

KALINGA STUDENTS: AUTONOMY AWARENESS, ATTITUDES, AND HB 3267 RESPONSES

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Abstract

This study investigated how Kalinga students engage with the Cordillera Autonomous Bill (HB 3267). It is found that students with a positive attitude towards the Bill and those who actively followed news about it were more likely to take positive actions in relation to the Bill. Interestingly, gender and where students received their information (media vs. university) didn't have a significant impact. However, students who felt a closer connection to the Bill's effects, such as female students and those from the Cordillera region itself, showed slightly higher engagement. The study also revealed that curiosity about HB 3267 news increased students' understanding and motivated them to act. However, simply knowing about the Bill wasn't enough. A positive attitude played a key role in turning awareness into action. To improve student engagement, the study recommends several strategies: targeted educational initiatives for male students, using the university's own media channels and partnering with external media for better information dissemination, workshops to develop media literacy skills, and inclusive outreach programs to address any awareness gaps. Finally, to gain a broader understanding of how well students understand HB 3267 across the region, the study suggests replicating it at various universities within the Cordillera region.

Keywords: Regional Autonomy, Cordillera, Awareness, Attitudes, Behavior

INTRODUCTION:

Internationally, the concept of regional autonomy has been implemented in various forms. In China, the Chinese Communist Party has established regional national autonomy as a fundamental policy and a cornerstone of the nation's political structure to address the concerns of minority nationalities. Within this legal framework, the Regional National Autonomy Law safeguards the right of minority nationalities to manage their internal affairs (Zhou, 2009). The pursuit of local government autonomy in Nigeria stems from several compelling reasons. At its core, local government autonomy aims to empower local governments with specific powers to fulfill a range of legally assigned functions. This includes the ability to plan, formulate, and implement their own policies, programs, and projects, as well as to establish their own rules and regulations tailored to their unique local needs (Agunyai, 2013). According to Ladner (2016), local autonomy, a hallmark of good governance, is gaining increasing traction in European nations. The persistent efforts of many European countries to bolster local government autonomy underscore the significance of decentralization and delegating far-reaching responsibilities to the lowest levels of governance. Local government autonomy encompasses the inherent right of local authorities to independently manage their personnel, control their finances, establish their own regulations and policies, and carry out their mandated responsibilities without undue interference from higher-level governments (Eme, 2013). Ultimately, decentralization and autonomy can potentially increase public sector efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability, as well as fulfill a conflict-mitigating role (Jimenez, 2009).

In the Philippines, the system of government is primarily unitary, meaning central authority generally holds supreme power. However, the Philippine Constitution allows for the establishment of autonomous regions to grant certain areas more control over their local affairs. Currently, there are two such regions: the Cordillera Autonomous Region (CAR), established in 1990, and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), created in 2019. Both the CAR and BARMM have their own elected governments and legislatures, allowing them to enact laws on various matters like education, culture, agriculture, and natural resources. Despite this, the central government can still veto regional laws and maintains control over critical areas such as defense and foreign policy. The creation of autonomous regions addresses the specific concerns of minority groups and fosters regional development. The CAR, for example, arose from the persistent demands of the Cordillera indigenous peoples for greater self-determination. Similarly, the BARMM was formed as a key component of a peace agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Regional autonomy, as a devolution of power from the central government, can significantly impact students. It has the potential to expand students' access to educational resources and opportunities. Regional governments might be more inclined to invest in education and be more responsive to local community needs, potentially leading to better schools, more qualified teachers, and a wider array of educational programs. Furthermore, regional autonomy can foster a greater sense of ownership among students regarding their education. When students recognize that their regional government is directly responsible for their education, they may be more motivated to actively participate in their learning, which can enhance academic performance and increase civic participation. Universities, as the pinnacle of post-primary education, are crucial for developing skilled manpower and equipping

young people with knowledge for socio-political, economic, and technical advancement. University students are generally rational and possess a good understanding of legal judgment and their rights, making them key stakeholders in regional autonomy. While challenging, the success of regional autonomy largely depends on cooperation and dialogue among various groups, with an educated student populace becoming more empowered to shape their region's future.

