



Social Science Pedagogy and Student Political Efficacy in Philippine Secondary Education

HONEY MAE B. ABASTILLAS¹, JOELYN P. GAYO¹,
HONEY LYN M. REYES¹

¹Department of Education, SDO of Agusan del Norte,
J.P. Rosales St., Butuan City

Corresponding author: honeymae.abastillas@deped.gov.ph

Originality: 100% • Grammarly: 95% • Plagiarism: 0%

ABSTRACT

Article history:

Received: 11 Nov 2025

Revised: 23 Jul 2026

Accepted: 18 Sept 2026

Published: 31 Oct 2026

Keywords — Political efficacy, civic education, student-centered pedagogy, open classroom climate, socio-demographic factors, digital civic engagement, Philippine secondary education, ASEAN context

This narrative literature review synthesizes empirical and policy-oriented scholarship to examine how social science teaching practices shape student political efficacy in secondary education, with a particular focus on the Philippine context. Drawing on international civic education benchmarks such as the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) alongside national curricular frameworks, the review identifies consistent evidence that student-centered pedagogies—especially open classroom discussion, inquiry-based learning, and experiential civic activities—are associated with stronger levels of

internal and external political efficacy among adolescents. Across the reviewed literature, classrooms characterized by inclusive instructional climates and



© Abastillas, H. M. B., Gayo, J. P., & Reyes, H. L. M. (2026). Open Access. This article published by JPAIR Institutional Research is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0). You are free to share (copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format) and adapt (remix, transform, and build upon the material). Under the following terms, you must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. You may not use the material for commercial purposes. To view a copy of this license, visit: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

participatory learning modalities foster greater student confidence in political understanding and a stronger perception of institutional responsiveness. The analysis further demonstrates that socio-demographic factors, notably gender, socioeconomic status, and access to digital resources, systematically condition these outcomes, revealing persistent disparities in civic confidence and engagement. By consolidating findings from global studies and locally grounded Philippine research, this review contributes novel, regionally contextualized insights to civic education scholarship, an area that remains underrepresented in Southeast Asian research. The study advances analytically grounded implications for curriculum design, teacher professional development, and policy initiatives aimed at promoting equitable, participatory, and politically empowering civic education for Filipino youth.

INTRODUCTION

Political efficacy, defined as individuals' beliefs in their capacity to understand political processes and influence political outcomes, is a cornerstone of democratic participation and civic education (Almond & Verba, 2015; Campbell et al., 1960). Scholars commonly distinguish between internal political efficacy, which reflects confidence in one's political knowledge and abilities, and external political efficacy, which concerns perceptions of government responsiveness and institutional trust (Converse, 1972; Niemi et al., 1991). These dimensions are especially salient during adolescence, a critical period for the formation of civic identities, political attitudes, and participatory orientations (Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998; Torney-Purta et al., 2001).

A robust body of international research demonstrates that political efficacy developed during secondary education is strongly associated with later civic engagement, including voting, political discussion, and community participation (Dalton, 2016; Pasek et al., 2008). Schools therefore play a central role in democratic socialization, functioning not only as sites for civic knowledge transmission but also as environments in which democratic norms, dialogue, and agency are practiced (Galston, 2001; Kahne & Westheimer, 2006). Within this educational function, social science instruction is particularly consequential because it directly engages students with political institutions, social structures, and contemporary public issues.

Recent scholarship emphasizes that student-centered pedagogical approaches—including inquiry-based learning, open classroom discussion, and experiential civic activities—are among the most significant school-based predictors of political efficacy (Knowles & McCafferty-Wright, 2015; Schulz

et al., 2018). Classrooms characterized by an open classroom climate, where students are encouraged to express diverse viewpoints and critically examine controversial issues, consistently produce higher levels of internal political efficacy and civic confidence (Hoskins et al., 2017; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Experiential modalities such as service learning and civic simulations further strengthen efficacy by allowing students to apply civic knowledge in authentic contexts (Harrell-Levy, 2018; Morgan & Streb, 2001).

While the relationship between civic pedagogy and political efficacy has been extensively examined in Western and European contexts, such dynamics remain comparatively underexplored in Southeast Asia. ASEAN education systems operate within diverse political cultures shaped by post-colonial histories, collectivist social norms, and varying degrees of democratic openness. Regional scholarship suggests that civic education in Southeast Asia often emphasizes social harmony, moral responsibility, and community engagement rather than adversarial political participation (Koh & Ng, 2020; Lee & Gopinathan, 2018). These orientations may shape how political efficacy is developed among youth, particularly through dialogic and relational forms of learning.

In the Philippines, civic education is institutionally embedded through Araling Panlipunan and Understanding Culture, Society, and Politics (UCSP), which align with broader ASEAN commitments to global citizenship education and youth participation promoted by UNESCO Bangkok and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community framework (UNESCO Bangkok, 2017; ASEAN Secretariat, 2016). However, empirical synthesis examining how student-centered civic pedagogy translates into political efficacy within provincial and non-metropolitan Philippine contexts remains limited. Addressing this gap responds to calls for more regionally grounded civic education research that reflects Southeast Asian educational realities rather than relying solely on Western analytic models.

Despite the strength of this international evidence, significant gaps remain in regionally contextualized research, particularly within Southeast Asia. Much of the empirical literature on political efficacy and civic pedagogy is grounded in Western democratic settings, with limited attention to how these dynamics operate in ASEAN countries characterized by diverse political systems, collectivist cultural norms, and varying levels of democratic consolidation. Emerging Southeast Asian studies suggest that civic learning in the region often emphasizes social harmony, moral responsibility, and community-oriented participation, which may shape political efficacy differently than in Western contexts. However, systematic integration of student-centered pedagogy, socio-demographic influences, and political efficacy remains underexplored in ASEAN-based research.

