

# The perceived influence of propaganda in understanding civic issues

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## Abstract

The acceleration of information access and dissemination in the digital age presents a growing challenge to the individuals' ability to critically understand and engage with civic issues. This study aimed to examine the perceived influence of propaganda on individuals' understanding of civic issues, focusing on how it shapes societal perceptions, political alignments, collective action, and trust in media and institutions. The study employed descriptive-comparative research design, utilizing a validated questionnaire to gather data from 100 respondents, who were young adults with high school education. The findings showed that participants relied on social media for civic information and demonstrated moderate level of media literacy. There was no significant difference in the perceived influence of propaganda when grouped according to demographic profile, except for educational attainment, which showed a significant relationship with political alignment. The findings suggest that higher education enhances individuals' critical thinking. However, the study was limited to a single community, which may restrict the generalizability of its results. The findings also highlight the need for enhanced media literacy programs across educational levels to help individuals identify false information, recognize propaganda techniques, and evaluate source credibility. These insights informed the development of social media awareness campaign aimed at addressing propaganda-related issues in the community.

**Keywords:** *civic issues, misleading information, perceived influence, propaganda, false information*

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## 1. Introduction

In contemporary society, propaganda continues to thrive, especially with various sources of information; it spreads quickly without proper verification. With the rise of digital technology, it becomes easier for stories, whether true or not, to spread rapidly through social media, online news, and other digital platforms. This ease of dissemination allows individuals to accept false stories easily. By using persuasive language, selective information, and emotional appeals, propaganda distorts truths. As a result, propaganda can heavily influence public opinion in, disagreements, and weaken trust among people, especially when making collective decision. As explained by Cuncic (2023), propaganda is a communication strategy that promotes specific viewpoint by spreading false or misleading information. It often aims to sway public opinion using tactics like peer pressure, fear appeals, and emotional manipulation. This is particularly dangerous because it relies on skewed information that can distort civic understanding and influence persons' behavior on crucial civic issues.

This manipulation is particularly concerning in democratic societies, where an informed individual is vital for democratic and social processes. Exposure to propaganda puts citizen at risk of developing biased views of political, social, and economic matters limiting their ability to make rational decision. Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) found that exposure to false news stories during the 2016 US presidential election significantly affected voter behavior. While the study is focused on election context, it extends to the broader implication for civic issues, as propaganda have the potential to distort public understanding and influence democratic outcomes. In the Philippines, similar challenges arise, especially during the 2016 and 2022 national election, where concerns about the increased rate of false narratives influences public opinion and manipulates electoral outcomes (Ong & Cabanes, 2018). According to Pulse Asia, as cited by Panti (2022), 90% of Filipinos have encountered fake political news. This large number creates an environment where propaganda can easily take root, potentially influencing the public.

Given this context, this study aimed to examine the perceived influence of propaganda on individuals' understanding of civic issues, focusing on its effects on societal perceptions, political alignment, collective action, and trust in media and institutions. The study is significant as it addresses a gap within a Philippine community context by exploring how propaganda affects understanding of civic issues. Its findings aimed to provide additional

insights for educators and local leaders in Sariaya to encourage citizens to engage in critical evaluation of information and encourage responsible civic participation.

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1. Propaganda***

Propaganda is the strategic dissemination of information, whether true, exaggerated, or false, designed to shape individuals' beliefs, opinions, and attitudes. It often appeals to emotions and promotes a particular agenda or ideology (Akeal, 2025). In the context of civic issues, propaganda can shape public opinion and influence behavior toward specific social, political, or economic agendas, potentially leading to a more polarized society. For instance, Surjatmodjo et al. (2024) found that false content on social media spreads faster than credible information.