Regional autonomy, also known as devolved governance, is a political system that distributes power between a central government and regional or local governments. Students can play a vital role in promoting and advocating for regional autonomy, as they represent a significant portion of the population in many regions and have a keen interest in shaping their own future.

In its essence, autonomy signifies self-governance. Historically, during the pre-modern era, entities such as seignories, bishoprics, monasteries, and towns were granted the privilege of self-rule by monarchs and emperors, often in recognition of their prominent standing within the Church or their strategic importance (Benedikter, 2009). Autonomy is viewed as an instrument for increasing administrative action and services (Toniatti, 2017). Ghai (2000) further defines autonomy as a framework that allows ethnic or other groups with a distinct identity to directly oversee affairs of particular relevance to them, while granting the larger entity the power to govern issues of common interest.

Regional autonomy is the decentralization of governance to outlying regions within a country. It grants a degree of self-governance to these regions, allowing them to make decisions about their own affairs and manage their own resources. The extent of autonomy varies from country to country, ranging from limited powers over local matters to full control over economic, social, and political affairs. The enactment of autonomy law typically provides a broader, more real, and responsible authority to regional governments. A balanced distribution of duties and tasks between the central government and provincial governments ensures that each region has ample income (Trisakti, 2021).

Students have a long history of activism and have played a crucial role in advocating for social and political change. In the context of regional autonomy, students can act as agents of change by raising awareness about the benefits of devolved governance, mobilizing support for autonomy initiatives, and participating in decision-making processes. Universities, as centers of higher education, are particularly vital in this context. They equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge for socio-political, economic, and technical advancement, fostering a generation that is reasonably rational, possesses a good sense of legal judgment and appreciation, and is conscious of their rights. Therefore, universities are instrumental in fostering informed citizenship crucial for the success of regional autonomy.

While research often suggests similarities in men's and women's general political attitudes, some studies reveal persistent gender differences in specific areas. Notably, these differences appear in issues related to civil liberties for marginalized groups. Several studies have found that women tend to be more cautious than men when it comes to granting rights to unpopular groups (Golebiowska, 1999). Additionally, research suggests that women and men may differ in the specific groups they are less tolerant of. Evidence further indicates that women tend to be less interested, informed, and efficacious regarding politics compared to men (Verba, 1997). This disparity in political engagement can have significant consequences for overall political participation rates in discussions surrounding regional autonomy.

This study holds the potential to contribute to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By investigating awareness of House Bill 3267 (HB 3267), the research directly relates to SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, as understanding public knowledge about the bill can shed light on how informed citizens are about efforts to lessen inequalities in political power, economic resources, or access to essential services. Additionally, by exploring public support for establishing an autonomous region as a step towards greater self-determination and participation in governance for the Cordillera people, the study can address SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.

The framework of this study explores how Kalinga students perceive HB 3267. While student gender remains constant (a control variable), the research examines how the provisions of the bill, specifically on Education, Science and Technology, Language, Arts, Culture and Sports, Social Justice, Health and Welfare, and Peace and Order (the independent variables), influence their awareness, attitudes, and behaviors towards the Bill (the dependent variables). Student ethnicity (whether Kalinga or Cordillera), access to information through various channels, and their curiosity about HB 3267 news act as moderating variables.

This study aims to thoroughly examine the diverse perspectives of Kalinga students by comparing and contrasting viewpoints from different subgroups within Kalinga province, analyzing variations based on factors such as ethnicity, gender, source of information, and curiosity. Such an in-depth analysis is expected to provide valuable insights into the array of perspectives held by students across the province. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to investigate students' level of awareness, attitude, and behavior towards House Bill 3267: An Act Establishing the Cordillera Autonomous Region.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study: Kalinga Students' Perceptions of House Bill 3267

