



Political Knowledge and Involvement in Public Affairs of College Students at St. Paul University Surigao, Philippines

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ABSTRACT: The study is aimed to assess College Students' Political Knowledge and their Political Involvement in Public Affairs. It was conducted to the 320 college students across all college departments at St. Paul University Surigao, Surigao City, during the second semester of AY 2021-2022. The study employed a descriptive quantitative survey method. The findings revealed that there is no significant degree of relationship between the students' Political Knowledge and their Political Involvement which means that the student's level of political involvement is not dependent on the level of their political knowledge. Political knowledge in this study is measured according to public policies, political leaders, political processes, and political issues while political involvement is measured from the perspective of voting, public forums, and political activism. Students were rated highly knowledgeable in all dimensions; however, they were rated seldom and not involved in voting, public forum, and political activism.

KEYWORDS: Descriptive Survey, Political Knowledge, Political Involvement, Public Affairs, Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

Governance has always been the central responsibility of the state. Public governance as stated in the Encyclopedic Dictionary of Public Administration, is an interdisciplinary field of study centering on relationships of power between government authorities, civil society, and the market, in a context of transformations in the ability of political communities to legitimately govern themselves and act effectively. Good governance sets the normative standards of development through participation, transparency, accountability, efficiency, and leaders upholding the rule of law in economic, political, and administrative institutions and processes.

Elections are essential for every democratic country such as the Philippines, for it points people, specifically, politicians to power. People's lives are affected by the kind of leadership our politicians are leading at every level of the political structure. We need the kind of leaders who will run the country efficiently eliminating corruption in all manners. This circumstance needs the political literacy of the country's citizens. Without adequate literacy or the proper knowledge, abilities, or skills about politics, people possess unawareness of the political processes, illegal political activities, and political ideas.

Political literacy describes the goal of political education in schools. Denver and Hands defined political literacy as "the knowledge and understanding of the political process and political issues which enables people to perform their roles as citizens effectively". Wormald referred to political literacy as goals of training for self-government, political understanding, and education in the procedures and purpose of voting (Cassell & Lo, 1997).

Political illiteracy does not only affect an individual but its community. Politically illiterate citizens cannot be a part of the country's progress in achieving the "right" government. When voters are illiterate, they are vulnerable to illegal activities such as vote-buying. They do not hold importance to their votes, trading it off for money hence, allowing undeserving candidates to grasp power and authority.

In the political perspective of a democratic society, wherein the partisan aspects of politics and biased positions regarding political matters are perceived to create disorder and confusion among the people. Much more, the illiteracy of the masses could result in havoc and peril shaped by the falsified knowledge of black propaganda or misinformation.

The provision of the Constitution stipulates that the educational institutions shall incorporate and include the discussions of our basic governance, concepts, history, privileges, nationalism, and duties as citizens towards fostering the awareness of the



students on their roles in the government. This implies that citizens must be informed about political issues, duties of government institutions, and most significantly their political rights and fundamental roles as political constituents to thoroughly emphasize, if they are politically educated and active to cogently formulate unbiased judgments in any political aspect (KuoTsu, 2016).

Based on a report by United Nations, the Philippines has the highest literacy rate at 97.95 percent among Southeast Asian countries such as Singapore, Brunei, and Indonesia. The literacy rate is 98.9 percent among females and 97 percent among males aged 15-24 (Philippine Star Global @ <https://www.philstar.com/lifestyle/on-the-radar/2019/09/27/1955462/national-literacy-month-un-ranks-filipinos-most-literate-southeast-asia>). However, despite the increase in literacy levels, knowledge may also equate to misinformation. Most individuals tend to be deceived by unreliable information. As a result, deception does not necessarily change people's beliefs, it only affects their political rationality and involvement.

Educational institutions are the foundations of knowledge. Education provides knowledge, information, skills, and the understanding of things that are significant factors in the political engagement and awareness of the youth. A conference paper of Beaumont (2004) entitled "Beyond civics 101: Promoting political engagement and participation" was presented at the American Political Science Association 2004 Annual Meeting. It stated that there remains a pressing need for the study of specific practices that show promise for addressing political disengagement; that there is a need to better understand and measure political interest and behavior in a diverse range of undergraduates, as well as to better understand and measure some of the processes and practices that can promote responsible democratic citizenship across the full spectrum of students.

