

## POLITICAL AWARENESS AND POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT AMONG BACHELOR OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the correlation between political awareness and political involvement among first-year Bachelor of Public Administration students at Santo Tomas College of Agriculture, Sciences, and Technology (STCAST). Using a survey with 200 students, data was collected through a questionnaire adapted from Hermosa's (2021) Political Awareness and Involvement Questionnaire. The results show a moderate positive correlation ( $r = .524$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) between political awareness and involvement, meaning students who are more aware of politics are also more likely to participate in political activities. The average score for political awareness was 3.94 (SD = .57), while political involvement was lower at 3.44 (SD = 0.72), showing a gap between knowing about politics and taking part in it. These findings highlight how schools can help students become more engaged citizens by including more political education in their lessons and encouraging participation in community activities. Helping students bridge the gap between awareness and action can strengthen democracy and prepare them to be active members of society. This study adds to the discussion on youth political engagement and shows how education plays a big role in shaping the future of governance. Future studies should also investigate ways to encourage long-term political participation and compare results across different schools and student groups.

**Keywords:** political awareness, political involvement, civic engagement, student participation

### INTRODUCTION

Political engagement among young people has been a growing concern worldwide, as fewer individuals participate in voting, activism, and other civic activities. This decline in political involvement threatens democratic systems and hinders the achievement of sustainable governance (Foa et al., 2020). Political participation is essential for strong democratic institutions and aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, which promotes peace, justice, and inclusive institutions (United Nations, 2015). However, many young people feel disconnected from

politics due to distrust in government institutions and the perception that their voices do not influence policy decisions (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Studies have shown that countries with strong civic education programs tend to have higher levels of youth political engagement (Camino & Zeldin, 2002). This suggests that education plays a vital role in fostering political awareness and encouraging active citizenship.

In the Philippines, research indicates a similar trend of political disengagement among students. Dolipas (2021) found that while university students in Benguet are aware of political issues, many remain apathetic due to distrust in political institutions. Mendoza et al. (2022) observed that in Northern Mindanao, students who understand local policies are more likely to participate in governance activities. These studies highlight the importance of civic education in promoting youth political involvement. However, despite the existing research on general student populations, little attention has been given to Bachelor of Public Administration (BPA) students, who are future policymakers and government leaders.

This study aims to fill this research gap by examining the relationship between political awareness and political involvement among BPA students in Mindanao. By understanding how awareness influences engagement, the study can provide insights into improving civic education and encouraging youth participation in governance. This research is socially relevant as it can help educators, policymakers, and institutions develop programs that empower students to become active and informed citizens, ultimately strengthening democracy and governance in the country.

## Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between political awareness and political involvement of public administration students at STCAST. Specifically, this study aimed to determine the following:

1. To determine the level of political awareness among public administration students at STCAST in terms of:
  - 1.1 public policies;
  - 1.2 political leaders; and
  - 1.3 public issues.
2. To determine the level of political involvement among public administration students at students in terms of:
  - 2.1 voting;
  - 2.2 political discussions/forums; and
  - 2.3 activism.
3. Determine the significant relationship between political awareness and political involvement among public administration students.

## Research Hypothesis

The parameter used in testing the null hypothesis in this study was 0.05 confidence level.  
**Ho:** There is no significant relationship between political awareness and political involvement among Bachelor of Public Administration students.

## Review of Related Literature

Political awareness and involvement are integral to sustaining a healthy democracy, as they shape citizens' engagement with political processes and decisions. Among students, fostering political awareness is especially critical as they approach adulthood and gain exposure to civic responsibilities. According to Achour et al. (2022), civic education can bridge gaps left by insufficient parental political socialization, equipping adolescents with the tools to engage politically. Ahmed et al. (2015) support this by emphasizing that structured civic education promotes greater engagement.

Educational environments significantly influence political awareness. Research by Khuhro (2024) highlights how open classroom climates that encourage diverse perspectives enhance students' civic self-efficacy and willingness to engage politically. Similarly, Sunday (2017) found that democratic practices and active participation opportunities in schools positively shape students' political attitudes and behaviors. Civic identity, developed through community involvement, also enhances political awareness and responsibility (Martinez et al., 2012). Schools can play a pivotal role in this process, particularly for students with limited exposure to civic activities at home (Khuhro, 2024).

