

Research Article

The Nexus between Political Awareness and Social Media Political Participation as Mediated by the Political Efficacy Among Youth in Region XI Philippines

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Abstract: The central aim of this study is to examine the role of political efficacy in mediating the connection between political awareness and social media political participation among youths in Region XI, Philippines. This study used a quantitative method, more especially, a non-experimental correlational approach. Data was collected online through Google Forms using modified questions, and respondents were chosen using stratified random sampling. Validity and reliability tests were performed on the measurement model, while descriptive statistics were utilized to depict the constructs in the study. The proposed mediation model was assessed using the standard algorithm-bootstrapping of SmartPLS 4.0 for mediation analysis. The findings revealed that the measurement model is valid and reliable based on the AVE, HTMT, Cronbach's Alpha values. The results indicated that youth in Region XI demonstrated high levels of political awareness, and moderate levels of political efficacy and social media political participation. Furthermore, the mediation analysis suggests that political efficacy significantly mediates the relationship between political awareness and social media political participation. These results underscore the critical role of political efficacy as a key mechanism through which political awareness translates into active political engagement on social media among the youth. The study provides valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers interested in enhancing political participation through increased political awareness and efficacy.

Keywords: political efficacy; political awareness; political participation; college students; mediation analysis

1. Introduction

Political participation encompasses various activities through which individuals influence government actions or policies, including voting, campaigning, and protesting. Understanding the factors driving political participation is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and representative democratic process (Uhlener, 2015). Youth political participation, in particular, is a multifaceted issue that has garnered significant attention in contemporary research due to its implications for the future of democracy.

On a global scale, the involvement of young people in conventional political activities, such as voting and joining political parties, has decreased. This has led to a decrease in voter turnout and a reduction in party memberships (Sloam, 2007; Binder et al., 2021). The conventional political actors and procedures frequently do not connect with the identification requirements and interests of young individuals, which leads to their disinterest and lack of involvement (Binder et al., 2021). Although young people are becoming less interested in traditional politics, they are increasingly participating in new kinds of political participation, such as internet activism, protests, and social movements (Kireeva & Filippov, 2022; Farthing, 2010; Earl et al., 2017). This phenomenon highlights a change in the way young people view and participate in politics, emphasizing the need to comprehend the fundamental elements that shape these actions.

Social media has greatly broadened citizens' political repertoires by offering novel avenues for political engagement, such as utilizing protest hashtags or participating in online communities focused on political matters (Waeterloos et al., 2021). The notion of "connective

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action," as proposed by Bennett and Segerberg (2016), highlights the idea that engaging in public action has progressively transformed into a means of individual self-expression enabled by social media (Bennett & Segerberg, 2016). The emergence of this novel approach to participation, which places emphasis on 'sharing' as a foundational element, requires us to revise our understanding of what qualifies as political involvement (Theocharis, 2015). Social media political participation encompasses both active, expressive actions and cognitive engagement, such as seeking and acquiring knowledge (Waeterloos et al., 2021).

Research conducted both nationally and internationally emphasizes how difficult political participation is. Particularly among younger people, international studies have shown that internal political efficacy – that is, the belief in one's own competence to understand and influence politics – highly increases political participation by inspiring emotions like anger in response to policy threats (Valentino et al., 2009). Young political involvement in the Philippines is shaped by several elements, including institutional frameworks, social influences, and technical developments as well as by Political skepticism among many young people toward the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) leads to minimal participation in its events and elections (Bautista, 2020; Palomares et al., 2021). Developing solutions to improve young political participation depends on an awareness of these regional characteristics.

The correlation between political efficacy and political engagement has been thoroughly examined. Internal political efficacy serves as a mediator in the connection between political knowledge and participation. This suggests that individuals who possess more information about politics are more inclined to join in political activities because they have a greater sense of efficacy (Jung et al., 2011). According to Valentino et al. (2009), external political efficacy, which refers to the idea that the political system is responsive to citizens, is not as closely associated with emotional participation as internal efficacy. Engaging in political campaigns can increase one's sense of political efficacy, indicating a reciprocal relationship where engagement enhances efficacy, which in turn motivates additional participation (Finkel, 1987). Moreover, the connection between engagement in administrative procedures and political participation is influenced by political efficacy. This suggests that taking part in administrative activities might increase one's political efficacy, which in turn encourages political participation (Oh & Lim, 2017).

