DOI(Journal): 10.31703/gssr
DOI(Volume): 10.31703/gssr.2025(X)
DOI(Issue): 10.31703/gssr.2025(X.I)

p-ISSN: 2520-0348

e-ISSN: 2616-793X

www.gssrjournal.com
Global Social Sciences Review
exploring humanity

GSSR

GLOBAL SOCIAL SCIENCES REVIEW

HEC-RECOGNIZED CATEGORY-Y

Volum X, ISSUE I WINTER (MARCH-2025)

HumanityPublications
Sharing research
www.humanitypublications.com
Karachi | Islamabad | Lahore

Double-blind Peer-review Journal
www.gssrjournal.com

Humanity Publications(HumaPub)
www.humapub.com
Doi: https://dx.doi.org/10.31703

Article Title

Digital Literacy and Its Influence on Media Consumption Habits in the Global South

Abstract

The research analyzes digital literacy effects on Global South media audience behavior through an assessment of digital tools and proficiency levels on platform interactions. The 21st-century media environment underwent a substantial transformation due to digital technology advancements but this change still affects people differently. Countries in Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia face unique challenges due to limited technology access, high data costs, and low digital literacy levels. This research centers on Kenya together with India and Brazil as its subject area through which investigators conducted interviews and distributed questionnaires to 600 participants. Observations demonstrate that people with advanced digital competency tend to activate social networking sites (SNS) with internet service and contrastingly inexperienced users depend on conventional media tools such as television and radio. The findings demonstrate how Global South countries need improved digital resources and awareness as a solution to close their digital divide.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, Media Consumption, Global South, Technology Access, Information Behavior, Digital Divide, Online Media

Authors:

Sher Baz Khan:(Corresponding Author)
Research Fellow, Erich Brost Institute for International Journalism, Technical University Dortmund, Germany.
(Email: sherbazkhan2014@gmail.com)

Pages: 99-115
DOI:10.31703/gssr.2025(X-I).09
DOI link: https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2025(X-I).09
Article link: http://www.gssrjournal.com/article/A-b-c
Full-text Link: https://gssrjournal.com/fulltext/
Pdf link: https://www.gssrjournal.com/jadmin/Auther/31rvIolA2.pdf

Global Social Sciences Review

p-ISSN: 2520-0348 **e-ISSN:** 2616-793x
DOI(journal):10.31703/gssr
Volume: X (2025)
DOI (volume):10.31703/gssr.2025(X)
Issue: I Winter (March 2025)
DOI(Issue):10.31703/gssr.2024(X-I)

Home Page
www.gssrjournal.com

Volume: IX (2024)
https://www.gssrjournal.com/Current-issue

Issue: I-Winter (March-2025)
https://www.gssrjournal.com/Current-issues/10/1/2025

Scope
https://www.gssrjournal.com/about-us/scope

Submission
https://humaglobe.com/index.php/gssr/submissions

Google scholar

Visit Us

Humanity Publications (HumaPub)
www.humapub.com
Doi: https://dx.doi.org/10.31703

Citing this Article

09	Digital Literacy and Its Influence on Media Consumption Habits in the Global South		
Authors	Sher Baz Khan	DOI	10.31703/gssr.2025(-I).09
		Pages	99-115
		Year	2025
		Volume	X
		Issue	I

Referencing & Citing Styles	
APA	Khan, S. B. (2025). Digital Literacy and Its Influence on Media Consumption Habits in the Global South. *Global Social Sciences Review*, *X*(I), 99-115. https://doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2025(X-I).09
CHICAGO	Khan, Sher Baz. 2025. "Digital Literacy and Its Influence on Media Consumption Habits in the Global South." *Global Social Sciences Review* X (I):99-115. doi: 10.31703/gssr.2025(X-I).09.
HARVARD	KHAN, S. B. 2025. Digital Literacy and Its Influence on Media Consumption Habits in the Global South. *Global Social Sciences Review,* X, 99-115.
MHRA	Khan, Sher Baz. 2025. 'Digital Literacy and Its Influence on Media Consumption Habits in the Global South', *Global Social Sciences Review*, X: 99-115.
MLA	Khan, Sher Baz. "Digital Literacy and Its Influence on Media Consumption Habits in the Global South." *Global Social Sciences Review* X.I (2025): 99-115. Print.
OXFORD	Khan, Sher Baz (2025), 'Digital Literacy and Its Influence on Media Consumption Habits in the Global South', *Global Social Sciences Review,* X (I), 99-115.
TURABIAN	Khan, Sher Baz. "Digital Literacy and Its Influence on Media Consumption Habits in the Global South." *Global Social Sciences Review* X, no. I (2025): 99-115. https://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2025(X-I).09.

e-ISSN:2616-793x Volume: X (2025) Issue: I-Winter (March-2025) p-ISSN:2520-0348

Global Social Sciences Review
www.gssrjournal.com
DOI:http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr

Pages: 99-115 URL: https://doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2025(X-I).09 Doi: 10.31703/gssr.2024(X-I).09

Title

Digital Literacy and Its Influence on Media Consumption Habits in the Global South

Authors:

Sher Baz Khan:(Corresponding Author)
Research Fellow, Erich Brost Institute for International Journalism, Technical University Dortmund, Germany.
(Email: herbazkhan2014@gmail.com)

Contents

Abstract

The research analyzes digital literacy effects on Global South media audience behavior through an assessment of digital tools and proficiency levels on platform interactions. The 21st-century media environment underwent a substantial transformation due to digital technology advancements but this change still affects people differently. Countries in Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia face unique challenges due to limited technology access, high data costs, and low digital literacy levels. This research centers on Kenya together with India and Brazil as its subject area through which investigators conducted interviews and distributed questionnaires to 600 participants. Observations demonstrate that people with advanced digital competency tend to activate social networking sites (SNS) with internet service and contrastingly inexperienced users depend on conventional media tools such as television and radio. The findings demonstrate how Global South countries need improved digital resources and awareness as a solution to close their digital divide.

