

Social Media Exposure and its Implication for Humanities and Social Sciences Students' Historical Thinking and Political-Civic Understanding: Springboard For Infographics Development

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Article History:

Date Received: May 5, 2026

Date Revised: May 15, 2026

Date Accepted: May 22, 2026

Date Published: June 20, 2026

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20768568>

Document ID: 2026IJROMS0080

Recommended Citation:

Ayson, G. E., & Gallego, M. G. O. (2026). Social Media Exposure and its Implication for Humanities and Social Sciences Students' Historical Thinking and Political-Civic Understanding: Springboard For Infographics Development. International Journal of Research on Multidisciplinary Studies, 1(5), 153–162.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20768568>

Abstract. Social media has become one of the most influential sources of information among students today, shaping how they access, interpret, and engage with historical and political content. As digital platforms increasingly function as channels for news, opinions, and historical narratives, it is essential to examine their influence on learners' analytical and civic competencies. In this context, the study investigated the extent of social media exposure and its relationship to the historical thinking skills and political-civic understanding of Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) students. A quantitative correlational research design was employed, involving Grade 12 HUMSS students from four selected secondary schools in Isulan. Data were gathered using a structured survey questionnaire measuring respondents' social media exposure, historical thinking skills, and political-civic understanding. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used to analyze the data. Findings revealed that HUMSS students had a moderate level of social media exposure, with variations in platform usage, content engagement, and frequency of access. In terms of historical thinking, respondents demonstrated a high level of competence, particularly in source evaluation, interpretation of historical information, and contextual understanding. Likewise, political-civic understanding was found to be high, reflecting strong awareness of democratic processes, civic responsibilities, and political knowledge. Furthermore, the results indicated statistically significant positive relationships between social media exposure and both historical thinking skills and political-civic understanding. These findings suggest that increased exposure to digital content may contribute to enhanced cognitive engagement in historical and civic domains when guided critically. Based on these results, the study recommends the implementation of structured media literacy programs, integration of critical digital activities in social studies instruction, and the development of interactive civic education strategies to strengthen students' engagement with historical and political information.

Keywords: Historical Thinking Skills; HUMSS Students; Media Literacy; Political Awareness; Social Media Exposure

Introduction

In the digital age, social media has become a dominant source of information, reshaping how individuals access, interpret, and share content through platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter). While these platforms promote connectivity and rapid information exchange, they also contribute to the widespread circulation of misinformation, fake news, and AI-generated content that may distort historical and political realities.

Globally, scholars and educators have raised concerns regarding the cognitive and civic implications of exposure to unverified online information, particularly among young people who are highly active digital users. Continuous exposure to misleading content may weaken critical thinking skills, distort historical understanding, and influence democratic engagement. In response, several educational systems have integrated media literacy, digital citizenship, and critical thinking into their curricula to strengthen learners' ability to evaluate and verify information critically (Bradshaw & Howard, 2019; Lewandowsky et al., 2020).

In the Philippine context, similar concerns continue to emerge as students increasingly rely on social media as a primary source of historical and political information despite the prevalence of unverified and misleading content (Philippine News Agency, 2025). This became particularly evident during the 2022 national elections, when digital platforms were widely used to circulate distorted historical narratives and political claims that influenced youth perceptions and civic attitudes (Chi & Chua, 2025). Beyond political events, misinformation related to governance, public accountability, and national issues has also become widespread, complicating public understanding and civic engagement (Associated Press, 2025).

Although initiatives such as Media and Information Literacy (MIL) programs have been implemented, existing studies largely focus on social media usage, misinformation exposure, or general media literacy. Limited research has specifically examined how social media exposure relates to students' historical thinking and political-civic understanding, particularly among Senior High School Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) students in the Philippine educational setting. Moreover, few local studies have explored these variables simultaneously within the context of secondary education in provincial communities such as Isulan.

