#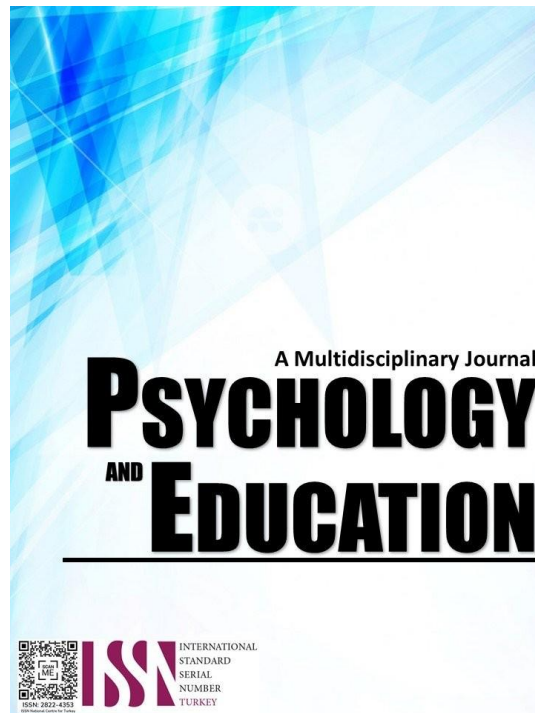 LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT VIA CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Lived Experiences of Senior High School Student Leaders: A Phenomenological Exploration of Leadership Development Via Civic Engagement

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Abstract

Student leaders have been experiencing leadership challenges and as civic engagement decreases, there is a need to strengthen essential leadership competencies. This qualitative study explored the experiences of senior high school (SHS) student leaders who had developed their leadership skills through civic engagement. To acquire a more comprehensive knowledge of their experiences with community-based initiatives, the transcendental phenomenological inquiry was employed. John Dewey's concept of experiential education (1938) suggests that the knowledge gained from these experiences would enhance leadership effectiveness. The social capital theory, formulated by Robert David Putnam (1993), asserts that civic engagement can be regarded as a manifestation of social capital. The study focused on five (5) SHS student leaders from San Francisco High School District I in Quezon City. Data were gathered through comprehensive interviews, observations, and Arts-based Data (photo) that will suffice the data gathering by adding relevant images about their experiences. Diversified participation was achieved through purposeful sampling, and ethical considerations were ensured for the involvement of minors. The study indicates that civic engagement activities boost leadership skills among SHS student leaders. Incorporating civic engagement into the academic curriculum and collaborating with teachers may improve collaboration, communication, public speaking, decision-making, empathy, and social awareness skills. The Department of Education may encourage student engagement and conduct future research on the long-term effects of civic engagement on leadership development.

Keywords: *student leadership, civic engagement, leadership skills, experiential learning, social relationships*

Introduction

The research explored the development of student leadership in senior high schools (SHS), focusing on the challenges these leaders face in balancing academic, personal, and leadership responsibilities. The Department of Education (DepEd) envisions that every graduate has high regard for human rights and values and that students should be "the 'voice' of the Filipino youth (Hernando-Malipot, 2021). This is congruent with scholarly works that stress that it is the schools' responsibility to help develop the desire of students to lead, help, and make a difference (Merza et al., 2022)

Student leadership is leadership within an educational institution in which students are given the responsibility to lead or guide a certain group of students. However, student leadership has become a demanding responsibility as expressed by recent studies. Dick et al. (2022) noted that student leaders are being challenged to balance their personal and work demands. Gowthaman (2019) mentioned that student leadership starts to be burdening when it hampers academic performance.

The student leaders' lacking competencies has been linked to the declining rate of civic engagement. Civic engagement refers to the set of behaviors that affect public matters and promote social welfare (Richards-Schuster et al., 2019). This can include a variety of political and non-political actions such as voting, volunteering, participating in collective activities, and cooperating with incumbent or elected personnel (Longley, 2022). These activities are usually geared to improve and aid community issues that serve as a catalyst that transforms a person into an effective member of society. Student participation in these initiatives will positively contribute to leadership development (Loyola, 2022).

