

Political Literacy in Relation to Political Engagement and Academic Performance Among Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) Officials

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between political literacy, political engagement, and academic performance among Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) officials in Ozamiz City. Utilizing a correlational research design, the study surveyed 132 SK officials enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences to assess how political knowledge influences civic participation and academic achievement. Results revealed that political literacy has a significant positive relationship with political engagement, particularly in civic participation and leadership activities. However, no significant correlation was found between political literacy and academic performance, suggesting that political awareness alone does not determine academic outcomes. These findings highlight the importance of targeted political education and leadership training to enhance youth engagement in governance, without assuming a direct academic benefit. The study offers practical insights for educational institutions, policymakers, and local government units in supporting youth development through balanced academic and civic initiatives.

Keywords: Political Literacy, Political Engagement, Academic Performance, Sangguniang Kabataan, Youth Leadership

INTRODUCTION

Political literacy is an essential element of an informed and engaged citizenry, equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills to understand political systems, policies, and societal issues while fostering the ability to critically evaluate and respond to them (Bennet, 2020). In the Philippines, with its rich democratic history and youth-oriented political structures such as the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) institutionalized under the Sangguniang Kabataan Reform Act of 2015 (Republic Act No. 10742, 2016), this competence is especially critical. The SK, established under the Local Government Code of 1991, provides a platform for young leaders aged 15 to 30 to engage in governance at the barangay level, yet varying levels of political literacy among its officials often influence their ability to fulfill their mandates effectively (Bautista et al., 2021; Perez, 2022).

Political engagement, a direct outcome of political literacy, includes activities such as voting, advocacy, and governance participation (Smith & Taylor, 2019). Among SK officials, engagement is shaped by their roles—elected officials often face higher scrutiny and accountability, while incumbents may display greater political maturity but risk complacency (Ramirez, 2023). Understanding how political literacy influences engagement across these categories is essential for evaluating youth leadership effectiveness. Despite the SK's intention to promote civic participation, challenges such as inefficiency and unpreparedness persist, underscoring the need to strengthen officials' political competencies (Bautista et al., 2021).

Balancing political responsibilities with academic obligations presents unique challenges for SK officials, who are often both students and public servants (Aber & Arathuzik, 1996; Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1999). While political involvement can enhance critical thinking, communication, and leadership skills, potentially boosting academic performance (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992; Higgins & Molesworth, 2017), the time and energy demands of governance may also lead to academic strain (Maloy & Torres, 2019). Existing studies highlight the mixed effects of extracurricular involvement, yet there is limited research on how political literacy mediates the link between political engagement and academic outcomes for SK officials specifically (Freedman, 2021; Villanueva & Santos, 2024).

Most Philippine studies on political literacy focus on broader youth groups rather than formal youth leaders, leaving a gap in understanding the complex dynamics of holding an SK position (Lundgren, 2021; Maloy & Torres, 2019). Examining elected and incumbent SK officials can provide valuable insights into how political knowledge shapes both governance effectiveness and academic performance (Collier & Mahon, 2018; Dawson & Frantz, 2022; O'Toole, 2022; Meyers & Lutz, 2018). This is particularly relevant in the country's evolving socio-political context, where youth activism on issues like climate change and social inequality is rising, and crises like the COVID-19 pandemic have underscored the importance of adaptability and resilience among leaders (Delos Santos, 2020; Bautista et al., 2021).

This study seeks to explore the relationships between political literacy, political engagement, and academic performance among SK officials, with a focus on differences between elected and incumbent leaders (Flanagan, 2018; Parker, 2018). It addresses key questions on how political literacy influences engagement, how engagement affects academic outcomes, and how these factors interact across role types (Gould & Morrow, 2017; Smith & Wills, 2021). By filling gaps in existing literature (Harris & Clayton, 2020; Freedman, 2021), this research aims to inform policies and programs that strengthen youth leadership capacity, ultimately contributing to a more informed, engaged, and capable generation of public servants prepared to navigate the socio-political challenges of the Philippines (Tavits, 2017; Norris, 2020; Klein & Cummings, 2019; Perez, 2022).

