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Social Media Usage and College Students' Political Engagement Input for Enhanced Campus Student Government Initiatives

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ABSTRACT :

Social media has become an important space through which college students access information, communicate opinions, and participate in civic and political processes. Within higher education, campus elections and student government activities offer practical opportunities for democratic learning because students evaluate candidates and platforms, vote, raise concerns, and held hold elected representatives accountable. This study examined the relationship between social media usage and political engagement among 362 undergraduate students of the University of La Salette (ULS) and used the findings as a basis for enhanced campus student government initiatives. A descriptive-correlational design was employed. The results showed a high level of overall social media usage (M = 3.41) and a moderate level of political engagement (M = 2.73). Social media usage did not significantly differ by sex. Significant differences in social media usage were found according to academic program, year level, number of social media platforms used, and hours spent on social media per day. Political engagement also differed significantly according to academic program, year level, number of platforms used, and hours spent per day, while no significant differences were found according to age or sex. Active social media usage had moderate positive relationships with latent, follower, expressive, and counter political engagement. Passive usage had a moderate positive relationship with latent engagement and weak positive relationships with follower, expressive, and counter engagement. All relationships were statistically significant. The findings indicated that social media functioned as both an information resource and a participation channel, but students were more politically aware than publicly expressive. These results informed Project CONNECT, an enhanced Campus Student Government initiative centered on accurate governance information, inclusive consultation, responsible digital expression, media literacy, and sustained participation beyond election periods. The study underscored the value of campus elections and student governance as training grounds for responsible participation in broader democratic and general electoral processes.

Keywords: social media use, political engagement, college students, student participation

Introduction

Digital communication has reshaped the ways young people obtain political information, discuss public issues, and participate in civic life. Social media has provided college students with immediate access to news, public commentary, political actors, and peer networks, thereby expanding participation beyond conventional face-to-face settings. Earlier studies have reported positive associations between social media use and political participation among young adults, particularly when users actively sought information, discussed issues, or interacted with political content (Boulianne, 2015; Yang & DeHart, 2016; Ahmad et al., 2019; Intyaswati & Fairuzza, 2023). At the same time, active and passive social media behaviors differ in the degree to which users create, share, discuss, or merely consume information, making this distinction important in understanding student political engagement (Ozimek et al., 2023).

The Philippine setting makes this relationship especially relevant because digital platforms have become deeply embedded in the communication practices of Filipino youth. Studies involving Filipino students have shown that social media serves as a source of political information, civic discussion, fact-checking, and participation (David et al., 2019; Agojo et al., 2023; Banzon et al., 2024; Obenza & Rabaca, 2024). Social media therefore provides not only information but also low-cost channels through which young people can observe political issues, connect with others, and decide whether to participate in public and civic affairs.

Student elections are particularly important because they can function as an early training ground for democratic participation. Voting in school elections has been associated with greater preparedness to vote as an adult, stronger commitment to future voting, political knowledge, and peaceful civic participation (Saha & Print, 2010). Political socialization research likewise recognizes schools, peers, organizations, and media as important contexts through which young people learn democratic norms and participation (Ladia, 2025). In this sense, campus elections allow students to practice behaviors that are also required in general elections: evaluating candidates and platforms, making informed choices, voting, discussing issues, monitoring leaders, and demanding accountability. Strengthening participation in student elections can therefore contribute to the development of habits and competencies relevant to later participation in local and national democratic processes.

At the University of La Salette (ULS), the Student Executive Council (SEC) serves as the official student government, and student elections are conducted annually. Records cited in the study showed that 4,171 of 5,317 students voted in the most recent election, equivalent to a 78.45% turnout; more than 1,000 students did not participate. Social media is used during election periods to circulate candidate information, campaign materials, platforms, and announcements. The challenge, however, extends beyond voter turnout. Student attention often became becomes concentrated during campaigns, while meaningful dialogue, consultation, feedback, and accountability need to continue after elected officers assume office. The campus context therefore provides an opportunity to examine how existing social media habits can support more sustained student participation in governance rather than engagement only during election season.

Despite growing research on social media and political behavior, gaps remain at the level of Philippine campus governance. Much of the available literature focuses on national politics, while fewer studies have examined how active and passive social media use relates to different dimensions of political engagement within a university. There is also limited campus-level evidence on whether engagement patterns vary according to academic program, year level, platform exposure, and time spent online. These gaps are relevant to ULS because evidence is needed to design student government initiatives that are responsive to actual patterns of information seeking, following, expression, discussion, and verification among students.

Accordingly, the study examined the relationship between social media usage and political engagement among undergraduate students of the University of La Salette. It described active and passive social media use; assessed latent, follower, expressive, and counter-political engagement; tested differences according to respondent profile; and determined the relationships between the two major variables. The findings were used as the empirical basis for an enhanced Campus Student Government action plan intended to strengthen accurate political and governance information, inclusive consultation, responsible digital expression, media literacy, and sustained participation throughout the academic year.

Research Questions

This study investigated the relationship between social media usage and political engagement among college students across the ten colleges of the University of La Salette.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. **What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:**
    1.1. Age
    1.2. Sex
    1.3. Academic program
    1.4. Year level
    1.5. Number of social media platforms actively used
    1.6. Number of hours spent on social media per day
2. **What is the level of social media usage among college students in terms of:**
    2.1. Active Social Media Use
    2.2. Passive Social Media Use
3. **What is the level of political engagement among college students in terms of:**
    3.1. Latent Political Engagement
    3.2. Follower Political Engagement
    3.3. Expressive Political Engagement
    3.4. Counter Political Engagement
4. **Is there a significant difference in the level of social media usage and level of political engagement of the respondents when grouped according to profile variables?**
5. **What is the relationship between social media usage and political engagement?**
6. **What campus student government action plan may be proposed based on the study?**

Literature Review

The increasing use of digital platforms has significantly transformed how individuals access information and engage in communication. Steinfeld and Lev-on (2024) examined the relationship between digital media and exposure to diverse political views. Their study emphasized that interpersonal interactions within digital platforms greatly influence the diversity of political opinions encountered by users. The study challenged the common assumptions regarding echo chambers and filter bubbles by revealing that digital media may expose individuals to both homogeneous and heterogeneous political content depending on the nature of online interactions. Similarly, Chan and Yi (2024) explored social media usage and political participation in polarized democratic contexts. Their findings showed that social media platforms strongly shape political attitudes and behaviors, although the effects differ depending on political polarization and contextual conditions.

The growing influence of social media is further supported by the Digital 2025 Report published by Meltwater and We Are Social, which revealed that Filipinos remain among the world's highest internet and social media users. The report indicated that Filipinos spend an average of eight hours and fifty-two minutes online daily, exceeding the global average. Most of this time is spent using mobile phones, reflecting the strong integration of digital platforms into the daily lives of Filipinos (Kemp,2025). Allaste et al. (2025) further emphasized that internet use among youth promotes civic engagement while simultaneously exposing them to misinformation and algorithm-driven polarization. These studies collectively suggest that social media exposure has become deeply embedded in the everyday experiences of young people and significantly influences how they encounter political information and discussions.

Digital technologies have transformed traditional forms of political participation among young people. Koren (2023) discussed how media technologies influence youth political identities and civic participation. The study emphasized that youth political engagement now extends beyond conventional voting and includes online activism, issue-based mobilization, and digital civic participation. Koren introduced the Circle Line Media Model to explain how media, peers, family, and educational institutions collectively shape political identity formation among young people.