The long-term benefits of civic education cannot be overstated. Moore (2021) demonstrates that students exposed to public education focusing on political literacy are more likely to vote and show interest in civic engagement. Such education lays the foundation for active citizenship, ensuring sustained participation in democratic processes.

Public policies are essential mechanisms for addressing societal issues, managing resources, and guiding behavior. They are developed through legislative, executive, or administrative processes to achieve equitable outcomes. In education, policy development must be grounded in robust data and analysis to ensure inclusivity and address systemic inequities (Levy & Akiva, 2019). According to Pei et al. (2018), analyzing policy documents can help stakeholders identify evolving trends and tackle complex challenges in education.

Public policies should prioritize inclusivity and equity. Badaru (2021) explore how policies in South Africa improve access to higher education for marginalized groups, emphasizing the need for interventions that promoting social mobility and equal opportunities. Levy and Akiva (2019) highlights the influence of public perceptions of educational stakeholders on the success and fairness of policies, underscoring the importance of credibility in policymaking.

Political leadership is a varied concept encompassing communication, ethical practices, and trust-building. Leadership communication is especially critical during crises. Wilson (2020) argues that clear and coordinated leadership responses are essential for fostering trust and compliance during emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Voina et al. (2023) notes that Jacinda Ardern's empathetic and transparent leadership during the pandemic enhanced public trust and cooperation.

Ethical leadership further strengthens public confidence. Billet (2020) link effective leadership to ethical practices, showing how leaders' actions raise managerial standards and public trust. Brown et al. (2019) integrates social, cultural, and psychological factors into a theoretical framework that underscores the role of ethics in leadership roles. Additionally, organizational transparency fosters compliance and loyalty (Voina et al., 2023).

Public policy plays a vital role in addressing societal challenges such as social welfare, economic development, and public health. Leadership styles are critical in policy implementation.

Brown et al. (2019) highlights how different leadership philosophies shape policy outcomes, stressing the need for adaptive approaches to complex issues. Ostrander (2021) emphasizes the importance of interest groups in setting policy agendas and influencing their implementation, reflecting the multifaceted nature of policymaking.

Public opinion also shapes policies. Paschou et al. (2024) demonstrates its role in sustainable initiatives, such as transportation policies, while Moore (2021) highlights the interplay between public and private regulatory systems in addressing societal issues. The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the importance of coherent communication in public health strategies. Voina et al. (2023) found that leaders' communication during health emergencies directly impacted adherence to health policies.

Emerging public issues like loneliness also require policy attention. Early (2022) advocates for "anti-loneliness" measures, emphasizing the growing recognition of mental health as a critical aspect of public policy. These findings highlight the dynamic nature of public issues and the need for responsive governance.

Political involvement encompasses various forms of civic engagement, including voting, activism, and participation in political events. Levy and Akiva (2019) emphasize that adolescents' perceptions of political efficacy play a critical role in their willingness to participate in politics. Their findings suggest that fostering political success among young people can significantly enhance their motivation to engage in civic activities. Similarly, Hashish and Kamel (2014) assert that students with heightened political competence are more likely to develop positive self-concepts and identities, driving greater involvement in politics.

Social interactions also play a pivotal role in political engagement. Williams (2020) highlights that political conversations within social contexts enhance participation, as individuals feel more engaged and validated when discussing political matters. This aligns with Towner's (2013) findings that supportive social networks often serve as catalysts for political participation.

The voting landscape is shaped by a range of sociopolitical, demographic, and institutional factors. Nurung et al. (2019) highlights that while voter rationality alone may not directly influence behavior, access to relevant information can mediate strategic decision-making, such as during referendums. Early et al. (2022) similarly argues that voter decisions are significantly influenced by social factors, including age, gender, and occupation.

