

Online Activism Through Social Media Engagement of Community Youth Leaders from a Teachers College

Chris Gem C. QUIMBA*, Jorlyn A. PILARTA, Donn Krisry S. LUENGAS, John Erwin P. PEDROSO

West Visayas State University, Iloilo City, Philippines.

*Corresponding author: chrisgem.quimba@wvsu.edu.ph

Abstract

Social media has continuously emerged as a transformative platform for youth civic engagement, enabling young leaders to participate in public discourse, advocate for causes, and shape community narratives. The aim of this study is examines how Filipino community youth leaders, specifically Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) Chairpersons, approach their social media engagement in relation to online activism. Employing a qualitative narrative inquiry approach grounded in Social Constructionism, this research captures the lived experiences of student leaders from a teachers' college. A semi-structured interview guide distributed through Google Forms was used to collect data through written interviews, enabling participants to provide in-depth, reflective answers. Findings reveal three major themes: (1) Crafting an Online Identity, where digital spaces allow for both personal self-expression and public image building; (2) Reimagining Activism Online, wherein social media actions become meaningful forms of civic participation; and (3) Developing Purpose in Activism, highlighting how pivotal events, emotional connections, and leadership roles deepen commitment to advocacy. These themes highlight how social media engagements strongly influence the political activities of community youth leaders, thus encouraging them to engage in digital forms of activism. These findings demonstrate that youth engagement online can evolve into reflective and sustained activism, underlining the role of social media as both a platform and a catalyst for youth-driven civic leadership in the digital age.

Keywords: Social media engagement, filipino youth leaders, online activism, social constructionism theory.

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Introduction

In recent years, social media emerged as a crucial platform influencing the political views of youth leaders, serving as both an information source and a space for political engagement (Intyaswati et al., 2021). Research suggested that social media enhanced the community youth leaders' political behavior through discussions and exposure to diverse perspectives ((Zainurin, 2024; Pedroso et al., 2024). These included expressing opinions, engaging in political communication, and accessing information. Active engagement with political content on social media correlated with increased political awareness and activism. Social media also became a platform for community youth leaders. (Abdullah et al., 2024) highlighted how in the 2020 elections in the United States, Black and Latino youth used social media as a way to voice their political opinions and engage in discussions with peers. This activity exemplifies how vital social media engagement has become in the new age of activism.

Previous studies confirmed its role in political engagement, yet gaps remained. Primarily, most studies on social media and political engagement relied on quantitative surveys, electoral data, and sentiment analysis (Fujiwara et al., 2020). However, qualitative methods such as written interviews, in-depth interviews, or focus group discussions were underutilized in understanding how individuals subjectively interpreted political content on social media. This provides limited insights into how community youth leaders processed and engaged with political discourse on platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, and Twitter (Ross & Bürger, 2014). Additionally, there was a lack of studies focused on Southeast Asia, which limited the findings' application to youth leaders, specifically in the Philippines. The country's social dynamics, culture, and political environment were very different from those of the United States and Europe. For instance, (Velasco et al., 2024) correlated Twitter use to alterations to U.S. voting patterns.

Data from Western settings, however, could not accurately represent how Filipino community youth leaders engaged with online political content. Furthermore, the focus on the majority of studies examined direct impacts, typically focusing on election seasons only rather than long-term impacts. Few long-term studies examined how community youth leaders' political views changed as a result of ongoing social media use. Determining whether internet activism led to short-term or long-term ideological transformations demanded an understanding of these lasting consequences. This study aimed to know how the social media engagement of community youth leaders from a teachers' college shapes their online activism. It has filled the noted gaps by applying qualitative designs to understand how Filipino community youth leaders, and specifically the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) Chairpersons, perceived and interacted with political content on social media. It studied the experiences and perceptions of community youth leaders in online political spaces in the form of written interviews. This study shifted the lens beyond supporting short-term activism and offered insights on how social media turned into a pillar of enduring political consciousness and endeavors.

