

Critical Reading in the Age of Misinformation: Levels and Factors Affecting Grade 10 Students

Fely V. Alajar^{*1}, Julie Ann A. Orobia²

¹Teacher III, Bukidnon National High School

²Dean, Central Mindanao University

^{*}Corresponding Author

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.910000461>

Received: 06 November 2025; Accepted: 12 November 2025; Published: 15 November 2025

ABSTRACT

This study examined the level of critical reading skills among Grade 10 students and identified the factors influencing them amid the growing spread of misinformation on social media. Using a descriptive research design, data were gathered from fifty (50) students through a survey questionnaire based on the Critical Literacy Theory. Results showed that students are active users of social media—particularly Facebook—and possess a high level of critical reading, especially in evaluation. Several factors were found to influence their skills, including knowledge of social media use, family and school influences, personal ideology, and the type of platform used, with the latter having the most substantial effect. The findings suggest that critical reading is not merely a cognitive ability but a contextual and socio-digital process shaping how youth interpret information. The study recommends integrating critical and media literacy into Filipino instruction, conducting teacher training on digital texts, developing educational programs to address misinformation, and pursuing further research on the relationship between students' profiles and their levels of critical reading.

Keywords: critical literacy theory, critical reading, misinformation, factors, social media

INTRODUCTION

In today's era of widespread digitalization, social media has become the primary source of information for the youth. On platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and X (Twitter), students are constantly immersed in various contemporary Filipino texts, including news posts, opinion pieces, memes, and infographics. This situation not only influences how they communicate but also significantly shapes their perspectives and understanding of social issues (Buckingham, 2015).

However, students continue to face challenges in critically evaluating the information they encounter online. According to Fajardo (2023), most Filipino students are still at the "beginning to emerging" level when it comes to assessing the credibility of digital media content. Similarly, Salimbay (2025) found a considerable difference in students' comprehension between printed and digital texts, with the latter being more difficult to analyze and interpret deeply.

Furthermore, Addatu (2022) emphasized that the lack of digital media literacy often leads students to easily believe and spread misinformation. On a broader level, Paul and Elder (2014) and Facione (1990) identified the ability to interpret, analyze, and evaluate information as the foundation of critical thinking, which in turn underpins critical reading.

Given these insights, the present study seeks to address how Filipino students respond to the challenges of misinformation on social media when their reading skills may be limited to a superficial level. It is therefore essential to determine their level of critical reading based on three dimensions—interpretation, analysis, and evaluation—as well as the factors that may influence it.

This study aims to assess the current level of critical reading among Grade 10 students of Bukidnon National High School amid the spread of misinformation on social media and to identify the factors that may affect it. The research will be conducted during the Second Quarter of the School Year 2025–2026 and is expected to provide a foundation for teachers and school administrators in developing pedagogical strategies that strengthen students' critical literacy in Filipino.

Scope and Delimitations of the Study

This study analyzes the level of critical reading skills among Grade 10 students as they engage with contemporary Filipino texts on social media that may contain misinformation. It examines three main dimensions of critical reading—interpretation, analysis, and evaluation—and identifies influencing factors, such as time spent on social media, the type of platform used, and the level of digital or media literacy. The study is limited to Grade 10 students of Bukidnon National High School. It excludes other grade levels, schools, and subjects, as well as texts in English or other digital content like videos and audio materials. Data were gathered solely through a survey, so the findings depend on the students' self-assessed perceptions and current literacy levels. The study does not measure the effects of any pedagogical interventions. Instead, it aims to describe the current state of students' critical reading as a basis for developing programs that strengthen critical literacy in Filipino.

Statement of the Problem

This study aims to examine the level of critical reading skills among Grade 10 students in engaging with contemporary Filipino texts on social media that may contain misinformation. To achieve this objective, the research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of Grade 10 students in terms of:
 - 1.1. sex;
 - 1.2. type of device or platform frequently used; and
 - 1.3. Number of hours spent on social media each day?
2. What is the level of critical reading of Grade 10 students based on:
 - 2.1. interpretation;
 - 2.2. analysis; and
 - 2.3. evaluation?
3. What factors influence the level of critical reading of Grade 10 students in addressing misinformation in contemporary Filipino texts on social media?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the learners' profile and their level of critical reading?