Electoral reforms and legal frameworks also affect voter turnout and inclusivity. Samuels (2015) examines the Shelby County Holder case and its impact on voter turnout, particularly among foreign-born eligible voters. Blesset (2015) underscores how legal obstacles, such as misdemeanor disenfranchisement, disproportionately disempowers marginalized groups, such as Black voters. Additionally, Mendoza et al. (2016) reveal how ethnic and regional loyalties influence voting patterns in the Philippines, demonstrating the interplay between social identity and electoral decisions.

Political discussions and forums, particularly in social and institutional settings, play a crucial role in enhancing civic engagement. Levy and Akiva (2019) argue that adolescents who perceive themselves as politically effective are more likely to engage in meaningful political discussions. Williams (2020) emphasized the importance of supportive social contexts in fostering productive political conversations that drive higher engagement. Similarly, Brady et al. (2022) discuss

how setting social participation goals during adolescence translates into long-term civic involvement, including voting and activism.

Activism has evolved significantly in the digital age, with technology providing new ways for people to engage in political and social movements. Research shows that factors such as education, gender, and age influence political activism, with higher education levels linked to greater participation in civic activities (Early et al., 2021). When individuals become more aware of social and political issues, they are more likely to act and advocate for change.

One of the most notable shifts in activism is the rise of digital activism, especially among young people. According to Earl (2011), online platforms such as social media, blogs, and petitions have made it easier for individuals to organize protests, raise awareness, and support political causes. Unlike traditional activism, which often requires physical presence and structured organizations, digital activism allows people to connect, collaborate, and mobilize movements from anywhere in the world.

Additionally, personal motivation plays a key role in shaping activism. Brady et al. (2020) found that individuals who have strong social participation goals are more likely to engage in political discussions, volunteer work, and advocacy campaigns. This suggests that when people identify with a cause and feel empowered, they are more willing to act and contribute to societal change.

Research consistently demonstrates a strong correlation between political awareness and political involvement. Political awareness, defined as an understanding of governance, political processes, and societal issues, serves as a foundation for active participation. Badaru and Adu (2021) found significant correlations between political awareness and civic engagement among university students in post-Apartheid South Africa. Similarly, Calawa et al. (2023) report that lower levels of political awareness correspond to reduced political participation.

Political efficacy is a critical mediator in this relationship. Alkhalalah (2022) highlights how individuals who feel capable of influencing political outcomes are more likely to engage in civic activities. Ainley et al. (2024) extend this by introducing religious political awareness as a factor that enhances participation in faith-based communities.

In conclusion, literature underscores that political awareness is a key driver of political involvement. Increasing awareness through education, social interactions, and media can enhance political efficacy and motivate greater civic engagement. However, further research is needed to explore how factors such as cultural dynamics and digital platforms shape this relationship in contemporary contexts.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study was based on three key theories—Civic Voluntarism Model, Socialization Theory, and Political Efficacy Theory—which help explain how political awareness influences political involvement. These theories provided a strong foundation for understanding why some students are more engaged in politics than others. Additionally, this framework aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Quality Education, which promotes inclusive and equitable learning opportunities that prepare individuals to become informed and active citizens (United Nations, 2015).

The Civic Voluntarism Model (Verba et al., 1995) suggests that people who are more aware

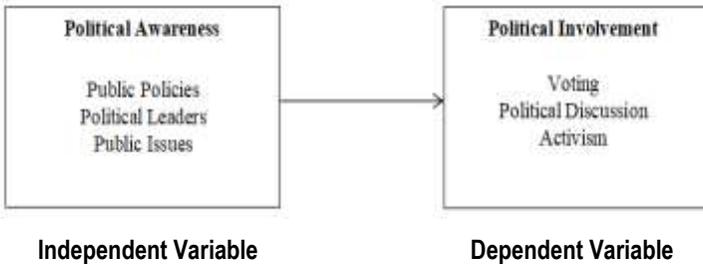
of politics, psychologically engaged, and have access to resources are more likely to participate in civic activities. This means that students with a strong understanding of political issues and government functions are more likely to vote, discuss political matters, or join activist efforts. This model highlights the role of schools in shaping students' political engagement by providing education that encourages civic participation (Zhang, 2022).

