



## Education and Technology in Information Science (ETIS)

Dergi sayfası: <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/etis>



### RESEARCH ARTICLE / ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ

Article Information / Makale Bilgisi  
Received / Geliş Tarihi: 13.01.2023  
Accepted / Kabul Tarihi: 13.03.2023

Refereed Papers / Hakemli Yazılar

To cite this article / Bu makaleye atıf yapmak için

Yap, J. M., Barat, A. H., & Tansiongco, K. C. T. (2023). Library and information science students' trust and judgement: An analysis of youth's social media engagement. *Education and Technology in Information Science*, 1(1), 13-27.

### Library and Information Science Students' Trust and Judgement: An Analysis of Youth's Social Media Engagement

### Kütüphane ve Bilgi Bilimi Öğrencilerinin Güveni ve Yargısı: Gençlerin Sosyal Medya Etkileşimlerinin Bir Analizi

Joseph M. YAP<sup>1,\*</sup> , Agnes H. BARAT<sup>2</sup> ,  
Kevin Conrad T. TANSIONGCO<sup>3</sup> 

1 PhD Student, Eotvos Lorand University, Budapeşte/MACARİSTAN, jomyap@student.elte.hu

2 Professor, Eotvos Lorand University, Budapeşte/MACARİSTAN, hajdu.agnes@btk.elte.hu

3 Graduate Student, University of the East, Manila/Filipinler, kevinconradtansiongco@gmail.com

\* Corresponding (Sorumlu yazar): Joseph M. YAP

### Abstract

The study observed the level of trust and judgment afforded by Library and Information Science (LIS) students toward their close relationships as they engage and interact in social media. The study employed a mixed-methods approach using quantitative data to describe and measure the mean and standard deviation and narrative analysis as its qualitative method using semi-structured interviews to understand how the youth critically appraises their social relationship with family, friends, and others. The online survey gathered 55 library and information science students and analyzed how they behave and interact online given that trust and judgement are at risk when people engage online.

Results showed that the youth give a high level of trust to their family members and close friends and a medium level of trust towards other people on social media. The students also indicate a low level of judgement towards close family, friends, and other people when they share information or interact on social media. This study provides a novel contribution to LIS students' perceived trust and judgement towards their close relations as they interact and share information on social media.

**Keywords:** social media engagement; relationships; trust; judgement; information evaluation; information literacy; youth

### Öz

Bu çalışma, Kütüphane ve Enformasyon Bilimi öğrencilerinin, sosyal medyada etkileşimde bulunurken yakın ilişkilerine karşı gösterdikleri güven ve muhakeme düzeyini gözlemledi. Çalışma, ortalama ve standart sapmayı tanımlamak ve ölçmek için nicel verileri kullanan karma yöntemli bir yaklaşım ve gençlerin aileleri, arkadaşları ve diğerleriyle olan sosyal ilişkilerini eleştirel bir şekilde nasıl değerlendirdiklerini anlamak için yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeleri kullanan nitel yöntem olarak anlatı analizini kullandı. Çevrimiçi anket, 55 Kütüphane ve Enformasyon Bilimi öğrencisini bir araya getirdi ve insanlar çevrimiçi etkileşim kurduğunda güven ve muhakemenin risk altında olduğu göz önüne alındığında, çevrimiçi ortamda nasıl davrandıklarını ve etkileşimde bulduklarını analiz etti.

Sonuçlar, gençlerin sosyal medyada aile üyelerine ve yakın arkadaşlarına yüksek düzeyde, diğer insanlara ise orta düzeyde güven duyduklarını göstermiştir. Öğrenciler ayrıca bilgi paylaştıklarında veya sosyal medyada etkileşimde bulduklarında yakın aile, arkadaşlar ve diğer insanlara karşı muhakeme yetileri düşük düzeydedir. Bu çalışma, Kütüphane ve Enformasyon Bilimi öğrencilerinin sosyal medyada etkileşimde bulunurken ve bilgi paylaşırken yakın ilişkilerine yönelik algıladıkları güven ve muhakeme konularına yeni bir katkı sağlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** sosyal medya etkileşimi; ilişkiler; güven; muhakeme; bilgi değerlendirme; Bilgi okuryazarlığı; gençlik

### Dergi İletişim / Journal Communication

Atatürk Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Bilgi ve Belge Yönetimi Bölümü / Atatürk University, Faculty of Letters, Department of Information and Document Management

