Short Paper

Participation of Students in Digital Activism

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Abstract

This research delves into the involvement of students in digital activism, utilizing a multi-method approach that includes social media account observation, surveys, and interviews with 180 scholars, 83 of whom have prior digital activism experience. Employing the triangulation method ensures data reliability. Key concerns raised by students encompass academic workload, mental health, the Philippine government, and racism. The predominant forms of engagement include liking, posting, or tweeting, along with reporting abusive content, and participation in polls and surveys. The study reveals

that digital activism can be a double-edged sword, with potential negative consequences such as spreading fake news and stifling opposing views, juxtaposed with positive effects like providing a platform for expressing concerns, raising awareness, and informing citizens about societal issues. Social media emerges as a potent tool for activism, embodying a modern version with both positive and negative consequences, as perceived by the involved students at PSHS-IRC. Students at PSHS-IRC engage in social movements through various social media platforms, addressing societal issues even if they may not always recognize their involvement. The research enhances our understanding of their digital activism, shedding light on prevalent issues like overwhelming school requirements, mental health concerns, the Philippine government, and racism. Common methods employed include liking posts, reporting abusive content, and participating in polls and surveys. Positive outcomes include the opportunity to express opinions, raise awareness, and disseminate information, although negative consequences such as causing harm, spreading fake news, and neglecting opposing perspectives are acknowledged.

Keywords – activism, digital activism, participation, social media, student-activist

INTRODUCTION

Activism encompasses any action or initiative aimed at instigating societal transformation (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016). It stands as a pivotal driver of societal advancement, as it strives to rectify injustices, provide a voice for marginalized individuals in the face of grave societal events, awaken the unaware to harsh realities, and condemn and educate those responsible for wrongdoing, particularly human rights violations. Although protests and rallies represent conventional forms of activism, numerous other avenues exist for participating in activism. These may include activities such as sharing posts on Facebook highlighting the brutality inflicted by the Philippine National Police on ordinary citizens, endorsing online petitions, reporting Twitter accounts of internet trolls, and tweeting about the burdensome academic workload.

Within the context of the holistic development of students at the Philippine Science High School (PSHS), a fundamental component involves nurturing their ability to think and act in a humane, critical, analytical, and objective manner. Even at a young age, PSHS scholars are groomed to engage actively with the Filipino community they serve. Given the emergence of political, social, and economic challenges in the country, along with local issues within the school premises, PSHS-IRC scholars frequently employ their voices to advocate for what they perceive as just. Despite these issues, their activism often assumes the form of expressing their viewpoints on social media, particularly through platforms such as Twitter and Facebook.

Through the examination of the extent of PSHS-IRC scholars' engagement in activism across various social media platforms, this study seeks to scrutinize the associated positive and negative consequences, discern the prevalent issues under discussion on these platforms, and evaluate the efficacy of their efforts. Additionally, this research can aid the school administration in identifying and addressing pertinent local concerns that require resolution. Furthermore, it endeavors to elucidate the genuine significance of activism, not only in personal development but also in fostering community betterment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Activism Carried Out by Students

Students engage in activism to address the social issues they observe, both within and beyond their school environment. These issues encompass a wide range, including injustices, violence, discrimination, and various others. As an illustration, in 2018, student groups spearheaded protests following a shooting incident at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. Their objective was to amplify calls for more rigorous investigations into gun buyers, in a bid to prevent similar tragedies from recurring. They leveraged the hashtag #NeverAgain (Jason, 2018). In the contemporary era, with the advent of modern technology, students in the 21st century can transition from traditional forms of activism to online platforms like Twitter and Facebook.

Digital Tools and Infrastructure

The digital age has encouraged people to use Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to express their views on social issues (Ntuli & Teferra, 2017). Tools such as phones, laptops, and tablets with internet connectivity can be used for this purpose. Internet connectivity accelerates the sharing of information, leading to the rapid spread of protests and various movements. Social networks like Facebook and Twitter have also increased people's participation in social issues by acting as bridges to join groups, making petition signing easier, and disseminating news on a large scale (Romero, 2013).