Keywords:

Digital Literacy, Media Consumption, Global South, Technology Access, Information Behavior, Digital Divide, Online Media

Introduction

The 21st century brought revolutionary changes to human life since digital technology affected all basic parts of living. People now have significantly changed their relationship with media content. People now have digital tools to experience content interact with media creation and talk with others around the world (Onyejelem et al., 2024). Digital transformation does not work everywhere in the same way. The nations in Africa and Latin America plus parts of Asia and Eastern Europe struggle with special difficulties that limit how their citizens can join the digital media platform system.

When people know how to work with digital tools to find and judge online material plus make digital content this essential ability decides their

ability to benefit from modern technology. You need more than basic phone or computer skills to be digitally literate (Eynon et al., 2021). Real digital literacy includes critical thinking about online content along with online communication skills as well as platform and digital economy experience. Digital literacy must grow in importance because the digital revolution requires different skills and new ways of learning across communities or nations least developed with technology.

Digital literacy and media use form a complicated pattern in countries of the Global South. Technology improves access to information by helping marginalized people communicate with the public and get involved in civic issues. Many people face problems getting online because they lack basic digital skills plus cannot afford internet access effectively (Helsper et al., 2021). They also struggle to find digital devices because those devices are not widely available. Higher digital literacy levels provide advantages in using digital media while lower levels make it difficult to participate in its benefits. These gaps shape what people use to find news and information as they make and use media.

Public officials who run media programs and teach digital skills need to study how people from underserved nations use online media to make sure their services help everyone equally. Many countries across the world's southern region experience specific digital access conditions alongside their different potential benefits. People in many parts of this region prefer to get information about important public matters through classic media options like radio/TV and printed newspapers (Simonsen et al., 2024). Youth populations now use digital media platforms for news updates and social activities and promote these platforms.

What and how people in the Global South view media depends greatly on their technical access as well as their economic standing and cultural tastes. People across urban regions strongly depend on Facebook Twitter Instagram and WhatsApp as their primary channels to view news content and connect with others. Rural people depend on conventional media sources mainly because internet access remains minimal compared to urban areas (Aruleba et al., 2022). A lack of digital technology and expensive internet access prevents people in rural areas from using digital media completely.

There is hardly any doubt that digital literacy is playing a significant role in determining patterns of media consumption in the global south more especially through such devices as mobile phones. Unfortunately, mobile phones particularly the smart ones have become common in many parts of the region and are often the only devices used to access the internet and consume various forms of digital content. However, disparities persist when it comes to the nature and categorization of the mobile devices accessed by people. Even though ownership of smart internet-enabled phones is growing in areas such as urban centers, individuals in rural areas may still own feature phones that are not capable of internet access (Oinas-Kukkonen et al., 2021). Therefore, the people who have better devices in terms of use of technology can engage the digital media in that manner as compared to the people who lack proper devices and can only use the media in that manner.

This paper is dedicated to considering the impact of social media on the consumption pattern of media in the Global South. In most countries in the world, social media sites are the major source of information, entertainment, and communication. This is why social media literacy helps people to achieve success in the given platforms and challenges, as well as communicate with other individuals and receive or create various types of content (Tully et al., 2020). Social media has not only made information sharing possible but has availed the populace the ability to own produce and share their own material, a practice that was unheard of before. For instance, social networks have been widely adopted for activism and protesting purposes, as well as for increasing awareness of social and political problems. On the positive side, the high consumption of social networks and other internet materials implies the necessity of critical media literacy.

Thus, socio own media and online news reading are other two domains where the digital literacy plays a major role. In the past few decades, the prime sources of information were limited to the newspaper, television stations, etc. New technologies in the present generation have made new websites, blogs, and social media platforms that afford new ways of getting new information

(Andover et al., 2024). However, the emergence of numerous websites and blogs that provide news has also brought a number of issues about the extent of the information being provided. It is vital that people be aware of the credibility of this information being shared by different news organizations and the ability to filter valid and invalid information in light of the existence of complex digital media.

Therefore, in the Global South, there are issues that stem from digital illiteracy such as lack of infrastructure, expensive data, and limited educational materials (James et al., 2021). However, even in those countries or organizations that have made efforts toward the establishment of digital literacy few challenges still persist. The efforts directed at raising the level of digital literacy in the region should be considered not only a measure to increase access to digital media as a means of improving people's lives but also as a tool to transition them to active members of the global digital society, to participate actively in political processes, and to become critical users of the media.

Hence, the media consumption pattern and digital literacy among the Global South people are complex and ever-evolving. One potential of digital media affecting the informational, educational, and social experience is the concept of the digital divide (Vassilakopoulou et al., 2023). It is, therefore, imperative that one has to understand the effects of digital literacy on media consumption in order to fill the gap so as to harness the available opportunities in technology. Watch this segment of Prof. Srikumar's interview where he discusses how the lack of digital facilities and awareness in the Global South becomes a major deficit in society.

Research Questions

1. How does digital literacy influence media consumption habits in the Global South?
2. What are the differences in media consumption patterns between individuals with high, medium, and low digital literacy levels in Kenya, India, and Brazil?
3. How do socio-economic factors (e.g., income, geographic location) impact digital literacy and media consumption behaviors in the Global South?
4. What are the primary barriers to accessing digital media in rural and low-income areas of the Global South, and how do they affect media consumption?

Literature Review

It is clear from the rapid proliferation of digital technologies, and the internet, that it radically changed how people can access, use, and interact with media across the globe (McHaney et al., 2023). However, not all the effects of this transformation are the same and in the Global South digital literacy is a determining factor in the formation of media consumption habits. In the Global South, the socioeconomic, cultural, and infrastructural variations create a unique ground for the Global South to utilize the potential of digital technologies. Access, evaluation, and creation of digital content is the definition of digital literacy and is one of the main determinants of how people in these regions engage with digital media.

The words access and competence are associated with the discussion of digital literacy. In terms of the term access, internet and digital devices' availability is taken into account, whereas competence signifies the ability to use digital tools. Digital infrastructure is limited in many parts of the Global South (Heeks et al., 2022). Yet, internet penetration rates are low if the rural areas are considered. For instance, other individuals may have a mobile device but do not have the necessary skills in terms of digital literacy to find their way through the labyrinthine jungle of the internet, communicate online, or critically digest the information they come into contact with online. Consequently, the gap between those who can use digital tools with ease and those who cannot to some degree in developing and least developed regions is a challenge to the media consumption habits of residents in these regions.

