

Media Literacy, Student Reading Engagement, and Text Genre Exposure: Determinants of Evaluative Reading Comprehension among Grade 9 Students

Irene Grace U. Calimutan¹, Kriscentti Exzur P. Barcelona, PhD¹

¹Lourdes College, Inc., Cagayan de Oro City, Misamis Oriental, Philippines

Publication history: Received: March 27, 2026; Revised: April 9, 2026; Accepted: April 13, 2026

Email of Corresponding Author: irene.calimutan@lccdo.edu.ph

Abstract

This study investigated the influence of media literacy, reading engagement, and text genre exposure on evaluative reading comprehension among Grade 9 learners, addressing the persistent gap in higher-order reading skills. Anchored on Rosenblatt's transactional theory, Alagaran's explore-engage-empower model, Fredricks et al.'s engagement theory, and Paré's rhetorical genre theory, the research employed a descriptive-correlational design. Data were collected from 187 Grade 9 students in a public secondary school using a composite survey and a 50-item evaluative reading comprehension test adapted from validated instruments. Descriptive statistics and regression analysis were utilized to determine levels and relationships among variables. Findings revealed that learners demonstrated high levels of media literacy and reading engagement, moderate text genre exposure, and a very good level of evaluative reading comprehension, although variations in performance were observed. Among the variables examined, only media literacy significantly predicted evaluative reading comprehension, indicating its critical role in developing higher-order literacy skills. In contrast, reading engagement and text genre exposure were not significant independent predictors, suggesting that participation and exposure alone are insufficient without deeper critical processing. The results highlight the need for instructional approaches that integrate media literacy, promote sustained engagement, and diversify text exposure to strengthen evaluative reading skills. The study concludes that evaluative reading comprehension is shaped by the interaction of multiple literacy-related factors and recommends the integration of media literacy into classroom instruction, alongside the enhancement of critical thinking and analytical skills. This study supports SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by promoting critical literacy and informed decision-making. It contributes to educational and socio-digital sustainability by fostering learners' ability to critically engage with information, navigate complex media environments, and participate responsibly in society.

Keywords: Evaluative Reading Comprehension, Grade 9 Learners, Media Literacy, Reading Engagement, Text Genre Exposure

1. Introduction

Evaluative reading comprehension is a higher-order literacy skill essential for Grade 9 students, enabling them to critically assess texts, evaluate arguments, and distinguish facts from opinions. Despite high basic literacy rates, Filipino learners demonstrate persistent difficulties in advanced comprehension, particularly in evaluative reading tasks. This study examines how media literacy, reading engagement, and text genre exposure influence evaluative reading comprehension, addressing critical gaps in both local and international research while contributing to educational and sustainability goals.

1.1 Background of the Study on Evaluative Reading Comprehension among Grade 9 Learners

Reading comprehension is fundamental to academic success and lifelong learning, particularly at the evaluative level, which requires critical thinking and analysis (Hammad, 2021). Grade 9 students are expected to assess credibility, identify bias, and evaluate arguments. However, global and national assessments reveal weak performance in higher-order reading skills. The 2022 PISA results indicate that few Filipino students reach advanced comprehension levels (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2025), while functional literacy remains significantly lower than basic literacy rates (Department of Education Philippines, 2025). The difficulty in evaluative comprehension is consistent across contexts, with students generally performing lower in evaluative tasks than in literal or inferential comprehension (List and Sun, 2023; Yusuf et al., 2024; Lemu et al., 2024). Local studies similarly report low proficiency in evaluative reading (Caraig and Quimbo, 2022; Abejuela et al., 2023). These challenges highlight the need to examine factors such as media literacy, engagement, and genre exposure that may influence students' ability to critically interpret texts.

