

## **Influence of Media Literacy Education on Critical Thinking Skills of Selected Nigerian Undergraduates in Oyo town**

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### **Abstract**

*This study examines the influence of media literacy education on the critical thinking skills of selected Nigerian undergraduate students in Oyo Town. In an era characterised by rapid information flows and pervasive digital media, undergraduate learners are frequently exposed to diverse sources of news, advertisements, and user-generated content. This research seeks to determine whether structured media literacy instruction enhances students' ability to analyse, evaluate, and synthesise information, discern credible sources, identify biases, and construct well-reasoned arguments. Survey Research methods design was employed, and the findings of this study affirm that media literacy education is a valuable educational intervention with the capacity to significantly enhance critical thinking among Nigerian undergraduates. Students who have been exposed to media literacy programmes are better equipped to navigate the complexities of media messages, evaluate information sources, and make informed judgments. The study, therefore, contributes to understanding how media literacy pedagogy can strengthen critical thinking among Nigerian undergraduates and offers practical implications for curriculum design, teacher training, and policy development in Oyo town. Recommendations include integrating iterative, contextually relevant media literacy modules across disciplines, fostering collaborative critique sessions, and ensuring equitable access to digital tools. Future research should explore longitudinal effects and the role of institutional support in sustaining critical thinking gains through media literacy education.*

**Keywords:** *Media Literacy, Critical Thinking, Undergraduate Student, Curriculum, Intervention, Information Literacy.*

### **Introduction**

In the contemporary digital age, young people are bombarded with an overwhelming amount of information through various media platforms, including television, social media, online news, and digital entertainment. These media play a pivotal role in shaping the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours of youth, thereby influencing their opinions on crucial social, political, economic and cultural issues. As a result, the ability to engage with and assess the messages conveyed through these platforms has become increasingly vital. Media literacy is the ability to access, decode, analyse, evaluate and create messages across a variety of contexts. Media Literacy consists of the

knowledge, the attitudes, and the ability needed to know when and what information is needed; where and how to obtain that information; how to evaluate it and organise it once it is found; and how to use it in an ethical way. Media literacy is among the basic skills that individuals need to possess in the Twenty-First century. The unprecedented advances in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), and the fact that these technologies have been located in the centre of people's lives, require defining and managing the necessary skills to efficiently use them. Particularly in the current century, people are being bombarded with information through these media, and protecting oneself from this bombardment has gained significant attention. Taking the fact that media messages are constructed into account, the vital importance of the case becomes evident because media culture is normally invisible and it is internalised unwittingly. Therefore, these developments in the media culture require individuals in the new century to acquire skills to use information efficiently, analyse information, address it from various perspectives, and use technologies and media tools that enable the communication of information.

A media-literate individual is an efficient media user and has an essential perspective in the interaction with media. For decades, schools, libraries, and other educational institutions have aimed to foster young people's skills, competencies, and knowledge around news and media, through various media literacy programmes and pedagogical approaches (Mihailidis, 2012). However, being news literate is becoming increasingly demanding in the current media environment. First, it encompasses knowing how to deal with a growing supply and variety of content that is only partially produced by professional journalists (Broersma, 2018). Second, social media timelines mix previously clearly demarcated genres of information, blurring the concept of "news" and what it means to be up-to-date (Edgerly and Vraga, 2020). Third, the increase in available platforms, devices, and access points for news also requires additional technological skills to use all the various tools that may now be part of users' media repertoires. Media literacy education is an essential tool for equipping individuals, particularly young people, with the skills to navigate this complex media environment. By promoting the ability to analyse and evaluate media content, media literacy education fosters informed decision-making, enhances critical thinking, and empowers youth to engage in responsible citizenship.

This study aims to investigate the impact of media literacy education on the critical thinking abilities of Nigerian youth, specifically focusing on students of Ajayi Crowther University (ACU) in Oyo, Nigeria. The research explores the role of media literacy programmes in helping students

develop the capacity to question, analyse, and interpret the media content they encounter daily. The study also examines whether participation in such programmes translates into improved critical thinking skills, which are essential for making informed choices and participating effectively in a democratic society.