Digital Activism

With the continuous development of technology, most people are becoming more aware of crucial issues we face. Digital activism is a form of activism that utilizes the internet to express views on an issue and provide extensive knowledge about a topic (Rhoads, 1998). Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are commonly used for this type of activism, often accompanied by hashtags in posts like #BlackLivesMatter and #NeverAgain to inform people about ongoing issues and encourage them to act (Kossow & Saliba, 2017). Digital activism is conducted through polls, campaigns, and mobilization in electronic forms (Ntuli & Teferra, 2017). Social media also plays a

significant role in combining traditional activism by organizing gatherings of like-minded individuals who protest on the streets (Romero, 2013).

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

Ajzen (1991) developed TPB to predict an individual's behavior based on their intentions. TPB assumes that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control help determine an individual's intentions regarding their behavior. Attitude refers to an individual's perception of whether a specific action leads to a positive or negative outcome. Subjective norms focus on the social environment of the individual, considering the opinions of people around them regarding a particular action. Perceived behavioral control, on the other hand, involves assessing the ease or difficulty of implementing a specific behavior. TPB has been extensively studied in various fields, including health, activism, environmental behavior, philanthropy, and political participation (Noland, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

This research aimed to identify the participation of Philippine Science High School-Ilocos Region Campus students in digital activism, focusing on the following specific questions: What are the common forms of engagement in digital activism by students; What are the issues that scholars discuss on their social media accounts; and What are the positive and negative effects of digital activism on students and community?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The main objective of this study is to determine and identify the participation of students in digital activism from the Philippine Science High School - Ilocos Region Campus. It uses a qualitative approach, which Rhoads (1998) also employed in his research. He mentioned that it is appropriate to use this approach to facilitate understanding of the problem while developing a new context. Furthermore, it enables a deep and comprehensive understanding of the subject. For the research design, a case study was utilized to enhance the analysis of gathered data and to deepen the understanding of the subject matter.

Population and Study Location

The study draws upon the input provided by students enrolled in grades 7 to 12 at the Philippine Science High School - Ilocos Region Campus during the academic year 2021-2022. A stratified random sampling method, as outlined by Thomas in 2020, was employed to select thirty (30) students from each grade level, resulting in a total of one hundred and eighty (180) students participating in the research.

Research Instruments

The researchers developed an online survey questionnaire to collect data regarding the extent of student involvement in digital activism. The developed survey questionnaire was validated by three experts and was found to be "highly valid." Additionally, a researcher-made interview guide was utilized to acquire supplementary insights, building upon the responses garnered from the survey questionnaire. In this section, the validity of the developed interview was assessed through the critical friend technique (Galdonez, 2024; McNiff, 2002) as a requirement for a qualitative instrument. Experts examined whether the content of the interview guide aligned with the study's objectives and found them to be consistent. Observations were also conducted to identify the specific issues or challenges that student participants were advocating for or against. Indicators from the developed checklist for observation were derived from relevant literature and studies.

Data Collection Methods and Ethical Considerations

The research team prepared a survey form consisting of ten (10) questions and an interview guide comprising three (3) questions. The survey questions were designed to assess the participant's level of engagement in digital activism, focusing on their methods of involvement and the specific issues or topics they commonly discussed on their social media platforms. Meanwhile, the interview questions delved into the participants' personal experiences with digital activism and its associated positive and negative impacts.

To select respondents, a stratified random sampling technique was employed, resulting in the inclusion of thirty (30) students from each grade level.

Thirty students were selected through stratified random sampling to represent their respective batches among the identified students participating in digital activism. The students involved in digital activism were identified through a needs assessment, and it was determined that the number of thirty was sufficient to represent each group. To inform and seek consent from potential participants, the researchers sent a brief letter outlining the research context along with a consent form, elucidating the study's objectives and requesting their permission to participate. The survey was distributed to the participants through a provided link and could be completed in approximately five to ten minutes. Additionally, the survey included a request for permission to conduct interviews. Those who agreed to participate in interviews were contacted, and interview sessions were scheduled. These interviews were conducted via online chat, with the questions provided to participants in advance to allow them time for preparation.

The interviews commenced with an introduction and an explanation of the interview's purpose before proceeding to the questions. Following the interviews, participants were thanked for their invaluable contributions. With the participant's consent, the researchers also examined the Facebook and Twitter accounts of students from PSHS-IRC to identify the issues or causes they supported or opposed.

