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Research Article

Demographic Differences In College Students' Self-Reported Social Media Competencies For Crime Prevention In Kidapawan City

Denn Lawrence R. Espadera [1] | Ken Vaness P. Montevirgen [2] | Dhan Christian Damero [3] | Jhon Rey G. Mamites [4] | Junel A. Barrera [5] | Tommy Von D. Lucas [6]

[1-6] Central Mindanao Colleges, Kidapawan City, Philippines

Abstract

Introduction: Social media can support crime awareness and prevention, but students' perceived competencies may differ from demonstrated abilities. Evidence on college students' social media competencies for crime prevention remains limited in local Philippine settings.

Objective: This study assessed college students' self-reported social media competencies for crime prevention in Kidapawan City across objective competencies, subjective competencies, and crime-prevention practices.

Methods: A cross-sectional descriptive-comparative design was used with 309 students from five higher education institutions, selected through proportionate stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a 57-item questionnaire adapted from Ahmad et al. (2015) and analyzed using descriptive statistics, Mann–Whitney U, and Kruskal–Wallis H tests with post hoc comparisons.

Results: Students reported high to very high levels of agreement across all three domains. After Holm correction, only the item concerning using social media "to manipulate" showed a significant gender difference, with higher scores among males.

Conclusions: Students generally perceived themselves as competent in using social media for crime prevention, although these findings reflect self-reported rather than demonstrated competence. Future research should use performance-based measures to validate these perceptions.

Correspondence
Tommy Von D. Lucas, Central Mindanao Colleges, Philippines
Email: tlucas@cmc.edu.ph

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1. Introduction

Social media has become an important platform for communication, information sharing, connectivity, and public engagement. Beyond personal interaction, it increasingly supports public safety by disseminating warnings, reporting suspicious activities, and sharing crime-prevention information (Araghi et al., 2025). For college students, active social media users, these platforms offer opportunities to participate in community awareness and crime-prevention efforts.

However, using social media for public safety also presents challenges, including misinformation, unverified reports, irresponsible posting, and limited critical evaluation of online content. Fauzi and Bahri (2024) noted that although social media can support crime prevention, its misuse may create confusion and weaken public trust. These concerns highlight the importance of understanding how students perceive and practice responsible social media use in relation to crime prevention.

Despite social media's growing role in community safety, limited attention has been given to college students' self-reported competence in using these platforms for crime-prevention purposes (Osumo et al., 2026; Kim, 2023). This study therefore examines college students in Kidapawan City in terms of their self-reported knowledge, perceived competence and confidence, and reported practices related to crime prevention and community awareness. Since the study relies on self-report measures, the findings describe students' reported knowledge, perceptions, and practices rather than objectively demonstrated competence.

Earlier research supports the argument that users' skills and awareness guide safety-related social media use. Ahmad et al. (2015) added that social media and young people's digital literacy help disseminate crime information and improve public knowledge. Likewise, Ismail et al. (2022) found that the credibility of online information shapes public attitudes toward crime prevention messages. These studies suggest that demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and education level may influence crime prevention through social media. Therefore, analyzing how these elements relate to social media skills among college students can help us understand who is better prepared to adopt responsible digital practices.

In a recent local study, Fajardo (2023) found that most Filipino students have yet to develop the critical skills needed to assess the credibility and accuracy of online content. This would mean that, despite being frequent social media users, students lack the critical ability to judge the credibility of crime information. This limitation can affect how they use social media for crime prevention, where credibility and accuracy matter. In this study, improving students' ability to identify credible sources and share accurate information is an important step toward using social media effectively to promote community safety.

This study is guided by the following research questions: (1) What are the respondents' demographic and institutional characteristics? (2) What are their self-reported levels of objective competence, subjective competence, and practices related to social media and crime prevention? (3) Do domain scores differ significantly according to gender, age, and institution? (4) For any significant omnibus comparison, which specific groups differ? The studies cited in this research have primarily examined the role of social media in crime prevention and the challenges associated with its use, while providing less attention to differences in students' self-reported knowledge, perceived competence, and practices across demographic and institutional characteristics. Accordingly, this study examines how college students in Kidapawan City describe their knowledge, confidence, and practices in using social media to share useful, appropriate, and secure information for crime prevention and community awareness. The findings are expected to provide schools and local organizations with evidence for developing programs that promote responsible and informed social media use for crime prevention. In future directions, the results may be disseminated through research presentations, institutional reports, stakeholder consultations, and academic publications to inform school-based and community-level initiatives on digital safety and crime prevention.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Design

This study used a cross-sectional, descriptive-comparative research design, allowing researchers to describe students' self-reported social media knowledge, perceived competence and confidence, and crime-prevention practices, and to compare these measures across selected demographic and institutional groups. As a cross-sectional design, the study describes conditions at a specific point in time and does not establish causal relationships. The study included 309 college students from five higher education institutions in Kidapawan City. Using Cochran's finite population formula, the researchers determined the sample size based on an accessible population of 13,661 college students across the five participating institutions. The 309 respondents represent the achieved sample used in the analysis and are consistent with the sample reported in the succeeding tables. Retain the corresponding sampling records to verify the original target sample, number of students invited, response rate, and any potential nonresponse bias.

2.2. Respondents and Sampling Procedure

To provide equitable representation, the research applied proportionate stratified random sampling. Each school served as a stratum, and the number of participants selected from each was based on its enrollment proportion relative to the total accessible population. This ensures that larger schools contribute more respondents than smaller ones, making the sample more representative of the student distribution across the five participating institutions. The final allocation is:

School	Population (N_i)	Sample (n_i)
College A	4,223	96
College B	956	22
College C	1,151	25
College D	4,116	93
College E	3,215	73
Total	**13,661**	**309**

The sampling frame for each participating institution was based on the official enrollment lists provided by the respective institutions for the study period. The required sample size was determined using the Raosoft Sample Size Calculator, based on a 95% confidence level, a 5% margin of error, and the recommended sample size for each institutional stratum. Dr. Felix Chavez Jr., a Filipino researcher and statistician, guided the sampling procedure to ensure appropriate application of the sampling and statistical procedures. Respondents were selected through stratified random sampling, with the Center for Research and Publications of Central Mindanao Colleges generating the random sequence. Eligible participants were college students enrolled in Kidapawan City during the study period, at least 18 years old, active social media users, and willing to provide informed consent. The study excluded students on leave of absence, those who had withdrawn, those below 18 years of age, and non-users of social media. The researchers contacted selected respondents and invited them to participate voluntarily. The authors documented nonresponses and refusals, and when replacement was necessary, selected respondents from the same institutional stratum using the established random-selection procedure.