### **Statement of the problem**

The media landscape today is increasingly characterised by the prevalence of misinformation, media manipulation, sensationalism, and biased narratives. With the advent of social media platforms and the ease of digital content sharing, young people are exposed to both credible and unreliable information, often without the skills necessary to distinguish between them. This situation is of particular concern in Nigeria, where a lack of media literacy education has led to widespread misinformation, which can shape public opinion and societal attitudes negatively. The Nigerian youths, in particular, are dangerously exposed to the negative impacts of uncritical media consumption, as they often lack the necessary tools to assess and question the media they engage with.

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of media literacy in fostering critical thinking, there seems to be a noticeable gap in empirical research regarding the effectiveness of media literacy education in improving critical thinking skills among Nigerian undergraduate students. While some studies have explored media literacy in Western contexts, very little research has been conducted on how media literacy education influences and impacts critical thinking abilities within Nigerian higher educational institutions. Moreover, the implementation of media literacy programmes in some Nigerian universities remains limited, and the few existing programmes have not been adequately evaluated for their impact on students' cognitive skills, particularly critical thinking.

This research seeks to fill this gap by investigating the influence of media literacy education on the development of critical thinking skills among Nigerian students using Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, as a study. By exploring the relationship between exposure to media literacy programmes and students' ability to analyse media messages, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the role of media literacy in enhancing the critical thinking abilities of Nigerian youths. This research is crucial for understanding the potential of media literacy education in addressing the challenges posed by misinformation and media bias, which can ultimately empower young people to make informed decisions in an increasingly complex media environment.

## **Media Literacy Education and Critical Thinking**

Media Literacy Education (MLE) is an essential educational approach that provides individuals with the necessary skills to access, analyse, evaluate, and create media across various platforms and forms (Levinson, 2018). In a world increasingly dominated by digital media, it has become critical for young people to engage with media messages actively. Rather than being passive consumers of information, students must be trained to evaluate the credibility, bias, and intentions behind the media they consume. Central to media literacy education is the notion that it is not enough to simply absorb media content; students must assess, interpret, and question the messages being conveyed to them. In the context of Nigerian youth, media literacy is an essential tool to help them navigate the complex and often misleading media landscape. The relationship between media literacy and critical thinking is well-documented in educational literature. In conclusion, media literacy education serves as a foundation for developing critical thinking skills among Nigerian youth, particularly at Ajayi Crowther University. Through exposure to media literacy programmes, students learn to analyse, evaluate, and create media content, which in turn enhances their overall cognitive skills. By fostering critical engagement with media messages, media literacy education empowers students to navigate the complexities of the media environment, make informed decisions, and contribute to the creation of a more informed and participatory society.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of this research focuses on the application of Critical Thinking Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory to understand the impact of media literacy education on critical thinking skills among Nigerian youth, specifically students at Ajayi Crowther University (ACU), Oyo. Both Critical Thinking Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of media literacy education on critical thinking skills. Critical Thinking Theory focuses on the cognitive development of students, helping them cultivate skills that empower them to engage with media content analytically and reflectively. By fostering the ability to question, analyse, and evaluate media messages, media literacy education improves students' critical thinking and cognitive abilities. On the other hand, Uses and Gratifications Theory complements this by examining the motives behind students' media consumption and how media literacy education influences the types of media they choose to engage with. The integration of both theories suggests that media literacy education not only sharpens students' critical thinking

skills but also shapes their media consumption habits, encouraging them to seek out content that fulfils intellectual and informational needs while fostering independent thought.

These two theoretical approaches guide the analysis of how media literacy education impacts students' ability to think critically about media messages and their overall media consumption habits. By combining both theories, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of how media literacy programmes at Ajayi Crowther University enhance students' cognitive abilities and influence their engagement with media in a meaningful way.

### Methodology

Survey research design will be adopted for this study to examine the impact of media literacy education on the critical thinking skills of Nigerian youth, specifically at Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo. According to Creswell (2014), survey research design involves collecting quantitative information from a sample population to generalise findings. This method is appropriate because it allows for the systematic collection and analysis of quantifiable data from a large number of respondents, enabling the researcher to identify patterns, trends, and relationships between media literacy education and critical thinking skills. The population for this study consists of undergraduate students at Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, Nigeria. According to the university's official website and records (Ajayi Crowther University, 2024), the total student population is approximately 3,500 undergraduates. These students represent a diverse range of faculties and academic disciplines, making them a suitable population for examining the impact of media literacy education on the development of critical thinking skills.