1.2 Themes and Insights from Literature on Media Literacy, Reading Engagement, Text Genre Exposure, and Evaluative Comprehension

Literature consistently identifies evaluative reading comprehension as a cognitively demanding skill that involves assessing credibility, identifying bias, evaluating arguments, judging relevance, and making value judgments (Paige et al., 2024;

Study.com, 2023; Mukhlis, 2023). Students often struggle with these dimensions due to limited critical reasoning and metacognitive abilities (Magdato and Satparam, 2023). Media literacy is recognized as a key factor in enhancing evaluative comprehension, as it develops learners' capacity to analyze and evaluate information (Hobbs, 2010; NAMLE, 2025), yet studies reveal a gap between conceptual awareness and practical application, particularly in ethical reasoning, verification, and critical reflection (Carambas and Tibaldo, 2025; Hobbs, 2021). Reading engagement also plays a crucial role, with engaged learners demonstrating deeper understanding and stronger critical thinking skills (Fredricks et al., 2004; Lee et al., 2021; Mofreh et al., 2023), although research often prioritizes behavioral aspects over emotional and cognitive dimensions. Similarly, genre exposure contributes to comprehension by fostering interpretive flexibility and critical literacy (Andreani et al., 2021; Nguyen, 2023), yet instructional materials frequently lack sufficient diversity, limiting students' exposure to varied text structures and purposes (Dost, 2025). Overall, the literature highlights that evaluative skills remain underdeveloped, credibility and bias evaluation are inconsistently taught, reasoning and metacognition are insufficiently addressed, interventions tend to improve general comprehension rather than evaluative abilities, and integrated models examining media literacy, engagement, and genre exposure are still limited.

1.3 Local, National, and Global Context of Reading and Media Literacy

Globally, students demonstrate difficulty in evaluative reading despite adequate basic comprehension (List and Sun, 2023; Yusuf et al., 2024). In the Philippines, similar trends persist, with learners struggling to evaluate credibility, bias, and argument quality (Caraig and Quimbo, 2022). The Philippine K–12 curriculum emphasizes Media and Information Literacy to address these gaps, recognizing the importance of critical thinking in the digital age. Media literacy has become essential due to increased exposure to digital content and misinformation (National Association of Media Literacy Education, 2025). However, disparities in digital access and socio-economic conditions affect students' ability to develop these skills (Alneyadi, 2023). At the global level, media literacy programs improve awareness but often fail to produce measurable gains in evaluative comprehension (Afrilyasanti et al., 2025). Similarly, engagement and genre exposure are recognized as important but are rarely examined together within a unified framework, particularly in Southeast Asian contexts.

1.4 Theoretical and Conceptual Basis for Media Literacy, Engagement, and Genre Exposure

This study is anchored on three key theories. Rosenblatt's (1993) transactional theory explains comprehension as an interaction between reader and text. Alagaran's (2015) explore-engage-empower model emphasizes critical engagement with media, supporting the role of media literacy in evaluative comprehension. Fredricks et al. (2004) engagement theory highlights behavioral, emotional, and cognitive participation as essential to learning. Paré's (2014) rhetorical genre theory underscores the importance of genre awareness in interpreting texts. These theories collectively support the assumption that media literacy, reading engagement, and genre exposure enhance evaluative reading comprehension by fostering critical thinking, active participation, and interpretive flexibility.

1.5 Research Gaps and Rationale

Despite extensive research, several gaps remain. First, evaluative reading comprehension is consistently underdeveloped and insufficiently targeted in instruction (Magdato and Satparam, 2023). Second, media literacy is often treated as a separate construct rather than integrated with reading comprehension (Carambas and Tibaldo, 2025). Third, reading engagement studies focus on general comprehension rather than evaluative outcomes (Lee et al., 2021). Fourth, text genre exposure research is limited in scope and rarely linked to higher-order comprehension (Dost, 2025). Most importantly, there is a lack of quantitative models examining the combined influence of media literacy, reading engagement, and genre exposure on evaluative reading comprehension, particularly among Grade 9 learners in the Philippine context. This study addresses these gaps by investigating the interaction of these variables within a single framework.

