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Student Perception Regarding the Utilization of Media Literacy to Prevent Online Threats, Thailand

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Abstract--The objective of this research was to study students' perception of using media literacy (ML) to prevent online threats of the students majoring in Communication Arts, Faculty of Management Science, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University (SSRU). Selected by Purposive Sampling, the samples ($n = 60$) of this research were the students majoring in Communication Arts, Faculty of Management Science, SSRU. The research tool was the student perception questionnaire with 4 sections: 1) personal data, 2) perception on ML (60 questions), 3) benefits of ML for students (10 questions), 4) implementation of ML (11 questions), and (5) open-ended questions (2 questions). The finding suggested that most students have paid attention to awareness on using OSM with carefulness as effects from posting messages, images, or video clips on oneself, others, and family members. The most agreed benefit of ML is that students can develop values, morality, and ethics as a result of their ML education. The application of ML in their life is based on their ML skills.

Keywords--media literacy, perception, social media, Thailand.

Introduction

The advancement of the Internet and digital technology has dramatically changed the way people use online social media (OSM) as it is communication without boundaries (Newman, 2012; Shi et al., 2016; Bonomi et al., 2012; Phuttitanakarn & Theintawon, 2020). With the ability to access and use OSM anywhere on electronic devices, such as computers, notebooks, or portable communication devices such as phones, smartphones, and tablets equipped with fast wireless

network access, OSM becomes one of the most prominent communication tools in the world today (Fogli & Veldkamp, 2021; Wang et al., 2021; Halili, 2019). In addition, online social networks have become public spaces for people regardless of gender, age, race, religion, educational level, occupation, or society around the world as everyone can be a communicator by easily creating content or sharing stories, experiences, articles, pictures, and videos on OSM (Wang et al., 2021).

Indifferent from other countries, Thailand is facing challenges in the digital era. The government has taken action on the digital economy to raise people awareness of the importance of digital technology in upgrading the country in the disruptive technology era to achieve the national vision “Thailand is stable, prosperous, sustainable, a developed country with development according to the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy” (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2021). Today OSM is used to support the development of the country to achieve the vision in many ways, particularly in education. For example, Facebook’s group is used as a space where teachers and students communicate with one another. During COVID-19 pandemic, Zoom or Google’s Meet are used to organize Online-Learning. In many cases, Line’s group is used as an online classroom. Of course, not only OSMs are integrated into education but also many are used in different sectors: economy, environment, health care, or even governance, etc (Nyandra et al., 2018).

It is undeniable that OSM provides a huge advantage for the country's development. However, in Thailand, people are encouraged to use OSM with awareness and safety as there are hidden threats that lead to mental side effects such as anxiety, stress, emotional exhaustion, depression, loneliness, envy, low self-esteem, health problem Mitchell (2010), or cybercrimes such as scams, fake news, email and internet fraud, identity fraud, theft of the financial card or payment data (Smith & Perry, 2021; Atherton, 2021). To prevent this, media literacy (ML) has played an important role. In general, ML is defined as the ability to analyze, criticize, evaluate, access, present, and produce the media in different forms. Media literacy also includes educational activities to develop critical analysis skills and create opportunities for media access (Theerapat Wongkumsin, 2019; Koltay, 2011; Festl, 2021). In addition, it is recognized as an ability to access and process information from any kind of transmission (Potter, 2015). Unlike many countries in Europe including Austria, France, Finland, Germany, Hungary, and UK where ML education has been integrated into school education Zhang et al. (2020), ML education in Thailand is limited to those who study in the field of media education in higher education institutions; in other words, ML has not been given enough importance and disseminated to develop the skills in using the media of people in Thailand, especially children and youth (Buranadechachai & Siriattakul, 2021; Brunsell, 2014; Wojdan et al., 2021). Although many previous scholarly studies in Thailand (from 2011-2021) have asserted that ML education can prevent online threats Therdsak Maitaouthong (2021); Rodyoo (2017); Uraphen Yimprasert et al. (2016); Patsinee Sansomedang (2014); Metta Sawanglap (2018); Mitchell (2010), as it is an important tool in empowering media consumers to consume media wisely Wiwatpanitch (2015); Biggins (2012); Boonyapitruksagoon & Poonpol (2019); Theerapat Wongkumsin (2019); Chatchada Akkarasri Woranaka Oka & Kritchanatsaenthawee (2019), ML

education has not been organized adequately for people in all ages (Rusfian & Alessandro, 2021; Wursan et al., 2021).