Despite existing literature on student civic engagement and leadership, there is a gap in understanding the specific consequences of civic engagement on student leadership development, particularly among SHS students. The study aimed to fill this gap by qualitatively exploring the experiences of SHS student leaders in civic engagement activities and identifying key factors contributing to leadership development.

This research explored the influence of civic engagement on student leadership, focusing on the experiences of SHS student leaders to identify what fosters leadership development and contributes to the growing literature on student leadership.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of SHS student leaders in civic engagement?
2. What types of civic engagement are undertaken by SHS student leaders that contribute to the development of their leadership skills?
3. How can leadership among SHS student leaders develop in terms of decision-making and addressing societal issues?

Literature Review

This paper reviewed the literature on students' leadership development and civic engagement experiences, focusing on mentorship,

civic engagement, and experiential learning through a thematic literature review to identify themes and their influence on leadership, personal development, and social responsibility, offering implications for theory and practice.

Developmental Outcomes of Civic Engagement

Civic engagement is a growing topic in political participation, encompassing both political and non-political actions. It has been linked to the improvement of various aspects of student life. Philippe et al. (2022) used the grade point average (GPA) of students to measure how civic engagement programs could directly increase students' academic performance. They suggested that civically engaged students tend to have better academic performance, as they are more likely to engage in civic activities when their peers are with them. Civic engagement programs offer students more resources, such as intellectual and interpersonal skills, hence positively affecting academic performance.

Fernandes et al. (2021) reported a positive relationship between civic engagement and social performance, highlighting the importance of motivational factors in increasing adult civic engagement. Self-efficacy, another developmental outcome, was also associated with civic engagement. As Gonsalves et al. (2019) found inconsistent findings in studies investigating civic engagement to increase self-efficacy, they used the Job Characteristics Model (JCM) theorizing that skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback as components of work outcomes. Through this, students are provided with activities that put them in a positive psychological state, thus motivating them to perform well.

Despite the rich research on civic engagement outcomes in holistic student development, an empirical gap must be bridged. Several student developmental outcomes still need to be explored, and civic engagement outcomes that benefit students as students and citizens must also be emphasized. Students are susceptible to multiple stressors that may affect their competence, so further research is recommended.

Student Leadership Development

Student leadership development is another area of research that has been advancing in recent years. Scholars have been exploring leadership in student life, as they are believed to be the future leaders of society. Recent leadership journals have focused on redesigning more applicable models for leadership development and exploring underpinning factors that affect student leadership.

Keisu (2021) found that student leaders' motivation significantly influences their willingness to enhance their leadership skills. Motivated leaders tend to be more engaged in developmental programs, and since these programs are a resource for improvement, leadership performance increases as actual engagement keeps happening. Wu and Crocco (2019) claimed that critical reflection, a personal attribute, is a significant tool for leadership development. Their findings confirmed that critical reflection helps improve leadership. Personality traits like emotional intelligence have been the most prominent factor in research to develop leadership. Gomez-Leal et al. (2021) proved that emotional intelligence produced effective leaders, with self-awareness, self-management, and empathy being the most related to the development of leadership. Specific behaviors have a positive relationship with leadership effectiveness, as addressing the lack of research on effective leadership behaviors. Halliwell et al. (2023) introduced coaching-related behaviors as a related variable that could increase leadership effectiveness.

Previous studies have shown probable connections between civic engagement and leadership development. Wang and Wang (2023) used civic education and explained how it affects leadership. Their study results showed that civic and political education is positively related to leadership development, and higher grades in civic courses led to higher leadership levels. Manning-Ouellette and Hemer (2023) revealed that civic attitudes are directly correlated to leadership capacity. However, these civic-related topics are used in the context of school initiatives rather than existing outside civic opportunities, potentially indicating bias and affecting the credibility of their findings. There is still a need to establish how actual external civic activities spill over the construct of leadership and how actual engagement in these activities makes relevant development to student leadership.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized qualitative methods like interviews and narrative analysis to explore the subjective experiences of SHS student leaders regarding civic engagement. Despite potential limitations due to subjectivity and generalization challenges, this research design is suitable for examining direct experiences and offers valuable insights for theory, practice, and future research in leadership and civic engagement. The study also employed a transcendental phenomenological methodology, founded on Edmund Husserl's philosophy (1938), to analyze the individual experiences of SHS student leaders. This approach aimed to explore the underlying structures of consciousness and limit assumptions, shedding light on the complex nature of leadership development, and illuminating the substance of civic engagement experiences among student leaders. The findings provide valuable insights for theory, practice, and future studies in leadership and civic engagement, as seen in previous studies like Serban and Apostolescu (2020) study on human consciousness and experience.