2.3. Research Instruments

This study used an adapted questionnaire originally developed by Ahmad et al. (2015) to assess social media use, competencies, and crime-prevention practices among Malaysian youth. The instrument was adapted to the Philippine context and to college students in Kidapawan City. The items were reviewed and contextualized to ensure their clarity, relevance, and appropriateness to the local setting. Experts in research, statistics, criminology, and education reviewed the adapted questionnaire, and the researchers incorporated their recommendations before final administration. The instrument was also pilot-tested with 20 individuals who met the general characteristics of the target respondents but were

not included in the final sample. The pilot test assessed the clarity, comprehensibility, and appropriateness of the items and identified necessary revisions before the main data collection.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part gathered the respondents' demographic and institutional characteristics, including gender, age, and school. The second part assessed self-reported knowledge, perceived competence and confidence, and reported practices related to social media and crime prevention. It consisted of 25 knowledge-related items, 11 perceived-competence items, and 21 practice items, for a total of 57 items. The knowledge-related items assessed respondents' self-reported understanding of social media and crime, the perceived-competence items assessed their confidence and perceived ability to use social media for crime-prevention purposes, and the practice items assessed their reported use of social media for crime prevention and community awareness.

Following the pilot test, the questionnaire was refined based on observations and recommendations from the pilot administration and expert review. The final instrument was subsequently administered to the 309 respondents included in the study. Because the original pilot-test response records were no longer available, Cronbach's alpha coefficients from the pilot administration could not be independently reproduced. Accordingly, no numerical reliability coefficient from the pilot test. This limitation is acknowledged in interpreting the instrument's reliability evidence. Nevertheless, researchers adapted, expert-reviewed, pilot-tested, and refined the instrument to ensure contextual appropriateness and clarity for the Philippine setting. The complete adapted questionnaire is provided in the Appendix.

The instrument uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Because the response anchors measure agreement, not frequency, the interpretation categories below are labeled in terms of agreement rather than how often a behavior is "manifested"; the range of means used for analysis is shown below:

Range of Means	Level/Extent	Interpretation
4.21 – 5.00	Very High	The indicator reflects strong agreement
3.41 – 4.20	High	The indicator reflects agreement
2.61 – 3.40	Moderate	The indicator reflects neither agreement nor disagreement
1.81 – 2.60	Low	The indicator reflects disagreement
1.00 – 1.80	Very Low	The indicator reflects strong disagreement

2.4. Data Collection and Analysis

The research employed comparative and descriptive statistics to analyze the data. We used frequency and percentage to describe students' profiles (gender, age, and school). In contrast, we used the mean and standard deviation to compute the average extent and range of their social media skills and crime prevention practices.

Data analysis considered the ordinal nature of the Likert-type responses, the distribution of the domain-level scores, and the sizes of the comparison groups. The collected data were initially organized and tallied using Microsoft Excel 365, where descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were computed. The dataset was subsequently analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 24. The Shapiro–Wilk test was used to assess the distribution of the domain-level scores, and the results were considered alongside the ordinal nature of the Likert-type responses and the sizes of the comparison groups to determine the appropriate statistical procedures.

Guided by the statistician, the researchers used nonparametric statistical procedures to examine differences between groups. The Mann–Whitney U test was used for comparisons involving two independent groups, such as gender, while the Kruskal–Wallis H test was used for comparisons involving more than two groups, such as age categories and participating institutions. Where a statistically significant Kruskal–Wallis result was obtained, post hoc pairwise comparisons were conducted using the Dwass–Steel–Critchlow–Fligner procedure. Statistical significance was evaluated at

the 0.05 level ($\alpha = .05$). The analyses focused on the composite scores of the major domains rather than treating individual questionnaire items as separate outcomes.

The demographic groupings and sample sizes reported in the results were reviewed for consistency with the achieved sample of 309 respondents. The descriptive statistics were prepared using Microsoft Excel 365, while the inferential analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 24.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary, and all respondents provided informed consent before data collection. The Central Mindanao Colleges Institutional Review Board (CMC-IRB) reviewed and approved the study under Protocol No. 0628, dated June 28, 2024. The researchers obtained institutional permission from the five participating higher education institutions before conducting the study. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

All responses were treated as confidential and were handled only by the researchers. The collected responses were stored in a secure, restricted Google Drive database, with access limited to the research team. The information provided by respondents was kept confidential and was not disclosed in a manner that would identify individual participants. The research adviser checked and validated the collected data as part of the quality-control process. The data will be retained securely for two years and then permanently destroyed in accordance with the researchers' data-retention procedures. Given the sensitive nature of some questionnaire items, respondents were assured that their individual responses would remain confidential and would be reported only in aggregated form. Respondents could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, and the researchers excluded incomplete or inconsistent responses from the final dataset to maintain the accuracy and integrity of the analysis.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Profile of College Students in Kidapawan City

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 309 college student respondents from various higher education institutions in Kidapawan City. In terms of gender, most respondents were female (178, 57.6%), while male respondents comprised 131 (42.4%). This gender distribution aligns with general enrollment patterns in Philippine higher education institutions, where female students often outnumber male students (Commission on Higher Education, 2023).

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Participants (N = 309)

Variable	Category	f	%
Gender	Female	178	57.6
	Male	131	42.4
Age	18–20	234	75.7
	21–23	59	19.1
	24–26	13	4.2
	27–30	3	1.0
Higher Education Institution (HEI)	College A	72	23.3
	College B	46	14.9
	College C	25	8.1
	College D	93	30.1
	College E	73	23.6

In terms of age, most respondents were in the 18–20-year-old category (234, 75.7%), followed by the 21–23-year-old category (59, 19.1%). The remaining respondents were aged 24–26 (13, 4.2%) and

27–30 (3, 1.0%). This age distribution reflects the typical age range of undergraduate students in Philippine colleges and universities (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2022).

Regarding institutional distribution, the largest number of respondents came from College D (93, 30.1%), followed by College E (73, 23.6%), College A (72, 23.3%), College B (46, 14.9%), and College C (25, 8.1%). This proportional distribution ensures that the sample adequately represents the student population across different higher education institutions in Kidapawan City.

The demographic profile of the respondents is significant as it may be associated with their social media usage patterns, level of awareness regarding crime issues, and involvement in crime prevention behaviors. Prior research has established that demographic characteristics such as gender and age can influence digital literacy and online engagement (Vogels et al., 2022; Ismail et al., 2022). The predominance of female respondents and younger students in this study aligns with national trends in higher education enrollment and provides a relevant context for examining social media competencies in crime prevention among college students.

3.2. Level of Social Media Competencies in Crime Prevention

Table 2 presents the descriptive level of objective competencies regarding social media and crime among college students across different higher education institutions. The results indicate that most items on objective competencies were rated very high across all institutions, with mean scores ranging from 3.76 to 5.00.