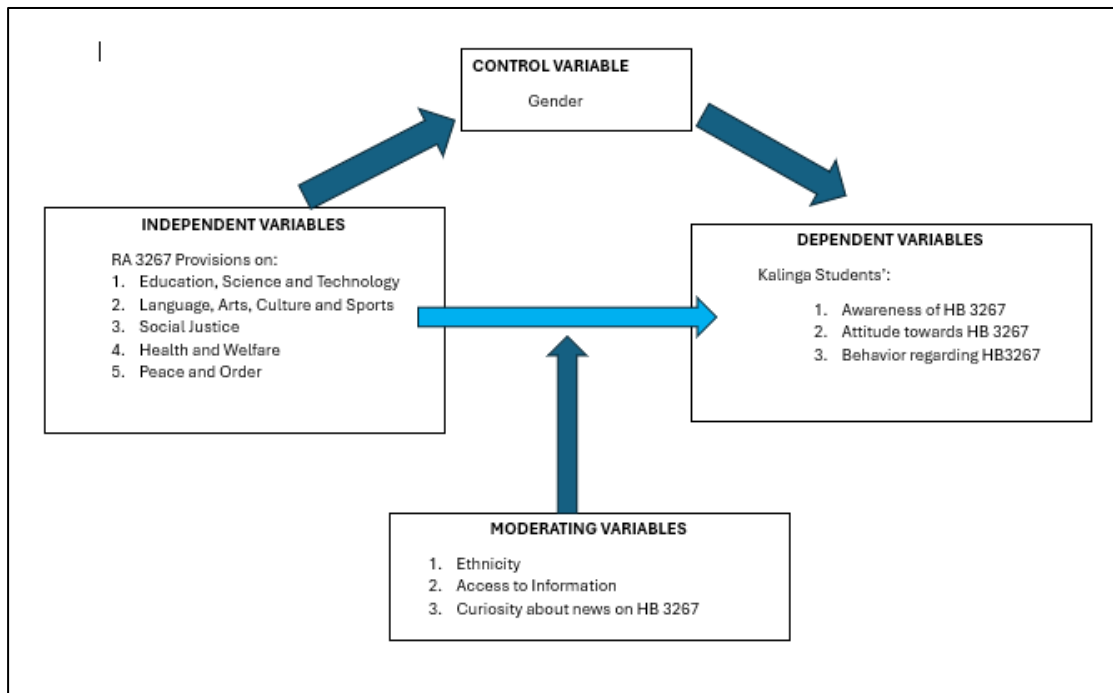


Figure 1

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study offers significant value to various stakeholders by addressing a critical knowledge gap in student engagement with political and social issues within the Cordillera region. For future researchers, it provides initial insights into Kalinga students' perspectives on House Bill 3267 (HB 3267), serving as a foundation for comparative and longitudinal studies on regional autonomy movements and youth activism, and offering methodological guidance for similar interdisciplinary inquiries into complex political issues. Government agencies can leverage the findings to bridge the gap between policymakers and young people, informing policy decisions on regional development, tailoring communication strategies for effective education and engagement on HB 3267, and encouraging responsible youth participation in political processes. Kalinga students themselves will contribute to a deeper understanding of the Bill's impact, empowering their voices and strengthening their community through their participation. For the Kalinga State University (KSU) Administration, this research provides valuable insights into student concerns and aspirations, informing the development of educational initiatives, promoting informed citizenship through programs that encourage critical thinking and democratic participation, and demonstrating KSU's commitment to social responsibility and community engagement. Finally, as the researcher, this study offers valuable insights into student agency, informs advocacy efforts related to HB 3267, guides the development of educational programs within the region, and establishes a foundation for future research on student civic engagement in the Cordillera.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative approach using a survey method for primary data collection to understand the perspectives of Kalinga students on House Bill 3267 (HB 3267). The research focused on students from various universities within Kalinga province, including Kalinga State University (with 182 participants), Kalinga College of Science and Technology, Cordillera A+ Computer Technology College, Saint Louis College of Bulanao, International School of Asia and the Pacific, and Saint Tonis College, with a total of 311 student participants. Prior to the initiation of the survey, a statement of written informed consent was presented to all participants on the first page of the questionnaire. The statement clearly outlined the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, the right to withdraw at any time without penalty, and how the collected data would be used and kept confidential. Participants were required to read and confirm their understanding and consent before they were able to proceed to the survey questions.