Posta Adresi / Postal Address: Atatürk Üniversitesi Yeni Edebiyat Fakültesi 25400, Yakutiye, Erzurum/ TÜRKİYE / TURKEY

Tel/Phone: +90 442 231 11 11 / 8122



## Introduction

Mutual relationships continue to evolve with the advent of social media communication (Eger et al., 2020). Social media plays a role and contributes to the development of online human interaction. With many platforms to choose from, the production and distribution of specific content and knowledge can be accessed by those who created online profiles across generations. Boomers may need help from Generation Z in setting up their social networking profiles. Nonetheless, once an individual grasps how to use them, the rest is manageable. These platforms were developed to establish connections and share voices even if we are cities or countries apart. Social media provides every user the freedom how to maximize the use of their accounts with limitations bound by its terms and conditions. The user may keep their accounts private or anonymous, influential or public. Privacy issues can also be raised as we speak about the use of social media (Lamdan, 2015).

As we interact with others, trust is a matter of concern especially in an online environment as there are issues of identity theft, phishing, and cyberbullying. Trusting people online may or may not be the same as trusting them in person. Trust is founded on good relationships. We also have our preconceived judgments about those we already know personally before becoming our online “friends”. As we talk about trust, it gives us the notion of how to control the information shared by our mutual friends. It also guides our social media participation and how we practice our socio-civic engagement. Social media users pose risk when they interact online as privacy is an issue. Trust is a factor that influences the way users share information in an online environment. In a study by Taddei and Contena (2013), people’s online self-disclosure behavior and the way they manage information depend on their level of trust. These users reveal themselves online if the trust was established. Having a high level of trust in the people we are comfortable with means social media users can control and manage the information they want to share online. Prior trust and experience contribute to the way we socialize online. Social contracts apply to an online and digital environment and affect how we control and manage information based on trust. Enabling trust and willingness to participate in an online environment varies on who we deal with (Levine, 2019).

In a report published by Pew Research Center in April 2021 regarding social media use, it found out that the younger population ages 18-24 use their time browsing Instagram (76%) or scrolling TikTok (55%) (Auxier, & Anderson, 2021). About 89% of college students access YouTube while 73% rely on Facebook. This data comes from the United States and has surveyed 1,502 adults. In recent data sourced by DataReportal, the Philippines has 89 million social media registered users as of January 2021 (Kemp, 2021). In the Asia Pacific region, the Philippines consume more than four hours browsing social media platforms, which is regarded as the highest among nations in the region (Statista, 2023). In another report shared by the Philippine Statistics Authority (Mapa, 2020), Filipino students give more time on social media (86.8%) as compared to doing research work and email (81.4%). This was the recorded data for students ages 10 to 30 years old.

With this increasing data of the younger population most exposed to social media content, how do they put trust and judgement as one of their values in evaluating information? Using the approach of Eger et al. (2020), it is interesting to know how library and information students build trust and pass judgement on family and friends’ interactions on social media.

Information sharing and interaction in social media become complex and sometimes virulent. Close relations with family and friends are affected if not everyone shares the same value, opinions, or beliefs. Knowledge acquired online triggers each social media user as to how they will take an action and behave online based on the level of how they understood the information processed. How do the youth of today value trust and judgment in social media? It matters to know that opening to others and

sharing information with people varies on different levels. The degree of trust given by a person differs for every individual, thus affecting how information may be shared, managed, and controlled. Is there a pattern for LIS students when they share information online as measured by the trust they give to close relations?

The main objective of this study is to understand how the youth, specifically LIS students, position themselves and react to social media posts of their close family and friends in a time when misleading and biased information erroneously appears as part of their daily content. The study observed the presence of judgement among the youth in critically appraising their attitudes toward family and friends' social media posts. The group being studied are novice information specialists and has the potential to fully understand how information is perceived. Lastly, it investigated the level of trust young individuals afford to their family and friends regardless of whether they have opposing views when they share online posts. This study describes the strength or weakness of a connection between the youth and their close relationships on the bases of making judgments and putting trust as their values.

## **Literature Review**

### ***The Value of Close Relationship***

Close relations whether by kin or by friends are characterized by maintaining an active level of relationships to avoid the decay of emotional intensity (Roberts, & Dunbar, 2011). The value of kinship and friendship with the help of social media stabilizes and improves satisfaction, commitment, and intimacy as they continue to stay virtually connected (Taylor et al., 2021). Online social interactions are an extension of their relational connection. The expression of closeness can be seen in how they behave, respond to, and support each other's online posts. Chambers (2013) found out in her research that "social network sites and other social media have become important sites for cultivating personal relationships" (p.13). It becomes a space where close personal ties are sustained despite being connected to a wide number of possible friendships. Strong bonds are seen in familial relationships and close friends. It is characterized by emotional intensity, intimacy, and reciprocity and is measured by the amount of time being together. Weak ties are seen in acquaintances who tend to have less involvement in the person's life (Granovetter, 1973). The stronger the bond, the more high-quality interaction and support an individual receives with their social media platforms (Chambers, 2013).