1.6 Alignment with Relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

This study aligns with SDG 4 – Quality Education, as it promotes the development of critical literacy skills necessary for inclusive and equitable education. By enhancing evaluative reading comprehension, the study supports learners' ability to think critically, analyze information, and make informed decisions. It also contributes to SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, as media literacy and evaluative reading enable students to identify misinformation, evaluate credibility, and engage responsibly in democratic and civic processes. Additionally, the study supports SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, as strong literacy and critical thinking skills are essential for employability and lifelong learning in a knowledge-based economy.

1.7 Importance of the Study to Multidisciplinary Sustainability

This study contributes to educational sustainability by strengthening literacy instruction and promoting higher-order thinking skills. It supports socio-economic sustainability by preparing learners for informed participation in society and the workforce. It also advances digital and technological sustainability by fostering responsible media use and critical engagement with digital content. Furthermore, the study contributes to community and cultural sustainability by encouraging critical awareness of diverse perspectives, promoting inclusivity, and supporting informed citizenship. By

integrating media literacy, engagement, and genre exposure, the research provides a multidisciplinary approach to developing reflective, analytical, and empowered learners capable of navigating complex information environments.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationship between media literacy, student engagement in reading activities, text genre exposure, and evaluative reading comprehension among Grade 9 learners. As a descriptive approach, it documented these variables as they naturally occur without manipulation, allowing for an accurate representation of learners' existing levels of literacy, engagement, and comprehension (Heffernen, 2025). Data were collected using standardized instruments and structured procedures to generate numerical data for analysis. The study was correlational in nature as it determined the statistical relationships among variables rather than establishing causality. Following Mekonnen (2020), correlational research measures variables to examine their relationships without experimental control. Correlation coefficients were computed to determine the strength and direction of associations between evaluative reading comprehension and the predictors: media literacy, reading engagement, and text genre exposure. This approach enabled the identification of meaningful relationships among variables within the Grade 9 context without implying cause-and-effect conclusions.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in a public secondary school in the Division of Cagayan de Oro City during the school year 2025–2026. The school setting provided a suitable environment for data collection due to the availability of Grade 9 learners, qualified personnel, and adequate infrastructure necessary for the implementation of the research procedures.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents consisted of Grade 9 students selected from five sections in the identified public high school. These learners were chosen because they possess the cognitive and social maturity required to provide meaningful responses and are expected, based on curriculum standards, to demonstrate evaluative reading comprehension skills such as analyzing texts, evaluating credibility, and distinguishing facts from opinions. Only Grade 9 students were included to ensure alignment with the study's focus, while other grade levels were excluded as they do not emphasize evaluative comprehension at the same level.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

A total of 187 participants were selected from a population of 350 Grade 9 students using an accessible population sampling technique. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's formula, ensuring adequacy for the population size. This approach allowed for practical and efficient data collection by selecting students who were readily available during the study period. The participants represented diverse academic abilities and reading experiences, providing a comprehensive basis for analysis. Only the students themselves completed the instruments to maintain data integrity, and proxy responses were not permitted.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study utilized a composite modified survey instrument and a 50-item evaluative reading comprehension test to measure the variables. The survey combined adapted items from validated instruments to assess media literacy, reading engagement, and text genre exposure. The media literacy component was based on Hallaq's (2013) Digital Online Media Literacy Assessment, while items for genre exposure and reading engagement were adapted from McGeown and Smith (2024). These instruments captured behavioral, cognitive, and emotional aspects of engagement, as well as exposure to different text genres. The evaluative reading comprehension test consisted of five passages adapted from Paige et al. (2024) and UNESCO (2024), each containing ten questions designed to measure specific evaluative skills. This structure ensured comprehensive assessment of students' ability to analyze, evaluate, and interpret texts. All instruments underwent expert validation to ensure content relevance, clarity, and cultural appropriateness. Reliability testing through pilot study with 30 non-participants utilized Cronbach's alpha, yielding acceptable to high reliability coefficients across all variables. Media literacy subscales ranged from .741 to .838, reading engagement from .876 to .891, and genre exposure from .820 to .860, indicating strong internal consistency. Since all values exceeded standard thresholds, no items were removed or revised. The scoring procedure categorized evaluative reading comprehension into levels ranging from poor to outstanding based on mean scores, while media literacy, engagement, and genre exposure were interpreted using a Likert scale from very low to very high. This structured scoring system ensured consistent interpretation of results.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection followed a structured and ethical process. Approval was first obtained from the Lourdes College Research Ethics Committee, followed by permissions from the Division of Cagayan de Oro City Office and the target school. Questionnaires were then administered to Grade 9 students during regular class hours to ensure convenience and minimal

