RESEARCH REVIEWER

Media Savvy, Ballot Ready: Media Literacy Practices and Informed Voting Behavior Among Students in Bulacan

I. UNDERSTANDING THE STUDY

Research Title:
Media Savvy, Ballot Ready: Media Literacy Practices and Informed Voting Behavior Among Students in Bulacan

General Purpose:

The study aims to describe the media literacy practices and informed voting behavior of students in Bulacan. It focuses on how students access, analyze, and verify political information, as well as how they evaluate candidates' qualifications and avoid misinformation.

Central Research Question:

How can the media literacy practices and informed voting behavior among students in Bulacan be described?

What is the study about?

The study examines how students engage with political information and how they approach decisions related to voting. It considers the importance of being able to access reliable information, critically examine political content, verify claims, evaluate candidates, and recognize misinformation.

Why is the study important?

Voting requires more than simply choosing a candidate. Voters encounter political information from different sources, particularly social media. Media literacy helps individuals examine the information they receive and make more informed judgments.

II. KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

1. Media Literacy

The ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and understand information communicated through different media platforms.

2. Political Information

Information related to government, public policies, elections, political candidates, political parties, and current political issues.

3. Media Literacy Practices

The actions or habits individuals use when accessing, analyzing, and verifying information from media sources.

4. Informed Voting Behavior

Voting-related practices that involve considering relevant information, evaluating candidates' qualifications, and avoiding misleading or false political information.

5. Misinformation

False or inaccurate information that is shared or circulated, regardless of whether the person sharing it intends to deceive others.

6. Disinformation

False information deliberately created or distributed to mislead people.

7. Political Bias

A preference or prejudice that influences how political information, candidates, or issues are presented and interpreted.

8. Fact-checking

The process of examining claims and comparing them with credible evidence or reliable sources to determine their accuracy.

9. Candidate Evaluation

The process of examining a candidate's qualifications, experience, background, platforms, and proposed policies before making a voting decision.

10. Media Consumption

The process of receiving or engaging with information through different media platforms, such as television, radio, newspapers, websites, and social media.

III. DIMENSIONS OF THE STUDY

A. Media Literacy Practices

1. Accessing Political Information

This refers to how students obtain political information through different media platforms.

Examples:

- Following current political news.
- Using different media platforms to learn about candidates' plans and advocacies.
- Seeking information about political issues and public concerns.

2. Analyzing Political Information

This refers to how students examine and interpret political content rather than accepting everything they encounter.

Examples:

- Distinguishing facts from opinions.
- Recognizing possible bias in political content.
- Examining how candidates and political issues are portrayed in the media.

3. Verifying Political Information

This refers to how students check the accuracy and credibility of political information before accepting or sharing it.

Examples:

- Checking the date and original source of information.
- Consulting official announcements and statements.
- Comparing information with credible sources.

B. Informed Voting Behavior

1. Evaluating Candidates' Qualifications

This refers to how students consider relevant information about candidates before making voting decisions.

Examples:

- Examining candidates' qualifications.
- Considering their knowledge and experience.
- Assessing whether their background is relevant to the position they seek.

2. Avoiding Misinformation

This refers to how students recognize and avoid relying on misleading or inaccurate political information.

Examples:

- Being cautious about unverified political claims.
- Checking information before sharing it.
- Avoiding decisions based solely on viral posts or unsupported statements.

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Media Literacy Theory

The study is anchored in Media Literacy Theory, which emphasizes the ability of individuals to access, analyze, evaluate, and understand media messages.

Important references:

- Masterman (1985)
- Aufderheide and Firestone (1993)

Why is this theory relevant to the study?

The theory provides a foundation for understanding how students interact with political information. It supports the examination of their ability to access media content, analyze messages, recognize possible bias, and verify information.

Possible defense question: Why did you choose Media Literacy Theory?

Suggested answer:

"We chose Media Literacy Theory because our study focuses on how students access, analyze, and verify political information. The theory provides a framework for understanding how individuals examine media messages instead of simply accepting the information presented to them."

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Research Approach

Quantitative research.

It uses numerical data gathered from respondents through a structured questionnaire.

2. Research Design

Descriptive research design.

Its purpose is to describe the existing media literacy practices and informed voting behavior of students in Bulacan.

Why descriptive research?

Because the researchers aim to determine and describe the respondents' reported practices and behaviors. The study does not intend to establish cause-and-effect relationships or test whether the two major areas are significantly related.

3. Research Locale

The study focuses on students residing in Bulacan, covering the municipalities and cities included in the researchers' intended scope.

4. Respondents

The intended respondents are students in Bulacan who meet the study's eligibility requirements concerning age, educational level, residence, and voter registration.

5. Sampling Technique

Snowball sampling.

This is a non-probability sampling technique in which initial participants help the researchers reach other individuals who meet the study's qualifications.

Why use snowball sampling?

Suggested answer:

"We used snowball sampling to reach eligible student respondents across Bulacan. Since our target participants had specific qualifications, referrals helped us connect with other students who could participate in the study."