### ***Information-Sharing Among Family and Friends***

Conversations among family and friends do not stop in face-to-face interactions. Friends update each other on social media by sharing recent information about their lives. In some cases, family members who are away from each other also receive information when their kins start sharing the latest status and other personal content that may seem a surprise to them. Regardless of the reason for sharing, everyone is entitled to fully express themselves online with caution. Sharing of online content and information is being questioned these days. It always seeks credibility and authenticity. The range of information we share may be personal stories to anything under the sun that could be about news and entertainment. Osatuyi (2013) enumerated various information types produced and consumed in social media. These are personal, sensational, political, and casual. Although not exhaustive, the author explained the following information types as follows:

- Personal information: private information shared to close family relations and friends. The recipient of the information is given full trust and confidence to not share it with others. Examples of this type may include health conditions and relationship status.

- Sensational information: news information about celebrities that are usually considered gossip. This type of information is usually found in the entertainment industry.
- Political information: government-related information and other social issues where the government is involved.
- Casual information: recreational information that is useful for relaxation, pleasure, or celebration. An example can be a place for summer vacation or a good place to have a coffee

The use of social media made it easier for humans to share information. People tend to share information although some may continue to be selfish (Fehr et al., 2008) and others remain cooperative when asked to share resources and information (Osatuyi, 2013).

### ***Trust and Credibility of Information***

Exposure to misinformation endangers those who do not assess information critically. If misinformation is frequently encountered, the receiver of misinformation easily remembers them and may think of them as default reliable information (Sullivan, 2019). Misperception occurs as a result of not being skeptical. Misperception is the person's loss of recognition of credible sources and has shaped their belief in misinformation. In today's era, being less critical will form vulnerable minds to misinformation and misperception.

How we deal with information on social media affects the way we think, act, and engage depending on where the information is coming from. The trust or mistrust and credibility given to the information are based on who shared it. In interpersonal relationships, we judge based on trust. Before a person opens up and becomes honest with another individual, perceived trust takes place. Toma (2014) added that in building relationships either professional or personal we allow the trust to happen even before we approach or avoid others.

Haider and Sundin (2020), discussed how a citizen's trust is subconsciously anchored in the way we trust our institutions and systems. A nation with corrupt practices can also have another dimension of trust that will question authorities in power and the people associated with them. When a person evaluates information whether online or otherwise, part of our cognitive function will trust others and the knowledge or the opinion they are sharing. They call this testimonial knowledge. The knowledge we receive should still pass through a credibility assessment and understand how information flows within the system. Furthermore, Haider and Sundin (2019) argue that trust is as important when evaluating information critically. Trust is accompanied by a clear understanding of the systematic creation of knowledge and a belief in how scientific systems shape this knowledge.

### ***Information Ecosystem in Digital Platforms***

The production of information comes from both traditional and new media. A schematic representation developed by Watts et al. (2021) starts with the production on the web, television, and radio including print media such as newspapers. The bottom of this information ecosystem includes several forms of information providers that produce daily sources of data, information, and knowledge; thus, it is crucial to study and analyze where the sources are coming from and how they produce such information. However, not all information produced reaches its target consumers. There remains the uninformed since they are not present in the platforms where information is distributed. Therefore, social media is an option where it could drive visibility and interactivity. The downfall is that researchers must identify how information is consumed and fairly distributed among social media platforms. Climbing to this ladder of information ecosystem is another challenge for consumers to understand the meaning of every piece of information distributed online. How many of them can actually translate the information into knowledge, belief, or opinion? These consumers' end goal is how to deal with the information they

receive, thus, giving them the freedom to take action or engage based on their awareness and understanding. Their ability to take community action begins at the time when the information is produced, distributed, and absorbed. The information ecosystem used in this study explores how sharing of information from the time it is produced influences how students act and engage. The idea is to figure out how information is controlled with the level of trust they give.