disruption. Ethical considerations were guided by the Belmont Report of 1979, emphasizing respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Participants were provided with informed consent forms explaining the study's purpose, procedures, voluntary nature, and confidentiality measures. For minors, parental consent and student assent were secured. Participation was voluntary, and students could withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained through coded data and secure storage of responses. Identifiable information was excluded, and access to data was limited to the researcher. All records were handled securely and scheduled for disposal after completion of the study. These procedures ensured the protection of participants' rights and the integrity of the research process.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were used to analyze the levels of media literacy, reading engagement, text genre exposure, and evaluative reading comprehension. These statistics provided a clear summary of participants' performance across variables. Regression analysis was employed to determine the extent to which media literacy, reading engagement, and text genre exposure predict evaluative reading comprehension. This method identified the strength and direction of relationships between independent and dependent variables. The results, presented in Table 1, summarize the computed coefficients, significance values, and explanatory power of the model, providing a comprehensive understanding of how the variables interact to influence evaluative reading comprehension.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Level of Media Literacy

3.1.1 Media Ethics Awareness

The results show that participants demonstrated a High level of media ethics awareness ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.50$), with most learners falling under high and moderate categories. The highest responses reflected awareness of fairness and human dignity, while lower scores were observed in recognizing specific ethical issues such as plagiarism. This indicates that learners are generally aware of ethical considerations in media use but show inconsistency in applying these principles in more complex situations. This supports Hristovska (2023) and Christians et al. (2020), who emphasized that ethical awareness develops through continuous exposure and guided practice. The difficulty in recognizing plagiarism aligns with Abbasi, P., et al. (2021) and Mulenga and Shilongo (2024), suggesting the need for stronger instruction in academic integrity.

3.1.2 Socio-Cultural Awareness

Participants demonstrated a Moderate level of socio-cultural awareness ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.44$), with most responses concentrated in the moderate range. Learners showed stronger ability in recognizing how authors' backgrounds influence perspectives but weaker performance in identifying cultural values and norms in texts. This suggests that while learners are beginning to understand socio-cultural dimensions of media, their analysis remains surface-level. This aligns with Afrilyasanti et al. (2025) and Ahmed (2024), who noted that socio-cultural awareness requires guided critical analysis. The difficulty in identifying cultural meanings reflects findings by Benitez (2022) and Toti and Hamid (2022), highlighting the complexity of interpreting cultural contexts.

3.1.3 Digital Citizenship

The findings indicate a High level of digital citizenship ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.57$), with most participants demonstrating responsible online behavior. Learners showed strong awareness of ethical participation but lower consistency in evaluating online credibility. This implies that students are generally responsible digital users but may lack deeper critical evaluation skills. This supports Gbore et al. (2025) and Gopinathan et al. (2022), who emphasized that digital participation is common but requires further development in critical engagement. The inconsistency in verifying information aligns with Georgopoulou et al. (2025), suggesting the need for stronger emphasis on evaluation skills.

3.1.4 Information Verification Skills

Participants demonstrated a High level of information verification skills ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.54$), with strengths in checking sources but weaker ability in distinguishing reliable from unreliable information. This indicates that learners possess basic verification strategies but struggle with deeper evaluation. This supports Lucaser and Acedera (2025) and Pérez-Escolar et al. (2021), who noted that verification skills require consistent practice. The difficulty in judging reliability aligns with Huang et al. (2024) and Keshavarz (2021), highlighting the need for structured guidance.

