



Democracy Resilience and Media Literacy amid the Pandemic: Perspectives of Civic Journalists

By: Hemmady Mora and Ariel Sebellino



The study asks the following questions:

1. What are the thoughts and insights of civic journalists on media literacy and democracy resilience?
2. What is the possible link between media literacy and democracy resilience?
3. What kind of relationship is operational in a crisis among government, media and society?

- The three main problems were answered using a **mixed method**.
- In particular, it used an exploratory **sequential design** in which it started with the conduct of an FGD; the results of which were validated in a survey.
- The study is grounded on the **Media System Dependency Theory** of Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur.
- **Focus Group Discussion** of 15 key informants representing Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao was conducted in January, exploring and examining perspectives and insights of civic journalists on the following: (a) Philippine democracy, (b) democracy resilience, (c) media literacy, and (d) 2022 Presidential Election. **Respondents of the survey were 60 civic journalists** representing equally Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

A democracy's steadfastness is reflected in part through its "democratic resilience (Baruch & Mordechay, 2020)

Societal resilience expresses "the capacity of a system to respond flexibly to a severe disruption or disaster – in accordance with its magnitude and severity of its consequences – in order to contain the damage and the inevitable decline of the system's functionality, and to bounce back rapidly to its normal entity, structure, and conduct." "**Democratic resilience**" evolves from the concept of societal resilience, and seeks to examine the conditions under which democracy can properly deal with disruption or disaster.

A **democracy qualifies as resilient** if its attributes of **recovery, flexibility, adaptation, and innovation** are “capable of addressing complex challenges, and weathering and responding to the crises that affect its survival or durability, and its overall quality and performance.”

Important Question: (Audience Poll)

“How resilient is the Philippine Democracy in the present crisis?”

Active Civic Engagement requires Media and Information Literacy

MEDIA LITERACY: AN EMPOWERING MEANS TO ADDRESS THREATS TO DEMOCRACY

Developing an **empowered population that can identify and avoid misinformation** (as well as unjust attempts to invalidate legitimate sources) on its own terms is not only the most effective solution available.

It is also the most democratic way to restore trust in media, fellow citizens, and other institutions. **It empowers citizens to make informed choices about what information is worthy of their trust**, instead of leaving those decisions to governments or other entities, which can cross a fuzzy line between serving the people and outright censorship - something counter to democratic ideals.

Jolls & Johnsen 2018 – Media Literacy: A Foundational Skill for Democracy in the 21st Century

Hastings Law Journal Vol 69: 1402 <https://www.medialit.org/sites/default/files/HastingsJolls-69.5.pdf>

Media literacy is an important factor in promoting democracy
Kibore, Lumona (2017)

Media literate people know and understand that in a democracy, their freedom of expression is guaranteed by their constitution,

and that the **fourth estate - the MEDIA** should deliver messages to the people without being **oppressed** or **intimidated** by the authorities of the respective country or any entities that have the authority to prevent information from the people.

Qualitative Component: Summary of Axial Codes

Democracy Resilience and Media Literacy amid the Pandemic: Perspectives of Civic Journalists

On Democracy Resilience - Research Findings:

1. The pandemic is being used by some people in power to control the public and the 2022 election.
2. Democracy's biggest issue is manipulation of public information.
3. Media are restricted and threatened; most have expressed fear and frustration.

4. Media's role as watchdog is crucial with propaganda spreading in social media.
5. Public trust in media and government is affected with various, dichotomous contents in social media.
6. The public needs to be more critical with the media restricted, and the government's manipulation of information.
7. Media and public should be vigilant of human rights violation.
8. Democracy resilience is continuing to speak against abuses in power, human rights violation, and curtailing propaganda and false information.

On Media Literacy - Research Findings:

1. Media literacy has to be an institutional advocacy, not just a personal advocacy.
2. Media literacy is crucial in fighting propaganda and false information.
3. The popularity of social media i.e., FaceBook has contributed in the problem of propaganda and false information.
4. The importance of context, research, facts and sensemaking in Journalism should be observed by other content producers in social media.

5. There is a need to collaborate with various sectors i.e., media, academe, NGOs in the fight against false information.
6. Media's job has become more difficult in dealing with propaganda and false information.
7. Opposing views are needed in discernment and decision-making.
8. Owners of social media sites should be responsible and accountable to proliferation of false information.

On Democracy Resilience and Media Literacy- Research Findings:

1. The public needs to be able to filter information; media should help the public in carrying this out.
2. Media even with restricted information and limited mobility cannot be silenced.
3. Red- tagging, freedom of the press, and of free speech and expression, propaganda and fake news are strong issues in democracy resilience.