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Critical Literacy Theory of Freire (1970) and Shor (1999), which posits that reading is not merely a process of decoding and understanding the literal meaning of a text but a critical act that requires active analysis and questioning of the ideologies, purposes, and power structures embedded within it. Freire (1970) emphasized that genuine learning occurs when readers become critical thinkers capable of recognizing hidden messages and ideologies that may manipulate their thoughts and perspectives. Similarly, Shor (1999) explained that critical literacy empowers students to read between the lines and actively challenge the accuracy and fairness of the information presented in texts. In the context of social media, such a skill becomes increasingly vital as misinformation and fake news rapidly circulate and shape young people's

perceptions. Buckingham (2015) asserted that digital and media texts are not neutral; they carry the author's intentions and perspectives, which readers must critically examine. Thus, this study views critical reading—comprising interpretation, analysis, and evaluation—as an essential tool that enables students to distinguish between factual information and misinformation in contemporary Filipino texts on social media. Overall, this theoretical framework assumes that students' critical reading skills are a key factor in helping them identify, understand, and evaluate the credibility of information they encounter online; the higher their ability to interpret, analyze, and assess, the lower their susceptibility to deception and their participation in spreading misinformation.

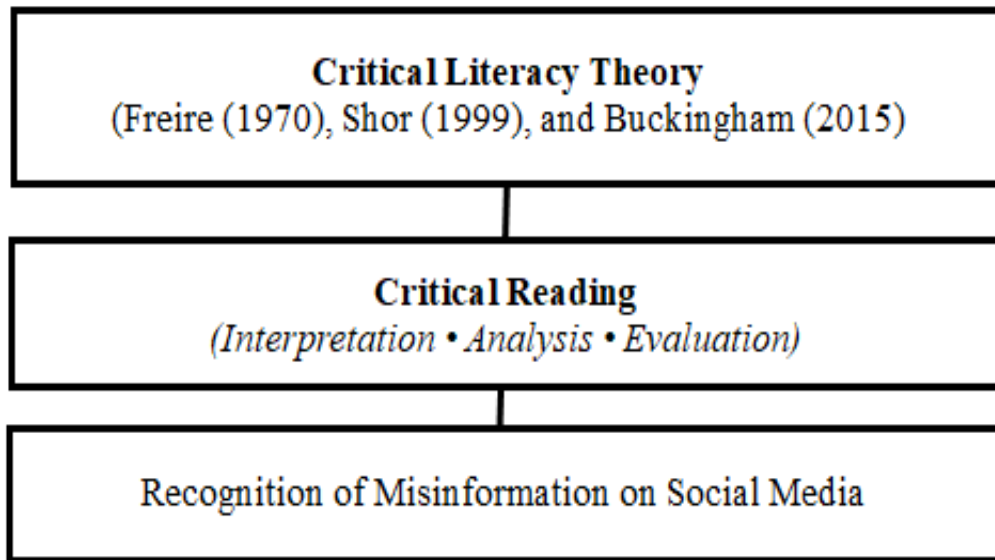


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework illustrating how the Critical Literacy Theory guides students' critical reading in identifying misinformation on social media.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive-quantitative research design to describe the level of critical reading among Grade 10 students and identify the factors influencing their ability to handle misinformation in contemporary Filipino texts on social media. Following Fowler (2013), as cited in Alajar and Paglinawan (2024), descriptive research is non-experimental and systematically reports existing conditions through observation and measurement. Data were gathered using a researcher-made survey questionnaire consisting of three parts: (1) students' profile (sex, platform used, and time spent on social media), (2) level of critical reading measured through indicators of interpretation, analysis, and evaluation, and (3) factors potentially influencing critical reading, such as knowledge of social media, influence of family, teachers, peers, personal beliefs, and interest in reading. All items used a 5-point Likert scale and the instrument, after expert validation, yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.80, indicating good reliability. Frequency and percentage were used to describe learners' profiles, while weighted mean with verbal interpretation assessed their critical reading levels and the influence of identified factors. To test whether the learners' profile variables had a significant relationship with their critical reading performance, the study employed the Pearson r correlation coefficient, with significance set at $p < 0.05$. These procedures provided a comprehensive basis for understanding Grade 10 learners' critical literacy in Filipino amid the growing issue of misinformation on social media.

Source of Data

The study utilized a researcher-made questionnaire and a critical reading test to gather the necessary data from Grade 10 students. The instrument consisted of three parts: (1) the students' profile, which included sex, type of social media platform used, and number of hours spent daily on social media; (2) a survey measuring the students' level of critical reading based on interpretation, analysis, and evaluation; and (3) a survey on the factors influencing critical reading, such as knowledge of digital/media literacy, purpose of social media use, and skills in evaluating information. To ensure its validity, the instrument was reviewed by three experts in the

fields of Filipino and media literacy, who provided recommendations to improve the clarity, relevance, and cognitive difficulty of the items. A pilot test was also conducted among Grade 9 students to determine the reliability of the instrument.