Table 2. Level of Social Media Competencies in Crime Prevention

Item Statement	HEI	Mean	SD	Descriptive Level
1. Crime is an issue that is taken seriously by the authority.	College A	4.03	0.165	High
	College B	5.00	0.000	Very high
	College C	5.00	0.000	Very high
	College D	5.00	0.000	Very high
	College E	5.00	0.000	Very high
2. Crime is an act prohibited by the religion.	College A	4.03	0.993	High
	College B	4.02	1.085	High
	College C	4.08	0.954	High
	College D	4.39	0.897	High
	College E	4.16	0.958	High
3. Crime cases are increasing each year.	College A	4.40	0.744	High
	College B	4.20	0.778	Very high
	College C	4.60	0.577	Very high
	College D	4.63	0.547	Very high
	College E	4.53	0.728	Very high
4. Crime cases mostly involve youth.	College A	4.28	0.755	Very high
	College B	4.20	0.806	High
	College C	3.88	0.781	High
	College D	4.39	0.660	High
	College E	4.11	0.809	High
5. Crime can threaten the safety of the country.	College A	4.40	0.744	Very high
	College B	4.15	1.135	High
	College C	4.52	0.918	Very high
	College D	4.63	0.604	Very high
	College E	4.52	0.747	Very high
6. Crime can hamper the development of the country.	College A	4.33	0.692	Very high
	College B	4.26	0.801	Very high
	College C	4.36	0.860	Very high
	College D	4.57	0.728	Very high
	College E	4.51	0.690	Very high
7. Crime can create anxiety.	College A	4.43	0.688	Very high
	College B	4.46	0.808	Very high
	College C	4.72	0.678	Very high
	College D	4.59	0.594	Very high
	College E	4.58	0.686	Very high

8. Crime can have negative impact to the lives of people.	College A	4.60	0.725	Very high
	College B	4.59	0.748	Very high
	College C	4.68	0.557	Very high
	College D	4.73	0.446	Very high
	College E	4.58	0.780	Very high
9. Crime threatens the economy.	College A	4.35	0.653	Very high
	College B	4.28	0.911	Very high
	College C	4.60	0.645	Very high
	College D	4.54	0.563	Very high
	College E	4.44	0.781	Very high
10. Crime negatively impact national harmony.	College A	4.40	0.685	Very high
	College B	4.26	0.855	Very high
	College C	4.64	0.638	Very high
	College D	4.65	0.503	Very high
	College E	4.45	0.688	Very high
11. Crime can be dealt with using social media.	College A	4.29	0.795	Very high
	College B	4.09	0.839	High
	College C	3.76	1.234	High
	College D	4.30	0.831	Very high
	College E	4.00	1.027	High
12. Social media can be used:				
a. For entertainment	College A	4.25	0.818	Very high
	College B	4.46	0.622	Very high
	College C	4.76	0.436	Very high
	College D	4.52	0.636	Very high
	College E	4.41	0.863	Very high
b. To manipulate	College A	3.83	1.088	High
	College B	4.07	0.854	High
	College C	4.24	1.128	Very high
	College D	4.14	1.059	High
	College E	3.68	1.300	High
c. To deliver information	College A	4.54	0.670	Very high
	College B	4.35	0.900	Very high
	College C	4.72	0.542	Very high
	College D	4.65	0.583	Very high
	College E	4.37	1.034	Very high
d. To incite hatred	College A	3.78	1.213	High
	College B	4.11	0.900	High
	College C	4.08	1.115	High
	College D	4.16	1.135	High
	College E	3.78	1.228	High
e. To get information	College A	4.49	0.750	Very high
	College B	4.50	0.782	Very high
	College C	4.60	0.577	Very high
	College D	4.73	0.554	Very high
	College E	4.29	1.020	Very high
f. To disseminate information	College A	3.96	1.067	High
	College B	4.33	0.896	Very high
	College C	4.68	0.476	Very high
	College D	4.49	0.732	Very high
	College E	4.29	0.841	Very high
g. To persuade	College A	4.07	1.025	High
	College B	4.39	0.745	Very high
	College C	4.40	0.707	Very high
	College D	4.45	0.854	Very high
	College E	3.96	1.033	High
h. To imitate negative behavior	College A	4.00	1.088	High
	College B	4.02	1.125	High
	College C	4.28	0.980	Very high
	College D	4.13	1.135	High
	College E	3.52	1.324	High
i. To educate	College A	4.44	0.690	Very high
	College B	4.46	0.622	Very high
	College C	4.68	0.476	Very high
	College D	4.77	0.492	Very high

	College E	4.26	0.986	Very high
j. To invade others privacy	College A	3.74	1.278	High
	College B	3.70	1.190	High
	College C	3.84	1.434	High
	College D	4.08	1.304	High
	College E	3.47	1.345	Moderate
k. To learn	College A	4.22	0.907	Very high
	College B	4.20	0.833	Very high
	College C	4.56	0.583	Very high
	College D	4.66	0.521	Very high
	College E	4.21	1.154	Very high
l. To access porn site	College A	3.28	1.406	Moderate
	College B	3.13	1.439	Moderate
	College C	3.56	1.635	High
	College D	2.95	1.570	Moderate
	College E	3.04	1.550	Moderate
m. To build relationship	College A	4.24	0.880	Very high
	College B	4.20	0.719	Very high
	College C	4.28	0.792	Very high
	College D	4.44	0.758	Very high
	College E	4.15	1.151	High
n. To share information	College A	4.31	0.725	Very high
	College B	4.33	0.845	Very high
	College C	4.48	0.586	Very high
	College D	4.61	0.590	Very high
	College E	4.47	0.818	Very high

Students generally self-reported a high to very high level of agreement with objective-competence items regarding social media and crime among the five higher education institutions in Kidapawan City. Respondents from Colleges B, C, D, and E gave a very high descriptive level for Item 1 (M=5.00), while College A gave a high descriptive level.

All five colleges showed a high descriptive level on Item 2 (M=4.02–4.39), indicating that students agreed that religions prohibit criminal actions. A similar pattern emerged for Item 3, where respondents gave high to very high ratings across the five colleges (M=4.20–4.63), indicating agreement that crime cases are increasing.

High to very high ratings were obtained for Item 5 by respondents from the majority of the colleges (M=4.15-4.63), where students were in strong agreement that the country's security is affected by crime, as well as Item 6, where students also strongly agreed that crimes hurt the nation's progress (M=4.26-4.57) among all the colleges surveyed. In Item 7, respondents strongly agreed that crime breeds panic (M=4.43-4.72), and in Item 8, that individuals can feel a negative impact of crime (M=4.58-4.73). Item 9 was also rated at a very high descriptive level across all four colleges, with respondents strongly agreeing that crime also affects the economy (M=4.28-4.60). This suggests that students have fully internalized this aspect of crime's consequences through observations in the media or around them, which is also supported by Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (2001).

All five colleges gave a very high descriptive level on Item 10 (M=4.26–4.65), where respondents agreed that crime affects national harmony, and on Item 11, where high to very high descriptive levels were obtained (M=3.76–4.30), indicating agreement that social media can be used to address crime-related concerns and safety.