Limitation:

Because snowball sampling is non-probability sampling, not every member of the population has an equal or known chance of being selected. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within the limitations of the sampling method.

6. Population and Sample Size

- Stated population: 87,636
- Target sample size: 399
- Margin of error used in the sample-size computation: 5%
- Sample-size formula: Slovin's formula

Slovin's Formula:

$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$

Where:

- n = sample size
- N = population size
- e = margin of error

Using the study's stated figures:

$n = 87,636 / (1 + 87,636(0.05^2))$

The computed target is approximately 399 respondents.

Important: The computation establishes the intended sample-size target. It does not remove the limitations of using non-probability sampling or guarantee statistical representativeness.

VI. RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Research Instrument: Structured questionnaire.

The questionnaire uses a four-point frequency scale:

Scale	Interpretation
4	Always
3	Often
2	Sometimes

Scale	Interpretation
1	Never

Purpose of the questionnaire:

To gather information about the respondents' reported media literacy practices and informed voting behavior.

Questionnaire dimensions:

Dimension	Focus
Accessing	Obtaining political information
Analyzing	Examining political messages and identifying possible bias
Verifying	Checking the credibility and accuracy of information
Evaluating qualifications	Examining candidates' qualifications and backgrounds
Avoiding misinformation	Recognizing and avoiding misleading political information

Why use a four-point scale?

Suggested answer:

"We used a four-point frequency scale to determine how often respondents practice the activities presented in the questionnaire. It allows us to describe the frequency of their reported practices."

VII. DATA GATHERING PROCEDURE

The general process involves:

1. Developing the research questionnaire.
2. Having the instrument reviewed and validated.
3. Conducting the necessary preliminary testing and securing approval.
4. Identifying and screening potential respondents.
5. Distributing the questionnaire online or through physical means.
6. Collecting the completed responses.
7. Screening the collected responses for eligibility and completeness.
8. Organizing, tabulating, and analyzing the data.
9. Interpreting the results based on the study's research questions.

VIII. PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

Based on the figures previously discussed in the research presentation:

1. Number of Responses

- Total responses received: 411
- Responses excluded: 12
- Valid responses retained: 399

The 12 excluded responses were either incomplete, invalid, or did not meet the eligibility requirements. The exact breakdown should be taken from the researchers' screening records.

2. Voter Registration Status

- 90.9% reported being registered voters.
- The remaining 9.1% reported not being registered.

3. Voting Experience

- 56.4% had voted at least once.
- 43.6% were registered but had not yet voted.

4. Overall Weighted Mean

- Overall weighted mean: 3.40

The interpretation of this figure must follow the actual questionnaire's scoring guide. Since the instrument uses Always, Often, Sometimes, and Never, do not automatically interpret 3.40 as Strongly Agree. Confirm the correct verbal interpretation in the final approved manuscript.

How should findings be discussed?

The findings should describe what the respondents reported. Avoid claiming that the results prove all students in Bulacan behave in the same way or that media literacy directly causes informed voting decisions.

IX. IMPORTANT RESEARCH DISTINCTIONS

1. Media Literacy Practices vs. Informed Voting Behavior

Media literacy practices concern how individuals interact with information.

Informed voting behavior concerns how individuals approach voting-related decisions using relevant information.

They are related in subject matter, but they are not interchangeable concepts.

2. Descriptive Research vs. Correlational Research

Descriptive Research	Correlational Research
Describes existing conditions or practices	Examines relationships between variables
Answers what, who, when, and how	Determines whether variables are associated
Does not test significant relationships	May test statistical relationships
Focuses on describing the collected data	Focuses on measuring associations

Our study uses descriptive research. Therefore, do not claim that it establishes a significant relationship between media literacy practices and informed voting behavior.

3. Independent and Dependent Variables

In a purely descriptive study that does not test relationships or effects, it is more appropriate to discuss the two major areas being described rather than automatically label them as independent and dependent variables.

4. Respondents' Answers vs. Actual Behavior

The questionnaire gathers self-reported information. This means the study describes what respondents say they practice. It does not independently observe or verify every action they perform.

5. Sample Size vs. Sampling Technique

Slovin's formula was used to determine the target sample size. Snowball sampling was used to recruit respondents.

These are different methodological decisions. A sample-size computation does not change a non-probability sampling method into probability sampling.

X. POSSIBLE DEFENSE QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTED ANSWERS

1. What is the main objective of our study?

Our study aims to describe the media literacy practices and informed voting behavior among students in Bulacan, particularly their practices in accessing, analyzing, and verifying political information and their approaches to evaluating candidates' qualifications and avoiding misinformation.

2. What is the research gap of our study?

Our study addresses the need to describe how students in Bulacan engage with political information and how they approach informed voting. It focuses on specific media literacy practices and voting-related behaviors within our target student population.

3. Why is our study important?

It is important because students are exposed to political information from different sources, including social media. Understanding their practices can provide insight into how they examine political information and approach voting-related decisions.

4. Why did you choose students as our respondents?

We chose students because they are part of a population that encounters information through various media platforms. Examining their practices can help describe how they engage with political information and voting-related issues.