Table 1. Distribution of Participants by School and Type

SCHOOL	ADDRESS	Public/Private	No. of Participants
Kalinga State University	Bulanao, Tabuk City, Kalinga	Public	182
Kalinga College of Science and Technology	Bulanao Tabuk City, Kalinga	Private	24
Cordillera A+ Computer Technology College	Dagupan Tabuk City, Kalinga	Private	13
Saint Louis College of Bulanao	Bulanao Tabuk City, Kalinga	Private	42
International School of Asia and the Pacific	Mapaoay Tabuk City, Kalinga	Private	12
Saint Tonis College	Bulanao Tabuk City, Kalinga	Private	38
TOTAL			311

Table 1

Stratified random sampling was utilized to ensure representation from all participating institutions, with participants randomly selected from each stratum proportionally to their size. The survey instrument, adapted from Bozoglu (2016), consisted of 59 questions across two parts:

Part 1 gathered demographic and curiosity information (gender, ethnicity, information sources on regional autonomy, and curiosity level regarding HB 3267), while Part 2 used a Likert-scale approach to assess students' overall awareness, attitudes, and behaviors toward HB 3267. Data collection followed a structured procedure: after obtaining approval from the university's research council and university officials, a representative sample was selected via stratified random sampling by school.

Participation was voluntary and anonymous, with informed consent obtained from all participants, and surveys were administered in paper format within university premises. All collected data was kept confidential, coded, and entered into statistical software. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographics and responses, while inferential statistics like chi-square and ANOVA explored significant differences based on demographics and information sources. Additionally, ordered probit regression analysis was conducted to examine factors influencing awareness, attitudes, and behaviors, providing a deeper understanding of variable interplay. A pilot test of the survey instrument was conducted for validity and reliability, and ethical considerations, including informed consent and anonymity, were strictly adhered to throughout the research process.

It is important to acknowledge the study's limitations: its focus on Kalinga universities restricts generalizability to the broader Cordillera student population, reliance on self-reported surveys introduces potential bias, and its cross-sectional design captures only a single point in time, limiting the ability to establish cause-and-effect or track changes. Furthermore, while demographics were collected, a deeper exploration of socioeconomic factors was not included, and the study prioritized student views, excluding insights from faculty, administrators, and community leaders.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics of the variables used in the models were presented in Table 2. This study contradicts with existing research suggesting a gender gap in political awareness and behavior. While a substantial amount of data indicates men tend to be more knowledgeable about politics than women nationally.

Figure 2. Distribution of Participants by Gender

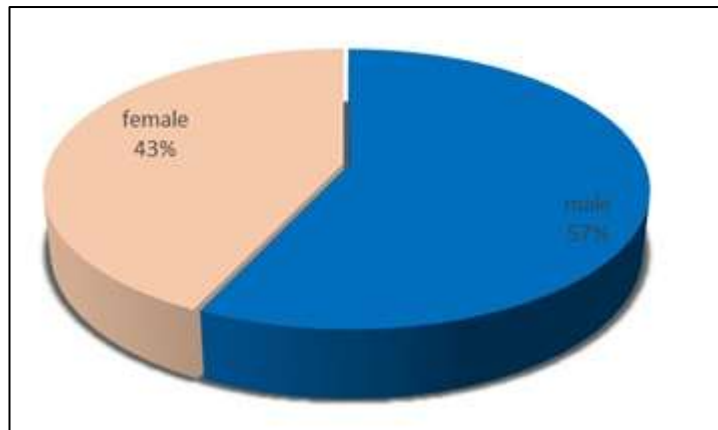


Figure 2

There seems to be a discrepancy in the findings regarding gender and awareness of House Bill 3267 in the Cordillera region. Mondak (2004) reports that while 57% of the studied students were male, this group showed a statistically lower likelihood of high awareness regarding the Bill (8.4% decrease). This finding contradicts the trend observed in the study, where the same group also exhibited statistically higher engagement. This calls for further investigation into the gender gap in awareness of the HB 3267. The cultural context of the Cordillera region might play a significant role in shaping these differences. Verba's (1997) study suggests a more general trend where women tend to be less informed about politics compared to men. However, the findings in Mondak (2004) highlight the need to consider cultural specificities when examining gender and political awareness.