However, Klinke (2022) presented a contrasting perspective by examining the paradoxical relationship between social media use and political engagement. According to the study, social media may negatively affect political participation when platforms are primarily used for entertainment rather than civic involvement. Klinke referred to this phenomenon as the Social Media Political Engagement Paradox, where increasing social media use does not necessarily lead to increased political participation. Despite this concern, Oden and Porter (2023) found that social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter positively relate to both online and offline civic engagement among youth. Their findings revealed that digital platforms provide opportunities for teenagers to learn about political causes, interact with supporters, and participate in collective action.

Digital citizenship and media literacy have become important factors in promoting responsible political participation among students in the digital age. The Journal of Applied Youth Studies (2020) examined the role of new media in youth political participation in Australia and challenged the common perception that young people are politically apathetic. The study highlighted that digital media effectively encourages political participation among youth; however, it also warned that social media does not automatically cultivate democratic values and responsible civic behavior.

Tiidenberg et al. (2024) further explored how social media can serve as both a facilitator and barrier to political engagement among young people in Estonia, Greece, and the United Kingdom. Their findings revealed that experiences of digital citizenship vary according to race, gender, disability, and social identity. Similarly, Cleofas and Labayo (2024) investigated the relationship between digital citizenship and global competence among Filipino university students. Their study revealed that digital citizenship practices contribute significantly to students' civic awareness, intercultural communication, and global understanding.

In the Philippine context, Banzon et al. (2024) conducted qualitative research among Social Studies students in Davao City regarding the role of social media in political participation. Their study identified themes such as information gathering, effective engagement, and responsible social media usage. The participants also demonstrated awareness of misinformation and practiced fact-checking before forming political opinions. These studies collectively emphasize the importance of media literacy and responsible digital citizenship in promoting informed political participation among college students.

Numerous studies consistently demonstrate that social media functions as a powerful tool for political participation and civic engagement. Boulianne (2020) conducted a meta-analysis on digital media and civic engagement spanning twenty years and concluded that social media positively influences political participation by creating new forms of democratic engagement and online civic activities.

Ahmad et al. (2019) examined the effects of social media on political participation among university students in rural Pakistan. Their findings revealed that social media significantly encourages both online and offline political participation, with Facebook emerging as the most influential platform for political communication. Similarly, Intyaswati and Fairuzza (2023) explored the mediating role of online political discussions in Indonesia and found that online political discussions strengthen the relationship between social media use and political engagement among college students.

Vukani and Obioha (2024) investigated social media use and political participation among university students in South Africa and discovered that students who actively engage with political content online are more likely to participate in political activities both online and offline. Zhong et al. (2022) also found that frequent social media users in Taiwan are more likely to express opinions regarding political and social issues online. Likewise, Zhang et al. (2024) identified strong positive correlations between social media usage and political participation among university students in Western China.

Furthermore, Intyaswati et al. (2023) examined social media as a source of political learning among Indonesian university students. Their study revealed that online political discussions and social media usage positively influence political knowledge acquisition among students. Collectively, these studies strongly support the idea that social media serves as an important avenue for political awareness, civic engagement, political communication, and democratic participation among students.

From a theoretical perspective, Resource Mobilization Theory explained that participation became more feasible when individuals and organizations could access resources such as information, communication channels, networks, and coordination mechanisms (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Social media could supply these resources at relatively low cost by allowing rapid dissemination, recruitment, and interaction. The Civic Voluntarism Model similarly emphasized resources, psychological engagement, and recruitment as predictors of participation (Verba et al., 1995). Kim and Khang (2014) extended this model to social media and found that civic voluntarism predictors were associated with college students' online and offline political

participation. These perspectives suggested that the political significance of social media depended not simply on frequency of use but on how digital resources were used and whether students were connected to opportunities for participation.

As digital political participation continues to expand, researchers have developed instruments to accurately measure political engagement in online environments. Waeterloos et al. (2021) developed and validated the Social Media Political Engagement Scale among Belgian high school students. Their research identified multiple dimensions of digital political engagement, including information seeking, opinion expression, content sharing, and mobilization activities. Cleofas and Labayo (2024) emphasized that digital citizenship practices among Filipino students contribute significantly to civic awareness and democratic participation. Their findings highlighted the importance of digital engagement in developing globally competent and politically aware students.

Similarly, Banzon et al. (2024) demonstrated that Filipino students actively utilize social media for political information gathering and civic participation. Their findings revealed that students practice fact-checking and responsible information sharing before forming political opinions. Reports consistently indicate that Filipino youth spend significant amounts of time on digital platforms, increasing opportunities for political awareness, public discussions, and civic participation. These studies suggest that the Philippine educational context provides a highly relevant environment for examining how social media influences political engagement among college students, particularly within higher education institutions.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine social media usage and political engagement among college students. The descriptive component summarized the respondents' profile and the levels of active and passive social media use and latent, follower, expressive, and counter-political engagement. The comparative component tested whether social media usage and political engagement differed according to respondent profile. The correlational component determined the direction and strength of the relationships between social media usage and the dimensions of political engagement.

The study was conducted at the College Department of the University of La Salette, Inc. (ULS), located along Bachelor Street, Dubinan East, Santiago City. The university setting provided access to the target population and allowed the study to examine digital and political engagement within a regional higher education context.

The respondents consisted of 362 undergraduate students enrolled in the ten colleges of the University of La Salette. Stratified random sampling with proportional allocation was used, with each college treated as a stratum and respondents selected from enrollment lists in proportion to the size of each college population.

Cochran's formula was used to determine the sample size using an estimated proportion of .50, a 95% confidence level, and a .05 margin of error. The resulting sample of 362 respondents was proportionally allocated across the ten colleges. Eligible respondents were undergraduate students who were actively enrolled, used at least one social media platform, and voluntarily agreed to participate. Students who were not enrolled, were on leave, or did not use social media were excluded.

Table 1 presents the proportional distribution of the 362 respondents across the ten colleges and served as the basis for the college-level comparisons conducted in the study.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by College

College	Population	Sample
College of Accountancy (COS)	372	22
College of Arts and Sciences (CAS)	288	17
College of Business Education (CBE)	818	48
College of Criminal Justice Education (CCJE)	241	14
College of Teacher Education (CTE)	258	15
College of Engineering and Architecture (CEA)	1322	77
College of Information Technology (CIT)	231	14
College of Law (COL)	96	6
College of Medicine and Allied Medical Program (CMAMP)	1026	60
College of Nursing, Public Health and Midwifery (CONPHM)	1519	89
Total	**6,171**	**362**

The respondents most commonly reported using Facebook (96.2%), TikTok (89.77%), and Instagram (83.70%). These platforms therefore represented important channels through which the respondents communicated, accessed information, and encountered campus and public-affairs content.

The study used adapted and validated instruments to measure social media usage and political engagement. The questionnaire contained three parts: respondent profile; the Social Media Activity Questionnaire (SMAQ) adapted from Ozimek et al. (2023); and the Social Media Political Participation Scale, adapted from Waeterloos et al. (2021). Both substantive scales used a five-point Likert-type response format from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very often). A pilot administration involving 50 respondents yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .872, indicating satisfactory internal consistency for the instrument used in the study.