Participants

The study involved five (5) SHS student leaders who participated in civic engagement activities. The research focused on diversity in leadership roles, including gender, age, and experience. Participants provided informed consent and assent, particularly those under 18, and maintained anonymity and confidentiality. A purposive sampling approach was used to select participants who could provide insightful information about the lived experiences of SHS student leaders. The selection criteria emphasized engagement with leadership roles and diversity considerations. In-depth interviews, observations, and documentation were conducted, with data saturation reached to ensure a high degree of information while being manageable. Ethical norms were strictly adhered to, and genuine narratives were solicited for insightful information.

Procedure

The study analyzed student leadership and civic engagement using interviews, observations, and arts-based data (photos). Participants were interviewed to share their experiences, opinions, and ideas about civic involvement and leadership qualities. The verbatim records of these interviews provided evidence of their understanding of their roles as student leaders and their involvement in community initiatives. The observation phase involved closely documenting the activities, behaviors, and interactions of student leaders to understand their leadership approach, community engagement, and commitment to civic duties. The arts-based data (photos) were used to reveal these leaders' emotions, beliefs, and encounters by adding some relevant images about their experiences in civic engagement and leadership development that will suffice the data collection. Data gathering was carried out until data saturation was reached, ensuring substantial information while being manageable. The study followed ethical norms, ensuring a dedicated effort to obtain genuine participant narratives. The comprehensive approach to studying student leadership and civic involvement included interviews, observations, and arts-based data. The inclusion of photos and narratives added complexity to the data collection process, enhancing the study and contributing to a more diverse range of data. The researchers meticulously analyzed each data source to uncover the intricate relationship between student leadership and civic engagement, yielding valuable perspectives on the evolving journey of student leaders involved in civic engagement.

Data Analysis

The researchers used Moustakas' framework (1994) to analyze data collection procedures, starting with an unbiased perspective. They used interviews, observations, and arts-based data to achieve horizontalization, dismantling hierarchical systems to give equal importance to all forms of evidence. Thematic analysis was used to identify underlying patterns and themes in the data, and concepts were combined to form a holistic understanding. Participants' visuals and narratives were incorporated into the dataset, introducing extra layers of complexity. The synthesis integrated a diverse range of data sources, uncovering perceptive perspectives on the evolving trajectory of student leaders toward civic engagement. The iterative process, guided by Moustakas' principles, enhanced the study with depth, authenticity, and resonance, ensuring a comprehensive investigation of student leadership and civic engagement.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of research findings is determined by examining participant experiences, identifying biases, and ensuring accuracy, validity, and reliability. Robust protocols and processes are essential for maintaining credibility, including sustained engagement, ongoing monitoring, cross-validation, expert evaluation, and participant confirmation. The authenticity of a study is maintained through continuous interaction, observation, peer-debriefing meetings, member checking, and triangulation using multiple data sources. Dependability is ensured through thorough documentation, methodological coherence, and confirmability through member-checking. Authenticity requires consideration of fairness, ontological, educational, catalytic, and tactical factors. The study on SHS student leaders upheld authenticity through a transparent research process.

Ethical Considerations

The study emphasized the importance of ethical consideration in educational research to ensure credible outcomes and address issues like plagiarism. The researchers obtained informed consent from participants, followed privacy and confidentiality precautions, and respected diversity by valuing their experiences. The study prioritized participants' well-being, guaranteed open communication, and allowed them to withdraw if needed. Transparency, honesty, and impartiality were maintained throughout the research process and publication of findings. Data integrity, accuracy, and confidentiality were protected through rigorous processes. The researchers took responsibility for the ethical conduct of the study.