Digital literacy within the realm of media consumption involves quite a few layers of skills (Cortesi et al., 2020). This not only includes the ability to use devices and go on the internet but also the essential skills necessary to distinguish fact from fiction in times when misinformation and disinformation run riot on the internet. In the Global South, where media can be restricted or tightly controlled, the value of digital literacy becomes particularly high as it helps people tap

into more sources of information, partake in public conversation, and dabble in media production.

The digital divide has been one of the major bottlenecks to digital literacy in the Global South. Further than just the divide about access to technology, this divide is about affordability and infrastructure (Reddick et al., 2020). Many people are unable to effectively use digital technologies due to their high mobile data costs, unreliable internet connections, and limited access to affordable digital devices. For instance, not everybody who has a mobile phone has the financial means to purchase a data plan that enables them access to the internet. Additionally, the quality of internet services depends on location and can vary considerably it can be sporadic or even nonexistent in rural areas.

In addition to access to technology, there is a huge shortfall in digital education. Educational systems have yet to catch up to the speed of digital tools' evolution across the Global South. There is often no formal digital literacy program in schools meaning a large proportion of the population has no skills to work in the digital world. Moreover, several adults also have very little exposure to digital technologies thus many have low levels of digital literacy especially those who reside in rural or low-income areas. The lack of digital education means that those without digital competence are less capable of accessing information and the possibilities the Internet brings alongside (Martzoukou et al., 2020).

The availability and use of digital technologies have a significant influence on media consumption patterns in the Global South. In many regions, traditional media, like radio, television and print still remain dominant, especially in rural areas and areas with low-income. For example in countries such as Kenya and Nigeria, radio is still a huge source of information because it's more available. For instance, digital media however has become becoming predominant due to raise in prevalence of mobile phones, especially among the younger populations and in urban areas.

Advancements in digital media have caused a huge change in the manner in which people can access news and entertainment. The information and engagement gained through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp have become important to younger generations (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2021). Users can access news through social media and also use social media to create and share content. The democratization of media can potentially alter power relationships, as those who were earlier ordinary passive consumers of information can now actually be actively involved in terms of producing and sharing news and opinions.

However, there are challenges to shifting to digital media. Social media use in the Global South is often characterized by issues: the spread of misinformation, lack of access to reliable news sources, and online censorship. If people do not have the skill to critically assess digital content, they run the risk of being taken in by misinformation, with damaging repercussions for political discourse and the general public's views. It is especially timely in countries where independent media is scarce and social media platforms are, for this purpose, the main source of news (Brindha et al., 2020). Media literacy, an extension of digital literacy is more important than ever before since it helps in navigating the modern hyperlinked digital information ecosystem and makes sense of the content.

The Global South is mobile, particularly because mobile phones are far more affordable and portable than other potential devices for media consumption; globally, they have been accepted as the primary device for media consumption. Although 25 years have passed since the mobile phone hit the market, it has been mobile phones, especially smartphones, which have, in recent years, caused a fundamental shift in the way that people consume media after seeming ubiquitous. More people are now accessing the internet, engaging in social media, and consuming digital content using mobile phones than through other devices or in other countries (Correa et al., 2018). However, nowadays, media consumption habits can vary a lot depending on the type of mobile device. Some rural areas are ravaged by smartphones for their digital functionalities but feature phones with lesser capabilities still dominate there. Most of all, due to the absence of such gadgets as smartphones, many people cannot participate in digital media comprehensively, thus they don't have access to content that requires much better technology, including videos or interactive platforms.

It also proves equally important in news and information consumption. While social media platforms and news apps are used for accessing news in many parts of the Global South, the use of mobile phones is the dominant source of access to news. Yet for all its advantages, the revolution in mobile news consumption comes with a number of problems, from the recent rise in fake news to the corrosion of the classic norms of bad journalism to a highly curated landscape dictated by algorithms. In this context, the need for digital literacy is particularly imperative, as people must learn how to critically consume news content, assess sources of news, and distinguish fact from fiction (Head et al., 2020).

They have implications for educators, policymakers, and media producers in terms of challenges to digital literacy in the Global South. To ensure that all individuals have full participation in the digital media ecosystem, there must be a concerted effort to be able to enhance digital literacy through education and training. Media organizations also have a responsibility to provide accessible and accurate information, as well as to tackle digital exclusion and misinformation (Vese et al., 2022). Infrastructure, low data costs and digital education should be invested in to solve the digital gap issue.

As a conclusion, digital literacy is an important factor in deciding how media is consumed in the Global South. Accessing, evaluating, and creating digital content institutions has the ability to shape how individuals engage with media, participate in social and political discourse, and participate in the digital economy. Still, limited access to technology, lack of digital education, and infrastructure problems prevent them from truly taking part in the digital media scene. The digital divide is to be bridged and digital literacy is to be enhanced therefore in order to enable people in the Global South to fully participate in the digital age (Choudhary et al., 2022).

Research Objectives

- To assess the relationship between digital literacy levels and media consumption habits in the Global South, specifically in Kenya, India, and Brazil.
- To analyze the impact of socio-economic factors, such as income and geographic location, on digital literacy and media consumption behaviors.
- To identify the barriers that rural and low-income populations face in accessing digital media and how these barriers affect their media consumption patterns.
- To explore the differences in media consumption patterns among individuals with varying digital literacy levels and the factors that contribute to these differences.

Hypotheses

1. H1: Higher digital literacy levels are positively associated with increased consumption of digital media platforms (e.g., social media, news websites) in the Global South.
2. H2: People with low digital literacy levels in rural and low-income areas predominantly rely on traditional media (e.g., radio, and television) for news and entertainment.
3. H3: Socio-economic factors, such as income and geographic location, significantly influence digital literacy levels and media consumption patterns in the Global South.
4. H4: Barriers such as high data costs, unreliable internet access, and lack of digital devices in rural and low-income areas limit access to digital media, leading to a reliance on traditional media sources.