### ***Fact-Checking as Source Evaluation Analysis***

Student assessments and online reasoning studies were conducted to show how sources are judged based on the credibility of information and not directly to those who spoke about it (Addy, 2020). In teaching the students how to identify cited sources, fact-checking is a method that can be applied by students with their close relationships who engage and post information on social media. Reliability and relevance of the source are two qualities that fact-checkers should look after when conducting source evaluation. Any controversial social media information posted or shared must be assessed for truthfulness and credibility.

Fact-checking is becoming a norm in the practice of assessing information. It critically assesses not only the sources of information but the information itself. However, in the world of social media misinformation, conspiracy theories are seen as facts and people may fall victim to believing in them (Haider, & Sundin, 2020). Facts are supposed to bridge trust between the information and the person receiving the information. Judgment happens at the time when the information is consumed and casts doubts on the authenticity of the information, the source, and the person disseminating the information. Informed judgments are products of a citizen's ability to critically think and embrace factual knowledge (Polizzi, 2020). The decision people make rests on how they assessed every piece of information they receive.

## **Methodology**

A group of Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS) students from three different Philippine universities spread in Northern Luzon, Metro Manila, and Southern Luzon was requested to partake in a digital civic engagement study. One component of the study is survey research that asks about their social media engagement with close family and friends at a crucial moment in Philippine history. Before the start of the Philippine election period from January to June 2022, political conventions and voter registration remain active since September 2021. The selection process, data collection, and data analysis are discussed below.

The study employed a mixed-methods approach using quantitative data to describe and measure the mean and standard deviation and narrative analysis as its qualitative method using semi-structured interviews to understand how the youth critically appraises their social relationship with family, friends, and others. The others described in this study are those not close to them and are referred to as acquaintances.

### **Selection**

Three groups of BLIS students from three universities participated in the study. Respondents came from all undergraduate levels from first-year to fourth-year students. Their age range between 18-36. Some students are older than their peers as they are yet to complete their undergraduate degrees. University names are anonymized. Quota or convenience sampling was applied in this study and participation was purely voluntary. The number of students depends on the total number of enrolled students and everyone received a link to the online questionnaire.

## Data Collection

The online survey as a tool for data gathering aims to document and analyze Filipino LIS undergraduate students' civic participation in the conduct of Philippine national elections. The survey was distributed using Google Forms during the first semester of the academic year 2021-22. The questionnaire was influenced by the Social Media Political Participation Scale created by Waterloos et al. (2021) and was modified to add questions related to trust and judgment. Modified statements can be seen below (Tables 2 and 3). The survey focused on their utilization of social media and their behavior while engaging with people and information while they are online. Data revealed their political participation experiences, the strength of trust, and perceived judgement in the social media environment. Their social media participation was observed in the context of the proliferation of false information mostly shared during the pandemic.

To validate the initial results, a follow-up online interview was made with four select participants from three universities. Since classes have ended and the initial survey was done anonymously, the study randomly asked a sample of students who may have answered the previous survey if they can be interviewed. They were selected based on availability and participation was voluntary without compensation. Data coming from the interview was audio recorded and stored online using the Zoom platform and consent was requested before the conduct of the online interview. Their identities are anonymized.

## Data Analysis

The results provided an overview of how select undergraduate library and information science students behave and interact online given that trust and judgement are at risk when people engage online. To measure the frequency, a 5-point Likert scale containing the options always, very often, sometimes, rarely, and never was used. Descriptive statistics were used for quantitative data. The results of the survey were tabulated, getting the mean and standard deviation and encoded using IBM SPSS v.28. A total of 55 students (32%) accomplished the survey from a possible population of 171. The online interview used descriptive analysis to discuss qualitative data. Narrative analysis was employed after transcribing the interview session. Common themes emerge and are discussed in another section below.

Participants were asked to rate their answers using a Likert scale (Table 1) with the following legend: 1 = never; 2 = rarely; 3 = sometimes; 4 = often; 5 = always.

**Table 1**

*Likert scale evaluation criteria*

Score interval (Mean)	Evaluation criteria
1.00 - 1.79	Very low level
1.80 - 2.59	Low level
2.60 - 3.39	Medium level
3.40 - 4.19	High level
4.20 - 5.00	Very high level

The evaluation and interpretation criteria for Likert scale questions (Table 1) were derived from Çelik & Oral (2016).

## Results

To better understand how the youth position themselves and react to social media posts of their close family and friends, the results of the study showed how LIS students value trust and judgment in times when misleading information may appear online.