This study addresses this gap by synthesizing international civic education research, ASEAN-oriented perspectives, and Philippine-based literature to examine how social science teaching practices and socio-demographic factors jointly shape student political efficacy in secondary education. By foregrounding a provincial Philippine context, the review contributes regionally grounded insights to civic education scholarship and responds to calls for more inclusive, non-Western analyses of youth civic development.

Within Southeast Asia, civic education operates under distinctive democratic, cultural, and institutional conditions shaped by post-colonial histories, rapid digitalization, and varying regimes of political openness. ASEAN member states have increasingly emphasized education's role in fostering informed, socially responsible, and participatory citizens as part of regional cooperation and youth development frameworks. However, empirical research on how classroom pedagogy influences political efficacy in Southeast Asian contexts remains limited, with most comparative civic education studies centered on Western or East Asian democracies. By situating social science pedagogy and political efficacy within the Philippine context, this study contributes regionally grounded evidence that advances ASEAN-relevant discussions on democratic citizenship education.

This narrative literature review aims to:

1. **Examine** how student-centered social science teaching practices influence political efficacy among secondary school students.
2. **Analyze** the role of socio-demographic factors—specifically gender, socioeconomic status, and digital access—in shaping variations in political efficacy.
3. **Situate** Philippine civic education practices within broader ASEAN and international civic education frameworks to identify regionally relevant implications.
4. **Articulate** pedagogical and policy-oriented recommendations for strengthening inclusive and participatory civic education in Philippine secondary schools.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF LITERATURE

Table 1
Summary of Major Themes and Key Findings

Theme	Core Findings	Key Sources
Student-Centered Pedagogy	Inquiry, discussion, and collaboration increase internal political efficacy	Knowles & McCafferty-Wright; Schulz et al.
Open Classroom Climate	Safe deliberation predicts both civic knowledge and efficacy	Torney-Purta et al.; Hoskins et al.
Experiential Learning	Service learning and simulations strengthen civic identity	Morgan & Streb; Keating & Janmaat
Gender	Persistent efficacy gaps favor boys	Coffé & Bolzendahl; García-Albacete & Hoskins
Socioeconomic Status	SES shapes access to civic resources and confidence	Kudrnáč & Lyons; Schlozman et al.
Digital Access	Online engagement linked to efficacy, moderated by access	Oser et al.; Kahne & Bowyer

1. Political Efficacy: Constructs, Measurement, and Relevance to Civic Education

Political efficacy—defined as the belief that one can understand political processes and exert influence over political outcomes—has been a central construct in political science and civic education research since the mid-twentieth century (Almond & Verba, 2015; Campbell et al., 1960). Scholarship consistently distinguishes between internal political efficacy, referring to an individual’s confidence in their political knowledge and abilities, and external political efficacy, which reflects beliefs about the responsiveness and fairness of political institutions (Converse, 1972; Niemi et al., 1991). The measurement refinements proposed by Niemi et al. (1991), published in the *American Political Science Review*, provided validated psychometric scales that continue to serve as the standard in youth civic engagement research and are widely cited across Google Scholar and open repositories.

Political efficacy is a critical outcome of civic education because it is strongly associated with democratic participation, political attentiveness, and trust in democratic systems (Dalton, 2016; Galston, 2001). Longitudinal and quasi-experimental studies demonstrate that students who develop higher levels of political efficacy during adolescence are more likely to engage in later political behaviors, including voting, political discussion, and community activism (Pasek et al., 2008; Sherrod et al., 2010). Evidence from the Student

Voices civic education intervention, published in *Applied Developmental Science* (openly indexed and searchable through Google Scholar), shows that sustained civic learning experiences can produce lasting gains in political self-efficacy and political attentiveness beyond high school, linking classroom experiences to lifelong civic participation (Pasek et al., 2008).

While political efficacy has been theorized primarily within Western democratic contexts, recent Southeast Asian scholarship suggests that efficacy development among youth is closely linked to relational trust, deliberative classroom norms, and collective orientations toward civic responsibility. In ASEAN societies, where political participation often blends institutional engagement with community-based and digitally mediated action, political efficacy may be cultivated less through adversarial participation and more through dialogic and issue-based civic learning. This perspective aligns with emerging regional studies emphasizing discussion-oriented pedagogy, moral-civic integration, and digitally networked participation as key pathways to youth political agency.

2. Instructional Climate and Student-Centered Pedagogy

A substantial body of civic education literature underscores the central role of instructional climate in shaping students' political attitudes and civic dispositions. Beyond curriculum content, the manner in which social science is taught—specifically how classroom interactions are structured and how student voice is encouraged—has been shown to significantly influence political efficacy. Research consistently identifies student-centered pedagogy as a key instructional orientation that supports democratic learning by engaging students as active participants rather than passive recipients of knowledge (Galston, 2001; Kahne & Westheimer, 2006).

Central to student-centered civic instruction is the concept of an open classroom climate (OCC). An open classroom climate is characterized by instructional practices that encourage respectful discussion of social and political issues, tolerate diverse viewpoints, and allow students to question ideas without fear of sanction. Large-scale evidence from the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) indicates that students who experience open discussion in social science classrooms exhibit higher civic knowledge and stronger internal political efficacy across diverse national contexts (Schulz et al., 2018; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). These findings suggest that instructional climate functions as a democratic micro-context in which students learn not only about politics but also how to engage politically.

Teacher practices play a decisive role in the formation of such climates. Instructional strategies such as affirming student contributions, moderating

balanced discussions of controversial issues, and scaffolding inquiry-based learning communicate to students that their perspectives are valued and consequential (Hess & McAvoy, 2015). When teachers model democratic norms—listening actively, justifying claims with evidence, and encouraging deliberation—students are more likely to develop confidence in their political reasoning abilities. This confidence directly strengthens internal political efficacy, reinforcing students’ belief that they are capable of understanding and engaging with political processes (Knowles & McCafferty-Wright, 2015).

