

## **FACTORS RELATED TO THE EXTENT OF INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF SENIOR COLLEGE STUDENTS IN TWO UNIVERSITIES IN ILOILO CITY<sup>1</sup>**

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The study was conducted to determine the relationship between selected factors and the extent of involvement in social and political activities of senior college students in two universities in Iloilo City. This descriptive study used a one-shot survey. The study's sample population consisted of 337 senior college students from Central Philippine University (CPU) and West State University (WVSU) who were chosen using a combination of stratified random sampling and systematic sampling with a random start. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection.

### **MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

The respondents were mostly females and Roman Catholics who were from rural areas. Their families were earning between 3,000 to 6,000 in a month.

Most of the students had "moderate awareness" of social and political issues and identified one to two specific issues for each of 10 specified social and political problems. The social problem most popularly known among the students was regarding the environment, while the issue of foreign debts was the least known to them. Their level of awareness of issues did not significantly vary according to course, family income, religion, sex and permanent place of residence.

On the average, the students were involved in one to two organizations both in and outside the school. Organizational participation did not significantly vary according to course they were taking, family income, religion, sex and place of residence. Among the students who were organization members, most had attended more than 50 percent of the meetings and other activities conducted by

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their organizations. Their attendance in meetings and participation in other activities did not significantly vary according to the selected personal characteristics considered, except the course they were taking. Their extent of organizational involvement did not significantly vary according to the selected personal characteristics.

Extent of organizational involvement, however, was found to be significantly related to students' awareness of issues, the meaningfulness of social and political activities they perceived, and their perception of their parents' attitude toward their social and political involvement.

Of the 12 selected social activities, more than half of the student have participated in only three activities, namely; charity work, tree planting and other activities for the environment and fiesta-related activities. The activity which was most participated in was charity work, while the least participated in were volunteer work in centers, such as providing assistance to battered women and publicly exposing anomalous transactions in public offices. Among the students' personal characteristics considered, only the course they were taking significantly contributed to the variations in the students' extent of social involvement. Students' awareness of issues, the perceived meaningfulness of participation in selected social and political activities and perception of parents' attitude towards social and political involvement were also found to be significantly related to their extent of involvement in the selected activities.

Most of the students have participated in six of the 12 selected political activities. Voting during election (both in school and outside) drew the highest participation of the students, while joining fact-finding missions, investigating, human rights violations and advocacy work on the issue of foreign debt were the least participated in. The extent of political involvement of the students, however, was found to be significantly related to their course, awareness of social and political issues, their perceived meaningfulness of the activities and their perception of their parents' attitude towards social and political activities.

Majority of the students found it "very meaningful" to get involved in 7 of the 14 selected social and political activities; namely, elections outside the school, environmental protection, charity work, rescue and relief operations, voting during campus elections, advocacy on or promoting human rights and promotion of women issues. On the average, most of the respondents found social and political involvement "moderately meaningful."

The data further reveal that the majority of the students perceived their parents to be “very much in favor” of their social and political involvement. Most said that their parents favor their participation in 9 of the 10 social and political activities included in the study. The only activity that did not gain the favor of parents as perceived by the students was participation in rallies, demonstrations and protest actions.

On the average, most of the seniors obtained an extent of involvement score of 7.15 which is equivalent to “moderate involvement.” Among the students’ personal characteristics considered, only course was found to be significantly related to the extent of involvement in social and political activities. Awareness of issues, student’s perceived meaningfulness of their involvement in social and political activities and perceived parents’ attitude towards involvement were all found to be significantly related to extent of involvement.

When students’ perceived meaningfulness of the activities was controlled, the association between extent of involvement and selected personal characteristics remained statistically insignificant for all categories of perceived meaningfulness except among those who found “slight meaning” in social and political involvement. A substantial association was noted between extent of involvement and course, family income, sex and permanent place of residence among those who found “slight meaning” when their perceived meaningfulness of the activities was controlled. This means that the selected personal characteristics had no bearing on students’ extent of involvement in social and political activities for all categories of perceived meaningfulness except among those who found “slight meaning” in their involvement in these activities.

When students’ perception of their parents’ attitude was controlled, the association between extent of involvement and selected personal characteristics remained negligible for all categories of perception of parents’ attitude except among those who said their parents were “not in favor” of their involvement. Among those who found their parents to be “not in favor” of their participation in social and political activities, the presence of a substantial association between extent of involvement and family income and permanent place of residence was noted. This indicates that extent of involvement in social and political activities is not affected by selected personal characteristics for all categories of perception of parents’

attitude, except among those who said their parents were “not in favor” of their participation in these activities.