The sample size for this study will be 346 respondents, calculated using Taro Yamane's formula.

### Analysis and Discussion of Findings

**Table One: Respondents' Level of Awareness of Media Literacy**

**Are Nigerian Undergraduates aware of Media Literacy?**

Q. No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
1	Awareness of Media Literacy	Yes	352	88.3%
		No	47	11.7%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.2 provides insights into the respondents' awareness, perception, and experiences related to media literacy. The data reveal that a significant majority of the respondents, 88.3 per cent, are aware of media literacy, while only 11.7 per cent are not. This high level of awareness sets a strong foundation for the rest of the findings. The results indicate a **high level of awareness of media literacy** among students of Ajayi Crowther University. This suggests that media literacy concepts are relatively well recognized within students of Ajayi Crowther University.

**Table Two: Respondent’s belief about the Medium of Awareness of Media Literacy**  
**If Yes, through which medium are Nigerian Undergraduates aware of Media Literacy?**

Q. No.	Question	Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
2	Medium of Awareness	Lecturer	89	22.3%
		Social media	197	49.4%
		Radio	74	18.6%
		Television	39	9.7%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>100</b>

The sources through which students of Ajayi Crowther University became aware of media literacy vary, with social media emerging as the most influential medium, accounting for 49.4 per cent. Lecturers also play a notable role at 22.3 per cent, followed by radio at 18.6 per cent and television at 9.7 per cent. This suggests that digital platforms, especially social media, are the primary drivers of media literacy awareness among the students of Ajayi Crowther University, although academic and traditional media also contribute meaningfully.

**Table Three: Respondents' Perception of Media Literacy**  
**What is your perception of media literacy?**

Q. No.	Question	Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
3	Perception of Media Literacy	Very Useful	147	36.8%
		Useful	216	54.2%
		Not Useful	20	5.0%

		Undecided	16	4.0%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>100</b>

Building on this awareness, the perception of media literacy is largely positive. Over half of the respondents (54.2 per cent) consider media literacy useful, and an additional 36.8 per cent see it as very useful. Only a small fraction (5.0 per cent) finds it not useful, with 4.0 per cent undecided

**Table Four: Respondent’s belief about Media Literacy Education helping students in critical thinking about Media Usage**

Q. No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
4	Helps Critical Thinking	Strongly Agree	213	53.4%
		Agree	160	40.2%
		Disagree	20	5.0%
		Strongly Disagree	6	1.4%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>100</b>

This generally favourable view is further supported by the belief that media literacy enhances critical thinking. More than half (53.4 per cent) strongly agree with this statement, and 40.2 per cent agree, indicating that respondents associate media literacy with improved cognitive skills.

**Table Five: Respondent’s belief about the benefits of Critical Thinking Skills**

**Which aspects of critical Thinking Skills benefits more from Media Literacy?**

Q. No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
5	Benefitting CT Skill	Analytic	52	13.1%
		Evaluative	156	39.1%
		Inductive	169	42.3%
		Deductive	22	5.5%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>100</b>

In identifying the specific critical thinking skills enhanced by media literacy, inductive reasoning (42.3 per cent) and evaluative skills (39.1 per cent) are the most frequently cited. Analytical skills follow at 13.1 per cent, and deductive reasoning is mentioned by 5.5 per cent. These responses

suggest that media literacy encourages broader reasoning patterns and thoughtful evaluation of Information among students of Ajayi Crowther University

**Table Six: Respondent’s belief about the effectiveness of Media Literacy Education on Students Performance**

**Rate the Effectiveness of Media Literacy Education on students' performance?**

Q. No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
	Effectiveness on Performance	Very Effective	217	54.5%
		Effective	145	36.4%
		Not Effective	20	5.0%
		Not Sure	17	4.1%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>100</b>

When asked about its impact on academic performance, 54.5 per cent of respondents believe media literacy is very effective, while 36.4 per cent find it effective. A minor segment views it as not effective (5.0 per cent) or is unsure (4.1 per cent). This reinforces the notion that media literacy is not only relevant but also contributes positively to students’ academic outcomes. Furthermore, respondents recognise media literacy’s role in distinguishing between facts and opinions. The results also indicate that a strong majority of respondents perceive media literacy as positively influencing performance. Overall, these findings suggest that media literacy is widely regarded as an effective factor in improving performance among the respondents.

