**Relationship between Social Media Usage and Civic Engagement among Students in St. Mary's College of Bansalan Inc.**



**ABSTRACT**

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|  This study investigates the relationship between social media use and civic engagement of St. Mary's College of Bansalan, Inc. students. The study employs a mixed-methods design, combining a quantitative correlational design with qualitative data from semi-structured interviews as supplementary information. A stratified random sample of 200 undergraduate students undertook online questionnaires measuring three aspects of social media use (academic, social, and information-based) and civic engagement. Twenty participants were also interviewed to enhance the findings. Statistical analysis indicated a high positive correlation between social media use and civic engagement (r = 0.967, p <.001). All aspects of social media usage significantly impacted civic participation, with academic usage having the highest mean (M = 4.31, SD = 0.544). Qualitative findings underscored how social media facilitates collaboration, community engagement, and awareness. The findings suggest that educational institutions can leverage social media to promote civic participation by implementing targeted digital literacy programs and creating opportunities for meaningful online interaction. |

***Keywords: Social Media Usage, Civic Engagement, Digital Literacy, Student participation,Mixed-Method, Digital Citizenship***

**1. INTRODUCTION**

* 1. **Background of the Study**

In today’s digital world, social media is crucial in creating awareness of civic issues among young people in today's digital world. In the study of Park, S., et. al., (2023), in digital environments, there are extensive opportunities to participate in groups and communities, as the internet provides a communication infrastructure that enables direct engagement with other people, organizations, and media. The more people engage with media, and in particular with news, the more likely they are to participate in civic duties, that is, participate in social and public issues (Shah, et. al., 2005). With more than 4.89 billion active users worldwide in 2023, Facebook and Twitter are not only used for social networking but also for exchanging information and debating matters of public concern. Studies indicate that social media can motivate youth to engage in social causes (Riaz et al., 2023). At St. Mary's College of Bansalan, Inc., students utilize social media for learning, networking, and being updated. Nevertheless, little research has examined how their usage is connected with their engagement in civic activities, particularly in private schools in the Philippines. This research seeks to bridge the gap by studying the relationship between social media behavior and students' the civic engagements.

     According to Akareem and Aslam (2024), social media usage encompasses various aspects, such as looking up information, socializing with others, and participating in public life. According to Tarman and Kilinc (2023), in order to advance civic engagement, schools should encourage students to get more personal experience that prepares students as active members of society. The sites should also be venues for critical consciousness toward social issues, community involvement, and participatory democracy. Research suggests properly using social media can significantly influence students' civil knowledge and social responsibilities. Thus, political awareness may be reduced through a second derivative effect. Types of methods include information transmission, aggregate communities (aggregates but also part of large communities), and organizing collective actions.

  This relationship between social media and civic engagement will be especially dramatic in the academic setting. (Kumar et al., 2022) social media platforms can reinforce civic participation by dispersing information, fostering community spirit, and promoting social causes. Schools should use these mechanisms to recast students ' online activities as a part of significant civic life. Research shows that undergraduate students who frequently read online public welfare news had a higher likelihood of participating in offline activities, beating for public salable advertisements, and showing a greater sense of social responsibility. However, while current research has looked at the effects of social media on civic engagement in various contexts, there is still a big gap between theory and practice when considering how this relationship works within schools situated in private educational institutions of the Philippines. They observed that most researchers focus their attention on public universities or urban areas – as a result, a noteworthy hiatus exists in our understanding of how particularly social media use patterns and civil engagement levels among students at private colleges relate More precisely, while there are studies which looked at general social media use, a dearth of research has been directed to exploring the life-style aspects and academic functions in a given population how these correlate with such things as civic engagement dimension respectively. Although there may be areas that remain uncovered or obscure points where investigation needs further work, it is hoped that this work and future research will decrease errors in socio-statistical assumptions by translating grade point averages into educational credits and services. To fill these gaps, therefore, this research establishes a particular relationship between the usage pattern of social media and the degree of civic engagement among students at St. Mary's College of Bansalan, Inc.

**1.2 Theoretical framework**

    Based on Albert Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, it is the theoretical framework to be used for research into the meaning of social media in the dimensions of academics, socialization and informativeness. According to this theory, people learn by making observations, mimicking others and modeling themselves in social situations. Within the social media environment, students are able to study through the Academic Dimension; as Otuson noted in his study of Filipino students that participated in SNS usage groups explores how they engage collaboratively for learning, exchange of resources or help on difficult questions within group members but still along(within) its discussion forum; How Students Acquire Academic Content The theory suggests that students learn academic content not through direct instruction but by exchange of information and dialogue with peers on social media platforms.

