

MEDIA AND
INFORMATION
LITERACY



MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY INDEX

Country Report Burkina Faso

Supported by the



Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development

Imprint

PUBLISHER

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PUBLISHED

April 2020

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The authors wish to thank the following persons for their support in preparing and conducting the study and in interpreting the data: Claudia Lampert, Sascha Hölig and Uwe Hasebrink of Leibniz Institute for Media Research (Hans-Bredow-Institut), Georg Materna and Niels Brügger of JFF – Institut für Medienpädagogik, and the team at the market research company IMMAR.

The paper used for this publication comes from wood from sustainably managed European forests. No fertilizers or pesticides were used.

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Executive summary

Reliable, high quality information is a key priority for the young generation in Burkina Faso. Perhaps as a consequence of political insecurities and the prevalence of violent extremism, a majority of young people between 15 and 25 years seems very aware of the negative consequences of malevolent forms of communication such as cyberbullying, disinformation and hate speech. At the same time, many young people lack vital Media and Information Literacy skills in the fields of access, creation and analysis of media content.

This is according to results from a 2019 representative survey conducted for the MIL INDEX study on behalf of DW Akademie. Cyrille Guel from media NGO EducommunicAfrik echoes these findings, saying in an interview for the study that a basic knowledge of “how media work and how information is disseminated” is lacking. Denis Vincenti of development agency Fondation Hirondelle argues that this lack of skills emanates from the fact that young people are not given a chance to voice their concerns in the country, despite below 25-year-olds accounting for roughly 65% of the population.

The country report presented here is based on the findings of the MIL INDEX study, for which a representative survey, eight focus groups and six expert interviews were conducted in Burkina Faso between November 2018 and April 2019. The Study focused on five Media and Information Literacy (MIL) skill sets: Access, analysis, reflection, creation and action. For each of these dimensions, survey respondents received a score ranging between 0 (= no skills whatsoever) and 20 (= highest level of skills) points, adding up to a total maximum score of 100. The average 15-25-year-old Burkinabè respondent had moderate to good skills when it came to access (10.5), analysis (10.8), as well as reflection (11.5). Deficits were found mainly in the areas of action (8.2) and creation (5.6). The total score amounted to 46.6 out of a possible 100.

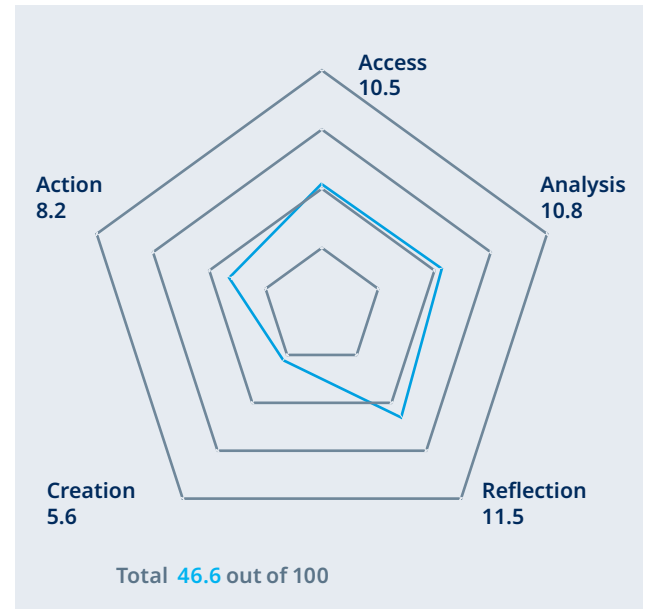
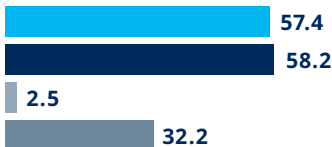


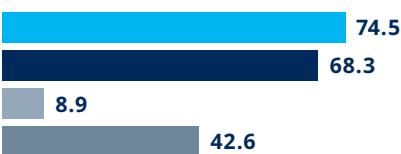
Image 1 MIL INDEX scores (maximum: 20, minimum: 0) for each dimension and total score.

Access



- Radio | n = 1261
- TV | n = 1262
- Newspaper | n = 1263
- Online | n = 1263

Use of media on a weekly basis: MIL INDEX survey data indicate that television (58.2%) and radio (57.4%) are the most frequently used media by 15-25-year-old Burkinabè on a weekly basis. Online use is less prevalent (32.2%) and readership of printed media (2.5%) like newspapers and magazines is almost non-existent.



- Radio | n = 1264
- TV | n = 1263
- Newspaper | n = 1263
- Online | n = 1264

Use of media for news: Radio is used most often as a source for news and information (73.5%), with television (68.3%) not far behind. Online is becoming increasingly relevant (42.6%), but still trails considerably behind the more traditional media. Printed media only play a marginal role (8.9%).

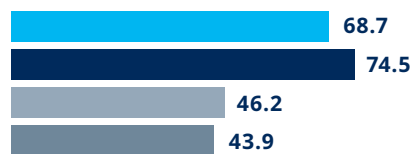
Analysis



- Knowing difference between Facebook and the Internet | n = 1262
- Defining journalism | n = 1258
- Knowing constitutional right to freedom of expression | n = 1264

Knowledge of facts about media and digital communication: Less than half of respondents were able to clearly define Facebook as a social network, while almost three quarters were able to accurately define journalism and knew about the universal right to freedom of expression as defined in the constitution. These results were based on multiple choice questions.

Reflection

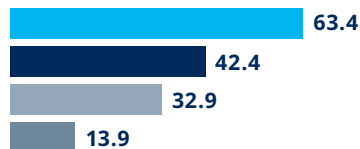


- Hate speech | n = 1260
- Disinformation | n = 1257
- News bias | n = 1248
- Censorship | n = 1230

Condemnation (“agree fully” or “agree somewhat”) of adverse forms of communication: There was widespread rejection of examples of hate speech (68.7%) and disinformation (74.5%), while less than half of the respondents were able to identify cases of unbalanced reporting and censorship.

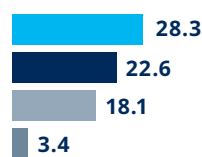
Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

Creation



- Taking Photos | n = 1264
- Audio recording | n = 1263
- Taking Video | n = 1263
- Writing and publishing reports | n = 1263

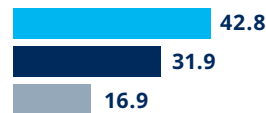
Use of production skills at least “sometimes”: Almost two thirds of respondents reported taking photos using a camera or smartphone, more than 40% recorded audio and about a third recorded video at least sometimes. Only about 14% indicated writing and publishing reports at least sometimes.



- Uploading files | n = 1264
- Updating social media accounts | n = 1261
- Creating messenger groups | n = 1264
- Creating blogs/websites | n = 1263

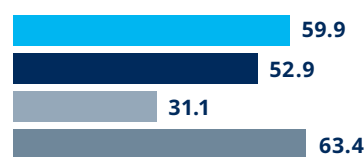
Use of online skills at least “sometimes” (file upload, social media account update) or at least “rarely” (creating messenger group, creating blog/website): Of the online skills included in the study, around a quarter of respondents uploaded files (28.3%) and updated their social media accounts (22.6%) at least sometimes, about a fifth indicated having created a messenger group before (18.1%) and almost none had created their own website or weblog (3.4%).

Action



- Sharing information with others | n = 1264
- Commenting on social issues in public | n = 1264
- Joining freedom of speech or access to information campaigns | n = 1258

Acting at least “sometimes” (sharing information with others, commenting on social issues) or at least “rarely” (joining freedom of speech or access to information campaigns): When it comes to becoming active for more informed communities, sharing information with others (42.8%) was most common, followed by commenting on social issues (31.9%) and joining campaigns for freedom of expression or access to information (16.9%).



