

## The Role of Media Clubs in Developing Students' Media Literacy Skills in Selected Rwanda Secondary Schools

Kwigira Issa<sup>1</sup>  
Dr. Joseph Njuguna<sup>2</sup>  
Festus Irungu<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>kwigiraissa1@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>jnjuguna110@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup>firungu@mku.ac.ke

<sup>1,3</sup>Mount Kenya University, <sup>2</sup>University of Rwanda

### ABSTRACT

*This study investigates the role of media clubs in developing media literacy among secondary school students in Rwanda, with a focus on Ecole Secondaire Scientifique Islamique Nyamirambo and Groupe Scolaire Cyahafi. In an increasingly digital world, media literacy is critical for students to navigate and interpret media content responsibly. However, traditional educational curricula often overlook this essential skill. Media clubs provide a platform where students can engage in activities like news reporting, writing, and editorial work, which are vital for building critical thinking and media analysis skills. This research was directed by Media Literacy Theory, which highlights the importance of equipping individuals with the ability to critically engage with media, and Constructivism Theory, which emphasizes learning through active involvement and reflection. The research design that was used in the study was mixed whereby both quantitative and qualitative methods have been used to collect and analyze information and data that help to provide credible research, where quantitative method was used first, then after qualitative method was used to analyze the quality of data collected based on quantitative method. A sample of 100 respondents including school administrators, teachers and students from the two schools was surveyed to gauge their perceptions of media clubs and the impact on their media literacy skills. Qualitative insights were gathered through interviews with students, teachers, media club advisors, and school administrators, exploring experiences and challenges related to media clubs. Additionally, archival data such as club charters and student-produced media projects were analyzed to provide context and evidence of the clubs' impact. Results revealed significant correlations between media club participation and improved media literacy. Students engaged in news reporting and writing showed enhanced critical thinking, better source evaluation, and a stronger grasp of ethical journalism. Editorial activities sharpened students' abilities to critically assess media messages and identify biases, while feedback from readers helped students refine their media content and communication strategies. Mentorship within media clubs was found to be crucial in developing students' understanding of media ethics and practical skills, preparing them for the complexities of media production and consumption. The study also identified the dual role of social media within media clubs, offering both opportunities for broader engagement and challenges related to misinformation. In conclusion, the research demonstrates that media clubs are vital in developing media literacy among Rwandan secondary school students. By providing hands-on experiences, mentorship, and critical engagement with media, these clubs contribute significantly to students' ability to navigate and interpret media content responsibly. The findings underscore the importance of integrating media literacy education into the school curriculum, with recommendations aimed at enhancing media literacy education for students, teachers, policymakers, and educational institutions.*

**Keywords:** Media Literacy, Media Clubs, Rwanda, Secondary Schools

### I. INTRODUCTION

Media literacy has become an essential skill in the digital era, enabling individuals to critically engage with various forms of media content. Lomteva & Demidov (2024) stated that media literacy involves the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media, skills that are increasingly important as digital technologies continue to evolve. Despite this, traditional education systems often fall short in integrating media literacy into formal curricula. Media clubs, however, offer an informal, extracurricular platform where students can develop these skills through active participation in media-related activities.

Research across the globe has underscored the role of media clubs in enhancing students' media literacy. Vickery (2014) highlighted that after-school media clubs provide students with opportunities to develop digital literacy, contributing to their social and cultural capital. Douglas and Share (2019) found that media clubs create spaces for critical discussions on media content, fostering a deeper understanding of media's role in society. Monteiro & Almeida (2019) also emphasized that media clubs help students enhance academic success and develop leadership, time management, and critical thinking skills.

One of the key benefits of media clubs is their ability to help students navigate the modern media landscape, which is rife with misinformation and disinformation. Reeves & Crowther (2019) observed that media clubs help build students' resilience to misinformation, sharpening their critical thinking skills. Furthermore, Melki (2017) noted that media clubs provide students with exposure to journalism and media production, improving their decision-making and independent thought. According to report of UNESCO (2019), media clubs play a pivotal role in enhancing students' media competence, fostering their ability to engage in public debate and become informed citizens.

In addition to media literacy, media clubs offer students a global perspective on media. Fastrez & Landry (2023) found that media clubs teach students how media content is produced and marketed, enabling them to critically assess global media narratives. Andersson et al. (2018) argued that media clubs equip students with the analytical skills needed to understand complex media environments, while Vickery (2014) suggested that these clubs promote cross-cultural understanding, helping students create and share content that reflects diverse perspectives.