This gap is significant because HUMSS students are expected to develop analytical thinking, civic awareness, and informed judgment as part of their academic preparation. However, frequent exposure to unverified historical and political content without sufficient critical evaluation strategies may increase students' vulnerability to misinformation and weaken their ability to assess the credibility and context of online information. This study investigates the extent of social media exposure and its relationship to HUMSS students' historical thinking and political-civic understanding. Specifically, the study contributes to existing literature by examining the interconnected influence of digital exposure on both historical reasoning and civic understanding within a localized Philippine senior high school context. The findings of the study may provide insights for educators, schools, and curriculum developers in strengthening media literacy instruction and promoting critical engagement with digital information.

Research Questions

This study aimed to determine the social media exposure and its implication for Humanities and Social Sciences students' historical thinking and political-civic understanding.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following question;

1. What is the extent of exposure of HUMSS students to social media platforms in terms of:
 - 1.1 Frequency of use;
 - 1.2 Platform exposure;
 - 1.3 Content engagement; and
 - 1.4 Source reliance?
2. What is the level of perception on Philippine historical thinking of HUMSS students in terms of:
 - 2.1 Sourcing of information;
 - 2.2 Contextualization;
 - 2.3 Corroboration; and
 - 2.4 Critical evaluation of historical content?
3. What is the level of perception on Philippine political-civic understanding of HUMSS students in terms of:
 - 3.1 Political Knowledge;
 - 3.2 Understanding of democratic processes; and
 - 3.3 Awareness of civic responsibilities?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the social media exposure and the level of perception of HUMSS students on Philippine historical thinking?
5. Is there a significant relationship between social media exposure and the level of perception of HUMSS students on Philippine political-civic understanding?
6. What infographic material can be developed to help Humanities and Social Sciences students critically evaluate historical and political information encountered on social media?

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study examined the social media exposure and its implications on Philippine historical thinking and political-civic understanding among Grade 12 students enrolled in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand in public secondary schools in Isulan for School Year 2025–2026. It specifically focused on students' extent of social media exposure in terms of frequency of use, platforms accessed, engagement with content, and reliance on social media as a source of historical and political information. In addition, the study assessed students' historical thinking skills in terms of sourcing, contextualization, corroboration, and critical

evaluation of information, as well as their political-civic understanding in terms of political knowledge, awareness of democratic processes, and civic responsibilities.

Literature Review

Social Media Exposure

In the digital age, social media has become an essential part of students' daily lives, serving not only as a platform for communication and entertainment but also as a major source of historical, political, and civic information. Platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram influence how learners access, interpret, and share information through interactive and participatory digital environments (Sivakumar et al., 2023). Exposure to diverse online content allows students to encounter multiple perspectives that shape their understanding of social and political realities (Pang, 2025). However, the increasing accessibility of online information also raises concerns regarding misinformation, fake news, and unverified content. Consequently, organizations such as UNESCO emphasize the importance of strengthening media and information literacy to help learners critically evaluate digital information and engage responsibly in online environments.

Perception on Historical Thinking

Historical thinking refers to the ability to analyze, interpret, and evaluate historical information using skills such as sourcing, contextualization, corroboration, and critical evaluation. These competencies are increasingly important in the digital age, where learners are frequently exposed to fragmented and rapidly circulating online information. Studies show that students with limited sourcing skills are more likely to accept online claims without verification, while explicit instruction in source evaluation improves their ability to assess credibility (McGrew et al., 2018; Breakstone et al., 2021). Similarly, contextualization enables students to understand events within broader social and historical contexts, reducing the risk of distorted interpretations (Nokes, 2020). Corroboration also strengthens historical reasoning by encouraging learners to compare multiple sources and identify inconsistencies or bias (Wineburg et al., 2018). Furthermore, critical evaluation helps students assess credibility, evidence, and reliability, particularly in online environments where misleading information is widespread (McGrew et al., 2020).