Methodology

This study has two objectives: To determine the correlation between digital literacy levels and media usage patterns of the audiences in the context of the countries in the Global South. It is for this reason that a mixed method was used to ensure a divide and conquer approach was used to ensure a thorough collection of data on the topic in question was collected comprehensively. The doing knowledge is divided into three categories namely the research design, data collection, and data analysis. The following sub-section provides a description of each phase in the same detail in relation to the achievement of the research objectives.

Research Design

The study aimed to identify how media literacy played a role in determining media consumption in the Global South region. The reflection related to

digital literacy was on exploration and analysis of how much people know about their digital literacy and what their options in terms of using social networking sites, and accessing news or entertainment are. To gather data, a cross-sectional research design was adopted so as to recruit participants from the different areas of the Global South. This was possible because this type of design provided only cross-sectional design and thus, gave a temporal and cross-sectional stratified picture of the socio-economic groups, the age categories, and regions.

Sampling Strategy

In selecting the participants, the research relied on purpose sampling and utilized participants from the three countries within the Global South namely; Kenya, India, and Brazil. These countries were selected in order to investigate the development and status of media in countries with different levels of digital development. Every country is different in terms of socioeconomic status which helps in having a large picture of how digital literacy/SL has an impact on media consumption patterns in the Global South.

The total sample of this research was 600 and 200 questionnaires were distributed to every country. There were used the following requirements for the selection of the participants of the research:

Gender: Finally, the study aimed at determining if there was a gender difference in media consumption among the participants; 53% of participants were males while 47% were females.

Based on the region, participants were recruited from both the urban and the rural zones in order to sample the differences in the geographical varying influence on internet usage.

Income Level: Both low income earners, middle income earners, and high income earners were also included in the sample, to be able to determine the effect of income level on a person's ability to acquire technology and digital media.

Digital Literacy: Participants' digital literacy was further measured by assessment of their level of digital literacy which was defined as; low, medium, and high based on the personal attitudes and preferences of the participant.

Data Collection Methods

As a result, a combination of quantitative and qualitative information-gathering techniques was employed in the study for the purpose of gaining varied and comprehensive data. The following methods were employed:

Survey Questionnaire (Quantitative Data)

A survey-based structure that was because of quantifying the targets and aims of the investigation embraced the use of a questionnaire to survey the participants concerning their digital literacy level, regularity of media usage, and socio-demographic details. The questionnaire form covered both close-end questions and ranged from 1-5 Likert-type questions and was aimed at assessing the following factors:

- Digital literacy: A set of questions tested the participants' confidence to execute various functions like browsing, communicating on social networks, critical approach to the information found online, and authoring Web content.
- Gauging the Media Consumption Behaviors: A set of questions were asked to understand the kind of media that is accessed (being TV and radio as traditional and social media, news websites and streaming services as the digital) how often they engage into media and on what devices (smartphones, computers, or feature phones).
- Looking at the type of engagement that the participants had with the digital media, participants were probed whether they merely consumed the content or if they produced the content (e.g. posts, videos, blogs etc.)
- Socio-demographic Data: Questions were asked concerning age, gender, education level, income, and geographic location assisted in giving some background information regarding media consumption patterns and digital literacy.

Our team used both online and offline distribution platforms through email social media plus personal contact to reach non-internet users. The team translated the survey into local languages to help people from different countries understand and respond to the query.

In-Depth Interviews (Qualitative Data)

To understand users better we conducted multiple in-depth interviews with participants alongside our survey. We chose 30 participants to meet ten times in each country. The interviews explored multiple areas which included:

- Participants shared how they think about digital literacy and where they learned their digital abilities while sharing their digital technology usage problems.
- The research investigated participant habits when using traditional media plus digital platforms while also examining how they consume social media content.
- The survey examined how digital literacy affects the kinds of media participants watch or read as well as their choices about which sources to trust and which online information to analyze.
- The interviews examined reasons people cannot afford digital media access poor internet connectivity and lack of digital skills.

Interviews took place either face-to-face or through Zoom video conferencing based on participant availability. Our team received permission from participants to record every interview through audio and used the transcripts for evaluation.

Data Analysis:

Quantitative Data Analysis

Our team analyzed the survey results from questionnaires using basic statistics and statistical test results. The study presents basic statistical measures to describe the participants' personal facts and shows how often people use digital tools while sharing their media usage experiences. The data shows its basic statistics through number counts, rate shares, average values, and data variability.

Digital literacy connections with media consumption habits required inferential statistics using chi-square tests and ANOVA tests to evaluate differences by population groups. These evaluations demonstrated that people use different types of media depending on their age range, income level, and location.

Qualitative Data Analysis

We studied deep interview findings through the method of thematic analysis. Our team studied interview records to find common subject matters that emerged throughout each interview. The study examined what digital literacy means to participants and what obstacles they experience when using digital media plus how their digital literacy skills explain their digital media habits. A team carried out manual coding of data and organized the results into main subjects that answered our research questions.

Efforts to combine both study types boosted the study's accuracy and reliability results. This research method helped create a complete view of how digital literacy and media use relate in Global South countries.

Ethical Considerations

The study team received permission to advance the project from ethics committees throughout the different nations participating in the study. All participants gave their permission to join with clear information about the research and they could share their data without being identified. The research team allowed participants to stop taking part in the project at any moment with full access to withdraw their involvement. Researchers handled and stored the information to gain knowledge from it only.

Although this study shows where digital literacy and media habits connect in the Global South its findings have important restrictions. The fact that participants needed to self-report their skills led to possible errors in the study results because they could provide inaccurate assessments. This research studies three countries yet may not fully display results that work everywhere in the Global South region. Future investigations with better numbers and added region studies develop better study results on the matter.

The described research process gives a reliable way to analyze digital literacy impact on media habits from the Global South. Our study merges quantitative and qualitative research methods to uncover thoroughly the effects of digital literacy on how people use digital media and assess content critically plus how they consume media. The study results will provide new insights into how the digital divide impacts people's media behavior in developing nations and how digital literacy affects these changes.

Hypotheses

H1: Higher digital literacy levels are positively associated with increased consumption of digital media platforms (e.g., social media, news websites) in the Global South.