The social media usage section measured two dimensions. Active social media use consisted of eight items covering behaviors such as liking, commenting, sharing, posting, messaging, and participating in discussions. Passive social media use consisted of seven items covering browsing, reading, viewing, and scrolling without direct public interaction. The items were presented as a continuous list in the questionnaire and were grouped by dimension only during data analysis to minimize response cueing.

The political engagement section contained 21 items representing four dimensions: latent political engagement (information seeking), follower political engagement (following political actors, organizations, or causes), expressive political engagement (sharing or creating political content), and counter

political engagement (fact-checking, challenging views, or responding to questionable political content). As with the social media usage items, the dimensions were not labeled in the administered questionnaire and were classified during analysis according to the adopted scale structure.

Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained the required institutional permissions and ethical clearance and coordinated with the deans of the participating colleges. Subsequently, enrollment information was used to implement the proportional stratified sampling procedure and to reach the required number of respondents from each college.

Following these preparations, data collection was conducted over three months using a consistent administration procedure across the ten colleges. The researcher coordinated with college administrators and faculty members to identify appropriate schedules and locations that did not disrupt regular academic activities.

During the data collection period, the questionnaires were administered at the ULS campus in Dubinan East, Santiago City. Before participation, respondents were informed of the purpose and procedures of the study and provided informed consent. The self-administered questionnaire required approximately 15–20 minutes to complete, and the researcher remained available to clarify procedural questions without influencing responses.

After administration, completed questionnaires were checked for completeness, coded numerically, and stored securely. No personally identifying information was used in the analysis. Finally, after the data collection period, the responses were reviewed, encoded, cleaned, and prepared for statistical analysis.

Data from the 362 respondents were reviewed, coded, cleaned, and analyzed using appropriate statistical software. Specifically, frequency and percentage were used to describe categorical profile variables. Because the manuscript available for final revision contained age and daily social media hours only as grouped categories, grouped-data estimates of the mean age and mean daily hours were reported for descriptive summaries. Furthermore, mean scores were used to describe the levels of social media usage and political engagement and were interpreted using the scale presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Scale Interval for Social Media Usage and Political Engagement

Interval	Descriptive value	Interpretation
1.00-1.80	Never	Very Low (VL)
1.81-2.60	Rarely	Low (L)
2.61-3.40	Sometimes	Moderate (M)
3.41-4.20	Often	High (H)
4.41-5.0	Very often	Very High (VH)

Inferential analyses were conducted at the .05 level of significance. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used for profile variables with more than two groups, including age, academic program, year level, number of platforms used, and hours spent on social media per day. Moreover, sex consisted of two groups was examined using an independent-samples t test. Significant ANOVA results were followed by Tukey HSD comparisons to identify specific group differences while controlling the familywise Type I error rate. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to determine the direction and strength of the relationships between active and passive social media usage and the dimensions of political engagement. Correlation magnitudes were interpreted as weak at approximately $|r| = .10$ to .29, moderate at $|r| = .30$ to .49, and strong at $|r| \geq .50$.

Assumptions for the parametric procedures were examined before inferential analysis, including normality, homogeneity of variance, independence of observations, linearity for correlation, and the presence of influential outliers. The available statistical report indicated that the assumptions were sufficiently met for the use of t tests, ANOVA, Tukey HSD, and Pearson correlation.

The study followed recognized ethical standards and received clearance from the Cagayan State University Institutional Ethics Review Board under clearance number CSU-IERB-2026-06-005 dated June 19, 2026. Respondents were informed about the purpose, procedures, voluntary nature, possible risks, and academic use of the study. They were free to decline or withdraw without academic or institutional consequences.

Confidentiality and anonymity were protected throughout the study. Questionnaires were numerically coded, no personal identifiers were included in the analytical dataset, and results were reported in aggregate form. Because political engagement involved potentially sensitive opinions and behaviors, the researcher-maintained neutrality and did not collect political party preference or ideological affiliation. Digital records and any future implementation data generated by Project CONNECT were expected to be handled in accordance with institutional privacy policies and Republic Act No. 10173, or the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents and discusses the findings according to the sequence of the statement of the problem and the hypotheses of the study. Descriptive findings are presented first, followed by the tests of differences, correlation analysis, and the proposed action plan.

Part I. Profile of the Respondents (SOP 1)

Table 3. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents in Terms of Profile Variables

Age	**Frequency (f)**	**Percentage (%)**
16–20	266	73.5
21–25	87	24.0
26–30	4	1.1
31–35	5	1.4
Estimated mean age	19.52 years	
Sex	**Frequency (f)**	**Percentage**

		(%)
Male	129	35.6
Female	233	64.4
Academic Program	**Frequency (f)**	**Percentage (%)**
College of Accountancy	22	6.1
College of Arts and Sciences	17	4.7
College of Business Education	48	13.3
College of Criminal Justice Education	14	3.9
College of Teacher Education	15	4.1
College of Engineering and Architecture	77	21.3
College of Information Technology	14	3.9
College of Law	6	1.7
College of Medicine and Allied Medical Program	60	16.6
College of Nursing, Public Health and Midwifery	89	24.6
Year Level	**Frequency (f)**	**Percentage (%)**
First Year	141	39.0
Second Year	92	25.4
Third Year	68	18.8
Fourth Year	60	16.6
Other	1	0.3
Number of Social Media Platforms Used	**Frequency (f)**	**Percentage (%)**
1–2 platforms	74	20.4
3–4 platforms	200	55.2
5–6 platforms	62	17.1
More than 6 platforms	26	7.2
Hours Spent on Social Media per Day	**Frequency (f)**	**Percentage (%)**
Less than 1 hour	8	2.2
1–2 hours	55	15.2
3–4 hours	113	31.2
5–6 hours	83	22.9
More than 6 hours	103	28.5
Estimated mean hours per day	4.58 hours	

Note. The mean age and mean daily hours are grouped-data estimates computed from category midpoints.

Table 3 presents the respondents' profile in relation to SOP 1. Most respondents were 16–20 years old (73.5%), and the grouped-data estimate of the mean age was 19.52 years. After data verification, the six responses previously encoded as "prefer not to say" were included under the male category, resulting in 129 male respondents (35.6%) and 233 female respondents (64.4%). The largest college representation came from the College of Nursing, Public Health and Midwifery (24.6%), and first-year students comprised the largest year-level group (39.0%). Most respondents used three to four social media platforms (55.2%). The largest single time category was three to four hours per day (31.2%), while the grouped-data estimate of daily social media use was 4.58 hours. These descriptive results established the respondent context for the succeeding analyses without treating profile characteristics as determinants of engagement.

Part II. Level of Social Media Usage among College Students (SOP 2)

Table 4.1. Level of Social Media Usage among College Students in Terms of Active Social Media Use

Parameters	$\bar{x}$	Description
1. I like posts, photos, or comments on social media	3.23	Sometimes (M)
2. I comment on posts, photos, or videos on social media	2.58	Rarely (L)
3. I share posts, photos, or videos on social media	2.93	Sometimes (M)
4. I post photos or videos on social media	2.75	Sometimes (M)
5. I write posts or status updates on social media	2.51	Rarely (L)
6. I send private messages to friends on social media	4.12	Often (H)
7. I respond to messages from friends on social media	4.05	Often (H)
8. I participate in discussions or conversations on social media	3.09	Sometimes (M)
GRAND MEAN	3.16	Sometimes (M)

Table 4.1 shows that active social media use was moderate (M = 3.16, "Sometimes"). Direct interpersonal communication was the most frequent active behavior: students often sent private messages (M = 4.12) and responded to friends' messages (M = 4.05). In contrast, commenting on public posts (M = 2.58) and writing posts or status updates (M = 2.51) occurred rarely. The pattern indicated that students used social media actively, but much of this activity remained interpersonal rather than publicly expressive.