In the Philippine context, propaganda continues to pose a significant challenge. Thorner (2024) emphasized that widespread propaganda erodes public trust in the electoral process, illustrating its alarming influence on civic perceptions. Thorner further explained that propaganda has been particularly instrumental during the Marcos administration, with misleading information during the 2022 elections undermining democratic values and creating doubt about electoral fairness. Additionally, the Reuters Institute Digital News Report (2025) found that Filipino users identify politicians as the primary source of false information online.

The relationship between age and susceptibility to propaganda is complex, influenced by cognitive, social, and digital factors. Baptista et al. (2021) noted that memory and processing declines make older adults more prone to sharing inaccurate information. Similarly, Vivion et al. (2024) found that older individuals often experience information overload and rely on familiar sources online, increasing their vulnerability to misleading narratives. However, Benyamina (2024) highlighted that young adults' civic engagement is often tied to career considerations, which may reduce their attention to civic matters. Nevertheless, the Council of Europe (2025) reported that younger individuals consume information rapidly and may not critically analyze it, highlighting the importance of media literacy in fostering critical awareness of civic issues.

Educational attainment also plays a crucial role in combating propaganda. Individuals with higher education levels typically have enhanced analytical skills, enabling them to

evaluate and assess information more effectively (Nygren & Ecker, 2024). Pedriza (2024) similarly found that education equips individuals with critical thinking skills necessary to identify misleading information on civic matters.

The source of information, ranging from traditional media like books and newspapers to digital platforms and personal interactions, also affects how propaganda spreads (Adetayo & Ufomba, 2023). Despite access to credible sources, propaganda continues to proliferate. Social media, in particular, has emerged as a powerful tool for spreading misinformation due to its rapid sharing mechanisms and algorithm-driven content exposure (Rudra, 2024; Ja'afaru & Asemah, 2024). In the Philippines, social media usage has grown to 73.4% of the total population (Global Digital Report, 2024, cited by Howe, 2024), with 80.5% of Filipinos aged 10–64 using it as a primary source of information (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2025). This widespread use creates an environment in which propaganda can easily reach a large audience.

Media literacy equips individuals with the ability to critically assess information from various sources, empowering informed decisions and reducing susceptibility to propaganda (Woffindin, 2025; Udoudom et al., 2023). In the Philippine context, students exhibit varying competencies in evaluating information credibility, highlighting the need for robust media literacy programs (Fajardo, 2023; Huang et al., 2024).

## ***2.2. Societal Perceptions***

Societal perception refers to the collective viewpoints and judgments of a group regarding social issues. Through continuous interaction with others, communities form inferences about societal norms, behaviors, and events (Fiveable, 2025). In this study, societal perceptions reflect collective interpretations and understanding of civic issues, which can be influenced by propaganda.

Studies have consistently demonstrated that propaganda can manipulate public perceptions. In the Philippines, Chua et al. (2022) observed that many voters distorted their opinions based on inaccurate information. False narratives disseminated through multiple channels often overshadow factual content, skewing public discourse. Similarly, Valeria (2023) noted that propaganda employs emotional and repetitive appeals to shape civic perceptions, while Kasuya (2023) highlighted how propaganda campaigns confuse and influence voter decisions. Stepney and Lally (2024) further emphasized that individuals are

more likely to believe information that confirms pre-existing beliefs, triggers emotional reactions, is frequently encountered, or comes from trusted sources, regardless of its accuracy.

### ***2.3. Political Alignments***

Political alignments refer to patterns of association and support that individuals hold toward political ideologies, parties, or leaders (Ollerenshaw, 2023). These alignments are highly susceptible to propaganda, as they influence the information individuals accept and how they engage with civic issues.

Propaganda's influence on political alignment is evident during elections. Rhodes (2024) observed that political actors strategically disseminate false narratives to shift voter support and affect election outcomes. Del Pozo et al. (2024) noted that individuals predominantly share information that aligns with their political beliefs, even when exposed to diverse media outlets. Huang and Cruz (2021) highlighted a common cognitive bias: people often believe that propaganda influences others more than themselves. Jyothi (2023) added that while individuals may recognize bias in content, confirmation bias can make it difficult for them to critically identify it, reinforcing the impact of propaganda on political attitudes.

