

Media Literacy and Critical Thinking Disposition among Grade 5 Learners under the Special Program in Journalism

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Abstract —

In journalism, media literacy and critical thinking skills involve the ability to critically examine news sources, detect bias or false information, and reach well-informed conclusions based on context and supporting data. This study assessed the level of media literacy and critical thinking disposition among Grade 5 learners of Cawayan West Central School enrolled under the Special Program in Journalism (SPJ) for School year 2024-2025. The results of the study served as the basis for recommending an enhanced Special Program in Journalism aimed at developing effective strategies for preparing learners to deal with the complexities of the information age. Using a descriptive-correlational research design, data were gathered from five journalism teachers and thirty-five learners.

An analysis of teacher demographic characteristics revealed that the respondents had an average age of 37, with two aged 31-40 and two aged 41-50; majority were female, three had units for a master's degree and majority attended only five or fewer journalism related trainings and seminars. Twenty-three of the learner respondents aged 11-12, twenty-two identified as female, and that, a considerable proportion came from economically modest background, with 11 classified as low-income but not poor. Based on the findings of the status of the implementation of the Special Program in Journalism, the program is implemented at a "Fairly Satisfactory" level. It had strengths in curriculum design but notable challenges in resources, teaching strategies, and administrative support. The level of media literacy and critical thinking disposition of learners enrolled in the special program were both rated as "Satisfactory". The learners demonstrated strengths in media consumption, open-mindedness, and truth-seeking but showed weaknesses in ethical judgment, evaluation, and independent reasoning. A significant negative correlation was found between the implementation of the Special Program in Journalism and learners' media literacy and critical thinking. These results highlight the importance of integrating critical media production into the SPJ to foster deeper cognitive and civic competencies among learners.

Keywords — Media Literacy, Critical Thinking, Special Program in Journalism, Descriptive-Correlational, Truth Seeking, Critical Prosumption

I. Introduction

In an era increasingly shaped by digital transformation and an overwhelming flow of information, media literacy and critical thinking have emerged as fundamental competencies for learners worldwide. These skills are essential not only for academic achievement but also for fostering informed, engaged, and responsible citizenship. To align with international benchmarks, this study adopts and is informed by global frameworks such as the UNESCO Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Curriculum for Teachers and the European Commission's Media Literacy Framework. Both underscore the importance of equipping young people with the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media content responsibly, critically, and ethically.

UNESCO emphasizes the integration of media and information literacy across curricula and promotes its inclusion in national education strategies, recognizing that MIL is pivotal for lifelong learning, democracy, and sustainable development. Meanwhile, the European Commission's Media Literacy Framework identifies key areas such as critical thinking, content creation, digital skills, and civic participation, aligning closely with the competencies targeted by the SPJ curriculum.

Despite these global developments, the Philippines continues to face challenges in the implementation of robust media literacy and critical thinking education. According to the Digital 2024 Report by We Are Social and Meltwater, the average Filipino spends 9 hours and 14 minutes per day using the internet, with social media usage ranking among the highest globally. However, high consumption has not translated into high literacy. The Southeast Asia Digital Literacy

Scorecard (2023) by the ASEAN Foundation and Google shows that Filipino learners scored below the regional average in critical thinking, fact-checking, and identifying information.

The Special Program in Journalism (SPJ), implemented in various Philippine schools such as Cawayan West Central School, offers an ideal platform to nurture these skills among elementary learners through structured exposure to journalistic practices and principles. While DepEd programs like the SPJ exist, there is limited empirical research assessing their effectiveness in developing media literacy and critical thinking at the elementary level—especially in public school contexts. This creates a critical research gap: How well are students in programs like SPJ developing the skills needed to discern credible sources, evaluate media messages, and think critically?

This study covered the assessment of learners' level of media literacy and critical thinking disposition of learners enrolled under the Special Program in Journalism at Cawayan West Central School, Cawayan West District, Masbate Province Division for School Year 2024-2025. By focusing on both functional and critical aspects of media literacy (Koc & Barut, 2016) and measuring critical thinking disposition through dimensions such as open-mindedness, systematicity/analyticity, and truth-seeking (Demir, 2017), the study provides a multidimensional view of learner competencies. The research work was delimited to journalism learners and teachers of the special program currently offered in the said institution.

