development in digital teaching. *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy.* 16(1): 20-37. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.1891-943x-2021-01-03

Manca, Ranieri, 2016 – *Manca, S., Ranieri, M.* (2016). Facebook and others. Potentials and obstacles of Social Media for teaching in higher education. *Computers & Education.* 95: 216-230.

Mertens, 2014 – *Mertens, D.M.* (2014). Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Niner, Wassermann, 2021 – *Niner, H.J., Wassermann, S.N.* (2021). Better for whom? Leveling the injustices of international conferences by moving online. *Frontiers in Marine Science.* 8: 638025. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2021.638025

Rapanta et al., 2021 – *Rapanta, C., Botturi, L., Goodyear, P., Guàrdia, L., Koole, M.* (2021). Balancing technology, pedagogy and the learner: Redesigning teacher education for the digital age. *Technology, Pedagogy and Education.* 30(1): 1-18. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/ 1475939X.2020.1856713

Redecker, 2017 – *Redecker, C.* (2017). European framework for the digital competence of educators: DigCompEdu. Publications Office of the European Union. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2760/ 159770

Roos et al., 2020 – *Roos, G., Oláh, J., Ingle, R., Kobayashi, R., Feldt, M.* (2020). Online conferences: Towards a new (virtual) reality. *Computational and Theoretical Chemistry.* 1189: 112975. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.comptc.2020.112975

Seidenberg et al., 2021 – *Seidenberg, N., Scheffel, M., Kovanović, V., Lynch, G., Drachsler, H.* (2021). Virtual academic conferences as learning spaces: Factors associated with the perceived value of purely virtual conferences. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning.* 37(6): 1694-1707. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/jcal.12614

Selwyn, 2016 – *Selwyn, N.* (2016). Education and Technology: Key Issues and Debates (2nd ed.). Bloomsbury Publishing.

Trust, Whalen, 2020 – *Trust, T., Whalen, J.* (2020). Should teachers be trained to teach online? A systematic review of teacher preparation for online and blended learning. *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education.* 28(2): 243-273.

Trust et al., 2016 – *Trust, T., Krutka, D.G., Carpenter, J.P.* (2016). "Together we are better": Professional learning networks for teachers. *Computers & Education.* 102: 15-34. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2016.06.007

Tyng et al., 2017 – *Tyng, C.M., Amin, H.U., Saad, M.N.M., Malik, A.S.* (2017). The influences of emotion on learning and memory. *Frontiers in Psychology.* 8: 1454. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3389/ fpsyg.2017.01454

Zhang, Liu, 2022 – *Zhang, H., Liu, Y.* (2022). Exploring teacher collaboration and digital competence in online communities: A mixed-methods study. *Journal of Educational Computing Research.* 60(4): 843-870. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/07356331221087221

Utilization of Media Space in Student Education

Elena Abramenko [a], [*], Sergey Abramenko [a]

[a] Volgograd State Technical University, Russian Federation

Abstract

The effective use of media space in higher education institutions fosters modern competencies among graduates, preparing them for professional activities in an informatized society. The key condition for successful integration of media resources is the availability of high-quality technical infrastructure, professional personnel, and continuous monitoring of audience needs. This article examines the role and potential of media space in the educational environment of contemporary higher education institutions. Various forms of integrating media resources into the educational process are explored, including video lectures, e-textbooks and digital libraries, virtual (VR) and augmented (AR) reality technologies, cloud services, digital archives, neural networks, interactive platforms, and social media, among others. The authors emphasize the positive aspects of media technologies, such as increased interest in the subject, development of student independence and responsibility, expansion of the informational field, and improvement of information analysis skills.

The authors stress the necessity of a systemic approach to integrating media space, which includes modernizing the digital infrastructure of universities, training faculty, and developing methodological support. A specific example of successful media resource implementation in a Cultural Studies course is provided. The article is of interest to researchers in media pedagogy, educational program developers, and higher education instructors involved in integrating digital technologies into the educational process.

Keywords: media space, media education, digital educational resources, media competence, students, higher education.

1. Introduction

The modern educational environment is significantly influenced by information technologies and digital tools, among which media space holds a special place. Media space encompasses various communication formats-from traditional print media and television to contemporary online resources, social networks, and mobile applications. It significantly impacts the formation of worldviews, cognitive abilities, and communicative competencies of learners. The advantages of educational media space are considered by the author in the following aspects.

