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Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) Programs at Esperanza, Agusan Del Sur: Influence on Youth Development

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effectiveness of the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) programs implemented in schools across Esperanza, Agusan del Sur, emphasizing their impact on youth development. As youth participation becomes increasingly vital in nation-building, understanding the role of SK programs in shaping the competence, confidence, connection, and character of young individuals is significant. The research aims to evaluate how well these programs are meeting their objectives, particularly in the areas of health, education, social inclusion, peacebuilding, active citizenship, and economic empowerment. A quantitative research design was employed using a structured survey questionnaire distributed to youth participants engaged in SK programs. Data collection focused on assessing perceived program effectiveness and its correlation with key youth development indicators. Descriptive statistics, mean analysis, and regression analysis were utilized to analyze the data. Results show that SK programs were highly effective, consistently earning high implementation ratings. Notably, leadership (mean = 3.63) and problem-solving (mean = 3.65) were the most strongly developed competencies among participants. The study found that the programs significantly fostered confidence, enabling youth to plan, take initiative, and manage responsibilities. Connection was also enhanced, with the global mobility program standing out as a statistically significant factor in strengthening relationships, contributing approximately 3.9% of the variance in youth development. Furthermore, character development was positively influenced, as the programs promoted resilience, inner strength, and values such as integrity and service. These outcomes suggest that the SK initiatives are instrumental in nurturing well-rounded, socially responsible, and community-oriented youth leaders. However, the findings also highlight the need to enhance collaboration, mentorship, and inclusivity, particularly for marginalized groups. The study concludes that regular program evaluation, capacity-building for SK leaders, and policy refinement are essential steps to sustain and further improve the impact of these youth-centered initiatives. Strengthening these aspects will not only maximize the programs' potential but also ensure that the youth are effectively empowered to contribute meaningfully to their communities and society at large.

Keywords

SK, Youth development, Competence, Confidence, Connection, Global mobility, Character development

INTRODUCTION

¹ The collective perception of the youth's engagement in the community-building process alongside the government has been marred by numerous criticisms. It is undeniable that challenges have arisen concerning the establishment of government positions for the youth. According to UNICEF (2020), youth councils have struggled to effectively produce legislation, promote youth development initiatives, submit reports, and engage in consultations with their constituents. This led to skepticism and concerns regarding the effectiveness of the Sangguniang Kabataan, particularly regarding its perceived ineffectiveness in involving the youth in community development. Such issues have been highlighted in various studies and critiques from higher government authorities and researchers who have contributed to the advancement and enhancement of the Sangguniang Kabataan.

¹ In the Philippines, the youth are those who are 15 years of age up to 30 years of age. As part of the community-building process, laws have been passed to recognize the participation of the youth since 1975 through Presidential Decree 684 that identified the role of the youth in community activities where the government gave a way to actively engage the youth in the development efforts of the country (National Youth Commission, 2019). Youth presence in a community shows a better future for society. Giving importance to their role in our society is an investment in building stronger and stable active citizenship in a locality and beyond borders. The prioritization of the youth in the community-building efforts of the government gives a remarkable impact on the grassroots government or the barangays. This gave way to the active participation of the youth in nation-building efforts of the government. Thus, the active participation of the youth is expected where nowadays, the youth are trained to engage in civic and politic roles from the barangay to the national level. In 1991, RA 7160, also known as Local Government Code of 1991, was enacted to form the Katipunan ng Kabataan to tap and harness the energy, enthusiasm, and idealism of young people aged 15-17 to vote for the Sangguniang Kabataan officials (UNICEF, 2020). The Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) as the local youth council develops over time from memberships, leaderships, names, and participation in the government.