Objectives of the study

This study examined the relationship between political literacy, political engagement, and academic performance among Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) officials. Specifically, it sought to answer the following Objective;

1. Determine the respondents' of political literacy in terms of civic participation, advocacy and leadership, and electoral participation.

2. Determine the respondents' of political engagement interms of civic participation, advocacy and leadership, and electoral participation.
3. Identify the respondents' academic grades during 1st semester, SY 2024-2025.
4. Explore the significant relationship between the respondent's political level of political literacy and their political engagement.
5. Explore the significant relationship between the respondent's political level of political literacy and their academic performance

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of the Respondents' Political Literacy

Table 1 reveal that the overall political literacy of the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) officials is "high", with an overall mean of 3.2359. Political literacy, as assessed in this study, comprises three key constructs: Awareness of Political Issues, Understanding of Political Processes, and Political Communication Competence.

The highest-rated construct is Awareness of Political Issues, with a mean score of 3.2803, interpreted as "very high." This indicates that the SK officials are highly informed about ongoing political developments, such as national policies, local government concerns, and broader social issues that affect their communities. Their roles likely demand consistent engagement with political information, which may explain their elevated awareness. Regular exposure to media, involvement in community affairs, and participation in youth-oriented programs all contribute to this high level of political awareness.

Closely following is Understanding of Political Processes, which has a mean of 3.2652, also falling under the "very high" interpretation. This shows that the respondents have a substantial grasp of how political systems function, including the roles of different branches of government, law-making procedures, civic responsibilities, and the structure of local governance. This understanding is crucial for SK officials, as it enables them to carry out tasks such as drafting resolutions, proposing ordinances, and participating meaningfully in barangay council activities. Their ability to navigate these processes reflects well on their preparedness and capacity for leadership within the local government setting.

Lastly, Political Communication Competence has a mean score of 3.1621, interpreted as "high." Although slightly lower than the other two constructs, this score still indicates that SK officials possess a reasonable ability to engage in political discourse. This includes skills such as public speaking, evaluating political messages, participating in discussions on political matters, and using social media for civic communication. However, the lower score compared to the other constructs suggests that while they are competent in understanding political matters, they may need additional training in expressing their ideas clearly and persuasively, particularly in public or digital forums.

Taken together, the data reflect that SK officials are politically literate, particularly in their knowledge of political issues and processes. However, to fully leverage their literacy for leadership and advocacy, there is a need to strengthen their political communication skills, as an essential area for development in order to maximize their effectiveness as youth leaders in governance.

Table 1

Level of Political Literacy**(n=132)**

Level of the Respondents' Political Literacy	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Awareness of Political Issues (AP)	3.2803	.43448	Very High
Understanding of Political Processes (UP)	3.2652	.40681	Very High
Political Communication Competence (PC)	3.1621	.40990	High
Overall	3.2359	.41706	High

Interpretation: 3.25 - 4.0 - Very High; 2.5 - 3.24 - High; 1.75 - 2.49 - Low; 1.0 - 1.74 - Very Low

Level of the Respondents' Political Engagement

Table 2 shows the level of respondents' political engagement, the data show that SK officials actively participate in political and civic processes. The mean score for Civic Participation was 3.1212 with a standard deviation of 0.46397, interpreted as "High." This means that most respondents are involved in organizing and attending community-based activities such as outreach programs, seminars, and barangay assemblies. These engagements are significant as they reflect the youth's commitment to public service and social responsibility. Nonetheless, the score, while high, suggests that not all respondents may be equally involved, possibly due to time constraints or institutional limitations.

The indicator Advocacy and Leadership yielded a mean of 3.2492 and a standard deviation of 0.45909, also interpreted as "High" and bordering on "Very High." This result reveals that SK officials are generally assertive in initiating projects and campaigns that address youth issues. They are likely to take leadership roles in addressing concerns such as education, health, and environmental sustainability. The high score reflects the empowering aspect of SK leadership, which nurtures civic responsibility and prepares young people to take on future political or administrative positions. These findings support the claim by Smith and Wills (2021) that exposure to leadership opportunities significantly enhances political maturity and personal growth among youth leaders.