### Narrative Analysis

Information shared by family members is automatically checked by each other. Any kind of information as long as they come from close family relations is subject to close kins judgment. Parental, familial, or cultural beliefs are usually passed to children. In a typical Filipino family with strong religious faith, children get influenced and this is the start of trust building. However, as teenagers start to become responsible adults, with other influences from social media, education, and friends, beliefs may change.

**Table 2.**

#### *Value of Trust*

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
I trust my family even if they share, post, like, or comment on a different view or perspective that is against mine on social media.	3.67	1.22
I trust my friends even if they share, post, like, or comment on a different view or perspective that is against mine on social media.	3.40	1.15
I trust other people even if they share, post, like, or comment on a different view or perspective that is against mine on social media.	2.91	1.27

Three questions were asked to identify the level of trust given by the youth to their close family, friends, and others. Table 2 shows that the youth give a high level of trust (3.67) to their family members even if they share, post, like, or comment on something different from their point-of-view in social media.

Trust among family members in the context of sharing perspectives on social media varies (Table 3). Participant W recalled that her brother's post annoys her because as a young female, she cannot bear his online behavior of posting stories related to cheating in a relationship. A young LIS student believes that being unfaithful or dishonest in case of election-related issues is an ethical principle, thus, giving her a negative feeling about it yet she remains close with her brother. Participant X had an uncle with a different political view. In some instances, it creates an argument. The student pointed out that it is not only her belief that is challenged but the way the message is conveyed. This is the same with Participant Y where cousins post political messages in an "inhumane" context. The participant mentioned that the delivery of the post contains negative captions potentially having false information and was structured to malign supporters. Participant Z shares the same belief with family members and their family prefers to be quiet on social media.

There was also an instance where family members of Participant W posted old childhood photographs without consent from the one involved, making it a privacy issue as they are not happy to

see their old self being circulated online. Anything posted on social media including images already becomes a source of information and can be instantly copied and distributed by others, therefore, a privacy and ownership concern. Similarly, in an old family photo of Participant X, the student feels disgusted and disappointed as the uncle posts their photo. In this image, she is particularly uncomfortable and shy and believes that it should not be posted. The worst part is the uncle tagged her in this post. However, Participants Y and Z approve of the postings of their family members when it is all about achievements. Participant Y does not think of this as private information and Participant Z thinks as a family, they own that photo and whatever happens, she cannot do anything about it.

In these scenarios, trust among family members occurs. Students were asked about how they feel about family members' being responsible online. The family member who posted the image continues to enjoy the respect of the younger sibling as she thinks they are responsible for anything they post online even at some point they shared unreliable and baseless information (Participant W). Participants Y and Z highly believe that family members know what they are doing and they completely trust them. However, Participant X will only trust family members who protected her online. Family members who violated her privacy will not gain her trust. In this example, close relationships continue to cultivate a strong bond between family members and trust is present as long as privacy issues are not breached.

Concerning political participation, Participant W prefers her immediate family members not to engage online as she does not see the reason for participating. Identifying which information is reliable could be difficult but the student understands that commenting online when the source is not reliable does not need an engagement. The student shared that she is shy to approach her sister whenever she feels the source is not verified. She feels that respect has to be maintained rather than personally approaching the sister. Participant X has a more academic approach. She feels ashamed whenever a family member posts unreliable information. She feels ashamed when family members post, share, or comment on unreliable information on social media. As a Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS) student, she thinks that family members will only share factual information with full credits or citations. She recognized that her mother sometimes posted fake news but she approached her. The mother took it positively and according to Participant X, the respect between the daughter and mother remained strong and even mentioned that the mother feels gratitude for learning from her daughter. Participant Y has a constructive outlook. Her response would tell us the level of maturity young people have adapted to today. She said:

“It is okay to correct each other in case my family posts something wrong on social media.”

Hearing this from a student gives us hope that this family values respect and trust. She said that in her family, it is best to check one another when posting something on social media. Participant Y, as a library and information science student, provides evidence for her claims and this is a form of assurance that her sources are legitimate.

Participant Z is optimistic. In a socially constructed world, not everyone will come up with this answer when asked how they think of their family members in case they post unreliable information on social media. She said:

“I won't be judgmental. Everyone can commit mistakes. I will not consider them as strangers and because they are my family, I will not judge them right away.”

In close family relations, personal ties are very strong. Before exposing children to social media, it is best to build a strong foundation among family members where they weave emotional intensity, intimacy, and reciprocity.