In Africa, media clubs have emerged as vital tools for fostering media literacy. Cunliffe-Jones (2021) identified media clubs as key platforms for teaching media literacy in African schools, offering spaces for creative and critical engagement. In Rwanda, Niyitegeka (2020) found that media clubs contribute to students' personal and social growth by fostering self-expression, collaboration, and practical media skills.

This study investigates the role of media clubs in developing media literacy among secondary school students in Rwanda, specifically at Ecole Secondaire Scientifique Islamique Nyamirambo and Groupe Scolaire Cyahafi. Through this research, the study aims to highlight the significant impact of media clubs on students' critical understanding of media and their responsible consumption of media content, offering insights relevant to educators and policymakers.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

In Rwandan secondary schools, as media literacy gains recognition within formal education, the potential impact of extracurricular media clubs on developing critical thinking, digital literacy, and communication skills remains unclear (Niyitegeka, 2020). A lack of comprehensive research hinders our understanding of the unique contributions of these clubs, including the variability in their structures and activities, the perspectives of students, media educators and club mentors involved, the integration with the formal curriculum, and the identification of barriers hindering student participation (Chen, 2022). This study aims to bridge these gaps, providing insights crucial for improving media competence teaching by optimizing the role of media clubs in Rwandan secondary schools.

### 1.2 Research Objectives

- i. To investigate the impact of participation in news reporting and writing experiences on students' levels of media literacy,
- ii. To assess the impact of media club editorial activities on Students' levels of media literacy,
- iii. To investigate the influence of media club newspaper reader feedback on students' levels of media literacy,
- iv. To examine the media club teacher's role as a mentor in the students' levels of media literacy skills,
- v. To assess the impact of using social media for news within Rwandan secondary school media clubs on students' media literacy skills.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theoretical Review

#### 2.1.1 Media Literacy Theory

Hobbs (2019) explains media literacy as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media in various forms, emphasizing critical thinking skills needed to navigate today's media landscape. Potter (2018) further stated that media Literacy Theory explores how individuals filter and interpret media messages using cognitive frameworks and advanced skills. This theory helps explain how participation in media clubs shapes students' ability to critically engage with media, discern biases, and produce content.

In this study, Media Literacy Theory is used to assess how media clubs in Rwandan secondary schools develop students' media literacy skills, focusing on critical analysis, ethical media practices, and content creation. By participating in activities like news reporting and editorial work, students enhance their understanding of media processes, aligning with the theoretical principles of media literacy (Hobbs, 2019).

### 2.1.2 Constructivism Theory

According to Siregar et. al (2024) the constructivism as a theory suggests that meaningful learning arises when students actively build their own knowledge. It is grounded in opinion and scientific study of how persons learn, emphasizing that people develop their understanding and knowledge of the world by engaging in experiences and replicating on them. The central principle of the constructivist perspective is that students build their own understanding through direct experiences and successive reflection. This theory underscores the students' dynamic role in modeling their perception of the world. Drawing from constructivist theory, the research acknowledges that learning is an active process where individuals construct knowledge based on their experiences. Media clubs, as interactive and participatory platforms, are viewed as environments that facilitate active learning. Students engage with various forms of media, collaborate with peers, and construct their understanding of media literacy through practical experiences.

In summary this theoretical framework provides a multifaceted lens through which the research project examines the role of media clubs in developing students' media literacy skills in Rwandan secondary schools. It integrates key theoretical views to suggest a complete understanding of the complex interaction between media clubs, student learning, and the broader socio-cultural context. Both theories demonstrate how media clubs enhance critical thinking, ethical understanding, and practical media skills, aligning with the study's focus on evaluating media literacy development in Rwanda.

### 2.2 Empirical Review

Media literacy is increasingly recognized as a fundamental skill in modern education, especially given the complex digital media landscape students encounter today. Media clubs, in particular, have emerged as a significant tool for enhancing students' media literacy (Buckingham, 2022). This review explores both theoretical and empirical perspectives on media literacy and the role of media clubs in developing critical thinking, media production, and overall educational development.

Developing media literacy can be approached through various methods, as highlighted in existing literature. One common approach is integrating media literacy into the school curriculum. According to Hobbs (2023), incorporating lessons that teach students how to critically engage with media content—such as recognizing bias, understanding media ownership, and identifying credible sources—equips them with essential skills. Another method is encouraging media literacy through digital literacy programs. Buckingham (2022) notes that in today's digital age, students need to understand not only traditional forms of media but also digital platforms. These programs teach students to evaluate online information, helping them navigate social media and the internet responsibly.