A research study examines the relationships among social motivations, media use, and levels of political knowledge measured the unique contribution of social motivations beyond simple exposure and individual motivations and tested for interactions between social and individual motivations and public affairs exposure. Findings showed that, although traditional individual-level predictors were a significant influence, social-level predictors should be considered when an individual's knowledge levels are being considered. Group interactions provided a significant control for all other variables. Results also indicated that the relationship between social and individual motivations is substantially additive, and that public affairs exposure interacts with social influences. Findings showed that the media were able to transfer substantial amounts of information at lower motivation levels. Motivation, then, was the overall best predictor of knowledge.

A two-wave panel study examines how an educational intervention focused on media literacy influences civic competence among lower-educated youth particularly those who aged 16 to 26. Tested on three measures of civic competence: news media literacy, political efficacy, and political knowledge, the findings revealed that the educational program has influenced the level of political efficacy and news media literacy. (Geers, et. al., 2020)

It is therefore the essence of this present study to find out the level of students' political knowledge and its impact on their political involvement to validate the impressions, observations, and opinions from other researchers on the relationship of political knowledge to political involvement. This research is hopeful to significantly contribute to the empowerment of youth in the political realm. According to Chrastka (2017) in his article "Creating Tomorrow's Civic Leaders by Learning to Be Civically Engaged Today: Engaging political literacy is part of leadership development."

RESEARCH PROBLEMS

The objective of this study is to ascertain the level of Political Knowledge and Political Involvement in Public Affairs by the College Students of St. Paul University Surigao. It sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the participants in terms of:
 - 1.1. Age;
 - 1.2. Sex; and
 - 1.3. Course?
2. What is the level of students' Political Knowledge in the following dimensions:
 - 2.1. Public Policies;
 - 2.2. Political Leaders;
 - 2.3. Political Processes; and
 - 2.4. Political Issues?



3. What is the level of the Political Involvement among the participants on the following perspectives?
 - 3.1. Voting;
 - 3.2. Public Forums; and
 - 3.3. Political Activism?
4. Is there a significant degree of correlation between the level of Political Knowledge and the level of Political Involvement in Public Affairs among the participants?
5. Is there a significant degree of relationship between the level of Political Knowledge and level of Involvement in Public Affairs by the College Students when grouped according to profile?
6. Is there a significant degree of variance in the level of Political Knowledge among college students?
7. Is there a significant degree of variance on the level of Political Involvement among college students in Public Political Affairs?
8. Based on the findings of the study, what recommendations could be proposed?

METHODOLOGY

The study utilized the descriptive quantitative survey method using two sets of researcher-made questionnaires for Student’s Political Knowledge which is measured in four dimensions, Public Policies, Political Leaders, Political Processes, and Political Issues and for Political Involvement which is likewise measured in three perspectives, Voting, Public Forums, and Political Activism. The questionnaires were pilot tested and were subjected to validity testing using Cronbach’s Alpha Test. Slovin’s Formula was utilized to determine the sample size employing a convenience stratified random sampling technique to a target of 320 college student participants in five (5) departments of St. Paul University Surigao taking a 95% confidence level and 4.97% margin of error. The paper was then reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee of the University Research Center.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1. Students’ Level of Political Knowledge as measured in four dimensions such as public policies, political leaders, political processes, and political issues.