### ***2.4. Collective Actions***

Collective action occurs when groups collaborate to achieve common objectives, such as protests, strikes, social movements, and community initiatives (Quickconomics, 2024). Propaganda can weaken collective action by fostering division and mistrust within communities, making unified efforts more difficult.

Propaganda shapes collective behavior by influencing public opinion and discourse. Young (2021) explained that campaigns often employ emotional appeals, such as anger, to drive civic participation. However, Ajay (2023) argued that emotional appeals are not the sole motivator; pre-existing beliefs and media exposure also significantly affect group decision-making and collective actions. In the Philippines, propaganda has been widely used to mobilize support for specific agendas (Arugay & Mendoza, 2024). High social media usage facilitates rapid dissemination of propaganda, influencing collective responses to critical social problems (Kemp, 2024). Furthermore, low public trust in traditional media increases susceptibility to misleading narratives, affecting participation in collective actions (Newman, 2024).

### ***2.5 Trust in Media and Institutions***

Trust in media and institutions refers to individuals' confidence in the ability of these entities to provide accurate, reliable, and transparent information. Trust in media entails public expectations of fairness, accuracy, and credibility, while trust in institutions reflects belief in the reliability of information shared by government and public organizations (Strömbäck et al., 2024; Organisation for Co-operation and Development, 2024).

The prevalence of false information complicates public discernment of credible sources. Zoonen et al. (2024) found that the willingness to share unverified content online contributes to declining trust in media and institutions. Al-Quran (2022) noted that the lack of editorial oversight in modern media further blurs the distinction between accurate and false information, though traditional media is generally perceived as more credible. Fotopoulos (2023) confirmed that people tend to trust newspapers, television, radio, and other established media sources more than online platforms, which are viewed with skepticism due to credibility concerns. Similarly, Guo et al. (2023) found that people are more likely to trust information from government institutions than from online news sources.

## **3. Methodology**

### ***3.1 Research Design***

This study employed a quantitative approach using a descriptive-comparative research design. The descriptive-comparative design was utilized to determine whether significant differences exist in respondents' perceptions when grouped according to their demographic profiles. According to Williams (2025), this design is suitable for identifying variations among groups based on specific variables. The research design enabled the researchers to describe, compare, and objectively interpret the data, thereby ensuring the validity and reliability of the findings. Furthermore, the results served as a basis for developing a social media awareness campaign addressing the influence of propaganda on the understanding of civic issues.

### ***3.2 Participants of the Study***

The respondents of this study were residents of a barangay in Sariaya, Quezon, with a total population of 1,867. Using purposive sampling, the researchers selected 100 participants who met specific criteria relevant to the study objectives. According to Bisht (2024), purposive

sampling is a non-randomized technique used to select participants who can provide reliable and contextually rich data.

The selected respondents were residents of the barangay in Sariaya, Quezon, who were willing to participate in the study, aged 18 years and above, and actively engaged in civic activities such as voting or attending community meetings. The use of purposive sampling was appropriate for this study because it ensured that participants possessed the knowledge and level of engagement necessary to assess how propaganda influences the understanding of civic issues. The sample size of 100 was deemed sufficient to represent the target population and provide adequate data for quantitative analysis while maintaining accuracy in data collection.