3.1.5 Media Influence Awareness

The results reveal a Moderate level of media influence awareness ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.53$), with strengths in recognizing emotional influence but weaker ability in identifying message intent. This suggests that learners can detect emotional persuasion but struggle to critically analyze purpose and influence. This supports Bryant and Finklea (2022) and Currie and Kelly (2022), who emphasized that awareness develops gradually. The difficulty in identifying intent aligns with Hobbs (2024) and Cho and Cannon (2024), indicating the importance of explicit instruction in media analysis.

3.1.6 Overall Media Literacy

Overall, participants demonstrated a High level of media literacy ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.42$), with stronger performance in digital citizenship, verification skills, and ethics, and lower performance in socio-cultural and influence awareness. This pattern indicates that learners are more proficient in practical media skills than in deeper analytical understanding. This aligns with Novitskyi et al. (2025) and Stoyanova (2025), who noted that functional skills develop earlier than critical dimensions. The results suggest the need to strengthen higher-order media literacy skills.

3.2 Extent of Text Genre Exposure

3.2.1 Academic and Informational Text Exposure

Participants demonstrated a High level of exposure to academic texts ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 0.52$), with stronger engagement in explanatory materials but weaker familiarity with text structure. This suggests that learners are exposed to academic content but may lack structural understanding. This aligns with Buehl (2023) and Schmitt et al. (2022), emphasizing the role of exposure in literacy development. The difficulty with structure supports Kim et al. (2021), indicating the need for instructional support.

3.2.2 Literary and Cultural Text Exposure

The results show a High but moderate-dominated exposure to literary texts ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.54$), with strengths in emotional engagement but limited exposure to diverse cultures. This indicates that learners connect with texts emotionally but lack broader cultural exposure. This supports Simel (2024) and Zohrabi and Zarei (2025), highlighting the importance of literary engagement. Limited diversity aligns with Hasby et al. (2025), suggesting the need for varied materials.

3.2.3 Persuasive and Functional Text Exposure

Participants demonstrated a High level of exposure ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.54$), particularly in instructional texts, but lower engagement with promotional content. This implies that exposure is practical but not deeply analytical. This aligns with Al-khresheh. et al. (2025) and Bean and Melzer (2021), emphasizing functional literacy. The lower engagement with advertisements reflects findings by Akhrenova and Zaripov (2023), highlighting the influence of multimodal media.

3.2.4 Multimodal and Visual Text Exposure

Participants showed a Moderate level of exposure ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 0.58$), with strengths in interpreting visuals but weaker engagement with structured visual texts. This indicates that learners encounter multimodal texts but lack deeper analysis. This supports Lim and Tan-Chia (2022) and Moldez and Gomez (2022), emphasizing the need for guided multimodal literacy development.

3.2.5 Overall Text Genre Exposure

Overall exposure was Moderate ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.47$), with stronger exposure to traditional texts and lower exposure to multimodal formats. This suggests that learners are more familiar with print-based texts than digital formats. This aligns with Tomas et al. (2021) and Lim and Tan-Chia (2022), highlighting the need for balanced exposure across genres.

3.3 Engagement in Reading Activities

3.3.1 Behavioral Engagement

The findings reveal that participants demonstrated a High level of behavioral engagement in reading activities ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.54$), indicating that most learners actively practice reading-related behaviors such as focusing on tasks, managing time effectively, rereading texts, and participating in assigned activities. Notably, rereading emerged as the strongest behavior, while persistence in reading less interesting texts was relatively weaker. This suggests that learners are capable of applying effective reading strategies that support comprehension, yet their engagement is influenced by interest and motivation. This supports Yang and Ogata (2023), who emphasized the importance of active participation and persistence in improving reading outcomes. However, the reduced persistence in less engaging texts aligns with Wang et al. (2022), indicating that learners' interest plays a crucial role in sustaining behavioral engagement.