Outside of formal education, experiential learning plays a crucial role in developing media literacy. The UNESCO (2019) report on media literacy emphasizes hands-on experiences such as creating media content (videos, blogs, podcasts) as a powerful tool for learning. By participating in media production, students become more aware of how messages are constructed and how media influences public perception. This active engagement allows them to apply critical thinking to their own media consumption.

Media clubs serve as an important platform for fostering media literacy through such experiential learning. These clubs are extracurricular activities where students participate in various media production activities like journalism, broadcasting, and editorial work. Media clubs provide students with the opportunity to practice creating news stories, editing, and analyzing media content in a real-world context. According to Vickery (2014), media clubs help students develop not only practical skills in media production but also critical thinking abilities, as they are encouraged to evaluate the content they produce and consume. The collaborative environment in media clubs also allows for peer feedback, mentoring from teachers, and discussion on ethical issues in media production, further reinforcing students' media literacy.

Empirical studies have consistently shown that media clubs enhance students' media literacy. Vickery (2014) demonstrated that participation in after-school media clubs enables students to build digital literacy and critical thinking skills, both of which are essential in today's information-rich society.

Monteiro and Almeida (2019) found that media clubs positively impact students' academic achievement and personal development by fostering leadership, time management, and collaboration skills. Similarly, Reem (2022) highlighted the role of media clubs in empowering students to develop resilience against misinformation and disinformation.

In the African context, Cunliffe-Jones (2021) emphasized that media clubs in sub-Saharan Africa, including Rwanda, help students critically engage with both local and global media content. Niyitegeka (2020) further underscored the importance of media clubs in Rwanda, noting that they promote students' personal growth and career readiness in media industries.

The above empirical studies underscore the value of media clubs in fostering media literacy. These clubs provide practical experiences that enhance critical thinking, ethical understanding, and media production skills, contributing to students' academic and personal development. This research adds to the body of knowledge by exploring how media clubs influence media literacy among Rwandan secondary school students.

This research has not yet been conducted in Rwanda, making it crucial for enhancing media literacy in the country's education system. It will demonstrate how media clubs can help develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, contributing to more effective educational policies and extracurricular programs.

Additionally, the findings will highlight how media clubs prepare students for careers in media by fostering leadership, ethical awareness, and collaboration. This will support the growth of Rwanda's media industry and ensure that students are well-equipped to navigate the digital landscape.

### III. METHODOLOGY

Kothari (2022) defines methodology as the set of methods and principles applied in studying a specific subject. This section outlines the research methodology employed in examining the role of media clubs in developing students' media literacy skills in Rwandan secondary schools. It discusses the research design, target population, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and procedures for ensuring reliability and validity.

#### 3.1 Research Design

As Kothari (2022) stated that research design refers to the structure of research methods and techniques selected by a researcher to conduct a study. The research design that was used was mixed whereby both quantitative and qualitative methods have been used to collect and analyze information and data that help to provide credible research, where quantitative method was used first, then after qualitative method was used to analyze the quality of data collected based on quantitative method. This study was conducted in Nyarugenge District of Kigali City, specifically in two secondary schools, Ecole Secondaire Scientifique Islamique Nyamirambo and Groupe Scolaire Cyahafi. The reason behind was that students in Kigali City as an urban area, easily access and consume Rwandan media outlets more than others in the country and there many schools which have media clubs than elsewhere.

#### 3.2 Target Population

The target population comprised students participating in media clubs and the teachers guiding these clubs. In this case, media club students and teachers from the two schools: Groupe Scolaire Cyahafi and Ecole Secondaire Scientifique Islamique Nyamirambo were included. A total sample of 100 participants was used through purposive sampling.

The Neyman allocation formula as used by Hidiroglou & Kozak (2017) was applied to determine the sample size, ensuring that participants from both schools were proportionately represented. This allowed the study to collect data from a balanced group of media club members and their mentors. Data was collected through three methods: surveys, interviews and document review.

In the survey, structured questionnaires were administered to 80 students to gather quantitative data on their participation in media clubs and media literacy skills. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 teachers and 10 administrators all of whom had direct involvement with media clubs either as facilitators or supervisors. These individuals were relevant to the study because they have firsthand knowledge of how the clubs operate and their impact on students' critical thinking and media skills. Teachers provided insights on the educational value of the clubs and the skills students acquire, while administrators discussed the structural support and policies that enable media clubs to function effectively, providing qualitative insights into the role of media clubs in promoting media literacy. To understand the work of the clubs, data on club documents, media projects, and relevant reports were also analyzed to supplement survey and interview data.