**Table 1**

*Demographic profile of the participants*

<b>Descriptors</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Age</b>		
18 - 22 years old	19	19
23 - 38 years old	32	32
39 - 54 years old	19	19
55 - 73 years old	18	18
74 and above	12	12
<b>Educational attainment</b>		
Elementary Graduate	16	16
High school Graduate	50	50
College Graduate	28	28
Postgraduate	5	5
College Undergraduate	1	1
<b>Sources of information on civic issues</b>		
Television	45	29.22
Radio	17	11.04
Newspaper/Magazines	1	0.65
Social media	65	42.21
Personal Communication	26	16.88
Total	154	100
<b>Level of media literacy</b>		
Low	23	23
Moderate	55	55
High	21	21
Very High	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents in terms of age, educational attainment, sources of information on civic issues, and level of media literacy. In terms of age, the largest proportion of respondents belonged to the 23–38 age group,

comprising 32% of the total sample. Meanwhile, respondents aged 74 years and above represented the smallest group at 12%. With regard to educational attainment, the majority of respondents were high school graduates, accounting for 50% of the total population. The remaining respondents had either lower or higher levels of educational attainment. In terms of sources of information on civic issues, social media emerged as the most frequently used source, representing 42.21% of the responses. Other sources included traditional media and interpersonal communication. Finally, in terms of media literacy, most respondents demonstrated a moderate level of media literacy, comprising 55% of the total sample, while the rest exhibited either low or high levels of media literacy.

### ***3.3. Instrumentation and Data Gathering Process***

The study utilized a researcher-constructed survey questionnaire to gather necessary data. The questionnaire was developed based on the reviewed literature and consisted of two parts: (1) demographic profile of the respondents, which included age, educational attainment, source of information on civic issues, and level of media literacy; and (2) items assessing the perceived influence of propaganda in understanding civic issues, focusing on societal perceptions, political alignments, collective actions, and trust in media and institutions. Furthermore, a 4-point Likert Scale was used ranging from Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).

To ensure the validity and reliability, the instrument underwent content validation from three experts. An internal validator reviewed the instrument for clarity, an external field expert reviewed the instrument for relevance and alignment of each statement with the objectives and variables, and a language editor evaluated the tool for grammar consistency. Revisions were made based on their comments and recommendations.

Prior to gathering data, the researchers ensured that ethical guidelines were properly considered to safeguard the participants. Approval from the Barangay Chairperson and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained to ensure compliance with ethical research standards. Printed questionnaire was distributed personally to the qualified respondents in one barangay in Sariaya, Quezon. The survey questionnaire included an informed consent form, and was assured the participants the confidentiality of their answers. Each participant signed the informed consent form and was guaranteed that their participation was voluntary and could withdraw from the study without any consequences. The study strictly adhered to the Data

Privacy Act of 2012 to safeguard respondents' personal information and maintain confidentiality throughout the research process.

### ***3.4 Data Analysis***

The data collected from the survey questionnaire were tailed, interpreted and analyzed using descriptive and statistical tools, including frequency and percentage distributions, Weighted Arithmetic Mean, and Kruskal-Wallis H test at 0.05 level of significance.

### ***3.5 Research Ethics***

The study strictly followed ethical guidelines to ensure the safety, welfare, and the rights of all participants. Approval to conduct the study was obtained from the Barangay Chairperson and the Institution Research Ethics Committee. Before data collection, each participant was provided with an informed consent form explaining the study's purpose, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. The researchers ensured that the respondents' safety and comfort were prioritized throughout the process. All responses were treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes. In compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, all personal data were securely stored and protected to maintain the privacy and integrity of the participants.

## **4. Findings and Discussion**

Table 2 presents the weighted arithmetic mean of the perceived influence of propaganda in understanding civic issues in terms of societal perceptions. The data gathered had generated an average WAM of 3.13 (Agree). This suggests that respondents acknowledged the influence of propaganda on their perception of understanding civic issues. As Valeria (2023) noted that, the use of repeated and emotional persuasion shapes people's civic beliefs. The statement, "I notice that social media has amplified the spread of propaganda, affecting civic discourse," obtained the highest WAM of 3.33 (Strongly Agree). This indicates that the respondents are aware that social media accelerates the spread of propaganda, influencing civic discourse. Chua et al. (2022) supported this, noting that the rapid spread of false information through various forms significantly distort opinion. Meanwhile, the statement "I often accept information about civic issues without questioning its source, when it is presented in a way that aligns with my beliefs" obtained a WAM of 2.67 (Agree). This indicates that the

respondents accept information as long as it aligns with their own beliefs. People tend to believe information that matches their beliefs, regardless of its truthfulness (Stepney & Lally, 2024).