3.3.2 Emotional Engagement

Participants exhibited a High level of emotional engagement ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.59$), reflecting that learners generally experience positive emotions such as enjoyment, satisfaction, and motivation when reading. The strongest emotional response was linked to satisfaction upon understanding texts, while curiosity toward reading materials was relatively lower. This indicates that emotional engagement is a strong driver of reading involvement, as learners are motivated when they achieve comprehension. This finding supports Hua et al. (2025), who emphasized the role of emotional engagement in literacy development. However, the relatively lower curiosity aligns with Tu and Lee (2025), suggesting that the relevance and appeal of reading materials significantly influence learners' emotional responses.

3.3.3 Cognitive Engagement

The results show that participants demonstrated a High level of cognitive engagement ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.54$), indicating that learners engage in higher-order thinking processes such as reflection, connection-making, and questioning. The strongest performance was observed in relating texts to real-life experiences, while evaluating the relevance of information was less consistently applied. This suggests that learners are developing critical thinking skills but may not consistently apply evaluative strategies when processing information. This aligns with Simango (2023), who emphasized the importance of cognitive engagement in deep comprehension. The difficulty in evaluating relevance supports Chavez et al. (2025), highlighting that learners may rely on readily available information rather than critically analyzing its importance.

3.3.4 Overall Reading Engagement

Overall, participants demonstrated a High level of engagement in reading activities ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.48$), with emotional engagement emerging as the strongest dimension, followed by behavioral and cognitive engagement. This indicates that learners are generally motivated and actively involved in reading, but their engagement is more affective than analytical. This aligns with Mihret and Joshi (2025) and Xu et al. (2023), who emphasized that reading engagement is multidimensional. The relatively lower cognitive engagement suggests the need to strengthen higher-order thinking skills to complement learners' motivation and participation.

3.4 Evaluative Reading Comprehension

3.4.1 Assessing Credibility and Reliability of Sources

The findings indicate that participants demonstrated a Good level of ability in assessing credibility and reliability of sources ($M = 5.79$, $SD = 2.81$), with a wide distribution of scores ranging from outstanding to poor. This suggests that learners vary significantly in their ability to evaluate sources, with some demonstrating strong critical skills while others struggle. This supports Phimphimon et al. (2024) and Georgopoulou et al. (2025), who emphasized variability in evaluating online information. The inconsistency aligns with Marttunen et al. (2021), indicating that familiarity with evaluation strategies influences performance.

3.4.2 Identifying Bias and Point of View

Participants demonstrated a Very Good level in identifying bias and point of view ($M = 6.40$, $SD = 2.41$), with most learners performing in the higher categories. This indicates that learners are generally capable of analyzing perspectives and recognizing how information is framed. This supports Robinson et al. (2025) and Hobbs (2024), who emphasized that identifying bias is a key component of critical literacy. The strong performance suggests that learners are developing awareness of how language and perspective shape meaning.

3.4.3 Evaluating Arguments and Evidence

The results show that participants demonstrated a Very Good level of performance ($M = 7.18$, $SD = 2.61$), with a large proportion achieving outstanding scores. This indicates that learners are highly capable of analyzing arguments and assessing supporting evidence. This aligns with Hussein et al. (2025) and Iordanou and Rapanta (2021), who emphasized that evaluating arguments is central to critical thinking. The strong performance suggests that learners are able to apply logical reasoning and evidence-based judgment effectively.

3.4.4 Judging Relevance and Appropriateness

Participants demonstrated a Very Good level in judging relevance and appropriateness ($M = 6.74$, $SD = 2.78$), with most scores concentrated in higher categories. This suggests that learners are able to determine the usefulness and suitability of information within texts. This supports Plummer et al. (2022) and Ruslan (2024), who emphasized the importance of relevance evaluation in critical reading. The findings indicate that learners are developing the ability to filter information based on context and purpose.

3.4.5 Value Judgment and Ethical Evaluation

The findings indicate that participants demonstrated a Very Good level in value judgment and ethical evaluation ($M = 6.84$, $SD = 2.65$), with many learners performing at high levels. This suggests that learners are capable of applying ethical reasoning when interpreting texts. This aligns with Arvianti et al. (2025) and List (2023), who emphasized the role of ethical evaluation in critical literacy. The results indicate that learners are developing awareness of moral standards and social responsibility in reading.