Within ULS, Messenger and similar channels were commonly used for class group chats, announcements, coordination, and peer communication. This institutional communication environment was consistent with the high means for private messaging and response behaviors. It also suggested that students were already connected through digital networks that the SEC could use for governance information and consultation, provided that official communication, moderation, and privacy safeguards were maintained.

The comparatively lower means for public commenting, posting, and discussion showed that visibility mattered. Students appeared more comfortable communicating within direct or familiar networks than expressing themselves before wider audiences. This distinction was important because political expression often required public articulation, interaction with disagreement, and visible support or criticism.

From a theoretical perspective, Resource Mobilization Theory helped explain the practical significance of this pattern. The students already possessed communication resources and networks, but those resources were used more frequently for personal coordination than for public civic expression. Therefore, the action plan needed to convert existing digital connections into structured, low-risk opportunities for consultation, discussion, and student voice rather than merely increasing platform use (McCarthy & Zald, 1977).

Table 4.2. Level of Social Media Usage among College Students in Terms of Passive Social Media Use

	Parameters	$\bar{x}$	Description
1.	I read posts from friends on social media	3.61	Often (H)
2.	I look at photos or videos posted by friends on social media	3.63	Often (H)
3.	I browse through my news feed on social media	3.87	Often (H)
4.	I check what friends are doing on social media	3.19	Sometimes (M)
5.	I scroll through social media without interacting	3.70	Often (H)
6.	I read comments on posts without responding	3.80	Often (H)
7.	I view stories or updates from friends on social media	3.83	Often (H)
GRAND MEAN		3.66	Often (H)

Table 4.2 shows that passive social media use was high (M = 3.66, "Often"). Browsing the news feed (M = 3.87), viewing stories or updates (M = 3.83), reading comments without responding (M = 3.80), and scrolling without interacting (M = 3.70) were common behaviors. Thus, students were regularly exposed to social media content even when they did not publicly react or contribute.

Passive use did not mean the absence of political learning. Repeated exposure to posts, comments, videos, and updates could contribute to awareness and issue familiarity even when students remained silent. This pattern was consistent with the later finding that passive social media use had its strongest relationship with latent political engagement, the dimension centered on information seeking and awareness.

Within the ULS context, social media channels were used for academic announcements, organizational updates, campus news, and current-events information. Students could therefore remain informed through routine browsing even without active posting. The same environment, however, also required media literacy because passive exposure could repeatedly present selective or algorithmically filtered content.

The finding was consistent with Verduyn et al. (2017), who distinguished passive browsing from active interaction. From a political socialization perspective, routine exposure could support awareness, but awareness alone did not ensure discussion, participation, or accountability. Hence, the gap between high passive use and only moderate overall political engagement reinforced the need for structured opportunities that moved students from receiving information toward meaningful participation.

At the same time, passive consumption could expose students to filter bubbles or echo chambers when algorithmic systems repeatedly presented similar viewpoints (Pariser, 2011; Nguyen, 2020). Therefore ULS, this meant that digital civic initiatives needed to include source verification, exposure to differing perspectives, and moderated discussion rather than relying on unstructured social media exposure alone.

Table 4.3. Level of Social Media Usage among College Students

Parameters	$\bar{x}$	Description
Active Social Media Use	3.16	Sometimes (M)
Passive Social Media Use	3.66	Often (H)
GRAND MEAN	3.41	Often (H)

Table 4.3 shows that overall social media usage was high (M = 3.41, "Often"). Passive use (M = 3.66) was higher than active use (M = 3.16), indicating that the respondents more frequently consumed and monitored content than created or publicly interacted with it.

The pattern suggested that social media was already integrated into the students' everyday communication and information environment. However, frequent exposure did not automatically translate into public participation. This distinction was central to the study because the political value of social media depended on whether informational and relational resources were converted into civic action.

From a theoretical perspective, Resource Mobilization Theory and the Civic Voluntarism Model both helped interpret this result. Students had substantial access to digital resources, but political participation also depended on motivation, recruitment, and opportunities to use those resources for collective or civic purposes (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Verba et al., 1995). Therefore, the SEC could focus on creating clear participation pathways polls,

consultations, town halls, feedback systems, and issue-based campaigns rather than assuming that high social media use alone would produce engagement.

Furthermore, the result was consistent with literature showing that passive consumption often exceeded public interaction on social networking sites (Verduyn et al., 2017). It also provided a practical basis for designing campus governance content that first captured students' existing browsing behavior and then invited them into progressively more active forms of participation.

Part III. Level of Political Engagement among College Students (SOP 3)

Table 5.1 Level of Political Engagement in Terms of Latent Engagement

	Parameters	$\bar{x}$	Description
1.	I read news about politics and current events on social media	3.57	Often (H)
2.	I seek information about political issues on social media	3.52	Often (H)
3.	I follow political news and updates on social media	3.34	Sometimes (M)
4.	I research political topics through social media	3.35	Sometimes (M)
5.	I stay informed about political developments via social media	3.51	Often (H)
GRAND MEAN		3.46	Often (H)

Table 5.1 shows that latent political engagement was high (M = 3.46, "Often"). Students often read political and current-events news (M = 3.57), sought information about political issues (M = 3.52), and stayed informed about political developments (M = 3.51). The findings indicated that information seeking was the strongest dimension of political engagement among the respondents.

The high latent engagement was consistent with the respondents' high passive social media use. Students frequently encountered and intentionally sought political information, yet following political updates continuously (M = 3.34) and conducting deeper research through social media (M = 3.35) occurred only sometimes. Thus, political awareness was present, but sustained investigation was less consistent.

Within ULS, the pattern was compatible with academic practices that required attention to current events. In Social Studies classes, activities such as Balitaan exposed students to news and encouraged them to gather and present current information. These experiences could support political socialization by making current affairs part of routine academic discussion.

From a theoretical perspective, Political Socialization Theory helped explain why the university context mattered. Classroom discussion, peer interaction, campus organizations, student elections, and digital media could jointly provide repeated opportunities to learn political information and democratic norms. Student elections were especially relevant because information seeking about candidates and platforms represented a practical step toward informed voting in both campus and later general elections (Saha & Print, 2010).

Furthermore, the finding was consistent with Waeterloos et al. (2021) and Intyaswati et al. (2023), who treated political information seeking as a foundational form of political engagement and learning. For Project CONNECT, this strength could therefore serve as the entry point for moving students from awareness toward consultation, expression, and accountability.

Table 5.2. Level of Political Engagement in Terms of Follower Engagement

	Parameters	$\bar{x}$	Description
1.	I follow politicians or political figures on social media	2.61	Sometimes (M)
2.	I follow political parties or organizations on social media	2.60	Rarely (L)
3.	I subscribe to political news sources on social media	2.64	Sometimes (M)
4.	I join political groups or pages on social media	2.35	Rarely (L)
5.	I follow political movements or causes on social media	2.67	Sometimes (M)
GRAND MEAN		2.57	Rarely (L)

Table 5.2 shows that follower political engagement was low (M = 2.57, "Rarely"). Students only sometimes followed political figures (M = 2.61), subscribed to political news sources (M = 2.64), or followed political movements or causes (M = 2.67), and they rarely followed political parties or organizations (M = 2.60) or joined political groups or pages (M = 2.35).

