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# Engagement, Social and Emotional Competence, and Civic Attitudes and Skills: A Structural Equation Model on the Social Networking Sites Usage of Public Administration Students in Region XII

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*Abstract* — This quantitative, non-experimental study examined how student engagement, social and emotional competence (SEC), and civic attitudes and skills (CAS) influence social networking sites (SNS) usage among 503 Master in Public Administration (MPA) students from five higher education institutions in Region XII. Data were collected using validated survey questionnaires adapted from established scales, and analyses included descriptive statistics, correlation, multiple regression, and Structural Equation Modeling to determine levels, relationships, and predictive pathways among variables. Results revealed high levels of student engagement, social and emotional competence, civic attitudes and skills, and social networking sites usage, with cognitive engagement, decision-making, and political awareness emerging as the strongest dimensions. Significant positive relationships were found between social networking site (SNS) usage and all three exogenous variables, while regression analysis identified engagement as the strongest predictor of SNS behavior. Among the tested structural models, Model 3 demonstrated the best fit, confirming that engagement and social and emotional competence (SEC)

significantly influence civic attitudes and skills (CAS), which in turn mediates social networking sites (SNS) usage. These findings indicate that Master's in Public Administration students' digital behavior is largely shaped by their academic involvement and civic dispositions, while emotional competence contributes indirectly by strengthening engagement and civic development that support more purposeful and responsible social networking sites (SNS) use.

***Keywords: Public Administration, student engagement, social and emotional competence, civic attitudes and skills, social networking sites usage, structural equation modeling, Region XII***

**SDG Indicator: SDG 4 (Quality Education); SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions)**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The use of Social Networking Sites (SNS) among students has evolved significantly from traditional text-based communication platforms into dynamic, interactive, and multimedia-driven environments deeply embedded in academic and social life (Antoniadou, 2025; Mulero-Henríquez, Serrano-Anguita, & Rodríguez-García, 2024; Tan & Yunus, 2023). Contemporary SNS are no longer limited to social interaction but now function as platforms for collaborative learning, content creation, and civic engagement, positioning them as essential tools in modern education (Estrella, 2023; Galindo-Domínguez, Bezanilla, & Campo, 2025). In the Philippine context, where social media usage remains among the highest globally, students increasingly rely on platforms such as Facebook, Messenger, and TikTok for academic communication, collaboration, and information access (DataReportal, 2024; Philippine Statistics Authority, 2025).

Despite these advantages, increasing evidence suggests that excessive or unregulated SNS use may negatively influence students' academic performance and emotional well-being. Studies associate prolonged SNS exposure with anxiety, depression, social comparison, and reduced academic focus (Han & Xu, 2024; Khalaf, Alubied, Khalaf, & Rifaey, 2023; Ajewumi, Olayiwola, & Adeyemi, 2024; Tiongson, 2024). Anchored in social comparison and media effects

perspectives, exposure to idealized online content may lead to unrealistic expectations and emotional strain (Swarnam, 2021; Martínez-Líbano, Rojas, & Araya, 2023). Philippine-based studies corroborate these findings, indicating that excessive SNS use among college students is linked to declining academic performance, disrupted study habits, and increased psychological distress (Billedo, Kerkhof, & Finkenauer, 2019; Labrador & Delos Santos, 2022; Canlas & Perez, 2024).

Beyond individual outcomes, SNS also play a crucial role in fostering academic engagement, social-emotional competence, and civic participation. Digital platforms enhance collaborative learning and knowledge exchange (Junco, 2012; Manca & Ranieri, 2016), support the development of interpersonal and emotional skills (Han & Xu, 2024; Kalu, Okafor, & Ugwu, 2024), and encourage civic engagement through online discourse and digital activism (Mahmood, Ahmad, & Javaid, 2020; Liao, 2024). In the Philippine setting, SNS have been widely utilized as informal learning environments that facilitate peer interaction, academic collaboration, and access to learning resources, particularly during remote and flexible learning modalities (Adarlo & Jackson, 2017; Barrot, Llenares, & Del Rosario, 2021; Fabito, Trillanes, & Sarmiento, 2020). Moreover, social media has been shown to influence students' civic and political engagement, particularly in higher education contexts (Banzon, Peladas, Salar, Sale, Basinas, & Sappayani, 2024).

Students' engagement, social-emotional competence, and civic attitudes collectively shape how SNS are utilized. Engagement promotes academic use and online collaboration (Salmela-Aro, Upadyaya, & Hakkarainen, 2021), while social-emotional competence supports responsible digital behavior and civic responsibility (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2020). Civic attitudes and skills further extend SNS use toward participation in societal and political processes (Mahmood, Ahmad, & Javaid, 2020; Hatcher, Bringle, & Hahn, 2020). Local studies further emphasize that Filipino students' SNS engagement is often relational and community-oriented, reflecting cultural values that influence both academic collaboration and civic participation (David, Ong, & Legara, 2019).

This study is anchored in multiple theoretical perspectives. Uses and Gratifications Theory explains SNS use as a means of satisfying academic, social, and civic needs (Katz, Blumler, &

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Gurevitch, 1973). Social Constructivism emphasizes learning through interaction (Vygotsky, 1978), while Social Learning Theory highlights the role of observation in shaping behavior (Bandura, 1977). The Civic Voluntarism Model further explains how engagement and skills translate into civic participation (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive framework for examining SNS as a multidimensional platform that influences student development.