- Using media responsibly | n = 1253
- Analyzing media critically | n = 1258
- Creating/publishing own content | n = 1258
- Reflecting own use of media | n = 1255

Self-assessment of ability to put MIL skills into practice (“agree fully” or “agree somewhat”): When judging their own skills in terms of MIL, around 60% of respondents feel they can put their access and reflection skills into practice, roughly 50% are convinced they can apply their analytical skills and a bit more than 30% feel they can put their creative skills to use.

Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

1. The MIL Index Approach

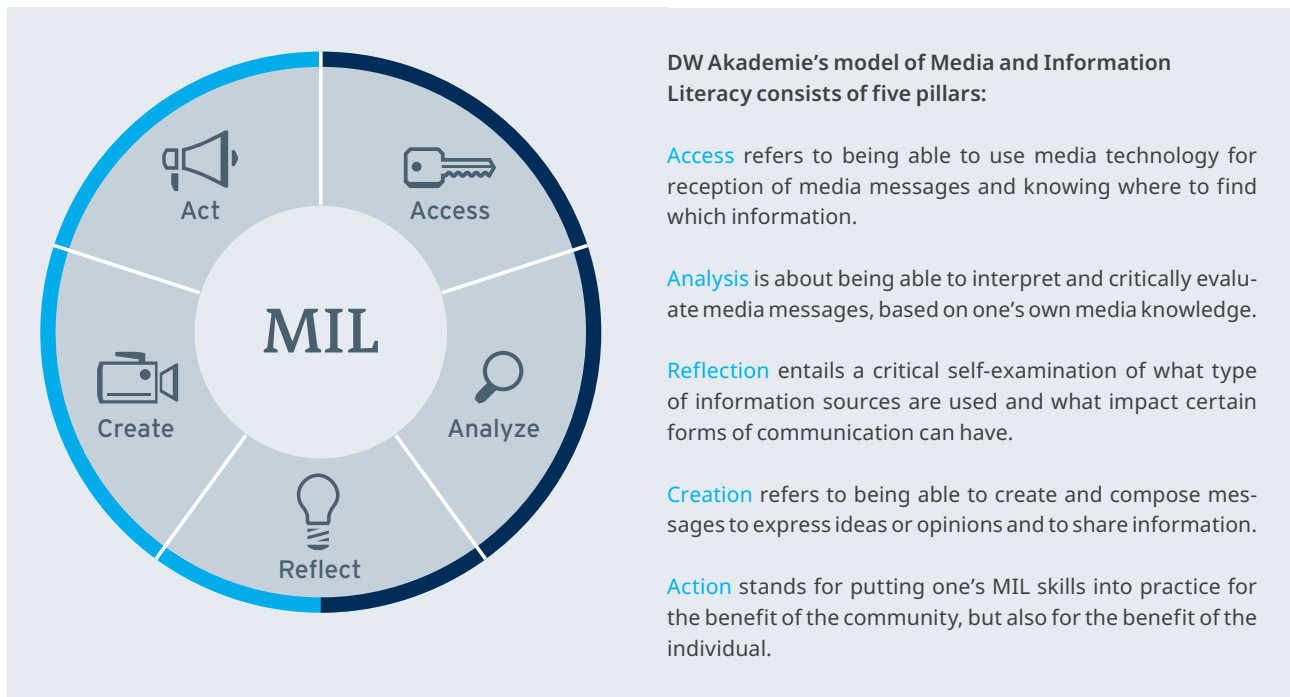


Image 2 DW Akademie's Media and Information Literacy Model

The purpose of the MIL INDEX study, based on data collected between November 2018 and April 2019 in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, and Uganda was to ascertain the levels of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) amongst 15-25-year-old citizens in all six African countries.

MIL is regarded by DW Akademie as an important prerequisite for putting one's rights of access to information and freedom of expression into practice. It involves both using one's skills at the individual level for one's own benefit, but also being an active part in society and contributing to and shaping an informed community.

For Burkina Faso, a representative survey (n = 1.264) was conducted, accompanied by eight focus groups with 62 adolescents and young adults in Ouagadougou and Banfora, and six in-depth interviews with experts.

The representative study was based on a multi-stage random sample, backed up by a quota plan for gender and rural vs. urban distribution to ensure that the data were not skewed towards certain types of respondents. The focus groups were differentiated by age (15 to 18 and 19 to 25) and rural vs. urban setting. The expert interviews included two key informants each for the following areas of expertise: media, youth, education, and MIL.

The participants answered questions that were drawn from the five key MIL skill sets of the model: access, analysis, reflection, creation and action. Each sub-dimension is defined at the beginning of the corresponding sub-chapter and includes a short description of how the scores were calculated. Each sub-dimension has a maximum score of 20, meaning the overall maximum score is 100. The overall MIL INDEX score is calculated adding the scores for the sub-dimensions to arrive at the total score. It goes without saying that a scoring system reduces the complexity of the subject matter, which is why it is advisable to take into account the findings from the interviews and focus groups as well, as presented below.

Since citizens cannot permanently use media and information sources unless they are journalists or media workers, a perfect score of 100 for any country appears unrealistic—it is more about the relative performance across time and in comparison to other countries. Additionally, no one dimension is enough to gauge levels of MIL. For instance, frequency and diversity of media used (access) should be looked at alongside issues such as trustworthiness (analysis) and impact of different forms of mediated communication (reflection) to obtain a more thorough picture of the situation on the ground.

The summary of results presented in the following is structured according to the model above.

2. Access

Access refers to being able to use media technology for reception of media messages and knowing where to find and use information.

Scoring

- 1. Diversity of weekly media use** was measured according to the number of media types (television, radio, printed press, online) survey respondents used on a weekly basis.
- 2. Diversity of media used for news** was measured according to the number of media types (television, radio, printed press, online) survey respondents used for news.

- 1. Diversity of weekly media use | 5.6 out of 10**
- 2. Diversity of media used for news | 4.9 out of 10**

Access Sum Index Score

10.5 out of 20



Access to information is an important prerequisite for informed political participation, but also for making the right economic and social decisions. In this sense, being able to access the media and the Internet is important for all citizens. It involves both the technological know-how needed to activate hardware and navigate software, as well as knowing where good sources of news and information are to be found, and using a diversity of such media frequently.

One of the experts interviewed for the MIL INDEX study, Denis Vincenti of Fondation Hirondelle, argues, “access to media is complicated in Burkina Faso” because affordability is a big issue for many young people. On top of this, “young people in rural areas do not have the same access to information as those in urban areas”, observes Abdoulaye Diallo from Centre de Presse Norbert Zongo. For Burkina Faso’s largest age group—under 25-year-olds account for about 65% of the population¹—access to information and corresponding skills are vital, however, for them to be able to take part and have their say in a society marked by the strong authority of elders.

For the purposes of the MIL INDEX, access and creation are the only dimensions that do not “test” respondents but evaluate the frequency of certain behavior. In the case of access, the survey measures (1) the diversity of types of media used

on a weekly basis and (2) the diversity of types of media used for news and information. This is based on the rationale that skills are put into practice via instances of actual usage and that diversity in media use is a good proxy for diversity of information obtained.

Diversity of weekly media use

About two thirds of survey respondents reported watching television and listening to radio programs on a weekly basis. In contrast only about every third respondent goes online every week. Weekly magazine and newspaper usage are very low. The average number of media types used per respondent was 2.3. This corresponds to a MIL INDEX score of 5.6 out of 10 for diversity of weekly media use.

There is a significant split between media accessed in urban and rural segments of Burkina Faso’s youth. Radio remains the most important mass medium for 15-25-year-olds living in rural parts of Burkina Faso, while television has surpassed it amongst urban Burkinabe youth. There is also a significant mismatch between the extent to which urban respondents access the Internet regularly and the low extent to which this is the case in rural areas. The same applies to gender in relation to smartphone ownership and use of digital media.

¹ CIA World Factbook 2018

Female, 15-18, urban

“TV gives more opportunity to understand the culture of others, the images from elsewhere.



