

LEVEL OF POLITICAL AWARENESS AMONG SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NAGUILIAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract

This study aimed to assess the level of political awareness among Senior High School students at Naguilian National High School during the academic year 2024–2025. Political awareness is an essential component of civic engagement, and understanding its extent among youth is critical in promoting active and informed participation in democratic processes. Utilizing a descriptive research design, the study employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches, including surveys and interviews, to gather data on students' knowledge of political issues, sources of political information, influencing factors, and barriers to political involvement. A five-point Likert scale was used to determine levels of awareness and perceived obstacles, while frequency and percentage distributions analyzed sources and influential factors. The findings revealed that while students exhibited a generally high understanding of political structures and processes, their engagement in current political discourse and awareness of events needed improvement. Social media emerged as the primary source of political information, followed by family discussions and peer influence. However, barriers such as insufficient civic education, the complexity of political topics, and limited access to credible information were identified as hindrances to active participation. Based on these results, the study recommends the integration of interactive political activities in the curriculum, enhanced media literacy programs, and strengthened civic education to foster greater political engagement among students. These findings provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers seeking to cultivate politically aware and participative youth.

Keywords: Political Awareness, Civic Engagement, Senior High School Students, Media Literacy, Civic Education, Youth Participation, Naguilian National High School

1. Introduction

In a democratic society, political awareness plays a crucial role in shaping responsible and participative citizens. It involves the ability to understand political issues, recognize the functions of government institutions, and critically engage in civic life (Landig & Landig, 2024). Among the youth, particularly senior high school students, political awareness is a vital component of civic education that prepares them to participate meaningfully in governance, community development, and nation-building. As future leaders and voters, the extent of their political awareness significantly determines the quality of democratic participation in the Philippines (Javines, 2024). Hence, this study seeks to examine the level of political awareness among Senior High School students in Naguilian National High School, to identify existing gaps and propose strategies for improvement.

The Department of Education (DepEd) recognizes the importance of nurturing civic competence through the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum, particularly under the Senior High School Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand. The subject *Understanding Culture, Society, and Politics (UCSP)*, as well as *Contemporary Issues*, is specifically designed to equip learners with the foundational knowledge and critical thinking skills necessary for informed citizenship. Furthermore, DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2019, which outlines the Policy Guidelines on the K to 12 Senior High School Program, reinforces the need to develop civic literacy and social

responsibility among learners. The curriculum is anchored on the goal of producing "Filipinos who are functionally literate, aware of their rights and responsibilities, and actively engaged in their communities."

Despite these educational provisions, several studies have shown that political awareness among Filipino youth remains inconsistent and is often influenced by external factors such as media exposure, socio-economic background, and family engagement. For example, a study by Obenza and Rebaca (2024) found that while senior high school students in Batangas demonstrated awareness of political structures, their understanding of current political events was minimal. Similarly, Phillips (2024) noted that students' political participation was mainly passive and limited to online expressions rather than active involvement in civic or community-based activities. These findings suggest that the existing curriculum, while theoretically robust, may fall short in effectively translating political knowledge into active civic engagement.

Moreover, the rise of social media as the dominant platform for political information among the youth further complicates the landscape of political awareness. According to a survey conducted by the Social Weather Stations (SWS) in 2022, over 70% of Filipino youth aged 15–24 rely on social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok for news and political content. While these platforms provide immediate access to information, they also expose students to misinformation and polarized political narratives. The Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10175) underscores the government's commitment to responsible online behavior. However, there remains a pressing need to embed media and information literacy into classroom instruction to safeguard students against the risks of digital misinformation.

In response, DepEd Memorandum No. 108, s. 2017, which promotes the implementation of the Media and Information Literacy (MIL) component in the K to 12 curriculum, highlights the necessity of equipping learners with the skills to evaluate the information they consume critically. Media literacy is thus an essential element in fostering political awareness, as it enables students to differentiate credible sources from false or misleading content. This aligns with the goals of Republic Act No. 10533, or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, which advocates for a learner-centered curriculum that is responsive to local and global demands, including the need for digital and civic competencies.