#### 3.3 Reliability and Validity of the Study Instruments

A pilot study was conducted to assess the reliability of the survey, with Cronbach's alpha yielding a value of 0.85, indicating strong internal consistency among the survey items (Sunhee & Sumi, 2024). This ensured that the questions measuring students' participation in media clubs and media literacy skills were reliable and consistent in capturing the intended data.

For the interviews, reliability was ensured through a consistent coding process applied across all responses, allowing for uniform interpretation of qualitative data. Additionally, cross-referencing and validation checks were conducted during the document review process, ensuring the accuracy of data from club documents, media projects, and relevant reports. This multi-step approach strengthened the overall reliability of the study's findings.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, with strict adherence to confidentiality. Ethical approval was secured from relevant educational authorities, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage.

## IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Understanding the demographics of the respondents provides context for interpreting the findings on media literacy development through media clubs.

#### 4.1.1 Gender Distribution

The gender distribution of the 100 respondents shows a nearly equal balance between males and females, indicating inclusivity in media club participation.

**Table 1**

*Gender of Respondents*

Gender of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Male	52	52.0%
Female	47	47.0%
Other	1	1.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The nearly equal participation rate in media clubs suggests that gender is no longer a significant barrier, indicating an inclusive environment where both male and female students can engage in media activities. This reflects progress toward gender equality in traditionally male-dominated spaces.

This shift indicates that young women are becoming empowered through participation in media clubs, gaining opportunities to develop their voices and skills. By challenging traditional gender roles, female students are playing a more active role in shaping news and public discourse, contributing to the broader movement toward gender empowerment in Rwanda.

#### 4.1.2 Media Club Participation by Level of Study

The slightly higher participation of upper secondary students in media clubs (52%) can be attributed to their increased awareness of media's role in self-expression and communication. As they mature, these students often recognize the influence of media on society and personal development, motivating them to engage in clubs that enhance their skills.

Additionally, upper secondary students typically have more opportunities and resources for extracurricular activities, making them more likely to explore media-related career pathways. This suggests that they understand the importance of media as a tool for self-expression, leading to greater participation in media clubs.

**Table 2**

*Grade/Class of Respondents*

Level of study	Frequency	Percentage
Lower secondary school	48	48.0
Upper secondary school	52	52.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

#### 4.1.3 Impact of Media Club Activities on Media Literacy Development

##### *Participation in News Writing and Reporting*

Student engagement in news writing and reporting is a central activity of media clubs. The majority of students reported frequent involvement in these activities, which are directly linked to the development of media literacy skills such as writing, critical thinking, and understanding of media ethics.

**Table 3***Frequency of Participation in News Writing/Reporting*

<b>Participation in News Reporting and Writing</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Rarely	15	15
Occasionally	30	30
Frequently	35	35
Always	20	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The finding that over half of the students (55%) participate frequently or always in news reporting and writing activities indicates a strong connection between media club participation and the development of media literacy. This result may stem from the active, hands-on experiences provided by these clubs, which align with constructivist learning theory. According to Stoyanova, (2023), students learn best through engagement and real-world applications. By participating in news-related activities, students are likely building essential skills that contribute to their overall media literacy.

Qualitative insights reveal further depth. When asked about their experiences in media clubs, one student remarked, “Through media club activities, I’ve learned how to critically analyze information and write more compelling articles that engage readers.” Another student noted, “Participating in these clubs has helped me understand media ethics and the responsibility that comes with reporting.” These responses suggest that students are not only improving their technical skills but also developing a critical mindset towards media consumption and production. In the context of Rwandan society, where media literacy is increasingly crucial for navigating both local and global information, these insights highlight the importance of media clubs in fostering informed, responsible future citizens. This aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the role of media education in empowering youth to engage critically with information (Vickery, 2014).

**4.1.4 Engagement in Editorial Activities**

Editorial activities such as peer review, content editing and fact-checking are essential for fostering students' analytical and critical thinking skills. Approximately half of the respondents frequently engage in these tasks.

**Table 4***Types of Editorial Activities Found Most Beneficial*

<b>Editorial activity</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
Content Editing	40	40.0
Peer Review	30	30.0
Fact-Checking	20	20.0
Layout and Design	10	10.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The question asked was, “How do peer review processes in your media club impact the content you produce?” One media club leader responded, “Peer review processes help us think more critically about the content we produce, making sure it is accurate and aligns with ethical standards.”

