

Media and information literacy among college student in Aizawl, Mizoram

S. Lalruatsanga¹, Ratnamala Vanamamalai²

^{1,2}Department of Mass Communication, Mizoram University
Tanhri, Aizawl, Mizoram, India, 796004

) * Corresponding Author, Email: ruatasailung09@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Background: This paper discussed the challenges posed by the rapid growth of mobile phone and internet usage in India, particularly in Aizawl, Mizoram and the proliferation of false information and its decimation. As digital media rapid growth increases with the advancement and development of accessible technological devices such as mobile phone. **Purpose:** To describe the experience of media and information literacy among college student in Aizawl, Mizoram. **Methods:** Mixed methods research integrates both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. **Results:** Furthermore, contextualized the social media literacy within Mizoram context, examine the factor that influence the local population with the awareness and skills needed to navigate the digital landscape. The findings contributed to examine college students a primary consumer of digital media in various platform and broader discourse on digital media literacy of misinformation and disinformation, emphasizing the importance of developing analytical and ethical competencies. The study explored the impact of critical digital literacy activities on enhancing participant social media and information literacy awareness. **Conclusion:** The findings are based on the college students in Aizawl, with the comprehension of its regional ethnical culture, shedding light on the potential benefits of such interventions in studying media literacy and countering the spread of false information among college student and institutions in Mizoram. **Implications:** The study highlights the importance of integrating digital and media literacy programs into higher education in Aizawl. These programs should focus on developing students' critical thinking and ethical understanding in using and evaluating online information.

Keywords: Media and information literacy; College students; Youth; Digital media; Digital literacy

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of Internet's ubiquitous uses and technological expansion of the various digital platforms in relation with college students' consumption of information and media. In the current digital era, students have a wide

range of exceeding digital media channels to keep informed and engaged, such as social media, online news sources, streaming videos, and interactive websites. It is crucial to comprehend how college students use and traverse various digital media platforms highlighting the

important details about digital preferences, and relationships to both local and international digital cultures among students. The study undertaking a thorough investigation of college students' digital media literacy.

By exploring college students' digital media consumption habits, preferences, and engagement patterns, research aims to provide insight into the ever-changing digital environment in which they live and work. Additionally, research aims to identify the variables that affect students' decisions on how digital media is consumed, such as language preferences, technical accessibility, and the effects of digital platforms on their social and academic lives. The potential for this dissertation to educate educators, academic institutions, and suppliers of digital media on the changing needs and goals of college students about digital media makes it significant. Furthermore, by highlighting how digital media can improve information literacy, foster critical thinking, and enhance students' general well-being in the digital age, this research adds to the larger conversation on digital media literacy.

Media literacy is defined as a skill that involves critical thinking, enabling individuals to interpret and evaluate the information they receive through mass communication channels (UNESCO, 2021). Media literacy is a political, social, and cultural undertaking that should be understood within the context of critical pedagogy and power structures in digital environments (Kellner & Share, 2019).

Whether it is traditional or media-based, literacy is essentially an active process that arises from the interaction of a person's ideas with different types of spoken or written text. Media literacy is a

social activity that arises from peer interactions, for any participatory in the landscape of digital cultures (Livingstone, 2019).

Literacy is the capacity to receive, process, assess, and convey information in a range of media (Hobbs, 2017). This definition suggests several important characteristics for a college setting, such as an integrated curriculum, student-centric learning, exploration of alternatives to standardized testing, problem-solving skills development through teamwork, and an emphasis on inquiry-based learning. Focusing on undergraduates, media literacy is the ability to efficiently obtain, analyse, evaluate, and apply information for different purposes across platforms (Commission of the European Communities, 2018). It includes the capacity to obtain, examine, evaluate, and transmit messages via various media (Mihailidis, 2018). The ability to navigate the complex and constantly changing media landscape that they encounter in both their personal and academic lives is a critical skill for college students.

Media and Information Literacy (MIL) refers to a set of competencies that enable individuals to access, evaluate, analyze, create, and use information and media effectively and responsibly. It integrates the skills of media literacy (e.g. understanding, evaluating, and producing media content) and information literacy (e.g. discovering, organizing, and disseminating knowledge). MIL empowers individuals to critically assess media messages, understand the intentions behind them, and navigate the digital and media landscape responsibly. It also promotes critical thinking, digital

citizenship, and the ability to combat misinformation, disinformation, and other social challenges like cyberbully and online hate speech (Özel, 2025; Ramaiah & Rao, 2021; Sánchez et al., 2021).