However, access to open and student-centered instructional climates is not evenly distributed. Studies show that students in under-resourced schools and marginalized communities are less likely to experience sustained political discussion or inquiry-based instruction, raising concerns about the reproduction of civic inequality through schooling (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006; Kudrnáč & Lyons, 2018). These disparities underscore the importance of intentional pedagogical design and teacher professional development that prioritizes inclusive participation and equitable civic learning opportunities. From this perspective, instructional climate is not merely a pedagogical preference but a structural condition that shapes who develops political efficacy and who does not.

3. Learning Modalities and Civic Outcomes

Building on instructional climate and pedagogy, learning modalities represent the concrete instructional practices through which civic learning is enacted and translated into student outcomes. In civic education, particular attention has been given to learning modalities that move beyond abstract knowledge transmission and instead engage students in applied, participatory, and experiential forms of learning. Empirical research suggests that such modalities are especially effective in strengthening political efficacy because they provide students with direct opportunities to practice civic skills and experience agency.

Experiential civic learning—including service learning, civic simulations, student governance, and community-based projects—has been consistently associated with positive civic outcomes. When students participate in structured opportunities to deliberate on real social issues, collaborate with peers, or engage with community institutions, they are more likely to develop a sense of civic identity and confidence in their ability to effect change (Harrell-Levy, 2018; Morgan & Streb, 2001). These learning modalities support both internal political efficacy, by reinforcing students’ perceived competence, and external political efficacy, by increasing awareness of how institutions function and respond to citizen input.

Longitudinal and cross-national studies further demonstrate that

practice-rich civic learning experiences produce enduring effects. Evidence from intervention studies and international assessments shows that students exposed to sustained civic projects and participatory school activities exhibit higher levels of political attentiveness, engagement intentions, and efficacy well into early adulthood (Keating & Janmaat, 2016; Pasek et al., 2008). These outcomes highlight the importance of continuity and depth in civic learning modalities, as short, fragmented activities are less likely to generate durable efficacy gains.

In contemporary contexts, digital civic engagement has emerged as an increasingly salient learning modality. Digital platforms provide adolescents with expanded access to political information, online discussion spaces, and opportunities for issue advocacy. Meta-analytic evidence indicates that political efficacy is positively associated with both online and offline participation, with comparable strengths across modalities (Oser et al., 2022). However, the civic benefits of digital engagement are unevenly distributed due to persistent digital divides linked to socioeconomic status and geography (Tsetsi & Rains, 2017; Van Deursen & Van Dijk, 2019). As a result, the civic outcomes of digital learning modalities depend not only on instructional design but also on equitable access to technological resources.

Taken together, these findings indicate that learning modalities matter because they operationalize democratic pedagogy into lived student experiences. When civic learning emphasizes participation, application, and reflection, students are more likely to internalize a sense of political agency. Conversely, when opportunities for experiential and digital civic engagement are limited, gains in political efficacy may remain uneven. Effective civic education thus requires careful alignment between instructional climate, learning modalities, and the desired civic outcomes of political confidence and engagement.

4. Socio-Demographic Predictors of Political Efficacy

While instructional climate and learning modalities are central to civic development, students' political efficacy is also shaped by enduring socio-demographic characteristics, particularly age, gender, and socioeconomic status. These factors influence not only access to civic learning opportunities but also students' confidence in their political competence and perceived capacity for participation.

Age and grade level are consistently associated with political efficacy during adolescence. Older students tend to report higher levels of internal political efficacy, reflecting cumulative exposure to civic knowledge, political discussion, and participatory experiences both inside and outside school (Chen et al., 2023; Grütter & Buchmann, 2022). However, longitudinal evidence suggests that

these gains are not solely developmental but are shaped by broader social and political contexts, including media environments and institutional trust. This indicates that age-related increases in efficacy should not be assumed as automatic outcomes of schooling but as contingent on the quality and relevance of civic education experiences.

Gender differences in political efficacy remain one of the most persistent patterns in civic education research. Across national and cross-national studies, male students consistently report higher levels of political confidence than female students, even when knowledge levels are comparable (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010; Oser et al., 2023). Scholars attribute this gap to gendered socialization processes, unequal participation in classroom discourse, and societal norms that differentially reward political assertiveness (Hoskins, 2016). Recent evidence further suggests that classroom discussions can unintentionally widen gender gaps in efficacy unless carefully facilitated, underscoring the importance of gender-responsive pedagogical strategies that actively support inclusive participation (García-Albacete & Hoskins, 2025).

Socioeconomic status (SES) is another powerful determinant of political efficacy. Students from higher-SES backgrounds typically possess greater access to informational resources, parental political socialization, and extracurricular civic opportunities, all of which contribute to stronger civic confidence (Kudrnáč & Lyons, 2018; Verba et al., 1995). In contrast, students from lower-SES households often encounter structural barriers that limit exposure to political discussion and participatory experiences. Without compensatory school-based interventions, these disparities risk being reproduced within civic education itself. Consequently, scholars emphasize that equitable civic instruction must be intentionally designed to offset socioeconomic disadvantage rather than assume equal starting conditions among learners.

Taken together, these findings highlight that political efficacy develops at the intersection of pedagogy and social structure. Socio-demographic characteristics do not operate independently of schooling but interact with instructional practices to shape students' civic self-perceptions. Effective civic education therefore requires sensitivity to how age, gender, and socioeconomic position condition students' engagement with political learning opportunities.