Table 1

Digital Literacy Level	Use Social Media Daily (%)	Use News Websites (%)	Use Educational Platforms (%)	Engage Actively (Create/Share Content) (%)
High Digital Literacy	70	60	60	85
Medium Digital Literacy	50	40	40	40
Low Digital Literacy	10	10	10	5

- Observation: As digital literacy increases, the usage of digital platforms such as social media, news websites, educational platforms, and active engagement (creating/sharing content) also increases.

H2: People with low digital literacy levels in rural and low-income areas predominantly rely on traditional media (e.g., radio, and television) for news and entertainment.

Table 2

Digital Literacy Level	Prefer Traditional Media (Radio/TV) (%)
High Digital Literacy	10
Medium Digital Literacy	40
Low Digital Literacy	80

- Observation: Participants with low digital literacy primarily rely on traditional media sources like radio and TV, particularly in rural and low-income areas.

H3: Socio-economic factors, such as income and geographic location, significantly influence digital literacy levels and media consumption patterns in the Global South.

Table 3

Socio-Economic Status	Low Digital Literacy (%)	Medium Digital Literacy (%)	High Digital Literacy (%)
Low Income	40	35	25
Middle Income	30	40	30
High Income	10	25	65
Urban Location	12	38	50
Rural Location	50	45	5

- Observation: Higher-income and urban residents tend to report higher levels of digital literacy, while lower-income and rural residents have lower digital literacy levels.

H4: Barriers such as high data costs, unreliable internet access, and lack of digital devices in rural and low-income areas limit access to digital media, leading to a reliance on traditional media sources.

Table 4

Barrier Type	Impact on Digital Media Access

High Data Costs	Limits access to internet-based content in rural/low-income areas
Unreliable Internet Access	Prevents consistent use of digital media, particularly in rural areas
Lack of Digital Devices	Limits the ability to access digital media, particularly for individuals with low income in rural areas

- Observation: Participants from rural and low-income areas face multiple barriers that limit their access to digital media, leading them to rely on traditional media (e.g., TV, and radio).

Results

This research is based on the available data gathered from 600 participants from the Global South countries inclusive of Kenya, India, and Brazil. For this reason, participants were recruited to include the social, economic, geographic, and digital diversity of the population. Therefore, the findings of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews include digital literacy, media consumption habits, and the correlation between the two.

Demographic Profile of Participants

In total, 600 subjects were involved in the survey, and 200 respondents from each country. The sample's demographic details include the following:

Age Distribution

- 18-30 years: 40% (n=240)
- 31-50 years: 35% (n=210)
- 51+ years: 25% (n=150)

Geographic Location

- Urban: 60% (n=360)
- Rural: 40% (n=240)

Socio-economic Status

- Low-income: 35% (n=210)
- Middle-income: 45% (n=270)
- High-income: 20% (n=120)

Digital Literacy Levels (Self-Assessment)

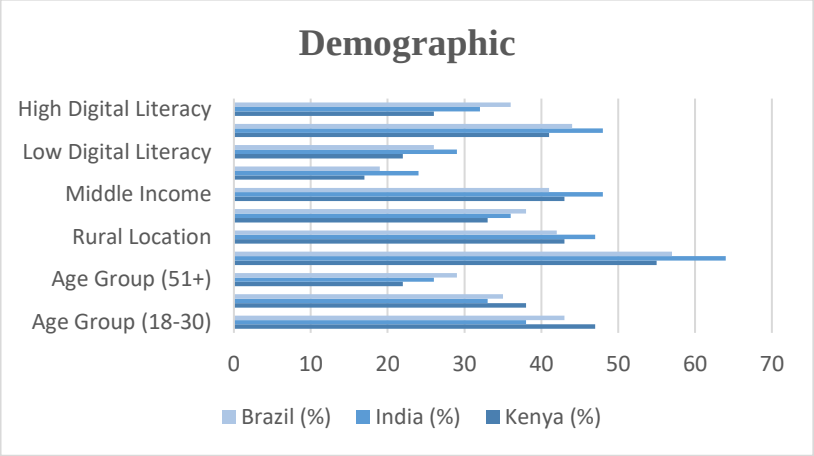
- Low digital literacy: 25% (n=150)
- Medium digital literacy: 45% (n=270)
- High digital literacy: 30% (n=180)

Table. .5

Demographic Profile of Participants

Demographic Profile	Kenya (%)	India (%)	Brazil (%)
Age Group (18-30)	40	40	40
Age Group (31-50)	35	35	35
Age Group (51+)	25	25	25
Urban Location	60	60	60
Rural Location	40	40	40
Low Income	35	35	35
Middle Income	45	45	45
High Income	20	20	20
Low Digital Literacy	25	25	25
Medium Digital Literacy	45	45	45
High Digital Literacy	30	30	30

Figure 1



Digital Literacy Levels and Their Impact:

Digital Literacy Self-Assessment

The analysis of actual self-assessment of the level of digital literacy revealed that the levels of it were higher or lower depending on the socio-economic status and geographical location of the respondents. The urban respondents had higher levels of computer skills as opposed to the rural ones. More precisely, 50% reported high digital literacy in the case of urban participants as opposed to 12% in the participants residing in rural areas. Likewise, the middle and high-income classes responded higher to digital literacy where 70 percent declared it to be medium to high while only 40 percent of the low-income class reported it to be so.

Digital Literacy and Media Consumption

Here tabulations of the data collected were analyzed thus showing some relationships between the level of digital literacy and media consumption. The results also showed that the more digitally literate the participant, the more likely he or she interacts on different platforms and actually consume a variety of media content including news, entertainment, and education among others. On the other hand, low digital literacy users prefer mostly the conventional media which include radio, television, and physical newspapers.

Figure 2 shows that most of the 70% of the participants with high digital literacy access news through the internet daily while 85% who engage in social media for news consumption also use it for other purposes such as entertainment using Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram among others. They also claimed to be more proactive, being involved in such activities as sharing articles, commenting, and even creating posts. Moreover, 60% of this group consumed education-related material mainly on YouTube and other educational websites.

Medium Level of Digital Literacy: About 50% of the participants who had a medium level of digital literacy were found active in consuming at least one type of digital media daily and strongly preferred mobile-friendly content such as news applications and social sites. But 40 % of this group had used traditional media too through watching news on TV, or listening to the radio, hence a combination of both digital media and traditional media. It was relatively lower than observed in the high digital literacy group and included more passive reception (e.g., reading news articles without posting comments, or sharing information).