The lack of ML skills may lead to many problems while people are using OSM. One of the problems is that people believe in information without taking into account how accurate the information is (Nuntika Noosom & Viroj Suttisima, 2019). The behavior of using social media in recognizing and believing in online content without judgment or knowledge should not be overlooked (Nuntika Noosom & Viroj Suttisima, 2019). In the last few years, several studies have been conducted to study the problems of using OSM of Thai people. For example, in 2018, Methawee Chamnian & Korrakot Chamnian (2018), studied the problems of using online media of students ($n=56$) in schools in the southern part of the country and the findings of this research indicated that students used unreliable online media by copying the contents without analysis or making reference. This led to the unethical manner of plagiarism at schools. In 2019, Pramasatraruchi (2019), has researched belief in online media in three different groups of people ($n = 540$): adolescents (age: 15-24), adults (age: 25-60), and elderly (age: > 60) who lived in six different areas in Bangkok. The research results indicated that adolescents believe in online media without knowing the sources of references, while people in other groups believed in online media when they knew its sources. In this research, the educational background of the samples was the key for deciding to believe (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Hanna et al., 2011). The studies on the ML perception of the students majoring in Communication Arts, Faculty of Management Science, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University (SSRU) have not been conducted before. To fulfill this academic gap left behind by previous scholarly works, the researchers, therefore, were interested in studying the student perception of using ML to prevent online threats. This research takes place in SSRU and focuses on the associations between ML perception in different educational contexts that make SSRU an interesting setting to test the generalizability of findings from previous studies (Geria et al., 2018; Gani et al., 2018).

Objectives

The objective of this research was: 1) to study students' perception of using ML to prevent online threats of the students majoring in Communication Arts, Faculty of Management Science, SSRU (Curtis et al., 2010; Renn, 2004).

Methodology

Population and sample

The population of this included the students of SSRU, majoring in Communication Arts, Faculty of Management Science. Semester 1, the academic year 2020. 60 of those then were selected as the samples ($n = 60$) by Purposive Sampling.

Research tools

This study was carried out employing the quantitative research methodology. The research tool was the five-rating scale questionnaire probing the student perception on using ML to prevent online threats. The questionnaire consists of 4 sections:

- Students' personal data.
- Perception on ml (60 questions).
- Benefits of ml for students (10 questions).
- Implementation of ml (11 questions).
- Open-ended questions (2 questions).

Variable

Independent variable: ML

Dependent variable: Students' opinions on ML

Research process

This research process was divided into 5 phases:

- Analysis, the researchers have studied and analyzed the ML background to identify an academic gap left by previous scholarly works in the research area. Then all relevant documents and research were analyzed to get the guidelines to design the research process as well as the student perception questionnaire.
- Design, the researchers have designed the research methods and research tool: a questionnaire consisting of 4 sections as mentioned above.
- Development, the researchers organized Focus Group Discussion (FGD) of 5 experts in the related fields of study to get advice and suggestions on the project. The content validity of the questionnaire was also evaluated by such experts in this stage.
- Implementation, the researchers have implemented the research to collect the data from the students with the permission of SSRU.
- Evaluation, the obtained quantitative data were interpreted and analyzed by the statistics: Percentage, Mean and Standard Deviation. The data from the open-ended questions were interpreted by Contextual Content Analysis. Finally, the ML perception resulted from this study was compared with previous studies to test the generalizability of the findings. The levels of ML perception of students were analyzed by finding Mean and Standard Deviation. The results were compared with the evaluation criteria below:
 - 4.51 - 5.00 refers to the highest level (Strongly agree)
 - 3.51 - 4.50 refers to the high level (Agree)
 - 2.51 - 3.50 refers to the moderate level (Undecided)
 - 1.51 - 2.50 refers to a low level (Disagree)
 - - 1.50 refers to the lowest level (Strongly disagree)