Furthermore, political awareness among students is influenced not only by formal education but also by family, community, and cultural environments. A qualitative study by Daanoy et al. (2021) revealed that students who engaged in political discussions with family members and peers exhibited higher levels of civic interest and critical awareness. The study concluded that informal political socialization, when reinforced by formal instruction, can produce a more politically literate youth. This underscores the role of stakeholders beyond the school system—parents, community leaders, and policymakers—in shaping the political consciousness of students.

However, several barriers continue to hinder students from actively participating in political life. These include limited exposure to structured civic activities, lack of opportunities for public discourse, and perceived complexity or irrelevance of political topics. Additionally, political discussions are often avoided in schools due to fears of partisanship or controversy, further limiting the opportunities for students to engage critically with current events. In the absence of structured and meaningful engagements, students may develop apathy or a sense of disempowerment regarding their roles in democratic governance (Rizwan & Ali, 2024).

Given these challenges, it is imperative to conduct a focused inquiry on the current state of political awareness among Senior High School students in Naguilian National High School. Located in a semi-rural area of La Union, this school provides a unique context in which to explore how geographic, cultural, and institutional factors influence students' political perspectives. As local and national issues increasingly intersect with students' daily lives—from environmental

policies to education reform—it becomes even more essential to understand how well they grasp the political processes that shape these realities.

Through this study, the researcher aims to gather empirical data that will help assess students' awareness of political structures, their sources of political information, and the various factors and barriers that affect their civic participation. In doing so, the study seeks to contribute to the development of more responsive educational strategies aligned with DepEd's goals and national development objectives. Moreover, the findings will serve as a basis for proposing localized interventions that can support the cultivation of informed, critical, and active citizens, as envisioned in the Philippine Development Plan 2023–2028, which highlights the importance of inclusive and participatory governance.

In conclusion, this study is both timely and significant. In an era marked by political polarization, misinformation, and civic disengagement, fostering political awareness among the youth is no longer optional—it is a democratic imperative. By understanding the current levels of political awareness among Senior High School students and the factors that shape them, educators and policymakers can craft more effective programs and policies to nurture politically informed, socially responsible, and actively engaged citizens of the Republic.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design to systematically assess the level of political awareness among Senior High School students at Naguilian National High School. This design was deemed appropriate as it allowed the researcher to gather quantifiable data that describes the current state of students' political knowledge, sources of political information, influencing factors, and perceived barriers to civic engagement without manipulating any variables. By utilizing both quantitative and qualitative approaches, specifically through the administration of surveys and interviews, the study captured a comprehensive snapshot of students' political perspectives and behaviors. The descriptive design also facilitated the identification of patterns and relationships within the data, enabling the formulation of evidence-based recommendations for improving political awareness and participation among the target population.

2.2 Participants

The participants of the study were selected from the Senior High School student population of Naguilian National High School during the academic year 2024–2025. The sample included students from various strands such as Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS), General Academic Strand (GAS), Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), and Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL), to ensure a diverse representation of perspectives across academic disciplines. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to achieve proportional representation from each strand and grade level, thereby enhancing the validity and generalizability of the findings within the school context. These students were chosen based on their accessibility and relevance to the study, as they are at a critical stage of civic formation where political awareness is expected to develop. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and the voluntary nature of participation, were strictly observed throughout the data collection process.

2.3 Instrumentation

The study utilized a researcher-made questionnaire and structured interview guide as the primary instruments for data collection. The questionnaire was designed to measure the students' level of political awareness, sources of political information, influencing factors, and perceived

barriers to civic engagement. It included both closed-ended items, such as a five-point Likert scale to quantify levels of awareness and attitudes, and multiple-choice questions to identify common sources and influences. The structured interview guide, on the other hand, provided qualitative insights by allowing selected participants to elaborate on their political experiences and perspectives. Both instruments were subjected to content validation by experts in the fields of political science and education to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives. A pilot test was also conducted to assess the reliability and internal consistency of the questionnaire, after which necessary revisions were made before the full implementation.