First, the accessibility of educational resources allows students to access textbooks, lectures, scientific articles, videos, and other materials available online, thereby expanding the boundaries of the traditional educational process. Second, the use of media space fosters students' ability to analyze information, assess its reliability, and evaluate the credibility of sources. For example, working with news feeds, scientific publications, and analytical materials helps students form their

---

[*] Corresponding author
E-mail addresses: abramella@list.ru (E.V. Abramenko)

own opinions and develop argumentation skills. Third, information culture includes the ability to effectively search, process, and utilize information. Modern students actively engage with various information sources, necessitating the development of media literacy skills. The ability to navigate the information flow becomes a crucial component of professional training for future specialists.

Finally, modern educational platforms enable interactive classes, webinars, forums, and other forms of interaction between students and instructors. Such tools enhance student motivation, improve the quality of material assimilation, and foster an active role in educational activities. The author agrees with researchers A. Mokina and L. Khoronko: the future of education lies in hybrid (online-offline) forms of interactive education, which is key to the success of higher education. Disciplines enriched with media content-such as presentations, video and audio materials, and even educational web quests-exemplify this trend (Mokina, Khoronko, 2023).

However, educational media space requires careful organization, systematic updates, and continuous quality control of the content used.

The authors of this article view educational media space as a specially organized system of information and communication resources and technologies aimed at supporting the educational process in universities. It includes diverse channels for disseminating and delivering educational information, helping to optimize teaching methods and develop the necessary skills for students.

2. Materials and methods

The material for this study is based on contemporary Russian and international scholarly publications on media education. The research methods include analysis and synthesis of scholarly literature on the topic, as well as student surveys.

3. Discussion

The development of media competence among Russian citizens is guided by Presidential Decree No. 203 of May 9, 2017, *On the Strategy for the Development of the Information Society in the Russian Federation for 2017–2030* (Ukaz..., 2017). It outlines essential actions, among which the most effective include: forming a safe information environment by promoting informational resources; developing the National Electronic Library and other state information systems to ensure broad access; adopting measures to effectively use modern information platforms for disseminating accurate and high-quality information; ensuring the availability of legal, high-quality media products and services; and supporting traditional media (radio, television, print media, and libraries) (Gálik, 2020; Gáliková Tolnaiová, Gálik, 2020; Shamigulova, Vasilina, 2023). It can be correlated with the goal of modern media education, aimed at the development of creative, communication skills, critical thinking, perception, interpretation, analysis and evaluation of media texts, teaching various forms of expression with the help of media technology (Fedorov, 2001: 38).

Media content plays a pivotal role in the contemporary higher education system, significantly influencing various aspects of academic activities and interactions among participants in the educational process. Media literacy and media competence are now essential across nearly all fields of study. Moreover, education in mass media is regarded as an integral part of modern education. Media competence can be defined as the ability to use media for personal purposes, independently understand and critically evaluate media content, and transmit, create, and disseminate media texts (Shamigulova, Vasilina, 2023).

Media literacy is defined by various terms, including *media pedagogy*, *media education*, *educational media, digital (new media) literacy* or *skills*. In general, media literacy is the training of media users, i.e. an educational approach aimed at raising students' awareness of how the media work, how they are created, how they are structured and how they are used for the development of society (Afrilyasanti et al., 2023).

To define the concept of media literacy, it is necessary to contact A.V. Fedorov, a leading specialist in the field of media education. In the scientific work of the authors, media literacy is understood as a set of motives, knowledge, skills, and abilities (criteria: motivational, contact, informational, perceptual, interpretative-evaluative, practical-operational, creative) that contribute to selection, use, and critical analysis, evaluation, creation and communication of media texts in various forms, types and genres, analysis of complex processes of media functioning in society. (Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2021). According to this definition, media literacy includes the competencies necessary to become an informed media consumer (Cho et al., 2024).

Scholars in pedagogy (Goncharova, 2021; Musifullin, 2023; Shamigulova, 2022) view media competence as a system of knowledge, skills, and abilities for working with information, effectively interacting with media space, and engaging with media texts.

Let us examine in detail how media content is utilized in universities and its advantages and disadvantages in the educational environment.