3.4.6 Overall Evaluative Reading Comprehension

Overall, participants demonstrated a Very Good level of evaluative reading comprehension ($M = 6.59$, $SD = 2.65$), with strongest performance in evaluating arguments and evidence and relatively lower performance in assessing credibility and reliability of sources. This indicates that learners possess well-developed higher-order thinking skills, particularly in analysis and evaluation, but still require improvement in verifying the trustworthiness of information. This finding aligns with Medranda et al. (2023), who emphasized that advanced comprehension involves critical evaluation and synthesis. The relatively lower performance in credibility assessment supports Hämäläinen et al. (2021), highlighting that evaluating

sources is a complex skill that requires explicit instruction. Overall, while learners demonstrate strong evaluative abilities, targeted interventions are necessary to strengthen their capacity for critical source evaluation and ensure balanced development across all dimensions of evaluative reading.

3.5 Influence of Media Literacy, Engagement, and Text Exposure

The regression results show that media literacy, engagement, and text exposure collectively have a significant influence on evaluative reading comprehension ($R^2 = 0.123$, $p < .001$), explaining 12.3% of the variance. This indicates that while these variables contribute to comprehension, other factors also play a major role. This supports A Al Roomy (2022), emphasizing the complexity of reading comprehension. Media literacy emerged as the only significant predictor, indicating a strong positive effect on evaluative reading. This aligns with Tommasi et al. (2023), highlighting the importance of media literacy in critical evaluation. In contrast, reading engagement and text exposure did not show significant effects, suggesting that participation and exposure alone are insufficient without critical processing. This supports Carroll et al. (2021) and Elston et al. (2022), emphasizing the need for strategy-based instruction. The unexplained variance suggests the influence of other factors such as prior knowledge, vocabulary, and cognitive skills, as supported by Hattan et al. (2024), Rahmah et al. (2023), and Marpaung and Sihombing (2021). These findings highlight the need for comprehensive instructional approaches that integrate multiple literacy components.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study found that Grade 9 learners demonstrate generally high levels of media literacy and reading engagement, moderate exposure to diverse text genres, and a very good level of evaluative reading comprehension, although variations in performance remain among learners. Among the variables examined, only media literacy significantly influenced evaluative reading comprehension, highlighting its critical role in developing higher-order reading skills. The findings indicate that evaluative reading comprehension is shaped by the interaction of literacy-related factors, emphasizing the need for instructional approaches that integrate media literacy, sustain engagement, and broaden exposure to diverse texts to support critical, analytical, and informed reading practices.

Based on the findings, learners are encouraged to strengthen their ability to verify information, critically evaluate media content, and engage with a wider range of text types, including cultural and digital materials. Teachers are advised to integrate media literacy into reading instruction, balance the use of different text genres, and incorporate activities that promote critical thinking, analysis, and evaluation across disciplines. Schools may support these efforts by implementing programs and training that enhance both media literacy and evaluative reading skills, while identifying areas where learners require further development. Future research may explore interventions, conduct comparative studies, and examine strategies that simultaneously improve media literacy and evaluative reading comprehension.

The study was limited to 187 Grade 9 students from a single public school using an accessible sampling technique, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. The use of a descriptive-correlational design also restricted the ability to establish causal relationships among variables. Additionally, the study focused only on media literacy, reading engagement, and text genre exposure, leaving other potential factors such as prior knowledge, vocabulary, and language proficiency unexplored.

Compliance with ethical standards

The authors declare no conflict of interest, and this study received no external funding. The research was conducted with the voluntary participation of Grade 9 students from a public secondary school, with informed consent obtained and necessary permissions secured from relevant authorities. Data were collected using non-invasive survey instruments, and strict measures were implemented to ensure confidentiality, with no identifying information disclosed. The researchers acknowledge the cooperation of the participants and the institution involved in facilitating the study.

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