Methodology

Research Design

Qualitative research design was used, which is a research approach based on inquiry that attempts to explain social phenomena within contextual settings (Sithole, 2025). In particular, the study applied narrative inquiry, which is a qualitative study approach whose data are personal stories and that considers such stories as initial data to explore how people create a sense of personal experiences (Butina, 2015). This method employs the use of stories as a valid and worthy knowledge-building tool. By concentrating on the written accounts of the informants, the research presented reflective accounts with attention to details as digital activists. Social Constructionism was the guiding theory used in the research because it indicates that reality is constructed by language, interaction, and collective cultural meanings (Segre, 2016). In this context, social media was

perceived as a communicative space and the place of identity formation where the meaning of civic responsibility and political activity is constantly regulated. This approach allowed the research to identify online interactions of the participants as a social and cultural practice.

Informants

This study has applied purposeful sampling, which is commonly used in qualitative research to identify occurrences of information value around the phenomenon of interest (Jack & Phoenix, 2022). Selection of the informants was implemented with regard to specific inclusion criteria, which were adapted to the objectives of the study. It was a targeted selection that allowed providing its participants with extensive experience in both leadership and online engagement in civic activities. The participants had to:

- 1. be enrolled as a student of a tertiary government teachers' college at any year level during the Academic Year 2024–2025;
- 2. be a current elected Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) Chairperson in their barangay;
- 3. have at least one active social media account; and
- 4. engage with sociopolitical content on social media at least three times per week.

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the five community youth leaders who served as the informants in the study. All participants are enrolled in various teacher education programs. Notably, all participants have served in the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) for an equal duration of 19 months, showing a shared level of experience in youth leadership roles. Before data collection, informants were oriented about the purpose and scope of the research. They were informed of the ethical protocols and confidentiality of their identity and data provided.

Table 1. Demographic Profile Of Informants

Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Program	Length of Service in the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) (in months)
FJ	Male	21	Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in Social Studies	19 months
JK	Male	21	Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in Social Studies	19 months
Sapphire	Female	21	Bachelor of Special Needs Education Major in Elementary School Teaching	19 months
Cha	Female	20	Bachelor of Elementary Education	19 months
Zera	Female	21	Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in Mathematics	19 months

Data Source and Research Instrument

A researcher-derived, semi-structured written interview guide was administered in Google Forms. The instrument was aimed at collecting in-depth narrative-based responses that summarize the experiences of the informants with regard to their experiences with social media engagement and how it has influenced their online activism. The guide consisted of three major sections. To guarantee ethical integrity, the form started with an informed consent section. Participants were requested to read an ethics statement and to sign a written agreement by submitting a written confirmation within the form. Then, a written interview proper followed, wherein the informants were provided with the relevant questions to be used in the study. This section is a detailed narrative of the experiences in youth leadership and online activism. Finally, the post-interview section was discussed, where informants were assured that their anonymity and confidentiality would be guaranteed.

The entire interview guide was designed in the English language and written in a conversational but thoughtful tone to promote considerate, narrative-based answers. The questions were based on the expressed research purposes and grounded in a narrative inquiry to be able to embrace the richness of the experience of each of the informants. The instrument was initially validated by an expert. After that, it was then pilot-tested with one (1) youth leader with experience in Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) leadership to test the suitability of the clarity, the tone, and the sequencing of the items. This feedback was taken into consideration, and minor revisions were made accordingly. This asynchronous and written design enabled respondents to devote more time to consider their responses. They did not feel pressured by time restrictions and were able to answer them in the comfort of their own space, so the instrument was very appropriate when eliciting detailed accounts among respondents with varied schedules and the ability to be geographically dispersed.

Data Gathering Procedure

After obtaining permission for the conduct of the research from the corresponding academic bodies, data collection then proceeded with the purposive selection of the informants satisfying the inclusion criteria. The participants were contacted by a formal invitation via Facebook Messenger, which described the purpose of the study, its voluntary character, and ethical safeguards, such as confidentiality and anonymity. The data has been collected through a written interview using Google Forms. The link to Google Forms was also provided through the same media. Such a format made the participation asynchronous, and informants could reflectively contribute detailed answers and responses at their own pace and comfort. The first part of the form contained an informed consent section where they provided a common and standard consent statement that the informants signed to show that they had voluntarily agreed to participate. To provide anonymity and safeguard the identities of the informants, pseudonyms were applied to all reporting. During the data collection, open communication was established with the participants via Facebook Messenger, both in the case of necessary clarification and follow-up questions. Data were collected until saturation was achieved and no new insights were appearing in the answers.