Analyzing domestic and international works, we identified the primary components of educational media space:

– Electronic educational materials (texts, manuals, notes) (Sergeeva, Zyukin, 2016).
– Video and audiovisual resources (films, *VK video*) (Abramenko, 2022).
– Interactive platforms (forums, blogs, chats, social networks, professional communities) (Goryachev i dr., 2015).
– Distance courses and electronic libraries (*EOS courses, Moodle, Lan EBS, elibrary.ru*) (Dorozhkin, Izyurova, 2022).
– Online simulators and programs for independent workshops.
– Mobile applications and self-education portals (*Stepik*) (Yaskievich, 2019).
– Gamification and game-based methods (educational quests, *Joyteka* quizzes) (Abramenko i dr., 2024; Ukrozhenko i dr., 2024).
– Digital laboratories and simulators (*Labster*) (Schechter et al., 2024).
– Cloud services and digital archives (*Yandex Disk, Google Drive, Mail.ru Cloud, Google Docs, Google Slides*) (Isaev, Plekhanova, 2015).
– Virtual (VR) and augmented (AR) reality technologies (*Kvantoriums, IT Cubes*) (Gorbunova, 2023; Polevoda i dr., 2022).
– Neural networks (*DeepSeek, GigaChat*) (Samarina, Boyarinov, 2023).
– Educational platforms (*Classcraft, CENTURY*).
– Text generation and processing (*GigaChat, YandexGPT 3, Perplexity, ChatPDF*).
– Image generation and transformation (*Kandinsky 3.1, Shedevrum, Waifu2x, Hama*).
– Music generation and video editing (*Recut, Suno, Adobe Podcast, Sunno AI/Udio*).
– Presentation creation (*Gamma, MyLens.AI, Kwizie, Character AI*).

In our opinion, the optimal solution is a balanced combination of traditional pedagogy and the media space, which maintains a balance between individual learning and high-quality organization of the educational process. In addition, the use of social networks in media education is possible, as evidenced by the data of the *Russian Public Opinion Research Center* (VCIOM, 2023). About 86 % of Russian residents visit social networks almost every day; 92 % of young people aged 18 to 24, 94 % of those aged 25-34, and the proportion of daily users in the 18-34 age group is close to absolute.

It should be noted that the use of the media space in students' education brings significant advantages such as accessibility and flexibility, but it also poses a number of serious challenges that require careful planning and supervision by teachers (Table 1).

Table 1. Media space in education: advantages and disadvantages

№	Advantages of media space in education	Disadvantages of media space in education
1	*Increased interest in the subject.* The use of multimedia tools (videos, infographics, interactive tasks, gamification) enhances student engagement and improves comprehension and retention of material.	*Information overload.* The digital environment provides excessive amounts of data, complicating systematization and prioritization, which hinders holistic understanding of the subject.
2	*Personalized learning.* Students can choose their own pace, revisit challenging topics, rewatch lectures, and access supplementary resources tailored to their level. Media technologies enable self-directed learning paths and progress monitoring.	*Reduced instructor-student interaction.* Online education often diminishes face-to-face contact, negatively impacting learning quality. Insufficient feedback may lower knowledge retention.

№	Advantages of media space in education	Disadvantages of media space in education
3	*Expanded information access.* Students are provided with free access to a wide range of information sources (digital libraries, online scientific resources, open educational platforms), which opens up the opportunity to get acquainted with the latest scientific achievements, expert assessments and develop the ability to critically evaluate information.	*Low content quality control.* The internet contains unverified or false information, complicating student work and undermining knowledge reliability.
4	*Enhanced communication experience.* Expanding communication opportunities through the use of various media channels — chats, messengers, blogs, wiki platforms, e-mail, educational portals and learning management systems (LMS), social networks, web conferences and video chats, forums and blog platforms, collaboration environments (Google Docs, Dropbox Paper) podcasts and audio messages — contribute to the development of competencies in the field of group cooperation and productive information exchange.	*Self-discipline challenges.* Flexible schedules and independent study may reduce accountability, leading to task delays and lower academic efficiency.
5	*Development of digital competencies.* Engaging with media content cultivates digital literacy, preparing students for a technology-driven society with constant information flow.	*Technical issues.* Connectivity problems, limited internet access, or inadequate hardware create barriers to resource utilization and task completion.

The integration of media space into student education relies on a systemic approach encompassing the modernization of university digital infrastructure, faculty training, and methodological development. Modernizing digital infrastructure involves adopting contemporary media resources and creating a unified electronic educational environment. Faculty training includes professional development programs, workshops, and courses on modern information technologies. For instance, the authors of this article annually complete training courses on IT integration, such as *Digital Instructor: Integrating AI, EOS, and Online Services into Education* (2025). Methodological support entails designing teaching guides, compiling lesson plans and didactic materials, and establishing experimental platforms for testing innovative approaches.

Preparing instructors to effectively utilize media space in higher education is crucial, as modern technologies demand specific skills and teaching methods. Let's consider the stages of formation of the faculty's readiness to use the media space.