Male, 19-25, rural

“Radio is more convenient and accessible everywhere – in the fields, in the classroom, in the graveyard, etc.



About two thirds of urban youth (75.1%) and half of young people from rural areas (50.5%) watch television on a weekly basis. Ownership of TV sets is significantly higher amongst city dwellers than amongst rural youth (81.2% vs. 48.0%). Smartphone ownership is less common among female in comparison to male respondents (32,9% vs. 48%). Also, online resources are accessed less frequently by females on a weekly basis (20.6% vs. 37.7%).

Due to the many accessible international channels, television is perceived as a window to the world for young urban Burkinabè, the focus groups revealed.

Both urban and rural youth perceive television as a quick source of information and entertainment. Particularly news on health and security issues are considered important – priorities that can be explained by the high incidence of diseases² and the frequency of terrorist attacks³ in the recent past.

Radio devices are owned more often than television sets by survey respondents' households (76.9% vs. 58.4%) and particularly in the countryside, listening to the radio is more common than watching television on a daily (31% vs. 18%) and weekly basis (61.8 % vs. 50 %).

Some urban respondents have come to regard radio as a medium of the older generation. When asked why they prefer to listen to radio programs, rural youth in the focus groups stressed the flexibility, low costs and reliability of radio stations.

Printed media are not popular among young Burkinabè. Although newspapers and magazines are considered accessible in terms of costs, they were often perceived by the focus group participants as outdated. Rural youth further stress that written content is not available to those who cannot read or do not read well. Urban youth on the other hand mention that there is no need for print versions since newspaper articles, books and magazines can be accessed online.

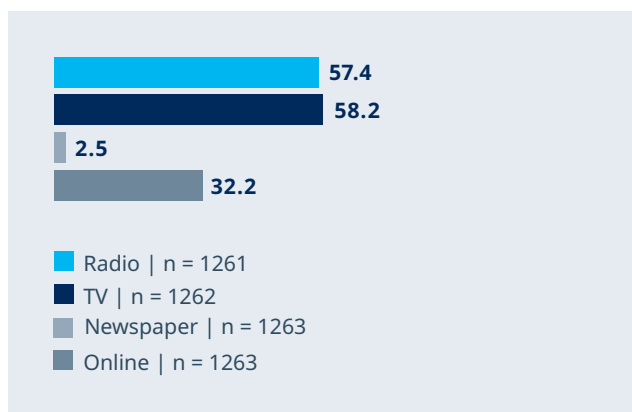


Image 3 Use of media on a weekly basis (radio, television, newspapers/magazines, online). Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

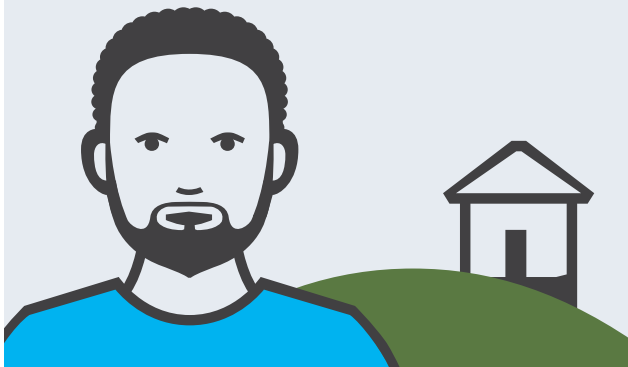
² WHO Burkina Faso country profile 2019

³ Crisis Group 2018

⁴ UNESCO 2017: 3

Male, 19-25, rural

“In the field there are no networks or connections. The smartphone will not be useful.



Female, 19-25, urban

“We connect on social networks! Facebook, WhatsApp. There's Twitter, Viber, YouTube...”



Going online is not as common as in many other Sub-Saharan African countries. Whereas a considerable proportion of respondents reported using online for news and information (42.6%), the numbers of daily (11.6%) and weekly (32.2%) Internet users are still quite low. Almost all respondents reported having access to a mobile phone (93.6%), but less than half owned an Internet-enabled smartphone (46.1%). In a country amongst the twenty nations with the lowest rates in literacy worldwide, it is not surprising that newspaper and magazine readership is almost negligible, at only 0.3% daily and 2.5% weekly readers, but smartphones offer benefits: “A lot of people use smartphones. There are even people who do not know how to read, but use voice messaging. They use WhatsApp to send photos and other things.” (Male, 19-25, urban)

Stark differences also emerge when comparing digital access amongst urban and rural respondents. Whereas there are no significant differences when it comes to access to a mobile phone in general, owning a smartphone is very unevenly distributed, with almost two thirds of city dwellers (64.2%) reporting ownership of such a hand-held device, compared to around a third (33.6%) of the population in the countryside. The difference is similarly pronounced for personal computers, laptops or tablets (29.4% vs. 4.5%).

Unequal distribution of device ownership owing to purchase and mobile credit costs, along with differences in infrastructure lead to differences in the frequency of digital access across urban and rural areas. About a quarter of urban (24.6%) and over half of rural (56.3%) respondents never access the

Internet. The proportion of daily urban users is roughly four times higher (23.6% vs. 6.1%) than that of rural users.

Since data bundles are expensive and Internet reception often not available, rural youth rather utilize offline functions of smartphones and feature phones such as taking pictures, playing games, calling or messaging, whereas urban youth who have better access to digital infrastructure value the versatility of smartphones and use a variety of different apps.

This is underscored by the survey data, revealing that 30.9% of 15-25-year-old respondents use Facebook and 22.3% use WhatsApp on a weekly basis. This means that almost everyone that uses the Internet every week, the majority of them urban youngsters, is on Facebook. Also, more than 40% of respondents indicated that they use social media for news. Other popular social apps like YouTube (5.4%), Instagram (2.9%) and Snapchat (1.6%) are seldom used.

Diversity of weekly media used for news

Radio is news source number one. In urban and rural contexts, it is tuned into more often for news and information than television (74.5% vs. 68.3%). Online sources for information and news are used only by less than half of the respondents. Less than one tenth of respondents rely on print sources such as newspapers or magazines for information and news. The individual average number of types of media used for news was 1.9, resulting in a MIL INDEX score of 4.9 out of 10.



While radio is considered a local medium, which is used more frequently in the countryside, urban youth watch television and access online news particularly for national and international news. The survey revealed that sports and entertainment as well as education were the main reasons to use media for young people. But also, the interest in health and politics was very strong among the respondents. During the focus group discussions several young people confirmed the latter and explained that the situation of political and financial insecurity as well as high incidence of diseases in the country creates a

necessity for them to obtain information on education, business and employment opportunities as well as health and national politics.

The focus groups showed that radio and TV are generally considered as trustworthy news sources by Burkinabè youth. This is echoed by survey results which reveal that about two thirds of respondents consider news media to be trustworthy. However, according to the focus group results the young people seem to distinguish between national and international media. Whereas national media are trusted on their local expertise but mistrusted owing to their perceived political bias, international media are valued for their contents and structural capacities such as correspondent networks but sometimes also perceived as biased in line with the positions of western countries.

In urban Burkina Faso online is on a par with radio as the second most important source for information and news (63.3% vs. 62.3%), behind television.

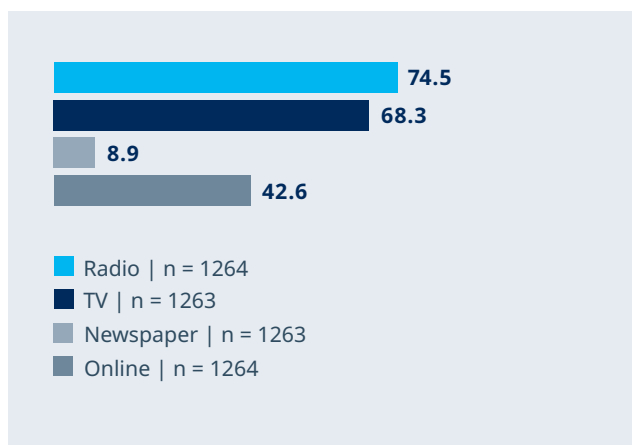


Image 4 Use of media for news and information (radio, television, newspapers/magazines, online). Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

3. Analysis

Analysis is about being able to interpret and critically evaluate media messages, based on one's own media knowledge.