Quantitative Component: Survey Results

Democracy Resilience and Media Literacy amid the Pandemic: Perspectives of Civic Journalists

Legend:

Description of Responses:

HM Highly Manifested

M Manifested

NM Not Manifested

U Uncertain

D Description of Responses

WM Weighted Mean

Responses (5 pt Likert Scale)

SA Strongly Agree

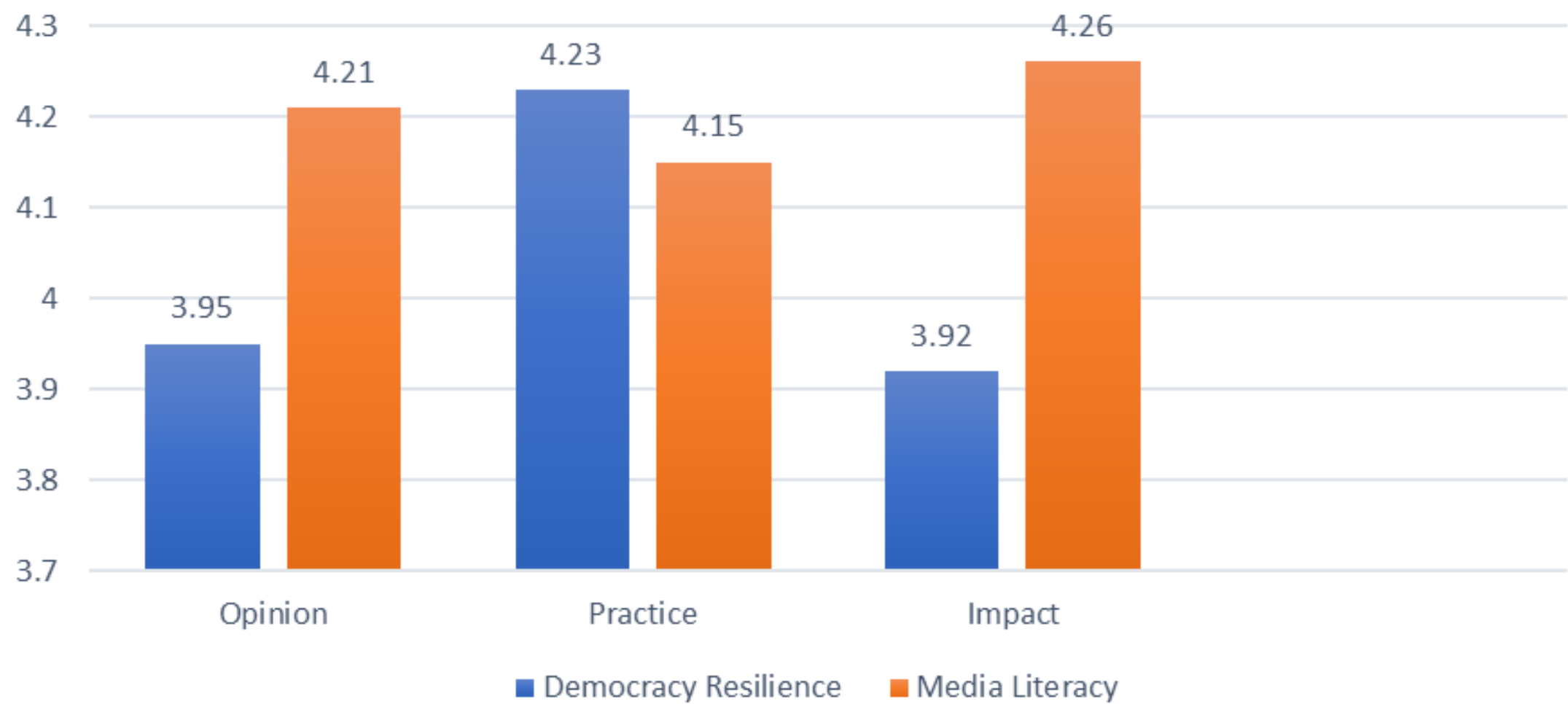
A Agree

N Neutral

D Disagree

SD Strongly Disagree

Summary Chart for Democracy Resilience and Media Literacy



**SUMMARY COMPARISON
FOR DEMOCRACY RESILIENCE AND MEDIA LITERACY**

Democracy Resilience	WM	D	Media Literacy	WM	D
<p style="text-align: center;">Opinion</p> <p>The public remains democracy resilient amid the pandemic.</p>	3.95	M	<p style="text-align: center;">Opinion</p> <p>Media literacy upholds the truth and creates a critical public.</p>	4.21	HM
<p style="text-align: center;">Practice</p> <p>The media remains democracy resilient in times of crises.</p>	4.23	HM	<p style="text-align: center;">Practice</p> <p>Media and journalists, individually or collectively, promote and support media literacy.</p>	4.15	M
<p style="text-align: center;">Impact</p> <p>Public's patriotism, trust and optimism depend on the public's trust in media and government.</p>	3.92	M	<p style="text-align: center;">Impact</p> <p>Media literacy affects the type and level of political participation of the public.</p>	4.26	HM

