

Civic Consciousness and Engagement of College Students

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ABSTRACT

This study determined the level of civic consciousness and civic engagement of college students in Kalibo, Aklan, and examined the relationship between the two constructs during School Year 2025-2026. A survey-correlational design was employed involving 374 college students selected through stratified random sampling from seven higher education institutions with a combined population of 13,250 students. Data were gathered using an adopted and modified 20-item Civic Consciousness Questionnaire and a 28-item Civic Engagement Questionnaire. The instruments were pilot-tested, yielding Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .909 and .739, respectively. Mean and standard deviation were used to describe the variables, while Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to test their relationship at the .05 level of significance. Results showed that

students had a Very High level of civic consciousness ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.49$) and a high level of civic engagement ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.58$). Civic consciousness and civic engagement were strongly and positively related ($r = .759$, $p < .001$), indicating that students who were more aware of their civic roles, responsibilities, and social concerns also tended to report greater participation in community and civic activities. The findings support the Civic Voluntarism perspective that psychological engagement and civic resources are associated with participation. The study highlights the importance of sustaining civic education, service-learning, leadership development, community partnerships, and opportunities for meaningful student participation in higher education.

Keywords: *civic consciousness, civic engagement, college students, civic education, service-learning, civic voluntarism*

INTRODUCTION

Higher education has an important role in preparing students not only for professional work but also for responsible participation in democratic and community life. Civic consciousness refers to awareness of one's rights, duties, responsibilities, and relationship to the wider community, while civic engagement involves concrete participation in activities intended to contribute to the public good. In the Philippine setting, this developmental responsibility is reinforced by the National Service Training Program, which explicitly promotes civic consciousness and youth participation in nation-building (Republic Act No. 9163, 2002).

Civic consciousness and engagement are related but distinct. Students may understand social issues, laws, and civic responsibilities without consistently translating such awareness into volunteering, community participation, advocacy, or other forms of civic action. Ng (2015) emphasized that civic consciousness can be assessed as a multidimensional construct within the National Service Training Program, while Doolittle and Faul (2013) demonstrated that civic engagement includes both attitudes and observable behaviors. The distinction makes it important to examine whether stronger civic awareness is actually associated with greater participation.

Recent studies show that civic involvement among young people is shaped by education, social environment, access to opportunities, political awareness, and personal motivation. College students can

participate through traditional civic activities, community service, digital engagement, advocacy, or institutional programs (Kornbluh et al., 2022; Satter et al., 2021). Philippine research similarly indicates that political awareness and civic consciousness are positively associated with community engagement among students (Landig & Landig, 2024), while community-based activities can support active and responsible citizenship (Paras, 2025).

Despite the presence of civic-oriented programs, the source thesis identified a local need to determine the actual level of civic consciousness and engagement among college students in Kalibo, Aklan. Seven higher education institutions serve students from different courses and year levels, yet institution-specific evidence concerning the relationship between civic awareness and participation remained limited. This gap is important because strong civic knowledge does not necessarily guarantee sustained involvement, and institutions need empirical evidence to design programs that connect awareness with meaningful participation.

Accordingly, the study assessed the level of civic consciousness and civic engagement among college students in Kalibo, Aklan and determined whether a significant relationship existed between the two variables. The findings were intended to provide a basis for strengthening civic education, service-learning, community partnerships, leadership activities, and other institutional initiatives that encourage students to become informed, responsible, and active citizens.

Literature Review

Civic Consciousness in Higher Education

Civic consciousness encompasses awareness of civic rights and obligations, knowledge of social issues, concern for public welfare, respect for laws and institutions, and a sense of responsibility toward one's community. Ng (2015) developed the Scale on Civic Consciousness for the National Service Training Program and emphasized that civic consciousness can be cultivated and measured among college students. In the Philippine context, this construct is closely linked with the nation-building and service orientation promoted through NSTP under Republic Act No. 9163 (2002).

