

# Chapter 14

## A Study Determining the Health Literacy Levels of Young Adults During COVID-19

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### ABSTRACT

*COVID-19 caused a massive quarantine around the world and also raised the need for individuals to obtain accurate information about their health. Health-related information that exists on the internet can be similar to misinformation, and this can confuse people and create fear and anxiety. Health literacy, defined as motivation with cognitive and social skills to obtain accurate information about health, understand and use the information to protect the health of individuals, is important in this context, especially as the COVID-19 pandemic period has demonstrated the importance of the ability to use digital communication tools. In this study, a survey was undertaken using field research methodology. The sample was a group of 407 people studying at Sakarya University, Selcuk University, and Konya Technical University. As a result of the research, it was determined that the general health literacy of the young adult group studying in the field of social sciences at the university was of a sufficient standard.*

### INTRODUCTION

Today, the momentum of technology and the services it provides have brought with it the facilitation of daily life. In addition to the increase in the number of internet providers and users, the ability of the public to access these services has also contributed significantly to the development of communication and itinerary. This has also been effective in increasing the number of internet users (Tarhan et al., 2021).

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The opportunities brought by technology pave the way for the formation of new behavioral patterns today, while reshaping societies and increasing the speed of access and use of information. Thanks to their characteristics, mass media can find widespread use in society and have large audiences that can influence it. Thus, with the increase in the rapidly expanding use of technology, it is possible to increase the effectiveness of circulating information. Health literacy is of great importance, especially in obtaining and assimilating health-related information transmitted through mass media in a way that affects individuals or societies positively or negatively (Önal, 2007). With the developments in information technology, the communication tools reaching the masses have made great strides and diversified and brought the countries of the world closer together culturally and socially. This global world, formed by the influence of communication platforms, has become a platform on a horizontal plane today (Bayat et al., 2015).

Changes in the social and economic structure that exist in our country as well as throughout the world have brought with it health problems and these problems have affected individuals significantly. Psychological diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, types of cancer, infectious diseases, physiological diseases caused by weight problems, which are the most common diseases seen in societies, also have a significant effect on individuals (Başol & Işık, 2015). As seen in many fields from the past to the present, there have been various developments in the medical field, many diseases have been treated, progression has been stopped or its speed has been slowed down. The development of societies in the field of health required the individuals who created them to have access to appropriate health information in case of illness, to understand the information they reached and to use this information, and studies in this field revealed the concept of health literacy (Nutbeam, 1998). In addition, the prolonged life expectancy of the human race and the high costs of disease treatment have made preventive health and health development services mandatory. In addition to the economic differentiations in societies, environmental, climatic, social, and cultural changes affect daily life, which is effective in changing the health awareness and knowledge of every individual that exists in societies, not just rule-makers (Jacobs et al., 2017). The ability to read and write, which is considered a prerequisite for existence in social life, also enables individuals to be active participants in life. Being literate makes it possible for individuals to participate economically and socially in society, to better understand every subject that comes their way, and thus to carry out their lives in social well-being (Nutbeam, 2008). Health literacy, on the other hand, makes it possible to understand, analyze and use mixed texts by reading or listening to mixed texts other than basic literacy ability (Nutbeam, 2000). To define the right of health of individuals in a universal perspective, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the definition of health' developed by the World Health Organization are of great importance. The right to health, which is one of the most basic human rights, is kept under the legal guarantee of countries. Article 56 of the Turkish Constitution which states that the responsibility of "ensuring that everyone lives in physical and mental health" belongs to the state of the Republic of Turkey. The state is obliged to provide this service in the realization of the responsibility (Yıldırım & Keser, 2015).

## **BACKGROUND**

### **History of Health Literacy**

In a 1974 study called Health Education, Scott K. Simonds used the concept of health literacy as social policy. In this study, which is discussed as a policy issue affecting the health and education system and

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