**Table 3.***Trust Among Family Members*

Themes	Participants' Descriptive Behavior
Annoyance	Posting stories of cheating in any form – that can be attributed to all kinds of dishonesty
Lead to argument	Challenging political beliefs lead to argumentation
Securing privacy	Anything that is posted online requires consent
Unverified posts	Uncomfortable feeling knowing they are LIS students
Maintaining respect	As family members, they can tolerate some online behavior (eg. sharing of unreliable post)
Acceptance	When called out because of unethical online behavior, family members appreciate it

The youth also gives a high level of trust towards their close friends with a mean of 3.40. In sharing online content on social media, Participant W mentioned that there was no post from her close friends that contradicts her belief. She also believes that her close friends protect her by not posting anything derogatory, shameful, or offending. Participant X has the same answer. None of her close friends share opposing views. While Participants Y and Z have close friends, who do not share the same views when it comes to religious beliefs. Among these two participants, one of them even gives a positive reaction to the post of a close friend even at the back of her mind, she does not completely like the post. She did this out of respect for her friend. One participant will not confront a close friend but will not do anything about the post. She will not also insist on her belief to her close friend. The close friends of Participants W and Z only share content if there is consent from them while close friends of Participants X and Y shared a private conversation publicly. Interestingly, all participants still consider their close friends as trustworthy and responsible individuals when communicating online on social media. When it comes to judging their close friends in case unreliable information is shared, Participants X and Y will be disappointed while Participant W will not do anything and will remain neutral. Participant Z will not judge her close friend and may consider reaching out to them to ask for the reasons for posting unreliable information. She acknowledges that everyone commits a mistake that can be corrected.

75% of the participants believe that their close friends' opinions matter and can be vocal on social issues. One said Generation Z is no longer afraid to speak up but this is not reflected in the results of the expressive engagement survey. One participant mentioned close friends should minimize public engagement in social media as she believes those comments will be a waste as no one will give attention to them.

Regarding trusting other people, the youth recorded a medium level of trust (2.91) when other people posted something different from theirs. They do not bother searching into other people's accounts and they only lurk in case it pops up as they open their social media accounts. In contrast with close friends, Participant W was able to capture posts against her beliefs coming from those not close to her. One example would be an individual posting curses publicly but is believed to be a devoutly religious person. Participant W stands witness to this phenomenon. The rest of the participants think the same. They have encountered posts from their non-close friends that are against their own beliefs. Participants X and Y encountered posts about religion and Participant Z encountered posts about wrong perceptions about the library field.

Participant W also encountered unreliable information posted by her circle of non-close friends. To her, she can firmly say that their posts are not based on facts but opinions only. She reiterated that

she has other sources to prove that these people are not careful with what they post online. Participant X is irritated every time she sees unreliable posts from other people while Participant Y is disappointed and has mentioned the term information literate, confirming that to her these people should be educated and have to learn how to evaluate information online. Participant Z will not judge them negatively but will stay away from other people who post unreliable information. Staying away from them means she will avoid the necessary online confrontation with them.

**Table 4.**

*Judging Others*

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
I judge my family based on what they share, post, like, or comment on social media.	2.12	1.31
I judge my friends based on what they share, post, like, or comment on social media.	2.15	1.27
I judge other people not related to me based on what they share, post, like, or comment on social media.	2.16	1.26
I do not judge anyone based on what they share, post, like, or comment on social media.	3.22	1.36

Four questions were asked to identify how the youth judges their close family, friends, and others. Part of the question asks if they do not judge at all. Table 4 summarizes the mean and standard deviation of how the youth make judgments based on their social media posts.

Results showed that youth have a low level of judgement towards close family with a mean of 2.12, followed by friends with a mean of 2.15, and other people with a mean of 2.16 when they share information or interact on social media. Moreover, they recorded a medium level of judgement in one of the categories, *not judging anyone* with a mean of 3.22 based on what they share, post, like, or comment on social media.

To validate the results, the participants in the online interview were asked about what they think of a person who shares unreliable information (Table 5). This person can be their family member, close friend, or others. Participant X shows irritation when she sees someone from her close circle posts unreliable information but will keep it to herself. As a LIS student, she knows the importance of being accurate when sharing information. It may not necessarily translate to having poor judgment between her close family, friends, or other people as she feels that they can still do anything online according to their freedom if they act responsibly in what they post, like, comment, or share. In addition, Participants X and Y believe that the people they know have the right to share information online since their opinions matter. Participant Y will be disappointed if her friends or family members will share unreliable information. She further exclaimed that she would do everything to help others become information literate in times of social media misinformation or disinformation. Meanwhile, Participant Z will not judge her family, close friends, and others, but according to her, she will stay away from them. In her own words, it would be better to stay away so she can restrain herself from not mentioning unsolicited statements that would offend other people. She may tend to utter unnecessary things when emotions affect the situation. In contrast to the other students, Participant W believes that her family, friends, or

others should not participate in online discussions since the online world is a chaotic environment. She can judge others if their posts are biased against legitimate sources.