The findings will provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers, contributing to the development of effective strategies for preparing learners to navigate the complexities of the information age. Cawayan West Central School, like many educational institutions, aims to equip its learners with the skills necessary to thrive in a rapidly changing world. This study will provide valuable data specific to the school's context, enabling educators to tailor their programs and interventions to meet the specific needs of their learners in media literacy and critical thinking. By focusing on a local school, the findings of this study can also serve as a basis of school personnel to improve the implementation of the program and serve as a model for other schools in the region seeking to enhance media literacy and critical thinking education.

Literature Review

The literature review supports the study's objectives, focusing on media literacy and critical thinking of learners under the Special Program in Journalism. The discussion is anchored on previous studies and theoretical perspectives that provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between these variables within the context of journalism education.

Conceptual Literature

Media literacy is a crucial skill in today's digital age, enabling individuals to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media content critically (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). Buckingham (2019) highlights that media literacy plays a fundamental role in education, particularly in

journalism programs, as it equips students with the necessary skills to differentiate credible information from misinformation. Similarly, Hobbs (2010) emphasizes that integrating media literacy into journalism education fosters students' ability to engage in informed discussions, recognize biases, and produce ethical and responsible media content.

In the school setting, studies have shown that media literacy enhances learners' engagement in journalism programs by encouraging functional consumption—the ability to access and use media effectively—and critical consumption, which involves analyzing and evaluating media messages (Koltay, 2011). Moreover, media literacy involves functional prosumption, where students produce basic media content, and critical prosumption, where they create meaningful, well-analyzed media outputs (Jolls & Wilson, 2014). This study aims to assess how these dimensions of media literacy influence learners' engagement in the Special Program in Journalism.

Critical thinking is an essential component of journalism education, as it fosters students' ability to question, analyze, and interpret information objectively (Facione, 2011). Ennis (2018) defines critical thinking as a reflective, reasoned approach to problem-solving that is essential for evaluating media content. Critical thinking disposition, which includes open-mindedness, systematicity/analyticity, and truth-seeking, plays a significant role in shaping students' engagement in journalism-related activities (Paul & Elder, 2019).

Research has shown that students with strong critical thinking skills are more likely to engage actively in learning and exhibit higher levels of academic achievement (Halpern, 2014). Open-mindedness, or the willingness to consider multiple perspectives, is a key factor in journalism education, as it allows students to explore different viewpoints and avoid biases in reporting (Kuhn, 2019). Systematicity and analyticity, which involve logical reasoning and structured thinking, are equally important in media production, enabling students to organize and present information coherently (Lipman, 2003). Truth-seeking, the desire to pursue accuracy, is crucial for ethical journalism, ensuring that students value fact-based reporting (Elder & Paul, 2012). This study seeks to examine how these dimensions of critical thinking disposition influence student engagement in journalism education.

Research Literature

Empirical studies validate these conceptual underpinnings across diverse contexts. Temesgen (2016) investigated vehicle maintenance in the Wonji Shoa Sugar Factory and found that preventive training and proper system structuring significantly improved availability and reduced costs. Similarly, Donmez and Zemmouri (2016) analyzed maintenance from the perspectives of original equipment manufacturers and transport providers, highlighting that perceived value in maintenance is directly tied to cost avoidance and service quality.

Several studies suggest that educational interventions can help bridge the gap created by socioeconomic disparities, particularly in the development of media literacy and critical thinking skills. Buckingham (2015) argues that integrating media literacy programs into the curriculum

equips students with essential analytical and evaluative skills, regardless of their socioeconomic background. This aligns with the findings of Livingstone and Helsper (2007), who highlight that structured media literacy instruction enhances students' ability to critically engage with media messages and navigate digital platforms effectively. Similarly, Hobbs (2021) emphasizes that incorporating critical media analysis into journalism education fosters a deeper understanding of information credibility and ethical reporting, particularly for learners who may have limited access to traditional academic resources.

Critical thinking education is another key factor in ensuring equitable learning opportunities. Facione (2020) stresses the importance of structured critical thinking instruction in journalism education, stating that it cultivates students' ability to assess media credibility, recognize biases, and engage in ethical media production. Halpern (2014) further supports this notion by demonstrating that explicit instruction in logical reasoning and analytical skills significantly improves students' ability to think critically, leading to better academic performance and increased engagement in journalism programs. Additionally, Paul and Elder (2019) argue that fostering dispositions such as open-mindedness, systematicity, and truth-seeking enhances students' ability to critically evaluate news and media, an essential skill in today's digital landscape.