  Different Dimensions of Social Life: Socialization Theory explains how students learn dress, behaviorisms and what is acceptable through social media interactions between different users.tanal·4 such interactions tend to make friends of acquaintances brought together as strangers both struggle together to survive in a new environment. Informativity dimension: The social learning theory argues that students take in information from social media platforms where there is formal educational content available to them even though it may most accurately be categorized in terms of peer-shared knowledge (those that learn from peers). A second theoretical foundation, Social Cognitive Theory, provides a perspective on how civic participation of students can be understood as civic engagement (CVE), students as partners in education (SAP) or voice, and campus traditions (CUL). The idea is that personal, behavioral and environmental factors all work together to influence human behavior and learning. In particular, In the specific context of Civic Education (CE), the theory explains how students' encounter with civically related content and information through social media affects their participation in civic life.  According to Cushman, S., (2019), social media also provides a pathway for deeper learning on political issues because it makes learning about an issue more appealing and engages students who are less interested in a traditional classroom delivery. This shows that social media can influence the interest of the students to actively participate in civic engagement. Student as Partners (sap), building upon Social Cognitive Theory, helps us understand how students will create agency and partnership roles via their social media behavior and civic involvement. Civic Culture (cul), the theory helps explain that students get civic awareness and cultural awareness from their social media interaction and interaction with the community.

**1.3 Conceptual Framework**

Social Media Usage

Academics

Socialization

Informativeness

Civic Engagement

CVE - Civic Engagement

SAP - Students as Partners

CUL - Civic Culture

**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the study**

**1.4. Research Question**

This study aims to investigate the correlation between social media usage and civic engagement among students of St. Mary's College of Bansalan, Inc. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What is the level of the respondents' perception towards their social media usage in terms of: a. Social Media Usage in terms of Academics b. Social Media Usage in terms of Socialization c. Social Media Usage in terms of Informativeness

RQ2: What factors influence the development of students' interest and participation in civic activities in terms of: a. CVE - Civic Engagement b. SAP - Students as Partners c. CUL - Civic Culture

RQ3: What is the relationship between social media usage and civic participation among students of St. Mary's College of Bansalan, Inc.?

**1.5 Null Hypothesis**

 There is no significant relationship between social media usage in terms of academics and civic engagement (CVE) among students of St. Mary's College of Bansalan INC.

**2. methodology**

**2.1 Research Design**

  This study employs a quantitative correlational design to examine the relationship between social media usage and civic engagement among students at St. Mary's College of Bansalan, Inc. The primary objective is to explore how the use of social media correlates with participation in community activities, without seeking to manipulate or influence these variables.

**2.2 Research Locale**

 The study will be conducted at SMCBI, a private school in Bansalan Davao del Sur, Philippines. It is considered a good place to conduct a study since it is a high education institute with a diverse group of students who are involved in academic and social activities. This mix of experiences and student backgrounds makes it an appropriate site to examine the relationship between social media use and civic engagement.

**2.3 Participants of the Study**

 We’ll focus on undergraduate students from different programs and year levels at St. Mary’s College. By including a diverse group of students across the institution, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media habits relate to the level of community involvement among students.

**2.4 Sampling Techniques**

 This study focused on undergraduate students at St. Mary’s College of Bansalan INC., who came from various academic programs and year levels. To select the sample, we used a combination of stratified random sampling and simple random sampling. First, we divided the students into groups based on their program and year level. This stratified random sampling ensured that each group was represented, helping us understand how social media usage and civic engagement differed among them.

Next, within each group, we chose participants using simple random sampling, which gave every student an equal chance of being selected. This approach reduced bias and allowed us to generalize our findings to the entire student population. We included about 200 students in our sample, which was enough to provide meaningful insights into the relationship between social media use and civic engagement. By using these sampling techniques, we ensured a representative sample that reflected the diverse student body at St. Mary’s College.

**2.5 Data Collection Procedure**

 This research used a mixed-methods design to explore the relationship between social media usage and civic engagement among students of St. Mary's College of Bansalan, Inc. Data collection was carried out in two phases;

 The quantitative Phase, a standardized online questionnaire based on validated scales of social media use and civic engagement, was administered through Google Forms. The questionnaire was sent to 200 undergraduate students chosen via stratified random sampling by academic program and year level. Recruitment was through class announcements and social media posts, with reminder emails sent for four weeks to enhance response rates.