Awareness of political issues is yet another important aspect that influences engagement in political processes. According to Lee (2017), Zetra et al. (2022), and Badaru and Adu (2021), research has shown that a higher level of political awareness, which includes knowledge about elections and politicians, is associated with improved political reliability and engagement. Research conducted by Lee (2017) and Jung et al. (2011) found that political awareness has a good impact on political knowledge, which in turn leads to an increase in political involvement. The function that political efficacy plays as a mediator in this relationship has been extensively researched and documented. It has been hypothesized that higher political knowledge leads to an increase in political efficacy, which in turn leads to an increase in political engagement (Jung et al., 2011; Reichert, 2016; Chen et al., 2019).

Though a lot of study has been done on political participation, little is known about the particular mediating function of political efficacy in the link between political awareness and political involvement—especially for young people in Region XI, Philippines. By looking at how political efficacy moderates the link between political awareness and political involvement among the young people in this area, this study seeks to close this gap. The results of this study will have major ramifications for groups striving to increase young political involvement, legislators, teachers, and for a better knowledge of political conduct among young people in the Philippines.

2. Materials and Methods

This study used a quantitative research design – more especially, a non-experimental correlational approach—to assess the relationships between variables and ascertain the mediating effect of Political Efficacy on Political Awareness and Political Participation of college students in Region XI, Philippines. Usually gained by surveys or experiments, the quantitative research method, as defined by Creswell and Creswell (2023) is the methodical gathering, analysis, and interpretation of data. This method lets one investigate relationships between variables to test objective hypotheses and get measurable results.

Political Efficacy was measured using the scale developed by Groskurth et al. (2021), Political Awareness was assessed with the instrument from Al-Khaza'leh and Lahiani (2021), and Social Media Political Participation was measured using the scale from Waeterloos et al.



(2021). Adopted from validated sources, were the research instruments used to measure the variables. Online surveys (Google Forms) using a 5-point Likert scale were sent to tertiary students registered in diverse programs across several universities and colleges in Region XI, Philippines.

The volunteers were chosen by stratified random sampling. This approach guarantees representation among several subgroups by first classifying the target population into strata and then randomly sampling from each strata (Ilyasu & Etikan, 2021). This method facilitates the obtaining of a representative sample from a varied population.

A priori power analysis using G*Power 3.1.9.6 (Faul et al., 2007) determined that a minimum sample size of 89 participants was required to achieve 80% power for detecting a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$) at a significance level of $\alpha = .05$. The actual sample size of 375 participants exceeded this requirement, thereby enhancing the study's robustness.

The instruments underwent pilot testing and expert validation to assure their reliability and validity. Cronbach's alpha was employed to measure the internal consistency of the data. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was used to analyze the convergent validity, while the Hetero-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) was utilized to evaluate the discriminant validity. The variables of political efficacy, political involvement, and political awareness among the college students were characterized using Jamovi software version 2.0. Descriptive statistics, such as the mean and standard deviation, were produced for this purpose.

The proposed mediation model was evaluated using SmarPLS 4.0 software, utilizing the bootstrapping standardized algorithm. This analysis examined the direct, indirect, and overall impacts of the model, as well as the magnitudes of each pathway, offering a full comprehension of the mediating function of political efficacy in the connection between political awareness and political involvement.

3. Results and Discussion

Confirming the validity and dependability of the measuring model is crucial before starting mediation analysis (Hair et al., 2019). Given the possibility of occasional item omission, the construct validity and dependability of the instruments applied in the study were assessed. As shown in Table 1, Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate the dependability of the instruments: Political Awareness (0.946), Political Efficacy (0.702), and Political Participation (0.941) showing appropriate internal consistency. Reliability calls for Cronbach's alpha values of 0.70 and higher (Taber, 2018). All variables, notably, exceeded this criterion and showed reasonable consistency for gauging the construct of interest. Furthermore, none of the Cronbach's alpha values above 0.95, suggesting that the items are not redundant (Diamantopoulos et al., 2012; Drolet & Morrison, 2001).

Table 1. Construct validity and reliability.