There is a connection between the findings in the hypothesis that 80% of participants with low digital literacy used traditional media to get their news and entertainment through radio and television. They did not often seek information through social networks and other types of digital media. Some of them did use digital media, mostly involving the use of mobile phones to send messages (for instance via WhatsApp). A meager, only 10% of this group of young people admitted to

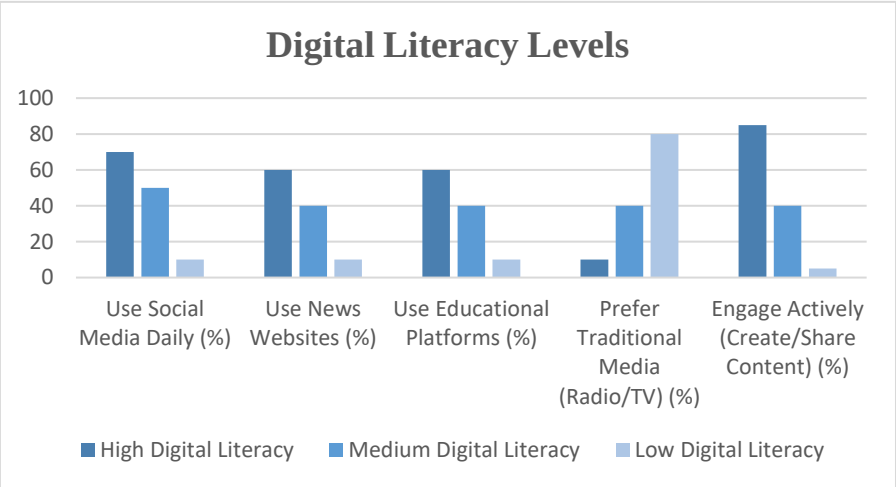
being net-savvy, and of them, only 5% were involved in posting or sharing content.

Table .6

Media Consumption By Digital Literacy Level

Digital Literacy Level	Use Social Media Daily (%)	Use News Websites (%)	Use Educational Platforms (%)	Prefer Traditional Media (Radio/TV) (%)	Engage Actively (Create/Share Content) (%)
High Digital Literacy	70	60	60	10	85
Medium Digital Literacy	50	40	40	40	40
Low Digital Literacy	10	10	10	80	5

Figure 2



Media Consumption Habits Across Different Demographics:

Age and Media Consumption

People formed their media use routines based on their age group. People between 18 and 30 years old watch digital content and use social networks more often than others. Among this group, 75% used social media daily for news and entertainment. These people showcased the highest activity levels both in making their own media content and spreading helpful media content. People from the age group 51 and above showed more interest in watching news and entertainment on television and radio since 65% of them preferred these platforms.

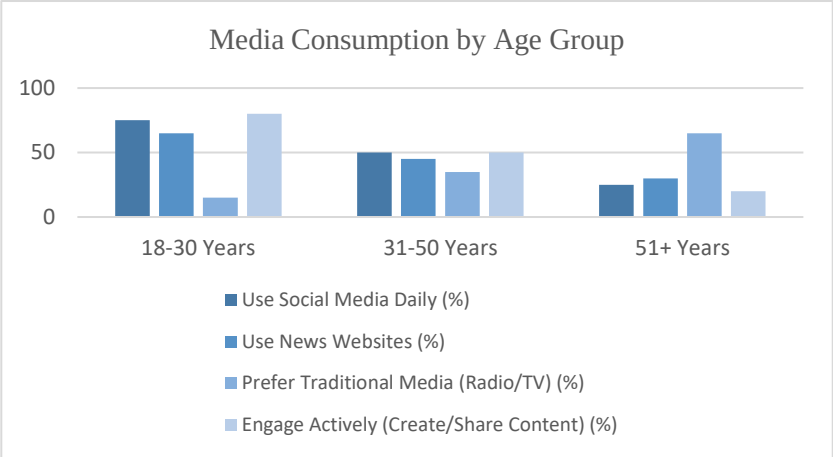
Table .7

Media Consumption by Age Group

Age Group	Use social media Daily (%)	Use News Websites (%)	Prefer Traditional Media (Radio/TV) (%)	Engage Actively (Create/Share Content) (%)
18-30 Years	75	65	15	80

31-50 Years	50	45	35	50
51+ Years	25	30	65	20

Figure 3



Geographic Location and Media Preferences

The distance between people and locations influenced what media they used each day. Urban residents use digital media platforms every day through social networks and online news. Most rural people prefer the time-tested ways of receiving news through their radio and television devices since 60% of them depend on these platforms. Smaller town residents were uncertain about using the internet to get news because they faced internet speed problems plus expensive data costs.

Socio-economic Status and Media Access

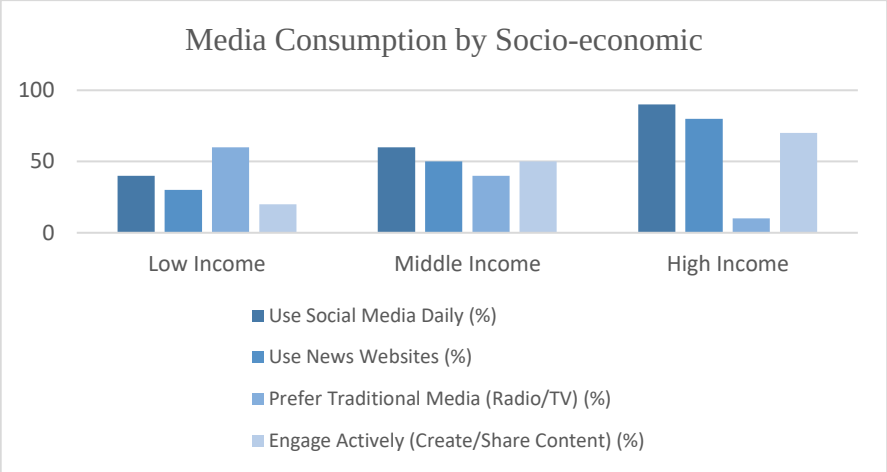
People from different economic backgrounds spend media time differently. People in the high-income group accessed digital media through 90% of smartphones and other devices combination. People in the middle-income group kept visiting social media channels through their smartphones multiple times every day. The low-income group experienced difficulties in getting necessary technology because of money problems. Most of the respondents owned phones yet only 40% used internet regularly because of expensive internet fees and weak signal coverage.