Upon gathering sufficient data from the survey, interviews, and observations, the results were consolidated, compared, and correlated using Microsoft Word 2013. The data collected through the surveys and interviews underwent analysis employing the triangulation method, a technique advocated by Paton (1999). Triangulation involves leveraging a combination of diverse methods and data sources to enhance the robustness of research findings. By employing this approach, the data could be presented in a more comprehensive and nuanced manner. From the identified data gathered through the survey, they were organized into tables, and the frequency of responses was examined. In the interview section, a thorough analysis was conducted using cool and warm analyses (Galdonez, 2024; de Guzman & Tan, 2007) to complement the numerical data. Additionally, the social media accounts of the identified respondents were observed to validate the gathered information from the survey and interview.

RESULTS

Respondents were asked if they had experience participating in social movements where they had to choose responses such as "Yes," "No," "Maybe," or "I don't know." Out of the 180 respondents, 83 (46.1%) answered "Yes," 37 (20.6%) answered "No," 40 (22.2%) answered "Maybe," and 20 (11.1%) answered "I don't know." It can be inferred that most scholars participate in digital activism. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) assumes that intentions to engage in an action can be related to three factors: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Attitude refers to an individual's perception of whether a specific action will lead to a positive or negative outcome. In terms of attitude, most scholars believe in the positive effects of digital activism and its beneficial impact, which is why they engage in it. Subjective norms refer to the influence of people in one's surroundings to act. For those who answered "No," one reason for their non-participation was their family. According to one respondent, some of their family members do not easily post their political opinions on social media. For those who answered "Yes," their participation may be influenced by the organization or school they belong to. This may indicate that PSHS scholars deeply understand and fulfill their sworn commitment. As stated in the scholar's pledge, *"I envision myself as creative, inventive, and innovative – taking the lead in initiating positive changes that will enrich my school, my community, and Philippine society."*

SOP 1: What are the common forms of engagement in digital activism by students?

Participants were asked how they participate in social movements on their social media accounts. Out of the 180 participants, 140 liked a status/post/tweet, 113 shared a status/post/tweet, 90 reported an abusive status/post/tweet, 77 answered polls and surveys, 68 blocked an aggressive account, 63 commented on a status/post/tweet, 63 used hashtags related to an issue, 59 created their status/post/tweet, 44 changed their profile picture/icon/header to a social movement picture, and 2 signed petitions. This indicates that liking a status/post/tweet is the most common way scholars participate in digital social movements because it is the quickest and easiest way to show support and express their stance on an issue.
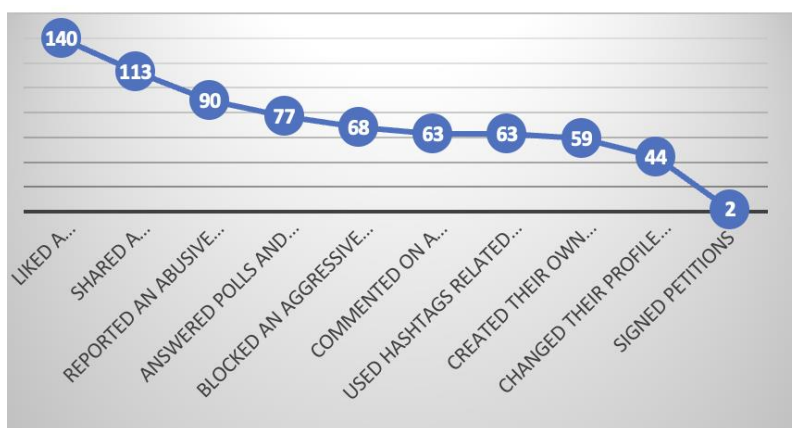

Figure 1. Forms of Digital Activism used by students.

SOP 2: What are the issues that scholars discuss on their social media accounts?