Results

Personal data

From the table, most of the students were 33 females, representing 55.00 %, and 27 were males, representing 45.00 %. Most of them were fourth-year students (19), 38.33%, followed by second-year students (31.66%), third-year (16.66%), and first-year (13.33%).

Table 1
Personal data

Personal Data	Number	Percent
1. Sex		
1.1 Male	27	45%
1.2 Female	33	55%
Total	60	100
2. Year		
2.1 First	8	13.33%
2.2 Second	19	31.66%
2.3 Third	10	16.66%
2.4 Fourth	23	38.33%
Total	60	100

Perception on ML

From the response of the sample students to 60 five-rating scale questions on their opinion on ML, the statistics indicate the overall opinions of the students on ML at a high level ($\bar{X} = 3.97$, S.D. = 0.79). The mean values of the questions were 3.65-4.36 and S.D. values were 0.68-0.79. Students agreed with all questions on ML. The students strongly agreed with the highest rated question, no. 48, 'Ethical awareness on using OSM ($\bar{X} = 4.36$, S.D. = 0.72)', followed by question no. 47, 'Awareness on the effects on the others from posting messages, images or video clips on OSM ($\bar{X} = 4.32$, S.D. = 0.74)' and the question, no.44 'Awareness on the effects on oneself and family from posting messages, images or video clips ($\bar{X} = 4.30$, S.D. = 0.68), and no. 46, 'Awareness on the effects on oneself from posting messages, images or video clips on OSM ($\bar{X} = 4.30$, S.D. = 0.74). The least mean value was seen in question no.41, 'Saving and storing information on OSM systematically' ($\bar{X} = 3.65$, S.D. = 0.82) ([McLean et al., 2016](#); [Jongsuksuntigul et al., 2003](#)).

Benefits of ML for students

From the response of the sample students to 10 five-rating scale questions on the benefits of ML for students, the overall opinion of the students was at the highest level ($\bar{X} = 4.33$, S.D. = 0.42). The highest mean value was seen in question no.2, 'Students have paid attention to the values, morality, and ethics for oneself, community and society ($\bar{X} = 4.72$, S.D. = 0.45)', followed by no. 1, 'Students are aware of the importance of media professional ethics ($\bar{X} = 4.62$, S.D. = 0.63)'. The least mean was seen in no. 6, 'Students can analyze the current situation and

find the solutions of occurred problems which affect themselves ($\bar{X} = 4.02$, S.D. = 0.75).

Application of ML

From the response of the sample students to 11 five-rating scale questions on the application of ML, the overall opinion of the students was at the highest level ($\bar{X} = 4.23$, S.D. = 0.46). The highest mean value was seen in question no.7, 'Students will produce contents of news or media based on suitable analysis, audience determination, objective setting and communication strategies ($\bar{X} = 4.38$, S.D. = 0.68), followed by no. 4, 'Students will search for the contents from reliable sources on the Internet or OSM systematically ($\bar{X} = 4.37$, S.D. = 0.70)'. The least score was seen in that of no. 3 'Students will evaluate contents of the media and deny created values, concepts and representative images that are inconsistent with reality ($\bar{X} = 4.08$, S.D. = 0.86)' (Accarino et al., 1997; Hindin et al., 2004).