The article's focus on MIL among college students in Aizawl, Mizoram aligns with the broader goals of MIL as described above. College students, as part of the digital generation, require MIL skills to critically engage with media and information in their academic, social, and personal lives. The study likely explores how these students access, evaluate, and use media and information, reflecting the competencies outlined in MIL frameworks. Furthermore, the emphasis on empowering students with critical thinking and responsible media use resonates with the global need for MIL to foster informed and active citizenship in the digital age (Özel, 2025; Ramaiah & Rao, 2021; Sánchez et al., 2021)

The purpose of this study is to investigate how college students use different media platforms, how often they consume media, what kinds of content they like, how they choose to communicate, and in what ways does media play a role as a tool for providing information. The research will cover a range of traditional and digital media sources, due to its functional and utilizable quality based on social interaction and accumulation of various information, this study mainly focus on the digital media such as, social media and various digital platforms depending upon the majority usage among college students'. This study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques.

The study's primary target population will be college students with a

variety of backgrounds, linguistic preferences, and academic specializations. Convenient sampling techniques will be employed in the sample selection process, considering participant availability and practical accessibility within the college campus. For a few reasons, this study on college students' media consumption is extremely important. First, it can provide insight into college students' media literacy, which has a big impact on how well they understand local and global cultures, how information is disseminated, and digital ethics. It can help in identifying and pinpoint the informational sources that students use, the degree of confidence they place in these sources, and the wider impacts of media on students' social and academic development. Thirdly, this research may provide in the creation of initiatives and treatments meant to improve college students' media literacy. By pointing out areas where media literacy needs improvement, it provides a road map for areas that should receive more focus and investigation, which eventually helps students and educational institutions alike. Finally, by contributing to the expanding body of knowledge on media and information literacy among college students, this study can help shape future research and academic policies concerning media and information literacy. The knowledge acquired from this research may have ramifications for local college campuses as well as for educational establishments across the globe.

RESEARCH METHODS

Mixed methods research integrates both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to explore research questions or phenomena. It entails the amalgamation,

analysis, and synthesis of both qualitative and quantitative data within a singular investigation or across multiple inquiries. By combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, mixed methods research enables researchers to address complex initiatives and interactions, offering broader perspectives and deeper insights than mono-method designs (Battista et al., 2025; Manzoor, 2021). Employing a mixed methodological approach, the study sought to elucidate media and information literacy among college in Aizawl. Qualitative research constitutes an explorative methodology aimed at comprehending the subjective experiences, perceptions, and significances of participants within their natural milieu. Conversely, quantitative research adopts a systematic approach utilizing numerical data for measurement, comparison, and hypothesis testing.

The sample size for the survey questionnaire is 106 college students in Aizawl. The focus group discussion consists of a total of 16 students. In this research the sample of the survey was selected using cluster sampling technique. The populations of college students are divided into a cluster based on the institution affiliation of Mizoram University and using random selection 2 colleges are selected to conduct the survey.

For focus group discussion (FGD) college student participants are selected who are readily accessible and willing to participate in the study. In the context of media and information literacy among college students, the use of convenience may be practical in FGD due to the transient nature and seclude for the student following the challenges associated with reaching a representative sample.

The data was collected using survey questionnaire. A survey questionnaire is a research tool used to collect data from participants by asking a series of questions. It typically consists of a set of structured questions designed to gather specific information related to the research objectives of the study. In the context of media literacy among college student in Aizawl, a survey questionnaire can help gather quantitative data about their media habits, preferences, and patterns of engagement.