Scoring

- 1. Knowing the difference between Facebook and the Internet** was measured by means of a multiple-choice question.
- 2. Knowing how journalism is defined** was measured by means of a multiple-choice question.
- 3. Knowing one's constitutional right to freedom of expression** was measured by means of a multiple-choice question.

1. Knowledge of the difference between Facebook and the Internet | 2.8 out of 6.67

2. Knowledge of the definition of journalism | 4.6 out of 6.67

3. Knowledge of the constitutional right to freedom of expression | 3.4 out of 6.67

Analysis Sum Index Score

10.8 out of 20



According to Denis Vincenti from the non-profit organization Fondation Hironnelle, Burkinabè youth often do not question the influence of opinion leaders who conveniently “provide the service of analyzing information for them”. And Abdoul Moumine Dialla of Conseil National de la Jeunesse du Burkina Faso observed that “[t]he majority of young people do not research information [...] and information is processed according to first impressions.” This tendency combined with insufficient knowledge on “how the media and the process of dissemination of information work”, adds Cyrille Guel from EducommunicAfrik, lets the analytical skills of young people in Burkina Faso appear in a questionable light. The results below suggest, however, that the knowledge gaps center around digital issues.

The MIL INDEX focuses on the knowledge and evaluation aspects of analysis, since they are most suited to the survey method employed. The multiple choice items of the questionnaire tested knowledge of (1) the difference between Facebook and the Internet, (2) how to define journalism, and (3) that all citizens' right to freedom of expression is entrenched in the national constitution.

Knowledge of the difference between Facebook and the Internet

According to Mirani (2015) there is confusion in several countries of the Global South over whether Facebook is a part of the Internet or in fact the Internet itself, because of Facebook's

free basics program. This program offers users free access to the Internet if they accept a limited bundle of websites with Facebook's own offerings as its core. The first multiple choice question was designed to find out whether respondents are capable of identifying Facebook as an Internet-based social network. About one fifth of the respondents believed that Facebook indeed was the Internet. The correct answer was given by 42,7% of respondents. This results in a MIL INDEX score of 2.8 out of 6.67.

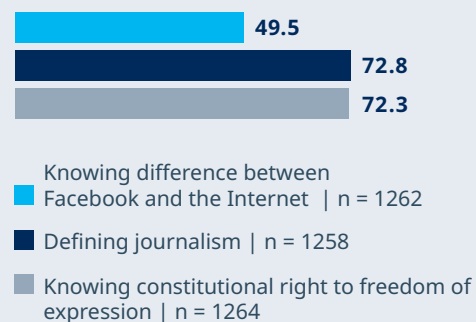


Image 5 Knowledge of facts about media and digital communication. Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

Knowledge of the definition of journalism

There is international consensus that journalism is most effective when it is independent of external influences thus the second knowledge item focused on the difference between journalism and public relations. A clear majority of about two thirds of respondents (68.8%) were aware of this distinction and chose the correct answer: "Journalists are people who research, produce and publish fresh information". One fifth believed journalists' mission is to engage in public relations. The MIL INDEX score was 4.6 out of 6.67.

Knowledge of the constitutional right to freedom of expression

Knowing one's constitutional right to freedom of expression can be a first step towards putting it into practice. The third multiple choice question was thus designed to measure awareness of the right. About three quarters of respondents knew that freedom of expression is entrenched in the constitution, the remaining "ones" either believed there is no such right, it is reserved for certain citizens, or they did not know. 3.4 out of 6.67 was the MIL INDEX score result.

Evaluation of Burkina Faso's news media landscape

Going beyond the knowledge items, respondents were asked to evaluate Burkina Faso's news media landscape. Perception of the media landscape was comparatively critical. Between 50 and 60% agreed at least "somewhat" that the media are neutral, trustworthy and timely. Burkina Faso's media obtained best marks for personal relevance (89.7%). The proportion of respondents rating media diversity and comprehensibility positive reached between 60 and 70%.

Young Burkinabè also possess basic knowledge on the media landscape of their country. They can differentiate between national and international broadcasters, are aware of and use a diversity of media outlets available to them. Trustworthiness, particularly of news content, seems to play an important role due to the insecure political situation in the country.

Media are considered as trustworthy if their reporting is detailed, timely, is supported by evidence and presented professionally according to the focus groups. Most young people seem to agree that digital and social media are useful for communication and entertainment purposes but generally not as trustworthy as traditional media because they offer everybody the opportunity to produce and publish content.

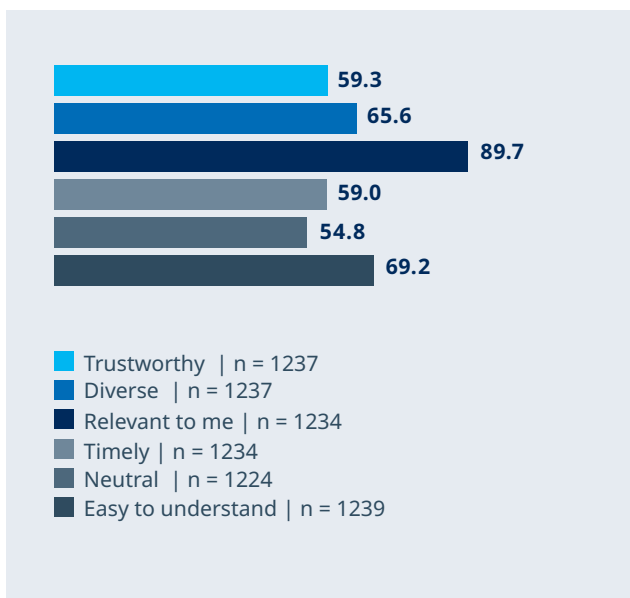


Image 6 Evaluation of the media landscape in Kenya, agreement "strong" and "somewhat". Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.



4. Reflection

Reflection entails a critical self-examination of one's own media consumption and reflecting what impact certain forms of communication can have on oneself.

Scoring

- 1. Condemnation of hate speech** was measured by showing respondents an example of hate speech and asking them whether they considered it to be "funny."
- 2. Condemnation of disinformation** was measured by showing respondents an example of disinformation and asking them whether they considered it to be "trustworthy."
- 3. Awareness of news bias** was measured by showing respondents an example of biased news and asking them whether it was "one-sided" or not.

4. Awareness of censorship was measured by showing respondents an example of censorship and asking them whether the media outlet in the example was being "censored" or not.

- 1. Condemnation of hate speech | 3.4 out of 5**
- 2. Condemnation of disinformation | 3.7 out of 5**
- 3. Awareness of news bias | 2.1 out of 5**
- 4. Awareness of censorship | 2.2 out of 5**

Reflection Sum Index Score

11.5 out of 20⁵



⁵ The deviation from the sum of sub-dimensions is due to rounding errors.

"The ability of young people aged 15 to 25 to reflect on the media is not present", believes expert Cyrille Guel from EducommunicAfrik. "I say this because it is necessary to have knowledge [on media] before being able to reflect."

On the other hand, reflection also entails having a critical attitude and DW Akademie's local expert Boureima Salouka sees young citizens in Burkina Faso at a disadvantage in this respect: "Teachers themselves are not trained to teach children to think critically. Parents themselves do not have this competence. It goes without saying that young people stay like that between themselves." The results below imply that these deficits mainly apply to recognizing biased journalism or censorship. The young Burkinabè respondents do seem to have a critical attitude towards issues such as hate speech, disinformation and cyberbullying.