Socialization Theory (Almond & Verba, 1963) explains that political attitudes and behaviors develop through early exposure to political information from family, friends, education, and media. For example, students who grow up in politically active households or study political issues in school are more likely to engage in civic activities later in life (Hyman, 1959). This theory supports the idea that inclusive educational environments help students—especially those from marginalized communities—develop political awareness and engagement (Neundorf et al., 2016).

The Political Efficacy Theory (Campbell et al., 1960) states that people who believe they can influence political decisions are more likely to participate in democratic processes. This theory suggests that when students feel confident in their knowledge of politics, they are more likely to vote, discuss political issues, or take part in activism. Quality education plays a key role in increasing political efficacy by helping students develop the skills and confidence needed to engage in governance and policymaking (Alkhalalah, 2021).

By using this theoretical framework, the study connected education and political engagement, emphasizing that schools can help students become more politically involved through civic education programs and awareness campaigns. Understanding these theories also supports the goal of SDG 4, which is to ensure that all individuals have access to quality education that prepares them to be active and responsible citizens (United Nations, 2015).

**Figure 1**  
*Conceptual Framework Showing the Variables of the Study*



The primary aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between political awareness and political involvement. The research also accounted for specific conditions, protocols, and collected data relevant to the study objectives. Participants included first-year public administration students, both male and female, enrolled at Santo Tomas College of Agriculture, Science, and Technology. The study was conducted during the first semester of the academic year 2024–2025, with findings limited to this period. Any changes in political awareness and involvement occurring outside this time frame were not within the scope of the research.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study used a correlational research design, which helped the researchers examine the relationship between two variables without manipulating or influencing them (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Specifically, the study analyzed how political awareness is related to political involvement among students. The researchers observed and measured students' knowledge or awareness of politics and their participation in activities such as voting or engaging in discussions.

A correlational design was appropriate for this study because it allowed the researchers to identify patterns and connections without altering the participants' normal behaviors (Fraenkel et al., 2019). For example, if students who had greater political awareness also participated more in civic activities, this suggested a possible link between awareness and involvement. However, since this design did not establish cause and effect, further research would be needed to determine whether political awareness directly influenced participation. By using this approach, the study provided valuable insights into student political engagement, which could help educators and policymakers develop strategies to encourage more active civic participation among young people.

The research was conducted at Santo Tomas College of Agriculture, Sciences, and Technology (STCAST) in Santo Tomas, Davao del Norte, focusing on the Bachelor of Public Administration (BPA) program. The BPA curriculum, covering governance, political theory, public policy, and civic engagement, aligns closely with the study's objectives on political awareness and involvement. As future public servants, BPA students possess foundational knowledge of political systems, making them ideal respondents. Additionally, their interest in public affairs provides a relevant population for examining the relationship between political awareness and participation, ensuring the study's relevance and alignment with its goals.

This study used quota sampling to select 200 first-year Bachelor of Public Administration (BPA) students enrolled at Santo Tomas College of Agriculture, Science, and Technology (STCAST) during the academic year 2024–2025. Quota sampling was appropriate because it ensured that the study included a specific number of participants who met the required criteria, allowing for a more structured and representative sample (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

The focus on BPA students was based on the limited research on their political awareness and political involvement, especially within Santo Tomas. As future policymakers and public servants, these students were an ideal group for studying how knowledge of politics related to their participation in civic activities. By examining this demographic, the study aimed to fill an important research gap and provide insights that could help educators and policymakers develop strategies to strengthen political engagement among young people pursuing careers in governance.

The researchers utilized a questionnaire adapted from Hermosa (2021), titled "Political Awareness and Involvement of College Arts and Sciences Students of Laguna State Polytechnic University." The instrument consisted of six indicators with a total of 30 items. It was structured into sections targeting key variables such as political knowledge, awareness of current events, and participation in both online and offline political activities.

## RESULTS

Table 1 shows the level of political awareness among the public administration students. Based on the results, the overall mean score for political awareness among participants was 3.94, with a standard deviation of 0.57. This placed them in the "highly aware" category, suggesting that students had a strong understanding of political matters. Their awareness was particularly evident in

areas related to governance and policymaking, demonstrating their familiarity with the roles and responsibilities of political leaders.