Civic consciousness is strengthened when education provides opportunities to connect knowledge with social realities. Service-learning is particularly relevant because it links academic learning with community participation and reflection. Ruiz-Ordóñez et al. (2020) demonstrated the importance of civic attitudes and sustainable-development values in service-learning, while Saban (2018) found that NSTP service-learning exposure could awaken awareness of community needs and civic responsibility. These perspectives position civic consciousness as a developable disposition rather than a fixed personal trait.

International and local evidence also indicates that civic awareness is influenced by educational exposure, critical reflection, and social context. Ajaps and Obiagu (2020) argued that civic education can be strengthened through critical consciousness and attention to the social factors shaping participation. Among Filipino students, Landig and Landig (2024) reported a highly positive relationship between political awareness, civic consciousness, and community engagement, suggesting that informed awareness can provide an important foundation for civic action.

Civic Engagement and Youth Participation

Civic engagement refers to active participation in social, community, and political processes intended to improve collective well-being. Doolittle and Faul (2013) conceptualized civic engagement through both attitudes and behaviors, recognizing that a person's sense of responsibility may be expressed through volunteering, helping community members, staying informed, or participating in public life. Civic engagement therefore extends beyond voting and formal politics.

Young people's civic behavior is increasingly diverse. Kornbluh et al. (2022) showed that college students participate in distinct forms of civic behavior shaped by civic beliefs and social conditions. Satter et al. (2021) likewise demonstrated that online and offline engagement can be influenced by social presence, commitment, and

motivational factors. These findings are relevant to contemporary college students because civic participation may occur through community programs, campus organizations, social media, advocacy, and digital networks.

Philippine studies reinforce the developmental importance of youth participation. Castillo et al. (2023) documented civic engagement among out-of-school youth across traditional and digital settings, while Mabazza et al. (2025) reported high awareness and engagement in local community activities among private senior high school students. Paras (2025) similarly emphasized the role of co-curricular, extracurricular, and barangay activities in promoting active and responsible citizenship.

Civic Education, Service-Learning, and Institutional Support

Educational institutions shape civic development by creating structured opportunities for students to learn about public issues and participate in community life. Maulana and Milanti (2023) identified experiential and project-based approaches as important directions for civic-engagement programs within citizenship education. Such approaches move civic education beyond abstract discussion by allowing students to apply knowledge to real social concerns.

Service-learning is especially useful because it combines academic objectives, community service, and reflection. Ruiz-Ordóñez et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of civic attitudes in service-learning, while Saban (2018) showed how community-oriented NSTP experiences can contribute to civic consciousness. More broadly, civic interventions can strengthen empowerment, participation, and community-level action when participants are provided with meaningful roles and support (Martini et al., 2023; Seguin-Fowler et al., 2022).

Institutional support is therefore essential for converting awareness into sustained engagement. Students require accessible programs, partnerships with community organizations, leadership opportunities, and guidance that connects civic participation with academic and personal development. These supports are particularly important when students face competing academic, financial, and social demands that may limit regular involvement despite strong civic values.

Civic Voluntarism Theory and the Consciousness-Engagement Link

The study was anchored on Civic Voluntarism Theory, which explains participation through resources, psychological engagement, and recruitment or mobilization through social networks (Verba et al., 1995). Individuals are more likely to participate when they possess the time, skills, and resources needed for civic action; when they are interested in and psychologically connected to public concerns; and when they are invited or mobilized through social relationships.

Applied to college students, civic consciousness represents an important component of psychological engagement because awareness of civic roles and social issues can strengthen interest, efficacy, responsibility, and willingness to participate. At the same time, participation depends on opportunities and resources. This explains why high civic consciousness may be associated with, but not identical to, civic engagement.

The framework therefore treated civic consciousness as the independent variable and civic engagement of college students as the dependent variable. The model tested whether greater awareness and understanding of civic responsibility were associated with greater participation in community and civic activities. Figure 1 presents this relationship as it appeared in the source thesis.