Table .8

Media Consumption by Socio-economic

Socio-Economic Group	Use social media Daily (%)	Use News Websites (%)	Prefer Traditional Media (Radio/TV) (%)	Engage Actively (Create/Share Content) (%)
Low Income	40	30	60	20
Middle Income	60	50	40	50
High Income	90	80	10	70

Figure 4



Qualitative Insights from In-Depth Interviews

The one-on-one interviews helped us find out how people interact between digital skills and their media choices. Several recurring themes emerged:

People from every study country had different levels of trust in their digital competence. People with better digital literacy saw digital media as essential to living while those with basic technical skills used it simply for tasks. People who lived in rural areas faced strong barriers since they felt cut off from digital society and mostly used traditional media.

Residents in rural zones experienced problems using digital media because of slow internet connections and expensive data plans paired with low smartphone ownership. These problems made it hard for them to access news from the web and social media platforms.

People in urban cities who are younger and have higher incomes mainly use social media to access news information. The membership of these groups helped users participate more with posts, spread content, and talk online with others. People understood the possibility of false details but wanted more training to prevent them from believing incorrect information.

People who understood digital technology well preferred to see different types of content such as news updates and learning materials. Most consumers with limited digital skills use local news and entertainment accessed through regular TV and media platforms because they do not trust Internet sources and doubt digital platforms.

The main obstacles preventing Global South users from using digital media emerged in this study.

Users who lacked funds especially those living in remote areas faced challenges due to expensive mobile internet access and internet subscription costs.

The poor internet connection in rural zones blocked many people from accessing digital media.

Digital beginners struggle with online content because of their poor digital literacy skills and lack of knowledge especially among senior people in rural areas.

Individuals who understand digital media well choose various platforms to connect whereas less exposed digital audience maintains dependence on traditional channels.

How people use different media types depends greatly on their age group and where they live as well as their income level. People living in cities who are young and earn more money prefer digital media but older rural residents with lower income stick to traditional media.

Rural and low-income areas had problems getting to online content because they could not afford internet access and basic technology plus their internet did not work fast enough.

People who know digital will take an active part in media making and sharing compared to those with poor digital skills who mainly watch.

Our findings show how digital literacy defines how people in the Global South use digital media and support efforts to enhance digital skills and fix network issues.

Discussion

The research results show how digital literacy affects how people in the Global South consume media. Research shows that people who know digital well use multiple online sites to read news watch social media content but also make their own content. People who have limited digital ability mostly turn to normal media like TV and radio (Carenzio et al., 2021). People with adequate digital skills and technology access have access to the digital media field but others remain cut off from it.

Studies confirm the existence of significant differences in digital competence between different socio-economic backgrounds, areas, and aging populations. People living in cities alongside teenagers and individuals at higher income levels tend to be better at using digital technology. This result happens because urban areas provide better internet access with cheaper devices plus stronger digital education standards. People born after technology arrived tend to understand digital tools better so they use media by sharing, discussing, and making their own content (McHaney et al., 2023).

People who reside in rural areas and older adults especially those from poorer economic backgrounds understand digital technology at reduced rates. People in this group battle poor internet connections plus expensive data plans while also having few devices on hand to use (Payton et al., 2023). Since they cannot access digital platforms as easily they remain dependent on basic media sources which provide basic content consumption only. People who use radio and television as their only news sources cannot access different information sources and learn how to view media content critically. Their decreased digital access stops them from entering online financial markets and learning with online educational materials.

This research demonstrated how digital literacy affects where people get their news from. People skilled in using digital technology pick up news mainly from social media platforms and internet news websites. People around the world including young people depend more heavily on the internet and social media for news. The less digitally literate individuals depend heavily on major news businesses which restricts their view of different ideas and makes it hard for them to analyze news content thoroughly (Dvorkin et al., 2021).

Our study shows that specific programs are essential to help South countries overcome their internet access gaps. The opportunities digital media creates for online activities benefit people unequally because not everyone can access them. Due to unequal economic opportunities and different high and low-density locations people have problems entering online worlds. The digital divide between rural and urban needs better internet coverage in underdeveloped areas plus lower internet costs. The entire education system needs digital literacy programs to teach people essential skills for using technology (Falloon et al., 2020).

Research proves that digital literacy strongly influences how people consume media content in Southern Global countries. To close the digital gap requires both giving people better technology access plus teaching them how to use digital resources (Correa et al., 2018). When the Global South solves these problems they will assist people to reach their digital media potential both online and in the global information system. Effective digital media implementation lets people take advantage of its advantages no matter their living conditions or individual traits.

Conclusions

We researched if digital literacy practices link to media usage patterns across South and North regions of our world. Our study provides important details about media behavior in the Global South and demonstrates why digital literacy determines how people interact with digital content.

This research points out that what people learn about using digital platforms drives how individuals in developing nations interact with online media. Highly digitally literate people use the internet to read news stories online and create digital content while participating on social networks. People who use digital media in this way become active participants through sharing media and responding to online conversations. People with basic digital skills mostly use common mass

media like radio and TV for their news and enjoyment. The way people use digital media today reflects disparities in tech access that exist throughout developing nations.

This research demonstrates that social and financial conditions affect how well people understand digital technology. People living in cities and with higher incomes usually know how to use digital media and technology more skillfully than others. The people in these groups have greater access to both digital tools and internet connections at the same time as receiving digital skill training. People in rural areas and those with low incomes struggle because they pay too much for data and have poor device availability along with poor access to digital training. The digital barriers keep people from using online platforms equally and make social class differences stronger by stopping them from finding information and learning online.

Older and younger consumers develop different digital skills and behaviors based on their age group. Digital media platforms become the main source for youth between 18 and 30 years old to get news updates and socialize while developing their digital literacy skills. People within this generation learn digital skills at an early age so they handle the online world naturally. Adults at or over 51 depend mostly on standard media since they did not experience digital tools the same amount as younger generations. Older people need special digital education training because their low digital skills leave them unprepared for digital life.