However, the findings also indicated gaps in awareness regarding certain recent political developments and government initiatives. This suggests the need for greater exposure to current political issues through education, media engagement, or participation in civic discussions. Strengthening political awareness in these areas could help students develop a more comprehensive understanding of political affairs, ultimately encouraging greater civic participation and informed decision-making.

**Table 1**  
*Level of Political Awareness*

Political Awareness	Mean	Standard Deviation	Descriptive Equivalent
Public Policies	3.91	0.70	Highly Aware
Public Leaders	4.04	0.67	Highly Aware
Public Issues	3.86	0.65	Highly Aware
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.94</b>	<b>0.57</b>	<b>Highly Aware</b>

The study found that the overall mean score for political involvement among participants was 3.44, with a standard deviation of 0.72. This placed them in the "highly involved" category, suggesting that students actively engaged in various political activities. Their involvement was particularly strong in electoral participation, indicating a commitment to supporting political candidates and engaging in democratic processes.

**Table 2**  
*Level of Political Involvement*

Political Involvement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Descriptive Equivalent
Voting	3.74	0.77	Highly Involved
Public Forums/Discussions	3.29	0.87	Moderately Involved
Activism	3.30	0.83	Moderately Involved
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.44</b>	<b>0.72</b>	<b>Highly Involved</b>

However, the findings also revealed lower levels of participation in community-based discussions and consultations. While students were engaged in some political activities, their involvement in decision-making processes at the local level was less frequent. This suggests the need for initiatives that encourage students to take a more active role in public forums, policy discussions, and civic engagement efforts beyond elections. Strengthening these areas of involvement could help cultivate more engaged and responsible citizens who actively contribute to governance and community development.

**Table 3***Significant Relationship between Political Awareness and Political Involvement*

Variables	Pearson r	Significance	Hypothesis
Political Awareness and Political Involvement	.524	.000	Reject Ho

The study found a moderately strong positive relationship between political awareness and political involvement among students. This means that as students become more knowledgeable about political issues, their participation in political activities also increases. The statistical analysis confirmed that this relationship was significant, indicating that students who are more politically aware are more likely to engage in civic activities.

These findings highlight the importance of political education in encouraging youth participation in governance and decision-making. By fostering greater political awareness, schools and institutions can help students become more engaged citizens, strengthening democratic processes and civic responsibility.

## DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that students demonstrated a high level of political awareness, indicating a strong understanding of governance, policymaking, and public affairs. This aligns with previous research highlighting that young individuals with greater political awareness tend to make more informed decisions and show higher levels of civic engagement (Ostrander et al., 2021). Political knowledge plays a crucial role in developing responsible citizenship, as it empowers individuals to participate actively in democratic processes (Zhang, 2022).

Despite this high level of awareness, gaps were observed in students' understanding of recent political developments and specific government initiatives. This finding reflects the argument of Williams (2020), who noted that while students may be knowledgeable about political structures and leadership, their familiarity with current policies and legislative actions often depends on exposure to political discussions in educational settings, media, and community engagement. Similarly, recent studies emphasize the need for stronger civic education programs to bridge knowledge gaps and enhance students' ability to analyze and respond to contemporary political issues (Neundorf et al., 2016).

These results highlight the importance of continuous learning and engagement in political affairs. Strengthening civic education in schools and encouraging participation in policy discussions and community activities could help students develop a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of political matters. Increasing accessibility to reliable political information through educational institutions, digital platforms, and public forums can also support the growth of politically informed and active citizens (Almond & Verba, 2020).

The findings indicate that students displayed a high level of political involvement, suggesting active participation in political activities such as elections, discussions, and advocacy. This aligns with recent studies emphasizing the role of youth engagement in strengthening

democratic processes and promoting responsible citizenship (Dioso, 2019). Research shows that when young people are politically involved, they contribute to policy discussions, influence decision-making, and help shape governance (Zhang, 2022).