When students’ perceived meaningfulness of the activities and their perception of parents’ attitude were controlled simultaneously and separately, the relationship between extent of involvement and awareness of issues remained the same. This means that the students’ awareness of social and political issues was related to their extent of involvement in social and political activities regardless of their perceived meaningfulness of the activities and their perception of their parents’ attitude toward their involvement in these activities.

The multiple regression analysis reveals that as students’ awareness of issues increases, their extent of involvement in social and political activities also increases. The regression results also show that the students’ extent of involvement increases as their perceived meaningfulness of the activities and their perception of their parents’ attitude towards their involvement scores increase.

The regression results show further that education students tended to be more involved in social and political activities than students from other courses. Students whose families earn above 9,000 in a month were more involved in social and political activities than those from the lower income groups. Roman Catholics tended to be more involved in social and political activities than Protestants and those who belong to other religions. Furthermore, the data show that males were more involved than females while students residing permanently in rural areas tended to be more involved in social and political activities than urban residents.

When all the other variables were controlled, awareness of issues, meaningfulness of the activities, perception of parents’ attitude, course and sex were found to be significantly related to extent of involvement in social and political activities.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. The higher the awareness of the students of issues, the more likely they will participate in social and political activities. This supports the theory of Fisbein and Azjen which held that knowledge determines behavior.

2. The social and political involvement of students who take up business and technical course is likely to be lower than those in the humanities, arts and social sciences. The findings of the study support the results of the researchers cited by Lipset who held this view.
3. The more meaningful to the students social and political involvement the more they will get involved. This confirms Weber's theory that social behavior is influenced by the meaning attached by actor to his action.
4. Students who perceived their parents to be in favor of their participation in social and political activities are more likely to participate in these activities than those who perceived that their parents are against their involvement. The long-held view that parents influence their children's social behavior is upheld by the findings of the study.
5. The relationship between extent of involvement and selected personal characteristics was found to be substantial, when perceived meaningfulness of the activities was controlled, only among those who found "slight meaning" in their involvement. The selected personal characteristics, except religion, are related to extent of involvement in social and political activities of the students who found "slight meaning" in their participation in these activities.
6. Family income and permanent place of residence are substantially related to extent of involvement in social and political activities among students who said their parents were "not in favor" of their involvement in these activities.
7. A male student, Roman Catholic and rural resident whose monthly family income is above P 9,000, enrolled in education and who found involvement in social and political activities meaningful, and perceived his parents to favor his involvement and who has a high awareness of social and political issues has a higher tendency to be involved in social and political activities than other students.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommended based on the findings and conclusions of the study:

1. To improve the awareness of students on social issues, subjects on social issues must be taught in school to make the students more interested in current events. In the teaching of these courses, the importance of being aware of current issues must be stressed. Aside from the usual classroom lectures, speakers can be invited to discuss current topics or issues, films relevant to the subject can be shown and field and exposure trips can be made to areas and situations depicting current social realities,
2. More students should be encouraged to join organizations, both in and outside the school, for the study has shown that more than two-fifths of the respondents had no organizations. School administration can organize orientation seminars in their schools, inviting representatives of existing organizations on the campus to present their goals and objectives as well as the nature of their organizations to the students. The seminar must include discussions on how the students can improve their personalities by joining organizations and on the opportunities available to them if they are a member of a particular organization.
3. The involvement of students in social activities must be improved for most of the respondents had only participated in 3 of the 12 selected social activities. Concerned groups, agencies and individuals should organize outreach programs to provide a venue to the students to do community service, particularly in depressed areas.
4. The political involvement of the students also needs improvement for most of the seniors in the study were active in only 6 of the 12 selected political activities. Students should be actively involved in advocacy work on issues that affect them and should be encouraged to strongly express themselves on issues vital to the welfare of the nation.
5. Since the extent of involvement of most of the respondents was "slight" and "moderate", there is still a need to encourage the students to be socially and politically involved. Students also should be encouraged

to be aware of their role in nation-building as well as their social responsibilities. School administrators should organize activities in their schools to provide the opportunity for the students to be socially and politically active, like outreach programs, more symposia and fora on current issues, and support students' initiatives in this particular area. Parents should create a climate conducive to their children's social and political involvement by providing support and encouragement. Government agencies can involve the students in their programs and activities geared towards community service to encourage the students to take their social responsibility seriously.

6. Further studies considering more variables should be conducted to examine the factors related to the extent of involvement in social and political activities of the students. Academic performance, classroom standing and school environment are other factors that should be looked into since the study has shown that the courses the students were taking were related to their extent of involvement in social and political activities.

It is finally recommended that a similar study should be done, covering more schools and other year levels, to further validate the findings of the study. A study on the social and political involvement of the out-of-school youth should also be conducted to determine their extent of involvement in these activities, and if the factors that affect their involvement are similar to those of the students.