On the other hand, Electoral Participation scored a mean of 3.0712 with a standard deviation of 0.44353, also within the "High" range but the lowest among the three indicators. This suggests that SK officials participate in activities related to the electoral process, such as voter education, campaigning, and discussing political platforms, albeit to a lesser extent compared to civic activities and advocacy. This may reflect a general perception that electoral politics remains dominated by older or more experienced actors, or perhaps a lack of emphasis on youth involvement in elections. Encouraging broader participation in the electoral process may strengthen democratic values among young leaders and improve political efficacy.

The overall mean for political engagement was calculated to be 3.1472, interpreted as "High." This indicates that SK officials are not merely passive recipients of political knowledge but are applying what they know through active involvement in community affairs. However, their lower level of electoral participation compared to other dimensions of engagement may warrant additional focus, particularly through institutional efforts to promote youth involvement in voting-related education and electoral reforms.

Table 2

Level of the Respondents' Political Engagement

Level of Political Engagement		Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Civil Participation (CP)		3.1212	.46397	High
Advocacy and Leadership (AL)		3.2492	.45909	High

Electoral Participation (EP)	3.0712	.44353	High
Overall	3.1472	.45553	High

Interpretation: 3.25 - 4.0 - Very High; 2.5 - 3.24 - High; 1.75 - 2.49 - Low; 1.0 - 1.74 - Very Low

Respondents' Academic Performance

Table 3 presents the respondents' academic performance of SK officials based on their General Weighted Average (GWA) during the first semester of the school year 2024–2025. The results show a mean score of **2.0833** with a standard deviation of **0.44833**, which falls under the interpretation of "**Low**" based on the study's scoring scale. This finding indicates that the SK officials, on average, are performing below high academic standards while managing their responsibilities as youth leaders. The low academic performance may be attributed to the challenges of balancing academic obligations with the demands of public service, including planning community projects, attending barangay sessions, and participating in governance-related activities. This supports the Role Strain Theory, which suggests that individuals handling multiple roles may struggle to meet the expectations of each, often resulting in compromised performance. The relatively moderate standard deviation also suggests that while some SK officials manage to perform better academically, others may be experiencing significant academic difficulty. These findings highlight the importance of institutional support from schools and local government units through academic advising, time management workshops, and flexible learning arrangements to help SK officials fulfill both their academic and civic duties more effectively.

Table 3

Respondents' Academic Performance

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Respondents' Academic Performance	2.0833	.44833	Low

Interpretation: 3.25 - 4.0 - Very High; 2.5 - 3.24 - High; 1.75 - 2.49 - Low; 1.0 - 1.74 - Very Low

Relationship between Political Literacy and Political Engagement

Table 4 presents a very high level of significant relationship between political literacy and political engagement among Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) officials. With a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.591$ and a p-value of 0.000, the statistical result shows a strong and meaningful positive correlation. This means that SK officials who demonstrate higher levels of political knowledge also tend to be more actively involved in various forms of civic and political participation. Individuals who are politically literate are more likely to take initiative in organizing youth programs, advocating for community issues, leading projects, and participating in electoral activities. The strength of this relationship highlights that political literacy does not merely represent theoretical knowledge, but directly influences how young leaders act and contribute to governance.

This significant correlation supports the core idea of the Civic Voluntarism Model (Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995), which emphasizes that knowledge and psychological engagement are crucial drivers of participation in democratic activities. When SK officials understand how the political system works and are aware of societal issues, they are more confident and motivated to take part in governance-related responsibilities. Political literacy provides them with the framework to interpret current events, evaluate policies, and communicate effectively with both peers and constituents, thereby strengthening their role as active stakeholders in local development.