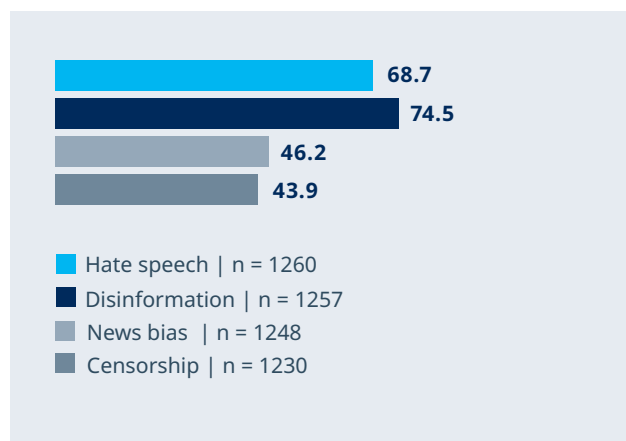


Image 7 Condemnation of adverse forms of communication, "strongly" or "somewhat" (hate speech, disinformation, news bias, and censorship). Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

For the MIL INDEX, survey respondents received examples of problematic forms of communication and were supposed to judge them on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 meant acceptance and 5 meant rejection of the example. The score was deduced from the extent to which respondents rejected (1) an example of hate speech, (2) an example of disinformation, (3) an example of biased reporting and (4) an example of censorship. The scoring is based on the assumption that awareness for the individual and societal impact of these forms of malcommunication (and censorship) would be a good approximation of reflective skills.

Female, 15-18, rural

“There are those guys, ... he'll ask you to send him pictures and... there's a problem between you, he threatens to publish your pictures.



Male, 19-25, rural

“Someone had texted me that he had business and that they had left the West. They also said they were at the port of Benin. We texted each other and then I knew he was a scammer.



Condemnation of hate speech

More than two thirds of respondents did not accept the hate speech example, which calls for a journalist to be beaten up, “strongly” (44.8%) or “somewhat” (23.7%). 7.5% could not make up their mind and 23.7% were prepared to accept the violent threat as “somewhat” or “very funny”. The mean level of agreement by respondents resulted in a MIL INDEX score of 3.4 out of 5.

According to DW Akademie’s local expert Boureima Salouka, messenger chats such as WhatsApp groups are used frequently by religious or political extremists to spread hate speech messages among young people. And experts Abdoulaye Diallo, director of the Centre National de Presse Norbert Zongo, and Cyrille Guel from EducommunicAfrik posit a connection between the disclosure of intimate photos in social media and sexual harassment which according to them is a very common form of cyberbullying in Burkina Faso.

The focus groups concentrated more on cyberbullying than on hate speech. Here too, sexual harassment, particularly of young women, was the most experienced form of cyberbullying. Several male respondents also report cases of cybercrime and cyberbullying. They often revolved around extortion, illicit business offers and hacked social media accounts.

When asked how to react to cyberbullying and hate speech, respondents seem to know about and use several active options such as blocking a person on social media or reporting misconduct to the platform concerned. However, although the young people recommend their peers to be cautious and not to accept friend requests of unknown persons and not to publish personal pictures, they often seem to act contrary to their advice.

Condemnation of disinformation

An example of disinformation was rejected by 70% of respondents. With almost half agreeing strongly (46.5%) and over a quarter agreeing somewhat (27.6%) that the Facebook post about a cure for HIV/AIDS was not to be trusted. Around 11.3% could not make up their minds, while the remaining 14% were inclined to believe the message. This resulted in a MIL INDEX score of 3.7 out of 5.

Interestingly, the experts interviewed for the study have a more skeptical view of Burkina Faso’s youth when it comes to disinformation than these results suggest. “There is a high consumption of disinformation” according to Abdoulaye Diallo from Centre National de Presse Norbert Zongo. Young people are also prone to spreading disinformation, believes Abdoul Moumine Dialla of Conseil National de la Jeunesse du Burkina Faso. Cyrille Guel, director of EducommunicAfrik,

Male, 19-25, rural

“ The day before yesterday, someone messaged me saying that the jihadists had arrived in Berekadougou. It was not true.



Female, 15-18, urban

“ Disinformation is often on Facebook, for example a notice that Rihanna has died. It's often things like that.



argues that most young people do not reflect what harmful impact “liking certain publications” can have.

Focus group participants reported several cases of disinformation related to false rumors on security issues such as terrorist attacks or violent riots. Examples for this type of disinformation were mentioned more frequently by young people from rural areas.

Other types of disinformation that included for instance rumors about well-known personalities or disinformation motivated by political agendas seemed to be experienced frequently by rural and urban youth alike.

Focus group participants agreed that everybody should avoid spreading disinformation. Several young people did not know how to react to or prevent disinformation. Some suggested analyzing and verifying information, although interpretations of verification varied from looking for visual evidence such as video recordings, to checking if other media published the same, or talking directly with journalists.

Awareness of news bias

About 43% of survey respondents recognized news bias in an example, agreeing strongly (21.1%) or somewhat (21.8%) that a report featuring only the opinions of a politician, his wife and a friend of his was one-sided. 10.3% of respondents could not make up their mind, while 5.6% of respondents did not spot the bias. The MIL INDEX score was consequently fixed at 2.1 out of 5.

“We have a press that happens to represent only those in power”, Boureima Salouka answers when asked about political bias in Burkina Faso. Gandema Winde Issa from Burkina Faso’s Ministry for Education similarly observes that young people sometimes receive biased information and are “misguided for strategic and political purposes”. With respect to young Burkinabè, Denis Vincenti from Fondation Hirondelle reports that they often spread biased information that has been framed by “opinion leaders” according to their agendas.

In the focus groups only very few participants observed political bias in news content. The examples mentioned refer mostly to political campaigning or information provided by national broadcaster RTB.

Although the young people have some basic knowledge about the different stakeholders present in their country’s media

Female, 19-25, urban

“RTB is the national channel, it needs to present the ‘right’ political information!”



Male 19-25, urban

“We can make comments on social media that can later lead us to justice because someone has filed a complaint.”



landscape and often show their critical attitude towards politicians as described in the chapter on ACTION, there is limited awareness of political bias. Nearly 45% somewhat or strongly agreed that there could be situations that justified one-sided reporting.

Awareness of censorship

The proportion of respondents able to identify censorship at a local newspaper on the basis of a small story was about 44%. Roughly one tenth was uncertain, while 42.7% did not identify the case provided as censorship. The MIL INDEX score was 2.2 out of 5.

The media landscape in Burkina Faso has improved regarding censorship after the mass uprisings in 2014. The national press code was modified, new laws officially recognize the legal status of media outlets and supposed offences by the press have partially been decriminalized. Still Freedom House ranks Burkina Faso as “partly free” with regards to freedom of the press and draws attention to the fact that high legal fines for media outlets in the past have supported auto-censorship (Freedom House 2016).

Maybe it is due to this relatively positive development that the interviewed experts rarely or indirectly mention censorship. Media expert Boureima Salouka is one of the few

who observes a dangerous “influence by political offices and religious organizations” on media content but also adds that the biggest problem concerning freedom of the press is representation of certain segments of the population in the media. He and other experts particularly criticize the media’s neglect of representing the younger age groups and the rural population (Boureima Salouka, Denis Vincenti, Cyrille Guel).

Focus group participants also do not identify censorship as a media problem familiar to them. Only one participant from an urban focus group knew of the risk of legal fines for regular social media users when a complaint to Burkina Faso’s media regulatory authority, the High Council for Communication (CSC), is made.

About 40% of survey respondents agreed somewhat or strongly that there can be situations that make it okay to restrict what media can publish.

5. Creation

Creation refers to being able to create and compose messages to express ideas or opinions and to share information.

Scoring

1. Diversity of media production skills was measured according to the number of production skills (making photos, videos, audio recordings and writing reports) survey respondents employed at least sometimes.