In Figure 2, it shows the distribution of topics frequently discussed by scholars in digital activism. Participants were also asked about the issues they often emphasize and pay attention to when they participate in social movements. The issue most frequently discussed by scholars is overload school requirements. Among all the issues, this one stands out the most because they are directly affected by it, and they experience the associated problems every day as students. They also believe that using social media to express their thoughts and suggestions regarding academic issues can lead to positive outcomes. One notable example, supported by the observation of their accounts, is the use of social media by scholars from various PSHS campuses in October, with the hashtag #PisayGiveUsABreak. By voicing their concerns on social media, authorities were prompted to grant the scholars a one-week break from their studies.

Other issues frequently discussed include mental health, the government of the Philippines, racism, LGBTQ+ rights, corruption, bullying, objectification of women, sexual

assault, and the low quality of the education system. All these issues revolve around human rights. It can be inferred from this that scholars pay attention to these issues even if they are not directly affected because they empathize with those who have been victims of these issues that violate human rights, and they want to correct these wrongs. On the other hand, the issues that scholars do not emphasize much, according to the survey, are academic cheating, teenage pregnancy, and unemployment. The first-mentioned issue is not considered by scholars as a problem that needs immediate attention and concern.
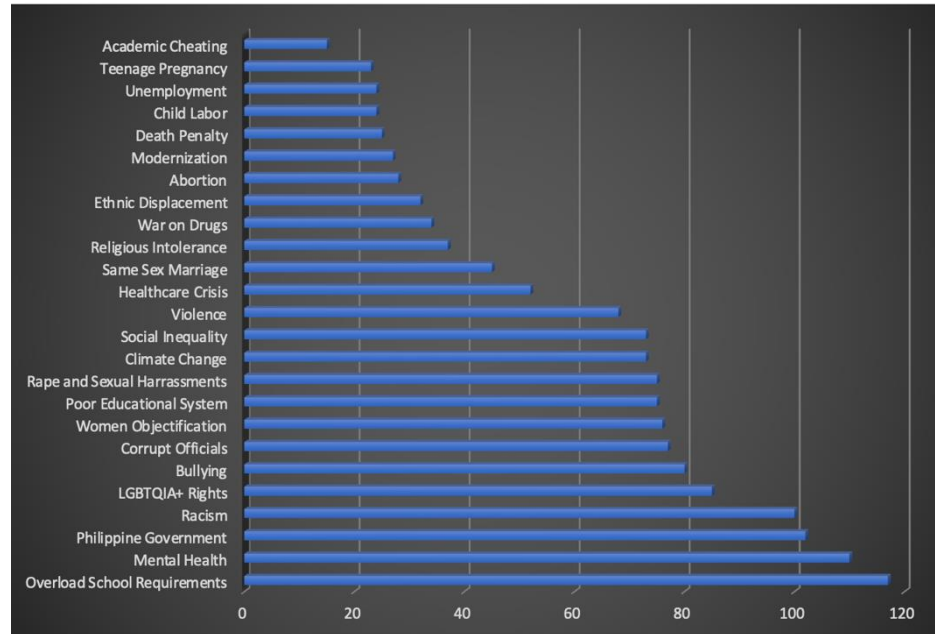

Figure 2. Issues emphasized by scholars on digital platforms.

SOP 3: What are the positive and negative effects of digital activism on students and the community?

The respondents were asked about the effects of digital activism, and they needed to choose whether the impact was positive or negative. 164 respondents answered positively (91.1%), while 16 responded negatively (8.9%). Based on the interviews, some answered "positive" because it makes people more aware of political and ethical aspects. Furthermore, some mentioned that it speeds up the dissemination of issues happening in our country and facilitates communication worldwide. On the other hand, those who answered negatively cited various concerns about cybercrime and fake news. They also mentioned the media's tendency to create issues even from minor mistakes.

Positive Effects of Digital Activism

In Table 1, it shows the cases of successful use of digital tools in participating in social movements.

Table 1. Cases of successful use of digital tools in participating in social movement

Case	Frequency
Policy/regulation was implemented	52
Policy/regulation was removed	19
Post containing abusive content was removed	62
The issue was addressed by authorities	1
I explained an issue to someone else	77
I understood an issue.	128

Note: The respondent may choose more than one case.