Moreover, this relationship underscores the practical importance of integrating political education into youth leadership training. The ability to engage meaningfully in civic life depends largely on how well-equipped youth leaders are in understanding political structures, recognizing civic responsibilities, and utilizing communication strategies to promote transparency, inclusivity, and accountability. Political literacy enables SK officials not only to function within the system but also to influence it positively.

As such, local government units, educational institutions, and youth-serving organizations are encouraged to institutionalize programs that foster political awareness and civic competence. This may include seminars, workshops, leadership boot camps, or mentorship programs that focus on strengthening the capacity of young leaders to understand and navigate political realities. Enhancing political literacy at the grassroots level is a strategic move toward building a more informed, engaged, and participatory youth sector—one that can meaningfully contribute to democratic governance and nation-building. The strong relationship demonstrated in this context affirms that political literacy is a cornerstone of effective and sustained youth political engagement.

Table 4

Relationship between Political Literacy and Political Engagement

Variables	R-value	P-value	Conclusion
Political Literacy	.591	.000	Significant
Political Engagement	.591	.000	Significant

Note: SIGNIFICANT CORRELATION. (p-value is $0.000 < 0.05$)

Legend: 0.00 - 0.05 - Significant: above 0.05 - Not Significant

Relationship between Political Literacy and Academic Performance

Table 5 presents the relationship between political literacy and academic performance among Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) officials. Based on the Pearson correlation analysis, the results show an r-value of -0.012 and a p-value of 0.893. These values indicate that there is no significant relationship between political literacy and academic performance, as the p-value is greater than the standard significance level of 0.05.

This means that the level of political literacy demonstrated by the respondents, including their knowledge of political issues, understanding of government processes, and ability to communicate political ideas, does not have a measurable impact on their academic performance, particularly their

general weighted average (GWA). Whether a student-leader is highly politically literate or not, this does not necessarily translate to better or poorer academic achievement.

From a theoretical standpoint, this result is supported by Goode's Role Strain Theory (1960), which explains that individuals managing multiple demanding roles may experience tension that affects their ability to perform effectively in all areas. SK officials often juggle responsibilities as both students and youth leaders, and the demands of public service may create conflicts with their academic obligations. Furthermore, according to Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986), human behavior is influenced by a dynamic interaction of personal, environmental, and behavioral factors. For instance, Delos Reyes and Navarro (2022) noted that while political involvement can develop critical life skills, it does not always lead to academic improvement. Similarly, Santos and Villanueva (2023) observed that some student-leaders perform well academically, while others struggle, emphasizing that academic outcomes are influenced by a complex range of factors beyond political awareness or civic involvement. The results indicate that political literacy and academic performance operate independently in the context of SK officials. While being politically literate may contribute to more effective leadership and governance, it does not inherently improve or impair academic outcomes.

Table 5

Relationship between Political Literacy and Academic Performance

Variables	R-value	P-value	Conclusion
Political Literacy	-.012	.893	Not Significant
Academic Performance	-.012	.893	Not Significant

Note: NO SIGNIFICANT CORRELATION. (p-value is 0.893 > 0.05)

Legend: 0.00 - 0.05 - Significant: above 0.05 - Not Significant

Conclusions

Based on the findings, it is concluded that SK officials demonstrate a commendably high level of political literacy, with very strong awareness of political issues and processes, though their political communication skills, while still high, may benefit from further enhancement. Their political engagement is also notably high, particularly in civic participation and leadership, although electoral participation shows room for improvement. Despite their active involvement in political and community affairs, the SK officials maintain very high academic performance, indicating their ability to balance leadership responsibilities with academic demands. Furthermore, the significant relationship between political literacy and political engagement highlights the role of knowledge and awareness in fostering active participation, while the absence of a significant relationship between political literacy and academic performance suggests that political knowledge does not necessarily influence academic achievement.

Recommendations

A collaborative effort among government agencies, educational institutions, and youth organizations should be undertaken to institutionalize comprehensive political literacy and leadership development programs that integrate civic engagement into academic and extracurricular activities, provide supportive systems for balancing dual roles, and address the long-term personal, emotional, and professional growth of student-leaders.

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