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Political Awareness	0.946	0.507
Political Efficacy	0.702	0.579
Political Participation	0.941	0.519
Discriminant Validity	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)	
Political Efficacy <-> Political Awareness	0.802	
Political Participation <-> Political Awareness	0.388	
Political Participation <-> Political Efficacy	0.447	

Calculating the average variance extracted (AVV) helped one to evaluate convergent validity. The AVE values for Political Awareness (0.507), Political Efficacy (0.579), and Political Participation (0.519) above the minimum criterion of 0.50, therefore indicating that the constructs account for 50% or more of the variance in respective items (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2019). Counter Engagement (0.849), Expressive Engagement (0.617), Follower Engagement (0.731), and Latent Engagement (0.715) were the sub-variables of Political Participation showing reasonable AVE values as well.

The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) helped to assess discriminant validity. All of the HTMT ratios – from 0.388 to 0.802—below the threshold of 0.85, so suggesting high



discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). Consequently, for gauging the constructions of Political Awareness, Political Efficacy, and Political Participation, the tools applied in this study are legitimate and accurate.

Table 2 shows the examination of youth's political efficacy, awareness, and participation in Region XI, Philippines, we find clear trends that help us to better grasp political involvement in this population. Classed as moderate, the mean score for Political Efficacy is 3.33 (SD = 0.677), indicating that students feel somewhat competent of influencing political processes but do not have strong convictions in this respect. Reflecting a high degree of awareness and knowledge about political issues among the students, political awareness has a mean score of 3.79 (SD = 0.615), consistent with the results of Amedu (2023) and Saroha (2016) that media exposure greatly increases political knowledge.

Table 2. Status of college students' political efficacy, political awareness, and social media political participation.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Description
Political efficacy	375	3.33	0.677	Moderate
Political awareness	375	3.79	0.615	High
Political participation	375	2.69	0.805	Moderate
<i>Latent engagement</i>	375	3.59	0.864	High
<i>Counter Engagement</i>	375	1.86	1.11	Low
<i>Follower Engagement</i>	375	2.59	1.06	Low
<i>Expressive Engagement</i>	375	2.70	0.99	Moderate

With a mean score of 2.69 (SD = 0.805), political engagement is seen to be modest, suggesting that although students are rather involved in political activities, more active participation is nonetheless possible. Further clarifying these results are the sub-dimensions of political participation. With a high mean score of 3.59 (SD = 0.864), latent involvement highlights the cognitive and passive consumption of political content, such reading and viewing political information online (Waeterloos et al., 2021). This kind of involvement points to an underlying political curiosity that might not always be shown in active participation.

Counter Engagement, however, is particularly low (mean = 1.86, SD = 1.11), showing limited involvement in contentious or combative political acts, which corresponds with the findings of Waeterloos et al. (2021). While students participate in supporting political activities like joining groups or signing petitions, their active creation and sharing of political content are also moderate (Waeterloos et al., 2021). Follower Engagement and Expressive Engagement both show moderate scores (mean = 2.59, SD = 1.06 and mean = 2.70, SD = 0.99, respectively). These findings align with the ambivalence of young people toward social media political involvement, who balance their involvement with techniques to control bad online conversation (Chu & Yeo, 2019).

Social media clearly plays a major part in political socializing since it affects political motivation, behavior, and voting patterns among young people, particularly in situations when physical participation is restricted due of safety issues (Razzaq et al., 2020; Ida et al., 2020). By giving venues for engagement with political leaders and political information dissemination, social media sites like Facebook and Twitter help both online and offline political participation (Tang & Lee, 2013; Mohamad et al., 2018). Notwithstanding these advantages, the ambiguity over social media political participation emphasizes the difficulty of controlling both the positive and bad features of online political communication (Chu & Yeo, 2019).

Table 3 presents the direct effects of all hypothesized paths. The results demonstrate that political awareness significantly predicts political efficacy ($\beta = 0.677$, $t = 24.507$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.844$). According to Cohen (1988), an effect size (f^2) of 0.35 or above is considered



large, indicating a substantial impact of political awareness on political efficacy. This suggests that students with higher political awareness are likely to feel more efficacious in their political capabilities, aligning with previous findings that emphasize the role of political knowledge in fostering political efficacy (Arens & Watermann, 2017). Our findings affirm that as students become more politically aware, their belief in their ability to influence political processes strengthens, thereby validating the core tenets of Political Efficacy Theory (Balch, 1974).

Table 3. The direct effects, indirect effects, and total effects on the relationships between variables - political efficacy, political awareness, and social media political participation.