Stage 1. Initial diagnosis and examination of professional readiness

Teaching staff carry out an initial assessment of their level of competence in the field of modern information and communication technologies and media capabilities. This stage provides for diagnostics in the following areas:

– Possession of computer equipment and digitalization of processes;

– Practical skills in handling office software, specialized software, and a content administration system;

– Willingness to implement information technology solutions in educational activities;

– Experience using media resources and online services in education.

Stage 2. Theoretical and methodological development of media pedagogy

Teaching staff need to undergo an in-depth study of the theoretical foundations and methodology of media pedagogy, which covers key concepts, principles and mechanisms for developing educational media resources, providing an understanding of the patterns of designing effective learning environments in the media space.

Recommended: Attend specialized workshops, review academic literature, and complete professional development courses.

Stage 3. Selection of optimal tools

Educators choose appropriate technological platforms to implement pedagogical approaches:
– *LMS* (Learning Management Systems): *Moodle, Blackboard, Google Classroom*;
– *visualization tools*: *Prezi, PowerPoint, Adobe Spark;*
– *video platforms*: *Rutube, Vimeo;*
– *social networks & messengers*: *Telegram, WhatsApp, VKontakte.*

Stage 4. Design of educational media process

This critical stage involves course development for digital formats:
– defining learning objectives;
– creating lesson plans incorporating multimedia elements;
– curating appropriate media content (videos, audio, illustrations, infographics);
– planning feedback mechanisms and interim assessments.

Stage 5. Implementation and progress monitoring

When integrating media resources:
– regularly track student progress;
– collect feedback to identify strengths/weaknesses;
– adapt teaching methods based on audience psychology;
– make timely adjustments to the educational process.

Stage 6. Methodology refinement and continuous learning

To maintain educational quality:
– continuously update knowledge and skills;
– attend academic conferences;
– review specialized journals;
– collaborate with peers;
– explore new approaches to media space utilization.

4. Results

Educational media space is an integrated system of informational channels and platforms used in the academic process to transmit, store, and process educational content. Its structure encompasses diverse media formats and organizational methods, creating optimal conditions for knowledge acquisition and professional skill development. Offering targeted training programs and resources can empower teachers to deliver high-quality media literacy education (Livingstone, Bulger, 2020).

Thus, the innovative media space of the modern educational system opens up large-scale horizons for the implementation of a holistic approach to learning, activating the active acquisition of knowledge by students in disciplines, providing a detailed immersion in theory and practice. A key outcome of our theoretical research is the developed Cultural Studies lesson incorporating media resources.

Case Study: *Media Space Implementation in a Cultural Studies Course* (Figure 1, Table 2).

Topic: *History of 19th-Century Russian Culture.*

Course objectives:

– Introduce students to key stages in the development of Russian culture during the 19th century.

– Analyze the era's influence on literature, music, visual arts, architecture, and theater, with comparisons to modernity.

– Cultivate skills in analyzing cultural phenomena, comparing facts, and drawing conclusions.
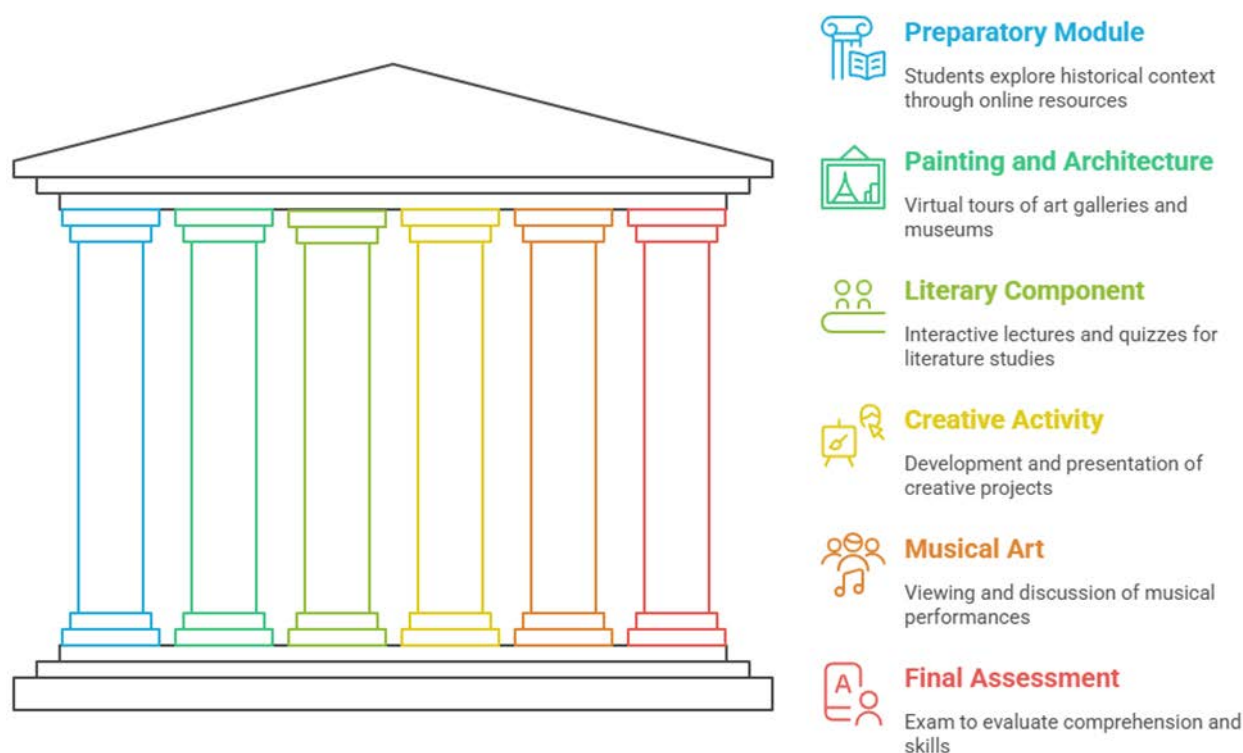
Fig. 1. Lesson Structure