The result suggested that students could be interested in political information without maintaining visible or sustained connections to political actors, organizations, or causes. Within the ULS context, the same pattern could occur in student governance when students received election information but did not consistently follow SEC channels after the election. Thus, this gap supported the need for official, recognizable, and useful student government pages that gave students a reason to remain connected throughout the year.

Also, the finding was consistent with Barberá (2020), who noted that exposure to political information did not necessarily produce direct affiliation. From a resource mobilization perspective, sustained following could matter because official pages and organizational networks were channels through which information, recruitment, and calls for participation were distributed. Project CONNECT therefore included strategies to strengthen connection with official student governance channels without requiring partisan affiliation.

Table 5.3 Level of Political Engagement in Terms of Expressive Engagement

	Parameters	$\bar{x}$	Description
1.	I share political posts or articles on social media	2.64	Sometimes (M)
2.	I post my own opinions about political issues on social media	2.24	Rarely (L)
3.	I comment on political posts or discussions on social media	2.15	Rarely (L)
4.	I create political content (posts, photos, videos) on social media	1.95	Rarely (L)
5.	I express support for political candidates on social media	2.50	Rarely (L)

6.	I use hashtags related to political issues on social media	2.20	Rarely (L)
GRAND MEAN		2.28	Rarely (L)

Table 5.3 shows that expressive political engagement was low (M = 2.28, "Rarely"). Sharing political posts or articles occurred sometimes (M = 2.64), but posting personal political opinions (M = 2.24), commenting on political discussions (M = 2.15), creating political content (M = 1.95), expressing support for candidates (M = 2.50), and using political hashtags (M = 2.20) occurred rarely.

The findings indicated that students were more willing to redistribute existing information than to create visible political content of their own. This pattern was consistent with the broader pattern of moderate active social media use and suggested that the main barrier was not digital access but willingness to become publicly visible in political discussion.

Moreover, expressive engagement required greater commitment because it involved public communication and possible disagreement (Waeterloos et al., 2021; Klinke, 2022). In the Civic Voluntarism Model, participation was strengthened when individuals possessed resources, motivation, and recruitment opportunities. Therefore**,** for ULS, safe and moderated issue forums, opinion weeks, and feedback channels could provide recruitment and structure that reduced the perceived cost of expression.

Table 5.4. Level of Political Engagement among College Students in Terms of Counter-Political Engagement

	Parameters	$\bar{x}$	Description
1.	I debate or argue about political issues on social media	2.11	Rarely (L)
2.	I criticize political figures or policies on social media	2.45	Rarely (L)
3.	I fact-check or correct political misinformation on social media	3.19	Sometimes (M)
4.	I challenge opposing political views on social media	2.38	Rarely (L)
5.	I report inappropriate political content on social media	2.81	Sometimes (M)
GRAND MEAN		2.59	Rarely (L)

Table 5.4 shows that counter-political engagement was low (M = 2.59, "Rarely"). Students rarely debated political issues, criticized political figures or policies, or challenged opposing views. However, they sometimes fact-checked or corrected political misinformation (M = 3.19) and reported inappropriate political content (M = 2.81).

The relatively higher means for fact-checking and reporting showed that students were more comfortable with verification-oriented behaviors than with confrontational debate. This distinction was useful for campus governance because critical engagement did not need to begin with argument; it could begin with checking evidence, asking questions, requesting clarification, and using respectful feedback mechanisms.

In addition, ULS had conducted seminars on misinformation and disinformation for faculty and students and had also held leadership and governance activities in which student leaders presented accomplishments, platforms, and priorities. Such initiatives provided a local context for the comparatively stronger verification behavior and offered a foundation for more systematic media literacy and accountability activities under Project CONNECT.

The finding was consistent with Banzon et al. (2024), who reported that Filipino students practiced fact-checking and information verification when encountering political content online. In the ULS context, this strength could be developed into student-led verification activities and evidence-based discussion rather than adversarial confrontation.

Debating or arguing about political issues had the lowest mean in this dimension (M = 2.11), while criticizing political figures or policies (M = 2.45) and challenging opposing political views (M = 2.38) also occurred rarely. These results indicated reluctance to engage in direct online conflict and reinforced the importance of moderated, respectful, issue-focused spaces for discussion.

Moreover, the pattern also needed to be considered alongside the risks of echo chambers, filter bubbles, and cyberbalkanization, in which users repeatedly encountered similar viewpoints and had limited constructive exposure to disagreement (Van Alstyne & Brynjolfsson, 1996; Pariser, 2011; Nguyen, 2020). Media literacy and deliberative activities were therefore necessary to ensure that political engagement involved evidence, respectful disagreement, and exposure to multiple perspectives.

The counter-engagement findings did not indicate political apathy. Rather, they showed a preference for lower-conflict forms of participation such as reading, checking, and reporting. The challenge for student governance was to preserve these responsible behaviors while gradually building students' confidence to ask questions, challenge claims with evidence, and participate in constructive democratic dialogue.

Table 5.5 Level of Political Engagement among College Students

Parameters	$\bar{x}$	Description
Latent Political Engagement	3.46	Often (H)
Follower Political Engagement	2.57	Rarely (L)
Expressive Political Engagement	2.28	Rarely (L)
Counter Political Engagement	2.59	Rarely (L)
GRAND MEAN	2.725	Sometimes (M)

Table 5.5 shows that overall political engagement was moderate (M = 2.73, "Sometimes"). Latent engagement was the only dimension rated high (M = 3.46), while follower (M = 2.57), expressive (M = 2.28), and counter engagement (M = 2.59) were low. The pattern showed a clear gap between being politically informed and participating visibly or interactively.

Accordingly, ULS students were more politically aware than politically active. They often sought or encountered political information, but they rarely followed organized political actors, expressed their own views publicly, or engaged in direct political challenge. This pattern was important for campus governance because an informed student body represented a strong starting point, but democratic learning required additional opportunities for discussion, participation, representation, and accountability.

From a theoretical perspective, Political Socialization Theory suggested that participation skills developed through repeated practice. Campus elections, governance forums, classroom discussions, student organizations, and consultation mechanisms could give students opportunities to move from awareness to action. The finding therefore strengthened the relevance of treating student elections not as isolated annual events but as part of a year-round democratic learning process that could prepare students for later participation in general elections.

Besides, the result was consistent with Vukani and Obioha (2024), who observed that university students could show greater political awareness than active participation. It was also consistent with the Civic Voluntarism Model: knowledge and interest were important, but participation also depended on resources, recruitment, confidence, and opportunities to act (Verba et al., 1995).

Thus, the principal challenge identified by SOP 3 was not a lack of access to information but the conversion of awareness into sustained and responsible participation. This finding directly informed the objectives and activities of Project CONNECT.