Data Analysis

The written accounts that were provided by the informants were analyzed and interpreted using thematic analysis. The technique has been described as being quite flexible and having the ability to find dense, patterned meaning amongst qualitative data. In a social constructionist approach, analyses were replaced by the understanding that the experience and identities of the participants are formed in the interaction with their social, cultural, and online environment. In addition, the six-phase model of thematic analysis developed by (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used. These included data familiarization, code generation, theme identification, theme review, theme definition, and reporting, and were done to have a systematic and meaningful interpretation of the data. In pursuit of rigor, triangulation was utilized in which a set of researchers independently read and confirmed the themes (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Disagreements were discussed accordingly and solved by consensus.

Moreover, to increase the trustworthiness and the relevance of the research, themes were cross-referenced with the research objectives and theoretical framework.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted within the strict guidelines of ethics in qualitative research to safeguard the privacy, dignity, and personal authority of all the participants. All informants were given an informed consent form containing the objectives, procedures, and rights of the participants in the study before data collection. This included the right to voluntarily participate, decline, or withdraw at any point without penalty or consequence. The form also clearly explained how the data would be used and how confidentiality would be maintained. Pseudonyms were employed instead of the actual names of the participants in all the transcripts and published material to maintain anonymity. No identifying information was attached to the final report. All personal data was stored securely and could be viewed only by the researchers. Some of the responses were direct references to political figures, parties, and movements by the nature of the explored research topic. Informants were reminded that while their perspectives were greatly valued, they should not name individuals, organizations, or movements without consent. Nevertheless, when such mentions occurred, the researchers took a responsible approach to redact or anonymize the data in keeping with the principles of ethical research (Grande Ratti et al., 2024). These names and affiliations were censored or generalized intentionally in the process of reporting the findings to prevent the possibility of bias in finding or producing other unwanted effects and to preserve academic neutrality in the reporting process. For instance, direct references were replaced with terms such as "national candidate," "political figure," or "particular political movement" where appropriate. By doing so, the element of political interference was not involved, and the informants as well as the study as a whole were protected.

Results

To know how the social media engagement of community youth leaders shapes their online activism, there are three (3) relevant themes that have been identified. They include: (1) Crafting an Online Identity, (2) Reimagining Activism Online, and (3) Developing Purpose in Activism.

Crafting an Online Identity

The ability to express oneself, interests, and opinions through the creation of an online character on social media is currently a central aspect of the lives of young individuals {Citation} (Gudić et al., 2024). It is divided into two (2) subthemes, namely, (1) Nurturing the Personal Self, and (2) Building a Public Image.

Nurturing the Personal Self

Online identity construction actively changes social interactions and identity expression. Promoting one's personal self by openly expressing one's identity in profiles influences how people communicate and who they connect with (Choi et al., 2024). Youth leaders do this through (1) Expressing Oneself in Social Circles.

Expressing Oneself in Social Circles

Youth leaders utilize social media as a space to reflect and express their lived experiences and personal values. This informal yet expressive sharing nurtures relationships and builds belonging

among peers.FJ: *“Social media serves as a space to share our thoughts, beliefs, and experiences.”*
Cha: *“I enjoy posts that help me connect with friends, classmates, and fellow SK leaders.”*

Building a Public Image

Beyond personal expression, youth leaders consciously engage in actions to inform, educate, and influence their digital audience. This supports the findings of Bergs et al. (2015), who assert that digital civic skills enable youth to engage democratically, especially when reliable information is shared through platforms designed to appeal to their generation. Youth leaders do this by (1) Sharing Knowledge for Civic Involvement.

Sharing Knowledge for Civic Involvement

Through civic-oriented content, youth leaders use their online presence to inform their constituents and participate in public discourse. They bridge personal and civic roles, using content creation as a tool for community outreach and reputation-building. Zera: *“I mostly engage with educational, news-related, and informative content, especially those that are fact-checked and relevant to current events.”* JK: *“It’s also about helping others—maybe someone will come across what I shared and realize, ‘Oh, so this is what it’s about.’... they might be encouraged to support it too, especially if it aligns with their own principles.”*

Reimagining Activism Online

Youth leaders are redefining activism by incorporating it into their daily social media use. Rather than viewing activism solely as protest or public demonstration, informants in this study framed their digital actions—posting, sharing, organizing, and reacting—as genuine political participation (Allaste & Saari, 2020). This theme includes the following subtheme: (1) Advocating Through Digital Action.