The study conceptualizes SNS usage as the dependent variable, encompassing academic, social, informational, and recreational dimensions. Student engagement and civic attitudes serve as independent variables, while social-emotional competence is treated as a mediating variable. It is hypothesized that student engagement directly influences SNS usage and, through social-emotional competence, indirectly affects it, thereby strengthening civic attitudes and skills.

A significant research gap exists in the limited integration of academic, social-emotional, and civic dimensions in SNS studies, particularly among Public Administration students in regional state universities. In Region XII, challenges such as unequal access to technology, limited institutional resources, and the need to develop civic-minded graduates underscore the importance of examining SNS in this context. Studies in Philippine higher education institutions reveal disparities in digital access, technological readiness, and learning conditions, particularly between urban and rural settings (Rotas & Cahapay, 2020; Toquero, 2021).

Accordingly, this study aims to develop and test a Structural Equation Model (SEM) to explain the relationships among SNS use, student engagement, social-emotional competence, and civic attitudes and skills. It seeks to determine construct levels, examine relationships among variables, and assess both direct and mediating effects.

The study contributes to the growing body of SNS research by offering an integrative, theory-driven model of student development. It provides practical implications for curriculum design, digital literacy programs, and student engagement strategies, particularly in Public Administration education. Moreover, it supports broader societal goals by promoting responsible digital engagement, civic participation, and institutional strengthening aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals on quality education and strong institutions.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, non-experimental design using descriptive-correlational and causal modeling approaches to examine the relationships among Social Networking Sites (SNS) usage, student engagement, social-emotional competence, and civic attitudes and skills among Master in Public Administration (MPA) students in Region XII, Philippines, during the academic year 2024–2025. The descriptive-correlational approach was used to determine variable levels and associations, while causal modeling assessed predictive relationships.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was utilized to test the hypothesized model, allowing simultaneous estimation of direct and indirect effects among latent constructs (Byrne, 2016; Kline, 2016). Model evaluation followed established fit indices, including Chi-square probability, CMIN/df, Normed Fit Index (NFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and P-close. Acceptable thresholds were based on Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2019):  $p > 0.05$ ,  $CMIN/df < 5$ ,  $CFI, NFI, GFI, \text{ and } TLI \geq 0.95$ ,  $RMSEA \leq 0.05$ , and  $P\text{-close} > 0.05$ .

### Participants and Sampling

The respondents were Master in Public Administration students from five higher education institutions in Region XII: University of Southern Mindanao, Mindanao State University–General Santos City, Notre Dame of Dadiangas University, Notre Dame of Marbel University, and Cotabato State University. Participants were selected based on their active enrollment and familiarity with social networking platforms, ensuring relevance to the study variables.

The required sample size ( $n = 503$ ) was determined using the Raosoft sample size calculator, ensuring adequate statistical power and generalizability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Proportional allocation was applied across institutions: Cotabato State University (151), Mindanao

State University (98), Notre Dame of Marbel University (91), University of Southern Mindanao (57), and Notre Dame of Dadiangas University (49).

Purposive sampling was employed, with inclusion criteria requiring respondents to be officially enrolled MPA students and willing to participate. Those not enrolled or unwilling were excluded. Participation was voluntary, and respondents could withdraw at any stage without penalty.

### **Instruments**

Data were collected using four standardized and previously validated instruments:

- (1) SNS Usage Scale adapted from Gupta and Bashir (2018);
- (2) Student Engagement Scale from Delfino (2019);
- (3) Social and Emotional Competence Questionnaire (SEC-Q) by Zych et al. (2018); and
- (4) Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ) by Moely et al. (2002).

All instruments were contextualized for the Philippine higher education setting while maintaining their theoretical constructs. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) (Likert, 1932).

Content validity was established through expert review, and a pilot test involving 50 MPA students from a non-participating institution was conducted. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951) yielded coefficients within acceptable levels, confirming internal consistency.

Mean scores were interpreted as follows: 4.20–5.00 (Very High), 3.40–4.19 (High), 2.60–3.39 (Moderate), 1.80–2.59 (Low), and 1.00–1.79 (Very Low).

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Data collection was conducted through formal coordination with university administrators and program heads. Approved survey questionnaires, along with informed consent forms, were

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distributed personally to qualified respondents. Administration was scheduled outside class hours to minimize disruption and encourage accurate responses.

Completed questionnaires were retrieved, encoded, and analyzed using statistical software. Preliminary analyses included descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression, followed by SEM to test the structural model and mediating effects.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The study adhered to ethical standards for research involving human participants. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Mindanao Ethics Review Committee (UMERC Protocol No. 2025-337). Participation was voluntary, with informed consent secured prior to data collection.

Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained in accordance with Republic Act No. 10173. Respondents were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Data were securely stored and used solely for research purposes.

Research integrity was upheld through proper citation, avoidance of plagiarism using tools such as Grammarly and Turnitin, and adherence to institutional guidelines. No data fabrication or coercion occurred throughout the study.

## **III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the findings from responses by Public Administration students on engagement, social and emotional competence, civic attitudes and skills, and Social Networking Sites (SNS) usage. Results are organized according to the study's objectives, with an integrated discussion and implications.