Results and Discussion

The researchers conducted interviews with five (5) student participants in February 2024 to explore student leadership and civic engagement. The participants shared their experiences and opinions, demonstrating their commitment to empathy and promoting constructive transformation. The research used observational journeys and arts-based data to gain valuable knowledge about their everyday routines. The study merged five themes, nine categories, and 122 codes to highlight the significant impact of student leadership on essential skills development, civic engagement, and personal growth. Student leaders at SHS play a crucial role in shaping communities' futures, guiding peers toward collective goals, and promoting inclusivity. This research highlights the importance of

student leadership in shaping the future of communities and promoting inclusivity. At the SHS level, student leaders engage in various civic activities, such as serving as club officers, volunteering in barangay organizations, and participating in church ministries. These activities lead to personal growth, skill development, enhanced leadership abilities, communication skills, and empathy.

Theme 1: Leadership Roles and Responsibilities

SHS student leaders shape communities' futures, guide peers, and foster inclusivity. They set examples, inspire excellence, facilitate discussions, organize events, and mentor others. Critical reflection is crucial for developing leadership skills.

Category 1: Personal Growth and Self-Discovery

SHS student leaders revealed their personal growth, revealing strengths, weaknesses, values, and aspirations. They navigated challenges, inspired others, and expanded their horizons, increasing self-awareness, confidence, and resilience. Interviews showed a strong belief in leadership's potential, the importance of time management, and dedication to making a meaningful difference.

"Naniniwala kasi ako na I can help the school and my community by sharing my skill when it comes to leadership". (L7-L8) "so 'di ko na pinalampas yung opportunity na makatulong sa mga kapwa ko kabataan sa church namin at sa school. Time management yung isa sa pinakamahalaga na matutuhan ng isang student leader". (L25-L33)

Participants shared their personal growth as student leaders, highlighting the benefits of socialization, expanded experiences, and stress-coping mechanisms, emphasizing the importance of critical reflection and enjoyable activities.

"there's a big contribution in my personal growth and development dahil noong una po talaga isa po akong mahiyain at napaka-introvert also hindi po ako mahilig makipag-socialize. (L20-L21)". "Nagkakaroon po ako coping mechanism kung saan nalelessen po ung mga stress." (L29)

The researcher highlighted the transformative potential of leadership in fostering connections, expanding knowledge, and inspiring personal growth among student leaders, highlighting the personal growth they experience through improved communication, responsibility, and time management.

"I can say that my attitude and character developed, my mindset towards life, or I became mature, and improvement of skills such as communication and interaction with other people, and leadership." (L20-L21) "I learned to manage my time well because I believe that there is always a way if you want it. But it takes responsibility." (L23)

"bilang isang leader po, nakakatulong po sa akin ito upang magkaroon ng mas malaking koneksyon sa mga bawat isa at mas madagdagan ko pa po yung aking kaalaman sa mga taong nakasalamuha ko, at the same time po, ito rin po yung nagiging inspirasyon ko na maging mabuti." (L11-L14)

The researcher documented participants' personal growth and skill development in leadership roles, emphasizing empathy, decision-making, time management, commitment, discipline, and transformative aspects like mindset shifts, skill acquisition, and character formation.

"mas nag-grow yung thinking ko 'yung perspective ko sa mga tao hindi lang ako basta naging limited sa kung ano 'yung environment ko dati." (L21-L22) "mas na-develop 'yung empathy ko sa kanila at mas na-develop 'yung thinking skills na paano ko ia-approach and. Mas na-develop yung skills ko to lead." (L26-L27) "to take responsibility and to make good decisions para sa good outcome." (L29). "Hindi lang dapat motivation you have to be disciplined, lalo na sa time management, you have to manage your time wisely." (L35-L36)

Category 2: Active Civic Engagement

SHS student leaders actively engage in civic engagement, participating in community initiatives, advocating for social awareness, supporting marginalized groups, and environmental conservation. Their commitment to community service, leadership skills, empathy, and service to others is evident in their involvement in events like the "Pamaskong Handon" project, fostering connections and collaboration among youth.