**Table 5.**

*Participants' Behavior When Someone Shares Unreliable Information*

Themes	Participants' Descriptive Behavior
Irritation	<i>Keeping to oneself; Thinks that others should be responsible in sharing information.</i>
Exercising free speech	<i>Allowing others to express emotions online since the opinions of people matter, and they have the right to share information</i>
Disappointment	<i>The level of disappointment varies when this happens to close family and friends. Informing others about the effects of misinformation/disinformation</i>
Unattached	<i>Staying away from people to avoid issues. The online environment is a chaotic world.</i>

## Discussion

### Trustworthiness and Judgement

Personal ties built on a strong foundation will affect how information is communicated online and on social media. As personal relationships flourish in social media, personal ties continue to bond stronger (Chambers, 2013). The youth of today represented by BLIS students remain to trust their family members and will solve the issues immediately in case false information is shared. No negative perception will prevail and, likely, they will not judge their parents or siblings for sharing false information as they will try to correct the misinformation. As Toma (2014) argued we allow the trust to happen even before we approach others. This familial trust is sealed. It is interesting to note that when asked about close friends, they view them as responsible individuals since they see themselves sharing the same values although some may be different in terms of a religious context. It is sensible that they provide high trust to close friends as they must have contributed a lot to the establishment of their friendship. Judgment and disappointment may happen among close friends sharing unreliable information but they will immediately restore the friendship by correcting each other and acknowledging that people may commit mistakes. Surprisingly, trust is still given to other people despite having weak relationships. The person sharing information, as long as there is trust, gives more significant effects on how they believe as compared to reputable media sources (American Press Institute, 2017). As mentioned by one participant, being on social media means that they will commit mistakes but will learn from them. Even if the young trust the others, fair judgment is reflected in their answers. Irritation, disappointment, rejection, and feeling biased are the words that can describe non-close friends when they share unreliable information. It may be early to tell how the youth shapes their cognitive understanding, but their education has helped them identify and assess information. Credibility assessment is stronger once an individual learns how to understand how information flows Haider and Sundin (2019). This will take a period for students to develop such practice.

When participants shared that close relations may potentially share information with bias, this is what Carr et al. (2020) mean that they might have fueled undemocratic propaganda. These are narratives or deliberate stories that diverge facts made to support one's interests. This information may have been shared unintentionally by close relations but participants' judgment towards their close relationship

remains low. Not everyone is active on social media and some families remain silent and continue to be lurkers. One participant shares the same belief with family members and their family prefers to be quiet on social media. Information is controlled by their behavior to not share anything. In this case, the judgment is very low as there is nothing to make any judgment.

Judgment is derived from how we act responsibly as individuals. In this study, judgment comes after a person shares and interacts online. Impression formation is a delicate matter as we want to present a positive perception about ourselves online but we never add friends on social media based on how reliable or credible they are (Utz, 2010). When asked about how important people's voices are online, participants believed that family members and close friends should minimize their comments and sharing of posts that would endanger them. The issue of misleading or biased information may come out as the issue they want to avoid if the time comes when their family or friends become victims of this. While they recognize the value of freedom of expression, this is not what they advocate.

Opinions of other people do not matter to one student. Granovetter's view on strong and weak relationships manifests even in social media. Acquaintances remain to have less involvement even in interactions made online. Familial relationships remain strong despite commenting or sharing posts that are opposite the youth's view. Emotional ties matter in an era where post-truth happens. However, we cannot test the evaluation criteria on how students can verify the truthfulness of the information shared by their social networks. They can easily identify if the information is personal, political, recreational, or about entertainment. Chamber is also correct when a student meant that more interaction happens in social media coming from the inner group of close family and friends as they connect more to them rather than acquaintances. Most of the time, trust is given to our close contacts.