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (stdev)	T statistics (O/Stdev)	f ²	P Values
Direct Effects						
Political Awareness -> Political Efficacy	0.677	0.68	0.028	24.507	0.844	0.000
Political Awareness -> Political Participation	0.216	0.216	0.066	3.29	0.030	0.001
Political Efficacy -> Political Participation	0.223	0.225	0.065	3.449	0.032	0.001
Indirect Effects						
Political Awareness -> Political Participation	0.151	0.153	0.045	3.33		0.001
Total Effects						
Political Awareness -> Political Participation	0.367	0.369	0.047	7.842		0.000

R²= 0.162

Adjusted R²=0.157

Note: f² is the Cohen's (1988) effect size: 0.02=small, 0.15=medium, 0.35=large.

Furthermore, political awareness has a significant direct effect on political participation ($\beta = 0.216$, $t = 3.29$, $p = 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.030$). Cohen (1988) classifies an effect size (f^2) between 0.02 and 0.15 as small, which suggests that while political awareness directly contributes to political participation, the effect is modest. This significant direct effect aligns with the principles of Uses and Gratifications Theory, which emphasizes that individuals actively seek out media to fulfill specific needs (Katz et al., 1973). The modest direct effect of political awareness on political participation suggests that students use social media to satisfy their informational needs, which in turn influences their political engagement. This finding is indicative of the active audience characteristic of Uses and Gratifications Theory, where students' engagement with political content on social media not only enhances their awareness but also motivates participation through the gratification of their need for political efficacy and social interaction.

Political efficacy also significantly impacts political participation ($\beta = 0.223$, $t = 3.449$, $p = 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.032$), with a small effect size indicating that students who feel more politically efficacious are slightly more likely to engage in political activities. These results underscore the multifaceted influence of political awareness on political behavior, mediated through political efficacy. Furthermore, this supports the political efficacy theory's assertion that individuals who perceive themselves as efficacious are more likely to engage in political activities (Campbell et al., 1954).

The mediation analysis indicates that political efficacy partially mediates the relationship between political awareness and political participation ($\beta = 0.151$, $t = 3.33$, $p = 0.001$), as manifested by the indirect effects shown in Table 3. This partial mediation suggests that while political awareness directly influences political participation, a substantial portion of its effect is transmitted through political efficacy, underscoring the importance of political efficacy as a key mechanism through which political awareness leads to active political engagement (Lee, 2006).

The interplay of personal factors (political awareness), behaviors (political participation), and environmental influences (social media) is effectively explained through Social Cognitive Theory. Bandura’s (1986) concept of reciprocal determinism is evident in the mediation analysis, where political efficacy serves as a partial mediator between political awareness and political participation. This partial mediation highlights the dynamic interaction between cognitive and behavioral aspects, suggesting that political awareness not only directly impacts participation but also does so indirectly by enhancing political efficacy. Figure 1 shows mediator’s impact using SmartPLS 4.0.