The results show the benefits of using social media in activism. Based on the experiences of the students, the most successful effect of digital activism they consider is the awareness and dissemination of knowledge about prevalent social issues. Some of the students interviewed also mentioned the benefits of using social media for spreading information:

"I become more aware of political and ethical concerns, and people in positions are influenced, as if they are called into action or to address concerns for the better." - Respondent #2
"The positive aspect of digital activism is that it changes people's opinions. This is the most important positive aspect of digital activism because it is where changes in laws begin and where new laws are made for politicians, the end of the long-standing animosity between two groups of civilians, and more." - Respondent #3
"Through my awareness, I see the positivity. If more people are aware of the problem, it can be solved more quickly." - Respondent #5
"The predominant positive effect is that it reaches the authorities immediately and is acted upon promptly. People also become aware and enlightened about the issues happening in the world." - Respondent #6
"The promotion of awareness and giving us a chance to present our opinions and knowledge." - Respondent #8

Another goal of activism is to give a voice to the oppressed to find solutions to their problems. This can be seen in the removal of posts with abusive content, and the enactment and modification of regulations and policies when necessary. On social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, users can report posts with sensitive or inappropriate content. These may include cyberbullying, sexual assault, and more. In this way, digital activism is helpful. Some respondents gave examples of successful digital activism in reporting:

"This account was reported because the user was a pedophile. [The action taken was] the account was banned to ensure the safety of people on the internet." - Respondent #6
"At the school level, strict policies regarding submission, requirements, etc., during the 1st quarter. At the national level, I think there were different protocols (nonsense quarantine policies, e.g., motorcycle barriers) that were removed when they trended on social media." - Respondent #10

The research also delved into the viewpoints of students regarding the beneficial outcomes of digital activism, with their responses documented in Table 2. The predominant positive effect identified by students is that it furnishes them with a platform to articulate their concerns and viewpoints regarding prevailing societal issues, a sentiment echoed by 144 respondents. Additionally, digital activism is almost equally perceived to enlighten the perspectives of others, as noted by 133 respondents, and as a mechanism for disseminating information to the general populace, as acknowledged by 134 respondents. Furthermore, 126 respondents emphasized that digital activism contributes to enhancing their awareness. Notably, a comparatively smaller number of respondents, 71 in total, concurred that digital activism aids in clarifying their stances on these matters.

Table 2. Positive effects of digital activism

Effects	Frequency
Express concerns and opinions	144
Open the minds of others.	133
Inform society about what's happening.	134
Awaken one's thinking.	126
Enrich curiosity, morality, perspective, and critical thinking.	115
Correct what is seen as wrong in society and improve it.	116
Urge authorities to act.	102
Determine where one stands.	71
Exchange ideas	112
Have strong convictions.	84
Speak for those who cannot speak.	105

Note: The respondent may choose more than one.

Drawing from the experiences of scholars, the primary objective of digital activism is to create a platform where students can share their concerns about contemporary issues. For instance, by expressing personal opinions on social media, there exists an opportunity to educate and raise awareness among others who encounter these viewpoints. This is substantiated by the anecdote provided by Respondent #6, who recounted how they helped their cousin gain a deeper understanding of the realities of contemporary racism and police violence when the "Black Lives Matter" movement gained traction on social media. Moreover, the act of sharing opinions also plays a role in compelling authorities to take notice of and respond to these pressing issues, as

underscored by the statement of Respondent #5, who asserted, *"the more people know about the problem, the faster it can be resolved."*

Negative Effects of Digital Activism

The students' viewpoints regarding the adverse impacts of digital activism were also examined, and their responses are presented in Table 3. The most frequently cited negative effect of digital activism is its potential to cause harm to others, as indicated by 86 respondents. Subsequently, it was noted that digital activism can contribute to the dissemination of fake news, with 82 respondents acknowledging this issue. The third notable effect is its tendency to foster toxic behavior on social media, which was reported by 52 respondents. Additionally, digital activism was seen as a factor that can lead to a lack of willingness to listen to opposing viewpoints, with 50 respondents highlighting this concern. Conversely, the least common responses were related to digital activism's perceived ineffectiveness in bringing about any substantial change, with only 28 respondents expressing this viewpoint.

Table 3. Negative effects of digital activism

Effects	Frequency
Used by people to harm others.	86
Distraction from important matters	30
The use of social media is toxic.	52
Spread of Fake news	82
No meaningful change is achieved.	28
The opinions of others are not heard	50

Note: The respondent may choose more than one.