2. Diversity of online skills was measured according to the number of specific online skills (uploading files, updating social media profiles, creating WhatsApp groups as well as blogs or websites) survey respondents employed at least sometimes.

- 1. Diversity of media production skills | 3.8 out of 10
- 2. Diversity of online skills | 1.8 out of 10

Creation Sum Index Score

5.6 out of 20



Skills in terms of creation are associated with being able to make one’s voice heard, expressing opinions and ideas using the media and digital tools one has at one’s disposal. This includes writing, recording and taking photos. Creating one’s own media and information is one of the most challenging fields of Media and Information Literacy.

Abdoulaye Diallo from Centre National de Presse Norbert Zongo observes that young Burkinabè have good communication skills and know how to “create their own networks” in order to express themselves. According to Gandema Winde Issa peer-to-peer exchange is a major source for knowledge about creative skills. The results below reveal, however, that especially the specific online skills seem to be limited to a small segment of Burkina Faso’s youth.

Skills in terms of creation were measured by looking at (1) the diversity of media production skills performed at least “sometimes” by the respondents (taking photos, recording audio, recording video, writing reports) and (2) the diversity of online skills either performed at least “sometimes” (file upload, social media account update) or at least “rarely” (create WhatsApp group, create blog or website).

Diversity of media production skills

Around two thirds of respondents reported taking photos “often” or “sometimes” (63.4%). More respondents engaged

in audio recording (42.4%) than in video recording which was done by around every third respondent at least “sometimes”. Reports were written and published by approximately every ninth respondent. The mean number of skills performed by every respondent was 1.5, resulting in a MIL INDEX score of 3.8 out of 10.

Taking and sharing pictures seems common practice for young Burkinabè in rural as well as in urban contexts judging

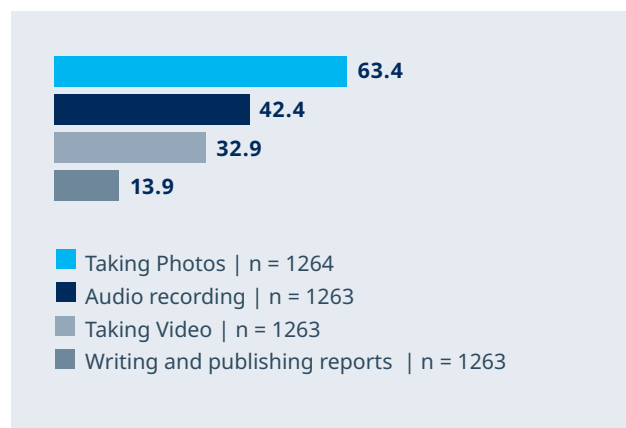


Image 8 Use of production skills (photo, video, audio, editorial) at least “sometimes”. Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

Female, 19-25, rural

“ You need to avoid publishing pictures in social media that could negatively impact your future and people having prejudices about you.

Female, 19-25, urban

“ A tablet is very practical because in school we can video call each other.

by the results of the focus groups. Youth publish pictures they took in social media such as on Facebook or in WhatsApp groups in order to share news and important events with their peers. At the same time, however, they issue warnings about sextortion, sexual harassment or negative impacts on their reputation, which frequently seems to be based on personal experience.

Audio is only scarcely mentioned in the focus groups in relation to recording voice messages in messenger chats. One participant stressed that audio messages are very important for the communication of people without schooling and low literacy levels.

Recording videos does not feature prominently in the focus groups either. It is never mentioned by participants from rural contexts and only few urban young people report having recorded a video to forward it via messengers or upload it on YouTube. Video calls on the other hand seem quite popular among urban Burkanibè.

Overall, rural and urban focus groups displayed basic creation skills. Urban creation skills seemed slightly more advanced than rural ones and occasionally also included someone with more elaborate skills who could create a Youtube video or possessed basic knowledge in programming. Rural youth often mentioned not being able to afford digital devices and lacking digital infrastructure such as Internet reception as limiting factors.

Diversity of online skills

Specific online skills are even less widespread than basic production skills. About every fourth survey respondent uploaded a file and updated her or his social media profile at least sometimes and slightly less had created a WhatsApp group at least once. Almost none of the respondents reported having created their own website or blog. The mean number of online

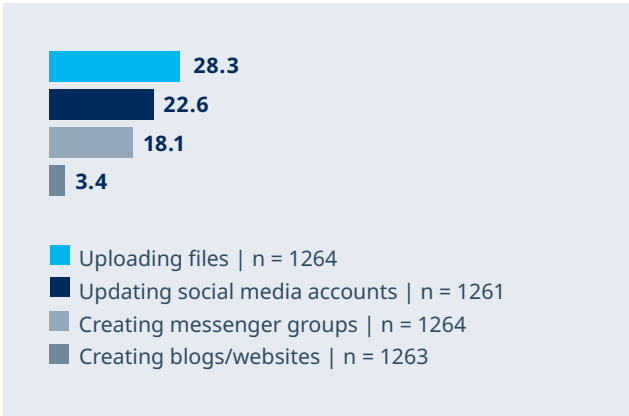


Image 9 Use of online skills at least “sometimes” (file upload, social media account update) or at least “rarely” (creating messenger group, creating blog/website). Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

skills was 0.7 leading to a very low MIL INDEX score of 1.8 out of 10 for online skills.

Uploading activities documented in the focus groups were restricted to posting photos and occasionally sharing videos via messengers and social media. Not being able to afford data, because “units to buy megas are very expensive” and “expensive smartphones”, as two rural focus group participants pointed out (Male, rural, 19-25), often restrict uploading and downloading activities. Social media plays an important role for young people in Burkina Faso, urban youth seeming to know and to use a greater diversity of messengers, apps and blogs than their rural counterparts. Updating social media profiles and following discussions in WhatsApp groups were mentioned several times by urban and rural young people, yet creation skills remain very basic in this area.

All skills involving creation except computer programming showed highly significant differences between urban and rural survey respondents, city dwellers engaging in them decisively more often than their counterparts from the countryside.

Despite the mentioned obstacles segments of Burkinabè youth are active in social media, they consume and at a very basic level also produce media content such as posting simple comments, sharing links and pictures or recording audio messages. Participation in traditional media however is rarely present because they do not offer enough space for young people to express themselves, according to expert Cyrille Guel from EducommunicAfrik.

6. Action

Action stands for putting one's MIL skills into practice for the benefit of the community, but also for the benefit of the individual.

Scoring

1. Activism was measured according to whether survey respondents shared information with others and whether they commented on social issues online or in public at least sometimes and whether they had ever joined a campaign for freedom of expression or access to information.

2. Putting skills into practice was measured via self-assessment, by finding out which survey respondents agreed at least somewhat that they were good at using media responsibly, analyzing media critically, creating their own media and information, as well as reflecting on their own use of media.

- 1. Media activism | 3.0 out of 10
- 2. Putting MIL skills into practice | 5.1 out of 10

Action Sum Index Score

8.2 out of 20⁶



⁶ The deviation from the sum of sub-dimensions is due to rounding errors.

The action component of Media and Information Literacy goes beyond the mere competency level in that it focuses on application of MIL competencies out of the pedagogical box. Making one's voice heard to improve the general situation or one's own standing in society entails both using one's skills for the public good and to one's own advantage.

According to Abdoulaye Diallo (Centre National de Presse Norbert Zongo), Boureima Salouka (DW Akademie) and Cyrille Guel (EducommunicAfrik) young Burkinabè have clearly shown their ability to make their voice heard during the 2014 mass protests against former president Blaise Compaoré. It was then that young people used social media to mobilize protesters and spread information on the political situation across the country. Still, Cyrille Guel argues that it is only few young people who "use interactive applications and social media to express their concerns" on a regular basis.

For the purposes of the MIL INDEX, the action dimension was operationalized in terms of (1) whether the respondents shared information they obtained from media with others, commented on social issues online or elsewhere in public at least "sometimes" and whether they had ever taken part in a campaign for freedom of speech or access to information, as well as (2) based on their self-appraisal of how well they could put the above mentioned skills (access, reflection, analysis, creation) into practice.