**Table Seven: Respondent’s belief about distinguishing Fact/Opinion in the Media**  
**Media Literacy assists to students to differentiate between facts and opinions in the Media?**

Q. No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
6	Distinguishing Fact/Opinion	Strongly Agree	209	52.5%
		Agree	155	38.8%
		Disagree	24	6.0%
		Strongly Disagree	11	2.7%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>100</b>

A combined total of 91.3 percent agrees or strongly agree that it enhances this ability, which is crucial in today’s information-heavy environment. The findings show that a substantial majority of respondents who are students of Ajayi Crowther University demonstrate confidence in their ability to distinguish between fact and opinion. A combined **91.3%** of participants either *strongly agree* or *agree* with the statement, indicating strong critical evaluation skills related to media content. In contrast, only **8.7%** of respondents expressed disagreement, suggesting that a relatively small portion of the sample may struggle with differentiating factual information from opinion. Overall, the results reflect a high level of media literacy in this specific competency among students of Ajayi Crowther University

**Table Eight: Respondent’s belief about Media Literacy education providing students with the ability to identify Fake News**

**Does Media Literacy education provide students with the ability to identify fake news in the Media?**

<b>Q. No.</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Options</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
7	Ability to Identify Fake News	Yes	333	83.4%
		No	66	16.6%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>100</b>

Similarly, 83.4 per cent affirm that media literacy helps them identify fake news, a key benefit in the era of misinformation. The data presented in Table 4.2.8, titled "Ability to Spot Fake News, provides valuable insights into public perception regarding this issue. The table categorises responses into two groups: those who believe they can identify fake news ("Yes") and those who do not ("No"). The findings reveal that a substantial majority of respondents—83.4% (333 out of 399)—are confident in their ability to spot fake news. This high percentage suggests a widespread belief among individuals that they possess the critical thinking skills or media literacy required to discern misinformation. However, the remaining 16.6% (66 respondents) who answered "No" indicate a notable segment of the population that remains uncertain or lacks confidence in this regard. This dichotomy raises important questions. While the majority's confidence is encouraging, it is essential to consider whether this self-assessment aligns with actual ability. Research has

shown that overconfidence in detecting fake news can sometimes lead to the inadvertent sharing of misinformation. Conversely, the minority who acknowledge their limitations may be more cautious, highlighting the need for targeted educational initiatives to bridge this gap. While the data reflects a generally optimistic outlook, it underscores the importance of continuous efforts to enhance media literacy. Empowering individuals with the tools to critically evaluate information is crucial in combating the pervasive threat of fake news.

**Table Nine: Respondents’ beliefs about Sharing Media Literacy Education Information with other students**

**If Yes to question 12, do you share media literacy education information with another student?**

Q. No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
8	Share Media Literacy	Yes	93	23.4%
		No	306	76.6%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>100</b>

Despite the benefits, the willingness to share media literacy knowledge is low, with only 23.4 per cent of respondents doing so. A significant majority, with 76.6 per cent has not shared their knowledge. This points to a gap in peer education or awareness dissemination that could be addressed through institutional initiatives or programs. The findings reveal that although awareness and perceived effectiveness of media literacy are high among students of Ajayi Crowther University, peer-to-peer dissemination of media literacy knowledge remains limited. The result highlights a potential gap between individual understanding and collaborative knowledge sharing, indicating the need for institutional or peer-led initiatives to encourage students to share media literacy education with others.

**Table Ten: Media Literacy education can enhance better evaluation of Information**

Q. No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
10	Better Information Evaluation	Strongly Agree	53	13.3%
		Agree	211	52.8%
		Disagree	65	16.2%

		Strongly Disagree	70	17.7%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>100</b>

The evaluation of media literacy’s role in improving information assessment skills also shows a majority in support. While 52.8 per cent agree and 13.3 per cent strongly agree, a combined 33.9 per cent either disagree or strongly disagree, indicating some level of scepticism or lack of confidence in its application. The findings indicate that more than two-thirds of the respondents believe media literacy education improves individuals’ ability to critically evaluate information. This suggests a strong recognition of the role of media literacy in helping audiences assess the credibility, accuracy, and relevance of media content, especially in an era characterised by information overload and misinformation. However, the substantial minority who disagreed highlights the need for more effective media literacy programmes and wider awareness of their practical benefits.