Conversely, despite the evident benefits of digital activism, it is imperative to acknowledge the potential for negative repercussions. However, these opportunities are accompanied by inherent risks.

With heightened engagement on social media platforms, individuals become increasingly vulnerable to cybercrimes, including cyberbullying, as highlighted by the accounts of Respondent #7, who stated, *"There can be negative consequences to digital activism, as many of us fall victim to cybercrimes,"* and Respondent #8, who remarked, *"Sometimes, what others want to see is perfect, and one mistake can turn into an issue."* Moreover, due to the pandemic's impact, more people have turned to social media as a primary source of news, often overlooking the proliferation of misinformation. Respondent #11 emphasized this concern, stating, *"Because some people provide false information or 'fake news,' and that's why there are many conflicts on the internet."*

It is also noteworthy that a significant number of activists on social media seem to prioritize garnering popularity, likes, shares, or retweets over meaningful engagement. Respondent #4 pointed out this phenomenon, remarking, *"Performative activism (e.g.,*

unnecessary antagonism of the masses who are DDS without any class analysis) – what I mean here is the liberal take of attacking instead of educating…Posts that antagonize the masses just for likes?"

Another detrimental aspect of digital activism is its potential to evoke strong emotions in individuals when opposing viewpoints are expressed, often resulting in conflicts or acrimonious exchanges in the form of debates or heated arguments. Respondent #12 underscored this issue, stating, *"The toxic mentality of many Filipinos is also a factor. Misunderstandings often arise due to a lack of understanding, either in words or context, which can harm others."*

DISCUSSION

The survey results underscore the significant involvement of scholars (46.1%) in social movements, particularly within the realm of digital activism. To better understand this engagement, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provides a valuable framework. TPB posits that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control collectively shape one's intentions to engage in a specific action. In the context of digital activism, scholars' positive attitudes toward its impact play a pivotal role in motivating their active participation. Their belief in the positive outcomes of digital activism likely serves as a driving force behind their willingness to engage in this form of social movement. This aligns with TPB, which suggests that an individual's perception of whether a specific action leads to positive or negative outcomes influences their intention to engage in that action. Subjective norms, another component of TPB, are evident in the survey findings, particularly concerning organizational or school influence. The connection between respondents answering "Yes" and their affiliation with specific groups highlights the impact of social surroundings on their engagement in digital activism. This observation resonates with the study by Ntuli and Teferra (2017), which emphasizes that student activists often embody and promote the values of their respective institutions.

In essence, the application of TPB to the survey results illuminates the intricate factors influencing scholars' involvement in digital activism. Their positive attitudes, shaped by a belief in the efficacy of digital activism, coupled with the influence of subjective norms tied to their organizational affiliations, collectively contribute to the observed active participation in social movements. Understanding these underlying psychological and social dynamics is crucial for comprehending and potentially influencing future engagement in digital activism among scholars.

The prevailing mode of participation among scholars in digital activism manifests as the act of liking a status/post/tweet, accounting for a substantial 77.8% of respondents. This preference for liking content serves as a quick and uncomplicated method to express support. The alignment of this finding with the practices highlighted by Adams et al. (2017) underscores the widespread use of liking and sharing as fundamental components of digital activism. They emphasize the commonality of these actions, considering them as

prevalent and accessible means through which individuals engage in digital activism. Liking a post or tweet requires minimal effort while providing a visible indicator of support. This aligns with the notion that digital activism often thrives on these simple yet effective gestures, allowing individuals to express their stance on various issues without a significant investment of time or resources. The high prevalence of liking as a form of engagement suggests that scholars value the immediacy and simplicity it offers in contributing to digital activism. This finding shed light on the nuanced ways in which individuals choose to participate in online movements, emphasizing the significance of accessible and user-friendly modes of expression within the digital activism landscape.