For the item on using social media to "deliver information," respondents across the five colleges generally agreed, with mean scores ranging from 4.35 to 4.72, indicating a high to very high level of agreement. This finding aligns with the preceding item on using social media to address crime-related concerns and suggests that students see social media as a channel for delivering information and raising awareness of social issues, including crime (Ismail et al., 2022). Respondents also reported high to very high agreement that social media can be used "to manipulate" and "to incite hatred," reflecting awareness of both constructive and potentially harmful uses of digital platforms. This finding is consistent with Fauzi and Bahri (2024), who noted that misuse of social media, including the

spread of false information, may contribute to confusion and other undesirable outcomes. Overall, the findings indicate that students recognize both the positive and negative dimensions of social media use, consistent with the broader digital-literacy construct discussed by Fajardo (2023).

Respondents also reported varying levels of agreement with the item concerning access to pornographic sites. College C showed a comparatively higher mean rating, while the other colleges generally reported medium levels. Because this item concerns a sensitive and socially undesirable behavior, the responses may be influenced by social-desirability bias and recall limitations. Therefore, lower reported levels should not be interpreted as evidence that students do not engage in such behavior. Rather, the findings indicate differences in self-reported responses across institutions and should be interpreted cautiously. Consistent with Fauzi and Bahri (2024), the results further illustrate that social media may serve both beneficial and potentially harmful functions, emphasizing the importance of responsible and critical digital engagement.

In general, students self-reported an adequate understanding of crime-related issues and acknowledged both the positive and negative roles of social media in crime prevention. The results suggest that students view social media as an important source of information and knowledge and a potentially useful tool for increasing awareness, while also recognizing risks such as deception or misuse; because these are self-reported agreement ratings rather than performance-based assessments, they describe students' own perceptions rather than demonstrated understanding. These findings are broadly consistent with Bandura's (2001) Social Cognitive Theory, which suggests that individuals develop knowledge, perceptions, and behaviors through observation, interaction, and exposure to media environments, although this study did not directly measure observational learning or environmental influence as distinct processes. The results are also broadly consistent with Fajardo's (2023) discussion of digital literacy, in the sense that students report being able to reflect on the social consequences of online media use.

3.3. Level of Subjective Competencies of Social Media and Crime

Table 3 presents the descriptive level of subjective competencies regarding social media and crime among college students. The findings reveal that most respondents rated statements about subjective competencies very highly, indicating strong positive attitudes and confidence in their ability to engage in crime prevention efforts.

Table 3. Level of Subjective Competencies of Social Media and Crime

Item Statement	HEI	Mean	SD	Descriptive Level
1. Crime is an important topic discussed by members of the community.	College A	4.42	0.687	Very high
	College B	4.33	0.871	Very high
	College C	4.44	0.507	Very high
	College D	4.65	0.503	Very high
	College E	4.48	0.747	Very high
2. Crime is a shared responsibility of the authority and the public.	College A	4.39	0.742	Very high
	College B	4.24	0.899	Very high
	College C	4.44	0.583	Very high
	College D	4.59	0.594	Very high
	College E	4.27	0.854	Very high
Item Statement	**HEI**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Descriptive Level**
1. Crime is an important topic discussed by members of the community.	College A	4.42	0.687	Very high
	College B	4.33	0.871	Very high
	College C	4.44	0.507	Very high
	College D	4.65	0.503	Very high
	College E	4.48	0.747	Very high
2. Crime is a shared responsibility of the authority and the public.	College A	4.39	0.742	Very high
	College B	4.24	0.899	Very high
	College C	4.44	0.583	Very high
	College D	4.59	0.594	Very high
	College E	4.27	0.854	Very high
3. Crime needs to be dealt with urgently.	College A	4.42	0.727	Very high
	College B	4.35	0.822	Very high

	College C	4.72	0.458	Very high
	College D	4.57	0.559	Very high
	College E	4.40	0.721	Very high
4. Crime needs to be dealt with in different ways.	College A	4.24	0.778	Very high
	College B	4.37	0.679	Very high
	College C	4.60	0.577	Very high
	College D	4.52	0.583	Very high
	College E	4.30	0.720	Very high
5. In dealing with crime, I am:				
a. Very interested in assisting the authority	College A	4.08	0.783	High
	College B	3.87	1.024	High
	College C	3.88	1.013	High
	College D	4.32	0.782	Very high
	College E	4.01	0.890	High
b. Willing to contribute and assist	College A	4.04	0.795	High
	College B	4.09	0.839	High
	College C	3.88	1.092	High
	College D	4.34	0.699	Very high
	College E	4.01	0.979	High
c. Ready to assist whenever needed	College A	4.01	0.864	High
	College B	4.02	0.745	High
	College C	3.72	1.100	High
	College D	4.34	0.684	Very high
	College E	4.04	0.807	High
6. I can use social media to prevent crime because:				
a. It is the medium I trust	College A	3.90	0.906	High
	College B	4.00	0.816	High
	College C	3.68	0.900	High
	College D	4.23	0.724	Very high
	College E	3.66	0.820	High
b. It is easy to use	College A	4.11	0.815	High
	College B	4.20	0.749	Very high
	College C	3.88	0.927	High
	College D	4.40	0.662	Very high
	College E	3.97	0.816	High
c. It is an effective medium	College A	4.08	0.835	High
	College B	3.98	0.931	High
	College C	3.96	0.841	High
	College D	4.25	0.732	Very high
	College E	3.82	0.805	High
d. It allows me to disseminate information swiftly	College A	4.11	0.865	High
	College B	4.04	0.918	High
	College C	3.96	0.735	High
	College D	4.37	0.763	Very high
	College E	4.05	0.848	High

Students strongly agreed that crime is an important topic discussed within communities (M = 4.33–4.65) and that addressing crime is a shared responsibility between authorities and the public (M = 4.24–4.59). These findings align with the Social Cognitive Theory perspective (Bandura, 2001), which emphasizes that individuals' beliefs about social issues are shaped by observational learning and social interactions. Recognizing crime prevention as a collective responsibility reflects the students' internalization of civic values. This aligns with the principles of SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), which emphasizes inclusive and participatory approaches to maintaining public safety (United Nations, 2015).

Regarding willingness to participate in crime prevention efforts, respondents showed high to very high levels of interest in assisting authorities (M = 3.87–4.32), willingness to contribute (M = 3.88–4.34), and readiness to assist when needed (M = 3.72–4.34). These findings are particularly significant because they show that, beyond mere awareness, students are motivated to actively engage in crime prevention activities. This positive disposition supports Bullock et al. (2021), who found that effective social media engagement for public safety relies on users' competencies and willingness to

participate in meaningful online community engagement.

Regarding social media as a crime prevention tool, students expressed moderate to high confidence in its utility. Students consistently rated the perceived ease of use (M = 3.88–4.40) and effectiveness (M = 3.82–4.25) of social media for crime prevention highly. Notably, students from College D consistently rated these items very highly, suggesting that institutional factors may influence students' confidence in using digital platforms for preventive purposes. This variation supports Wui et al.'s (2025) finding that classroom openness and supportive learning environments significantly influence Filipino students' digital literacy and online civic engagement.