Advocating Through Digital Action

Youth digital activism creates opportunities for participation and becoming the voices of those unheard (Irannejad Bisafar et al., 2020). They participate in online activism by (1) Utilizing Digital Platforms, (2) Leading as a Form of Influence, and (3) Turning Empathy into Collective Awareness.

Utilizing Digital Platforms

Informants described their activist efforts as extending from content-sharing to organizing events. FJ: *“I share educational content on these platforms, repost others’ work—such as important petitions, calls for action, or advocacy posts by other activists or organizations.”* JK: *“Online social and political activism gives us a platform to express not only our views in a positive side, but also our grievances and concerns so they can be brought to the attention of the right people.”*

Leading as a Form of Influence

Digital leadership is both performative and community-driven. Leaders use their positions to set an example and shape civic behavior. JK: *“As an SK Chairperson... you become a representative or image to your fellow community members.”* Sapphire: *“To influence others, provide (a) platform for them to learn from it, and to inspire them as well.”*

Turning Empathy into Collective Awareness

Emotionally resonant narratives, especially those rooted in marginalization, were cited as sources of purpose and drive. FJ: *“When advocating for LGBTQ+ rights or environmental justice, the stories shared by individuals personally affected resonate the most with me and drive me to continue speaking up.”* Zera: *“It inspired me to use social media as a platform to advocate for good governance, transparency, and youth empowerment.”*

Developing Purpose in Activism

Many informants expressed that their social media engagement eventually evolved into purposeful activism. This theme explores how key moments, experiences, and internal or external pressures shaped their activist identities (Kirshner, 2007). Subthemes include: (1) Being Shaped by Moments of Awakening, and (2) Sustaining Engagement.

Being Shaped by Moments of Awakening

Informants often described pivotal political events as triggers for their deeper engagement. This reflects insights that online platforms transition youth from consumption to participation when connected to experiential learning (Middaugh et al., 2025). They transition due to (1) Recognizing Limits of Passive Engagement, and (2) Uniting Movements as Catalysts.

Recognizing Limits of Passive Engagement

While many began as passive observers, some felt compelled to act. FJ: *“I felt that merely liking or sharing posts wasn't enough. There was a deeper need to challenge misinformation and actively mobilize people around the truth.”* Zera: *“I realized that with my knowledge of social media, I had the tools and responsibility to counter fake news and help others understand the importance of truth in civic decision-making.”*

Uniting Movements as Catalysts

Informants also recalled movements as collective catalysts that spanned physical and digital realms to sustain civic energy. Zera: *“Seeing people unite for a cause online showed me the power of digital engagement in influencing change.”* JK: *“That was probably the time I got more engaged in sharing and liking posts because I truly believed (a political candidate) deserved it.”*

Sustaining Engagement

Civic commitment is strongly linked to youth's social roles and identity within organizations, in which, despite having setbacks, they feel compelled to push through activism for a cause (Rye, 2024). They transition because of (1) Acknowledging Emotional and Practical Limits, and (2) Assuming a Role-Driven Responsibility

Acknowledging Emotional and Practical Limits

While engaged, informants acknowledged burnout, toxicity, and competing academic responsibilities. FJ: *“Trolling or harassment online can create a toxic environment that pushes people away from online activism.”* Sapphire: *“Might be my personal endeavors, knowing that senior year in (my university) requires so much time.”*

Assuming Role-Driven Responsibility

Despite these challenges, informants cited their roles as leaders, students, and community members as sources of motivation. Cha: *“What keeps me going is my role as a youth leader and my interest in helping the community...even small actions—like sharing a post or speaking up—can make a difference.”* FJ: *“As a servant leader and as a social studies major, I feel that I have a sense of responsibility to use my voice and my platform to uplift different causes that matter and that are close to my heart.”*