Open-ended question answers

In addition, the students expressed other opinions on the application of ML skills to prevent online threats in Open-ended questions, 'What is your opinion on online media and ML skills? And How do you use ML skills to prevent online threats?' the research team conducted a contextual content analysis and summarized as follows:

- You should use the media creatively and think before believing.
- ML can be well applied in daily life. We can use the media in a good way. ML allows us to use media correctly.
- We must first verify that the information we hear or see whether it is true and not.
- ML is very helpful, so we don't waste time, health, and opportunity.
- We know the suspiciousness of the content received from social media.
- ML makes us use more judgment which makes it easier for us to understand the media and interpret the content honestly and objectively.
- Good media perception is based on careful thought.
- We can know and evade all kinds of threats.
- ML is beneficial to the students and the media producers themselves have to learn and review current media creation strategies with reliability and appropriateness.
- When media producers are known as messengers, they should be aware of their own professional and ethical codes to deliver messages with fairness and non-partisanship.
- There should be channels or organizing activities that are open to outsiders to know the advantages and disadvantages of the media that is being consumed today.
- The use of media can be perceived by oneself.
- We will believe by using our judgment.
- ML is beneficial for everyone to use in their daily lives.
- It makes us know more about media. You can see the differences in each medium in detail.

- Media can't control you; you can control yourself.
- The media can't control our thoughts at all. We should have discretion in choosing to believe or not to believe.
- When we are aware of the media. It can't do anything when we know how to use media and choose to receive different media.
- Learners must be aware of the addiction to media.

Discussion

Based on the research results above, most students have paid attention to awareness on using OSM and effects from posting messages, images, or video clips on oneself, others, and family. Most students agreed that the benefit of ML is that students can develop values, morality, ethics, and focus while using OSM. The application of their ML is based on their awareness of using OSM and ML skills. This is consistent with the recent study (2021) of [Pattamaporn Suksom Soe & Pathom Phong Phum Phruek \(2021\)](#), on the impact of using social media to change the Thai values of teenagers (aged 15-24) in high schools and higher education institutions in Phranakhon Si Ayutthaya Province. This study asserted that OSM leads them to develop the positive values:

- Values in education and curiosity.
- Values of gratitude.
- Values of generosity and volunteering.
- The values of healthy living.
- Values of self-reliance and diligence.

The focus on using OSM of the students in positive ways leads to the betterment of learning outcomes. This finding is also confirmed with the 2019 research of [Panich \(2016\)](#), on the effects of social media on academic performances in 73 sample students in the University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce. The research result revealed that the controlled group of 37 students that studied with the assistance of OSM has achieved greater learning outcomes than that of the non-controlled group (37 students). The most important factor that contributed to this achievement was the focus on using OSM together with their curiosity ([Panich, 2016](#)). The research result is also confirmed by the study (2021) of [Wattana Nontachit et al. \(2021\)](#), on social network usage behaviors of 394 students majoring in the Public Administration Program in Prince of Songkla University, Suratthani Campus. Its results indicated that students use ML to benefit their understanding, evaluating, and analyzing the media in positive ways. Not only do these aforesaid studies confirm the finding of this study but also the studies of [Chonthicha Juinam & Nopporn Chantanamchoo \(2018\)](#), in Sukhothai Province, [Suwannaphant et al. \(2020\)](#), in Khon Kaen Province. Anyhow, the research result of this study contradicts the above-reviewed studies ([Methawee Chamnian & Korrakot Chamnian, 2018; Pramasatraruchi, 2019](#)). The cause of this difference is that in this research, the student samples were studying in Communication Arts so an ML course was organized for them. From the samples' responses to the open-ended questions, it can be seen that students have strong commitments and awareness in defending themselves from online threats. This leads to the conclusion of this study that ML education provides a

huge advantage to students. The government therefore should insert ML education into all levels of education of the country (Phyo et al., 2012; McLean et al., 2013).

Suggestions

- The research results should be used as a guideline for teaching and learning, and organizing student development activities to enhance ML skills which will form a protective shield or self-immunity for adolescent students or even for other groups of people.
- The next research should study a model for ML education development for students in different areas or institutions.

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