Table 2. Lesson Structure and Digital Resources

Stage	Lesson structure	Digital tools
1	Preparatory (online module) Students, using a series of short video clips, infographics and documentaries. form an idea of the social environment of the era, shaping the artistic world of the great Russian authors	Electronic course: *Eos2.vstu.ru* *Videos: Rutube.ru, VKvideo*
2	Literary component (interactive lectures) The teacher conducts a remote lecture, accompanied by the demonstration of illustrative material (portraits of writers, manuscripts of works), audio recordings of the voices of famous actors reading excerpts from classic works (for example, *Eugene Onegin*, *War and Peace*). After the lecture, a quiz is held in the format of an interactive test with the selection of the correct answer.	Lecture: *MTS Link* Videos: *Rutube.ru, VKvideo* Presentation: *Gamma.app* Quiz: *Joyteka*
3	Musical art (video fragments) Viewing fragments of operas (e.g. *Boris Godunov*), ballets (e.g. *The Nutcracker*), and symphonic concerts recorded by professional orchestras. Discussion of musical images, characteristic features of the creativity of 19th-century composers is offered.	Videos: *Rutube.ru, VKvideo*
4	Painting and architecture (overview of museum collections). Organize a virtual tour of art galleries and museums in Russia (for example, the Tretyakov Gallery). Using high-resolution panoramas, students can explore	*Tretyakov gallery*: *my.tretyakov.ru* *Classical painting (digitized collections of*

Stage	Lesson structure	Digital tools
	the works of leading artists, study painting styles, and examine architectural landmarks from the period.	*the hermitage in Google Arts and Culture)* Culture.RF *Russian museum: rusmuseum.ru*
5	Creative activity (project activities). Students develop their own creative projects: presentations, essays, and mini-research on a chosen topic of 19th-century art. The work is carried out individually or in groups, and a cloud-based service is used for collaborative development and presentation of the project to the audience.	Text generation: *Deepseek* Picture and video generation: *GigaChat, Masterpiece* Group communication: *VKchat* Project protection: *MTS Link, Yandex Telemost, Google Meet* Creating diagrams and pictures: *Napkin.ai* Creating presentations: *Canva*
6	Final assessment (examination testing). The final exam is conducted in the form of a computer-based test with open-ended questions and tasks involving the interpretation of a literary text, a piece of music, or a painting.	Electronic course: *Eos2.vstu.ru* Interactive online *whiteboard (miro.com)*

This approach fosters active student participation, independent knowledge acquisition, and 21st-century competencies: digital literacy, creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration.

The research analysis provides an opportunity to evaluate the experience of students and teachers in the field of media education, who note: accessibility of educational information and its rapid addition to new educational material (Chtena, 2021), increased student engagement and preparedness (Nagashima, Hrach, 2021), successful use of mixed learning (Machado et al., 2024), discussion of equal conditions for Internet users in the online learning process (Ferguson et al.,2024), content authenticity (Boler et al., 2025) and methods of combating misinformation in education (Pérez et al., 2025), preparation for work in the modern information space (Kruse, 2024; Brown, Croft, 2020).