**Table 2**

*Perceived influence of propaganda in understanding civic issues in terms of societal perceptions*

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>WAM</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
I notice that social media has amplified the spread of propaganda, affecting civic discourse.	3.33	Strongly Agree
I know propaganda is a powerful entity to manipulate public opinion.	3.25	Agree
I actively seek out diverse perspectives to avoid being influenced by propaganda.	3.22	Agree
I feel that propaganda is just part of modern politics everyone uses to some extent.	3.18	Agree
I notice that propaganda often targets vulnerable populations to exploit their beliefs.	3.15	Agree
I think propaganda is used to create fear or anger about certain civic issues.	3.12	Agree
I shape my opinions on civic issues based on the information I see online, even if it may be propaganda.	3.12	Agree
I am rarely influenced by propaganda in my personal views on community issues.	3.07	Agree
I encounter propaganda that can confuse my understanding of civic issues.	3.06	Agree
I often accept information about civic issues without questioning its source, when it is presented in a way that aligns with my beliefs.	2.67	Agree
<b>Average Weighted Arithmetic Mean</b>	<b>3.12</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 3 presents the weighted arithmetic mean of the perceived influence of propaganda in understanding civic issues in terms of political alignments. The data gathered had generated an average WAM of 3.10 (Agree). This indicates that the respondents are aware on the influence of propaganda on their political activity. As Jyothi (2023) mentioned, biased campaigns shape public attitudes in a way that favors a particular agenda. Although, individuals may be aware that some content may contain bias, they often fail to recognize it because they interpret information that aligns with existing beliefs (del Pozo et al., 2024).

The agreement across all indicators suggests that respondents have been exposed to propaganda or is aware of, particularly in political landscape. While the respondents agreed on the influence of propaganda, they acknowledge its influence on others than themselves. Huang and Cruz (2021) supported this, explaining that individuals perceived the influence of

propaganda on others rather than themselves. People often assumed that propaganda heavily influences others more, since they believed their views are based on facts.

**Table 3**

*Perceived influence of propaganda in understanding civic issues in terms of political alignments*

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>WAM</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
I believe my political stances are solely based on factual information, not propaganda.	3.23	Agree
I noticed that propaganda can promote division and polarization among different political groups.	3.20	Agree
I noticed that propaganda often creates biased narratives about political candidates.	3.20	Agree
I noticed that propaganda can manipulate emotions to influence voting behavior.	3.16	Agree
I actively seek information from diverse political sources to avoid propaganda.	3.15	Agree
I am confident that propaganda does not affect my political choices.	3.15	Agree
I am heavily influenced by propaganda perceptions of different political parties	3.06	Agree
I believe that people are not easily swayed by political propaganda.	3.00	Agree
I rarely encounter political propaganda in my social media feeds.	2.98	Agree
I can easily identify biased information used in political propaganda.	2.91	Agree
<b>Average Weighted Arithmetic Mean</b>	<b>3.10</b>	<b>Agree</b>

**Table 4**

*Perceived influence of propaganda in understanding civic issues in terms of collective actions*