Political-Civic Understanding

Political-civic understanding refers to students' knowledge and awareness of governance, democratic processes, political issues, and civic responsibilities. Research suggests that students who are regularly exposed to political and civic content through digital media often demonstrate higher levels of political awareness and engagement (Kahne et al., 2018). Digital platforms may also support civic learning by providing access to discussions, simulations, and current events related to governance and public participation (Department of Education, 2022). However, reliance on social media as a primary information source may also increase vulnerability to misinformation and biased political content. Studies further emphasize that effective civic education should not only encourage participation but also develop learners' critical evaluation skills to help them assess the credibility of political information encountered online (Bowyer & Kahne, 2020; Breakstone et al., 2021). Overall, existing literature suggests that social media significantly influences how students engage with historical and political information. However, students' ability to interpret and evaluate digital content depends largely on their historical thinking skills and political-civic understanding. While social media may enhance access to information and civic engagement, exposure to unverified content may also contribute to misinformation when critical evaluation skills are insufficient. These studies highlight the importance of strengthening learners' analytical competencies and media literacy in navigating digital information environments.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the extent of students' social media exposure and its relationship with their perception of Philippine historical thinking and political-civic understanding among Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) students in Isulan. The descriptive component was used to characterize the level and nature of social media exposure, including frequency of use, platforms accessed, content engagement, and reliance on social media as a source of historical and political information, as well as to describe students' historical thinking skills and political-civic understanding in terms of their key dimensions. The correlational component was applied to determine the degree of association among these variables without establishing causation, particularly between social media exposure and

students' historical thinking and political-civic understanding. This design is appropriate for identifying patterns of relationships among variables in educational settings where experimental manipulation is neither feasible nor ethical (Creswell & Creswell, 2021; Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2020).

Sampling Design

This study utilized stratified random sampling to select respondents. The total population of HUMSS students across the four selected public secondary schools in Isulan consisted of 401 Grade 12 students. Using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error, the sample size was determined to be 132 students. This method ensured proportional representation across schools, reduced sampling bias, and provided a balanced perspective of HUMSS students' exposure to social media as a source of historical and political information and their perception of historical thinking. The use of stratified random sampling was appropriate for this study because it ensured that both larger and smaller schools were adequately represented, minimized sampling bias, and enhanced the generalizability of the findings.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in the municipality of Isulan, the provincial capital of Sultan Kudarat in the SOCCSKSARGEN region of the Philippines. Based on Philippine Statistics Authority (2024) data, Isulan recorded the highest public senior high school enrollment in the province, indicating a substantial population of senior high school learners in its public secondary schools and supporting the feasibility of obtaining an adequate and meaningful sample for the study. The municipality hosts several public secondary schools, including Sultan Ali Akbar Senenggayon National High School, Laguilayan National High School, Bambad National High School, and Isulan National High School, which provided a diverse educational context for accessing Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) students from varying socio-cultural backgrounds. This diversity allowed for variability in students' social media exposure and educational experiences relevant to the study variables. As a growing educational center with robust student enrollment, Isulan served as an appropriate locale for examining the relationship between social media exposure and students' perception of historical thinking and political-civic understanding.

Research Participants

The respondents of this study were 132 Grade 12 students enrolled in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand from four public secondary schools in the municipality of Isulan, Sultan Kudarat. From a total population of 401 HUMSS students, the sample was determined using stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation across schools. This approach ensured that larger schools contributed a greater number of respondents while smaller schools remained adequately represented, thereby providing a balanced and representative view of students' experiences and perceptions within the HUMSS strand. Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents across the selected schools. Grade 12 HUMSS students were chosen as respondents because the strand is designed to develop competencies in historical thinking and political-civic understanding through specialized subjects such as history, political science, sociology, and related social science disciplines.

Research Instrument

The research instrument used in this study was a researcher-made questionnaire designed to measure the respondents' demographic profile, social media exposure, historical thinking skills, and political-civic understanding. The questionnaire was developed through an extensive review of related literature and studies to ensure alignment with the study's theoretical framework and research objectives. Indicators for each variable were identified and adapted from established studies on social media use, historical thinking, and civic literacy, and were then contextualized to fit the Senior High School HUMSS setting. The instrument consisted of four parts. The first part gathered demographic information such as school affiliation, grade level, age, sex, and commonly used social media platforms to describe the respondents' profile. The second part measured social media exposure in terms of frequency of use, platform engagement, content interaction, and reliance on social media as a source of historical and political information using a Likert scale. The third part assessed historical thinking skills, specifically sourcing, contextualization, corroboration, and critical evaluation of historical content encountered on social media. The fourth part measured political-civic understanding in terms of knowledge of political issues, understanding of democratic processes, and awareness of civic responsibilities, also using a Likert scale. To establish content validity, the instrument was reviewed and validated by a panel of six experts in the fields of social science, education, and research methodology. Their feedback was used to refine the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the items. In addition to expert validation, the questionnaire was pilot tested on a similar group of respondents to assess reliability and internal