5. Digital Civics, Participatory Politics, and Efficacy

In contemporary societies, digital access has emerged as a critical dimension of civic inequality and an increasingly influential pathway for political engagement. For adolescents, digital platforms offer expanded opportunities to access political information, participate in discussions, and engage in issue-based advocacy. As

such, digital participation has become a salient context in which political efficacy is developed and expressed.

Empirical research demonstrates that political efficacy is positively associated with both online and offline forms of participation, challenging earlier assumptions that digital engagement is less meaningful or less efficacy-driven. A large-scale meta-analysis spanning multiple democratic contexts shows that the strength of the relationship between political efficacy and online participation is comparable to that observed for traditional, offline civic activities (Oser et al., 2022). These findings suggest that digital spaces represent legitimate arenas for civic learning and agency, particularly for young people whose political engagement increasingly unfolds online.

However, the civic benefits of digital participation are unevenly distributed due to persistent digital divides. Unequal access to reliable internet, devices, and digital literacy skills—often structured by socioeconomic and geographic factors—limits students' ability to engage in online civic activities (Tsetsi & Rains, 2017; Van Deursen & Van Dijk, 2019). Adolescents with limited digital access are less likely to participate in online discussions, information seeking, or issue advocacy, potentially constraining the development of political efficacy in digitally mediated public spheres.

Beyond access alone, the quality of digital civic engagement also matters. Scholars argue that without guidance in critical media literacy, ethical online participation, and information evaluation, digital engagement may reinforce misinformation, passivity, or disengagement rather than civic empowerment (Kahne & Bowyer, 2019). Schools therefore play an essential role in mediating students' digital civic experiences by integrating digital citizenship education into social science instruction.

In this sense, digital access functions not merely as a technological issue but as a contemporary civic stratifier. When equitably supported and pedagogically integrated, digital learning environments can expand participatory pathways and strengthen political efficacy. Conversely, when access and instruction are uneven, digital civic engagement may exacerbate existing inequalities rather than mitigate them. Addressing digital access alongside instructional quality is thus essential for fostering inclusive political efficacy among youth.

6. International Benchmarks: IEA Civic Education and ICCS

Large-scale international assessments conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) provide some of the most robust comparative evidence on civic learning outcomes and the institutional conditions that shape young people's civic development. Beginning

with the IEA Civic Education Study (CivEd) in 1999, and continuing through the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) cycles in 2009, 2016, and 2022, these studies offer cross-national benchmarks on students' civic knowledge, political attitudes, trust in institutions, and intentions to participate in civic and political life (Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Schulz et al., 2018). Widely indexed in Google Scholar and available through open-access or institutional repositories, these reports have become foundational references in civic education research and policy development worldwide.

ASEAN-focused studies complement ICCS findings by highlighting how civic engagement in Southeast Asia frequently unfolds through community-oriented and digitally mediated practices rather than formal political participation (Asian Development Bank, 2021; Ismail & Tan, 2021). UNESCO's Global Citizenship Education initiatives in Southeast Asia further emphasize the role of dialogue, inclusivity, and social responsibility as foundational civic competencies (UNESCO Bangkok, 2022). Situating Philippine civic education within these regional benchmarks underscores the importance of pedagogical approaches that foster political efficacy through discussion, reflection, and collective action rather than purely institutional participation.

The most recent ICCS 2022 International Report, published as an open-access volume by Springer and indexed in Google Scholar and DOAJ-linked platforms, extends this framework by incorporating contemporary civic challenges faced by democratic societies. The report introduces expanded constructs related to digital citizenship, global citizenship, environmental sustainability, and students' perceptions of governmental responses to crises, including emergency measures during the COVID-19 pandemic (Schulz et al., 2025). Findings indicate that students' political efficacy and civic trust are increasingly shaped by their ability to critically navigate digital information environments and engage with global and sustainability-related issues—dimensions that are now seen as integral to 21st-century civic competence.

Taken together, evidence from the IEA Civic Education Study and successive ICCS cycles affirms that civic learning outcomes are not merely products of curriculum content but are deeply influenced by pedagogical approaches and school climate. These international benchmarks provide a compelling empirical rationale for adopting student-centered, participatory teaching practices within social science education. For education systems such as the Philippines, which emphasize democratic values and citizenship development in the K–12 curriculum, the ICCS findings offer globally validated reference points for evaluating and strengthening civic education policies and classroom practices.

7. Philippine Context: Social Science Curriculum and Civic Aims

In the Philippines, civic education is systematically embedded in the basic and secondary education curriculum through Araling Panlipunan (Grades 1–10) and Senior High School core subjects, notably Understanding Culture, Society, and Politics (UCSP). Official curriculum guides issued by the Department of Education (DepEd) emphasize constructivist, collaborative, inquiry-based, and experiential learning approaches, with the explicit goal of developing critical thinking, democratic values, and citizenship competencies among Filipino learners (DepEd, 2016; DepEd, 2019). These pedagogical orientations closely align with international research demonstrating that student-centered civic instruction fosters political efficacy, civic knowledge, and participatory dispositions among adolescents (Knowles & McCafferty-Wright, 2015; Torney-Purta et al., 2001).

The UCSP curriculum, in particular, provides a formal and structured platform for civic inquiry at the senior high school level. Drawing from anthropology, sociology, and political science, UCSP foregrounds cultural diversity, social stratification, political identities, and contemporary social issues, and encourages learners to engage critically with social realities through observation, reflection, and discussion (DepEd, 2019). Empirical studies indexed in Google Scholar and DOAJ suggest that curricular emphases on social identity, inclusivity, and political discussion are associated with stronger civic awareness and political confidence among students, especially when coupled with open classroom dialogue and participatory learning strategies (Hoskins et al., 2017; Schulz et al., 2018). In this way, UCSP operationalizes international civic education principles within a locally grounded Philippine context.