One of the key aspects of political involvement among students was their engagement in electoral activities, particularly in supporting candidates and participating in campaign efforts. According to Rahman et al. (2020), election-related activities are among the most common forms of youth political participation, as they provide direct opportunities to express political preferences and advocate for leadership change. However, while students actively took part in elections, their involvement in community-based discussions and consultations was relatively lower. This reflects findings by Pike et al. (2014), who observed that young individuals often hesitate to engage in public forums due to limited awareness, lack of confidence, or skepticism about their impact on governance.

To address these challenges, civic education and public engagement initiatives should be strengthened. Studies suggest that exposure to open discussions, political forums, and participatory decision-making processes can encourage young people to be more involved beyond elections (Neundorf et al., 2016). Promoting awareness of local governance issues and providing platforms for students to voice their opinions can further enhance their participation in shaping policies and addressing societal concerns.

The findings revealed a moderately strong connection between political awareness and political involvement, suggesting that students who are more knowledgeable about political issues are also more likely to participate in civic activities. This aligns with recent studies highlighting that higher political awareness fosters greater engagement in democratic processes, such as voting, activism, and public discussions (Dioso, 2019). Research has consistently shown that an informed citizenry plays a crucial role in strengthening governance, promoting accountability, and ensuring inclusive decision-making (Rahman et al., 2020).

Educational institutions serve as key drivers of political awareness, equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary for active civic engagement. Studies emphasize that when schools incorporate civic education programs, students develop a better understanding of political systems, policies, and leadership, making them more likely to participate in governance-related activities (Neundorf et al., 2016). Furthermore, exposure to critical discussions on political issues helps students develop confidence in expressing their views and engaging in policymaking processes (Pike et al., 2014).

To enhance youth participation in politics, schools, communities, and policymakers should work together to create inclusive spaces for civic engagement. Encouraging students to take part in debates, leadership programs, and public forums can help bridge the gap between political awareness and actual involvement. Additionally, integrating digital platforms and social media as tools for political discourse can further empower young individuals to engage in civic activities and contribute to meaningful societal change (Zhang, 2022).

## **Conclusion**

The study reveals that first-year public administration students possess a strong level of political awareness, demonstrating a solid understanding of political matters, particularly the roles and responsibilities of policymakers in creating and implementing guidelines for the common good.

While their overall awareness is commendable, there is room for improvement in understanding specific political developments and initiatives.

Students also exhibit a high level of political involvement, actively engaging in activities such as campaigning for their chosen candidates during elections. However, their participation in community-focused activities, such as attending public consultations on pressing issues, is comparatively less frequent, indicating the need to encourage greater involvement in localized political discussions.

Furthermore, the study establishes a significant positive correlation between political awareness and political involvement. This finding suggests that as students' understanding of political systems and processes increases, their engagement in political activities also rises, emphasizing the importance of promoting political education to cultivate active and informed citizens.

## Recommendations

To enhance political awareness and involvement, students should actively engage with current political issues by following reliable news sources, attending political forums, and participating in discussions about governance and policies. Schools can support this by organizing debates, mock elections, and student government programs to encourage hands-on learning. Additionally, students should be encouraged to join political organizations, volunteer in community projects, and participate in local government meetings to gain firsthand experience in civic engagement.

Schools play a critical role in developing students' political awareness. To improve this, schools should incorporate political literacy into subjects such as social studies and public administration and ensure that classroom discussions include real-world political events and policy analysis. Hosting guest lectures from government officials, political analysts, and civic leaders can help students understand complex political issues. Schools should also establish student-led civic organizations that promote awareness campaigns and advocacy initiatives.

To bridge the gap between political awareness and involvement, schools should partner with local government units and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to provide students with opportunities for internships, volunteer work, and participation in public consultations. Hands-on experiences, such as attending city council meetings, engaging in policy-making workshops, and assisting in voter registration drives, can empower students to take an active role in governance.

Future researchers should explore the effectiveness of digital platforms and social media in promoting political engagement among students. Studies should examine how online discussions, digital petitions, and virtual town hall meetings influence political participation. Additionally, comparative research across different schools, regions, and educational systems could identify the best practices in civic education and suggest improvements for making political awareness programs more engaging and effective.

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