The data analysis techniques used thematic analysis for qualitative data and statistical analysis for quantitative data, followed by combining results to identify emergent themes or meta-inferences (Battista et al., 2025). Tools like NVivo and SPSS can facilitate this integration by enabling the exploration of relationships between qualitative codes and quantitative attributes (Andrew et al., 2008). Additionally, strategies such as data transformation and parallel integration ensure that both data types complement each other, enhancing the depth and breadth of the analysis (Castro et al., 2010; Jang et al., 2008). This approach aligns with best practices in mixed methods research, which emphasize meticulous planning and iterative integration to address complex research questions effectively (Castro et al., 2010; Minc et al., 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the survey respondents, majority of student age between 18-30 years of age. The data is based on a survey of 106 people. The survey on media consumption habits and media literacy provides a comprehensive insight into how individuals, particularly young adults,

interact with media and evaluate information in the digital age. The study is largely representative of students and young professionals who are typically more engaged with digital platforms. This age group is often considered digitally active and highly exposed to various forms of media, making their responses particularly relevant in understanding contemporary media trends. In terms of gender distribution, the survey shows a higher proportion of male respondents compared to female respondents, with a small percentage identifying otherwise. While this slight imbalance does not significantly distort the overall findings, it is important to acknowledge that gender differences may influence media preferences and behaviors to some extent.

The analysis of media consumption patterns highlights a significant reliance on digital media among respondents. A majority reported spending between three to six hours daily consuming media, while a considerable portion indicated even higher usage exceeding six hours per day.

College students in Aizawl exhibit high levels of digital media engagement, with the majority reporting daily usage between three to six hours, and a significant segment surpassing six hours per day. Such extended usage not only reinforces the omnipresence of social media and digital information platforms in their daily routines but also raises concerns regarding the potential negative impacts on academic performance and health, as noted in studies linking prolonged media exposure to issues like digital distraction, sleep disturbances, and psycho-social challenges. This dual-edged dynamic necessitates targeted interventions aimed at enhancing media and information literacy, thereby fostering

critical consumption and healthy balancing of digital media in academic settings (Khangte et al., 2025; Lalduhzuali et al., 2022; Lalthlamuanpuui et al., 2021; Liu, 2025; Oraon et al., 2025; Sobaih et al., 2023; Zúñiga & Sánchez, 2025).

The substantial daily media engagement among college students is not merely a reflection of technological advancement but also a manifestation of shifting social norms and academic practices. While digital media serves as a conduit for learning, socialization, and self-expression, the intensity and duration of use—often surpassing six hours per day for a significant subset—signal potential risks of overuse. These include diminished attention spans, increased susceptibility to misinformation, and adverse health outcomes such as sleep disturbances and psycho-social stress. The dual-edged nature of digital engagement thus underscores the imperative for targeted interventions that promote critical media consumption and foster resilience against the negative externalizes of pervasive media exposure (G. Liu, 2025; Oraon et al., 2025; Sobaih et al., 2023; Zúñiga & Sánchez, 2025).

This suggests that media consumption is deeply integrated into the daily routines of individuals, potentially influencing their perceptions, attitudes, and knowledge. The high screen time also reflects the increasing dependency on digital devices for entertainment, information, and communication. When examining preferred sources of news and information, it becomes evident that social media platforms and online news websites dominate over traditional forms such as television and newspapers. This shift underscores the transformation in information dissemination, where immediacy and

accessibility take precedence over conventional credibility structures.

Social media usage patterns further reinforce this trend, with most respondents indicating that they access platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter multiple times a day. This frequent engagement not only increases exposure to diverse content but also raises concerns about the quality and authenticity of information consumed. While a significant number of respondents reported occasionally sharing news articles and information online, fewer indicated frequent sharing behaviour. This suggests a moderate level of caution among users, although it does not necessarily guarantee that shared information is always verified. The act of sharing content plays a crucial role in the spread of information, including misinformation, and therefore reflects an important aspect of media literacy.

The pervasive use of social media among college students has significantly influenced their exposure to diverse content, reshaping their information consumption patterns. Studies indicate that platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are widely used by students for both academic and social purposes, with many spending substantial time daily on these platforms (Lalnunpuii & Ngurtinkhuma, 2021; L. Liu et al., 2025; Nordin, 2025). This frequent engagement enhances access to a variety of information, fostering opportunities for learning and collaboration. However, it also raises critical concerns about the quality and authenticity of the information consumed. For instance, the overuse of social media has been linked to distractions, reduced academic focus, and mental health challenges, such as anxiety and stress, which may stem from exposure to unreliable or misleading content (Fatima et al., 2025; L.

Liu et al., 2025). Furthermore, the lack of digital literacy and critical evaluation skills among students exacerbates the risks of misinformation and poor information practices, as highlighted in studies emphasizing the need for improved media literacy education (A. Gupta & Gupta, 2021; Khan & Pandey, 2026; Lalduhzuali et al., 20221). These findings underscore the dual-edged nature of social media: while it serves as a powerful tool for information dissemination and academic engagement, it also necessitates the development of robust media and information literacy skills to navigate the digital landscape responsibly and critically.