## Engagement of Public Administration Students

The findings reveal a **high overall level of engagement** among Public Administration students, with an average rating of 3.80, indicating that learners are generally active, motivated, and committed to their academic tasks. This suggests that students participate meaningfully in the learning process rather than remaining passive recipients of instruction. This pattern is supported by both international and national studies, which emphasize that strong student engagement contributes to improved academic performance, persistence, and motivation in higher education contexts (Salmela-Aro, Upadyaya, & Hakkarainen, 2021; Zhou & Yao, 2024; Adarlo & Jackson, 2017).

TABLE 1

### LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION STUDENTS

Indicators	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Behavioral	0.76	3.71	High
Cognitive	0.61	3.89	High
Emotional	0.64	3.80	High
<b>Overall</b>	<b>0.58</b>	<b>3.80</b>	<b>High</b>

Among the dimensions, cognitive engagement emerged as the highest, with a mean of 3.89, reflecting students' strong involvement in higher-order thinking processes such as critical analysis, problem-solving, and knowledge application. This implies that learners are actively constructing knowledge, which enhances deeper learning outcomes. Empirical evidence supports that high cognitive engagement significantly strengthens academic achievement and critical thinking skills across diverse educational settings (Li & Xiong, 2023; Zhou & Yao, 2024).

On the other hand, behavioral engagement registered the lowest mean, at 3.71, although it still falls within the high category. This indicates slight inconsistencies in observable academic

behaviors such as participation, preparation, and task completion. This trend aligns with existing literature, which notes that behavioral engagement is more susceptible to external influences, including time management challenges and digital distractions (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Li & Xiong, 2023).

Overall, the results suggest that while students exhibit strong cognitive and emotional involvement, there is a need to reinforce consistent academic behaviors to further enhance engagement and optimize learning outcomes.

### **Social and Emotional Competence of Public Administration Students**

Table 2 presents the level of social and emotional competence among Public Administration students, with a high overall rating: an average score of 3.85 and a standard deviation of 0.70. This indicates that students generally demonstrate strong abilities in emotional regulation, interpersonal interaction, and responsible decision-making. The result implies that learners are well-equipped with essential socio-emotional skills that support academic adjustment, collaboration, and civic engagement. This finding is supported by both international and local studies, which emphasize that students with strong social and emotional competence tend to exhibit better academic performance, improved behavior, and stronger social responsibility (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Fiesta, Reyes, & Santos, 2025).

Among the indicators, **decision-making emerged as the highest**, with a mean of 3.96, indicating that students are highly capable of evaluating options, anticipating outcomes, and making ethical and responsible judgments. This suggests that they are well-prepared for leadership roles and governance-related responsibilities that require accountability and critical thinking. Studies affirm that strong decision-making competence is closely associated with leadership potential and civic responsibility among higher education students (Li & Wong, 2022; Benito, Naval, & Cruz, 2025).

**TABLE 2**  
**LEVEL OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION STUDENTS**

Indicators	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Self-Awareness	0.91	3.71	High
Self-Management and Motivation	0.87	3.89	High
Social-Awareness and Prosocial Behavior	0.76	3.85	High
Decision-making	0.83	3.96	High
<b>Overall</b>	<b>0.70</b>	<b>3.85</b>	<b>High</b>

On the other hand, **self-awareness registered the lowest mean**, at 3.71, although still interpreted as high. This suggests that students have comparatively less developed ability to recognize and understand their own emotions. This pattern is consistent with existing research, which identifies self-awareness as a more complex competency that requires deeper reflection and metacognitive development (Bennett, Carré, Daffern, & Kosson, 2023; Mendoza, Santos, & Reyes, 2017).

Overall, the findings indicate that while Public Administration students already possess strong social and emotional competence, particularly in decision-making, there is a need to further enhance self-awareness to achieve more balanced emotional development and strengthen leadership readiness.

### **Civic Attitudes and Skills of Public Administration Students**

Table 3 shows a **high overall level of civic attitudes and skills** among Public Administration students, reflected in an average score of 3.89 and a standard deviation of 0.50. This indicates that students generally demonstrate strong civic readiness, active orientation toward democratic participation, and well-developed interpersonal capacities needed for public

service. The finding implies that learners are prepared to engage in civic and political processes. This is supported by both international and local studies, which highlight that civic knowledge, skills, and motivation significantly influence active participation and democratic engagement (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995; Cantiga, dela Cruz, & Navarro, 2025).

**TABLE 3**  
**LEVEL OF CIVIC ATTITUDES AND SKILLS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**  
**STUDENTS**

Indicators	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Civic Action	0.71	3.78	High
Interpersonal and Problem-Solving Skills	0.69	3.97	High
Political Awareness	0.66	4.26	Very High
Leadership Skills	0.77	3.83	High
Social Justice Attitudes	0.73	3.74	High
Diversity Attitudes	0.64	3.73	High
<b>Overall</b>	<b>0.50</b>	<b>3.89</b>	<b>High</b>

Among the indicators, **political awareness emerged as the highest**, with a mean of 4.26, indicating that students are highly informed about governance issues, public affairs, and socio-political concerns. This suggests that learners possess the knowledge base necessary for informed civic participation and policy-related decision-making. Studies affirm that strong political awareness enhances civic involvement and strengthens democratic participation, particularly among students exposed to governance-related education (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995; Benito, Naval, & Cruz, 2025).