Several studies in the Philippine context highlight the role of educational interventions in promoting media literacy and critical thinking, particularly in journalism education. According to Torres and Hermosa (2021), journalism programs in the Philippines, including the Special Program in Journalism (SPJ), provide students with opportunities to develop investigative and analytical skills through news writing, editorial decision-making, and ethical reporting. Their study emphasizes that structured journalism education significantly enhances students' ability to differentiate credible sources from misinformation, an essential skill in a country where social media serves as a primary source of news and information.

Similarly, Bernardo (2018) highlights the challenges posed by digital misinformation and media bias in the Philippines, stressing the importance of integrating media literacy education into the basic education curriculum. His research indicates that Filipino students often struggle to critically evaluate media messages due to a lack of formal instruction in news verification and media ethics. A study by David, Atun, and Lanuza (2020) further supports this, demonstrating that media literacy training among Filipino students leads to improved critical thinking skills, particularly in analyzing political propaganda, fake news, and biased reporting.

To address these challenges, Guillermo and Tuazon (2016) advocate for the expansion of media literacy programs in Philippine schools, emphasizing that journalism education should integrate fact-checking initiatives, social media literacy, and ethical journalism training to equip students with 21st-century skills. They suggest that the Department of Education (DepEd) should strengthen the implementation of SPJ by providing teacher training, increasing access to digital

tools, and integrating media literacy into Araling Panlipunan and English subjects to promote cross-disciplinary critical thinking skills.

II. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationship between profile, implementation status of the program, media literacy, and critical thinking disposition among learners participating in the Special Program in Journalism. The methodology is structured to systematically gather, analyze, and interpret data that will contribute to the enhancement of journalism education.

Descriptive statistics was used to summarize the profile of the respondents, including age, sex, highest educational attainment, relevant trainings attended, and family income. Measures such as frequency distribution, percentages, mean, and standard deviation will be applied to describe the status of the SPJ and students' levels of media literacy and critical thinking disposition. These statistical tools will provide a clear overview of the characteristics and competencies of the respondents.

To determine if there were a significant relationship between the status of the Special Program in Journalism and the learners' level of media literacy and critical thinking disposition, the Pearson r correlation was employed.

Study Locale

The study was conducted in Cawayan West Central School, Cawayan West District, Masbate Provision Division. The said school is under the supervision of DepEd Bicol Region.

Population and Sampling

The respondents of this study consisted of journalism teachers and learners enrolled in the Special Program in Journalism at Cawayan West Central School. This study employed total enumeration, meaning that all teachers and Grade 5 learners enrolled in the program will be included as respondents.

Table 1 summarizes the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents. It reveals that this study's respondents were 12 (10%) vehicle maintenance staff, 10 (8.3%) key officials, 60 (50%) faculty, and 38 (31.7%) Non-teaching Personnel, for a total of 120 respondents.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents *Data Collection Instruments*

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Learners	35	87.5%
Teachers	5	12.5%
Total	40	100%

Data Collection Instrument

The study used a structured questionnaire as the primary data-gathering tool. The questionnaire is divided into four sections: the first section gathers demographic information of the respondents. The second section measures the learners' media literacy levels in terms of functional consumption, critical consumption, functional prosumption, and critical prosumption. The third section assesses critical thinking disposition, focusing on open-mindedness, systematicity/analyticity, and truth-seeking. The fourth section assesses the implementation status of the SPJ through its key program components- objectives, curriculum, instructional materials, facilities, strategies, support, teacher competence and learner engagement. The instrument is adapted from existing standardized scales and validated by experts in education and journalism to ensure accuracy and reliability.

Each section used a Likert-scale format (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) to quantify responses and facilitate statistical analysis. The collected data will provide insights into the implementation status of the program and the learners' levels of media literacy and critical thinking, contributing to an understanding of their engagement in the Special Program in Journalism. The questionnaire underwent expert review by the adviser and panel members for relevance and clarity. It was further assessed by instrumentation experts to ensure reliability and validity.