Ethical Considerations

The participation of students in this study was entirely voluntary, allowing them the freedom to decide whether to take part or withdraw at any point without fear of penalty or negative consequences. Their choice not to participate or to discontinue involvement did not affect their relationship with the researcher or their teachers. Although no direct benefits were provided, the study's results are expected to contribute meaningful recommendations for improving Filipino instruction and enhancing students' critical literacy amid the widespread use of social media. The researcher ensured that all information and responses from participants remained confidential and would not be disclosed in any publication or discussion. The collected data were used solely for research purposes and may serve as reference material for future studies with similar objectives. All data collection and analysis procedures were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards set by the DFIL 371 course.

Data Analysis Procedure

The study used frequency counts and percentages to answer the first research question, describing the profile of Grade 10 students in terms of sex, device or platform used, and hours spent on social media. The weighted mean was used to determine students' critical reading levels in interpretation, analysis, and evaluation. The scoring and interpretation of the levels of critical reading and the factors affecting it were based on the criteria adapted from the study of Alajar and Orobia (2025): 4.50–5.00 – Very High, 3.50–4.49 – High, 2.50–3.49 – Moderate, 1.50–2.49 – Low, and 1.00–1.49 – Very Low for the level of critical reading; and 4.50–5.00 – Strongly Affects, 3.50–4.49 – Affects, 2.50–3.49 – Moderately Affects, 1.50–2.49 – No Effect, and 1.00–1.49 – Strongly No Effect for the factors influencing critical reading. These statistical tools provided a precise, systematic analysis of the collected data to describe students' current essential reading skills and the extent to which factors influence them.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings of the study on the level of critical reading among Grade 10 students in engaging with contemporary Filipino texts on social media that may contain misinformation. The analysis was conducted based on the students' profile factors such as sex, type of platform frequently used, and number of hours spent on social media, as well as their skills in interpretation, analysis, and evaluation as essential components of critical literacy. Guided by the Critical Literacy Theory of Freire (1970) and Shor (1999), the study examined how critical reading helps students identify, reflect on, and assess the credibility of information found in the digital space. From this process, the results were presented according to the three main research questions, focusing on the students' profiles, their level of critical reading, and the factors influencing it.

Profile of Grade 10 Students

Table 1 presents the profile of fifty (50) Grade 10 students according to sex, type of social media platform used, and number of hours spent on social media. The majority of the students were female (66%), while 34% were male. Among the types of social media platforms, Facebook was the most frequently used (76%), followed by YouTube (20%) and X or Twitter (4%). In terms of time spent on social media, nearly half of the students (48%) reported using it for three to four hours per day.

These data indicate that Filipino youth—particularly females—tend to use social media as their primary tool for communication, information access, and entertainment. According to Statista Research Department (2024), Facebook remains the most popular social networking site in the Philippines, especially among users aged 16 to 24. Likewise, Ofreño and Canoy (2021) emphasized that prolonged social media use has become a significant part of adolescents' identity formation and social interaction.

Table 1. Profile of Grade 10 Students

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Female	33	66
Male	17	34
Total	50	100%
Types of Platforms Used		
Facebook	38	76
Youtube	10	20
X (Twitter)	2	4
Total	50	100%
Number of Hours spent on social media		
1 to 2 hours	3	6
3 to 4 hours	24	48
5 to 6 hours	13	26
7 hours and above	10	20
Total	50	100%

Level of Critical Reading Among Grade 10 Students

Table 2 shows that the overall level of critical reading among Grade 10 students is high ($M = 4.13$), particularly in interpretation ($M = 4.05$), analysis ($M = 4.09$), and evaluation ($M = 4.25$). These results indicate that students do not merely read to understand the literal content of a text but also engage in deeper analysis and evaluation of ideas. Their high proficiency across these three aspects demonstrates their ability to “read between the lines,” as emphasized by Freire (1970) and Shor (1999) in the Critical Literacy Theory.