The item concerning trust in social media as a medium for crime prevention received high ratings (M = 3.66–4.23), though it was comparatively lower than other subjective competency items. This finding aligns with concerns raised by Fauzi and Bahri (2024) about misinformation and how social media misuse can create confusion and erode trust. The moderate level of trust observed among students underscores the importance of developing critical evaluation skills, as Fajardo (2023) noted that Filipino students are still developing their competence in evaluating the credibility of digital media content.

In conclusion, the results show that students have favorable attitudes toward, confidence in, and willingness to participate in crime prevention activities via social media. By recognizing that crime prevention is a collective issue and providing their help to law enforcement, they also demonstrate active citizenship. This aligns with Bandura's (2001) Social Cognitive Theory, which holds that beliefs and intentions form through experiences gained from society and others' behavior; it is also supported by SDG 16 and research by Bullock et al. (2021).

3.4. Level of Practices Related to Social Media and Crime Prevention

Table 4 presents the descriptive level of practices related to social media and crime prevention among college students. The findings show that most preventive practices were rated very high, indicating responsible behavior and positive engagement with crime prevention strategies.

Table 4. Level of Practices Related to Social Media and Crime Prevention

Item Statement	HEI	Mean	SD	Descriptive Level
To avoid being involved in crime, I:				
a. Avoid negative activities.	College A	4.44	0.803	Very high
	College B	4.35	0.766	Very high
	College C	4.68	0.476	Very high
	College D	4.57	0.540	Very high
	College E	4.47	0.728	Very high
b. Acquire religious knowledge.	College A	4.42	0.727	Very high
	College B	4.24	0.766	Very high
	College C	4.52	0.770	Very high
	College D	4.29	0.716	Very high
	College E	4.25	0.830	Very high
c. Avoid with being negative individuals.	College A	4.39	0.761	Very high
	College B	4.24	0.923	Very high
	College C	4.48	0.653	Very high
	College D	4.40	0.694	Very high
	College E	4.26	0.850	Very high
d. Engage in useful activities.	College A	4.40	0.799	Very high
	College B	4.33	0.634	Very high
	College C	4.56	0.583	Very high
	College D	4.53	0.544	Very high
	College E	4.36	0.788	Very high
e. Listen to parents' advice.	College A	4.58	0.622	Very high
	College B	4.54	0.622	Very high
	College C	4.56	0.651	Very high

	College D	4.63	0.484	Very high
	College E	4.64	0.609	Very high
f. Being with friends with positive attitude.	College A	4.43	0.688	Very high
	College B	4.52	0.623	Very high
	College C	4.68	0.476	Very high
	College D	4.56	0.561	Very high
	College E	4.62	0.659	Very high
2. Social media is the medium I used the most.	College A	4.13	0.887	High
	College B	4.28	0.655	Very high
	College C	4.44	0.712	Very high
	College D	4.49	0.583	Very high
	College E	4.23	0.773	Very high
3. I frequently use social media:				
a. For entertainment	College A	4.42	0.645	Very high
	College B	4.11	0.849	High
	College C	4.20	1.190	Very high
	College D	4.49	0.601	Very high
	College E	4.11	1.137	High
b. To manipulate	College A	3.39	1.327	Moderate
	College B	3.02	1.406	Moderate
	College C	2.96	1.513	Moderate
	College D	3.68	1.431	High
	College E	2.79	1.527	Moderate
c. To deliver information	College A	4.42	0.687	Very high
	College B	4.41	0.832	Very high
	College C	4.36	0.907	Very high
	College D	4.68	0.535	Very high
	College E	4.18	1.147	High
d. To incite hatred	College A	3.39	1.306	Moderate
	College B	3.15	1.299	Moderate
	College C	2.88	1.740	Moderate
	College D	3.61	1.475	High
	College E	3.04	1.438	Moderate
e. To get information	College A	4.46	0.627	Very high
	College B	4.43	0.834	Very high
	College C	4.20	1.190	Very high
	College D	4.62	0.550	Very high
	College E	4.23	1.100	Very high
f. To disseminate information	College A	3.82	1.226	High
	College B	3.78	1.114	High
	College C	4.00	1.000	High
	College D	4.40	0.849	Very high
	College E	4.27	0.902	Very high
g. To persuade	College A	3.89	1.029	High
	College B	3.87	0.909	High
	College C	3.80	1.190	High
	College D	4.18	0.955	High
	College E	3.82	1.194	High
h. To imitate negative behavior	College A	3.49	1.363	Moderate
	College B	3.24	1.336	Moderate
	College C	2.72	1.621	Low
	College D	3.63	1.458	High
	College E	3.00	1.472	Moderate
i. To educate	College A	4.39	0.797	Very high
	College B	4.37	0.741	Very high
	College C	4.08	1.038	High
	College D	4.55	0.542	Very high
	College E	4.29	1.086	Very high
j. To invade others privacy	College A	3.28	1.366	Moderate
	College B	3.00	1.300	Moderate
	College C	2.84	1.599	Moderate
	College D	3.52	1.508	High
	College E	3.01	1.541	Moderate
k. To learn	College A	4.35	0.808	Very high
	College B	4.39	0.829	Very high

	College C	4.24	0.926	Very high
	College D	4.60	0.554	Very high
	College E	4.16	1.190	High
l. To access porn site	College A	3.08	1.480	Moderate
	College B	2.67	1.521	Low
	College C	2.44	1.502	Low
	College D	2.26	1.510	Low
	College E	2.29	1.541	Low
m. To build relationship	College A	4.32	0.784	Very high
	College B	4.26	0.801	Very high
	College C	4.08	0.954	High
	College D	4.43	0.682	Very high
	College E	4.40	0.878	Very high
n. To share information	College A	4.40	0.705	Very high
	College B	4.35	0.924	Very high
	College C	4.52	0.653	Very high
	College D	4.43	0.826	Very high
	College E	4.62	0.700	Very high

Students demonstrated strong commitment to personal preventive behaviors, including avoiding negative activities (M = 4.35–4.68), engaging in useful activities (M = 4.33–4.56), listening to parents' advice (M = 4.54–4.64), and associating with friends who have positive attitudes (M = 4.43–4.68). These findings align with the Social Cognitive Theory framework (Bandura, 2001), which posits that individuals learn preventive behaviors by observing and modeling positive influences in their social environment. The high ratings for listening to parents' advice and associating with positive friends suggest that students' social networks serve as protective factors against criminal involvement, consistent with Routine Activity Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979), which emphasizes the role of capable guardianship in crime prevention.

Regarding social media usage patterns, students indicated that social media is their most frequently used medium (M = 4.13–4.49), with entertainment being a primary purpose (M = 4.11–4.49). Importantly, students reported frequent use of social media for positive purposes such as getting information (M = 4.20–4.62), education (M = 4.08–4.55), learning (M = 4.16–4.60), building relationships (M = 4.08–4.43), and sharing information (M = 4.35–4.62). These findings support Zahnow and Smith's (2024) argument that social media can effectively raise awareness and mobilize communities around crime prevention initiatives.