In terms of media literacy awareness, the findings reveal a mixed scenario. A large proportion of respondents consider themselves to be critical consumers of media content, indicating a level of confidence in their ability to analyse and interpret information. However, this self-perception may not always align with actual practices. For instance, when asked about their confidence in identifying the source of a news article, many respondents reported only moderate confidence. Similarly, while some respondents consistently check the credibility of information before sharing it, a majority admitted to doing so only occasionally. This gap between awareness and practice highlights a key challenge in media literacy, where individuals may possess theoretical knowledge but fail to apply it consistently in real-life situations.

The ability to distinguish between fact and opinion is another critical component of media literacy, and the survey results indicate that most respondents believe they can make this distinction. Additionally, a majority acknowledged that bias plays a significant role in shaping media content,

demonstrating an understanding of how information can be influenced by underlying perspectives. Despite this awareness, respondents expressed only moderate confidence in their ability to evaluate the accuracy and reliability of information online. This suggests that while foundational concepts of media literacy are understood, there is still a need for more advanced skills and critical thinking abilities to navigate complex information environments effectively.

The ability to distinguish between fact and opinion is a fundamental aspect of media literacy, as it enables individuals to critically evaluate the credibility and intent of media messages. Research highlights that media literacy encompasses skills such as critical thinking, fact-checking, and the ability to analyze and evaluate media content effectively (D. Gupta et al., 2026; Khan & Pandey, 2026; Lalthlamuanpuii et al., 2021). For instance, studies show that students with higher media literacy are better equipped to identify misinformation and distinguish between factual content and biased or fabricated information, a skill particularly crucial in the digital age where misinformation proliferates (Arman et al., 2019; Sobaih et al., 2023). However, gaps in critical thinking and analytical skills persist among students, as evidenced by findings that many lack sufficient training in media literacy, particularly in analyzing and interpreting media messages (Alquaary et al., 2026; Lalthlamuanpuii et al., 2021).

Moreover, the integration of media literacy into educational curricula has been shown to enhance students' ability to critically assess media content. For example, targeted media literacy programs have improved students' capacity to decode and interpret complex media messages,

fostering a more nuanced understanding of fact versus opinion (Boro et al., 2024; Gupta et al., 2026). Despite these advancements, challenges remain, as some studies report that students often overestimate their ability to critically evaluate media, underscoring the need for structured training to bridge these gaps (Alquaary et al., 2026; Oraon et al., 2025).

External influences such as family and education also play a role in shaping media habits. The survey indicates that family attitudes have a moderate impact on how individuals consume media, suggesting that social and cultural contexts contribute to media behaviour. However, one of the most significant findings is the lack of formal media literacy education among respondents. A majority reported that they do not receive structured training or coursework related to media literacy in their academic curriculum. This absence of formal education may contribute to the inconsistencies observed in critical evaluation and verification practices, emphasizing the need for institutional intervention.

Research underscores the significant role of family attitudes in shaping media consumption behaviors, highlighting the interplay between social and cultural contexts. Family dynamics influence not only the patterns of media use but also the attitudes and vulnerabilities associated with media exposure. For instance, studies reveal that family sociocultural contexts, such as parental marital status and socioeconomic background, significantly affect students' media use and related behaviours, including body image satisfaction and eating habits (Anafo & Filson, 2014; Jamil & Alazrak, 2023). Additionally, family models and broadcast

scheduling within households have been shown to shape children's television consumption and their reception of media content, further emphasizing the familial impact on media behavior (Khan & Pandey, 2026). These findings suggest that family attitudes act as a moderating factor, mediating the broader sociocultural influences on media engagement. Moreover, the correlation between family influence and media consumption patterns underscores the need for targeted interventions that consider familial and cultural contexts to foster healthier media habits and critical media literacy (Anafo & Filson, 2014; Khan & Pandey, 2026).

Reliance on social media as a primary source of news is another notable trend identified in the survey. Many respondents indicated a high level of dependence on these platforms for information, which can be problematic given the prevalence of misinformation and unverified content online. This reliance increases the risk of exposure to biased or false information, particularly when users do not consistently verify sources.

