

**Abstract**

Student journalists in the Philippines are vulnerable in the rapidly changing media landscape due to digital transformation and diverse training experiences, coupled with state harassment, administrative intervention, legal scares, cyberattacks, and the tense media situation in the country. This master's thesis investigates how formal and extracurricular education and digital transformation influence the practices and reportage of student publications in the Philippines. Using Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to contextualize environmental influences and Estella's conceptual framework of digital journalism competence for competency indicators, this mixed-methods study analyzes Facebook posts from 20 student publications and interviews with their editors, representing all Philippine regions.

Findings reveal that Filipino Gen Z student journalists are actively engaged as mobile and backpack journalists, adapting quickly to the digital media landscape. They report on their schools and communities, demonstrating key competencies. The study highlights the need for robust support systems, emphasizing paralegal, cybersecurity, and continuous digital transformation training. This reflexive education and practice help Filipino student journalists remain relevant and effective in a rapidly changing media environment. The unique challenges faced by Filipino student publications highlight the importance of adaptive education to empower student journalists in navigating these complexities.

**Keywords**

*Journalism competence, students, education, digital transformation, reportage*

**Title**

Start Them Young: The Influence of Education and Digital Transformation on Student Publications' Practices and Reportage in the Philippines