Indicators	M	SD	VI	QD
Public Policies	3.55	0.63	SA	HK
Political Leaders	3.70	0.51	SA	HK
Political Processes	3.64	0.54	SA	HK
Political Issues	3.62	0.58	SA	HK
Average	3.63	0.57	SA	HK

Below are the parameters using the 4point-Likert Scale:

Scale	Range	Verbal Interpretation	Qualitative Description
4	3.25-4.00	Strongly Agree (SA)	Highly Knowledgeable (HK)
3	2.50-3.24	Agree (A)	Knowledgeable (K)
2	1.75-2.49	Disagree (D)	Not Knowledgeable (NK)
1	1.00-1.74	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Strongly Not Knowledgeable (SNK)

The level of political knowledge is measured by the four dimensions namely: public policy, political leaders, political processes, and political issues. Using the 4-point Likert scale, the resultant mean of all the dimensions were falling on the same mean range, interpreted as highly knowledgeable. The political leader dimension got the highest mean at 3.70 and the lowest is political policies at 3.55.



Table 2 below showed the significant degree of variance among the four dimensions of political knowledge, rejecting therefore the null hypothesis

Table 2. Significant Degree of Variance on the level of Political Knowledge in Public Affairs among College Students in terms of Public Policies, Political Leaders, Political Processes, and Political Issues.

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit	Decision
Between Groups	1.23	3	0.41	3.19	0.024	2.63	Reject H ₀
Within Groups	52.41	408	0.13				

The table below showed the seldom involvement of students in public affairs in the perspective of voting and public forum and most of all not involved in student activism.

Table 3. Students' Level of Political Involvement as measured in three perspectives such as voting, public forum, and political activism.

Indicators	M	SD	VI	QD
Voting	2.78	0.88	A	SI
Public Forums	2.67	0.93	A	SI
Political Activism	2.38	0.92	D	NI
Average	2.61	0.91	D	SI

Below are the parameters using the 4point-Likert Scale:

Scale	Range	Verbal Interpretation	Qualitative Description
4	3.25-4.00	Strongly Agree (SA)	Highly Involved (HI)
3	2.50-3.24	Agree (A)	Seldom Involved (SI)
2	1.75-2.49	Disagree (D)	Not Involved (NI)
1	1.00-1.74	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Strongly Not Involved (SNI)

The computed value in table 4 below showed a significant degree of variance in the level of political involvement in public affairs which were previously rated as Not Involved (NI) and barely rated as Seldom Involved (SI) among the three perspectives. Hence, rejecting the null hypothesis.

Table 4. Significant Degree of Variance on the level of Political Involvement in Public Affairs among College Students in terms of Voting, Public Forums, and Political Activism.

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit	Decision
Between Groups	9.16	2	4.58	13.53	2.3E-06	3.03	Reject H ₀
Within Groups	103.60	306	0.34				

Table 5 below showed the insignificant degree of correlation between political knowledge and the political involvement of students. Using the 0.05 level of significance the resultant p-value of 0.450, which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, justifies the acceptance of the null hypothesis. The insignificant degree of correlation is validated by the high level of political knowledge but is low in the level of political involvement among the students.

Table 5. Significant Degree of Correlation between the Level of Political Knowledge and the level of Political Involvement in Public Affairs among College Students

Source of Relationship	r	p-value	Decision
Political Knowledge and Political Involvement	0.08	0.450	Accept



The results of the study confirm the findings of Sigauke (2001) in his study assessing high school students’ knowledge of, attitudes towards, and participation levels in citizenship issues. Findings show that while students are knowledgeable about citizenship issues they are, however, hesitant about involvement in political activities.

The insignificant degree of correlation between Political Knowledge and Political Involvement is further supported by the findings of the study referring to the concepts of situated learning, self-determination, and knowledge gap, which asks whether young adult's participatory practices (e.g., participation in politics, prior involvement in decision-making at school) predict political knowledge. The study showed that political knowledge has multiple predictors suggesting differential associations between Political knowledge and participatory activities (Reichert, et.al., 2019). Accordingly, the conditional effect of party-related political participation is further moderated by educational resources.

Table 6- Significant degree of relationship in the Level of Political Knowledge and the Level of Political Involvement in Public Affairs when respondents are grouped according to profile. The findings revealed that students’ level of political knowledge and political involvement are not significantly influenced by their age, sex, and course profile as shown in the resultant statistical computation where the p-value is lesser than the 0.05 level of significance,

Table 6. Significant Degree of Relationship of the Level of Political Knowledge in Public Affairs among College Students when grouped according to their profile.