Following the authors, we believe that the widespread practical implementation of media education requires the consolidation of pedagogical universities, universities, journalism faculties, libraries, media libraries, media educators, and the media community, as well as the coordination of interaction between government agencies, existing media education centers, and experimental platforms in this field (Fedorov, 2020).

5. Conclusion

The theoretical study confirms the significant pedagogical potential of media resources in higher education. Analysis of contemporary practices yields the following conclusions:

1. Media resources have become integral to education, serving functions such as:
– Interactive learning (video lectures, podcasts, webinars).
– Visualizing complex concepts (infographics, 3D modeling).
– Developing professional skills (simulators, VR labs).
2. The instructor's role is evolving from knowledge transmitter to media pedagogue, capable of:
– Designing and adapting digital content.
– Effectively integrating media technologies into curricula.

– Fostering student media literacy.
3. Systemic use of media resources offers key benefits:
– Increased student motivation and engagement.
– Personalized learning opportunities.
– Enhanced critical thinking and media competence.

The analysis reveals that media resources create an interactive learning environment, diversifying content delivery through videos, presentations, online courses, and virtual labs. However, challenges include the need for faculty IT training, technical infrastructure, and high-quality digital content.

Thus, effective implementation requires a holistic approach: methodological guidelines, faculty development, and infrastructure support. Further research will refine models for integrating media resources into higher education.

By embedding media literacy into core curricula, equipping educators with resources, and addressing technological inequities, education systems can cultivate informed, ethical, and engaged digital citizens. Collaboration among policymakers, educators, and media organizations is essential for sustainable, inclusive frameworks (UNESCO, 2021).

6. Acknowledgments
The authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their careful reading of the article and valuable comments.

References
Abramenko i dr., 2024 – *Abramenko, E.V., Sitnikova, O.I., Fedotova, L.A.* (2024). Obrazovatel'nyy kvest kak sredstvo formirovaniya istoricheskogo soznaniya u studentov neistoricheskikh spetsial'nostey vysshey shkoly [Educational quest as a tool for shaping historical consciousness among non-history majors in higher education]. *Nizhegorodskoe obrazovanie.* 1: 84-93. [in Russian]

Abramenko, 2022 – *Abramenko, E.V., Abramenko, S.A.* (2022). Kinotrening kak metod formirovaniya patrioticheskikh chuvstv u studentov vysshchei shkoly [Cinema training as a method of fostering patriotic feelings among higher education students]. *Primo Aspectu.* 4(52): 125-132. DOI: 10.35211/2500-2635-2022-4-52-125-132 [in Russian]

Afrilyasanti et al., 2023 – *Afrilyasanti, R., Basthomi, Ya., Zen, E.L.* (2023). Factual vs. fake news: Teachers' lens on critical media literacy education in EFL classes. *Journal of Interactive Media in Education.* 1: 1-16. DOI: 10.5334/jime.781

Boler et al., 2025 – *Boler, M., Gharib, H., Kweon, Y.Ji.* et al. (2024). Promoting mis/disinformation literacy among adults: a scoping review of interventions and recommendations. *Communication Research.* 1-30. DOI: 10.1177/00936502251318630

Brown, Croft, 2020 – *Brown, M., Croft, B.* (2020). Social annotation and an inclusive praxis for open Pedagogy in the college classroom. *Journal of Interactive Media in Education.* 1: 1-8. DOI: 10.5334/jime.561

Cho et al., 2024 – *Cho, H., Cannon, J., Lopez, R., Li, W.* (2024). Social media literacy: a conceptual framework. *New Media & Society.* 26(2): 941-960. DOI: 10.1177/14614448211068530

Chtena, 2021 – *Chtena, N.* (2021). Opening art history: exploring the motivations and practices of faculty using open educational resources in lower-level and general education art history courses. *Journal of Interactive Media in Education.* 1. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://jime.open.ac.uk/articles/10.5334/jime.677

Dorozhkin, Izyurova, 2022 – *Dorozhkin, E. M., Izyrova, Ya. S.* (2022). Rol' elektronnoj informatsionno-obrazovatel'noj sredy v sisteme vysshego obrazovanija [The role of the electronic information and educational environment in the higher education system]. *Vestnik Moskovskogo gosudarstvennogo oblastnogo universiteta. Seriya: Pedagogika. 2:* 71-85. DOI: 10.18384/2310-7219-2022-2-71-85 [in Russian]