5. Why did you use a quantitative approach?

We used a quantitative approach because our study gathers numerical data through a structured questionnaire. This allows us to summarize and describe the respondents' answers using statistical measures.

6. Why did you use descriptive research design?

We used descriptive research design because our objective is to describe the existing practices and behaviors of our respondents. We are not testing causation or significant relationships between the two major areas of the study.

7. Why did you use snowball sampling?

We used snowball sampling because our study requires respondents who meet specific qualifications. Through referrals, we were able to reach other students who could participate.

8. What is the limitation of snowball sampling?

It is a non-probability sampling technique, so the respondents may not fully represent the entire student population of Bulacan. The findings must therefore be interpreted with this limitation in mind.

9. Why did you use Slovin's formula?

We used Slovin's formula to calculate our intended sample-size target based on the stated population and chosen margin of error. However, we recognize that the formula does not eliminate the limitations of our non-probability sampling technique.

10. Why did you use a four-point scale?

We used a four-point frequency scale to determine how often respondents practice the activities presented in the questionnaire, from Always to Never.

11. Why is verifying political information important?

Verifying political information helps individuals assess whether the information they encounter is accurate and credible. It can reduce the likelihood of accepting or sharing misleading political claims.

12. Can someone be media literate but still make an uninformed voting decision?

Yes. Media literacy can help individuals examine information, but voting decisions may also be influenced by personal preferences, political beliefs, social influences, and other factors. Being media literate does not automatically guarantee an informed voting decision.

13. Does our study prove that media literacy leads to informed voting behavior?

No. Our study uses a descriptive research design. It describes the respondents' reported practices and behaviors but does not establish cause and effect.

14. Why did you include both media literacy practices and informed voting behavior?

We included both because the study aims to provide a description of how students engage with political information and how they approach voting-related decisions. They represent two important areas of political information engagement.

15. What is the main limitation of our study?

One limitation is the use of snowball sampling, which may limit the representativeness of the respondents. Another is that the questionnaire relies on self-reported answers, which may not perfectly reflect actual behavior.

16. What can schools do based on our study?

Schools can strengthen media literacy and voter education initiatives by teaching students how to identify credible sources, examine political claims, evaluate candidates, and recognize misinformation.

17. What would you recommend to future researchers?

Future researchers may consider expanding the study population, improving respondent recruitment, and exploring other research designs if they intend to examine relationships or possible influences between media literacy and voting behavior.

18. What is the significance of our study to students?

It can encourage students to become more critical and responsible consumers of political information and to consider credible information when making voting-related decisions.

19. Why should people not rely solely on viral political posts?

Popularity does not necessarily indicate accuracy. A post may receive many reactions and shares even when its claims are unsupported or misleading. It is important to check the original source and compare claims with credible information.

20. What is the main contribution of our study?

The study provides a descriptive account of the media literacy practices and informed voting behavior reported by students in Bulacan. It can serve as a reference for discussions and initiatives concerning student media literacy and voter education.

XI. CRITICAL ISSUES TO REVIEW BEFORE OUR DEFENSE

These are important because panelists may notice inconsistencies in the manuscript or presentation.

1. Voter Registration Eligibility

Our intended respondents have been described as registered student voters, but the reported findings indicate that 9.1% were not registered. Check whether registration was an actual eligibility requirement or merely a demographic question.

2. Age Requirement

Some versions of our research materials mention respondents aged 17 and above, while others mention 18 and above. Make sure the manuscript, questionnaire, screening criteria, and presentation use the correct and consistent requirement.

3. Weighted Mean Interpretation

Our questionnaire uses a frequency scale, but an earlier interpretation of the overall weighted mean of 3.40 used the label Strongly Agree. Confirm the correct interpretation based on our actual scoring guide.

4. Statement of the Problem and Demographic Profile

Check whether voter registration status is included in our Statement of the Problem if you present it as part of our findings.

5. Number of Excluded Responses

You received 411 responses and retained 399. Be prepared to explain the exclusion process using our actual screening records. Do not invent a breakdown of the 12 excluded responses.

6. Sampling and Sample Size

Be ready to explain why you used Slovin's formula for the target sample size while employing snowball sampling to recruit participants. Acknowledge the limitations of non-probability sampling.

XII. FINAL POINTS TO REMEMBER

Before our defense, make sure you can explain these without looking at our notes:

1. The purpose of our research.
2. The research gap.
3. The meaning of media literacy.
4. The difference between accessing, analyzing, and verifying information.
5. The meaning of informed voting behavior.
6. The difference between misinformation and disinformation.
7. Why Media Literacy Theory supports our study.
8. Why you used quantitative descriptive research.
9. Why you selected snowball sampling.
10. How you calculated our target sample size.
11. How our questionnaire measures each dimension.
12. How to interpret the weighted mean.
13. What our findings actually show.
14. The limitations of our study.
15. What our study contributes to students and voter education.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO REMEMBER:

Our study is descriptive. Our responsibility as a researcher is to explain what our data show, how you gathered those data, and what conclusions can reasonably be drawn from them. Do not claim that our study proves a relationship, influence, or cause when our research design does not test those claims.