Etesse and Mateus (2026) said that media literacy is influenced by sociocultural factors, including family education, societal norms, and regional contexts. For instance, in Peru, family education, particularly maternal education, significantly impacts media literacy, highlighting the role of cultural and familial structures in shaping critical media skill. Similarly, cultural norms mediate perceptions of media authenticity and influence behaviour, as seen in studies on deepfakes and misinformation (Aghbari et al., 2026) The data on this research indicates that a significant portion of the respondents exhibits a pronounced dependence on these

specific mediums for information acquisition.

The challenges associated with media literacy, as identified by respondents, include difficulty in identifying fake news, lack of proper education and awareness, information overload, and the presence of biased or misleading content. These challenges highlight the complexities of navigating the modern media landscape and underscore the importance of developing robust media literacy skills.

The challenges faced by college students in navigating the modern information landscape are multifaceted, encompassing issues such as the proliferation of fake news, inadequate education on media literacy, information overload, and the prevalence of biased or misleading content. The rise of social media has significantly amplified the spread of misinformation, making it difficult for students to evaluate the credibility of online information. Studies reveal that while students are aware of the importance of verifying information, many struggle to accurately identify fake news due to limited critical evaluation skills and overconfidence in their abilities (Leeder, 2019; Mai et al., 2023; Schroeder, 2021). Furthermore, the lack of structured media literacy education exacerbates this issue, as students often lack the tools to critically assess and filter information effectively (Ingvaldsen & Oberg, 2016; Lalduhzuali et al., 20221; Musgrove et al., 2018).

Information overload, driven by the rapid expansion of digital media, further complicates students' ability to process and evaluate information. This phenomenon not only overwhelms students but also diminishes their capacity to engage critically with content, highlighting the

need for tailored educational interventions to mitigate its effects (Chara-DeLosRios et al., 2025). Additionally, biased or misleading content, often disseminated through partisan or emotionally charged reporting, poses a significant barrier to objective information processing. Research underscores the importance of media literacy programs in addressing these challenges by fostering critical thinking and enhancing students' ability to discern credible sources (Xiao & Yang, 2024; Zannu et al., 2024).

In response to these challenges, respondents suggested several measures to improve media literacy, including the introduction of dedicated courses, workshops, and seminars, as well as the integration of media literacy into existing educational curricula. They also emphasized the importance of access to reliable online resources and opportunities for discussion and collaborative learning. These recommendations reflect recognition of the need for both formal and informal approaches to enhancing media literacy.

In conclusion, the survey reveals that while individuals demonstrate a basic awareness of media literacy concepts, there is a significant gap between knowledge and practical application. The heavy reliance on digital media, particularly social media, combined with the lack of formal education in media literacy, contributes to this discrepancy. Although respondents exhibit an understanding of key concepts such as bias, credibility, and the distinction between fact and opinion, their inconsistent application of these principles suggests a need for more comprehensive education and training. Addressing these gaps is essential in empowering individuals to critically evaluate information, make

informed decisions, and contribute to a more informed and responsible media environment in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the media and information literacy of college students in Aizawl, Mizoram and reveals a strong shift toward digital platforms as primary sources of information and engagement. Social media platforms, particularly Facebook and Instagram, dominate students' daily media use due to their accessibility, interactivity, and immediacy. Compared to traditional media, digital platforms are more frequently used, reflecting broader changes in communication practices influenced by technological advancement. While entertainment-oriented content remains the most preferred, educational content continues to play a relevant, though comparatively smaller, role in students' media engagement. Students rely on a range of information sources, including social media, online news portals, and academic websites. However, their level of trust in these sources varies significantly. Students are not passive consumers but are increasingly aware of the challenges associated with the digital information environment. Importantly, the study highlights the development of critical engagement practices among students, as many actively verify information by cross-checking it with more credible sources. This behaviour reflects an emerging level of media and information literacy, aligning with the study's focus on strengthening analytical and evaluative competencies. However, despite this awareness, the persistence of misinformation risks suggests the need for more structured and

systematic interventions. In alignment with the study's objectives, the findings emphasize the importance of promoting culturally relevant and context-specific media literacy initiatives in Aizawl. The next idea of the research is about media and information literacy in other universities.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

SL: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – original draft. VR: Supervision, Validation, Writing – review & editing.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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DATA AVAILABILITY

The data generated during the development of this study is not publicly

available but may be obtained from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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