Fedorov, 2001 – *Fedorov, A.V.* (2001). Mediaobrazovanie: istoriya, teoriya i metodika [Media education: history, theory and methodology]. Rostov. [in Russian]

Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2020 – *Fedorov, A., Levitskaya, A.* (2020). Mediaobrazovatel'nye orientiry v stranakh SNG: prognoz na budushchee [Media education benchmarks in the CIS countries: forecast for the future]. *Crede Experto.* 1: 118-128. [in Russian]

Ferguson et al., 2024 – *Ferguson, R., Perryman, L.A., Ball, S.J.* (2024). The importance of offline options for online learners. *Journal of Interactive Media in Education.* 1: 16. DOI: 10.5334/jime.898

Gálik, 2020 – *Gálik, S.* (2020). Thinking in the network. *Central European Journal of Communication.* 27(3): 446-459. DOI: 10.51480/1899-5101.13.3(27).9

Gáliková Tolnaiová, Gálik, 2020 – *Gáliková Tolnaiová, S.,* Gálik, S. (2020). Cyberspace as a new living world and its axiological contexts. In: Abu-Taieh, E., Mouatasim, A., Al Hadid, I.H. (eds.). *Cyberspace.* London. Pp. 39-52.

Goncharova, 2021 – *Goncharova, T.A.* (2021). Pedagogicheskie printsipy formirovaniya mediakompetentnosti studentov vuza [Pedagogical principles of developing media competence among university students]. *Vestnik Yuzhno-Ural'skogo gosudarstvennogo gumanitarno-pedagogicheskogo universiteta.* 6: 43-49. [in Russian]

Gorbunova, 2023 – *Gorbunova, N.V.* (2023). Primenenie tekhnologij virtual'noj real'nosti v kontekste professional'nogo obrazovanija [Application of virtual reality technologies in professional education]. *Problemy sovremennogo pedagogicheskogo obrazovanija.* 79(1): 131-134. [in Russian]

Goryachev i dr., 2015 – *Goryachev, M.D., Goryachev, M.M., Ivanushkina, N.V., Mantulenko, V.V.* (2015). Ispol'zovanie social'nykh setej v obuchenii studentov [Using social networks in student education]. *Vestnik Samarskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta.* 7(129): 174-177. [in Russian]

Isaev, Plekhanova, 2015 – *Isaev, A.A., Plekhanova, T.M.* (2015). Povyshenie rezultativnosti samostoyatel'noj raboty studentov putem vnedreniya tekhnologii oblachnyh hranilishch [Improving the effectiveness of student independent work by introduction of cloud storage technology]. *Vestnik Samarskogo gosudarstvennogo tekhnicheskogo universiteta. Seriya: Psikhologo-pedagogicheskie nauki.* 2(26): 70-78. [in Russian]

Kruse et al., 2024 – *Kruse, J. Voss, S., Easter, Ja.* et al. (2024). Preparing students for the modern information landscape and navigating science–technology–society issues. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching.* 62(3): 792-824. DOI: 10.1002/tea.21972

Levitskaya, 2021 – *Levitskaya, A., Fedorov, A.* (2021). Criteria and methods for assessing the effectiveness of activities, contributing to the development of students' media competence in the process of analyzing media manipulative influences. *International Journal of Media and Information Literacy.* 6(1): 129-145. DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2021.1.129

Livingstone, Bulger, 2020 – *Livingstone, S., Bulger, M.* (2020). Media literacy: An essential component of digital citizenship. *Journal of Learning, Media and Technology.* 45(2): 1-14. DOI: 10.1080/17439884.2020.1707212

Machado et al., 2024 – *Machado, C., Hsiao, P.Y., Vaccaro, Ch., Baker, Ch.* (2024). Entering the social media stratosphere: higher education faculty use of social media with students across four disciplines. *Journal of Interactive Media in Education.* 1: 1-17. DOI: 10.5334/jime.854

Mokina, Khoronko, 2023 – *Mokina, A.Yu., Khoronko, L.Ya.* (2023). Mehanizmy formirovaniya mediasredy v obrazovatel'nom prostranstve vuza [The mechanisms of formation of the media environment in the educational spaces of the university]. *Kant.* 4(49): 363-368. [in Russian]

Musifullin, 2023 – *Musifullin, S.R.* (2023). Formirovanie mediagramotnosti studentov pedagogicheskogo vuza v usloviyah transformacii obrazovatel'nogo processa [Education of pedagogical university students on media competence under the conditions of the transformation of the educational process]. *Science for Education Today.* 13(1): 7-27. DOI: 10.15293/2658-6762.2301.01 [in Russian]