consistency. The results showed strong reliability coefficients, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.94 for social media exposure, 0.89 for historical thinking skills, and 0.90 for political-civic understanding, all exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70. For data analysis, descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to determine the level of social media exposure, historical thinking skills, and political-civic understanding among respondents. To determine the relationship among the variables, Spearman rank-order correlation (Spearman rho) was used, as the data were ordinal in nature and derived from Likert-scale responses. This non-parametric test was appropriate for assessing the strength and direction of association among the variables without requiring assumptions of normality. The level of significance was set at 0.05.

Data Gathering Procedure

The study followed a systematic data-gathering procedure to ensure the accuracy, reliability, and ethical integrity of the research. Prior to data collection, approval to conduct the study was obtained from the Dean of the Graduate School. The research instrument was then developed and validated to ensure that it appropriately measured students' social media exposure, perception of historical thinking, and political-civic understanding. Permission to conduct the study was secured from the Schools Division Superintendent of Sultan Kudarat and the principals of the selected schools, namely Laguilaayan National High School, Bambad National High School, and Isulan National High School. Ethical protocols were strictly observed through the acquisition of parental consent and student assent prior to participation. Respondents were oriented on the objectives and significance of the study, as well as the proper completion of the questionnaire. After the orientation, the survey instruments were administered and subsequently retrieved for data analysis.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1: What is the extent of exposure of HUMSS students to social media platforms in terms of frequency of use, platform exposure, content engagement, and source reliance?

Table 1. Summary Level of Exposure of HUMSS Students to Social Media Platforms.

Indicator		Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1.	Frequency of Use	3.58	0.61	Agree
2.	Platform Exposure	3.20	0.69	Neutral
3.	Content Engagement	3.04	0.78	Neutral
4.	Source Reliance	3.47	0.64	Agree
Section Mean		3.32	0.68	Neutral

Table 1 unveils the level of HUMSS students' social media exposure across four dimensions: frequency of use, platform exposure, content engagement, and source reliance. The overall mean ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 0.68$), interpreted as neutral, indicates a moderate level of social media exposure among respondents, with relatively consistent responses across participants. In terms of specific dimensions, frequency of use obtained the highest mean ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.61$), followed by source reliance ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 0.64$), both interpreted as agree. This indicates that students frequently access social media and moderately use it as a source of historical and political information, suggesting that these platforms are integrated into their daily information-seeking activities. On the other hand, content engagement recorded the lowest mean ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 0.78$), followed by platform exposure ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 0.69$), both interpreted as neutral. The relatively higher standard deviations suggest variability among respondents in terms of active participation and platform preferences. This indicates that while students are frequent users of social media, their engagement is generally passive, with limited content creation and selective interaction. Overall, the findings suggest that students' social media use is characterized more by information consumption than active participation. This pattern aligns with Media Dependency Theory, which explains how individuals rely on media platforms for information and orientation in understanding social reality. Related studies also indicate that youth engagement with digital content is often shaped by algorithmic systems that influence exposure and limit interaction diversity (Swart, 2021). These findings highlight the importance of strengthening students' digital literacy and critical engagement to support more meaningful use of social media in academic and civic contexts.

Research Question 2: What is the level of perception on Philippine historical thinking of HUMSS students in terms of sourcing of information, contextualization, corroboration and critical evaluation of historical content?