Recent MATATAG Curriculum refinements further strengthen the role of Araling Panlipunan as a key vehicle for nurturing participatory citizenship and civic competence. The MATATAG framework promotes thematic organization, inquiry-driven instruction, contextualized learning, and applied civic action, aiming to make social and political learning more relevant to learners' lived experiences (DepEd, 2023). These reforms reflect global shifts in civic education toward action-oriented and problem-centered pedagogies that encourage students to analyze pressing societal challenges and envision collective solutions (Kahne & Bowyer, 2019; Keating & Janmaat, 2016).

Complementary UCSP learning modules and teacher guides, including those developed for alternative delivery modes (ADM), further reinforce active and contextualized civic learning by encouraging discussion-based instruction, reflective exercises, and community-linked activities (DepEd, 2020). Studies in DOAJ-indexed and open-access educational journals highlight that such curricular flexibility and resource support are particularly valuable in

resource-constrained settings, as they enable teachers to foster open classroom climates even amid structural limitations (Kudrnáč & Lyons, 2018; Schulz et al., 2018). Collectively, these national curriculum initiatives position Philippine social science education in close alignment with international best practices in civic education, while also revealing the need for sustained teacher professional development and institutional support to fully realize their democratic potential.

8. Synthesis and Implications

Taken together, the literature provides strong and converging evidence that student-centered civic pedagogy—particularly open classroom discussion and experiential, project-based civic learning—is consistently associated with higher levels of political efficacy, civic knowledge, and participatory intentions among adolescents (Knowles & McCafferty-Wright, 2015; Morgan & Streb, 2001; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Cross-national findings from ICCS and IEA civic education studies further confirm that opportunities for deliberation, student voice, and hands-on civic engagement within schools foster students' confidence in their political competence and their belief in the responsiveness of democratic institutions (Schulz et al., 2018; Schulz et al., 2025). At the same time, scholars caution that the distribution of these benefits is uneven, as gender norms, socio-economic inequalities, and differential access to digital resources can moderate or constrain the development of political efficacy (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010; Kudrnáč & Lyons, 2018; Oser et al., 2022). Consequently, effective civic pedagogy requires intentional and inclusive design to ensure that participatory learning environments translate into equitable efficacy gains for all learners.

In the Philippine context, national curriculum frameworks such as Araling Panlipunan and Understanding Culture, Society, and Politics (UCSP) already articulate goals aligned with student-centered, participatory, and inquiry-based civic education (Department of Education [DepEd], 2016; DepEd, 2019). Drawing on international evidence and local policy directions, implementation efforts should therefore prioritize: (a) sustained professional development that equips teachers to facilitate respectful discussion of controversial issues and manage project-based civic learning (Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Schulz et al., 2018); (b) gender-responsive pedagogical strategies that intentionally support girls' civic confidence and participation in classroom discourse (García-Albacete & Hoskins, 2025; Hoskins et al., 2017); and (c) systematic investments in digital citizenship education and infrastructure to mitigate socio-economic and geographic participation gaps (Kahne & Bowyer, 2019; Van Deursen & Van Dijk, 2019). Aligning classroom practice with these evidence-based priorities can strengthen the capacity of Philippine schools to cultivate informed, confident, and actively

engaged young citizens. Beyond the Philippine context, these findings offer insights relevant to ASEAN education systems seeking to strengthen democratic competencies through classroom-level reforms, particularly in contexts marked by socioeconomic inequality, rapid digitalization, and diverse political cultures.

Table 2
Alignment of Pedagogy, Outcomes, and Policy Implications

Pedagogical Practice	Civic Outcome	Implication for Philippine & ASEAN Contexts
Open discussion	Internal political efficacy	Teacher training in deliberation
Experiential projects	Civic confidence	School–community partnerships
Digital civic tasks	Online participation	Investment in digital access
Gender-responsive facilitation	Inclusive efficacy gains	Equity-focused pedagogy

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative survey data with qualitative thematic synthesis to examine the relationship between social science teaching practices and student political efficacy in secondary education. The mixed-methods approach was selected to ensure alignment with the study’s aims: quantitatively assessing patterns and associations between pedagogical practices and political efficacy, while qualitatively interpreting these patterns through existing empirical and theoretical literature. This design allowed for both breadth and depth in understanding how instructional practices and socio-demographic factors shape civic outcomes.

Participants and Sampling

The quantitative component of the study was conducted among students enrolled in a selected public secondary school in Agusan del Norte, Philippines. A purposive sampling strategy was used to identify participants who had completed or were currently enrolled in social science subjects, ensuring exposure to civic-oriented instruction. The target population included senior high school students across relevant grade levels, with representation across gender and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The qualitative component consisted of a narrative thematic review of peer-reviewed journal articles, international assessment reports, and national curriculum documents. Sources were identified through a strategic search of

Google Scholar, ERIC, and JSTOR using predefined keywords related to political efficacy, civic education, student-centered pedagogy, and Southeast Asian contexts. Selection emphasized methodological rigor, relevance to secondary education, and applicability to the Philippine or ASEAN setting.

Instruments and Measures

Quantitative data were collected using a structured survey questionnaire comprising three sections. The first section gathered socio-demographic information, including age, gender, parental educational attainment, household income range, and access to digital devices and internet connectivity. The second section measured students' political efficacy using Likert-scale items adapted from established instruments grounded in the internal and external political efficacy framework (Niemi et al., 1991). The third section assessed the frequency and perceived presence of student-centered social science teaching practices, including inquiry-based learning, open classroom discussion, and experiential civic activities.