Figure 3. Distribution of Participants by Ethnicity

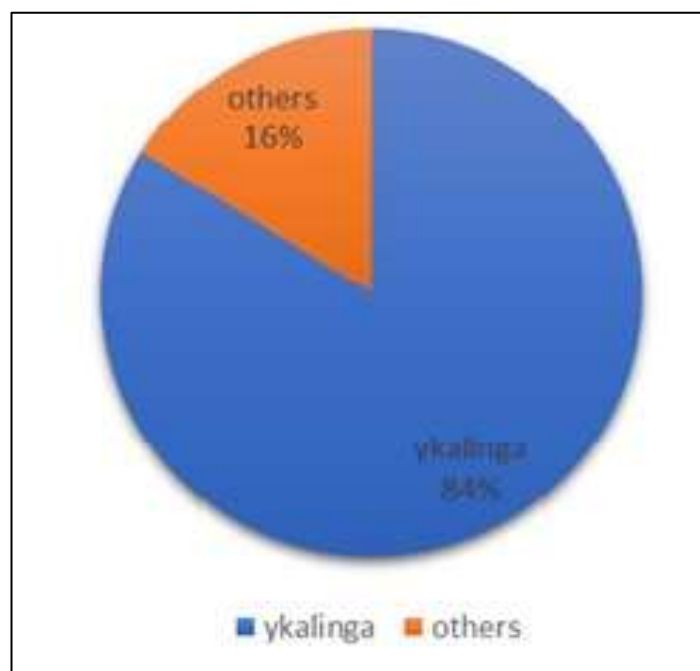


Figure 3

The study finds a clear link between ethnicity and awareness of House Bill 3267 (HB 3267). Students who identify as Kalinga or come from other Cordillera provinces (83.9%) have significantly higher awareness compared to the non-Cordillera ethnic group (16.1%). This translates to a 5.5 percentage point increase in the likelihood of high awareness for students who identify as Kalinga or from the Cordillera region. This finding aligns with research on ethnicity and regional autonomy movements globally as presented in Table 2. Kalinga students and those from other Cordillera provinces likely share a stronger sense of Cordillera identity and culture. This shared identity might be linked to a common history, language, traditions, or grievances that the Cordillera autonomy movement aims to address. The study's findings support the concept of ethnicity as a dynamic and influential factor in shaping political awareness, as discussed in Nagel (1994). Students' self-identification and cultural background seem to play a role in how they engage with the issue of regional autonomy. This aligns with the emphasis in the provided literature on the connection between ethnicity, identity construction, and engagement with political issues.

Figure 4. Distribution of Participants by Source of Information

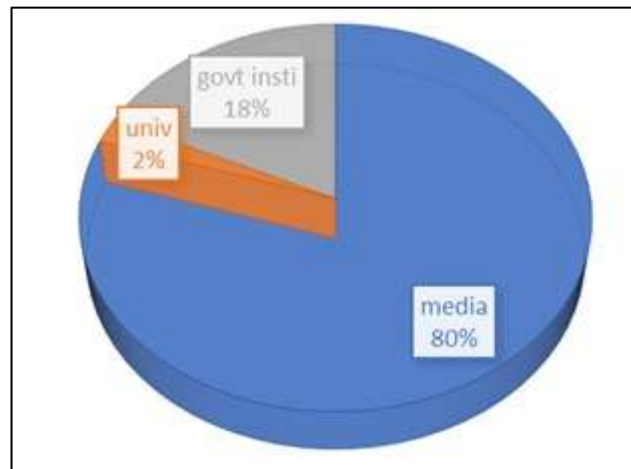


Figure 4

The findings of this study corroborates with Kawuryan's (2017) argument that mass media plays a significant role in shaping public understanding of regional autonomy issues. The finding that 80% of students rely on media as their primary information source about House Bill 3267 (HB 3267) highlights this. However, Kawuryan (2017) also emphasizes how media can frame information, potentially influencing how people perceive the issue. Students who rely solely on media for information might have a limited understanding of the complexities surrounding regional autonomy, lacking exposure to alternative viewpoints. Interestingly, the study finds a statistical link between the university as an information source and student attitudes and behaviors. This suggests that university information might offer a contrasting perspective to media portrayals. Universities can provide a platform for diverse viewpoints, critical analysis, and potentially a more balanced understanding of HB 3267.