Looking at the current situation of the operations and visibility of the Sangguniang Kabataan in many localities such as Esperanza, Agusan del Sur, it can be gleaned that they are having imbalance focus in developing the youth. Sports activities became the focus of the proposal of the SK officials which has become the default activity expected from them, blindly looking at the other needs of the youth in the community and somehow looking at them as icebreakers during the summer break of the students. Though this may not be true to all since some SK officials are implementing other programs that develop and sustain the other aspects of the youth development such as education, health, equality, and civic participation. Although their performance varies based on their specific focus, they are directed by the government in organizing activities and programs for the youth within their respective constituencies. Thus, effectiveness of the Sangguniang Kabataan can be enhanced by implementing programs, projects, and activities that genuinely benefit the youth. This can be achieved by assessing the influence of youth development challenges within the community and identifying the specific needs of their constituents.

In making the Sangguniang Kabataan more effective, the National Youth Commission (2019) issued Resolution No. 46 Series of 2019 known as A Resolution Approving the Guidelines on Local Youth Development Planning, Comprehensive Barangay Youth Development Planning, and Annual Barangay Youth Investment Programming. The Philippine Youth Development Plan (PYDP) becomes the framework for unified actions pertaining to youth development to address the economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights of the youth. The PYDP proposed the nine centers for youth participation focusing on: health; education; economic empowerment; social inclusion and

equity; peace-building and security; governance; active citizenship; environment; and global mobility. Through this plan, there will be a more comprehensive guideline in planning from the barangay up to the national level of the youth participation in the nation-building process. It can be gleaned that these centers of meaningful youth participation are also aligned with some of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, namely: good health and well-being; quality education; gender equality; decent work and economic growth; industry, innovation, and infrastructure; reduced inequalities; sustainable cities and communities; climate action; peace, justice, and strong institutions; and partnerships for the goals. These goals are part of a plan of action for people, planet, and prosperity as mentioned in the preamble of the October 2015 General Assembly.

Thus, this study provides the Sangguniang Kabataan with opportunities and privileges that significantly impact the lives of young people, particularly in the municipality of Esperanza, Agusan del Sur. The study investigates how SK programs influence youth development in Esperanza, Agusan del Sur, Philippines. It also aims to explore the types of SK programs available in the area, the level of youth participation in these programs, and the perceived effects of these initiatives on youth development, as referenced in the Philippine Youth Development Plan (PYDP), 2023.

Theoretical Framework

This research is guided by a combination of theories to understand the influence of SK programs on youth development in Esperanza, Agusan del Sur and how this support the study. Albert Bandura introduced Social Learning Theory (SLT) in 1977. He continued to develop his ideas, and in 1986, he expanded SLT into Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). His latest book, Social Cognitive Theory: An Agentic Perspective on Human Nature, was published in 2018 according to his book that individuals learn through observing and imitating others. Social Learning Theory (SLT), proposed by Albert Bandura, emphasizes that individuals learn behaviors, values, and social norms through observation, imitation, and modeling. By observing role models within the local government and actively engaging in projects that promote youth empowerment, they develop confidence, competence, and civic consciousness. SLT theory infers that reinforcement mechanisms, such as recognition for leadership achievements and positive feedback from the community, further encourage youth to adopt positive behaviors. Ultimately, the SK programs, influenced by the principles of SLT, play a crucial role in shaping youth leadership, social responsibility, and active participation in community development.

Secondly, Typology of Youth Participation and Empowerment (TYPE) Pyramid, providing an evidence-based model of youth-adult participation. This signifies the importance of empowering young people through participation and decision-making. It was developed by Naima Wong, Marc Zimmerman, and Edith Parker in 2010, provides a framework for understanding different levels of youth involvement in decision-making and community development. This model is highly relevant to the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) programs in Esperanza, Agusan del Sur, as it highlights the varying degrees of youth empowerment, from passive participation to active leadership. The SK programs serve as a platform for young people to engage in governance, develop leadership skills, and influence policies that impact their communities. According to the TYPE Pyramid, effective youth programs should promote authentic participation, where young individuals are not just passive recipients but active contributors to decision-making processes. In Esperanza, SK initiatives provide leadership training, project management opportunities, and collaboration with local government units (LGUs) align with the highest level of the TYPE Pyramid Youth-Adult Partnerships where youth and adults share power and responsibilities. This

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