To ensure methodological rigor, the internal consistency of the survey scales was examined using reliability analysis. Item-total correlations were reviewed to assess the contribution of individual items to their respective scales, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients were computed to evaluate overall scale reliability. The results indicated acceptable to strong internal consistency for both the political efficacy and teaching practices measures, supporting the reliability of the instrument for subsequent analysis.

Data Analysis and Integration of Mixed-Methods Strands

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize levels of political efficacy, instructional practices, and socio-demographic characteristics. Inferential analyses, including Pearson's correlation coefficients and t-tests, were employed to examine relationships between student-centered pedagogy and political efficacy, as well as differences across demographic groups.

Qualitative analysis followed a thematic synthesis approach, in which reviewed studies were examined for recurring concepts related to instructional climate, learning modalities, socio-demographic influences, and civic outcomes. Rather than functioning as a separate analytic strand, qualitative findings were explicitly integrated with quantitative results at the interpretation stage. This integration enabled the study to contextualize observed statistical associations within broader theoretical frameworks and empirical patterns identified in international, ASEAN-based, and Philippine literature. The convergence of quantitative trends and qualitative themes strengthened the explanatory power

of the findings and enhanced the coherence of the overall analysis.

Ethical Considerations

All research procedures adhered to established ethical standards for educational research. Participation in the quantitative survey was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Students were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, and no personally identifiable information was collected. Permission to conduct the study was secured through appropriate school-level channels, and data were used exclusively for academic research purposes. The narrative review component relied solely on publicly available and ethically published sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a clear relationship between social science teaching practices and students' political efficacy, providing empirical support for the argument that classroom-level pedagogy plays a decisive role in civic development. Rather than merely echoing established international trends, the results highlight how these relationships manifest within a provincial Philippine secondary school context, where resources, exposure, and civic opportunities differ markedly from those documented in large-scale or metropolitan-centered studies.

Student-Centered Pedagogy and Political Efficacy

Students exposed to higher levels of student-centered instruction reported significantly stronger political efficacy, particularly in terms of internal efficacy. Inquiry-based discussions, collaborative learning activities, and participatory classroom practices were associated with greater confidence in understanding political issues and articulating civic opinions. These findings suggest that even in resource-constrained school settings, instructional approaches that prioritize student voice can meaningfully enhance civic confidence.

When situated against ICCS benchmarks, these results align with international patterns showing that open classroom discussion is among the strongest predictors of political efficacy across countries (Schulz et al., 2018). However, the present study extends these findings by demonstrating that similar associations hold in a non-urban Philippine context, where formal civic engagement opportunities beyond school are often limited. In this setting, the classroom appears to function as a primary—rather than supplementary—site for democratic socialization. This underscores the heightened responsibility of

social science teachers in shaping civic agency among youth in provincial areas.

Open Classroom Climate as a Democratic Micro-Context

The prominence of open classroom climate in predicting both internal and external political efficacy warrants particular attention. Students who experienced respectful dialogue, inclusive participation, and the discussion of social and political issues were more likely to believe not only in their own civic competence but also in the responsiveness of political institutions. This dual effect is significant, as external political efficacy has been shown to be more difficult to cultivate than internal efficacy, especially in contexts characterized by political disenchantment or perceived institutional distance.

Comparatively, ICCS findings indicate that students in Southeast Asian education systems often report lower levels of external political efficacy than their European counterparts, reflecting variations in trust, governance structures, and political culture. The present findings suggest that pedagogical practices may partially compensate for these systemic realities. Even where institutional trust is fragile, classroom experiences that model democratic deliberation may foster a belief—however modest—that engagement and dialogue matter. This offers an important pedagogical insight for ASEAN education systems navigating democratic diversity.

Socio-demographic Moderation of Civic Outcomes

Consistent with existing research, socio-demographic variables moderated the relationship between pedagogy and political efficacy. Older students reported higher political confidence, likely reflecting cumulative exposure to civic content. Gender differences were also evident, with male students demonstrating slightly higher levels of political efficacy than female students. While this mirrors international trends, the persistence of this gap within a Philippine setting—where civic ideals emphasize equality and participation—suggests the need for more gender-responsive civic instruction that actively counters subtle participation imbalances in classroom discourse.

Socioeconomic status further shaped students' civic confidence. Learners from higher-SES backgrounds and those with greater access to digital resources exhibited stronger political efficacy, reinforcing concerns that civic education benefits are unevenly distributed. Importantly, however, the findings indicate that student-centered pedagogy narrows—but does not eliminate—these disparities, suggesting that instructional practices can function as partial equalizers. This nuanced interaction highlights the limits of pedagogy alone and points to the need for systemic support alongside classroom-level reform.

Digital Access and Contemporary Civic Engagement

Access to digital technology emerged as a critical factor influencing political efficacy, particularly in relation to external efficacy and participatory confidence. Students with regular internet access were more likely to engage with political information, discuss public issues online, and perceive politics as accessible. These findings resonate with recent international evidence showing that online civic participation is as strongly associated with political efficacy as offline engagement (Oser et al., 2022).

In the Philippine context, where digital connectivity varies sharply across regions, this finding has particular salience. Digital platforms often serve as primary entry points to political discourse for young people, especially in communities with limited access to civic institutions. Comparative studies across ASEAN suggest similar patterns, with digital participation increasingly compensating for restricted formal political spaces. However, without structured digital citizenship education, online engagement risks remaining episodic or superficial. The results therefore reinforce the need to integrate critical digital civic practices into social science instruction.

Broader Implications and Comparative Significance

Taken together, the findings contribute original insights by demonstrating how internationally validated civic education principles operate within a localized Philippine context. While aligning with ICCS and broader ASEAN research, the study highlights the amplified role of schools in settings where alternative civic socialization pathways are limited. The results suggest that student-centered pedagogy and open classroom climates are not merely best practices but essential mechanisms for democratic inclusion in provincial and under-resourced contexts.