Discussion

This study explored how the social media engagement of community youth leaders, specifically Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) Chairpersons, from a teachers' college shapes their online activism (Figure 1). Viewed within the framework of Social Constructionism and investigated through Narrative Inquiry, this study exposes current trends toward the nature of youth civic engagement in the digital age. As social media becomes increasingly incorporated into everyday life, youth leaders are not only passive recipients of information but also producers and sharers of content that could help in shaping discourse, forming values, as well as encouraging collective messages and actions. This analysis produced three (3) key themes: (1) Crafting an Online Identity, (2) Reimagining Activism Online, and (3) Developing Purpose in Activism, all of which corresponded to a notable shift in the participants' digital civic activities.

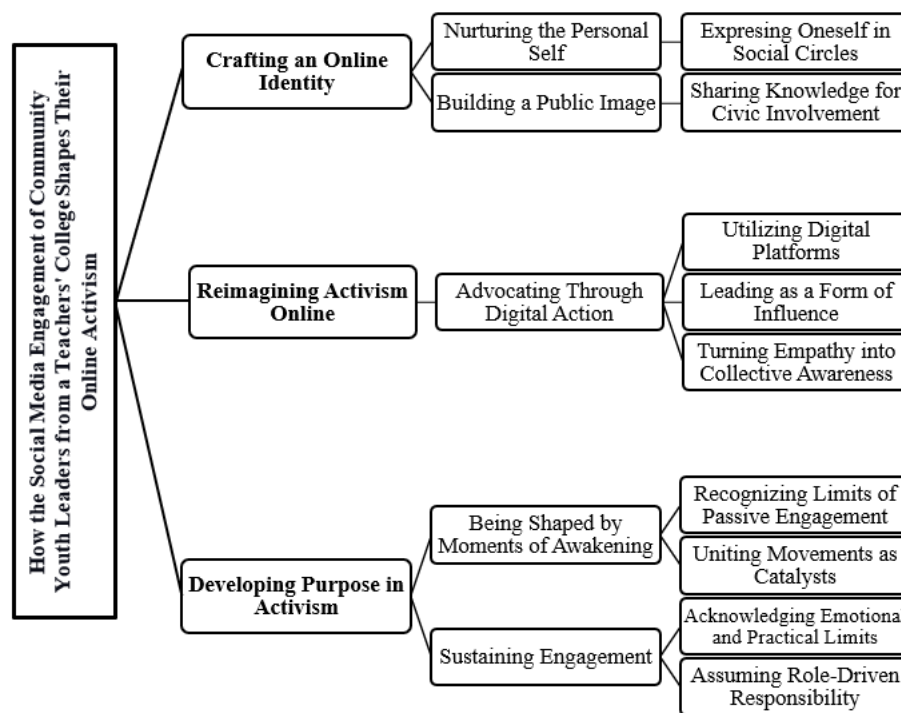


Figure 1. Themes and subthemes and their corresponding codes

As digital citizens, youth leaders develop an online identity to be seen and become active. They utilize social media as a stage and as a mirror to express their humor, anger, gains, and insights, while at the same time giving importance to how they wish to be perceived in this virtual realm. This is reminiscent of Goffman's dramaturgical "front stage" in which people stage performances that are responsive to their audience's anticipations (Gudić et al., 2024); (Ghafar, 2024). This also resonates with (Papacharissi, 2010) idea of networked publics, which facilitate people to perform identities

across multiple overlapping social audiences. Their online self-presentation was not all about branding but deeply linked to their civil posture. In contrast to (Steeves & Regan, 2014) study, in which young people had high regard for digital privacy and were frequently concerned about online surveillance, SK Chairpersons in our research were willing to be assertive and confident in their digital self-presentation because of their leadership roles. Despite the fact that much of the youth identity work is private and a process of self-discovery (Fullam, 2017), the informants in this study detailed identities that worked in the service of public good and social justice for youth. They were even using personal narratives and reflections to not only share who they are, but also to endear and build trust with the people they represented.