"nagkakaroon kami ng youth event sa church namin, where in yung mga youth ng church namin, at the same time nag-iinvite kami ng iba't ibang youth from iba't ibang schools Sa Isipinayan, marami na kaming nagawang project. nagkaroon kami ng "Pamaskong Handon" (L14-L21)

The Sinag Kabataan Organization's education project involved participants in literacy teaching, demonstrating their enthusiasm and motivation. This aligns with Philippe et al.'s (2022) research that civically engaged students perform better academically and demonstrate leadership qualities and commitment to community improvement.

"In our barangay as a part of Sinag Kabataan Organization, the first project our barangay S.K is about Education na kung saan I'm one of the volunteers para tulungan yung mga bata at turuan na matutong magsulat at magbasa." (L10-L12) "I really wanted help other people na nangangailangan ng tulong at nais ko pong ibahagi ang kaalaman at kakayahan ko bilang isang student leader." (L18-L20). "nagkakaroon po ako ng pag-asa, motivation, and inspiration para gawin po yung mga responsibilidad ko." (L25-L26).

The researcher observed non-verbal cues during an interview with a youth volunteer who was passionate about serving others and connecting with their church community. The participant was actively participating in church activities and teaches children just like Hart,

"I am currently a youth volunteer in our church (Our Lady of Mt. Carmel – Project 6). As a SHS student leader, we volunteer to facilitate events and projects of the SK Council of our Barangay that supports 'UBAS' or 'Ugnayang Baranggay at Simbahan', and other events. We also facilitate events like teaching kids in Sunday School." (L7-L11) "I was in elementary and being a part of a community made me happy." (L14-L16)

The study by Fernandes et al. (2021) found a positive correlation between civic engagement and social performance. Participants organized monthly seminars to express their advocacies and demonstrate a proactive approach towards positive change, demonstrating their commitment to community development and empowerment.

"nililinang po namin ang kanilang kaisipan at kakayahan upang mas maging aware sila sa mga bagay para maging parte ng ating komunidad." (L9-L13)" sa community po sa aming Tandang Sora po, uhm mostly po once a month seminar nagpapa-event din kami, kung saan mas mapahayag yung kanilang mga adbokasiya sa manonood sa ating komunidad po." (L18-L19)

Theme 2: Enhancing Leadership Skills through Real-world Experiences

SHS student leaders develop leadership skills through real-world experiences, fostering self-awareness and personal growth. Civic engagement enhances leadership attributes, improves student life, and leads to better academic performance among civically engaged students.

Category 1: Leadership Challenges and Opportunities.

Challenges in leadership can be opportunities for growth and development, as participants navigate team dynamics and address community issues. By embracing these challenges, they can enhance their leadership skills, foster collaboration, and inspire positive change. Church involvement helps them learn effective collaboration, unity, and public speaking skills.

"natutuhan ko kung paano makipag-collaborate sa iba't ibang uri ng tao." (L38-L40)

"nakatutulong iyon upang iimprove ang leadership natin sa pagkakaroon ng pagkakaisa Sa pagiging leader kasi, need mo ng pagkakaisa, sa pag-lead ng isang organization, pag-lead ng ibang estudyante o pag-lead ng Kabataan." (L40-L46) "tinulungan ako upang magawa namin ang objective at goal ng pamaskong handog naming." (L49-L50) "ako ma-improve ang public speaking skills ko." (L52-L53)

The study highlights the transformative impact of civic engagement on leadership skills and personal development, highlighting the importance of addressing community challenges and organizational dynamics through civic activities. It also emphasizes the value of public speaking, communication, and teamwork in achieving collective goals.

I strongly believe that my role in civic engagement had a big impact on my leadership skills. The skills that I have developed by engaging myself in civic engagement are my public speaking or communication skills and public relationship building. Working with teams or groups in civic projects helps me value others' insights." (L40-L45

The research explores student leadership development models and factors affecting leaders (Abdumusaevna, 2023). Participants report personal growth and leadership development through experiential learning, focusing on communication, time management, adaptability, and problem-solving skills. They also highlight their involvement in local event production, cooperation, humility, delegation, and public speaking experience. Hart emphasizes that when she says,