 In the qualitative Phase, semi-structured interviews were also carried out with 20 participants from the survey group to gather more in-depth information. Interviews were conducted in a secluded campus area, audio-recorded with permission, and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

**3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

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| **Table 1. Level of Social Media Usage** |  |
|  | **Mean** | **SD** | **Descriptive Equivalent** |
| Academics |  | 4.31 |  | 0.544 |  |  |
| Socialization |  | 4.26 |  | 0.584 |  |  |
| Informativeness |  | 4.27 |  | 0.595 |  |  |
| Social Media Usage |  | 4.28 |  | 0.560 |  |  |
| Civic Engagement (2) |  | 4.29 |  | 0.576 |  |  |

Table 1 Social usage was highest for academics (M = 4.31, SD = 0.544) followed by civic engagement (M = 4.29, SD = 0.576) and overall (M = 4.28, SD = 0.560) (see Table 1). Usage for informativeness (M = 4.27, SD = 0.595) and socialization (M = 4.26, SD = 0.584) is marginally lower, but high nonetheless. These results underscore the profound influence social media also plays in all areas of life, including for educational and civic purposes. This aligns with findings by Kwon, Shao, and Nah (2020), who revealed that social media use fosters greater civic engagement, acting as a platform for debate, advocacy, and community work.

| **Table 2. Level of Civic Engagement** |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Mean** | **SD** | **Descriptive Equivalent** |
| Civic Engagement |  | 4.30 |  | 0.607 |  |  |
| Student as Partners |  | 4.29 |  | 0.583 |  |  |
| Civic Culture |  | 4.29 |  | 0.587 |  |  |
| Overall |  | 4.29 |  | 0.576 |  |  |
|  |  |

Table 2 For social usage, academic (M = 4.31, SD = 0.544) was highest followed by civic engagement (M = 4.29, SD = 0.576) and overall (M = 4.28, SD = 0.560) (see Table 1). Usage for informativeness (M = 4.27, SD = 0.595) and socialization (M = 4.26, SD = 0.584) is slightly lower but still high. These results illustrate social media's profound and, at times, alarming impact on every area of life, including civic engagement and learning.

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| **Table 3. Correlation between Social Media Usage and Civic Engagement** |
|  | **Social Media Usage** | **Decision** |
| **Civic Engagement** | **0.967****(<.001)** | **Reject Ho** |

    Table 3 and The scatter plot below depicts the relationship between social media usage and civic involvement. The correlation coefficient is 0.967, meaning these variables have a strong positive relationship. The p-value is below 0.001; thus, it is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This means that H0-that there is no significant relationship between social media usage and civic engagement rejected based on this result. This finding would, therefore, mean that increased utilization of social media greatly correlates with higher levels of civic engagement among the respondents.

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| **Table 4. Significant Influence of Social Media Usage to Civic Engagement** |  |
| **Predictor** | **Estimate** | **SE** | **t** | **p** | **Decision** |
| **Intercept** |  | **0.0290** |  | **0.0790** |  | **0.368** |  | **0.713** |  |  |
| **Academics** |  | **0.3509** |  | **0.0557** |  | **6.296** |  | **< .001** |  | **Reject Ho** |
| **Socialization** |  | **0.3450** |  | **0.0484** |  | **7.120** |  | **< .001** |  | **Reject Ho** |
| **Informativeness** |  | **0.3011** |  | **0.0501** |  | **6.008** |  | **< .001** |  | **Reject Ho** |

**Plot**

    

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Fig 2- Scatter plot showing Social media usage

 The latter graph seems to indicate a positive linear relationship between the use of social media and civic engagement; in other words, the more frequent the use of social media, the greater the civic engagement. These findings provide further confirmation of the premise that these social media platforms serve as a forum for debate, advocacy, and community work that will motivate users to become more civically engaged.

    Findings have shown a high level of involvement expressed by participants in both academic and civic spheres, revealing a strong relationship between social media usage and civic participation. This agrees with findings by Lee Rainie et al. (2012), which explain that social media platforms increase political and civic participation by allowing users to discuss it, advocate voting, and join social movements. These studies show that social media effectively encourages academic and civic participation.