Part IV. Differences in the Level of Social Media Usage and Level of Political Engagement (SOP 4)

Table 6.1 Difference in the Level of Social Media Usage According to Profile

Profile Variable / Group	Mean	SD	F	df	p-value	decision
age group						
16–20	3.23	1.02	2.594	3, 358	.052	accept the null hypothesis
21–25	3.43	1.07				
26–30	2.50	0.58				
31–35	2.60	0.55				
sex group						
Male	3.26	1.03	0.142	1, 360	.706	accept the null hypothesis
Female	3.30	1.01				
academic program						
COA	3.59	1.01	2.666	9, 352	.005*	reject the null hypothesis
CAS	3.53	0.94				
CBE	3.48	1.01				
CCJE	2.79	0.58				
CTE	3.73	1.03				
CEA	2.91	1.03				
CIT	3.29	0.99				
COL	2.67	0.52				
CMAMP	3.27	1.02				
CONPHM	3.20	1.02				
year level						
First Year	3.06	0.98	3.997	4, 357	.003*	reject the null hypothesis
Second Year	3.20	0.98				
Third Year	3.62	1.01				
Fourth Year	3.25	1.08				
Other	2.00	—				
number of platforms used						
1–2 Platforms	2.95	0.89	6.417	3, 358	< .001*	reject the null hypothesis
3–4 Platforms	3.17	1.00				
5–6 Platforms	3.63	1.06				
More than 6 Platforms	3.54	1.10				
hours spent per day						
Less Than 1 Hour	2.63	0.74	3.614	4, 357	.007*	reject the null hypothesis
1–2 Hours	3.05	0.85				
3–4 Hours	3.05	0.96				
5–6 Hours	3.35	0.98				
More than 6 Hours	3.46	1.15				

** Significant at the .05 level.*

Table 6.1 presented the differences in the level of social media usage among college students when grouped according to their profile variables. At the .05 level of significance, significant differences were found according to academic program, year level, number of social media platforms used, and hours spent on social media per day. No significant differences were found according to age and sex.

Age did not significantly differentiate the respondents' level of social media usage, F(3, 358) = 2.594, p = .052. Although the 21–25 age group obtained the highest mean (M = 3.43), the observed differences across age groups were not statistically significant. Thus, the null hypothesis for age was accepted.

Male respondents had a mean of 3.26 (SD = 1.03), while female respondents had a mean of 3.30 (SD = 1.01). The difference was not statistically significant, F(1, 360) = 0.142, p = .706. Therefore, the null hypothesis for sex was accepted.

A significant difference was found according to academic program, F(9, 352) = 2.666, p = .005. The College of Teacher Education obtained the highest mean (M = 3.73), whereas the College of Law obtained the lowest mean (M = 2.67). The null hypothesis for academic program was therefore rejected. In the ULS context, this result indicated that patterns of social media use varied across academic programs, which may reflect differences in course requirements, modes of communication, collaborative academic activities, and the extent to which digital platforms were incorporated into students' academic experiences.

A significant difference was also found according to year level, F(4, 357) = 3.997, p = .003. Third-year students obtained the highest mean (M = 3.62). The null hypothesis for year level was rejected. This finding indicated that students' social media usage varied across stages of their college experience. At ULS, students in the middle years of their programs may have been engaged in more academic coordination, organizational activities, research-related tasks, and peer communication that required regular use of digital platforms.

The number of social media platforms used also showed a significant difference, F(3, 358) = 6.417, p < .001. Respondents who used five to six platforms obtained the highest mean (M = 3.63), while those who used only one to two platforms obtained the lowest mean (M = 2.95). Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. The result suggested that broader platform exposure was associated with a higher level of social media usage because students who maintained accounts across several platforms had more opportunities to access information, communicate, and participate in online activities.

Hours spent on social media per day likewise showed a significant difference, F(4, 357) = 3.614, p = .007. Respondents who spent more than six hours per day on social media obtained the highest mean (M = 3.46), while those who spent less than one hour obtained the lowest mean (M = 2.63). The null hypothesis was rejected. In the ULS context, greater time spent on social media might have provided students with more opportunities for communication, information seeking, academic coordination, and interaction with online content.

The findings showed that social media usage significantly differed according to academic program, year level, number of platforms used, and hours spent per day, but not according to age and sex. These findings indicated that students' academic context and patterns of digital exposure were more closely associated with differences in social media usage than age or sex.

Table 6.2 Difference in Political Engagement According to Profile

Profile Variable / Group	Mean	SD	F	df	p-value	Decision
age group						
16–20	3.52	0.90	2.395	3, 358	.068	accept the null hypothesis
21–25	3.71	0.98				
26–30	3.50	0.58				
31–35	4.40	0.89				
sex						
Male	3.51	1.00	1.014	1, 360	.315	accept the null hypothesis
Female	3.61	0.88				
academic program						
COA	3.64	0.90	6.525	9, 352	< .001*	reject the null hypothesis
CAS	4.53	0.72				
CBE	3.40	0.79				
CCJE	2.86	0.36				
CTE	4.27	0.80				
CEA	3.26	0.89				
CIT	3.71	1.14				
COL	4.33	0.82				
CMAMP	3.70	0.89				
CONPHM	3.58	0.89				
year level						
First Year	3.44	0.96	2.904	4, 357	.022*	reject the null hypothesis
Second Year	3.48	0.85				
Third Year	3.82	0.91				
Fourth Year	3.75	0.90				
Other	4.00	—				
number of platforms used						
1–2 Platforms	3.36	0.97	2.460	3, 358	.063	accept the null hypothesis
3–4 Platforms	3.58	0.87				

Profile Variable / Group	Mean	SD	F	df	p-value	Decision
5–6 Platforms	3.79	0.91				
More than 6 Platforms	3.62	1.10				
hours of social media use						
Less Than 1 Hour	3.13	1.25				
1–2 Hours	3.20	0.91				
3–4 Hours	3.59	0.88	3.781	4, 357	.005*	reject the null hypothesis
5–6 Hours	3.64	0.81				
More than 6 Hours	3.74	0.98				

** Significant at the .05 level.*

Table 6.2 presented the differences in political engagement among college students when grouped according to their profile variables. At the .05 level of significance, significant differences were found according to academic program, year level, and hours of social media use per day. No significant differences were found according to age, sex, and number of social media platforms used.

Regarding Age, it did not significantly differentiate political engagement, F(3, 358) = 2.395, p = .068. Although mean scores varied among the age groups, the differences were not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis for age was accepted.

Regarding Sex, male respondents obtained a mean of 3.51 (SD = 1.00), while female respondents obtained a mean of 3.61 (SD = 0.88). The difference was not statistically significant, F(1, 360) = 1.014, p = .315. Thus, the null hypothesis for sex was accepted. In the University of La Salette, this indicated that male and female students demonstrated comparable levels of political engagement, and the results did not support interpreting sex as a distinguishing factor in their political participation.

A significant difference was found according to academic program, F(9, 352) = 6.525, p < .001. The College of Arts and Sciences obtained the highest mean (M = 4.53), followed by the College of Law (M = 4.33) and the College of Teacher Education (M = 4.27), while the College of Criminal Justice Education obtained the lowest mean (M = 2.86). The null hypothesis for academic program was rejected. In the ULS context, the higher political engagement of students from the College of Arts and Sciences could be understood in relation to programs such as Political Science and Journalism, where students may have been more regularly exposed to governance, public affairs, current events, political communication, and civic issues. This pattern supported the view that academic environments could provide different levels of political information, discussion, and opportunities for engagement.

Political engagement also significantly differed according to year level, F(4, 357) = 2.904, p = .022. Third-year students obtained the highest mean (M = 3.82), followed by fourth-year students (M = 3.75). The null hypothesis for year level was rejected. This result indicated that political engagement varied across students' progression in college. The higher engagement observed among students in the more advanced year levels could be associated with greater academic exposure, participation in organizations, leadership experiences, and encounters with social and civic issues.