"I gained confidence from my experiences that led me to be an effective leader. Communication, time management, adaptability, and problem-solving." (L29-L30). "I learned to be cooperative or became open with my team. I learned to lower my pride and delegate tasks I learned to listen. And manage my time. I have experienced speaking in public most of the time, I am assigned to facilitate a particular activity in an event." (L36-L40)

Category 2: Critical Thinking Development

SHS student leaders promote critical thinking and civic responsibility through community projects, analyzing complex issues, and participating in civic engagement activities. This culture equips students with modern skills and deepens their understanding of societal roles. Cecille mentioned that,

"As a HUMSS Student I must think critically kung ano ang magiging outcome ng isang bagay na pinagdedesisyunan natin. Now I can say na I've learned a lot So far, wala naman po problems na e-encounter. Kasi talangang ang bawat isa po sa amin ay nagkakaunawaan at nagtutulungan para magawa po yung isang bagay? (L48-L51)

Participants emphasized understanding, active listening, and respect in teamwork, emphasizing fair decision-making and common goals. SSLG's challenging projects demonstrated these principles, fostering positive relationships and leadership. Jose Antonio mentioned,

Castro et al.

"Pagiging understanding po, pagkakaroon po ng malawak na pakikinig sa bawat isa at pagkakaroon po ng pantay na pagtingin sa bawat opinyon na nasa paligid mo." (L35-L36) "dapat bawat isa po ay may respeto at may pagkakaisa po talaga. Sa pagdedesisyon una po muna sa SSLG, may mga proyekto po kami na sobrang hirap pero dahil nagtulungan po kami at naipagsamasama po namin ito." (L43-L45)

Participants discussed decision-making at Manila North Cemetery, emphasizing learning from experiences and inclusivity. It has always been associated with activities that are helpful for the community and its citizens (Richards-Schuster et al., 2019). They facilitated a democratic process, considering team members' opinions, and shared their public speaking experience, demonstrating commitment to inclusive leadership.

"they encourage us to be involved na-motivate ako doon nung nakita ko na yung need talaga para matuto 'yung mga bata sa Manila North Cemetery and from 2021 until now nagtuturo pa rin ako how to read how to boost their confidence by reciting pakikipag-groupings din or parang pakikipag-social engagement,pina-practice namin sila na makipag cooperate with one another po. I think 'yung thinking na nahe-help namin silang mag-grow na maging mabuting tao in the future is what led me to really uhh be committed sa gawain na ito." (L7-L19)

Theme 3: Decision-Making and Problem-Solving Skills

Participants at Manila North Cemetery discussed decision-making, promoting inclusivity, and learning from experiences. They facilitated a democratic process, considering team opinions and shared public speaking experiences.

Category 1: Ethical Leadership Skills

The researcher interviewed participants in a children's ministry at Manila North Cemetery, who are motivated by the need to help children without education, teach morality, and boost confidence. Their dedication demonstrates leadership qualities and genuine concern for children's well-being.

"nakikita mo na kung ano ba yung wise decision, as a leader you're not just deciding on your own, you must consider kung sino-sino ba 'yung mga kasama mo, applying that to my leadership skills here at school as a student is natutunan ko na talagang i-involve or i-include 'yung perceptions or perspectives." (L40-L51) "Nagkaroon po ako ng motivational talks it was a privilege talaga sa'kin kasi first time ko 'yon and doon ko nakita na kaya naman pala na talagang 'yung mga experiences na naranasan ko will really help para mas ma-motivate talaga genuinely 'yung mga tao po, to be a good citizen din po, and to help those who are in need." (L66-L70)

Participants emphasized the importance of effective communication in managing diverse opinions and project decision-making. Megheirkouni and Mejheirkouni, (2019) mentioned that leadership is continuously advancing in research by producing contemporary approaches, theories, and valuable recommendations. They highlighted the transferability of these skills beyond school and community contexts, demonstrating a forward-thinking approach to personal and professional development. Adrian believes that,