Nagashima, 2021 – *Nagashima, T., Hrach, S.* (2021). Motivating factors among university faculty for adopting open educational resources: incentives matter. *Journal of Interactive Media in Education.* 1. DOI: 10.5334/jime.678

Pérez et al., 2025 – *Pérez, G., Henderson, T., Wendell, K.B.* (2025). Addressing media and information literacy in engineering design education: learning to design technologies in the era of science denial and misinformation. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching.* 62(6): 1546-1579. DOI: 10.1002/tea.22023

Polevoda i dr., 2022 – *Polevoda, I.I., Ivanitsky, A.G., Mikhanovich, A.S., et al.* (2022). Tekhnologii virtual'noj i dopolnennoj real'nosti v obrazovatel'nom procese [Virtual and augmented reality technologies in the educational process]. *Vestnik Universiteta grazhdanskoĭ zashchity MChS Belarusi.* 1: 119-140. [in Russian]

Samarina, Boyarinov, 2023 – *Samarina, A.E., Boyarinov, D.A.* (2023). Nejroseti dlja generatsii izobrazhenij: pedagogicheskij potencial v vysshem obrazovanii [Neural networks for image-generating: pedagogical potential in higher education]. *Concept.* 11: 161-179. [in Russian]

Schechter, et al., 2024 – *Schechter, R., Gross, R., Cai, J.* (2024). Exploring nationwide student engagement and performance in virtual lab simulations with Labster. *Proceedings of EdMedia + Innovate Learning.* 871-878. *Brussels, Belgium: Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE).* [Electronic resource]. URL: https://www.learntechlib.org

Sergeeva, Zyukin, 2016 – *Sergeeva, N.M., Zyukin, D.A.* (2016). Ispol'zovanie ehlektronnyh uchebnyh posobiy v obrazovatel'nom processe [Using electronic study guides in the educational process]. *Sovremennaya pedagogika.* 8: 27-30. [in Russian]

Shamigulova, 2022 – *Shamigulova, O.A.* (2022). Informacionno-prosvetitel'skaya deyatel'nost' kak uslovie formirovaniya mediagramotnosti u obuchayushchikhsya [Information and educational activities as a condition for the formation of media literacy among students]. *Sovremennye problemy nauki i obrazovaniya.* 6: 48-59. [in Russian]

Shamigulova, Vasilina, 2023 – *Shamigulova, O.A., Vasilina, D.S.* (2023). Formirovanie mediakompetentnosti v usloviyah vuza: analiz mnenij studentov – budushchih pedagogov [Formation of media competence at higher educational institutions: analysis of students – future teachers's opinions]. *Perspektivy nauki i obrazovania – Perspectives of Science and Education.* 3(63): 50-70. DOI: 10.32744/pse.2023.3.3 [in Russian]

Ukaz..., 2017 – Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii ot 09.05.2017 g. № 203 O Strategii razvitiya informatsionnogo obshchestva v Rossiyskoy Federatsii na 2017–2030 gody [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation dated 09.05.2017 No. 203 On the Strategy for the Development of the Information Society in the Russian Federation for 2017 – 2030]. [Electronic resource]. URL: http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41919 [in Russian]

Ukrozhenko i dr., 2024 – *Ukrozhenko, D.S., Neverova, O.P., Stepanov, A.V. i dr.* (2024). Gejmifikaciya v vysshem obrazovanii: vlijanie igrovyh podhodov na motivaciju i akademicheskie dostizhenija studentov [Gamification in higher education: the impact of gamebased approaches on students' motivation and academic achievement]. *Pravo i upravlenie.* 12: 479-483. [in Russian]

UNESCO, 2021 – UNESCO. Media and information literacy for everyone and by everyone: a call to action. 2021. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://unesdoc.unesco.org /ark:/48223/pf0000379177

VCIOM, 2023 – VCIOM. Sotsialnye seti i messendzheri: vlozhennost' i predpochteniya [Social media and messengers: engagement and preferences]. 2023. [Electronic resource]. URL: https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/socialnye-seti-i-messendzhery-vovlechennost-i-predpochtenija [in Russian]

Yaskievich, 2019 – *Yaskievich, M.I.* (2019). Massovye otkrytye onlayn-kursy kak glavnaya tendenciya razvitiya obrazovaniya [Massive open online courses as the main trend of education development]. *Kul'turnoe nasledie Rossii.* 2: 79-84. [in Russian]