**Table Eleven: Students with media literacy education or knowledge are better assets to society**

Q. No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
11	Media Literacy Beneficial	Strongly Agree	55	13.7%
		Agree	223	55.8%
		Disagree	66	16.6%
		Strongly Disagree	56	14.0%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>100</b>

Similarly, when asked whether media literacy is beneficial overall, 55.8 per cent agree and 13.7 per cent strongly agree. However, a notable minority remain unconvinced, with 16.6 per cent disagreeing and 14.0 per cent strongly disagreeing. The findings reveal that more than two-thirds of the respondents acknowledge the benefits of media literacy. This underscores the importance of media literacy education in empowering individuals with critical thinking skills, enhancing their understanding of media messages, and enabling informed decision-making. Nevertheless, the

presence of dissenting views suggests the need for increased sensitisation and more practical, context-driven media literacy initiatives.

**Table Twelve: Media Literacy education is difficult to come by in Nigeria**

Q. No.	Question	Options	Frequency	Percentage
12	Difficulty Accessing Media Literacy	Strongly Agree	116	29.0%
		Agree	169	42.3%
		Disagree	45	11.3%
		Strongly Disagree	69	17.4%
		<b>Total</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>100</b>

Lastly, the accessibility of media literacy emerges as a concern. A majority of respondents (71.3 per cent) either agree or strongly agree that they face difficulty accessing media literacy resources. In contrast, 28.7 per cent disagree with this view. This highlights a need for improved access to media literacy materials and training, particularly through institutional support or public education campaigns. This finding also suggests that although media literacy is widely regarded as beneficial, a major barrier lies in its accessibility. The high level of agreement indicates possible challenges such as limited availability of structured programmes, inadequate integration into formal education curricula, low public awareness, or insufficient institutional support. This difficulty in access may undermine the effectiveness of media literacy initiatives and limit their impact on improving critical media consumption. Overall, the result highlights the need for policymakers, educators, and media institutions to prioritise broader access to media literacy education.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings from the study reveal critical insights into how media literacy education influences the development of critical thinking skills among students at Ajayi Crowther University (ACU), Oyo. These insights align with both theoretical foundations and empirical evidence drawn from existing scholarly work. These findings were also derived from four research questions guiding this study. The discussion integrates respondent feedback with relevant scholarly perspectives to provide a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon

The first research question in this study was aimed at ascertaining if Nigerian undergraduate is exposed to media literacy education. The findings reveal a high level of awareness among respondents, with the majority affirming their familiarity with media literacy, while only a few respondents reported no awareness. This overwhelming majority underscores the prevalence of media literacy education among the surveyed population, providing a robust basis for further analysis. It was also discovered that the mediums through which respondents became aware of media literacy were primarily social media, highlighting its pivotal role in disseminating information. Academic instructors contributed significantly, with a larger percentage of respondents citing lecturers as their source of awareness. Traditional media, such as radio and television, also played a critical role, albeit less prominently. These results suggest that digital platforms, particularly social media, are the primary conduits for media literacy awareness among Nigerian undergraduates, supplemented by academic and conventional media sources. This means that a strong exposure to media literacy education among Nigerian undergraduates, driven largely by social media and supported by academic and traditional media. This awareness lays a critical foundation for fostering media literacy skills, which are essential in navigating the complexities of modern information ecosystems. This finding underscores the study of Hobbs (2011), who emphasised the role of both formal and informal education in media literacy acquisition. The prominence of social media also aligns with Livingstone and Helsper's (2007) argument that informal digital platforms are increasingly important avenues for young people's media engagement and learning.