This response highlights the significant role of peer review in enhancing the quality and credibility of media content produced by students. By engaging in peer review, students not only receive constructive feedback but also develop a deeper understanding of media ethics and accuracy. This aligns with literature suggesting that exposure to peer review activities fosters critical thinking and responsibility in media production. According to Jones and Green (2021), peer review in educational settings encourages students to evaluate their work critically and consider multiple perspectives, which ultimately leads to higher-quality outputs. This supports the findings of this study, demonstrating that media clubs are instrumental in cultivating a culture of accountability and ethical awareness among young media producers.

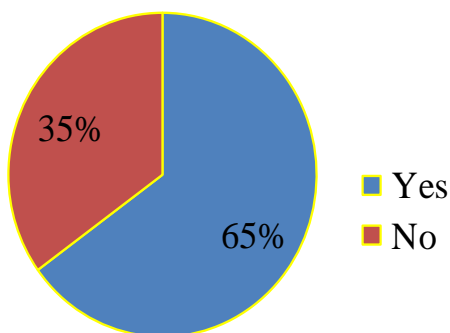
**4.1.5 Feedback Mechanisms and Media Literacy Development**

Feedback from peers, teachers, and media club audiences plays a crucial role in improving students' media literacy skills, particularly in writing, analyzing, and understanding audiences.

*Seeking Feedback*

A significant proportion of students (65%) actively seek feedback on the articles they produce, highlighting its importance in their learning process. This indicates that students value constructive criticism as a means to enhance their writing skills and media literacy, reflecting a commitment to improvement.

Research supports this emphasis on feedback in education. Shute & Rahimi (2023) notes that feedback helps learners identify their strengths and weaknesses, guiding them toward more effective practices. Reeves & Crowther (2019) further emphasize that seeking feedback fosters a growth mindset, encouraging students to view challenges as opportunities for learning. This proactive approach in media clubs underscores their role in promoting collaboration and continuous improvement, ultimately enhancing media literacy development.



**Figure 1**  
*Actively Seeking Feedback on Media Club Articles*

**4.1.6 Contribution of Feedback to Skills Development**

The majority of students reported that feedback helped improve their writing quality (40%), enhanced analytical skills (30%), and provided a better understanding of the audience (20%). These findings underscore the multifaceted benefits of feedback in media club activities. The emphasis on writing quality aligns with Kamanzi (2023), who found that constructive feedback directly contributes to students' ability to produce polished and compelling content.

Moreover, the enhancement of analytical skills corroborates Sadler (2021) research, which highlights that feedback encourages students to critically assess their work and consider different perspectives, thereby deepening their analytical abilities. The reported improvement in understanding the audience reflects the importance of audience awareness in media production, a concept also emphasized by Kamanzi (2023). Overall, these results illustrate how feedback mechanisms within media clubs are instrumental in fostering key skills necessary for effective media literacy.

**Table 5**  
*Contribution of Feedback to Skills Development*

Contribution	Respondents	Percentages
Improved writing quality	40	40.0
Enhanced analytical skills	30	30.0
Better understanding of audience	20	20.0
Increased confidence	10	10.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

When asked about the impact of feedback on their writing, one student remarked, “The feedback I receive from both peers and teachers help me refine my work and see areas where I can improve, especially in making my articles more engaging and factual.” Another student added, “Getting constructive criticism pushes me to think critically about my writing and ensures I’m presenting accurate information.”

These responses highlight that student’s value feedback as crucial for improving their writing and critical thinking skills. Shute & Rahimi (2023) supports this by emphasizing that specific feedback helps learners identify their strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, Ramani et al. (2019) note that seeking feedback fosters a growth mindset, allowing students to view critiques as opportunities for improvement. Thus, the feedback culture within



media clubs enhances students' writing abilities and promotes a collaborative learning environment essential for developing media literacy skills.

#### 4.1.7 Role of Mentorship in Media Literacy Development

Media club mentorship is identified as a crucial factor in shaping students' understanding of media ethics and critical thinking.

##### *Media club teacher as a Mentor*

Most students (80%) rated their media club teachers as effective or very effective mentors, which highlights the importance of guidance in developing media literacy skills.

**Table 6**

*Effectiveness of Media Club Teacher as Mentor*

Effectiveness	Respondents	Frequency
Very Effective	35	35
Effective	45	45
Neutral	15	15
Ineffective	3	3
Very Ineffective	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

When asked about the role of mentorship in their media club experience, one member shared, “Our teacher plays a key role in mentoring us on how to ethically gather and present news, which has greatly improved our understanding of the journalistic process.” Another student noted, “With our teacher’s support, we’ve learned the importance of being truthful and responsible in our reporting.”