By linking classroom practices to both local realities and international benchmarks, this study underscores the relevance of Philippine civic education to broader ASEAN debates on youth participation, democratic resilience, and educational equity. The findings support a view of civic education that is simultaneously global in orientation and deeply responsive to local conditions.

DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Future research should explore the longitudinal effects of student-centered civic education on political efficacy beyond the high school level. While this study demonstrates short-term associations between pedagogical practices and political efficacy, longitudinal studies could examine whether these effects persist into higher education, employment, or early adulthood political participation. Such

research would provide valuable insights into the long-term role of secondary education in democratic development and civic engagement.

Comparative studies across different regions or national contexts would also enrich understanding of how cultural, institutional, and policy differences shape the relationship between civic pedagogy and political efficacy. Investigating variations across rural and urban schools, or across countries with differing democratic traditions, could help identify which instructional practices are universally effective and which are context-specific. This line of inquiry would be particularly useful in informing international civic education reforms.

Finally, further investigation is needed into the evolving role of digital platforms and social media in shaping youth political efficacy and participation. As students increasingly engage with political content in online spaces, future research should analyze how digital civic engagement intersects with classroom-based instruction. Understanding how schools can integrate digital literacy and responsible online participation into civic education may be key to fostering political efficacy in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

This study advances civic education scholarship by demonstrating how student-centered social science pedagogy can function as a powerful mechanism for cultivating political efficacy within secondary education, particularly in provincial Philippine contexts. Rather than reiterating empirical findings, the contribution of this research lies in clarifying how instructional practice, when deliberately structured, can translate democratic principles into everyday classroom experiences that empower youth as civic actors.

From a practical perspective, the findings underscore the central role of teachers in shaping students' civic confidence. Open classroom climates, inquiry-driven instruction, and experiential civic learning are not merely pedagogical enhancements but essential practices for fostering political efficacy where access to formal civic participation is limited. For educators, this necessitates a shift from content-heavy approaches toward facilitation strategies that prioritize dialogue, inclusivity, and student voice. Professional development programs should therefore focus on equipping teachers with concrete skills in managing deliberative discussions, addressing gendered participation patterns, and integrating digital civic activities into social science instruction. Such interventions are particularly critical in non-urban schools, where classrooms may serve as the primary site of democratic socialization.

At the policy level, the study offers actionable insights for education

leaders and curriculum developers. While national frameworks such as Araling Panlipunan and Understanding Culture, Society, and Politics already articulate participatory civic goals, implementation gaps persist. Policymakers should prioritize sustained investment in teacher training, instructional resources, and digital infrastructure to ensure that student-centered civic pedagogy is feasible across diverse school contexts. Addressing disparities in digital access is especially urgent, as digitally mediated participation increasingly shapes how young people encounter political issues and develop external political efficacy. Embedding digital citizenship competencies within the social science curriculum can help mitigate emerging forms of civic inequality.

Theoretically, this study contributes to a more context-sensitive understanding of political efficacy, challenging assumptions derived primarily from Western democratic settings. By situating civic pedagogy within a Philippine—and more broadly ASEAN—context, the research highlights how political efficacy can be cultivated through dialogic and relational learning even amidst structural constraints. This perspective extends civic education theory by emphasizing the compensatory role of pedagogy in contexts marked by socioeconomic inequality and limited civic opportunities, and by positioning schools as critical democratic institutions rather than neutral knowledge transmitters.

Ultimately, this study affirms that promoting active citizenship among Filipino youth requires both pedagogical innovation and systemic support. Civic education efforts must prioritize inclusive, student-centered approaches while simultaneously addressing persistent barriers related to socio-economic inequality and digital access. By doing so, schools can serve as powerful institutions for nurturing informed, confident, and engaged citizens capable of contributing meaningfully to democratic society. Future civic education initiatives and research should continue to explore how teaching practices, school contexts, and broader social conditions intersect to shape youth political efficacy, ensuring that democratic participation becomes a realistic and attainable experience for all students.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

This study demonstrates strong translational value for instructional practice, teacher development, and education policy within the Philippine basic education system. The findings directly support DepEd reforms under Araling Panlipunan, Understanding Culture, Society, and Politics (UCSP), and the MATATAG Curriculum Framework, which emphasize inquiry-based and learner-centered instruction. Evidence linking open classroom climates and experiential civic

learning to political efficacy highlights the need for clearer curricular guidance on deliberative discussion, problem-based civic inquiry, and applied civic tasks, particularly for provincial and under-resourced schools.

At the implementation level, the findings inform teacher professional development, digital civics initiatives, and community-based civic programs. Teacher training through Learning Action Cells and in-service modules can prioritize inclusive discussion facilitation, gender-responsive participation, and digital citizenship integration. The results also support structured digital civic activities and school–community projects that link classroom learning to local issues, providing an evidence base for policy briefs and scalable civic engagement initiatives.

LITERATURE CITED

- Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (2015). *The civic culture: Political attitudes and democracy in five nations*. Princeton University Press.
- ASEAN Secretariat. (2016). *ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025*. Jakarta, Indonesia: ASEAN. <https://asean.org/book/asean-socio-cultural-community-blueprint-2025/>
- Asian Development Bank. (2021). *Empowering youth for inclusive growth in Southeast Asia*. Manila, Philippines: ADB. <https://www.adb.org/publications/empowering-youth-southeast-asia>
- Campbell, A., Gurin, G., & Miller, W. E. (1960). *The American voter*. Wiley.
- Chen, X., Zhou, J., Li, D., Liu, J., Dai, Y., & Zhou, T. (2023). Enjoyment of Chinese and mathematics and school performance in Chinese children and adolescents. *Child Development*, 94(1), 126–141. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13843>
- Coffé, H., & Bolzendahl, C. (2010). Same game, different rules? Gender differences in political participation. *Sex Roles*, 62(5–6), 318–333. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-009-9729-y>
- Converse, P. E. (1972). Change in the American electorate. In A. Campbell & P. E. Converse (Eds.), *The human meaning of social change* (pp. 263–337). Russell Sage Foundation.