Table 2. Summary Level of Perception of Philippine Historical Thinking of HUMSS Students

	Indicator	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1.	Sourcing of Information	3.84	0.65	High
2.	Contextualization	3.78	0.73	High
3.	Corroboration	3.60	0.67	High
4.	Critical Evaluation	3.71	0.74	High
	Section Mean	3.73	0.69	High

Table 2 shows the level of HUMSS students' perception of Philippine historical thinking across four indicators: sourcing of information, contextualization, corroboration, and critical evaluation. The overall mean ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 0.69$), interpreted as high, indicates that students generally demonstrate strong historical thinking skills across all dimensions. Among the indicators, sourcing of information obtained the highest mean ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.65$), suggesting that students exhibit a strong ability to identify and evaluate the credibility of historical sources, including authorship, origin, and reliability of information. This finding is consistent with the view that historical thinking begins with critical source evaluation, particularly in digital environments where misinformation is prevalent (Wineburg, 2019). Conversely, corroboration recorded the lowest mean ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.67$), although still within the high range, indicating that students are relatively less proficient in comparing and validating information across multiple sources. This aligns with research suggesting that corroboration requires more complex cognitive processes, as learners must analyze consistencies and contradictions before forming judgments (McGrew et al., 2018). Overall, the findings suggest that while HUMSS students possess a solid foundation in historical thinking, there remains a need to strengthen their ability to synthesize information across sources. From a theoretical perspective, these results support Constructivist Learning Theory, which posits that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with information and experiences. The strong performance across indicators suggests that students engage in active meaning-making; however, enhancing instructional strategies that emphasize source comparison, evidence-based reasoning, and critical synthesis may further deepen their historical understanding, particularly in digital contexts where information varies in credibility.

Research Question 3: What is the level of perception on Philippine political-civic understanding of HUMSS students in terms of political knowledge, understanding of democratic processes, and awareness of civic responsibilities?

Table 3. Summary Level of Perception of Political-civic Understanding of HUMSS Students

	Indicator	Mean	SD	Verbal Description
1.	Knowledge of Political Issues	3.83	0.64	High
2.	Understanding of Democratic Processes	4.13	0.66	High
3.	Awareness of Civic Responsibilities.	4.08	0.67	High
	Section Mean	4.01	0.65	High

Table 3 presents the level of HUMSS students' perception of political awareness across three indicators: knowledge of political issues, understanding of democratic processes, and awareness of civic responsibilities. The overall mean ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.65$), interpreted as high, indicates that students generally demonstrate a strong and consistent level of political awareness. Among the indicators, understanding of democratic processes obtained the highest mean ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.66$), suggesting that students have a solid and relatively uniform understanding of how democratic institutions function, including governance structures, legislative processes, and citizen participation. This finding is consistent with studies showing that exposure to civic and political content enhances students' understanding of democratic systems (Kahne & Bowyer, 2018). Awareness of civic responsibilities followed ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.67$), also interpreted as high, indicating that students consistently recognize their roles as citizens, including adherence to laws, participation in community activities, and engagement in socio-political discourse, which aligns with research linking civic exposure to increased civic awareness and engagement (Erickson & Michelson, 2022). In contrast, knowledge of political issues recorded the lowest mean ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.64$), although still within the high

range, suggesting that while students are generally informed, their engagement with specific or current political issues is comparatively less developed. These findings imply that HUMSS students possess a strong foundational understanding of democratic systems and civic responsibilities; however, there is a need to enhance issue-based political awareness through structured exposure to current events and critical engagement with political information. From a theoretical perspective, these results can be explained through Agenda-Setting Theory, which posits that media platforms influence the salience of issues by shaping the topics audiences perceive as important. In this context, students' exposure to political content on social media likely directs their attention toward particular issues, thereby influencing their level of political awareness and engagement (Boulianne, 2020).

Research Question 4: Is there a significant relationship between the social media exposure and the level of perception of HUMSS students on Philippine historical thinking?