These insights highlight the significance of teacher mentorship in shaping students' understanding of ethical journalism. According to Chen (2022), effective mentorship not only imparts technical skills but also instills a strong ethical foundation in budding journalists. Moreover, Williams (2023) emphasizes that guidance from experienced mentors fosters critical thinking and ethical decision-making, which are vital in today’s media landscape. Thus, the mentorship provided within media clubs is crucial for equipping students with both the practical skills and ethical standards necessary for responsible news reporting.

#### 4.1.8 Social Media Use and Media Literacy Skills

##### *Usage of Social Media for News*

The findings show that 60% of students frequently use social media as a news source, reflecting a trend in how young people consume information. This reliance offers opportunities for diverse viewpoints and real-time updates, enhancing engagement with current events, as noted by Gunter (2019).

However, challenges arise from the prevalence of misinformation on social media, making it difficult for students to discern credible information. Smith & Parker (2021) emphasizes the importance of critical media literacy education to address these concerns. Media clubs can play a vital role in equipping students with the skills needed to evaluate the reliability of news on social media, ensuring they navigate the digital landscape effectively.

**Table 7**

*Frequency of Social Media Use for News Sourcing*

Frequency	Respondents	Percentage
Rarely	10	10.0
Occasionally	30	30.0
Frequently	40	40.0
Always	20	20.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

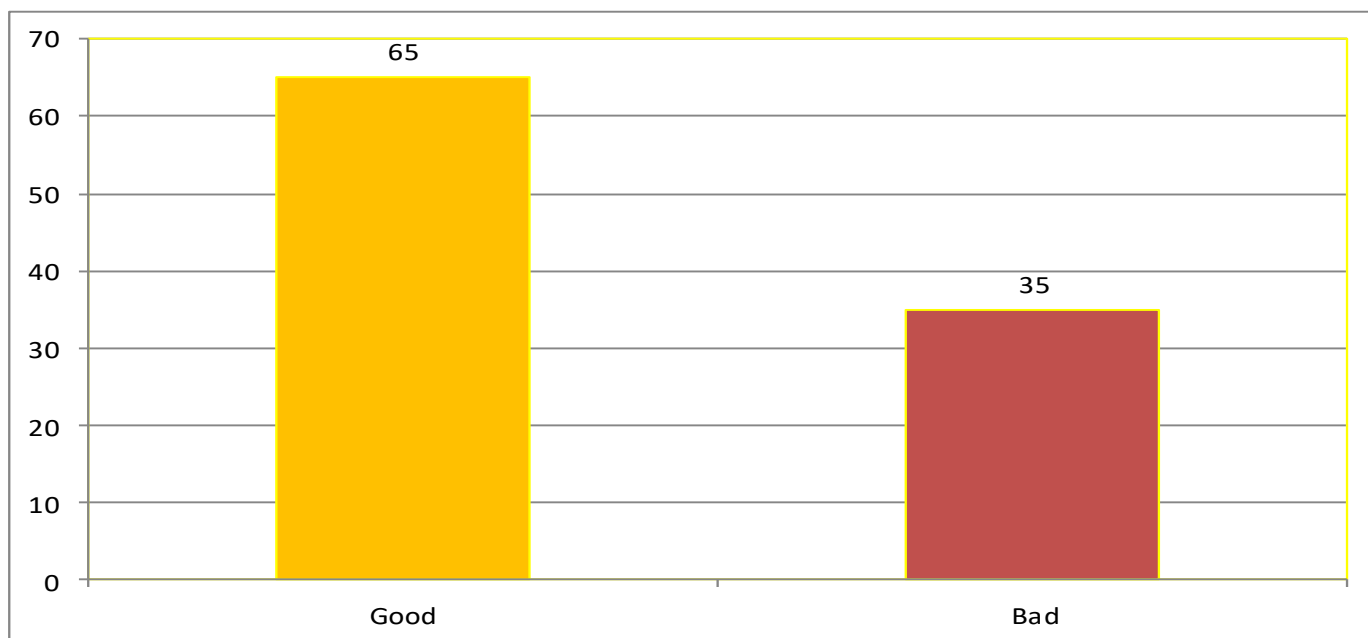
#### 4.1.9 Assessment of Social Media as a News Tool

While 65% of students view social media as a valuable tool for accessing news, a notable 35% express concerns about the reliability of information found on these platforms. This dichotomy reflects broader discussions in



the literature regarding the role of social media in news consumption. According to Gunter (2019), social media can enhance information accessibility and provide diverse perspectives, making it an appealing resource for students.

