Letter

The Importance and Role of Media Literacy in the Recent Iran-Israel War

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Dear Editor,

In recent decades, rapid technological advancements and the unprecedented expansion of digital media have shifted the battlefield from physical fronts to the cognitive-media domain. Soft power exercised through media can influence collective mindsets and behaviors by producing and disseminating misinformation and propaganda. This issue gains heightened significance in wartime, particularly in "imposed wars", where nations, without direct military pressure, seek to undermine morale, social cohesion, and public trust through media warfare [1, 2].

Media literacy encompasses the ability to deeply comprehend media messages, recognize hidden agendas and biases, and make informed selections from vast information flows. By adopting a critical perspective and precise content analysis, it enables individuals to distinguish credible messages from biased or manipulated ones [3, 4]. This skill allows people to uncover the underlying motives behind media content by identifying production and dissemination mechanisms, thereby shielding themselves from negative media influences through logical and multidimensional evaluation.

Thus, media literacy, by analyzing the structure, context, and objectives of media messages, transforms individuals into active and informed consumers capable of responsible engagement in the complex landscape of warfare, particularly in active media war zones. It reduces the acceptance of false information and enhances societal psychological resilience [5]. Studies on the Ukraine-Russia war demonstrate that individuals with higher media literacy are less susceptible to fake news and distorted narratives [6].

In Iran, due to its complex geopolitical situation, this issue has become a security priority. Foreign Persian-language media, alongside official foreign outlets, consistently publish highlighted news aimed at fostering insecurity, distrust, and collective psychological collapse. Despite this, the educational system still lacks a cohesive instructional framework and effective assessment tools for media literacy. The importance of this issue is undeniable, as media warfare not only functions as a short-term psychological weapon but also, in the long term, threatens national security by exacerbating social divisions, weakening cultural cohesion, and diminishing social capital.

However, Iran's research infrastructure exhibits several critical gaps: The absence of a coherent theoretical-operational framework for media literacy tailored to wartime conditions; the lack of validated, localized assessment tools for measuring media skills across different levels (students, university attendees, and the general public); insufficient examination of successful international models adaptable to Iran's cultural context; and a shortage of mixed-methods research evaluating the educational impact on psychological and social dimensions. Furthermore, emerging media technologies such as artificial intelligence and manipulated content systems (deepfakes) are rapidly evolving.

Amidst the recent war, where the Zionist regime of Israel has engaged in direct and indirect psychological warfare and anti-Iranian propaganda, media literacy serves as a vital tool to counter these threats. With the

expansion of cyberspace and the infiltration of Western media, the enemy has sought to weaken public morale and sow discord in Iranian society through fake news, rumors, and distortions. Media literacy educates individuals on identifying credible news sources, detecting false information, and resisting enemy propaganda. Additionally, by enhancing public awareness, it inoculates society against information infiltration and psychological campaigns.

Many foreign media outlets, with predetermined objectives, aim to foster despair, pessimism, and eroded national trust. However, improved media literacy enables society to neutralize these tactics. Moreover, media literacy helps the public correctly understand and propagate the discourse of resistance and Islamic ideals.

Conclusions

Media literacy is not merely a defensive skill against the enemy's soft warfare but also a tool for media counteroffensives and the global dissemination of resistance truths. Yet, Iran's educational and media systems still lack a comprehensive strategy to address these challenges. Given Iran's exposure to severe informational and media threats, with enemy media employing advanced psychological analysis and biased content tools, it is imperative to enhance media literacy and establish a synergistic network integrating education, policymaking, and media.

If society, particularly the youth, acquires this skill, they can act as informed soldiers in cyberspace, spreading authentic narratives instead of the enemy's fabricated ones. Therefore, investing in media literacy education is a strategic necessity to preserve social cohesion, resist propaganda, and enable informed decision-making in warfare.

Footnotes

References

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