In contrast, diversity attitudes recorded the lowest mean, at 3.73, although still within the high category. This indicates a comparatively lower level of openness and sensitivity toward

cultural and social diversity. This pattern aligns with existing research, which suggests that inclusivity and intercultural understanding require more deliberate exposure and reflective learning experiences to be fully developed (Fiesta, Reyes, & Santos, 2025; Mendoza, Santos, & Reyes, 2017).

Overall, the results suggest that while Public Administration students demonstrate strong civic attitudes and skills particularly in political awareness, there is a need to further strengthen attitudes toward diversity to promote inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and more holistic civic engagement.

### **Social Networking Sites Usage of Public Administration Students**

Table 4 shows a **high overall level of Social Networking Sites (SNS) usage** among Public Administration students, reflected in an average score of 3.91 and a standard deviation of 0.52. This indicates that students frequently and purposefully engage with SNS for academic, social, informational, and entertainment purposes. The result implies that SNS has become an integral part of students' digital environment, supporting both learning and social interaction. This is consistent with international studies which emphasize that SNS use among students is multidimensional and contributes to academic enhancement, collaboration, and information access (Al-Rahmi, Othman, Zeki, & Yahaya, 2022; Manca & Ranieri, 2023).

**TABLE 4**  
**LEVEL OF SOCIAL NETWORK SITES USAGE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION STUDENTS**

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Descriptive Level</b>
Academics	0.66	4.13	High
Socialization	0.78	3.85	High
Entertainment	0.94	4.05	High
Informativeness	0.66	4.16	High
Constraints	0.89	3.38	High
<b>Overall</b>	<b>0.52</b>	<b>3.91</b>	<b>High</b>

Among the indicators, informativeness emerged as the highest, with a mean of 4.16, indicating that students primarily use SNS as a platform for accessing news, academic content, and job-related information. This suggests that learners strategically utilize SNS to support knowledge acquisition and professional awareness. Studies affirm that social media platforms are increasingly used as learning tools that facilitate information exchange and academic engagement among higher education students (Al-Rahmi, Othman, Zeki, & Yahaya, 2022; Manca & Ranieri, 2023).

In contrast, constraints recorded the lowest mean, at 3.38, although still within the high category. This indicates that students experience some challenges related to SNS use, particularly in terms of time management and maintaining academic focus. This pattern aligns with existing literature, which highlights that while SNS offers educational benefits, excessive or unregulated use may lead to distractions and reduced concentration (Al-Rahmi, Othman, Zeki, & Yahaya, 2022).

Overall, the findings suggest that Public Administration students are active and purposeful users of SNS, particularly for informational and academic purposes. However, there is a need to

strengthen digital discipline and self-regulation to minimize distractions and ensure that SNS remains a productive tool for learning and professional development.

### Relationship between Engagement and Social Networking Sites Usage

Table 5 shows a **significant positive relationship between engagement and Social Networking Sites (SNS) usage** among Public Administration students, reflected in an overall correlation coefficient of 0.502. This indicates that students who demonstrate higher levels of behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement also tend to use SNS more purposefully across academic, social, informational, and entertainment functions. The finding implies that engagement plays an important role in shaping how students utilize digital platforms in meaningful ways. This is supported by international studies which show that highly engaged learners are more likely to use social media intentionally for academic support, communication, and information-seeking (Smith & Anderson, 2023; Lee & Kim, 2024).

**TABLE 5**  
**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION STUDENTS**

Engagement	Social Networking Sites					Overall
	Academics	Socialization	Entertainment	Informativeness	Constraints	
Behavioral	.397**	.313**	.203**	.326**	.179**	<b>.408**</b>
	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	<b>.000</b>
Cognitive	.461**	.364**	.233**	.415**	.206**	<b>.481**</b>
	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	<b>.000</b>
Emotional	.436**	.409**	.201**	.379**	.091*	<b>.429**</b>
	.000	.000	.000	.000	.042	<b>.000</b>
Overall	<b>.493**</b>	<b>.412**</b>	<b>.243**</b>	<b>.424**</b>	<b>.182**</b>	<b>.502**</b>
	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>

Among the dimensions, cognitive engagement shows the strongest relationship with SNS usage, particularly in academic use and informativeness. This suggests that students who are more intellectually engaged tend to maximize SNS for learning, accessing academic resources, and acquiring relevant information. This pattern is consistent with studies indicating that cognitively engaged learners use digital platforms more strategically to enhance understanding and academic performance (Johnson, Brown, & Davis, 2023; Patel & Nguyen, 2024).

In contrast, the weakest relationship is observed between emotional engagement and SNS constraints, indicating a weak but significant association. This suggests that emotionally engaged students are less influenced by the negative effects of SNS use, such as distraction and time mismanagement. This aligns with research showing that emotional engagement strengthens self-regulation and helps students maintain focus despite digital distractions (Garcia & Wilson, 2023; Torres & Reyes, 2025).

Overall, the findings suggest that student engagement particularly cognitive and behavioral dimensions, contributes to more purposeful and productive SNS usage, while emotional engagement helps mitigate its negative effects. Strengthening engagement within academic contexts can therefore enhance both the quality of SNS use and students' ability to manage digital challenges effectively.