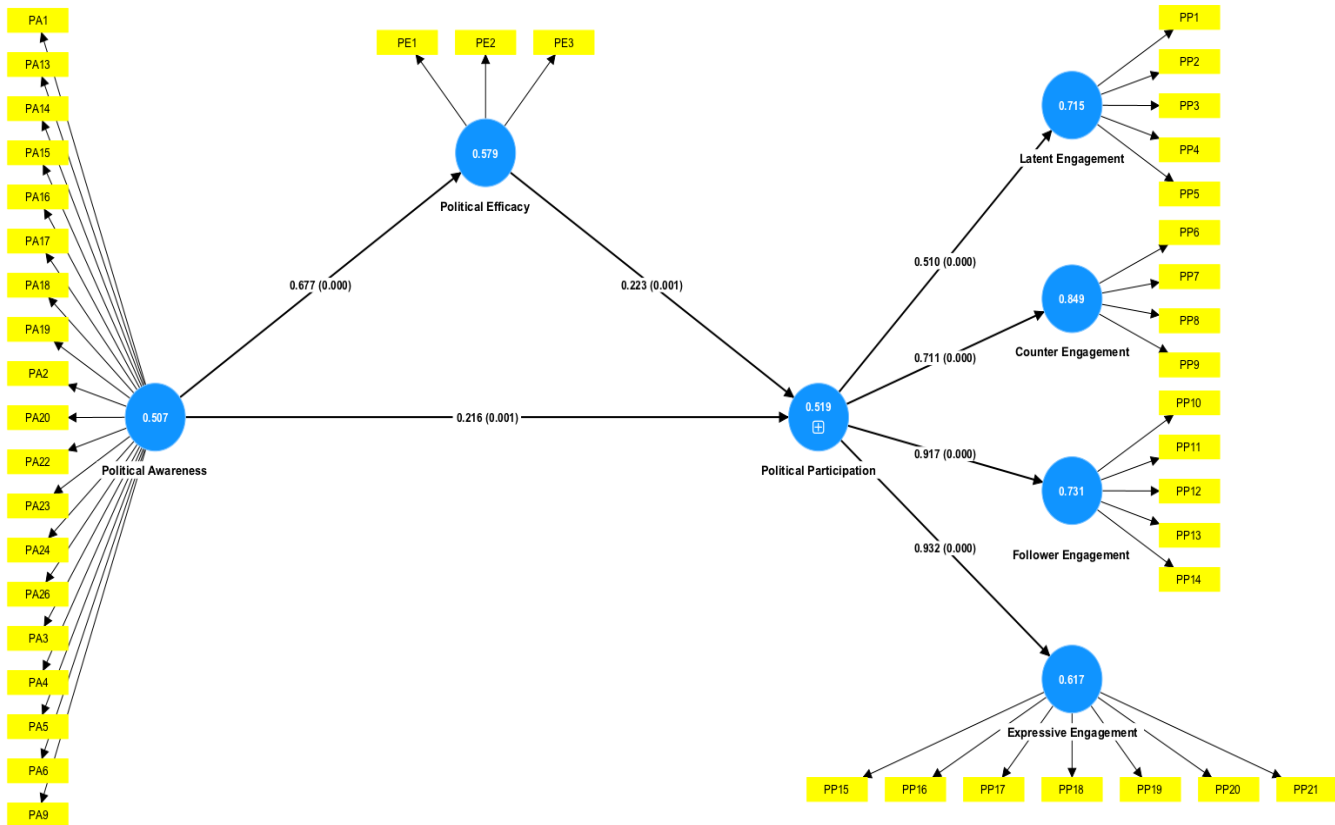


Figure 1. Mediator’s impact - results using SmartPLS 4.0.

As shown in Table 3, the total effect of political awareness on political participation is considerable ($\beta = 0.367, t = 7.842, p < 0.001$), indicating that higher political awareness results in greater political participation, both directly and indirectly through increased political efficacy. The R^2 value of 0.162 indicates that approximately 16.2% of the variance in political participation can be explained by political awareness and political efficacy. The adjusted R^2 value is 0.157, which accounts for the number of predictors in the model. This integrative perspective high-lights the multifaceted nature of political behavior among youth, demonstrating that political awareness is a robust predictor of political efficacy and, consequently, political participation.

4. Conclusions

The study demonstrates that political efficacy acts as a mediator in the connection between political awareness and social media political participation among young individuals in Region XI, Philippines. Having a strong understanding of politics greatly increases one’s ability to effectively engage in political activities, which in turn has a favorable impact on one’s level of political involvement. The results emphasize the crucial importance of political efficacy in converting political awareness into active involvement, suggesting that interventions designed to enhance political knowledge and efficacy are necessary for promoting political participation among young people.

Recommendations

Given these findings, it is imperative for educational institutions and policymakers to create specific initiatives aimed at improving political knowledge and efficacy among young

people. Possible strategies could involve incorporating political education into the curriculum, organizing workshops on civic engagement, and utilizing social media platforms to distribute political information. In addition, establishing circumstances that facilitate free political discourse can enhance political effectiveness and engagement. The objective of these endeavors should be to enable young people to participate more actively in political processes, thus enhancing democratic involvement.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. The first limitation of the cross-sectional design is that it makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the relationship between political awareness, efficacy, and engagement. To verify the existence of these connections over the course of time, longitudinal research is required. The second issue is that the use of self-reported data may result in response biases, which in turn may have an impact on the reliability of the findings. The utilization of objective measurements of political engagement ought to be incorporated into future study. With that being said, the fact that the research was conducted in Region XI may make it difficult to generalize the findings to other regions. The relevance of the findings might be improved if the research were expanded to include a sample that was more representative of the population.

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