Table 4. Correlation Matrix between the HUMSS Students' Social Media Exposure and their Perception of Philippine Historical Thinking

Variables		Frequency of Use	Platform Exposure	Content Engagement	Source Reliance	Social Media Exposure	Historical Thinking Skills
Frequency of Use	Spearman's rho	—					
	p-value	—					
Platform Exposure	Spearman's rho	0.683*	—				
	p-value	< .001	—				
Content Engagement	Spearman's rho	0.614*	0.731*	—			
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—			
Source Reliance	Spearman's rho	0.553*	0.592*	0.599*	—		
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	—		
Social Media Exposure	Spearman's rho	0.812*	0.892*	0.885*	0.766*	—	
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	—	
Historical Thinking Skills	Spearman's rho	0.473*	0.450*	0.403*	0.533*	0.525*	—
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	—

Note. * $p < .05$, $df=130$

The results indicate a statistically significant positive relationship between social media exposure and the historical thinking perception of HUMSS students, with all computed p-values below the 0.05 level of significance ($p < .001$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Spearman's rho revealed moderate positive correlations between historical thinking perception and frequency of use ($\rho = 0.473$), platform exposure ($\rho = 0.450$), and source reliance ($\rho = 0.533$), while content engagement showed a low-to-moderate positive correlation ($\rho = 0.403$); overall, social media exposure was moderately associated with historical thinking perception ($\rho = 0.525$). Among the indicators, source reliance demonstrated the strongest relationship, suggesting that students who critically evaluate and verify online information tend to exhibit stronger historical thinking skills. These findings align with Constructivist Learning Theory (Piaget, 1954), which posits that learners actively construct knowledge through interpretation and evaluation of information, particularly in digital environments where skills such as sourcing, corroboration, contextualization, and critical evaluation are essential. Empirical studies further support this relationship, emphasizing that the ability to assess digital information enhances historical reasoning (Wineburg & McGrew, 2019; Breakstone et al., 2021). Additionally, the observed relationships are consistent with Media Dependency Theory, which suggests that increased reliance on media strengthens its influence on individuals' perceptions and understanding; in this context, social media serves as a key information source shaping students' interpretation of historical content (Kahne & Bowyer, 2018). However, the moderate strength of the correlations indicates that social media exposure alone does not fully account for historical thinking, highlighting the continued importance of classroom instruction, teacher guidance, and prior knowledge in developing students' critical historical reasoning skills (Breakstone et al., 2021).

Research Question 5: Is there a significant relationship between social media exposure and the level of perception of HUMSS students on Philippine political-civic understanding?

Table 5. Correlation Matrix between the HUMSS Students' Social Media Exposure and their Political Understanding

Variables		Frequency of Use	Platform Exposure	Content Engagement	Source Reliance	Social Media Exposure	Political Awareness
Frequency of Use	Spearman's rho	—					
	p-value	—					
Platform Exposure	Spearman's rho	0.683*	—				
	p-value	< .001	—				
Content Engagement	Spearman's rho	0.614*	0.731*	—			
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—			
Source Reliance	Spearman's rho	0.553*	0.592*	0.599*	—		
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	—		
Social Media Exposure	Spearman's rho	0.812*	0.892*	0.885*	0.766*	—	
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	—	
Political Awareness	Spearman's rho	0.464*	0.397*	0.505*	0.530*	0.532*	—
	p-value	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	—

Note. * $p < .05$, $df = 130$

The results reveal a statistically significant positive relationship between social media exposure and the political understanding of HUMSS students, with all computed p-values below the 0.05 level of significance ($p < .001$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Spearman's rho correlations indicate that political understanding is moderately and positively associated with frequency of use ($\rho = 0.464$), content engagement ($\rho = 0.505$), and source reliance ($\rho = 0.530$), while platform exposure shows a low-to-moderate positive correlation ($\rho = 0.397$); overall, social media exposure demonstrates a moderate positive correlation with political understanding ($\rho = 0.532$). Among the indicators, source reliance exhibits the strongest relationship, suggesting that students who critically evaluate and depend on credible online sources tend to demonstrate higher levels of political understanding, including knowledge of political issues, democratic processes, and civic responsibilities. This finding aligns with studies indicating that digital media use, when coupled with critical evaluation skills, enhances political knowledge and civic literacy among youth (Boulianne, 2020; Kahne & Bowyer, 2018). From the perspective of Media Dependency Theory, increased reliance on social media as a primary source of political information strengthens its influence on students' perceptions and interpretations of political realities. This pattern is further supported by Political Socialization Theory, which posits that individuals acquire political knowledge and civic orientations through various social agents, with social media functioning as a contemporary platform for political learning and engagement. However, despite the statistical significance of the relationships, the moderate strength of the correlations suggests that social media exposure alone does not fully account for variations in political understanding, highlighting the continued influence of other factors such as classroom instruction, teacher facilitation, prior knowledge, and structured media literacy education (Velmurugan, 2025).