Media activism

Information was shared by about 40 per cent of respondents with others at least sometimes and approximately a third commented on social issues online or in public that often. Less than every fifth respondent reported having taken part in campaigns for freedom of expression and access to information. It may be assumed that campaigning was understood by the respondents in more general terms, i. e. that raising one's voice on any issue was interpreted as campaigning for freedom of expression. This interpretation would still be in line with the action dimension. The MIL INDEX score drawn from the data for "activism" was 3.0 out of 10.

Focus groups revealed that many young people are frustrated with the politicians and the political system of their country. Young Burkinabè do not feel represented and particularly criticize nepotism and corruption. As a consequence, many seem to have given up being involved in or even following news on politics.

However, when asked about how they express their concerns in media it becomes apparent that there are youths that are nonetheless politically very active in fields they are interested in on social media. One girl from a rural area reports for instance being engaged in the "fight against emigration" with help of

Male 19-25, urban

“Politicians retire and then they come back. Many even hold several positions. There’s an old youth minister!”

Female, 15-18, rural

“During the election period, politicians approach young people... But then they forget about them. Politicians’ programs do not take us into account.”

a Facebook campaign (Female, 19-25, rural) while two boys use WhatsApp to “comment on a teachers’ strike” (Male, 15-18, urban) and “expose problems” (Male, 15-18, rural).

When asked about their perception of the relevance of media, young Burkinabè name the provision of accessible, timely and reliable information, particularly on security and on health

issues. Further, there seems to be an agreement that media should reflect young peoples’ concerns to the wider public and help them tackle challenges they face: “I think the media should provide us with information that can help us solve our problems”. (Male, 19-25, rural)

Putting MIL skills into practice

Shifting the focus from the societal to the individual level, the self-assessment reveals that about 60% of the respondents think they are good at using media responsibly and reflecting their own media use. About half of the respondents feel they have the capacities to analyze media critically whereas only a third of respondents are convinced that they are good at creating and publishing own content. The MIL INDEX score for putting MIL skills into practice is quite high at 5.1 out of 10.

When asked about their individual hopes and worries, beyond overarching visions of peace and economic development the young focus group participants mentioned education and employment as top priorities and poverty, unemployment and health as their major concerns. This is in line with the survey results which also found education and health to be amongst the top five media topics the respondents were interested in.

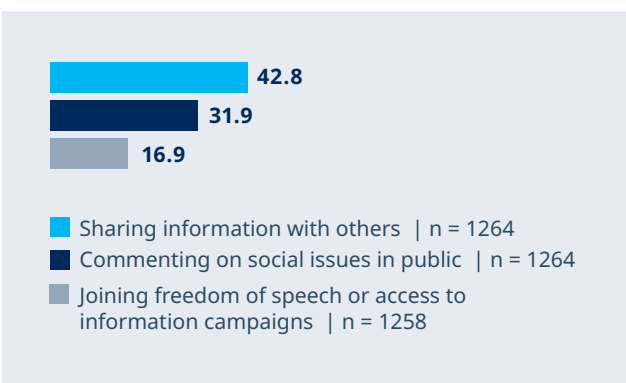


Image 10 Acting at least “sometimes” (sharing information with others, commenting on social issues) or at least “rarely” (joining freedom of speech or access to information campaigns). Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.

The high interest in media content stands in contrast to the few occasions the concerns of young Burkinabè are represented in the media. They are rarely provided with spaces for self-expression. Abdoul Moumine Dialla (Conseil National de la Jeunesse du Burkina Faso) criticizes: "Have you ever seen a young person under 25 invited to the RTB newspaper to explain or expose a given situation or topic? Each time, it is other people who speak for the young people." This lack of representation in traditional media is the reason why young Burkinabè prefer to focus on social media and online resources to express themselves, argues Denis Vincenti from Fondation Hirondelle.

Urban respondents were found to be significantly more active than rural respondents in every respect (sharing, commenting, campaigning). When it came to the self-evaluation of putting their skills into practice, city dwellers were much more confident than their rural counterparts at putting media creation into practice (43.9% vs. 25.2%), while for the other aspects, the urbanites also saw themselves as more competent, but both camps were closer together.

Primarily urban focus group participants mentioned researching health information online, discussing personal problems with their peers in group chats and sharing job offers and education opportunities via messengers and social media platforms as ways in which they put their online skills into practice.

Media play an important role in the lives of young Burkinabè. They need media to be informed about security and health issues and some have discovered the potential of social media for activism. Nevertheless, the lack of representation in traditional media, not being able to afford data, or digital devices as well as possessing only very basic creation skills are major obstacles for the young people to put their MIL skills into practice.

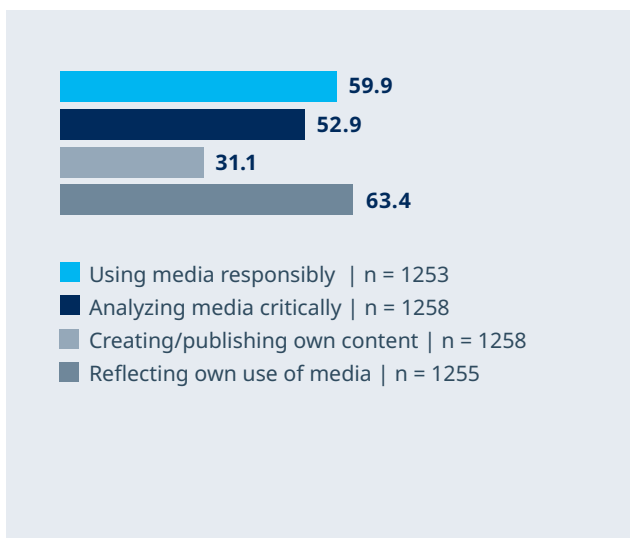


Image 11 Self-assessment of ability to put MIL skills (using media responsibly, analyzing media critically, creating and publishing own content, reflecting own use of media) into practice ("agree fully" or "agree somewhat"). Numbers indicate percentage of respondents.



7. Conclusions

The MIL INDEX study focused on the Media and Information Literacy skills of 15-25-year-old Burkinabè. Based on the quantitative results, on average this age group has moderate skills when it comes to access, analysis and reflection. Deficits were found mainly in the dimensions of creation and action. The MIL INDEX score was 46.6 out of a possible 100, meaning young people from Burkina Faso achieved lower mid-range results for Media and Information Literacy.

Access

Taking a closer look at the different dimensions, young Burkinabè access radio and television regularly, and to a significantly lesser extent online. Whereas television is predominant in urban areas, radio access is highest in rural contexts though radio is the most important news medium in both urban and rural settings. A smartphone which is the most common device for Burkina Faso's youth to access online media is owned by about two thirds of urban respondents and only one third of rural respondents. WhatsApp is used by almost every fifth and Facebook by roughly every third respondent on a weekly basis. Both Internet access and smartphone ownership are substantially more common in urban than rural contexts and slightly more likely for male than female respondents. Access to print media is very low in urban and nearly non-existent in rural areas. Generally, the urban-rural divide is very pronounced in the field of access and economic, infrastructural and cultural difference play an important role. Taking into account the diversity of media used on a weekly basis and the diversity of media used for news and information, the MIL INDEX score is moderate (10.5 out of 20).

Data from the Afrobarometer Study of Burkina Faso (2018) confirms findings from the MIL INDEX study with respect to the smartphone being the most important access point to online resources for young Burkinabè. According to Afrobarometer and MIL INDEX study data roughly every third respondent goes online with their smartphone regularly (29.9% vs. 33%). Daily use of online is also similar for both surveys (8.9% vs. 11.6%), further supporting the reliability of the findings.