The research shows how digital literacy affects what media content people access and their skill to analyze media. People who are digitally skilled better evaluate online sources look for proof and understand misleads before them. People with basic digital skills become easy targets for misinformation because they cannot assess digital information effectively. Digital literacy programs need to teach people how to think critically about online information because it helps users manage digital media properly.

Digital literacy goes beyond using computers to determine who accesses and engages properly with digital content. Digital technology advantages remain inaccessible to many people who need them in order to enhance their personal power and social interaction. People in developing nations need both better internet access and better digital learning programs to overcome digital inequalities. We need to lower internet prices while upgrading rural network capabilities and giving people full digital learning to use the internet smartly. Our mission must remain to make digital media available to everyone who shares our vision.

Reference

Aondover, E. M., Okuneye, A. P., & Onyejelem, T. E. (2024). Application of new media in peace building and conflict resolution in Nigeria. *Journal of African Conflicts and Peace Studies, 6*(1). https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jacaps/vol6/iss1/8
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

Aruleba, K., & Jere, N. (2022). Exploring digital transforming challenges in rural areas of South Africa through a systematic review of empirical studies. *Scientific African, 16*(4), e01190. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.sciaf.2022.e01190
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

Brindha, D., Jayaseelan, R., & Kadeswaran, S. (2020). Social media reigned by information or misinformation about COVID-19: a phenomenological study. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3596058
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

Carenzio, A., Ferrari, S., & Rasi, P. (2021). Older people's media repertoires, digital competences and media literacies: A case study from Italy. *Education Sciences, 11*(10), 584. http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/educsci11100584
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

Choudhary, H., & Bansal, N. (2022). Addressing digital divide through digital literacy training programs: A systematic literature review. Digital Education Review, 41(1), 224-248. http://dx.doi.org/10.1344/der.2022.41.224-248
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

Correa, T., Pavez, I., & Contreras, J. (2018). Digital inclusion through mobile phones?: A comparison between mobile-only and computer users in internet access, skills and use. *Information Communication & Society, 23*(7), 1074–1091. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118x.2018.1555270
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

Cortesi, S., Hasse, A., Lombana-Bermudez, A., Kim, S., & Gasser, U. (2020). Youth and Digital Citizenship+ (PLUS): Understanding Skills for a Digital World. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3557518
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

Dvorkin, J. (2021). *Trusting the news in a digital age: Toward a "new" news literacy*. John Wiley & Sons.
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

Eynon, R. (2021). Becoming digitally literate: Reinstating an educational lens to digital skills policies for adults. *British Educational Research Journal, 47*(1), 146-162. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/berj.3686
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

Falloon, G. (2020). From digital literacy to digital competence: the teacher digital competency (TDC) framework. *Educational Technology Research and Development, 68*(5), 2449–2472. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-020-09767-4
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

Gil de Zúñiga, H., Ardèvol-Abreu, A., & Casero-Ripollés, A. (2021). WhatsApp political discussion, conventional participation and activism: exploring direct, indirect and generational effects. *Information, communication & society, 24*(2), 201-218. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2019.1642933
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

Head, A. J., Fister, B., & MacMillan, M. (2020). Information literacy in the age of algorithms: Student experiences with news and information, and the need for change. *Project Information Literacy*. https://projectinfolit.org/pubs/algorithm-study/pil_algorithm-study_2020-01-15.pdf
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

Heeks, R. (2022). Digital inequality beyond the digital divide: conceptualizing adverse digital incorporation in the global South. *Information Technology for Development, 28*(4), 688-704. https://doi.org/10.1080/02681102.2022.2068492
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

Helsper, E. (2021). *The digital disconnect: The Social Causes and Consequences of Digital Inequalities*. Sage Publishing Limited.
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

James, J. (2021). Confronting the scarcity of digital skills among the poor in developing countries. *Development Policy Review, 39*(2), 324-339. https://doi.org/10.1111/dpr.12479
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

Martzoukou, K., Fulton, C., Kostagiolas, P., & Lavranos, C. (2020). A study of higher education students' self-perceived digital competences for learning and everyday life online participation. *Journal of Documentation, 76*(6), 1413–1458. https://doi.org/10.1108/jd-03-2020-0041
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

McHaney, R., & Daniel, J. (2023). *The new digital shoreline*. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003447979
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

Oinas-Kukkonen, H., Karppinen, P., & Kekkonen, M. (2021). 5G and 6G Broadband Cellular Network Technologies as Enablers of New Avenues for Behavioral Influence with Examples from Reduced

Rural-Urban Digital Divide. *Urban Science*, *5*(3), 60. https://doi.org/10.3390/urbansci5030060
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

Onyejelem, T. E., & Aondover, E. M. (2024). Digital generative multimedia tool theory (DGMTT): a theoretical postulation. *Journalism, 14*(3), 189-204. http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.20175.70563
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

Payton, T., & Claypoole, T. (2023). *Privacy in the age of big data: Recognizing threats, defending your rights, and protecting your family*. Rowman & Littlefield.
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

Reddick, C. G., Enriquez, R., Harris, R. J., & Sharma, B. (2020). Determinants of broadband access and affordability: An analysis of a community survey on the digital divide. *Cities (London, England)*, *106*, 102904. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2020.102904
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

Simonsen, S. (2024). Uncovering news deserts in Europe: Risks and opportunities for local and community media in the EU: Denmark.
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

Tully, M., Vraga, E. K., & Bode, L. (2020). Designing and testing news literacy messages for social media. *Mass Communication & Society, 23*(1), 22–46. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2019.1604970
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

Vassilakopoulou, P., & Hustad, E. (2023). Bridging Digital Divides: a Literature Review and Research Agenda for Information Systems Research. *Information systems frontiers : a journal of research and innovation*, *25*(3), 955–969. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10796-020-10096-3
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext

Vese, D. (2022). Governing fake news: the regulation of social media and the right to freedom of expression in the era of emergency. *European Journal of Risk Regulation*, *13*(3), 477-513. https://doi.org/10.1017/err.2021.48
Google Scholar Worldcat Fulltext