Youth leaders discussed the importance of being genuine when developing relationships as a way to mold their personality in the different social circles in which they are involved. Keeping it online allows them to be so relatable and real. This is consistent with the study by (Copeland & De Moor, 2018), who pointed to creating communities that are rooted in shared feeling and goodwill through digital storytelling. This study shows that even non-political posts can still be seen as a contribution to an emergent civic identity built on forging affective ties. These expressions serve to bridge deeper engagement and turn the trivial content on a daily basis into relational currency in a future struggle. However, in contrast to findings stating that the youth are more inclined to use the new media for entertainment and social networking (Salman & Saad, 2015), youth leaders consistently engaged with community leaders and politicians and commented on issues related to politics. This demonstrates that they used the values of honesty, transparency, and accountability to shape their online images. In platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, youth leader combine their values and knowledge as a way to keep up with social and political issues. As they do, they form a public image that fits their leadership and ideologies, turning these platforms into civic stages. On these stages, participants exchanged news of how their projects were progressing, fact-checked information, and issued calls to action. These practices supported findings that emphasized that developing digital citizenship requires the development of digital and socio-civic abilities (Peart et al., 2022).

As youth leaders engage with online social and political content, they bridge activism with their own digital practices. Unlike the classic iteration of activism, which often revolves around public protest or mass mobilization, participants were remaking activism one online engagement at a time. This reinforces (Alodat et al., 2023; Sahoo & Pradhan, (2025) that social media is useful as a tool in engaging young people in politics. It adheres to the idea that civic engagement in the digital era has significant transformational possibilities (Public Administration Kampala International University, Uganda. & Nchaga, 2025) that give marginalized youth a tool of participation in civic life at a time when they are unable to do so due to physical organization. Although differing from (Kaviani & Salehi, 2022) focus on transnational movements, activism in this study was intensely local, demanding change at the level of the nation to address widespread problems, such as corruption, good governance, and youth representation. Youth leaders were there to be the voices of their communities' civic conversation and tone. In addition, leaders used digital channels to build civic consciousness, mobilize local events, and counter stereotypes. These are similar to the practices of digital tactics to ensure sustained engagement as described by (Associate Professor, NIMS University, Jaipur, Rajasthan & Raj, 2024). They wielded digital media as instruments for mobilizing public opinion, constructing solidarity, and teaching their communities. To be able to do this, youth leaders were also highly conscious of their civic visibility. They use their skills in leadership as a way to model public behavior and be the spearhead in civic involvement in their respective communities. Youth leaders influence the digital behavior and identity development of adolescents in their community (Zozaya-Durazo et al., 2023). This means that one of the roles of formal youth leaders is to become digital role models. They did not just strive to leave a part of themselves online; they sought to appear credible and righteous in their virtual doings. The main reason for this action is the utilization of empathy in their leadership. Youth leaders spoke of being inspired by stories of marginalized populations, political disinformation, and national tragedies. These instances approximate (Papacharissi, 2015)

concept of affective publics, in which emotion-saturated discourse sparks civic action. In this study, leaders pointed to local triggers, including the elections or environmental degradation in their communities. Their activism was emotionally rooted and nationally significant.

What happens after these youth leaders involve themselves in online social and political content is the process of change. There are stories of awakening, sparked by exposure to misinformation, a role-based responsibility, and national movements that lead them to the path of online activism. They marked the beginning of a continuing political journey grounded in responsibility, education, and emotional investment. During global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders play a crucial role in fostering unity and shaping citizens' responses (Gleibs, 2025). This leadership helps construct collective identities and efficacy, emphasizing the importance of socio-political contexts in identity formation. In particular, youth leaders emphasized that their political consciousness developed gradually, shaped by repeated exposure to disinformation, polarizing issues, and real-life governance struggles. Numerous catalysts awakened a stronger sense of civic purpose among young Filipinos. These moments led to political self-awareness that proved irreversible. These experiences parallel the political socialization through family and peers, along with online news exposure and maternal education, which significantly influence youth's political participation, particularly in the online sphere (Hong & Lin, 2017). This means that the online participation of SK Chairpersons became a means of political socialization. Leaders framed their transformation within the immediate context of their communities, governance duties, and nationhood, which contextualized their own role-based accountability. Furthermore, the online activism exhibited by these leaders became long-term and not just reactive or situational. This was marked by resilience in the face of emotional and practical barriers. Despite reported experiences of emotional fatigue, anxiety, and burnout caused by toxic online spaces and the pressure to maintain consistent civic engagement, they continue to engage with social and political content. Activism-related social media content is associated with increased mental health symptoms rarely addressed in therapy (Marshall et al., 2024). Activism inherently involves significant emotional engagement, often driven by personal experiences and a desire for social change. This emotional labor can lead to burnout as activists continuously manage intense emotions like anger and frustration (Chen et al., 2024). However, in contrast to cases where burnout often led to disengagement, the youth leaders in this study managed to persist. Their continued activism was driven by a sense of moral leadership and responsibility to educate, protect, and guide their constituents. Leaders in digital activism often feel a strong sense of ethical and social responsibility, which drives them to continue their efforts despite the mental toll. For them, civic action was not optional but intrinsic to their identity. They considered their emotional labor as a form of public service, accepting the psychological cost as part of the responsibilities attached to civic influence.