Conversely, students reported low to moderate engagement in negative social media practices. Items concerning manipulation (M = 2.79–3.68), inciting hatred (M = 2.88–3.61), imitating negative behavior (M = 2.72–3.63), invading others' privacy (M = 2.84–3.52), and accessing pornographic sites (M = 2.26–3.08) received consistently low to moderate ratings. This pattern indicates that while students are aware of these negative applications, they do not frequently engage in such behaviors. This finding is encouraging and suggests that students exercise responsible judgment in their social media use, consistent with the digital literacy principles emphasized by Ismail et al. (2022) and Wood and Thompson (2021).

The variation across institutions, particularly the higher ratings for positive practices and lower ratings for negative practices observed in certain colleges, suggests that institutional culture and educational interventions may influence students' social media practices. This observation aligns with Wui et al.'s (2025) finding that supportive learning environments enhance students' confidence in navigating online platforms responsibly.

Overall, the results indicate that students self-reported predominantly positive social media practices and comparatively low agreement with risky online behaviors; because these sensitive items ask about socially undesirable conduct, self-reported low engagement may partly reflect social-desirability and recall bias rather than the true frequency of these behaviors, and should be interpreted with that

caveat. Typical self-reported social media behaviors include learning, sharing information, and building friendships, while self-reported risky behaviors were comparatively less frequent.

3.5. Significant Differences in Social Media Competencies by Gender

Table 5 presents the Mann–Whitney U test results comparing the reported social media competency and crime-prevention measures of male and female respondents. The table presents a significant-results excerpt from the item-level comparisons across the three domains. Before adjustment for multiple comparisons, statistically significant differences were observed for five reported indicators: recognition that crime is taken seriously by authorities ($p = .022$), trust in social media as a medium for crime prevention ($p = .046$), using social media to manipulate ($p = .005$), using social media to incite hatred ($p = .026$), and using social media to invade others' privacy ($p = .038$). In the reported comparisons, males obtained higher mean scores than females on all five indicators.

However, because we conducted multiple item-level comparisons, we interpreted the results with a multiple-comparison adjustment. Applying the Holm procedure to the five reported p-values, only the difference for the indicator concerning the use of social media "to manipulate" remained statistically significant at the adjusted level. The other reported differences were no longer significant after adjustment. Thus, the findings should not be interpreted as demonstrating a general effect of gender on social media competence. Rather, they indicate that male and female respondents differed on certain self-reported indicators, with only the manipulation-related practice remaining statistically significant after controlling for multiple comparisons.

For transparency, the full statistical output or supplementary material should report the complete set of indicators tested, including nonsignificant results. The findings reflect group differences in self-reported responses and do not establish that gender causes differences in social media competence or crime-prevention behavior.

Table 5. Significant Differences in Social Media Competencies by Gender

Indicator	Group	n	M	Mdn	SD	U	p
Objective Competencies of Social Media and Crime							
1. Crime is an issue that is taken seriously by the authority.	Female	178	4.82	5.00	0.385	10373	.022
	Male	131	4.71	5.00	0.456		
Subjective Competences of Social Media and Crime							
a. I can use social media to prevent crime because it is the medium I trust.	Female	178	3.87	4.00	0.833	10200	.046
	Male	131	4.04	4.00	0.854		
Practices Related to Social Media and Crime Prevention							
3. I frequently use social media:							
b. To manipulate.	Female	178	3.04	3.00	1.508	9535	.005
	Male	131	3.53	4.00	1.366		
d. To incite hatred.	Female	178	3.14	3.00	1.460	9972	.026
	Male	131	3.51	4.00	1.389		
j. To invade others privacy.	Female	178	3.05	3.00	1.527	10086	.038
	Male	131	3.43	4.00	1.370		

For objective competencies, a significant difference was found in the item "Crime is an issue that is taken seriously by the authority" ($U = 10373$, $p = .022$). Female respondents ($M = 4.82$) demonstrated a slightly higher mean score than male respondents ($M = 4.71$), suggesting that female students are more likely to perceive crime as a serious issue requiring authoritative intervention. This finding aligns with the research of Ismail et al. (2022), who found that gender influences how individuals

process and react to crime-related information, with female users often demonstrating greater concern for safety issues.

For subjective competencies, a significant difference was observed in the item "I can use social media to prevent crime because it is the medium I trust" (U = 10200, p = .046). Male respondents (M = 4.04) reported slightly higher trust in social media as a crime-prevention tool than female respondents (M = 3.87). This finding is consistent with Vogels et al. (2022), who noted that gender influences confidence in assessing and using online content, with male users often reporting higher trust in digital platforms.

For practices related to social media and crime prevention, significant differences were found for items concerning manipulation (U = 9535, p = .005), inciting hatred (U = 9972, p = .026), and invading others' privacy (U = 10086, p = .038). Male respondents consistently reported higher engagement in these negative practices compared to female respondents. These findings align with Ismail et al. (2022), who found that male users are more likely to post crime-related content and engage in certain online behaviors than female users, who tend to be more cautious and verify information before posting.

The observed gender differences support Bandura's (2001) Social Cognitive Theory, which posits that observational learning and socially constructed norms influence behavior in online environments. The findings also align with Qazi et al. (2021), who emphasized that user characteristics, including gender, affect how individuals process, interpret, and react to web-based information. These differences underscore the importance of developing gender-sensitive digital literacy programs that promote responsible social media use and ethical online behaviors, as recommended by Audrin and Audrin (2022) and Bullock et al. (2021).

In summary, the study found that self-reported scores on selected individual items differed by gender; these findings should be interpreted as differences on specific items, at the uncorrected significance level, rather than as evidence that gender influences social media competencies or practices broadly. Female students tended to report perceiving crime as more serious on this item, while male students tended to report greater trust in social media for crime prevention on that item; the practical magnitude of these differences (e.g., M = 4.82 vs. 4.71) is small and has not been evaluated with an effect size.

The findings are consistent with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (2001), which posits that behavior and attitudes are shaped by social experience, environmental influences, and socially constructed rules. The findings also align with Qazi et al. (2021) and Vogels et al. (2022), which state that gender influences how information is processed, online interactions, and computer usage. This supports the need for gender-responsive digital literacy and education on safe social media use.

3.6. Significant Differences in Social Media Competencies by Age Group

Table 6 presents the results of the Kruskal-Wallis test comparing social media competencies across age groups. The analysis revealed statistically significant differences in several items across the three competency domains, indicating that age influences certain perceptions and practices related to social media use for crime prevention.