Trust is a major factor in valuing information shared online. This is the same as how the youth perceive credible information when shared by close family and friends. They strongly believe that close family and friends are responsible individuals which gives clearance for them to share all kinds of information on social media. LIS students' emotions were confined as they cannot fully interfere with how family members should be responsible users of social media. Informed decisions do not only come from adults but from how everybody, including students, understands how information is produced, consumed, absorbed, and also controlled. Having trust as a factor in managing online information guarantees one's openness to share.

### **Action and Engagement**

The actions and engagement of the young in how they interact on social media depend on the level of knowledge they received from their surroundings and what they learned from their BLIS classes. The information ecosystem produced by Watts et al. (2021) draws us to identify that youth as part of the community should have the ability to act when information is produced, distributed, and absorbed regardless of information type such as personal, sensational, political, and casual. To recall one of the participant's observations in engaging with close family members in handling political information, she believed that the delivery of her brother's post contains negative captions potentially having false information and was structured to malign supporters. Carr et al. (2020) regard this as undemocratic propaganda. These are narratives or deliberate stories that diverge facts made to support one's interests. Not everyone is active on social media and some families remain silent and continue to be lurkers.

Students' behavior online is based on how they understood the information processed. In evaluating information online, trust and judgement are affected on different levels as they interact with close relations and other people. BLIS students have learned that being information literate is an important human skill to learn in this digital age. The freedom to take action or engage on social media is based on their awareness and understanding of how information flows online. It is still critical to

conduct assessments to judge information. BLIS students with the help of educators must prepare themselves to understand every social context and find the truthfulness and credibility of information (Addy, 2020). For them to be reliable sources of information and that trust is developed, they should remain cognizant to engage only if they possess informed judgments (Polizzi, 2020).

It is not easy for the young to voice out their thoughts when political information is discussed on social media. In a study conducted previously as part of this digital civic engagement survey, it was found that the youth have a low level of expressive engagement as they tend not to express or avoid public discourse related to politics (Yap et al., 2022). For example, the mean for “I posted, shared, commented on something (status, meme, link,...) concerning the upcoming Philippine national elections in a way it was publicly visible” is 1.98. In the evaluation criteria, it is interpreted as low level. The results are also low for these statements: “I posted or shared something (status, meme, link,...) concerning the upcoming Philippine national elections in a closed Facebook group” receiving a mean of 2.35, and “I commented on something concerning the upcoming Philippine national elections in a closed Facebook group” with a mean of 2.15. Family members irregularly and rarely post social issues about elections, political candidate profiles, and other issues of socio-civic importance that may affect their families. Fake news circulation (90.9%) is believed to be the most disadvantageous effect of using social media, particularly Facebook (Yap et al., 2022).

As a reflection, those interviewed showed less participation and engagement online. In addition, the youth had a low level of expressive engagement as seen in previous studies. They would rather share their thoughts in a private message to another friend instead of posting them publicly (Yap et al., 2022).

Action and engagement among the youth depend on who they trust. While they use social media particularly Facebook most of the time, they feel they should remain silent on social media. They understand the value of freedom of expression based on interview sessions conducted yet they feel it is best to take it behind social media. In this case, LIS students, who are future advocates of truth should be given more time to decipher how social media knowledge affects us so we can freely participate and make use of our democratic rights. Young individuals should know their place and when they should start to be visible online.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

This study is limited to three undergraduate universities and may be expanded to understand the general climate on how BLIS students understand the application of critical information literacy in their daily lives. It is also hoped that more critical assessments be done in future research.

### **Recommendations**

The youth of today is exposed to multiple viewpoints and information circulating in social media. Students’ trust and judgment in online communication are affected by their social media engagement with close family and friends. Since BLIS students have learned that being information literate is an important human skill to learn in this digital age, it is recommended to conduct information-seeking or information practice studies concerning political information. A closer look at how students relate online trust and judgment not only with their close family and friends but also with their acquaintances.

## Conclusion

This study revealed the youth's level of trust and judgments made with their close relationships and ones outside of their social media circle. Specifically, it brought out the current experiences of LIS students who are in the early stages of being exposed to the study of recorded data, information processes, and knowledge sharing. It is undeniable that LIS students possess a high level of trust in dealing with social media information associated with their family and friends.

Since strong relationships occur, the student's background in the LIS field has little effect on how they approach the situation, because of power struggles, not to mention, the emanating culture of respect for elders in the Philippine context. However, they may lose trust and pass judgement when they continue to develop a critical assessment of social media information. Still, this is always subject to further studies. This research, though not generalized, confirms that students' judgement in no way affects their trust as they tend to have low judgement with close relations.

## Conflicts of Interest

There is no conflict of interest between the authors.

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