The data reveals a nuanced relationship between information source and awareness. While relying on media increases the likelihood of having high awareness by 4.6% points, it also decreases the likelihood of moderate and low awareness by 4.3% and 0.3% points respectively. Similarly, for students who usually or always follow news, the likelihood of high awareness increases by 5.2% points, but moderate and low awareness decrease by 4.9% and 0.3% points respectively. This suggests that media exposure might create awareness of HB 3267, but it might not always provide a comprehensive or balanced perspective. University information, on the other hand, could contribute to a more nuanced understanding, potentially explaining the link between university information sources and student attitudes and behaviors.

Awareness and curiosity were significant variables while university and government institutions as main source of information has no statistical influence on attitude. If the student had a higher awareness, the likelihood of having high attitudes increased by 7.3% points. However, the likelihood of having moderate and low attitudes decreased by 5.8 and 1.4% points, respectively.

If the student usually or always followed news or has high curiosity, his likelihood of having a high attitude increased by 4.15% points. However, the likelihood of having a moderate and low attitude decreased 3.3 and 0.85 percentage points, respectively. The study finds that 58% of students frequently follow news on the HB 3267, with a statistically significant link between news frequency and awareness, attitudes, and behaviors. Studies exploring the link between news consumption, political attitudes, and political participation can shed light on the connection observed in this study. Frequent exposure to news on the HB3267 might not only enhance awareness but also influence students' attitudes towards the Bill and their willingness to engage in related behaviors. While the historical changes outlined in the study of Blumler (1999). (strong institutions, television adaptation) don't directly apply here, the finding that frequent news exposure correlates with higher awareness, attitudes, and behaviors reflects the ongoing influence of media in shaping political engagement.

The average HB 3267 awareness score was 3.80, and this meant that the students had a high level of HB 3267 awareness. There were statistical differences among the attitude and behavior groups in terms of HB 3267 awareness ($p < 0.01$). The finding that Kalinga students have a high level of awareness regarding the HB 3267 raises interesting questions about potential collective action in the pursuit of greater autonomy. While the study of Siroky (2015). focuses on a more extreme outcome, the concept of groups mobilizing for their rights is relevant. High awareness of the Bill suggests students might be more prepared to engage in discussions, advocacy efforts, or even peaceful protests to achieve their goals.

The average attitude score was 4.05, indicating that the students had a high level of attitude towards HB 3267. There were statistical differences among the behavior groups in terms of attitude ($p < 0.01$). The finding that Kalinga students have a high average attitude score (4.05) towards House Bill 3267 suggests a strong positive sentiment regarding the Bill which is in contrast to the study of Duckitt (2016) which examined the link between broad ideological stances and political behavior and discovered that group identity might have a weaker effect on general

political participation but could be significant for issues that directly affect a specific group's cultural identity or well-being. While this study finds that with the Cordillera region's autonomy, a concept closely tied to the Kalinga students' cultural identity. The group identity (Kalinga) likely strengthens their positive sentiment towards the Bill. The study of Earl (2017) about youth political participation and the finding on student engagement with House Bill 3267 directly connect to the debate about young people's role in activism. The finding that Kalinga students have a high average behavior score (3.52) regarding House Bill 3267 suggests a strong likelihood of engagement with the Bill. The Kalinga students demonstrate active engagement with the HB 3267 potentially through traditional or online methods which aligns with the argument that young people participate in activism beyond institutional politics. The HB 3267 resonates with the students' sense of identity or desire for regional autonomy, motivating their engagement.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Awareness, Attitude, and Behavior Levels by