T**able 6.** Significant Differences in Social Media Competencies by Age Group

Indicator	Age Group	n	M	Mdn	SD	χ^2	df	p
Objective Competencies of Social Media and Crime								
4. Crime cases mostly involve youth.	18-20	107	4.32	4.00	0.700	8.340	3	.039
	21-23	108	4.07	4.00	0.817			
	24-26	53	4.26	4.00	0.764			
	27-30	41	4.27	4.00	0.708			
12k. Social media can be used: To learn.	18-20	107	4.56	5.00	0.759	9.698	3	.021
	21-23	108	4.19	4.00	0.963			
	24-26	53	4.40	5.00	0.839			

	27-30	41	4.44	5.00	0.743			
Subjective Competences of Social Media and Crime								
6d. I can use social media to prevent crime because it allows me to disseminate information swiftly.	18-20	107	4.21	4.00	0.772	8.231	3	.041
	21-23	108	4.03	4.00	0.920			
	24-26	53	4.34	5.00	0.808			
	27-30	41	4.10	4.00	0.768			
Practices Related to Social Media and Crime Prevention								
3g. I frequently use social media: To persuade.	18-20	107	4.02	4.00	1.025	15.135	3	.002
	21-23	108	3.80	4.00	1.086			
	24-26	53	4.26	5.00	0.879			
	27-30	41	3.71	4.00	1.006			
3k. I frequently use social media: To learn.	18-20	107	4.45	5.00	0.886	9.641	3	.022
	21-23	108	4.30	5.00	0.948			
	24-26	53	4.64	5.00	0.522			
	27-30	41	4.10	4.00	0.917			
3m. I frequently use social media: To build relationship.	18-20	107	4.42	5.00	0.756	10.266	3	.016
	21-23	108	4.22	4.00	0.842			
	24-26	53	4.58	5.00	0.633			
	27-30	41	4.07	4.00	0.905			

For objective competencies, significant differences were found for the item "Crime cases mostly involve youth" ($\chi^2 = 8.340$, $p = .039$). The youngest age group (18-20) had the highest mean ($M = 4.32$), suggesting that younger students are more likely to perceive youth as being involved in crime. Additionally, significant differences were observed for the item "Social media can be used to learn" ($\chi^2 = 9.698$, $p = .021$), with the 18-20 age group ($M = 4.56$) and 24-26 age group ($M = 4.40$) showing higher means than the 21-23 age group ($M = 4.19$). These findings align with Zimmerman's (2000) emphasis on self-efficacy as a critical factor in translating acquired behaviors into responsible practice, and suggest that younger students may have different learning patterns and information-processing strategies.

For subjective competencies, significant differences were found for the item "I can use social media to prevent crime because it allows me to disseminate information swiftly" ($\chi^2 = 8.231$, $p = .041$). The 24-26 age group reported the highest mean ($M = 4.34$), followed by the 18-20 group ($M = 4.21$), suggesting that older students and younger students may have different confidence levels in their ability to use social media for rapid information dissemination.

For social media and crime-prevention practices, significant differences were found for items on persuasion ($\chi^2 = 15.135$, $p = .002$), learning ($\chi^2 = 9.641$, $p = .022$), and building relationships ($\chi^2 = 10.266$, $p = .016$). Notably, the 24-26 age group consistently reported the highest means across these items ($M = 4.26$, 4.64, and 4.58, respectively), followed by the 18-20 age group, while the 21-23 and 27-30 age groups reported comparatively lower means.

These findings are broadly consistent with Vogels et al. (2022), who found that different age cohorts report varying levels of confidence and competency in navigating digital platforms; this study's cross-sectional, item-level comparisons cannot establish that age itself causes these differences, and the age-group sizes for 24–26 and 27–30 are reported inconsistently between Table 1 and Table 6 (see Methods), which affects how stable these comparisons are; this must be resolved before the stability of these subgroup comparisons can be assessed (see Limitations).

Overall, these findings suggest that self-reported attitudes, confidence, and practices toward social media and crime prevention differed on selected items by age group in this sample. Respondents in the 24–26 age group reported comparatively higher confidence and more positive self-reported practices on some items than certain younger age groups; given that this group had only 13 respondents, this pattern should be treated as preliminary rather than a stable age-related trend.

3.7. Dwass-Steel-Critchlow-Fligner pairwise comparisons for significant items by age group

Table 7 presents the pairwise comparison results using the Dwass-Steel-Critchlow-Fligner method to identify specific age groups with significant differences. The analysis identified specific age-group comparisons that explain the significant differences observed in the Kruskal-Wallis tests.

Table 7. Dwass-Steel-Critchlow-Fligner pairwise comparisons for significant items by age group

Indicator	Age Group Comparison	W	p
Objective Competencies of Social Media and Crime			
4. Crime cases mostly involve youth.	18-20 vs. 21-23	3.506	.063
	18-20 vs. 24-26	2.434	.313
	18-20 vs. 27-30	0.434	.990
	21-23 vs. 24-26	0.211	.999
	21-23 vs. 27-30	-0.681	.963
	24-26 vs. 27-30	-0.877	.926
12. Social media can be used:	18-20 vs. 21-23	3.136	.119
k. To learn.	18-20 vs. 24-26	2.479	.297
	18-20 vs. 27-30	2.301	.363
	21-23 vs. 24-26	0.974	.902
	21-23 vs. 27-30	1.698	.627
	24-26 vs. 27-30	1.258	.810
Subjective Competences of Social Media and Crime			
6. I can use social media to prevent crime	18-20 vs. 21-23	-1.647	.649
because:	18-20 vs. 24-26	3.458	.069
d. It allows me to disseminate information	18-20 vs. 27-30	-0.868	.928
swiftly.	21-23 vs. 24-26	3.790	.037
	21-23 vs. 27-30	-0.222	.999
	24-26 vs. 27-30	-3.010	.144
Practices Related to Social Media and Crime Prevention			
3. I frequently use social media:	18-20 vs. 21-23	1.499	.714
g. To persuade.	18-20 vs. 24-26	5.011	.002
	18-20 vs. 27-30	1.928	.523
	21-23 vs. 24-26	4.494	.008
	21-23 vs. 27-30	1.689	.631
	24-26 vs. 27-30	-0.983	.899
k. To learn.	18-20 vs. 21-23	0.012	1.000
	18-20 vs. 24-26	3.767	.039
	18-20 vs. 27-30	2.149	.426
	21-23 vs. 24-26	3.838	.034
	21-23 vs. 27-30	2.280	.372
	24-26 vs. 27-30	0.679	.964
m. To build relationship.	18-20 vs. 21-23	1.519	.706
	18-20 vs. 24-26	4.266	.014
	18-20 vs. 27-30	1.099	.865
	21-23 vs. 24-26	3.462	.068
	21-23 vs. 27-30	0.705	.960
	24-26 vs. 27-30	-1.657	.645

No pairwise significant differences were found among the age groups for objective competencies of social media and crime for the item 'Crime cases mostly involves youth' and 'Social media can be used to learn' (all p-values are > .05). Although significant differences were found among the age groups for the Kruskal-Wallis test in Table 2 above, pairwise comparisons indicated that the difference between the groups were not strong enough to be statistically significant after applying multiple comparison. This means students across all age groups had relatively similar attitudes toward items related to youth involvement in criminal cases and the use of social media for learning. This study also shows that college students of different ages can be expected to be exposed to digital information and content related to crime.