The scholars' prioritization of issues reveals a discernible pattern wherein they give prominence to concerns directly affecting them, with a notable emphasis on overload school requirements. Additionally, scholars are encouraged to cultivate critical and analytical thinking skills and to develop the capacity to take a stance on the various challenges they encounter (Melki & Mallat, 2014). This alignment is congruent with their role as students, indicating a keen interest in instigating positive changes within their educational milieu. The identification of issues such as mental health, government, racism, LGBTQ+ rights, and others underscores a broader commitment to the principles of human rights.

The salience of overload school requirements suggests that scholars are particularly attuned to challenges within their immediate academic environment, reflecting a desire for tangible improvements in their educational experiences. This resonates with the idea that individuals are often motivated to engage in activism when issues directly impact their lives. However, the comparatively lesser emphasis on certain issues like academic cheating, teenage pregnancy, and unemployment may be attributed to perceived relevance or awareness. One of their goals in discussing these issues is to influence the actions of those in the wrong and thereby bring about change, allowing others to learn from it as well (Van Tol, 2017). Furthermore, they are also exercising their freedom of speech on political matters as citizens of a democratic country (Memoli & Vassallo, 2016). Scholars may prioritize issues that resonate more closely with their daily experiences and societal concerns.

Academic cheating, for example, may not be perceived as an urgent problem, as suggested by Eaton (2021), who notes that it often occurs discreetly and may not be readily apparent to students. The scholars' selective emphasis on specific issues provides valuable insights into their priorities and areas of concern. It reflects a nuanced approach to digital activism, where individuals choose to advocate for issues that hold personal significance or align with their broader commitment to human rights. Understanding these preferences enriches our comprehension of the factors shaping scholars' engagement in social movements and digital activism.

The survey results underscore a prevailing positive perception of digital activism among scholars, with an overwhelming 91.1% expressing that it yields positive effects. The

emphasis on awareness and knowledge dissemination emerges as a noteworthy aspect, showcasing the scholars' belief in the power of digital activism to inform and educate. Given the significant role that social media plays in our daily lives, it serves as an apt medium for expressing our perspectives, particularly in response to events unfolding on online platforms (Sivitanides & Shah, 2011). Additionally, tangible instances of success, such as the removal of abusive content and the influence on policy implementation or repeal, further highlight the efficacy of digital activism in bringing about concrete changes. Although there is no definitive answer to this question, Loizou (2019) suggested that digital activism helps strengthen communities and solve technology-related problems due to its positive effects. Because of these positive effects, it surpasses previous generations and those without access to social media. Many individuals are naturally inclined to share their viewpoints in digital activism due to the extensive audience reach facilitated by various social media platforms (Reid & Sehl, 2020). Furthermore, the act of voicing concerns through digital activism serves as the foundation for a range of other positive outcomes (Dumitrica, 2020).

Scholars, in expressing a sense of empowerment and influence through their digital engagement, indicate a belief in the transformative potential of their collective efforts. According to the Humanitarian Academy for Development (2020), digital activism helps connect many people on a global level, making it easier to convey and receive messages about campaigns, especially during times of pandemic when there are restrictions on physical gatherings and protests. Peuchaud (2014) also emphasized in the HiAP Framework for Country Action the power of social media and activists using it to reach people who are otherwise hard to engage.

Given the widespread adoption of social media in contemporary society, numerous activists utilize these platforms to disseminate information, sway public opinion, champion transformative causes, and participate in various movements aimed at enhancing the world in which they live (Al-Sharif, 2018). Despite the positive sentiments, scholars also exhibit a nuanced understanding of the potential negative effects associated with digital activism. Concerns are raised regarding the misuse of digital activism to cause harm to others, the dissemination of fake news, and the creation of a toxic social media environment. These apprehensions reflect a critical awareness among scholars about the risks and challenges inherent in the digital space. A particularly noteworthy finding is the recognition by a significant number of respondents (50) that digital activism may lead to an unwillingness to listen to opposing viewpoints, indicating a potential echo chamber effect. This acknowledgment highlights scholars' awareness of the need for diverse perspectives and the potential dangers of creating isolated digital spaces that reinforce existing beliefs without fostering open dialogue.