Data Collection Procedures

Upon approval from the school principal and the office of the Schools Division Superintendent, the researcher personally distributed the questionnaires to the identified respondents, along with instructions and clarifications to ensure accurate and honest responses. Completed questionnaires were retrieved, and responses were collated for analysis.

Data Processing and Analysis

The study utilized several statistical tools to analyze the data effectively. The profile of the respondents was compiled using descriptive statistics. The status of the SPJ and the degree of media literacy among the learners as well as their critical thinking disposition will be described using metrics like frequency distribution, percentages, mean, and standard deviation. To determine if there was a significant relationship between the status of the Special Program in Journalism and

the learners' level of media literacy and critical thinking skills, the Pearson r correlation was employed.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher will conduct the study with the highest levels of integrity and professionalism, adhering to ethical guidelines set by the university, the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173), and research protocols on proper data management. The collected raw data will be securely stored and properly disposed of after the study. Participation in the research will be entirely voluntary and ensure that respondents are not subjected to any physical, emotional, or psychological harm. Since the study involves minors, the researcher will secure parental consent to guarantee voluntary participation.

III. Results and Discussion

RESULTS

Profile of Teacher Respondents.

Table 2 presents and analyzes data regarding the demographic profile of the teachers such as age, sex, highest educational attainment, and number of relevant trainings attended.

The distribution of teacher-respondents reveals that the majority fall within the middle age brackets, with 40% aged 31–40 and another 40% aged 41–45. Only 20% are aged 25–30. The sex profile shows a significant female majority (80%), with only 20% male representation. In terms of qualifications, a notable 60% of the teachers have earned units toward a Master's Degree, while 20% have already completed a Master's Degree. The remaining 20% have units towards a Doctorate Degree. A majority of the respondents (60%) have attended 5 or fewer training sessions, while the remaining 40% have attended 6–10 trainings.

Table 2. Profile of Teacher Respondents

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
41-50	2	40
31-40	2	40
20-30	1	20
Total	5	100
Gender		
Male	1	20
Female	4	80
Total	5	100
Highest Educational Attainment		
Doctorate Degree	0	0
CAR Doctorate Degree	1	20

Master Degree	1	20
CAR Master's Degree	3	60
Total	5	100
Relevant Trainings/Seminars Attended		
15-20	0	0
11-15	0	0
6-10	2	40
5 BELOW	3	60
Total	5	100

Table 3 presents the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the learner respondents who are enrolled in the Special Program in Journalism (SPJ) at Cawayan West Central School for SY 2024-2025.

The data reveals that the majority of the student respondents (65.7%) fall within the age bracket of 11 to 12 years old, 22.9%, are 9 to 10 years old. Only 11.4% of respondents are 13 years old and above. There is a noticeable gender disparity among the respondents, with females (62.9%) outnumbering males (37.1%). The socioeconomic profile of the respondents varies, with the highest percentage belonging to the low-income class but not poor (31.4%), followed by lower middle-income (25.7%) and middle middle-income (25.7%) categories. Only 2.9% of respondents are classified under the poor income bracket.

Table 3. Profile of the Learner Respondents

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
9-10	8	22.9
11-12	23	65.7
13 and above	4	11.4
Total	35	100
Gender		
Male	13	37.1
Female	22	62.9
Total	35	100
Family Income		
Poor	1	2.9
Low-income class	11	31.4
Lower middle-income	9	25.7
Middle middle-income class	9	25.7
Upper middle-income	4	11.4
Upper-Income Class	1	2.9
Total	35	100

Table 4 presents the summarized results and in-depth analysis regarding the current status of the Special Program in Journalism (SPJ) across eight key indicators. The data show a grand mean of 2.98 (SD = 0.63), which falls within the “Fairly Satisfactory” (FS) category. This suggests that, from the perspective of teachers, the overall implementation and quality of the SPJ are moderately effective but leave considerable room for improvement.