### **Relationship between Social and Emotional Competence and Social Networking Sites Usage**

Table 6 shows a **significant positive relationship between social and emotional competence (SEC) and Social Networking Sites (SNS) usage** among Public Administration students, with an overall correlation coefficient of 0.409. This indicates that students with higher levels of social and emotional competence tend to use SNS more purposefully and constructively across academic, social, informational, and entertainment functions. The finding implies that socio-emotional skills play an important role in shaping responsible and goal-oriented digital behavior. This is supported by international studies emphasizing that individuals with strong emotional competence demonstrate better self-regulation and more adaptive use of online platforms (CASEL, 2024; Schutte & Malouff, 2023).

Among the dimensions, self-awareness shows the strongest relationship with SNS usage, with the highest correlation observed across indicators. This suggests that students who are more aware of their emotions and behaviors tend to engage more meaningfully with SNS, particularly for information-seeking and social interaction. This pattern aligns with studies indicating that self-awareness enhances reflective and purposeful use of digital platforms, allowing students to maximize academic and personal development opportunities (Zhao & Li, 2024; Nguyen & Lee, 2023).

**TABLE 6**  
**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL**  
**COMPETENCE AND SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES OF PUBLIC**  
**ADMINISTRATION STUDENTS**

Social and Emotional Competence	Social Networking Sites					Overall
	Academics	Socialization	Entertainment	Informativeness	Constraints	
Self-Awareness	.293**	.303**	.226**	.316**	.262**	<b>.413**</b>
	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	<b>.000</b>
Self-Management and Motivation	.304**	.256**	.159**	.244**	.151**	<b>.322**</b>
	.000	.000	.000	.000	.001	<b>.000</b>
Social-Awareness and Prosocial Behavior	.279**	.252**	.174**	.277**	.158**	<b>.330**</b>
	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	<b>.000</b>
Decision-making	.279**	.180**	.135**	.277**	.142**	<b>.289**</b>
	.000	.000	.003	.000	.001	<b>.000</b>
Overall	<b>.348**</b>	<b>.300**</b>	<b>.209**</b>	<b>.334**</b>	<b>.217**</b>	<b>.409**</b>
	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>

In contrast, decision-making registers the weakest relationship, particularly in relation to entertainment and constraints. This indicates that while decision-making contributes to responsible SNS use, it is less influential in managing entertainment-driven behaviors and minimizing distractions. This is consistent with research showing that decision-making alone may not fully regulate impulsive or habitual SNS use without the support of emotional regulation and self-awareness (Garcia & Wilson, 2023; Patel & Nguyen, 2024).

Overall, the findings suggest that social and emotional competence significantly influences how students use SNS, with self-awareness playing a key role in fostering constructive, balanced engagement. Strengthening socio-emotional skills can therefore enhance students' ability to use SNS productively while minimizing its negative effects.

### **Relationship between Civic Action Skills and Social Networking Sites Usage**

Table 7 shows a **significant positive relationship between civic attitudes and skills (CAS) and Social Networking Sites (SNS) usage** among Public Administration students, reflected in an overall correlation coefficient of 0.443. This indicates that students with stronger civic competencies tend to use SNS more constructively across academic, socialization, informational, and entertainment functions. The finding implies that civic readiness influences how students engage in digital spaces, promoting more purposeful, informed, and socially responsive behavior. This is supported by studies showing that civic competencies are associated with more meaningful and participatory use of social media among university students (Jenkins & Keating, 2023; Oh & Lee, 2024).

Among the dimensions, political awareness shows the strongest relationship with SNS usage, particularly in overall use, academic engagement, and informativeness. This suggests that students who are more politically aware are more likely to use SNS for information-seeking, discussion of public issues, and engagement with current events. Research supports that political awareness enhances students' ability to use digital platforms for civic discourse, learning, and informed participation (Kaya & Başaran, 2024; Smith & Anderson, 2023).

In contrast, civic action registers the weakest relationship, particularly in relation to constraints and entertainment. This indicates that while civic action contributes to overall SNS engagement, it has limited influence on leisure-related use and in managing challenges such as distraction and time management. This pattern aligns with findings that civic participation does not always directly translate into self-regulation in digital environments unless supported by complementary skills (Garcia & Wilson, 2023; Patel & Nguyen, 2024).

**TABLE 7.**  
**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CIVIC ATTITUDES AND SKILLS AND SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION STUDENTS**

Civic Attitudes and Skills	Social Networking Sites					Overall
	Academics	Socialization	Entertainment	Informativeness	Constraints	
Civic	.248**	.283**	.122**	.273**	.059	<b>.279**</b>
Action	.000	.000	.006	.000	.186	<b>.000</b>
Interperson	.255**	.301**	.190**	.323**	.130**	<b>.347**</b>
al and	.000	.000	.000	.000	.004	<b>.000</b>
Problem-Solving						
Skills						
Political	.371**	.331**	.234**	.342**	.100*	<b>.394**</b>
Awareness	.000	.000	.000	.000	.026	<b>.000</b>
Leadership	.220**	.275**	.105*	.296**	.102*	<b>.283**</b>
Skills	.000	.000	.019	.000	.023	<b>.000</b>
Social	.265**	.208**	.146**	.232**	.225**	<b>.315**</b>
Justice	.000	.000	.001	.000	.000	<b>.000</b>
Attitudes						
Diversity	.225**	.178**	.122**	.192**	.264**	<b>.291**</b>
Attitudes	.000	.000	.006	.000	.000	<b>.000</b>
<b>Overall</b>	<b>.368**</b>	<b>.367**</b>	<b>.212**</b>	<b>.388**</b>	<b>.202**</b>	<b>.443**</b>
	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>

Overall, the results suggest that civic attitudes and skills significantly shape SNS usage, with political awareness playing a key role in promoting informed and purposeful engagement. Strengthening civic competencies can further enhance students' ability to use SNS in academically productive, socially responsible, and civically meaningful ways.