Profile	Dependent Variables	SS	df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Decision
<i>Age</i>	Public Policies	0.33	2	0.16	1.25	0.290	Accept Ho
	Political Leaders	0.56	2	0.28	2.86	0.062	Accept Ho
	Political Processes	0.65	2	0.32	3.27	0.042	Reject Ho
	Political Issues	2.00	2	1.00	6.19	0.00	Reject Ho
<i>Sex</i>	Public Policies	0.32	1	0.32	2.52	0.116	Accept Ho
	Political Leaders	0.04	1	0.04	0.43	0.512	Accept Ho
	Political Processes	0.12	1	0.12	1.21	0.275	Accept Ho
	Political Issues	0.01	1	0.01	0.05	0.816	Accept Ho
<i>Course</i>	Public Policies	2.39	4	0.60	5.34	0.00	Reject Ho
	Political Leaders	2.04	4	0.51	5.99	0.000	Reject Ho
	Political Processes	3.69	4	0.92	13.26	0.000	Reject Ho
	Political Issues	3.55	4	0.89	5.95	0.000	Reject Ho

Table 7. Significant Degree of Relationship of the Level of Political Involvement in Public Affairs among College Students when grouped according to profile.

Profile	Dependent Variables	SS	df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Decision
<i>Age</i>	Voting	1.60	2	0.80	2.47	0.090	Accept Ho
	Public Forums	1.90	2	0.95	2.76	0.068	Accept Ho
	Political Activism	0.63	2	0.32	0.97	0.383	Accept Ho
<i>Sex</i>	Voting	0.92	1	0.92	2.81	0.097	Accept Ho
	Public Forums	0.37	1	0.37	1.02	0.314	Accept Ho
	Political Activism	0.12	1	0.12	0.35	0.553	Accept Ho
<i>Course</i>	Voting	2.81	4	0.70	2.20	0.074	Accept Ho
	Public Forums	1.32	4	0.33	0.92	0.454	Accept Ho
	Political Activism	1.14	4	0.29	0.87	0.482	Accept Ho



The resultant computation in table 7 revealed that there is no significant degree of relationship between the students' profile and their political involvement in public affairs. Although some studies report on the effect political participation has on political efficacy and civic knowledge. The research study, "Promoting Civic Knowledge and Political Efficacy Among Low-Income Youth Through Applied Political Participation", recommends intervention coupled with civic literacy workshops with applied political participation to increase the civic knowledge and political efficacy of low-income, ethnically diverse high school students (Padilla & Alvarez, 2020).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The end view of this present study is to ascertain whether these two variables, political knowledge, and political involvement, are linearly related. The research findings showed that the students have high political knowledge but are seldom involved in political affairs. Therefore, it is concluded that the student's level of political involvement is not dependent on the level of his/her political knowledge. Likewise, the students' political knowledge and political involvement, as revealed by the resultant statistical treatment, are not influenced by their age, sex, and degree program enrollment.

Based on the analysis done on the data gathered, the findings revealed in this study are summarized as follows:

1. Group Behavior, Group Dynamics, Knowledge Level, Motivation, Political Attitudes, Political Influences, Political Socialization, Public Affairs Education, Social Influences, Student Empowerment, and Good Governance should be embedded in the curriculum across all tertiary levels.
2. Carefully-design college courses and programs that can have significant effects on all constituent elements of political engagement, including political knowledge, values, skills, and behaviors.
3. Strengthen the student government's political system, policies, practices, and activities including a politically engaged identity of students, or one's sense of self as a person who is concerned about political issues and government policies and is politically involved; internal and external political efficacy that would motivate, encourage, and inspire students to become an agent of change in diverse political arenas.

IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research outlined practical recommendations with sensible insights on how academic institutions like St Paul University Surigao would equip the students and graduates with political knowledge, information, skills, and the understanding of things that are significant factors in the political engagement and awareness of the youth. The institution to supply the public and the nation with political leaders at every level of the political structure who can run the country efficiently eliminating corruption in all manners.

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