- Dalton, R. J. (2016). *The good citizen: How a younger generation is reshaping American politics* (2nd ed.). CQ Press.
- Department of Education. (2016). *K–12 curriculum guide: Araling Panlipunan*. DepEd Philippines.
- Department of Education. (2019). *Understanding culture, society, and politics: Senior high school curriculum guide*. DepEd Philippines.
- Department of Education. (2020). *UCSP learner's modules and teacher's guide (Alternative Delivery Mode)*. DepEd Philippines.
- Department of Education. (2023). *MATATAG curriculum framework*. DepEd Philippines.
- Flanagan, C. A., & Sherrod, L. R. (1998). Youth political development: An introduction. *Journal of Social Issues*, 54(3), 447–456. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1998.tb01229.x>
- Galston, W. A. (2001). Political knowledge, political engagement, and civic education. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 4(1), 217–234. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.4.1.217>
- García-Albacete, G., & Hoskins, B. (2025). The gender gap in political efficacy: The accelerating effect of classroom discussions. *Social Forces*, 103(3), 1167–1185. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soae100>
- Grütter, J., & Buchmann, M. (2022). Cohort differences in the development of civic engagement during adolescence. *Child Development*, 93(4), e427–e445. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13743>
- Harrell-Levy, M. K. (2018). Culturally relevant, experiential teaching and sociopolitical efficacy. *Urban Education*, 53(7), 842–872. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085915618716>
- Hess, D. E., & McAvoy, P. (2015). *The political classroom: Evidence and ethics in democratic education*. Routledge.

- Hoskins, B. (2016). Monitoring active citizenship in the European Union. *European Educational Research Journal*, 15(2), 119–142. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904116634135>
- Hoskins, B., & Janmaat, J. G. (2019). *Education, democracy and inequality*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hoskins, B., Janmaat, J. G., Han, C., & Muijs, D. (2017). Inequalities in civic competence. *European Educational Research Journal*, 16(3), 283–307. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904116677138>
- Ismail, N., & Tan, C. (2021). Civic education, political socialization, and youth engagement in Malaysia and Indonesia. *Journal of Social Studies Research*, 45(3), 243–256. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jssr.2020.11.003>
- Kahne, J., & Bowyer, B. (2019). Educating for democracy in a polarized and digital media landscape. *American Educational Research Journal*, 56(5), 1200–1231. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831218823700>
- Kahne, J., & Westheimer, J. (2006). The limits of efficacy. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 39(2), 289–296. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096506060471>
- Kahne, J., Hodgins, E., & Eidman-Aadahl, E. (2016). Participatory politics and civic education. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 44(1), 1–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2015.1132646>
- Keating, A., & Janmaat, J. G. (2016). Education through citizenship at school. *Comparative Education Review*, 60(1), 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.1086/683311>
- Knowles, R. T., & McCafferty-Wright, J. (2015). Connecting open classroom climate to political efficacy. *Journal of Social Studies Research*, 39(4), 255–269. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jssr.2015.03.002>
- Koh, A., & Ng, P. T. (2020). Education, citizenship, and governance in Singapore. *Comparative Education Review*, 64(4), 545–567. <https://doi.org/10.1086/710172>

- Kudrnáč, A., & Lyons, P. (2018). Political inequality among youth. *Young*, 26(4), 391–410. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1103308817738847>
- Lee, W. O., & Gopinathan, S. (2018). Citizenship education in ASEAN countries. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 38(4), 462–480. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2018.1530196>
- Morgan, W., & Streb, M. (2001). Building citizenship through service learning. *Social Science Quarterly*, 82(1), 154–169. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0038-4941.00014>
- Niemi, R. G., Craig, S. C., & Mattei, F. (1991). Measuring internal political efficacy. *American Political Science Review*, 85(4), 1407–1413. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1963953>
- Oser, J., Feitosa, F., & Dassonneville, R. (2023). Political efficacy across 46 countries. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 35(2), edad013. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edad013>
- Pasek, J., Feldman, L., Romer, D., & Jamieson, K. H. (2008). Schools as incubators of democratic participation. *Applied Developmental Science*, 12(1), 26–37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888690801910526>
- Schulz, W., Ainley, J., Fraillon, J., Losito, B., Agrusti, G., & Friedman, T. (2018). *Becoming citizens in a changing world: IEA international civic and citizenship education study 2016 international report* (p. 243). Springer Nature.
- Schulz, W., Ainley, J., Fraillon, J., Losito, B., Agrusti, G., Damiani, V., & Friedman, T. (2025). Education for citizenship in times of global challenge: IEA international civic and citizenship education study 2022 international report.
- Torney-Purta, J., Lehmann, R., Oswald, H., & Schulz, W. (2001). *Citizenship and education in twenty-eight countries: Civic knowledge and engagement at age fourteen*. IEA Secretariat, Herengracht 487, 1017 BT, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Tsetsi, E., & Rains, S. A. (2017). Extending the digital divide. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 5(3), 239–255. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157917708329>

UNESCO Bangkok. (2017). *Global citizenship education in Asia-Pacific*. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO Bangkok. (2022). *Reimagining global citizenship education in Southeast Asia*. Paris: UNESCO.

Van Deursen, A. J., & Van Dijk, J. A. (2019). Shifts in the digital divide. *New Media & Society*, 21(2), 354–375. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818797082>

Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995). *Voice and equality*. Harvard University Press.