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## **Influence of Engagement, Social and Emotional Competence and Civic Attitudes and Skills on Social Networking Sites Usage of Public Administration Students**

**Table 8 shows a significant combined influence of engagement, social and emotional competence (SEC), and civic attitudes and skills (CAS) on Social Networking Sites (SNS) usage among Public Administration students, reflected in a multiple correlation of 0.526 and an explained variance of 27.7 percent. This indicates that a substantial portion of students' SNS usage is shaped by these three factors collectively, suggesting that digital behavior is influenced by academic involvement, socio-emotional capacity, and civic orientation rather than occurring randomly. This finding is supported by studies showing that behavioral and psychosocial factors significantly shape students' patterns of digital media use and online engagement (Hossain, Rahman, & Chowdhury, 2023; Bennett, Smith, & Lee, 2023).**

Among the predictors, engagement emerges as the strongest influence, indicating that students who are more behaviorally active, cognitively involved, and emotionally invested in their academic experiences tend to use SNS more frequently and purposefully for academic, social, and civic functions. This suggests that engagement drives meaningful and productive use of digital platforms. Supporting studies affirm that highly engaged learners are more likely to utilize social media for information access, collaboration, and academic support (Tafesse & Tesfaye, 2024; Anderson & Kumar, 2024).

In contrast, social and emotional competence shows the weakest and non-significant influence, indicating that while it contributes positively, its role is more indirect. This suggests that SEC shapes how students behave on SNS such as regulating emotions and interacting responsibly rather than determining how often or how intensively they use it. This aligns with research showing that socio-emotional skills influence the quality of online interaction rather than the level of usage (Shao & Wang, 2024; Huang & Goh, 2023).

**TABLE 8**

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INFLUENCE OF ENGAGEMENT, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE AND CIVIC ATTITUDES AND SKILLS ON SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES USAGE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION STUDENTS**

<b>Social Networking Sites Usage</b>				
(Variables)	<i>B</i>	B	<i>T</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Constant	1.859		11.544	.000
Engagement	.307	.341	6.279	.000
Social and Emotional Competence	.069	.093	1.714	.087
Civic Attitudes and Skills	.160	.152	2.674	.008
R	.526			
R <sup>2</sup>	.277			
ΔR	.272			
F	63.266			
P	.000			

Meanwhile, civic attitudes and skills have a significant positive influence, indicating that students with a stronger civic orientation are more likely to use SNS for information-seeking, public discourse, and community engagement. This suggests that civic competencies enhance the socially responsive and participatory use of digital platforms. Studies support that civic-minded students tend to engage more actively in online discussions, advocacy, and civic activities (Oh & Lee, 2024; Jenkins & Keating, 2023).

Overall, the findings suggest that engagement is the most influential factor shaping SNS usage, followed by civic attitudes and skills, while social and emotional competence plays a supportive but indirect role. Strengthening engagement and civic competencies can enhance the academic, informational, and civic value of SNS use, while socio-emotional competence contributes to responsible and ethical digital behavior

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## Best Fit Model of Social Networking Sites Usage

Table 9 presents the **summary of goodness-of-fit measures for the three generated structural equation models (SEMs)** examining the relationships among Social and Emotional Competence (SEC), Engagement, Civic Attitudes and Skills (CAS), and Social Networking Sites (SNS) usage among Public Administration students. The results indicate that **Models 1 and 2 did not meet the acceptable standards of model fit**, as both obtained significant probability values, high Chi-square to degrees of freedom ratios, and poor fit indices. Their Goodness of Fit Index, Comparative Fit Index, Normed Fit Index, and Tucker-Lewis Index all fall below the recommended threshold of 0.95, while their RMSEA values exceed the acceptable limit of 0.05. This suggests that these models do not adequately represent the observed data patterns. This finding is consistent with SEM literature emphasizing that poorly fitting models fail to capture the true structure of relationships among variables (Awang & Ramli, 2023; Kline & Brown, 2023).

In contrast, **Model 3 demonstrates the best overall fit**, as shown by a non-significant probability value of 0.170 and an excellent Chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio of 1.259, indicating strong model parsimony. It also achieved very high fit indices, with Goodness of Fit Index at 0.987, Comparative Fit Index at 0.996, Normed Fit Index at 0.982, and Tucker-Lewis Index at 0.994, all of which exceed recommended standards. The RMSEA value of 0.023 further confirms an excellent fit, while the P-close value of 0.985 supports model adequacy and stability. These results establish Model 3 as the most appropriate structural representation of the relationships among SEC, Engagement, CAS, and SNS usage.