Figure 1. *Engagement of College Students as Influenced by Their Civic Consciousness*

Conceptual Framework

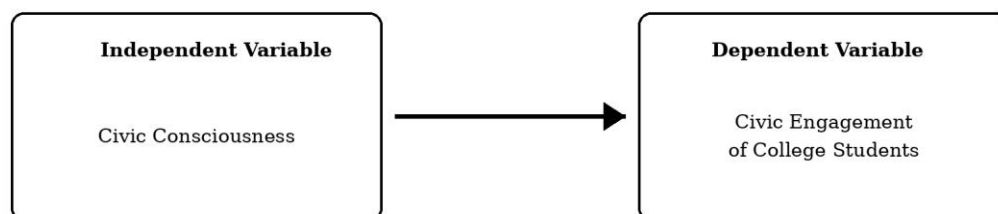


Figure 1. *Engagement of College Students as Influenced by Their Civic Consciousness*

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a survey-correlational research design. The survey component described the civic consciousness and civic engagement of college students at a particular point in time, while the correlational component tested whether the two variables were significantly related. Civic consciousness was treated as the independent variable and civic engagement as the dependent variable.

Research Locale

The study was conducted among college students in Kalibo, Aklan during School Year 2025-2026. Participants were drawn from Aklan State University, Aklan Catholic College, Garcia College of Technology, Northwestern Visayan College, STI College, Aklan Polytechnic College, and Saint Gabriel College.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The study included 374 college students selected through stratified random sampling from a combined population of 13,250. The sample consisted of 90 students from Aklan State University, 43 from Aklan Catholic College, 34 from Garcia College of Technology, 65 from Northwestern Visayan College, 20 from STI College, 62 from Aklan Polytechnic College, and 60 from Saint Gabriel College. Participants represented different courses and year levels.

Table 1. *Distribution of Participants by Institution*

Institution	Population	Sample
Aklan State University	3,199	90
Aklan Catholic College	1,535	43
Garcia College of Technology	1,200	34
Northwestern Visayan College	2,300	65
STI College	678	20
Aklan Polytechnic College	2,198	62
Saint Gabriel College	2,140	60
Total	13,250	374

Research Instrument

Two adopted and modified instruments were used. Civic consciousness was measured using a 20-item questionnaire based on Ng's Scale on Civic Consciousness for the National Service Training Program, while civic engagement was measured using a 28-item questionnaire adapted from the Civic Engagement Scale of Doolittle

and Faul (2013). Both instruments used a five-point response format from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always), with mean scores interpreted from Very Low to Very High.

The instruments were pilot-tested with 30 students who were not part of the final sample. The source thesis reported a Cronbach's alpha of .909 for the Civic Consciousness Questionnaire and .739 for the Civic Engagement Questionnaire. These coefficients were used in the thesis as evidence of acceptable reliability for the study.

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained permission from the Dean of the Graduate School of Filamer Christian University and from administrators of the participating colleges. Students were informed about the purpose of the research and their voluntary participation. The questionnaires were personally administered during face-to-face classes, with schedules arranged to avoid class conflicts. Participants were given approximately one hour to complete the instruments, after which the questionnaires were retrieved, checked, encoded, and processed using SPSS.

Data Analysis

Mean and standard deviation were used to describe civic consciousness and civic engagement. Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to determine the relationship between the two variables at the .05 level of significance. Although the methodology chapter also listed one-way ANOVA among the planned inferential procedures, the reported results addressing the stated research questions presented Pearson's *r* as the inferential analysis of the relationship between civic consciousness and civic engagement.

Ethical Consideration

Participation was voluntary and informed consent was secured. The researcher sought authorization from the participating institutions and assured students that their responses would be used only for academic research. Confidentiality and data privacy were observed during questionnaire administration, data processing, and reporting.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of Civic Consciousness

College students demonstrated a Very High level of civic consciousness, with an overall mean of 4.25 and a standard deviation of 0.49. The finding indicates strong awareness of social responsibilities, community issues, civic roles, and the importance of participating responsibly in society.