Table 4. Summarized Perception Status of the Special Program in Journalism

S/N	INDICATORS	Teacher		
		AWM	Std Dev	C
1.	Objectives	3.09	0.56	FS
2.	Curriculum	3.50	0.66	S
3.	Instructional Materials	2.95	0.68	FS
4.	Physical Facilities and Equipment	2.90	0.83	FS
5.	Teaching Strategies	2.90	0.54	FS
6.	Administrators' Support	2.85	0.65	FS
7.	Teachers' Competence	2.83	0.48	FS
8.	Students' Engagement	2.83	0.54	FS
GRAND MEAN/ STANDARD DEVIATION/CATEGORY		2.98	0.63	FS

Table 5 presents the summarized perceptions of the respondents regarding the level of media literacy of learners. The data show a grand mean of 4.06 (SD = 0.83), which falls within the “Satisfactory” (S) category. Among all the indicators, Functional Consumption received the highest rating with an average weighted mean of 4.25 (SD=0.69) categorized as “Outstanding” for learner respondents and an average weighted mean of 4.00 (SD= 57) categorized as “Satisfactory” for teacher respondents. In contrast, Functional Prosumption, received the lowest rating for learner respondents with an average weighted mean of 3.96 (SD=0.88) categorized as “ Satisfactory” while teacher respondents rated Critical Consumption and Critical Prosumption with an average weighted mean of 3.71 (SD= 0.51) categorized as “Satisfactory”. A "Satisfactory" result indicates that learners are in the right direction; they have the fundamentals of critical thinking, though they are probably inconsistent, underdeveloped, or lacking in complexity. As media environments grow more complex, the need for learners to critically evaluate, create, and engage with media in thoughtful ways becomes essential for full participation in society (Kellner & Share, 2007).

Table 5. Summarized Perception of Learners' Level of Media Literacy

Indicators	Learners			Teachers		
	AWM	SD	Description	AWM	SD	Description
Functional Consumption	4.25	0.69	Outstanding	4.00	0.57	Satisfactory
Critical Consumption	4.02	0.88	Satisfactory	3.71	0.51	Satisfactory
Functional Prosumption	3.96	0.88	Satisfactory	3.93	0.63	Satisfactory
Critical Prosumption	4.02	0.88	Satisfactory	3.71	0.51	Satisfactory
GRAND MEAN/STANDARD DEVIATION/DESCRIPTION	4.06	0.83	Satisfactory	3.84	0.56	Satisfactory

Table 6 presents the summarized results and in-depth analysis regarding the level of critical thinking disposition of learners enrolled under the Special Program in Journalism. The data show a grand mean of 4.06 (SD = 0.83), which falls within the “Satisfactory” (S) category. Among all the indicators, open-mindedness received the highest rating with an average weighted mean of 4.09 (SD=0.82) categorized as “Outstanding” for learner respondents and an average weighted mean of 4.00 (SD= 57) categorized as “Satisfactory” for teacher respondents. This implies that

learners enrolled under the special program are indicating a high level of perceived competence in navigating and interpreting various media forms. In contrast, truth seeking, received the lowest rating for learner respondents with an average weighted mean of 3.99 (SD=0.80) categorized as “Satisfactory” while teacher respondents rated truth seeking with an average weighted mean of 3.96 (SD= 0.50) categorized as “Satisfactory”. The over-all rating of “Satisfactory” implies that learners' critical thinking disposition skills suggests that learners are developing the necessary dispositions for effective and reflective thinking but have not yet fully mastered them.

Table 6. Summarized Perception of Learners’ Level of Critical Thinking Disposition

Indicators	Learners			Teachers		
	AWM	SD	Description	AWM	SD	Description
Open-mindedness	4.09	0.82	Satisfactory	4.00	0.57	Satisfactory
Systematicity/analyticity	4.15	0.79	Satisfactory	3.73	0.35	Satisfactory
Truth seeking	3.99	0.80	Satisfactory	3.96	0.58	Satisfactory
GRAND MEAN/STANDARD DEVIATION/DESCRIPTION	4.08	0.80	Satisfactory	3.90	0.50	Satisfactory

Table 7 presents the correlation analysis examining the relationship between the status of the Special Program in Journalism (SPJ) and learners’ levels of media literacy. The results reveal statistically significant negative correlations across all assessed dimensions. Specifically, Functional Consumption yielded a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = -0.756$ ($p < .01$), indicating a strong inverse relationship between students’ involvement in the SPJ and their perceived functional media consumption skills. Critical Consumption also demonstrated a significant negative correlation, with $r = -0.600$ ($p < .01$), suggesting a moderate inverse association. For media production-related dimensions, the analysis revealed even stronger negative correlations. Functional Prosumption reported the highest correlation with $r = -0.798$ ($p < .01$), followed closely by Critical Prosumption at $r = -0.778$ ($p < .01$). In all cases, the null hypothesis was rejected at the 0.01 significance level.