Within the validated Model 3, **Social and Emotional Competence positively influences Engagement**, indicating that students with stronger emotional regulation, self-awareness, and social skills tend to exhibit higher behavioral, cognitive, and emotional involvement in academic and civic activities. SEC also shows a **moderate positive influence on Civic Attitudes and Skills**, suggesting that socio-emotional strengths contribute to the development of civic awareness, interpersonal effectiveness, and prosocial behavior, although this effect is less pronounced than its impact on Engagement.

**TABLE 9**

**SUMMARY OF GOODNESS OF FIT MEASURES OF THE THREE GENERATED MODELS**

Model	P-value (>0.05)	CMIN / DF (0<value <2)	GFI (>0.95)	CFI (>0.95)	NFI (>0.95)	TLI (>0.95)	RMSEA (<0.05)	P- close (>0.05)
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1	.000	8.378	.807	.747	.724	.707	.122	.000
2	.000	3.319	.912	.922	.893	.908	.068	.000
3	.170	1.259	.987	.996	.982	.994	.023	.985

*Legend:* CMIN/DF – Chi Square/Degrees of Freedom

NFI – Normed Fit Index

GFI – Goodness of Fit Index

TLI – Tucker-Lewis Index

RMSEA – Root Mean Square of Error Approximation

CFI – Comparative Fit Index

Engagement emerges as the strongest direct predictor of SNS usage, indicating that highly engaged students tend to use social networking platforms more purposefully for academic collaboration, communication, and civic-related activities. In contrast, Engagement shows only a minimal direct effect on Civic Attitudes and Skills, suggesting that its contribution to civic development operates more indirectly rather than directly.

Meanwhile, SNS usage shows a negative relationship with Civic Attitudes and Skills when not properly guided, implying that unstructured or excessive use of social networking platforms may reduce civic development by shifting attention toward entertainment and non-productive activities. This highlights the dual nature of SNS as both a learning support tool and a potential distraction when not regulated.

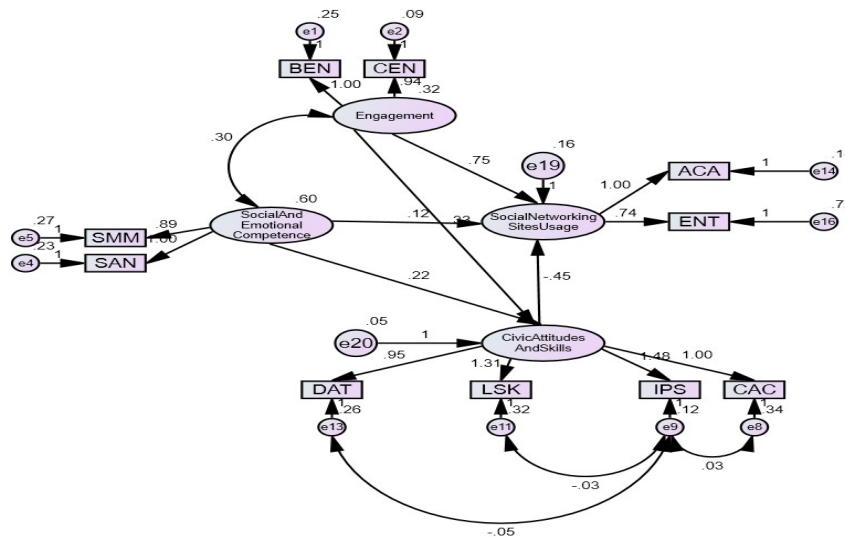
Overall, the findings suggest that Model 3 best explains the structural relationships among the variables, where SEC serves as a foundational factor that enhances Engagement, Engagement drives purposeful SNS usage, and SNS usage has mixed effects on civic development depending on how it is managed. Collectively, the results support an integrated theoretical interpretation where Uses and Gratifications Theory explains intentional SNS use, Social Constructivism explains learning through engagement and interaction, Social Learning Theory explains the development of regulated digital behavior, and the Civic Voluntarism Model explains how competencies and engagement translate into civic participation in digital spaces.

### **Regression Weights of the Three (3) Generated Models**

The study generated three structural equation models (SEMs) to examine the relationships among Engagement, Social and Emotional Competence (SEC), Civic Attitudes and Skills (CAS), and Social Networking Sites (SNS) usage among Public Administration students. This comparative modeling approach allows for a more rigorous validation of theoretical relationships by testing alternative structural pathways, ensuring that both direct and indirect effects are properly examined. This process is consistent with methodological recommendations that emphasize model comparison in SEM to identify the most empirically and theoretically sound representation of relationships (Kline & Brown, 2023; Byrne & Smith, 2024).

Model 1 and Model 2 provide preliminary but limited explanations of the relationships among the variables. Model 1 assumes that Engagement, SEC, and CAS directly influence SNS usage. In this model, Engagement and Civic Attitudes and Skills show significant effects, while Social and Emotional Competence does not exhibit a significant direct influence. Although this model identifies relevant predictors, it treats all variables as independent determinants of SNS usage, without accounting for possible mediation or developmental pathways. This limits its explanatory depth, as digital behavior is rarely driven by isolated factors alone (Shao & Wang, 2024). Model 2 simplifies the structure further by identifying Engagement as the only significant predictor of SNS usage, while SEC and CAS become non-significant when Engagement is introduced. Although this highlights Engagement as a central behavioral driver, it still fails to

explain how emotional and civic factors operate indirectly through engagement processes. This limitation is consistent with prior studies emphasizing the need to account for mediated relationships in explaining technology use behavior (Fornell & Larcker, 2024; Tafesse & Tesfaye, 2024; Anderson & Kumar, 2024).