The number of social media platforms used did not produce a statistically significant difference in political engagement, F(3, 358) = 2.460, p = .063. Although students using five to six platforms obtained the highest mean (M = 3.79), the variation across platform groups was not statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted. This indicated that simply using more social media platforms did not necessarily correspond to a different level of political engagement among ULS students; the way students used the platforms and the political content they encountered could have been more relevant than the number of platforms alone.

Hours of social media use per day showed a significant difference in political engagement, F(4, 357) = 3.781, p = .005. Respondents who spent more than six hours per day on social media obtained the highest mean (M = 3.74), while those who spent less than one hour obtained the lowest mean (M = 3.13). The null hypothesis was rejected. In the ULS context, students who spent more time online had greater opportunities to encounter current events, governance-related information, political discussions, and civic content, which could have contributed to differences in their political engagement.

Political engagement significantly differed according to academic program, year level, and hours of social media use per day, but not according to age, sex, and number of social media platforms used. These findings suggested that the students' academic environment, stage in college, and intensity of social media exposure were more closely associated with differences in political engagement than age, sex, or the number of platforms used.

Part V. Relationship between the Level of Social Media Usage and Level of Political Engagement of the Respondents (SOP 5)

Table 7. Relationship between Social Media Usage and Political Engagement

Variables	Latent Political Engagement		Follower Political Engagement		Expressive Political Engagement		Counter Political Engagement	
	Corr.	Sig.	Corr.	Sig.	Corr.	Sig.	Corr.	Sig
Active Usage	.335**	< .001**	.325**	< .001**	.377**	< .001**	.373**	< .001**
Passive Usage	.395**	< .001**	.156**	.003**	0.118*	.025*	.241**	< .001**

Note. ** p < .01; * p < .05. Correlation strength: weak = \|r\| .10–.29; moderate = \|r\| .30–.49; strong = \|r\| ≥ .50.

Table 14 shows that all tested relationships between social media usage and political engagement were positive and statistically significant. The strength of the relationships ranged from weak to moderate; none reached the strong range. This distinction was important because statistical significance indicated a reliable association in the sample, whereas the correlation magnitude indicated that social media usage was associated with only part of the variation in political engagement.

Specifically, active social media usage had moderate positive relationships with latent ($r = .335$, $p < .001$), follower ($r = .325$, $p < .001$), expressive ($r = .377$, $p < .001$), and counter-political engagement ($r = .373$, $p < .001$). The strongest active-use relationship was with expressive engagement. In the ULS context, students who more frequently posted, shared, messaged, and joined discussions also tended to report more political information seeking, following, expression, and critical response. Resource Mobilization Theory explained this pattern by treating interactive digital channels and networks as resources that could lower the costs of communication and participation.

Passive social media usage had a moderate positive relationship with latent engagement ($r = .395$, $p < .001$) and weak positive relationships with follower ($r = .156$, $p = .003$), expressive ($r = .118$, $p = .025$), and counter engagement ($r = .241$, $p < .001$). The strongest passive-use relationship was therefore with information seeking. This finding closely matched the ULS pattern of high passive social media use and high latent political engagement: browsing and reading appeared more closely connected with awareness than with public expression or debate.

The findings supported the integrated theoretical framework. Resource Mobilization Theory explained social media as a source of information and communication resources; the Civic Voluntarism Model emphasized that resources had to combine with motivation and recruitment opportunities; and Political Socialization Theory explained how repeated exposure in classrooms, peer networks, campus elections, and student organizations could develop democratic habits. The correlations therefore supported using social media as an engagement tool while also showing why structured opportunities were needed to turn exposure into participation.

The results were consistent with Zhong et al. (2022), Boulianne (2015), and other studies linking social media exposure and interaction with political engagement. However, the weak-to-moderate magnitudes cautioned against causal or deterministic interpretations. Social media was one part of a broader political socialization environment that also included academic program, year level, organizational experience, and opportunities to participate.

Since all eight correlations were statistically significant at $p < .05$, the null hypothesis stating that social media usage was not significantly related to political engagement was rejected. The direction of the relationships was positive, with strengths ranging from weak to moderate.

ENHANCED CAMPUS STUDENT GOVERNMENT (CSG) INITIATIVES: PROJECT CONNECT

Rationale

The University of La Salette (ULS) provided a values-oriented higher education environment in which student organizations and the Student Executive Council (SEC) supported leadership, representation, communication, and participation. The findings of the study showed that students already used social media frequently, particularly for passive information consumption, while overall political engagement remained moderate and follower, expressive, and counter engagement remained low. These conditions created a practical basis for an initiative that used existing digital habits to strengthen informed and sustained participation in campus governance.

Student government elections were central to this initiative because they represented more than an annual selection of officers. The ULS turnout cited in the study was 78.45% (4,171 of 5,317 students), leaving more than 1,000 students who did not vote. Research on student elections showed that participation in school elections could strengthen preparedness for later voting, political knowledge, and civic participation (Saha & Print, 2010). Campus elections could therefore serve as a training ground for general elections by allowing students to practice evaluating candidates and platforms, making informed choices, voting, discussing issues, monitoring elected leaders, and demanding accountability.

Project CONNECT was developed from the significant findings of the study. Social media usage and political engagement differed according to academic program, year level, number of platforms used, and daily hours; and social media usage had significant weak-to-moderate positive relationships with the dimensions of political engagement. The initiative therefore emphasized college-specific and year-level-sensitive communication, cross-platform outreach, carefully scheduled engagement opportunities, and activities that transformed information exposure into consultation, expression, verification, and accountability.

The initiative did not assume that more social media use or longer screen time would automatically improve political engagement. Instead, it treated social media as a resource that could be organized more intentionally. In line with Resource Mobilization Theory and the Civic Voluntarism Model, Project CONNECT sought to provide credible information, recruitment opportunities, accessible participation channels, and sustained networks through which students could exercise democratic voice.

Legal Bases

Project CONNECT was anchored on the following legal and policy bases: (1) Article II, Section 13 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, which recognized the vital role of the youth in nation-building and encouraged their involvement in public and civic affairs; (2) Republic Act No. 8044, or the Youth in Nation-Building Act, which established a policy of sustained youth development and participation; (3) CHED Memorandum Order No. 09, series of 2013, which directed higher education institutions to provide student-centered programs that support holistic development and active involvement of students as future responsible citizens and leaders; and (4) Republic Act No. 10173, or the Data Privacy Act of 2012, which governed the responsible processing and protection of personal information in digital consultations, surveys, analytics, and feedback systems.

Objectives

1. To strengthen students' access to accurate political and campus-governance information and promote responsible digital citizenship through coordinated, cross-platform communication and media literacy activities.
2. To increase inclusive and sustained student participation in campus governance through regular consultation, dialogue, feedback, election education, and college- and year-level engagement mechanisms.

3. To strengthen responsible political expression, critical verification, deliberation, and accountability through safe student-voice activities, fact-checking, moderated discussions, and evidence-based monitoring.