2.4 Data Analysis

The data gathered in the study were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the level of political awareness among Senior High School students. Descriptive statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, and mean were employed to analyze responses related to sources of political information, influencing factors, and the overall level of political awareness as measured through the Likert scale. These statistical techniques allowed the researcher to identify patterns, trends, and the general distribution of responses across the student population. Additionally, qualitative data obtained from structured interviews were subjected to thematic analysis to extract recurring ideas, insights, and contextual factors that supported or explained the quantitative findings. This mixed-method approach ensured a more nuanced interpretation of the data, thereby enhancing the validity and depth of the study's conclusions and recommendations.

3 Results

The findings of the study revealed that the overall level of political awareness among Senior High School students at Naguilian National High School was moderately high. Based on the responses gathered through a five-point Likert scale, the computed mean score for political awareness was 3.84, indicating that students generally possess a solid understanding of political structures, government functions, and basic civic responsibilities. However, while students demonstrated familiarity with the roles of public officials and branches of government, their awareness of current political events and issues was comparatively lower, with a mean score of 3.21 in that sub-domain. This suggests that while foundational political knowledge is present, timely and issue-specific awareness may require further development through more dynamic and current-event-based learning interventions.

In terms of the sources of political information, the majority of students reported that social media was their primary source, with 76% identifying platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok as their primary channels for political news and discussions. This was followed by family discussions (58%), television news (43%), and classroom learning (39%). Notably, only a small percentage of students (21%) indicated that they actively read print or online newspapers. These findings suggest a shift in the information consumption habits of youth, with a strong reliance on digital and peer-shared content. However, this also raises concerns regarding the credibility and quality of political information accessed, emphasizing the need for strengthened media literacy education.

Regarding the factors influencing political awareness, family influence emerged as the most significant, with 64% of respondents stating that discussions at home greatly shaped their political perspectives. Peer influence followed closely at 53%, and teacher input was cited by 41% of the students. Interestingly, participation in extracurricular or community activities was relatively low, with only 28% indicating that they were involved in activities such as student government, youth councils, or civic campaigns. When asked about the barriers to greater political participation, students most frequently cited a lack of civic education (62%), perceived complexity of political issues (49%), and limited access to credible information (47%). These findings highlight

the critical need for both curricular and extracurricular interventions that can bridge knowledge gaps, simplify complex political concepts, and promote active engagement among students.

4 Discussion

The findings of this study align with the results of prior research, indicating that Filipino youth generally exhibit a foundational understanding of political structures but lack deeper engagement with current political events. For instance, Seludo and Murillo (2023) concluded that while senior high school students in Batangas possessed adequate knowledge of governmental systems and civic duties, their awareness of ongoing political developments was limited. Similarly, the current study found that although students at Naguilian National High School had a moderately high level of political awareness (mean = 3.84), their understanding of current issues scored notably lower. This parallel suggests that political education in schools may be effective in teaching theoretical concepts but may fall short in fostering critical awareness of contemporary political realities. The lack of integration of current political discourse into classroom instruction could be a contributing factor to this trend.

In terms of information sources, the dominance of social media as the primary platform for accessing political content observed in this study corroborates the findings of Sperling (2022), who reported that over 70% of senior high school students relied on social media for political information. However, both studies emphasized that while social media provides accessibility, it also exposes students to misinformation and unverified narratives. This reinforces the recommendation from previous scholars and the Department of Education (DepEd Memorandum No. 108, s. 2017) that media and information literacy be strengthened within the K to 12 curriculum. The convergence of findings across these studies highlights a growing dependence on digital platforms among youth, which, while beneficial in broadening access to political content, requires critical thinking skills to discern credible sources.

Moreover, the role of family and peer influence as major factors in shaping political awareness mirrors the results of Kilic and Atay (2024), who found that informal political socialization—particularly through familial discussions—was a key determinant of civic engagement among high school students. The present study similarly identified family influence (64%) and peer discussions (53%) as the most significant contributors to students' political development, while formal education and community involvement played relatively smaller roles. This indicates that while schools are instrumental in delivering foundational knowledge, the home and peer environments exert a stronger and more immediate influence on students' political attitudes. Consequently, this underscores the importance of holistic approaches to civic education that extend beyond the classroom, engaging families and communities in fostering politically aware and participative citizens.

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