A study recently commissioned by Fondation Hironnelle with the aim of understanding the realities of young Burkinabè from 15 to 30 years also confirms the urban-rural divide in terms of media access found by the MIL INDEX study. The study (n = 438) found that radio was the preferred news medium amongst both urban and rural young people, which is in line with the findings of the MIL INDEX study. The data for watching television regularly is also very similar to the findings of this study (45% vs. 12%, as compared to MIL INDEX study: 43.9% vs. 18%).

Analysis

The young Burkinabè respondents show a good level of media knowledge. Over 70% of respondents can define journalism and know about their right to freedom of expression. Roughly half of the young people can distinguish between Facebook and the Internet. Overall, these results add up to a moderate to good MIL INDEX score for analytical skills (10.8 out of 20).

Focus groups reveal that the young people possess some basic knowledge about the media landscape in Burkina Faso and have their own criteria regarding trustworthiness of information. The survey also showed that they are quite critical of the media landscape, though Reporters Without Borders has termed Burkina Faso "one of Africa's success stories" with "dynamic, professional and diverse media" (Reporters Without Borders 2019). Local experts see room for improvement when it comes to questioning the information provided by opinion leaders or thinking about the ways in which information is disseminated.

Reflection

Over two thirds of respondents condemned disinformation, cyberbullying and hate speech which shows a strong awareness of adverse forms of communication. Perception of news bias and censorship however seems less pronounced among young Burkinabè, as only roughly 40% of respondents were able to recognize these media problems. The overall MIL INDEX score for reflective skills is moderate to good (11.5 out of 20).

Focus groups confirmed that the young generation of Burkina Faso is frequently confronted with cyberbullying and disinformation. The most mentioned form of cyberbullying is sexual harassment. Disinformation on the other hand is condemned because of the young peoples' need for reliable information with regards to the present state of insecurity in the country.

Although mistrust in politicians and the political sphere is high, as confirmed by the study commissioned by Fondation Hironnelle in 2019, focus group and survey results of the MIL INDEX indicate a relatively low sensitivity for political bias and censorship among young Burkinabè. One reason might be the disenchantment with official politics, prompting young people to take political interference in media reporting for granted.

Creation

Young Burkinabè possess very basic skills in the field of creation. About 60% of respondents reported using the basic skill of taking photos, less than half made audio recordings and about a third of respondents recorded videos or uploaded files

at least sometimes. Updating their social media profiles, writing and publishing reports as well as creating blogs or WhatsApp groups was reported by even less young people. This resulted in a very weak MIL INDEX score (5.6 out of 20).

It seems the political uprising that took place in Burkina Faso in 2014 sparked a new quality of activity in terms of sharing photos, videos and information via social media (see Hagberg et al 2018: 21). But this activity on social media took place mainly in the urban center of the country. The focus groups also revealed that urban youths' creation (and especially online) skills were generally more developed than the skills of young people from the countryside. Not being able to afford digital devices and lacking digital infrastructure proved to be significant obstacles.

Action

Action entails putting one's MIL skills into practice for the good of society or for one's own benefit. Respondents show limited skills when it comes to utilizing their media skills for the benefit of society: About 40 per cent share information with others, a third of respondents comments on issues in public at least sometimes, and every sixth young person reports having taken part in a campaign for freedom of expression or access to information. Urban respondents were more active throughout, perhaps because of better Internet access and closer proximity to the national goings-on in the political sphere.

The respondents' MIL self-assessment is comparatively critical. Slightly more than half of the respondents are convinced that they can use media responsibly, analyze them critically and reflect their own use of media. The proportion of respondents believing they are good at creating and publishing their own content is considerably lower, at around 30%. The MIL INDEX score for the sub-dimension of action is fairly weak (8.2 out of 20).

The picture transmitted by the focus group result is slightly different in terms of contributing to the good of society. Although national politics are regarded in a sceptical light, many participants mention examples of using social media for political actions. Several experts interviewed for the study echo the findings of Ouoba (2016) that young Burkinabè have gained confidence in using social media for political activism having assumed a major role in the dissemination of information during the mass protest against the former president in 2014. It is worth noting that social exclusion of marginalized youth may be seen as one of the main drivers of violent extremism in Burkina Faso (see Loada and Ramoniuk 2014), emphasizing the need for inclusion of youth in national debates and issues. The media can be one vehicle for this to happen.

Positive results

Critical results

Access

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Widespread regular access to radio across the country + Widespread regular access to television in urban areas + High levels of phone ownership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low levels of Internet access - Significant urban-rural divide: less access to media for rural than for urban youth - Less access for female than for male youth - Rare access to printed media |
|---|--|

Analysis

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Widespread knowledge of constitutional right to freedom of expression + Widespread knowledge of the definition of journalism + Basic knowledge of media landscape | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not sufficient critical analysis of opinion leaders and information dissemination processes - Distinction of Facebook and the Internet is not clear for about half of the respondents |
|---|--|

Reflection

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Strong rejection of disinformation, cyberbullying and hate speech + High awareness of negative impact of cyberbullying, disinformation and hate speech | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low level of awareness and in several cases even acceptance of certain forms of news bias and censorship - Repertoire for countering cyberbullying and disinformation is limited |
|---|---|

Creation

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Photo taking widespread and quite frequent + Audio and video recordings fairly widespread | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Writing/publishing reports not very frequent - Rare creation of blogs/websites - Rare uploading of files, updating social media profiles and creating messenger groups |
|--|--|

Action

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Segments of the young generation are involved in civil society actions documented using social media as a tool + Somewhat realistic self-assessment of skills in using media responsibly, analyzing them critically and reflecting one's own media use | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited sharing of information with others and commenting on political issues - Limited participation in campaigns for freedom of expression and access to information - Self-assessment of skills in creating / publishing one's own content is comparatively low |
|---|--|

8. Recommendations

Drawing on the above findings for Burkina Faso, the following recommendations might be given:

Access



Improve technical access and usage skills of rural and female youths: Rural and female segments of Burkina Faso's youth have limited access and should be targeted especially in terms of online access and skills. In doing so, the low literacy rates in rural areas should be taken into account.

Analysis



Encourage critical thinking and analytical skills with regards to media: Young people in Burkina Faso are mostly aware of media problems such as disinformation or hate speech. Nonetheless, they have difficulties in analyzing media content thoroughly and critically questioning information provided by opinion leaders. They should improve their skills to be able to recognize political bias and (auto-)censorship.

Reflection



Encourage development and application of digital safety tactics: Young Burkinabè often encounter online scamming and sextortion attempts in the digital realm. Giving them the necessary defense strategies in terms of digital safety will reduce the likelihood of falling victim to such attacks.

Equip with strategies to deal with cyberbullying and sexual harassment: Cyberbullying, sexual harassment and sextortion of young women and sometimes also young men is common in Burkina Faso. The 15-25-year-olds need to be sensitized and should be supported in developing strategies to deal with these incidents.

Creation



Encourage writing or creating audio/visual content: In order to voice their concerns succinctly and convincingly, productive skills need to be conveyed to young Burkinabè. Audio/visual technologies hold the potential to also involve illiterate young people.

Support the creation of media formats for young people in traditional media: Although being the majority within the country, young Burkinabè between 15 and 25 are often not represented in traditional media. They need platforms beside social media where they can voice their concerns and interact.

Action



Integrate MIL into the national curriculum and develop alternatives for out of school youth: It is important to convey the importance of Media and Information Literacy to young Burkinabè as early as possible. Currently, there are no official initiatives in place to provide them with basic MIL skills in school settings and non-formal contexts. Convincing important stakeholders of the education sector would be a first step towards the goal of integrating MIL into the national curriculum. Youth not enrolled or without formal schooling should be reached with alternative outreach programs. These programs should not focus on conveying knowledge alone but give young people opportunities to put their skills into practice.

Develop a MIL campaign for youth: With curriculum development associated with considerable efforts and uncertainties, a national MIL campaign might be a first step to sensitize young people in Burkina Faso for the subject.

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