Correlations

		DR Opinion	ML Opinion	DR Practice	ML Practice	DR Impact	ML Impact
DR Opinion	Pearson Correlation	1	.182	.949	-.623	.960	.963
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.884	.204	.572	.182	.174
	N	3	3	3	3	3	3
ML Opinion	Pearson Correlation	.182	1	.482	.656	.451	-.090
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.884		.679	.545	.702	.943
	N	3	3	3	3	3	3
DR Practice	Pearson Correlation	.949	.482	1	-.345	.999*	.829
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.204	.679		.776	.022	.378
	N	3	3	3	3	3	3
ML Practice	Pearson Correlation	-.623	.656	-.345	1	-.378	-.811
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.572	.545	.776		.753	.398
	N	3	3	3	3	3	3
DR Impact	Pearson Correlation	.960	.451	.999*	-.378	1	.848
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.182	.702	.022	.753		.355
	N	3	3	3	3	3	3
ML Impact	Pearson Correlation	.963	-.090	.829	-.811	.848	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.174	.943	.378	.398	.355	
	N	3	3	3	3	3	3

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Conclusions

1. The public's dependency on media and government in times of crises is not evident in the study. Factors such as false information and propaganda seem to affect the supposed dependency of the public to media and government during times of crises. What appears to be evident is the public's relying on social media for information. As observed in the qualitative part of the study, in a pandemic where media is restricted with mobility and information, and when the government is perceived as manipulating information, the public relies on social media for information.

2. Interdependencies between media and government, media and society, and government and society in terms of public information, public order, social integration, and mobilization are limited, which should be strongly operational in a crisis.
3. A fully operational strong media literacy sustains democracy resilience. This is observed in the qualitative data, and appeared as positively connected in the survey.

4. False information and propaganda may translate to a more critical public out of desperation. But this may only happen with a media literate public. This dichotomy of misinformation and propaganda either creating a blinded manipulated public or a critical discerning public, in this case the latter being evident.
5. The significant correlation of the study was on the public's democracy resilient being connected to the public's patriotism, trust and optimism which is based largely on their trust in media and government. This validates the general principle of the MSD theory on the public's dependency and need for government and society in times of crises. However, the dependency is grounded on perceived trust i.e., lost of trust in government and media reduces the need and dependency of the public in these two institutions.

Recommendations

1. It is suggested that various projects on the promotion of democracy resilience and media literacy be conducted by civic journalists through the Philippine Press Institute (PPI), along with stakeholders and partner organizations.
2. Other institutions and organizations that promote media and information literacy and democracy resilience should conduct projects geared towards educating the people to make informed decisions on prevailing democratic issues such as:
 - a) vaccination program;
 - b) claiming pandemic provisions (ayuda) guaranteed by the government;
 - c) democratic issues in the upcoming elections;
 - d) Discerning propaganda and disinformation in the current political landscape.

3. An evaluation on the effectiveness of the recently conducted PPI Voter's Education Webinar-Forum for various universities in the country is highly recommended.
4. A similar study may be conducted for the mainstream media practitioners.
5. A study on the readiness of the Philippines for the upcoming elections is highly recommended.

References:

Baruch & Mordechay, 2020 <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/the-covid-19-pandemic-and-democratic-resilience-in-israel/>

Belin & De Maio, 2020 https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/FP_20200817_democracy_covid_belin_demaio.pdf

Jolls & Johnsen, 2018 – Media Literacy: A Foundational Skill for Democracy in the 21st Century *Hastings Law Journal* Vol 69: 1402 <https://www.medialit.org/sites/default/files/HastingsJolls-69.5.pdf>

Kibore, Lumona, 2017

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/role-media-deepening-democracy-rule-law-vs-public-demanding-kibore/>

Mallawaarachchi, Chammika, 2015 <http://www.ijsrp.org/research-paper-1115.php?rp=P474786>

<https://guides.library.unlv.edu/civicengagement>



- The End -
Thank you!