Implementation Framework

Project CONNECT shall be implemented over one academic year through four linked phases. Phase 1, Consultative Validation and Baseline Setting, shall be spearheaded by the SEC with the Student Affairs Office, College Student Councils, and ULS Commission on Elections. Phase 2, Preparation and Capacity Building, shall establish the content calendar, baseline social media analytics, student feedback instruments, moderation protocols, privacy procedures, and training for student digital liaisons. Phase 3, Implementation, shall deliver the activities mapped directly to the three objectives in Table 15. Phase 4, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Turnover, shall use quarterly analytics, participation records, consultation outputs, issue-response logs, and an annual evaluation report to improve the succeeding year's plan.

The SEC shall serve as the overall lead office, with designated committees responsible for information, consultation, media literacy, and monitoring. College Student Councils shall localize activities and identify college-specific concerns, while the Student Affairs Office shall provide institutional coordination and oversight. Funding may be drawn from the approved SEC/student government annual budget, authorized student-development allocations, college council counterpart or in-kind support, and university-approved partnerships or sponsorships, subject to institutional accounting, procurement, ethics, and data-privacy policies.

Table 8. Enhanced CSG Action Plan: Project CONNECT (SOP 6)

Objective	Basis from the Findings	Mapped Activities	Time Frame	Budget	Source of Funds	Spearhead / Partners	Resources Needed	Success Indicators
Objective 1: Strengthen access to accurate governance information and responsible digital citizenship.	High passive social media use; high latent political engagement; significant differences by academic program, year level, number of platforms, and hours; passive use was most strongly related to latent engagement.	Campus Pulse monthly governance updates; Know Your Student Government campaign; cross-platform posting on official channels; candidate/platform explainers during elections; FACT Check workshops; Pause-Check-Share materials; media and information literacy sessions.	June–May; monthly information releases; quarterly media-literacy activity; intensified election-period content.	₱8,000	Approved SEC/student government budget; Student Affairs/student-development allocation; authorized in-kind support.	SEC Information Committee (lead); Student Affairs Office; ULS COMELEC; College Councils; Library; faculty in Social Studies/Communication/IT.	Official templates, internet access, analytics tools, QR materials, fact-checking guides, resource speakers.	At least 24 issue-based posts; 12 governance updates; 4 media-literacy/verification activities; official election explainers completed; improved reach and student awareness based on pre/post feedback.
Objective 2: Increase inclusive and sustained participation in campus governance.	Overall political engagement was moderate; follower engagement was low; political engagement differed by academic program, year level, number of platforms, and hours; third-year students exceeded first-year students; CAS exceeded several colleges in post hoc comparisons.	Your Voice Matters digital town halls; monthly polls/question boxes; college listening sessions; first-year governance orientation; Beyond Elections annual civic calendar; SEC accountability forums; college digital liaisons; election	June–May; monthly consultations; at least one listening session per college per semester; orientation	₱8,000	Approved SEC/student government budget; college council counterpart/in-kind support; Student Affairs/student-development allocation.	SEC President/Executive Board (lead); College Student Councils; Student Affairs Office; ULS COMELEC; class officers; deans/program heads as coordinating partners.	Poll and livestream tools, consultation forms, orientation materials, issue tracker, attendance and documentation system.	12 digital consultations; 2 listening sessions per college; governance orientation for incoming students; representation from all colleges; documented response to student concerns; improved election and

Objective	Basis from the Findings	Mapped Activities	Time Frame	Budget	Source of Funds	Spearhead / Partners	Resources Needed	Success Indicators
		participation and voter-education drive.	each semester; annual accountability forum.					consultation participation from baseline.
Objective 3: Strengthen responsible expression, verification, deliberation, and accountability.	Expressive and counter engagement were low; fact-checking was comparatively stronger; active social media use had moderate positive relationships with expressive and counter engagement; all social-media/political-engagement correlations were significant.	#MyCampusMyVoice opinion week; issue-based reels and student voice spotlights; moderated campus issue forums; student-led fact-check/verification team; evidence-based debate and dialogue sessions; EngageTrack quarterly analytics and feedback review; year-end transparency and accountability report.	Quarterly expression/verification activities; ongoing monitoring; quarterly review; annual report in May.	₱8,000	Approved SEC/student government budget; university-approved partnerships/sponsorships; Student Affairs/student-development allocation; authorized in-kind support.	SEC Research/Advocacy Committee (lead); Student Publication; Debate/academic organizations; Student Affairs Office; faculty advisers; privacy/data-protection focal persons as needed.	Content guidelines, moderation protocol, verification templates, survey tools, analytics dashboard, report templates, certificates/incentives where approved.	At least 4 expression campaigns; 4 verification/deliberation activities; student fact-check/verification team formed; 4 quarterly monitoring reports; annual evaluation and accountability report completed; measurable increase in constructive student-generated participation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

In the University of La Salette, Inc., the study found that undergraduate students had a high level of social media usage and a moderate level of political engagement. Students were more active as information consumers than as public contributors, and latent political engagement was substantially higher than follower, expressive, and counter-political engagement. After correcting the six sex responses that had been misclassified as “prefer not to say,” sex was not significantly associated with either social media usage or political engagement. Social media usage differed significantly according to academic program, year level, number of platforms used, and hours spent per day. Political engagement also differed significantly according to academic program, year level, number of platforms used, and hours spent per day, although the significant omnibus result for hours did not yield a specific significant pair after Tukey adjustment. Active social media usage had moderate positive relationships with all four political-engagement dimensions, while passive usage had a moderate relationship with latent engagement and weak relationships with follower, expressive, and counter-political engagement. The findings supported the view that social media could provide information, networks, and communication resources for participation, but meaningful engagement also required political learning, recruitment, safe opportunities for expression, and sustained governance

mechanisms. Thus, campus elections were important not only for selecting student leaders but also as democratic training grounds in which students could practice informed voting, deliberation, representation, and accountability relevant to future participation in general elections.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and the variables that showed statistically significant differences or relationships, the following recommendations were proposed:

1. The Student Executive Council, in coordination with the Student Affairs Office and College Student Councils, should adopt Project CONNECT subject to a consultative validation meeting. Implementation should prioritize the significant profile variables by using college-specific communication, first-year and lower-year orientation, cross-platform outreach, and scheduled engagement activities. The program should not target students by sex or age because these variables were not significant after data correction.
2. The SEC and ULS Commission on Elections should strengthen student-election education and year-round accountability. Candidate and platform explainers, voter-information materials, post-election governance updates, digital town halls, and accountability forums should explicitly frame campus elections as opportunities for practicing responsible participation in broader democratic and general electoral processes.
3. The Vice President for Academic Affairs, deans, and faculty members should strengthen civic, media, and information literacy through relevant courses and co-curricular activities. Colleges with higher political engagement, particularly CAS and CTE in the corrected post hoc results, may be tapped as peer-learning partners, while engagement strategies should be localized for colleges and year levels that showed lower participation. Activities should develop fact-checking, respectful deliberation, evidence-based expression, and responsible digital citizenship rather than simply increasing time spent on social media.
4. The SEC should maintain official communication across multiple appropriate platforms and use analytics to identify where students are already active, because the number of platforms used and daily hours were significant profile variables for social media usage. However, the university should use these patterns for timing and reach, not encourage excessive screen time. Quarterly monitoring should track reach, consultation participation, student-generated content, issue resolution, and election participation while complying with the Data Privacy Act and institutional privacy policies. Future researchers should use the raw continuous data for exact mean age and daily hours, replicate the study in other institutions, examine additional predictors such as political efficacy and organizational involvement, and evaluate Project CONNECT using pretest-posttest or longitudinal designs.

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