"Communication ang susi ipara magkaroon ng pagkakaisa, kasi kung wala kayong communication sa kapwa mo leaders ay hindi kayo magkakaron ng magandang project." (L66-L71). Eventually hindi lang sa paaralan, hindi lang sa community, kundi sa pagdating na rin ng panahon sa aking sarili. kung ang trabaho ay naka-align sa gobyerno ay magagamit ko ang mga natutuhan ko sa labas ng paaralan." (L73-L76) "where in matutulungan ko ang SK namin na maging better organization para sa kapwa namin Kabataan." (L84-L87)

Participants viewed civic engagement as a potential way to enhance education, create a safe environment, and promote personal development, demonstrating a strong commitment to societal improvement. Cecille added,

"I believe that my civic engagement experiences can help me in the future. learn how to stand their feet to fight from what is right. dahil ito ay nakatutulong para sa pagpapapapunlad at kakayahan sa pamununo" (L52-L57)

Student leadership involves guiding an organization to success, despite challenges like theft and financial constraints. Participants used problem-solving strategies, collective mobilization, and sponsorship to sustain projects and develop independence, and transferable skills. Hart said,

"We receive problems like stealing, we first consult with our adviser, and when we come up with a solution to disseminate information to their class by reminding each student to be mindful of their belongings. in our church, we have no budget for projects we want to implement. It will help me to be independent and mature. Leadership skills are also beneficial to my future job which is to be an Architect or a Business Owner. It will help me in decision-making, problem-solving, and other skills." (L43-L53)

Category 2: Resiliency Motivation

Resilience and motivation are crucial for civic engagement and leadership development, enabling individuals to overcome challenges and adapt to new situations. Understanding this relationship is essential for creating future leaders capable of driving positive change. Just like what Jose Antonio stated,

"mas mabuting maging mabuting tao, makinig sa bawat isa upang mas malaman mo po kung ano po yung kahinaan mo at kakayahan

mo. Kasi hindi nakikita mo lang alam mo sa sarili mo kung ano yung kakayanan mo pero iba yung tingin ng tao sayo. husgahan ka, masama man o maganda, i-take mo iyon para maging strong pa sa sarili mo po." (L78-L82)

Participants emphasized the importance of gaining parental trust in teaching children, addressing apprehensions, active engagement, consent, lesson quality, respecting authority, and addressing conflicts.This was a challenging experience for Sandy as she stated,

"i-gain din 'yung trust ng parents, that we're teaching their child a good lesson and that will help them in the future. mahirap i-gain 'yung, trust ng mga parents whether we are credible to teach or to influence their child naman po kasi they have their own beliefs and perspective minsan nagkakaroon kami ng, conflict sa ibang parent na bakit kami." (L76-83)

Participants emphasized personal and community advancement, challenging traditional leadership based on intelligence. They advocated for moral character development, self-awareness, resilience, ethical conduct, empathy, and service-oriented endeavors. As Adrian stated,

"What motivated me to take this role is that Yung passion ko when it comes to leadership Naniniwala kasi ako na I can help the school and my community by sharing my skills when it comes to leadership." (L6-L8)

Theme 4: Strengthening Community Capabilities

Capacity building is crucial for community development, civic engagement, and student leadership. According to Fernandes et al. (2021), there was a positive correlation between engagement with community events and social performance. It involves investing in programs to strengthen skills, knowledge, and resources, enabling individuals to take leadership roles and solve community challenges.

Category 1: Future Leadership Role Aspiration

The study explores the aspirations and objectives of aspiring leaders, focusing on their reasons for future leadership, challenges, and strategies. Participants, who grew up in leadership positions, attributed their aspirations to their parents' influence, emphasizing the importance of role models and positive examples.Jose Antonio stated that,

"nagsimula sa magulang, sa pamilya, sa paaralan at hanggang sa komunidad po yun po yung mga dahilan kung bakit po, na gusto ko po maging leader po. mahal ko po yung ginagawa ko kaya ginagawa ko po yung best ko gaya nga ng paniniwala ko na walang mahirap sa taong gustong matuto" (L25-L31)

Participants emphasized the importance of continuously honing leadership skills to become a better individual and responsible citizen. They valued witnessing others' struggles and applying leadership knowledge in real-life situations. Manning-Ouellette and Hemer (2019) found that civic attitudes are directly correlated with leadership capacity, emphasizing the value of learning from experiences.