However, the concerns raised by the 35% highlight the challenges associated with misinformation and the need for critical evaluation skills. Smith & Parker (2021) underscores the importance of media literacy education in helping individuals discern credible sources from unreliable ones. Media clubs can serve as a vital platform for fostering these skills, guiding students to navigate social media effectively and critically engage with the content they encounter.



**Figure 2**  
*Assessment of Social Media as News Tool*

When asked about their views on using social media for news, one respondent stated, “Social media is useful for staying updated, but we’ve learned to cross-check facts with other sources to avoid spreading misinformation.” This sentiment was echoed by another student who noted, “We’ve been taught to be skeptical and verify what we read online.” These responses highlight students' growing awareness of the importance of fact-checking in the digital age.

The emphasis on cross-checking information aligns with findings from Chen (2022), who argue that media literacy education equips students with the critical thinking skills necessary to navigate the complexities of social media. Furthermore, as reported by Bhardwaj & Kumar (2023), teaching students to verify sources is essential for combating misinformation, especially in an era where social media plays a significant role in news dissemination. This underscores the vital role media clubs play in fostering a culture of critical evaluation among students.

## V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusions

The study examined the role of media clubs in enhancing students' media literacy skills in Rwandan secondary schools, focusing on ESSI Nyamirambo and G.S. Cyahafi. The research findings demonstrate that media clubs play a significant role in developing critical media skills among students, including news reporting, content creation, editorial processes, and ethical media practices. Participation in media clubs was found to strengthen students' abilities to analyze, evaluate, and produce media content, enhancing their critical thinking and media literacy.

Editorial activities within media clubs fostered a deeper understanding of language, tone, and content structure, while reader feedback promoted a more audience-centered approach to media creation. The mentorship provided by media club coordinators was pivotal in guiding students through ethical considerations and practical media challenges, equipping them with the necessary skills for responsible media engagement.

The findings also highlighted the potential of social media as a tool for news consumption, though it requires a strong emphasis on media literacy education to navigate the challenges of misinformation and content verification.

Overall, the study underscores the importance of integrating media literacy education within the secondary school curriculum to prepare students for informed and responsible media consumption in an increasingly digital world.

In conclusion, media clubs serve as an effective platform for improving students' media literacy, providing practical experiences that are essential for critical engagement with media content. The study highlights the need for continued support for media clubs to ensure students are equipped with the necessary skills to navigate the complexities of modern media landscapes.

## 5.2 Recommendations

Grounded on the findings of the research, the following recommendations are offered for students, policymakers, teachers, and teaching institutions to further enrich media literacy through media clubs:

*For Students:* Energetically participate in all parts of media club actions, comprising news reporting, editorial tasks, and feedback processes. Use these experiences to advance critical thinking, media analysis, and ethical content creation skills. Improve your ability to judgmentally evaluate social media content and verify information to better circumnavigate the digital media landscape.

*For Policymakers:* Implement policies that upkeep the incorporation of media literacy into the school curriculum. Ensure that media clubs are sufficiently backed and resourced to deliver expressive learning experiences. Boost teamwork between schools to share successful strategies and practices in media literacy education.

*For Teachers:* Integrate media literacy principles into teaching practices and support students in engaging with media content critically. Facilitate hands-on activities in media clubs that bring into line with news reporting, editorial practices, and reader feedback to expand students' understanding of media principles. Suggest guidance and mentorship to help students steer the ethical and practical aspects of media creation and consumption.

*For Teaching Institutions:* Develop comprehensive media literacy packages that comprise organized media club activities. Distribute resources to support media club actions and ensure that these packages are frequently revised and modernized to mirror current media trends and challenges. Deliver training for educators to efficiently integrate media literacy into their teaching and support students' media-related activities.

These recommendations are intended to build on the study's findings and ensure that media clubs efficiently contribute to increasing students' media literacy skills.