However, the second research question in this study was aimed at examining the role of media literacy education in improving critical thinking skills among Nigerian youth. The study's findings reveal a predominantly positive perception of media literacy, with the majority of the respondents deeming it "useful" and "very useful." Only a small minority dismissed its utility, while the remaining were undecided. This widespread acknowledgement underscores the perceived value of media literacy in contemporary education. Further reinforcing this view, the research highlights a strong relationship between media literacy and the enhancement of critical thinking. A significant majority of respondents "strongly agreed" that media literacy aids in developing critical thinking, with another larger percentage agreeing. This consensus suggests that media literacy is not merely an academic exercise but a practical means to cultivate cognitive skills essential for navigating an increasingly complex media landscape. Delving deeper, the study identifies the specific critical

thinking skills most impacted by media literacy. Inductive reasoning and evaluative skills were the most frequently cited, followed by analytical skills and deductive reasoning. These findings indicate that media literacy education encourages youth to engage in broader reasoning patterns and thoughtful evaluation of information, equipping them to discern biases, assess credibility, and draw informed conclusions. The finding, therefore, underscores the transformative potential of media literacy education in Nigeria. By fostering critical thinking skills—particularly inductive reasoning and evaluative abilities—media literacy empowers youth to engage with media content more discerningly. As such, integrating media literacy into educational curricula could play a vital role in preparing Nigerian youth to meet the challenges of the digital age. This finding is in agreement with Levinson's (2018) view that media literacy serves as a foundational skill in the digital era, essential for empowering individuals to make informed decisions. Furthermore, most respondents believe media literacy enhances critical thinking, with over 93 per cent either agreeing or strongly agreeing to this. This supports the position of Kellner and Share (2007), who argue that media literacy fosters inquiry, evaluation, and critical reasoning. The study further reveals the specific critical thinking skills gained through media literacy education. Respondents most commonly identified inductive and evaluative reasoning as benefits, which mirrors Ennis's (2011) conception of critical thinking as the ability to assess and interpret information through logical analysis. The application of these skills in real-world settings, such as discerning media bias and misinformation, is vital in a society where media content often lacks transparency or accountability. In terms of academic performance, more than 90 per cent of respondents believe media literacy education is effective or very effective. This supports findings by Adebayo (2020), who found a strong correlation between media literacy education and improved cognitive and academic outcomes among Nigerian university students. Media literacy is seen not only as a means to understand media but as a tool for academic enhancement and self-empowerment.

Meanwhile, the third research question in this study was aimed at assessing Nigerian students' ability to evaluate media on media literacy education. The findings revealed that media literacy education has emerged as a critical component of modern academic curricula, particularly in an era dominated by information overload and misinformation. The study also revealed that a majority of respondents consider media literacy "very effective" in enhancing academic performance, while an additional larger percentage deem it "effective." This overwhelming consensus underscores the relevance of media literacy as a tool for academic success. Only a small fraction of students found

it ineffective, with a negligible percentage remaining unsure. These results affirm the value of integrating media literacy into educational frameworks to bolster students' analytical and critical thinking skills. It was also discovered that students' ability to distinguish between facts and opinions is a fundamental skill in navigating today's complex media landscape, as the majority of the respondents either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that media literacy enhances this ability. This finding is particularly significant, as the capacity to discern factual information from subjective viewpoints is essential for informed decision-making and civic engagement. Another critical aspect explored was the ability to identify fake news. The majority of the students confirmed that media literacy aids in spotting misinformation, a skill of paramount importance in combating the spread of false information. This statistic reflects the practical utility of media literacy in fostering a more discerning and informed student population. However, the study also uncovered a notable gap: only a few of the respondents reported sharing their media literacy knowledge with peers, while the majority had not done so. This disparity suggests a lack of peer-to-peer education or institutional mechanisms to encourage knowledge dissemination. Addressing this gap through targeted initiatives, such as workshops or student-led awareness campaigns, could amplify the reach and impact of media literacy education. This means that media literacy education is highly effective in equipping Nigerian students with essential skills for academic and real-world challenges. While its benefits are widely recognised, the low rate of knowledge sharing indicates an area for improvement. By fostering a culture of collaboration and awareness, educational institutions can further enhance the transformative potential of media literacy. This finding is in agreement with the study of Adebayo and Martins (2020), whose findings discovered that students exposed to media literacy training developed enhanced scepticism and critical awareness, improving their resilience to media manipulation. However, the study reveals a key challenge: only 23.4 per cent of respondents reported sharing media literacy knowledge with others. This suggests a gap in peer-to-peer dissemination, which is crucial for broader societal awareness. Okafor and Ogbodo (2019) note that for media literacy to be transformative, it must be collectively understood and practised, not just individually experienced. Hence, universities and educators must find ways to encourage communal learning and discussions about media literacy, possibly through student-led forums and peer mentorship initiatives.