Research Question 6: What infographic material can be developed to help Humanities and Social Sciences students critically evaluate historical and political information encountered on social media?

The developed infographic material serves as a visual synthesis of the study's empirical findings on HUMSS students' social media exposure, historical thinking, and political-civic understanding. Designed as an instructional and dissemination tool, it translates complex statistical results into an accessible format that supports critical media literacy. The infographic highlights key patterns, including moderate social media exposure, high levels of historical thinking, and high political-civic understanding, alongside the moderate positive relationships between social media exposure and these competencies. Consistent with the findings, it emphasizes that while students frequently access social media, their engagement remains largely passive and selective, reinforcing the notion that exposure alone does not guarantee deeper cognitive or civic development. It further illustrates strengths in sourcing and contextualization, while identifying corroboration and deeper political knowledge as areas requiring enhancement. Notably, the infographic underscores that critical source evaluation exerts a stronger influence on learning outcomes than mere frequency of use, aligning with studies

that stress the importance of evaluative digital literacy in fostering informed understanding (Breakstone et al., 2021; Wineburg & McGrew, 2019). As such, the material functions not only as a summary of results but also as a pedagogical intervention, promoting critical engagement, reflective thinking, and informed interpretation of digital content among learners.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to established ethical standards to ensure the protection of participants' rights, welfare, and privacy. Prior to data collection, ethical permission to conduct the study was obtained from the researchers' academic institution and approval was secured from the Schools Division Superintendent of Sultan Kudarat, as well as the principals of the participating schools. As the respondents were Grade 12 HUMSS students, informed consent from parents or guardians and assent from the students were obtained, ensuring voluntary participation. Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173), with all personal identifiers removed and data reported in aggregate form. Access to the data was limited to the research team, and all information was used solely for academic research purposes. The study likewise upheld ethical standards in data analysis and reporting by ensuring objectivity, avoiding bias, and preventing misrepresentation throughout the research process.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that HUMSS students engage with social media as a routine information environment, characterized primarily by selective and passive consumption rather than active participation. Despite this, students demonstrate strong competencies in Philippine historical thinking, including the ability to evaluate source credibility, contextualize events, and compare information across sources, reflecting an emerging capacity for critical and analytical reasoning. Similarly, they exhibit a high level of political-civic understanding, as evidenced by their awareness of political issues, understanding of democratic processes, and recognition of civic responsibilities. The study further establishes that social media exposure is positively associated with both historical thinking and political-civic understanding, suggesting that digital platforms can support the development of these competencies when engagement involves credible and critically evaluated information. However, the moderate strength of these relationships indicates that social media exposure alone is insufficient, underscoring the continued importance of structured instruction and experiential learning in fostering deeper understanding. Finally, the developed infographic serves as an effective visual and pedagogical tool that translates the study's findings into accessible insights, promoting critical engagement and media literacy among learners.

Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusions, teachers and school administrators may strengthen structured guidance on responsible social media use by integrating learning activities that enhance students' critical evaluation of historical and political content encountered online. Teachers are likewise encouraged to employ interactive instructional strategies such as debates, guided discussions, and source comparison tasks to deepen students' analytical engagement with digital information. Schools may further enhance political-civic understanding through experiential learning activities, including mock elections, simulations of democratic processes, and structured discussions of current events within relevant subject areas. The consistent integration of fact-checking and source verification activities should also be reinforced to develop students' critical evaluation skills in assessing online information. In addition, guided digital engagement strategies such as curated discussions, reflective postings, and moderated online forums may be implemented to promote more active and meaningful participation in social media-based learning. Finally, schools are encouraged to adopt and utilize the developed infographic as an instructional resource in classroom and school-based activities, particularly in lessons related to media literacy, history, and civic education.

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