For subjective competencies of social media and crime, a significant difference was found between 21-23 and 24-26 for the item 'I can use social media to prevent crime because it allows me to disseminate information swiftly' (W=3.790, p=.037). This means students aged 24-26 showed significantly higher confidence in using social media to rapidly disseminate information for crime prevention than students aged 21-23. This finding suggests that older students can communicate through digital platforms with significantly greater confidence. This aligns with Bandura's (2001) Social Cognitive Theory, which states that self-efficacy and competence develop through learning experiences and ongoing interaction with the surrounding environment. Regarding social media practices and crime prevention, several significant differences emerged among the age groups. For the item "To persuade", there was a significant difference between the age groups 18-20 and 24-26 (W=5.011, p=.002) and between the age groups 21-23 and 24-26 (W=4.494, p=.008). Likewise, for the item "To learn", there was a significant difference between the age groups 18-20 and 24-26 (W=3.767, p=.039) and between the age groups 21-23 and 24-26 (W=3.838, p=.034). Additionally, for the item "To build relationships", there was a significant difference between the age groups 18-20 and 24-26 (W=4.266, p=.014). For all significant comparisons, the 24-26 age group had higher scores on these positive social media practices. In summary, respondents aged 24–26 reported comparatively higher self-efficacy on selected positive social media practice items (persuade, learn, and build relationships) than younger age groups in this sample. Greater maturity, academic background, and interaction experience are plausible explanations for this pattern, but they were not directly measured in this study and should be treated as untested interpretations; given that the 24–26 group comprised only 13 respondents, this finding requires replication with a larger, more balanced sample before being treated as a stable conclusion.

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn: The profile of college students in Kidapawan City showed that most respondents were female and primarily in the 18–20-year-old age bracket. Among higher learning institutions, most respondents were from College D, followed by Colleges E, A, B, and C. The demographic profile illustrates that young college students with constant exposure to social media and digital media were the target respondents. Based on the findings, this study concludes that college students in Kidapawan City self-reported high to very high levels of agreement across three self-report dimensions: objective competence, subjective competence, and practices related to social media and crime prevention. Because these are self-reported perceptions and agreement ratings, not performance-based assessments, these findings describe how students perceive their own awareness, attitudes, and reported behavior rather than demonstrated competence or verified crime-prevention effectiveness. In self-reported objective competence, students agreed with statements reflecting awareness of crime's personal, socio-economic, and national effects, and with statements about social media's value for communication, information, education, and crime prevention; they also self-reported awareness that negative uses of social media, such as manipulation, inciting hatred, invading privacy, and accessing pornographic sites, should be avoided. Because several of these negative-use items ask about socially undesirable behavior, self-reported low engagement should be interpreted with caution given possible social-desirability bias. In self-reported subjective competence, students expressed strong agreement that crime prevention is a shared concern and reported willingness to participate in crime-prevention efforts alongside authorities, along with self-reported confidence in using social media for communication and awareness-raising around crime. In self-reported practices, students reported engaging more frequently in constructive online behaviors, such as learning, education, networking, and communication, and reported comparatively lower agreement with manipulation, inciting hatred, invading privacy, imitating others' negative behavior, and accessing pornography; as noted above, self-reported low engagement with these sensitive behaviors should not be read as confirmed evidence of responsible conduct, given the potential for social-desirability and recall bias. Selected individual item scores, rather than validated domain scores, differed significantly by gender and age group, at the uncorrected significance level; because a large number of item-level comparisons were tested and the oldest age group contained only 3 respondents, these differences should be read as preliminary rather than stable, well-established patterns.

5. Recommendations

The following recommendations are grounded in the specific indicators discussed above and are directed to specific stakeholders; they should not be read as implying that a universal intervention is justified solely by a few item-level differences. Higher education institutions. Provide instruction on source verification and misinformation detection, given that students' ability to evaluate the credibility of crime-related information was not directly tested in this study. Student affairs and criminology departments. Develop protocols and short trainings for safely reporting crime-related information on social media, including privacy, doxxing, and evidence-preservation considerations. Local police and barangay authorities. Coordinate with colleges to guide students on verifying and safely relaying crime-related reports to authorities before sharing widely on social media. Curriculum and student-development offices. Design digital citizenship activities tailored to the specific indicators on which students reported lower self-efficacy or agreement, rather than broad, undifferentiated programming. Future researchers. Develop and validate performance-based measures of students' ability to assess crime-related social media content, complementing self-report instruments; reconcile and verify this study's population, sample, and item-count figures against original records; and apply multiple-testing corrections and effect-size reporting in any replication.

6. Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. The cross-sectional design cannot establish causality between demographic characteristics and social media competencies or practices. All measures were self-reported, creating a risk of common-method and social-desirability bias, particularly for items asking about sensitive or socially undesirable behaviors such as accessing pornography, inciting hatred, manipulation, and privacy invasion; the consistently high self-reported ratings across most items may also reflect ceiling effects rather than uniformly high underlying competence. As detailed in the Methods section, this manuscript contains unresolved inconsistencies in reported population and sample-size figures, the number of items per instrument domain, and the statistical software used, which must be reconciled against the original protocol, sampling records, questionnaire, and statistical output before the study's findings can be considered fully auditable; findings and generalizability claims in this revision are provisional pending that reconciliation. The study did not report validity and reliability evidence computed on the final study sample, and the instrument was adapted from a Malaysian youth population without confirmed content- or construct-validity evidence for this Philippine college-student sample. The age groups were highly unequal in size, with the 24–26 and 27–30 age groups reported with inconsistent sizes across Table 1 and Table 6 (see Methods), which must be resolved before the stability of comparisons involving these groups can be assessed. The authors conducted many individual item-level hypothesis tests without adjusting for multiple comparisons, increasing the risk that some statistically significant findings are false positives; they also did not report effect sizes. Because the study used agreement-based, self-report items rather than performance-based assessments, it cannot confirm demonstrated competence or verify whether reported behaviors actually prevent or reduce crime. Findings are geographically limited to college students in Kidapawan City and should not be generalized more broadly, and generalizability should be restricted to institutions and students reasonably represented by the final, verified sampling frame and response process.

Supplementary Details

Supplementary Materials & Data availability statement:
The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. The data are not publicly available due to privacy and confidentiality restrictions, as they contain information that could compromise the anonymity of the research participants.

Author Contributions:

All authors were responsible for the conceptualization and design of the study, development and validation of the research instrument, data collection and analysis, interpretation of findings, and preparation and revision of the manuscript. The authors also reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript and accepted responsibility for the integrity and accuracy of the work.

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Not applicable. The study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards for educational research. Necessary permissions were secured from the concerned educational authorities and participating schools prior to the conduct of the study.

Informed Consent Statement:
The study adhered to ethical standards in research involving human participants. Prior to data collection, participants were provided with a comprehensive informed consent form detailing the purpose of the study, procedures, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality measures, and their rights, including voluntary participation and the option to withdraw at any time without

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Conflicts of Interest:
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Disclosure Statement:
The authors used Grammarly only for language editing. No AI tools were used in the data analysis or in generating the study's results. The authors reviewed and validated all content and take full responsibility for the article's accuracy, originality, and integrity.

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