Finally, the fourth research question in this study was aimed at exploring the relationship between media literacy education and the students' awareness of media misinformation. Media literacy

education has become a critical tool in addressing the challenges posed by misinformation in the digital age. The findings reveal that a majority of respondents recognise the value of media literacy in improving information evaluation skills. The majority of the respondents who are students of Ajayi Crowther University agree and strongly agree that media literacy enhances their ability to access information. However, some students disagree or strongly disagree, suggesting scepticism or a lack of confidence in its effectiveness. Similarly, when asked about the overall benefits of media literacy, the majority of the students agree and strongly agree, reinforcing its perceived importance. Yet, a notable minority remains unconvinced, highlighting a divide in opinion.

A significant concern emerges regarding accessibility, with the majority of respondents reporting difficulty accessing media literacy resources. This underscores a critical gap in the availability of media literacy education, pointing to the need for institutional and public initiatives to improve access. This means that, while media literacy education is widely regarded as beneficial for combating misinformation, its impact is hindered by accessibility issues and varying levels of confidence among students. Addressing these challenges is essential to maximising its potential in fostering a more informed and discerning public. This presents a challenge for Nigerian tertiary institutions. As highlighted by Aduloju (2019), without sufficient institutional support, curricular, technological, and pedagogical media literacy education risks being inconsistently applied or ineffectively delivered. Furthermore, while most students find media literacy beneficial, there remains a sizable minority (around 30 per cent) who are either indifferent or sceptical. This suggests that despite high awareness, the depth of understanding and appreciation of media literacy may vary. This aligns with Ejike (2018), who found that while many students could recognise the term “media literacy,” few understood its full implications or practised its principles consistently. The study also affirms key aspects of the **Critical Thinking Theory**, which posits that critical reflection and scepticism are central to logical reasoning and informed decision-making (Ennis, 2011). Media literacy programs at Ajayi Crowther University appear to reinforce this, helping students develop skills to question media narratives, detect bias, and engage in reasoned analysis skills increasingly necessary in Nigeria’s politicised and commercialised media environment. Additionally, the **Uses and Gratifications Theory** support the interpretation of findings related to media consumption habits. Students, as active media users, seek content that aligns with their informational and personal identity needs. Media literacy education, as indicated in the study,

appears to influence these choices, guiding students to be more discerning in their consumption, as suggested by Ruggiero (2000) and Katz et al. (1973).

In conclusion, the study shows that media literacy education positively impacts the development of critical thinking skills among students of Ajayi Crowther University. It enhances their ability to analyse, evaluate, and interpret media content while fostering academic performance and civic engagement. However, gaps in peer-dissemination and accessibility signal areas that require institutional intervention. As Nigeria continues to navigate an evolving media landscape, this study underscores the urgency for comprehensive media literacy integration across tertiary institutions to build an essential aware and participatory generation.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

The findings of this study affirm that media literacy education is a valuable educational intervention with the capacity to significantly enhance critical thinking among Nigerian undergraduates. Students who have been exposed to media literacy programmes are better equipped to navigate the complexities of media messages, evaluate information sources, and make informed judgments. The study concludes that media literacy plays an essential role in shaping the cognitive and evaluative capacities of students. In a society increasingly affected by misinformation, political bias, and digital content manipulation, the skills acquired through media literacy are critical not only for academic success but also for responsible citizenship. The evidence from this research shows that Ajayi Crowther University students benefit from media literacy education, particularly in developing inductive, evaluative, and analytical reasoning skills. However, the study also underscores existing gaps. Limited peer-sharing, low dissemination of media literacy knowledge, and difficulty accessing relevant resources highlight the need for improved institutional strategies and broader implementation of media literacy initiatives. Addressing these issues would help ensure that the benefits of media literacy are more widely distributed and deeply embedded in the academic and social lives of the students. In conclusion, media literacy education contributes meaningfully to the development of well-informed, critically-minded individuals who are capable of engaging constructively with media and societal issues. Its role in fostering independent thought, academic excellence, and civic engagement cannot be overemphasised in the Nigerian context.

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