Table 2. *Level of Civic Consciousness of College Students*

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Civic Consciousness	4.25	0.49	Very High

This result is consistent with the developmental role of civic education in higher education. Ng (2015) emphasized that civic consciousness can be intentionally developed through NSTP-related learning, while Saban (2018) showed that service-learning exposure can heighten awareness of community needs and responsibility. The finding also parallels Landig and Landig (2024), who reported strong civic consciousness among students in relation to political awareness and community engagement.

Level of Civic Engagement

The overall level of civic engagement was High, with a mean of 3.97 and a standard deviation of 0.58. The result indicates that students generally participated in community-related activities, civic initiatives, volunteer efforts, and other forms of social involvement, although the level of participation was not as consistently high as their civic consciousness.

Table 3. *Level of Civic Engagement of College Students*

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Civic Engagement	3.97	0.58	High

The slightly lower engagement mean compared with civic consciousness suggests a modest awareness-action gap: students may strongly understand their civic responsibilities while participating somewhat less consistently in organized activities. This pattern is compatible with research showing that youth engagement is influenced by opportunities, motivation, resources, social networks, and institutional support (Ajaps & Obiagu, 2020; Kornbluh et al., 2022). Philippine studies likewise show that students participate more actively when schools and communities provide meaningful avenues for involvement (Mabazza et al., 2025; Paras, 2025).

Relationship Between Civic Consciousness and Civic Engagement

Pearson correlation analysis showed a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between civic consciousness and civic engagement, $r = .759$, $p < .001$. The null hypothesis of no significant relationship was therefore rejected. The result indicates that higher civic consciousness was associated with higher levels of civic engagement among the 374 college students.

Table 4. *Relationship Between Civic Consciousness and Civic Engagement*

Variables	r	p	Decision
Civic Consciousness and Civic Engagement	.759	< .001	Significant

The relationship supports the study's theoretical framework. Civic Voluntarism Theory proposes that participation is encouraged when individuals possess civic resources, psychological engagement, and mobilizing social networks (Verba et al., 1995). In this study, students who were more aware of their social roles and responsibilities were also more likely to participate in civic and community activities. This result is consistent with Landig and Landig (2024), who found a highly positive relationship among political awareness, civic consciousness, and community engagement.

The result also has practical implications for higher education. Strengthening awareness alone remains important, but institutions can increase the likelihood that awareness becomes action by providing service-learning, leadership activities, community partnerships, volunteer programs, and structured opportunities for participation. Evidence from citizenship-education and civic-engagement research shows that experiential opportunities can reinforce civic knowledge, attitudes, and action (Maulana & Milanti, 2023; Martini et al., 2023; Seguin-Fowler et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

College students in Kalibo, Aklan demonstrated a very high level of civic consciousness and a high level of civic engagement. The findings indicate that the students were generally aware of their civic responsibilities, social issues, and roles as members of society and that they also participated in community and civic activities to a substantial degree.

Civic consciousness was strongly and positively related to civic engagement. Thus, students who possessed stronger awareness of civic duties and community concerns also tended to report greater participation in civic activities. The study contributes local evidence that civic awareness and civic action are closely connected among college students and supports the continued development of higher-education programs that combine civic knowledge with meaningful opportunities for participation.

Recommendation

College students should continue participating in community programs, volunteer initiatives, civic organizations, and other activities that allow them to apply civic knowledge and social responsibility in practical settings. They should also remain informed about social issues and exercise responsible citizenship inside and outside the university.

Teachers should integrate civic education, service-learning, community-based activities, reflective tasks, and discussions of social issues into appropriate courses. Learning experiences should encourage critical thinking and connect classroom content with real community needs.

School administrators should sustain leadership training, outreach programs, extension activities, and partnerships with local government units and non-government organizations. Institutional policies may also encourage sustained student participation and recognize meaningful civic involvement.

Future researchers may examine additional predictors of civic consciousness and civic engagement, compare students across institutions or demographic groups, and use qualitative or longitudinal designs to explore how civic awareness develops into sustained participation over time.

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