In essence, scholars navigate a delicate balance, acknowledging both the positive and negative aspects of digital activism. Their recognition of the potential pitfalls underscores a thoughtful approach to engagement, emphasizing the importance of responsible and informed participation in the digital activism landscape. This nuanced

understanding positions scholars as critical contributors to the ongoing discourse surrounding the impact of digital activism on individuals and society at large. The data on participants' self-identification as digital activists presents a nuanced picture, reflecting a variety of perspectives and motivations. The reasons provided offer valuable insights into the complex factors influencing individuals' self-perceptions in this context.

Participants who identify as digital activists attribute their self-designation to a range of activities conducted on social media platforms. These activities include posting or sharing concerns related to societal issues, engaging with social movements and organizations dedicated to addressing problems, expressing opinions, educating others, and participating in reform efforts and online petitions. These responses align with the broader understanding of digital activism, emphasizing its role in using online platforms for social and political engagement.

The affirmative responses suggest that these individuals perceive their actions on social media as aligned with the principles and practices of digital activism. Their engagement reflects a conscious effort to leverage digital spaces for social change, supporting the idea that individuals can play an active role in shaping narratives and advocating for causes through online platforms.

On the other hand, respondents who do not identify as digital activists offer a diverse array of reasons for their negative stance. These reasons include external factors such as parental or familial restrictions, a closed mindset, and a desire to avoid conflicts or controversies. Additionally, factors like limited familiarity with the issues discussed on social media, prioritizing studies, infrequent use of social media, and viewing social media primarily for news, entertainment, or academic purposes contribute to the negative responses. The hesitancy to express opinions due to fear of judgment or differing viewpoints, indifference to prevailing issues, and the belief that posting or sharing content is insufficient are also cited as reasons for not identifying as digital activists.

These varied reasons underscore the complexity of individual perspectives and the diverse barriers that may hinder active engagement in digital activism. Some individuals may face external constraints, while others may perceive their activities on social media as not aligning with the traditional notions of activism. Based on the data gathered, it appears that respondents' self-identification as activists is influenced by their perspectives, aligning with the findings of Greijdanus et al. (2020). According to their research, social media plays a role in propagating digital activism by documenting and aggregating individual experiences, fostering communities, establishing norms, and enhancing perceptions of reality. Consequently, it can be inferred that respondents' self-perceptions are closely tied to their understanding of what it entails to be a digital activist.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Engaging in social movements through the utilization of social media platforms has become a prevalent practice among scholars at PSHS-IRC, even if they may not always recognize their involvement. The research undertaken by these scholars has facilitated a deeper comprehension of their engagement in digital activism. They frequently address societal issues such as overwhelming school requirements, mental health concerns, the Philippine government, and racism. Common methods employed to highlight these issues encompass activities such as liking posts, reporting abusive content, and participating in polls and surveys. Among the positive outcomes associated with digital activism are the opportunities to express one's opinions, raise awareness among others, and disseminate information concerning societal events. While the motives underlying digital activism are commendable, it is inevitable that negative consequences, such as causing harm to others, spreading fake news or misinformation, and failing to consider opposing perspectives, can also manifest.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed: augmenting the sample size to enhance the accuracy of results, broadening the scope of observed social media platforms, and exploring additional variables, including demographics and personality traits, to ascertain potential correlations with participants' engagement in digital activism.

IMPLICATIONS

Digital activism holds significance, not only for individuals but also for the community, as it serves to amplify often unheard voices and champion calls for justice in the face of societal challenges that affect everyone. It additionally empowers marginalized voices, shedding light on the hardships they endure and the aspirations they hold dear. Furthermore, digital activism plays a pivotal role in cultivating awareness and fostering critical thinking among students regarding social issues that traditional media may not comprehensively address. However, notwithstanding the positive impact of digital activism, it also carries potential negative consequences, exemplified by the widespread dissemination of disinformation and misinformation prevalent today. Consequently, as consumers of online content, it remains imperative for us to meticulously scrutinize the materials we encounter, view, and engage with on social media platforms.

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DECLARATIONS

Conflict of Interest

It is affirmed that all references used in the study have been acknowledged and identified. It is further attested that this study is an original work and has never been submitted to any other journal.

Informed Consent

All consent letters from study participants have been identified and collected, emphasizing the confidentiality of the gathered data.

Ethics Approval

The conduct of the study has been disclosed and approved by the committee overseeing the involvement of participants.

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