Although the current study provides valuable information, there are some limitations. The articles in this set used purposive sampling from a single tertiary government teachers' college, so the results may not apply to the broader population. The respondents who were SK Chairpersons are a highly active group in terms of local civic involvement and thus very engaged with sociopolitical issues. Their academic and civic orientations likely biased their responses toward activism. The non-involvement of non-leader or less-involved students silences potential divergent points of view—students who are disengaged, resistant, or critical of digital activism. Also, the fact that the researchers identified themselves with the participants as fellow citizens, working members of the civic society, could have influenced data interpretation. While this may have enhanced narrative access, that same status may have resulted in confirmation bias. Despite these limitations, the study makes a substantial contribution to the literature on youth digital activism. It speculates how online presentation, public presence, and role-based obligations intersect to convey a form of civic reality. It also confirms that activism can come not only in the form of mass protests but in experiential, emotional, and academic wisdom and personal digital storytelling. The research adds to the knowledge on youth political involvement by providing a story version of how Filipino youth leaders participate in civic life online. It suggests educators and youth organizations focus on emotional resilience, civic responsibility, and

critical digital literacy. These questions and more will be addressed by future studies, which might do well to undertake a comparison of platform studies, gendered activism analyses, and longitudinal analyses of sustained participation. In the end, this analysis highlights the fact that youth activism is not simply an origin point; rather, it is continually shaped, challenged, and revitalized in the digital spaces where young people lead, learn, and live.

Conclusion

The social media engagement of community youth leaders significantly contributes to the formation and evolution of their online activism. Digital platforms serve not only as tools for self-expression but as dynamic spaces for identity formation, civic participation, and political influence. Youth leaders initially use social media to nurture their personal identities and build public images through reflective and intentional content-sharing. Their online experiences turn into new forms of activism over time, where citizens take to online forms of interaction as a form of political expression. The narratives presented by the informants reveal how moments of transition, such as exposure to misinformation or involvement in major political campaigns, act as the key to increased civic participation. Despite the circumstances, such as online bullying, emotional burnout, and the pressure to perform well at studies, student leaders remain faithful to their positions, following a sense of duty as members of the educational and governmental community. These findings emphasize that Filipino youth leaders actively engaged in social media are not only consumers of technology but also people capable of becoming agents of change. Therefore, the study draws attention to how digital spaces effectively alter the process of forming civic identity among younger citizens and provides a crucial understanding of how to foster digital literacy, leadership abilities, and resilience in young people involved in civic activities. This study has limitations in generalizability because it focuses solely on one specific Teachers College and its associated community leaders, meaning the findings may not fully apply to broader institutional or social contexts. The collected data is susceptible to self-report bias (social desirability bias) inherent in survey or interview methods. Furthermore, the research does not measure the actual, long-term impact of online activism on real-world policy change or sustained community mobilization. Future research should prioritize three key areas: comparative analysis by studying youth leaders from different types of higher education institutions to understand how institutional context influences activism; utilizing mixed-methods (including network analysis) to move beyond self-reported data and accurately map influence; and critically, conducting longitudinal studies to quantify the real-world impact of their digital engagement on tangible outcomes like policy change or sustained community mobilization.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no financial or other substantive conflicts of interest that could be construed to influence the results or interpretation of this manuscript. No financial support was received for the conduct of this research or the preparation of this manuscript.

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