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>WAM</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
I believe that propaganda contributes to the polarization of opinions on civic issues.	3.18	Agree
I believe propaganda often misrepresents the root causes of civic problems.	3.17	Agree
I believe my decisions to join collective actions in my Barangay are based solely on my informed judgment, not propaganda.	3.14	Agree
I believe that propaganda can manipulate my understanding of the goals and objectives of collective action.	3.13	Agree
I believe that propaganda can make me less likely to trust information from official sources.	3.11	Agree
I can easily distinguish between factual information and propaganda in media coverage of civic issues.	3.10	Agree
I participate in discussions or activities related to civic issues because the information is inaccurate (e.g., voting, community forums, protests).	3.04	Agree
I am aware of the techniques used in propaganda to manipulate public opinion.	3.01	Agree
I feel confident in my ability to critically evaluate information related to civic issues.	2.95	Agree
I am easily swayed by emotional appeals in propaganda related to civic issues.	2.80	Agree
<b>Average Weighted Arithmetic Mean</b>	<b>3.06</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 4 presents the weighted arithmetic mean of the perceived influence of propaganda in understanding civic issues in terms of collective actions. The data gathered had generated an average WAM of 3.06 (Agree). This indicates that the respondents perceived the influence of propaganda can shape their understanding on civic issues and participation in collective actions. This aligns with Ajay (2023), who found that propaganda indeed affects group decision-making and media exposure, and pre-existing belief plays a role influencing the collective behaviors.

The data also shows that respondents agreed propaganda can shape their collective views and decisions in the community. Moreover, respondents recognize that propaganda can influence their understanding of the motives behind certain actions. While they believe their decisions are based from informed judgement, they admit that emotional appeals in propaganda can still sway their opinions. Propaganda campaigns that employed emotional appeals sway public attitudes and individuals' collective participation in civic issues (Young, 2021; Arugay & Mendoza, 2024).

**Table 5**

*Perceived influence of propaganda in understanding civic issues in terms of trust in media and institutions*

Indicators	WAM	Interpretation
I notice that social media platforms often spread propaganda about civic issues.	3.39	Strongly Agree
I believe that traditional media undergoes stricter fact-checking than social media.	3.38	Strongly Agree
I trust traditional media (newspaper, TV, radio, etc.) more than social media for providing accurate information about civic issues.	3.37	Strongly Agree
I believe that traditional media is better at providing balanced coverage of civic issues without bias.	3.36	Strongly Agree
I notice that the information on social media regarding civic matters is often influenced by political or ideological bias.	3.34	Strongly Agree
I believe the rise of social media in spreading false information has made it harder to trust the information I receive about civic issues.	3.21	Agree
I believe that political bias influences how institutions present information to the public.	3.19	Agree
I believe that misleading information from institutions weakens public trust in governance.	3.19	Agree
I think social media exposes me to false or misleading information more often than traditional media.	3.16	Agree
I am skeptical of information presented by institutions due to the potential propaganda.	3.04	Agree
<b>Average Weighted Arithmetic Mean</b>	<b>3.26</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

Table 5 presents the weighted arithmetic mean of the perceived influence of propaganda in understanding civic issues in terms of trust in media and institutions. The data gathered had generated an average WAM of 3.26 (Strongly Agree). This indicates a strong agreement regarding the influence of propaganda on their trust in media and institution for civic information. This aligns with Zoonen et al. (2024), who found that the willingness to share unverified content whether online, can reduce public trust in media sources and institutions.

The statement “I notice that social media platforms often spread propaganda about civic issues”, obtained the highest WAM of 3.39 (Strongly Agree), suggesting that respondents are aware of social media contributes to spread propaganda more on civic issues. This may be due to the lack of editorial oversight that filters accurate information (Al-Quran, 2022). Furthermore, the statement “I believe that traditional media undergoes stricter fact-checking than social media”, obtained second highest WAM of 3.38 (Strongly Agree). Likewise, the statement “I trust traditional media (newspaper, TV, radio, etc.) more than social media for providing accurate information about civic issues.”, obtained third highest WAM of 3.37 (Strongly Agree). This indicates that they trust traditional media like newspaper, television, radio, and printed media than social media as credible and reliable because of its fact-checking process (Fotopoulos, 2023).