Table 7. Significant Relationship between Status of the Special Program in Journalism and Learner’s Level of Media Literacy

Pearson r	Special Program in Journalism	Extent of Involvement	Decision on Ho
	Functional Consumption	-.756**	Reject Ho
	Critical Consumption	-.600**	Reject Ho
	Functional Prosumption	-.798**	Reject Ho
	Critical Prosumption	-.778**	Reject Ho

Table 8 presents the statistical relationship between the status of the Special Program in Journalism (SPJ) and learners' level of critical thinking disposition. The findings reveal significant negative correlations across all indicators, suggesting that as the perceived effectiveness or implementation level of the SPJ increases, students tend to demonstrate more critical self-assessments of their critical thinking competencies. Specifically, the correlation between SPJ status and Functional Consumption was $r = -0.756$, $p < .01$, which denotes a strong inverse relationship. Critical Consumption yielded a moderately strong correlation at $r = -0.600$, $p < .01$.

Table 8. Significant Relationship between Status of the Special Program in Journalism and Learner's Level of Critical Thinking Disposition

	Special Program in Journalism	Extent of Involvement	Decision on Ho
Pearson r	open-mindedness	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.576** .000 40 Reject Ho
	simplicity/analyticity	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.376* .026 40 Reject Ho
	truth seeking	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.592** .000 40 Reject Ho

Discussion

The teacher respondents in the Special Program in Journalism (SPJ) are predominantly middle-aged, with 40% falling within the 31–40 and 41–45 age brackets, and 20% in the 25–30 range. The sex distribution shows a significant female majority (80%) over male teachers (20%). In terms of educational qualifications, the majority of teachers (60%) hold units toward a Master's Degree, while 20% have completed a Master's Degree, and the remaining 20% have pursued Doctorate-level education. When it comes to professional development, the majority (60%) of teachers have attended 5 or fewer training sessions, with the rest attending 6–10. The learner respondents in the SPJ are predominantly aged between 11 to 12 years (65.7%), with a smaller proportion in the 9–10 age range (22.9%) and 13 years and older (11.4%). Gender-wise, females represent 62.9% of the respondents, while males constitute 37.1%, indicating a higher participation rate of females in the program. The family income distribution shows that most learners come from middle-income and low-income families, with 31.4% classified as low-income, and 25.7% each in the lower-middle and middle-middle-income categories.

The implementation status of the Special Program in Journalism is Fairly Satisfactory, with a grand mean of 2.98 and a standard deviation of 0.63. This suggests a need for significant improvements in various areas to meet the program's intended outcomes more fully. The learners' level of media literacy falls within the "Satisfactory" (S) category with a grand mean of 4.06 (SD = 0.83). The study found that both learners and teachers perceptions showed agreement regarding

the ability of the learners to possess a strong foundation in media literacy, though their strengths vary across dimensions. The learners' level of critical thinking disposition falls within the "Satisfactory" (S) category with a grand mean of 4.06 (SD = 0.83). The results suggest that learners possess a healthy disposition toward critical thinking but require more structured opportunities to deepen their analytical capacity, question established viewpoints and navigate information with greater independence.

The findings collectively demonstrate a statistically significant and consistent relationship between the status of the implementation of the Special Program in Journalism and learners' level of media literacy and critical thinking disposition.

IV. Conclusion

The study revealed that the Special Program in Journalism (SPJ) at Cawayan West Central School is being implemented at a "Fairly Satisfactory" level, with curriculum as its strongest component and notable gaps in resources, teaching strategies, and administrative support. Learners demonstrate solid foundational media literacy, especially in consumption skills, but need improvement in evaluating media ethically and legally. Similarly, students exhibit a satisfactory level of critical thinking disposition, with strengths in open-mindedness and truth-seeking, but require support in deeper analysis and autonomous reasoning.

The study revealed a significant relationship between the status of the Special Program in Journalism and learners' level of media literacy and critical thinking disposition. Therefore, enhancing the SPJ through a more dynamic, inclusive, and skills-focused approach is essential. By updating the curriculum, expanding teacher training, improving access to resources, and strengthening institutional support, the program can better equip learners to navigate the complexities of today's media landscape.

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