In contrast, Model 3 emerges as the most comprehensive and best-fitting model, demonstrating a structured pathway of influence among the variables. Regression weights show that Social and Emotional Competence significantly predicts Engagement, indicating that students with stronger emotional regulation, self-awareness, and social sensitivity tend to exhibit higher levels of behavioral, cognitive, and emotional involvement in academic and civic activities. Engagement, in turn, has a strong and direct influence on SNS usage, suggesting that highly engaged students use social networking platforms more purposefully for academic collaboration, communication, and information sharing. These results align with studies emphasizing engagement as a key determinant of meaningful and productive digital media use (Bennett & Smith, 2023; Tafesse & Tesfaye, 2024).

Model 3 further shows that both Social and Emotional Competence and Engagement significantly predict Civic Attitudes and Skills. This indicates that emotionally competent and actively engaged students are more likely to develop civic awareness, interpersonal effectiveness, leadership orientation, and prosocial behavior. However, Civic Attitudes and Skills exhibit a negative effect on SNS usage, suggesting that students with stronger civic orientation tend to use SNS more critically, selectively, and responsibly rather than for excessive or entertainment-focused purposes. This aligns with findings that civic-minded individuals are more likely to regulate their digital behavior and prioritize meaningful engagement online (Hossain & Rahman, 2023; Anderson & Kumar, 2024).

Additionally, SEC does not show a direct effect on SNS usage, reinforcing its role as an indirect predictor operating through Engagement and Civic Attitudes and Skills. This supports the view that emotional and social competencies influence behavior primarily through motivational and engagement-based pathways rather than direct usage patterns (Shao & Wang, 2024).

Overall, the results confirm that Model 3 best represents the complex and interconnected relationships among the variables, where Engagement acts as the primary mechanism linking Social and Emotional Competence and Civic Attitudes and Skills to SNS usage, while Civic Attitudes and Skills serve as a regulatory factor that promotes more responsible and purposeful digital behavior. These findings suggest that strengthening emotional competence, academic engagement, and civic development can collectively enhance the academic, social, and civic value of SNS use among Public Administration students. This integrated interpretation is supported by Bennett and Smith (2023), Hossain and Rahman (2023), Tafesse and Tesfaye (2024), and Anderson and Kumar (2024), who emphasize the combined influence of psychological, academic, and civic factors in shaping digital behavior in higher education contexts.

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

##### Conclusion

The study concludes that Public Administration students demonstrate **high levels of engagement, social and emotional competence, civic attitudes and skills, and use of Social Networking Sites (SNS)**, indicating active participation in academic, social, and civic domains. Notable strengths were observed in **cognitive engagement, decision-making, political awareness, and informativeness**, reflecting students' capacity for higher-order thinking, responsible judgment, civic awareness, and purposeful information-seeking behavior.

However, relatively lower indicators in **behavioral engagement, self-awareness, diversity attitudes, and SNS constraints** highlight areas requiring further development. These findings suggest the need to reinforce consistent academic practices, deepen emotional reflection, strengthen intercultural openness, and improve digital self-regulation to ensure balanced and responsible SNS usage.

The validated structural equation model confirms that **social and emotional competence indirectly influences SNS usage through engagement and civic attitudes and skills**, with **engagement emerging as the strongest predictor of SNS behavior**, while **civic attitudes function as a regulatory mechanism** promoting selective and responsible use. The negative association between unstructured SNS use and civic outcomes further suggests that excessive or unguided engagement may weaken civic development.

Overall, the findings affirm that SNS function as a **multidimensional platform** that supports academic learning, social development, and civic engagement when guided by strong engagement, emotional competence, and civic orientation. The study contributes to theory by demonstrating the integrated operation of Uses and Gratifications Theory, Social Constructivism, Social Learning Theory, and the Civic Voluntarism Model in explaining students' digital behavior.

## Recommendations:

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

### 1. **Strengthening Academic Engagement**

Higher education institutions should design structured academic activities that enhance **behavioral engagement**, such as monitored coursework, collaborative tasks, and performance-based assessments, to reinforce consistent academic participation.

### 2. **Enhancing Social and Emotional Competence**

Institutions should integrate **social-emotional learning (SEL) programs** focusing on self-awareness, emotional regulation, and reflective practices through mentoring, coaching, and guided reflection activities.

### 3. **Promoting Civic Attitudes and Inclusivity**

Curriculum developers should incorporate **service-learning, civic education, and intercultural engagement programs** to strengthen diversity attitudes, social responsibility, and inclusive perspectives among students.

### 4. **Developing Digital Literacy and Self-Regulation**

Universities should implement **digital literacy and time-management interventions** that promote responsible SNS use, including training on information evaluation, digital ethics, and balanced online engagement.

### 5. **Integrating Holistic Development Programs**

Academic institutions are encouraged to adopt **integrated programs** that simultaneously enhance engagement, emotional competence, and civic skills to maximize the academic, social, and civic benefits of SNS usage.

### 6. **Future Research Directions**

Future studies may explore longitudinal designs, include diverse academic disciplines, and examine additional mediating or moderating variables to further validate and extend the structural model of SNS usage.

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