Variables	General (N=311)	AWARENESS LEVEL			ATTITUDE LEVEL			BEHAVIOR LEVEL		
		Moderat			Moderat			Moderat		
		Low	e	High	Low	e	High	Low	e	High
		(N=3)	(N=61)	(N=247)	(N=8)	(N=83)	(N=220)	(N=14)	(N=126)	(N=171)
GENDER	0.2165	0.4165	0.2745	0.2	0.219	0.25	0.2125	0.222	0.25	0.1915
	-0.248	-0.204	-0.25	-0.245	-0.256	-0.252	-0.2475	-0.253	-0.2505	-0.2435
ETHNICITY	0.0805	0.1665	0.041	0.089	0.094	0.106	0.077	0.111	0.0715	0.085
	-0.184	-0.258	-0.1375	-0.1915	-0.2015	-0.206	-0.1805	-0.212	-0.1755	-0.18845
INFORMATION SOURCE										
INFS MEDIA	0.405	0.3335	0.4015	0.4065	0.375	0.4015	0.4065	0.4075	0.4225	0.392
	-0.1965	-0.258	-0.1995	-0.195	-0.2235	-0.2005	-0.1955	-0.198	-0.181	-0.206
INFS UNIV	0.1125	0.0835	0.086	0.1195	0.094	0.053	0.1205	0.0925	0.0925	0.136
	-0.209	-0.204	-0.1895	-0.2135	0.2015	0.155	0.214	-0.198	-0.1865	-0.223
INFS GOV INSTITUTION	0.069	0.0835	0.082	0.0945	0.0315	0.106	0.092	0.0925	0.0755	0.104
	-0.1935	-0.204	-0.186	-0.196	0.125	0.206	0.194	-0.198	-0.1795	-0.203
CURIOSITY	0.29	0.3335	0.209	0.3095	0.25	0.129	0.311	0.148	0.1745	0.386
	-0.247	-0.258	-0.2475	-0.243	0.258	0.2205	0.2425	-0.2325	-0.239	-0.21
AWARENESS	1.8985	1.0675	1.637	1.967	1.562	1.723	1.9245	1.7295	1.841	1.945
	-0.2005	-0.09	-0.116	-0.131	0.369	0.2105	0.1715	-0.3305	-0.2055	-0.1635
ATTITUDE	2.0265	1.2805	1.822	2.086	1.4005	1.4925	1.801	1.532	1.9375	2.131
	-0.29	-0.578	-0.312	-0.2405	-0.362	-0.213	-0.2555	-0.437	-0.267	-0.2225
BEHAVIOR	1.758	1.4835	1.603	1.8005	1.4005	1.4925	1.801	1.0965	1.5595	1.9565

Table 2

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigated the factors influencing Kalinga students' behavior regarding House Bill 3267 (HB 3267), revealing that while a slight gender gap existed where males showed marginally less positive behavior, the most significant determinants were a student's attitude and their news consumption habits. Students holding a more positive attitude towards HB 3267 exhibited a considerably higher likelihood of engaging in positive behaviors related to the Bill, and regular followers of news about the Bill also displayed increased positive behavior, irrespective of whether their information originated from media or university/other institutions. In conclusion, the study found that students' opinions on the Bill and their news-following habits were the primary drivers of their behavior, with gender and information source having a lesser impact; female students and those from the Cordillera region showed slightly higher awareness and engagement, potentially due to a closer connection to the Bill's implications, and curiosity about HB 3267 news positively correlated with understanding and motivation to act, yet awareness alone was insufficient without a positive attitude to translate into favorable actions. Building on these findings, it is recommended that universities implement targeted educational initiatives, such as symposia and seminars for male students featuring prominent female student leaders on HB 3267, to address the identified gender gap. To enhance information dissemination and counter reliance on mass media, KSU should leverage its own media channels and forge partnerships with external media outlets to co-create content and invite journalists for campus talks. Furthermore, fostering critical news consumption through media literacy workshops is crucial given the correlation between curiosity and engagement. Inclusive outreach strategies, such as targeted information campaigns for non-YKalinga and non-Cordillera students, are necessary to address awareness disparities. Finally, replicating this study across various universities in the Cordillera region is recommended for a more comprehensive understanding of HB 3267 literacy variations among diverse student populations.

Ethical Approval Statement

This research was approved by the **Kalinga State University Research Ethics Committee** on **April 15, 2024**. The committee's approval was made for the research proposal titled "**KALINGA STUDENTS: AUTONOMY AWARENESS, ATTITUDES, AND HB 3267 RESPONSES**." A specific reference or permit number is not

available, as the university's standard procedure for this type of approval does not include one. The confirmation was made by Dr. Brenda Lumines (Primary Reviewer), Sheena Phine P. Dayagon (REC Secretary), and Dr. Lope T. Buen (REC Chairman).

Data Availability Statement: The pertinent data that support the findings of this study have been included in the article. Further data are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Competing Interests: The author declare no competing interests.

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