Amid the vast flow of information on social media, the findings reveal that students possess the capacity to respond critically to digital and media texts. In line with Buckingham’s (2015) view, such a level of reading is essential for young people to understand that every online text carries underlying ideologies and social positions. Therefore, the students’ high levels of interpretation, analysis, and evaluation reflect their role as active readers, capable of discerning information, questioning textual authority, and adapting to the critical reading demands expected of digital citizens today.

Table 2. Overall Level of Critical Reading Among Students Based on Interpretation, Analysis, and Evaluation

Aspect	Mean	Descriptive Response	Interpretation
Interpretation	4.05	Agree	High
Analysis	4.09	Agree	High
Evaluation	4.25	Agree	High
Overall Mean	4.13	Agree	High

Legend:

4.50-5.00 Very High

3.50-4.49 High

2.50-3.49 Moderate

1.50-2.49 Low

1.00-1.49 Very Low

Factors Affecting the Level of Critical Reading Among Grade 10 Students in Addressing Misinformation in Contemporary Filipino Texts on Social Media

Table 3 shows that the factors influencing the level of critical reading among students obtained an overall mean of 3.90, interpreted as Affecting. These factors include knowledge of social media use ($M = 3.96$), ability to seek additional information for verification ($M = 4.00$), family influence ($M = 3.64$), school influence ($M = 3.74$), and peer influence ($M = 3.96$). The highest mean was found in the type of platform used ($M = 4.52$), indicating that the nature and design of platforms—such as Facebook, YouTube, or X/Twitter—strongly influence how young people process and interpret information. These findings imply that critical reading is not solely a cognitive skill but is shaped by broader social, digital, and ideological contexts. Consistent with the Critical Literacy Theory of Freire (1970) and Shor (1999), readers cannot be truly critical unless they recognize the social forces and environments that shape meaning within texts. The study confirms that factors such as family, teachers, peers, and digital platforms play a significant role in shaping students' ability to discern information online.

Although the results show a high level of critical reading among students, previous literature suggests that such skills may not yet be fully adapted to the realities of digital information. Fajardo (2023) found that many Filipino students remain at the “beginning to emerging” level in assessing the credibility of digital media content, which aligns with the present study's results showing that multiple factors, such as platform type, family and school influence, and social media knowledge, affect their reading behavior. Similarly, Salimbay (2025) revealed that students find it more challenging to interpret digital texts deeply, consistent with the current finding that platform characteristics strongly influence comprehension. Moreover, Addatu (2022) emphasized that insufficient digital media literacy increases the risk of misinformation, supporting this study's conclusion that personal and social factors continue to hinder the full development of students' critical reading. These findings are further reinforced by Paul and Elder (2014) and Facione (1990), who noted that interpretation, analysis, and evaluation, the three dimensions used in this study, are core components of critical thinking that various contextual factors can influence. Overall, the literature supports the present study's conclusion that multiple social, cognitive, and technological variables shape students' critical reading in the age of digital information.

Table 3. Factors Affecting the Level of Critical Reading

Aspect	Mean	Descriptive Response	Interpretation
Knowledge in using social media	3.96	Agree	Affecting
Ability to seek additional information for verification	4.00	Agree	Affecting
Family influence on perceptions of information	3.64	Agree	Affecting
School or teacher influence on reading and analysis	3.74	Agree	Affecting
Peer influence on beliefs about texts read.	3.96	Agree	Affecting
Limited time or attention for reading on social media	3.76	Agree	Affecting
Personal beliefs or ideology influencing reading	3.62	Agree	Affecting
Type of platform used (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, Twitter/X)	4.52	Strongly Agree	Strongly Affecting
Level of interest or motivation in reading social media texts	3.90	Agree	Affecting
Quality and form of language or presentation of the text	3.98	Agree	Affecting
Overall Mean	3.90	Agree	Affecting

Legend:

- 4.50-5.00 Strongly Affecting
- 3.50-4.49 Affecting
- 2.50-3.49 Moderately Affecting
- 1.50-2.49 No Effect
- 1.00-1.49 Strongly no Effect

Significant Relationship Between the Level of Critical Reading and the Learners' Profile

Table 4 shows that the relationships between the level of critical reading and the learners' profile variables like sex ($r = 0.058$, $p = 0.689$), type of platform used ($r = 0.169$, $p = 0.241$), and time spent on social media ($r = 0.111$, $p = 0.444$) all yielded p -values greater than 0.05, indicating that no significant correlations were found among the variables.