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| **Table 5: Descriptives table** |
|  | **Mean** | **SD** |
| AC1 |  | 4.51 |  | 0.671 |  |
| AC2 |  | 4.09 |  | 0.664 |  |
| AC3 |  | 4.32 |  | 0.820 |  |
| AC4 |  | 4.28 |  | 0.613 |  |
| AC5 |  | 4.32 |  | 0.798 |  |
| SO1 |  | 4.34 |  | 0.685 |  |
| SO2 |  | 4.17 |  | 0.729 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| SO3 |  | 4.23 |  | 0.827 |  |
| SO4 |  | 4.30 |  | 0.732 |  |
| IN1 |  | 4.32 |  | 0.705 |  |
| IN2 |  | 4.18 |  | 0.753 |  |
| IN3 |  | 4.23 |  | 0.792 |  |
| IN4 |  | 4.35 |  | 0.745 |  |
| CE1 |  | 4.48 |  | 0.684 |  |
| CE2 |  | 4.08 |  | 0.665 |  |
| CE3 |  | 4.34 |  | 0.835 |  |
| SP1 |  | 4.30 |  | 0.707 |  |
| SP2 |  | 4.27 |  | 0.724 |  |
| SP3 |  | 4.17 |  | 0.806 |  |
| SP4 |  | 4.43 |  | 0.732 |  |
| CC1 |  | 4.40 |  | 0.683 |  |
| CC2 |  | 4.18 |  | 0.750 |  |
| CC3 |  | 4.31 |  | 0.795 |  |
| CC4 |  | 4.29 |  | 0.704 |  |
| Academics |  | 4.31 |  | 0.544 |  |
| Socialization |  | 4.26 |  | 0.584 |  |
| Informativeness |  | 4.27 |  | 0.595 |  |
| Civic Engagement |  | 4.30 |  | 0.607 |  |
| Student as Partners |  | 4.29 |  | 0.583 |  |
| Civic Culture |  | 4.29 |  | 0.587 |  |
| Social Media Usage |  | 4.28 |  | 0.560 |  |
| Civic Engagement (2) |  | 4.29 |  | 0.576 |  |
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**4. CONCLUSIONS**

     To enhance the positive influence of social media on civic engagement, St. Mary's College of Bansalan, Inc. should implement programs emphasizing responsible and meaningful social media usage. This could involve organizing digital literacy and citizenship workshops to teach students how to engage with social media thoughtfully while contributing to constructive conversations. Faculty members can also incorporate social media into academic activities, encouraging students to participate in collaborative online discussions that foster awareness and engagement. These initiatives would help students view social media as a platform for personal development and active societal participation, rather than merely a source of entertainment.

     Moreover, the college can facilitate student involvement in community-oriented projects through social media campaigns. These campaigns could address critical issues such as environmental conservation, voter education, or public health awareness. Collaborations with civic organizations and local government units can offer students practical opportunities to use social media for advocacy and problem-solving, bridging the gap between online engagement and real-world impact. Such initiatives would nurture a stronger sense of social responsibility among students.

     Lastly, the college should empower student organizations to lead social media-driven civic engagement efforts. Hosting competitions, forums, or events utilizing social media to mobilize participants can help students build leadership and advocacy skills. The administration can support and recognize impactful initiatives that demonstrate significant community contributions. These strategies ensure that students use social media effectively while cultivating habits of active civic participation that extend beyond their academic years.

**Ethical Approval and Consent:**

 Ethical integrity was a core focus of this study on the correlation between social media usage and civic engagement among students at St. Mary's College of Bansalan Inc. To ensure the rights and welfare of respondents were prioritized, several key actions were implemented. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing all data; personal identifiers were removed, and unique codes were assigned to participants, ensuring results were reported in aggregate form to prevent individual identification. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without repercussions, a point clearly communicated in both the survey introduction and during interviews.

 An informed consent procedure was established prior to data collection, providing participants with detailed information about the study's purpose, their involvement, potential risks, and benefits. They were required to read and sign an informed consent form before participating in the survey or interviews. Data security was also prioritized; all collected data were stored on a password-protected computer and backed up on an encrypted external drive, with access limited to the research team. Following the completion of the study, data will be retained for a specified period for verification and auditing before secure deletion. Through these measures, the study aimed to uphold ethical standards, protect the rights of all participants, and ensure the reliability of findings that contribute valuable insights into the relationship between social media usage and civic engagement among students.

**DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE):**

Author(s) hereby declare that generative AI technologies, such as Large Language Models, etc., have been used during the writing or editing of manuscripts.

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