## REFERENCES

- Andersson, Y., Dalquist, U., & Ohlsson, J. (2018). *Youth and news in a digital media environment: Nordic-Baltic perspectives* (pp. 125-131). Nordicom.
- Bhardwaj, A., & Kumar, V. (2023). *Pandemics in the age of social media: Social media as an enabler to combat misinformation* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003315278>
- Buckingham, D. (2022). *Media literacy, equity, and justice: Media education and citizenship in neoliberal times* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003175599>
- Chen, C. (2022). *Critical thinking ability in the age of digital media – Employing an updated measurement to understand fitness and nutrition information process among young adults in the U.S.* [Master's thesis, Washington State University]. <https://doi.org/10.7273/000004418>
- Cunliffe-Jones, P. (2021). *The state of media literacy in Sub-Saharan Africa 2020 and a theory of misinformation literacy*. University of Westminster Press. <https://doi.org/10.16997/book53.a>
- Douglas, K., & Share, J. (2019). *DouglasThe critical media literacy guide: Engaging media and transforming education*.
- Fastrez, P., & Landry, N. (2023). *Media literacy and media education research methods: A handbook* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Gunter, A. T. (2019). *Closing the opportunity gap: Facilitators of and barriers to access and opportunity from the culturally and linguistically diverse parent perspective* [Doctoral dissertation, The George Washington University].
- Hidiroglou, M. A., & Kozak, M. (2017). Stratification of skewed populations: A comparison of optimisation-based versus approximate methods. *International Statistical Review*, 8(7), 89-92. h
- Hobbs, R. (2023). Media literacy and media education research methods: Issues of pedagogy, alignment, and context in assessing measures of media literacy. *Educational Media International*, 59(3), 189-208.
- Kamanzi, O. (2023). *A case study: Effective African youth leadership development in an East African Community*. Free Press.
- Kothari, C. R. (2019). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques* (4th ed.). New Age International Publishers.

- Lomteva, E., & Demidov, A. (2024). *The role of media education in shaping the conscious choice of a future profession among young people in the era of information glut*. Cherkas Global University.
- Melki, J. (2017). *International handbook of media literacy education* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Miller, D. (2020). The role of industry professionals in media education: Bridging the gap between theory and practice. *International Journal of Media and Communication Studies*, 18(4), 87-102.
- Monteiro, S., & Almeida, L. (2019). The benefits of participating in extracurricular activities. *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*, 3(11), 76-80.
- Niyitegeka, E. (2020). *Exploring the acquisition of media literacy skills through media participation in Rwanda* [Master's thesis, Lund University].
- Potter, J. W. (2022). *The concept of media literacy: Evolving concepts in the age of social media*. New Age International Publishers.
- Ramani, S., Könings, K. D., Ginsburg, S., & van der Vleuten, C. P. M. (2019). Twelve tips to promote a feedback culture with a growth mind-set: Swinging the feedback pendulum from recipes to relationships. *Medical teacher*, 41(6), 625–631. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2018.1432850>
- Reem, M. A. Z. (2022). The impact of media and information literacy on students' acquisition of the skills needed to detect fake news. *Journal of Media Literacy Education Pre-Prints*, 7(3), 78-80.
- Reeves, J., & Crowther, T. (2019). Teacher feedback on the use of innovative social media simulations to enhance critical thinking in young people on radicalisation, extremism, sexual exploitation, and grooming. *An International Journal of Personal, Social and Emotional Development*, 9(6), 45-67.
- Sadler, D. R. (2021). Approaches to assessment that enhance learning in higher education: Beyond feedback - developing student capability in complex appraisal. *Journal of Connoisseurship Approach*, 46, 1-12.
- Shute, V., & Rahimi, S. (2023). Stealth assessment: A theoretically grounded and psychometrically sound method to assess, support, and investigate learning in technology-rich environments. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 8(5), 78-79.
- Siregar, B. H., Panjaitan, A., Hasratuddin, H., Kairuddin, K., Mulyono, M., & Rahman, A. A. (2024). Digital media innovation based on multimedia cognitive and constructivist theory in a cultural context: Encouraging students' higher-order thinking skills. *Journal Teori dan Aplikasi Matematika*, 8(1), 20-24.
- Smith, K., & Parker, L. (2021). Reconfiguring literacies in the age of misinformation and disinformation. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education*, 17(2), 1-27.
- Stoyanova, K. D. (2023). Media literacy and critical thinking in children: media pedagogy.
- Stoyanova, K. D. (2023). *Media literacy and critical thinking in 5-7-year-old children* (Doctoral dissertation, Sofia University).
- Sunhee, P., & Sumi, O. (2024). Development and psychometric analysis of the smombie scale for adolescents. *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*, 8(5), 89-98.
- UNESCO. (2019). *Global framework for media and information literacy cities*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- Vickery, J. R. (2014). The role of after-school digital media clubs in closing participation gaps and expanding social networks. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 47(1), 78-95.
- Williams, J. Z. (2023). *Examining the effects of a mentoring program on high school students' academic achievement and attendance*. Palgrave Macmillan.