The low r -values suggest that there is virtually no linear association between the learners' profile and their level of critical reading. This implies that sex, platform preference, and time spent on social media do not influence how learners interpret, analyze, or evaluate the texts they encounter. Moreover, the absence of significant relationships indicates that demographic attributes or social media habits do not merely shape critical reading but rather shape deeper cognitive and socio-digital competencies, as reflected in earlier findings. Such results suggest that regardless of sex or degree of exposure to social media, learners possess relatively similar capacities to understand information critically.

These findings align with the observations of Paul and Elder (2014) and Facione (1990), who assert that critical thinking—the foundation of critical reading—is more closely linked to the development of higher-order thinking skills than to personal variables such as sex or media exposure. Similarly, Buckingham (2015) emphasizes that digital engagement does not automatically foster criticality; instead, it requires deliberate cultivation of skills in analysis and evaluation. Taken together, the results affirm that critical reading is not confined to simple demographic factors, but hinges on complex intellectual skills continuously shaped within and beyond the school environment.

Table 4. Relationship Between Learners' Profile and Level of Critical Reading

Profile	Pearson r	p -value	Interpretation
Sex	0.058	0.689	No significant relationship
Types of Platforms used	0.169	0.241	No significant relationship
Time Spent on social media	0.111	0.444	No significant relationship

$p < 0.05$ – significant relationship

$p \geq 0.05$ – no significant relationship

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's findings show that students' critical reading is not merely a reflection of academic ability, but a complex social and cognitive skill shaped by the realities of a digital society. Their high levels of interpretation, analysis, and evaluation reveal that even young learners have the potential to read beyond surface meanings and engage with texts thoughtfully and discerningly. However, their engagement with digital spaces also exposes them to algorithms, persuasive designs, and emotionally charged content that easily influence how they interpret information. Although the study revealed no significant relationship between students' profiles—such as sex, type of platform, and time spent on social media—and their level of critical reading, this absence of correlation underscores an important insight: critical reading is not determined by demographic factors or mere exposure to digital platforms, but by deeper cognitive, instructional, and socio-digital conditions. This reinforces the idea that critical reading must be intentionally developed, as students' skills are continually shaped by the interplay among their learning environments, social influences, and digital contexts.

Given these implications, it is essential to strengthen instructional practices that cultivate learners' critical literacy in the age of misinformation. Teachers are encouraged to design lessons that explicitly develop students' analytical and evaluative skills, integrating media literacy, source evaluation, and fact-checking across subjects. Classroom discussions should challenge students to question authors' purposes, ideological positions, and the credibility of online content. Parents and schools must work collaboratively to foster responsible digital habits and encourage reflective engagement with information. For future research, it is recommended to conduct broader and more varied studies that explore other potential predictors of critical reading—such as digital literacy skills, socio-economic background, motivation, and reading habits—as these may offer deeper insights into what truly strengthens or hinders students' critical reading abilities.

REFERENCES

1. Alajar, F., & Orobia, J. (2025). Digi-AI: Ugnayan ng Digital Literacy at Pagtanggap ng mga Guro sa Filipino sa Paggamit ng Artificial Intelligence sa Pagtuturo. *International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Studies (IJAMS)*, 5(4), 106–116. Retrieved from <https://www.ijams-bbp.net/archive/vol-5-issue-5/digi-ai-ugnayan-ng-digital-literacy-at-pagtanggap-ng-mga-guro-sa-filipino-sa-paggamit-ng-artificial-intelligence-sa-pagtuturo/>
2. Addatu, M. J. B. (2022). Enhancing students' digital media literacy through classroom integration strategies. *Philippine Journal of Education Studies*, 96(2), 45–58. <https://ejournals.ph/article.php?id=24000>
3. Buckingham, D. (2015). Defining digital literacy – What do young people need to know about digital media? *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy*, 10(1), 21–34.
4. Fajardo, M. F. (2023). Filipino students' competency in evaluating digital media content credibility: 'Beginning' to 'emerging' levels. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 15(2), 58–70. <https://doi.org/10.23860/JMLE-2023-15-2-5>
5. Facione, P. A. (1990). Critical thinking: A statement of expert consensus for purposes of educational assessment and instruction. The Delphi Report. American Philosophical Association.
6. Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2014). The miniature guide to critical thinking concepts and tools. Foundation for Critical Thinking
7. Salimbay, F. R. B. (2025). Effectiveness of printed and digital text on reading comprehension of Grade 10 students. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Education*, 2(4), 112–125. https://www.allmultidisciplinaryjournal.com/uploads/archives/20250426184817_MGE-2025-2-403.1.pdf