Table 6 presents the significant difference in the perceived influence of propaganda in understanding civic issues when grouped according to demographic profile. The result for societal perceptions, collective actions, and trust in media and institutions when grouped across age, sources of information on civic issues, and level of media literacy, obtained high  $p$  values, leading to the acceptance of null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ). This indicates no sufficient evidence to conclude association or differences on the perceived influence of propaganda between these variables.

Moreover, the variable “Political Alignments” obtained a  $p$  value of .049, indicating evidence for rejecting the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ). Given that the result is lower than the alpha level (.05), based on the data, there is a significant difference in the perceived influence of propaganda on the civic understanding of the respondents in political alignments across different educational levels. Thus, individuals perceive the influence of propaganda differently and their varying educational backgrounds may influence how they interpret it. The findings aligned with Pedriza (2024), who explained that levels of education influence the ability of

individual to evaluate and critically analyze information. Along with the use of strategic way to spread false political agenda, and the evidence found in educational attainment, it can influence to shift the voter support and further altering electoral outcomes (Rhodes, 2024).

**Table 6**

*Significant difference in the perceived influence of propaganda on civic understanding when grouped according to demographic profile*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Societal Perceptions</b>	<b>Political Alignments</b>	<b>Collective Actions</b>	<b>Trust in Media and Institutions</b>
<b>Age</b>				
<i>H</i> statistic	2.355	0.482	4.160	6.860
<i>p</i> -value	.671	.975	.385	.114
Statistical Decision	Accept $H_o$	Accept $H_o$	Accept $H_o$	Accept $H_o$
Interpretation	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant
<b>Educational Attainment</b>				
<i>H</i> statistic	1.815	6.047	3.343	3.392
<i>p</i> -value	.403	.049*	.188	.183
Statistical Decision	Accept $H_o$	Reject $H_o$	Accept $H_o$	Accept $H_o$
Interpretation	Not Significant	Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant
<b>Sources of Information on Civic Issues</b>				
<i>U</i> statistic	762.300	760.200	710.100	760.000
<i>p</i> -value	.586	.476	.283	.573
Statistical Decision	Accept $H_o$	Accept $H_o$	Accept $H_o$	Accept $H_o$
Interpretation	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant
<b>Media Literacy</b>				
<i>H</i> statistic	2.338	.200	1.139	1.922
<i>p</i> -value	.311	.905	.566	.383
Statistical Decision	Accept $H_o$	Accept $H_o$	Accept $H_o$	Accept $H_o$
Interpretation	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant

## 5. Conclusion

This study examined the perceived influence of propaganda on individuals' understanding of civic issues. Among the 100 participants, the largest group was aged 23-38 years old (32%), with most completed high school (50%) and rely on social media as their source of information on civic issues (42.21%). Also, the majority of the respondents have moderate level of media literacy (55%). The results revealed that respondents agreed on propaganda influences their understanding of civic issues in terms of societal perceptions (WAM = 3.12), political alignments (WAM = 3.10), and collective actions (WAM = 3.06), while they strongly agreed that it affects their trust in media and institutions (WAM = 3.26). A significant difference was found on political alignments when grouped according to educational attainment ( $p=.049$ ), indicating that higher education enhances individuals' ability to critically assess information.

Based on these findings, the researchers developed a social media awareness campaign to strengthen individuals' capability to identify and counter propaganda. The study concludes that propaganda significantly shapes understanding in civic issues, especially among social media users, and that education is a factor in reducing the vulnerability to false information. The research successfully addressed its objectives and questions to determine the perceived influence of propaganda on individuals' understanding in civic issues. However, the study being limited to one barangay and small sample size, may affect the generalizability of the findings. Finally, future studies are encouraged to include larger populations, various localities for comparison, and qualitative approaches to gain deeper insights into how propaganda influences civic behavior.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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### Institutional Review Board Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines set by the College of Sciences, Technology, and Communications, Inc. The conduct of this study has been approved and given relative clearances by the Research Ethics Board and the Local Government Unit.

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