"i-hone pa 'yung skills ko as a leader, not just a leader, but as a person, and as a good citizen din po in the future I will be a good leader in Apply it in real life, and that's where civic engagement comes in. Because in civic engagement, you apply kung ano 'yung mga natutunan mo, and by applying that, along the way, you will learn some of the skills na eventually in real life situation matututunan mo 'yung mga kailangan to be a good leader." (L88-L94)

Category 2: Career Advancement

Civic activities and leadership roles contribute to societal advancement and professional development, requiring key competencies like communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and decision-making. Gomez-Leal et al. (2021) proved that Emotional intelligence produces effective leaders. Displaying leadership and civic engagement experience on resumes and job interviews differentiates candidates and showcases potential for positive change. As Hart and Adrian said,

"Yes, it will help me to be independent and mature. Leadership skills are also beneficial to my future job which is to be an Architect or a Business Owner. It will help me in decision-making, problem-solving, and other skills." (L51-L53)

"lahat ng natutuhan kong bagay na nakatulong sa akong leadership skills ay nagagamit ko sa loob ng paaralan. At eventually, hindi lang sa paaralan, hindi lang sa community, kundi sa panahon sa aking pagtatrabaho. (L72-L74)

Theme 5: Empowering Student Leaders

Leadership skills and public participation are crucial for career advancement and societal development. Empowering future leaders through mentorship programs, leadership training seminars, community service projects, and youth forums can foster communication, empathy, problem-solving, and teamwork. According to Wang (2023), Student leadership involves guiding student organizations to success.

Category 1: Role Model Student Leaders

Halliwell et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of leaders who inspire others through honesty, empathy, resilience, and inclusivity, setting high ethical standards, creating hope, prioritizing mentoring, fostering potential, and contributing to quality and integrity. As Adrian Said,

"Sa mga tulad kong student leader sa ating paaralan, masasabi ko lang na subukan pa nilang palawakin ang kanilang kakayahan bilang isang leader Subukan nilang ilabas pa kung ano ang mga kakayahan nila, ipakita nila sa ibang tao, dahil hindi lang natatapos sa loob ng paaralan ang pagiging leader natin, kundi mabuti at mas maganda kung napapakita rin natin ito sa labas at buong komunidad." (L83-87)

Participants demonstrated effective leadership through fresh perspectives and risk-taking, emphasizing the importance of student leadership beyond the school environment to the wider community.

"Start small at first, I was once a member. Don't be afraid to serve and enjoy the experience you will face in your journey. Embrace the challenges you will encounter that will help you nourish your character and skills at the right moment, you can say that you are already a leader." (L54-L57)

Hart encourages student leaders to take small steps and focus on development, highlighting the challenges ahead. during an interview, the researcher observed non-verbal cues in Sandy's words.

"In civic engagement, you really apply kung ano 'yung mga natutunan mo and by applying that, along the way you will learn some of the skills na eventually in real life situation mo mae-experience na matututunan mo 'yung mga kailangan to be a good leader someday po." (L92-L94)

This study focused on the role of civic engagement in developing leadership skills among SHS students. It emphasized the importance of critical thinking, collaboration, communication, resiliency, and conflict resolution in decision-making, enabling students to make informed decisions that benefit their communities. The study concludes that student leaders' leadership development is closely linked to civic activities. SHS student leaders engage in civic engagement activities like school organizations, community service projects, and religious affiliations to develop leadership skills. Public speaking skills are also crucial, as students learn to facilitate discussions and articulate ideas effectively which is essential in community service projects and volunteering that helps students understand the needs and challenges of marginalized groups. By empathizing with others and advocating for change, student leaders demonstrate their capacity for compassionate leadership and civic responsibility.

The study provides theoretical insights into the importance of experience learning and social relationships in influencing leadership development through civic engagement. These insights are derived from the theories of experiential education developed by John Dewey (1938) and social capital developed by Robert David Putnam (1993). The idea that civic engagement offers students the opportunity to improve their leadership skills by involvement in real-life situations was consistent with Dewey's philosophy, which emphasizes the necessity of learning through practical experiences. Further understanding of the communal benefits of civic engagement was provided by Putnam's theory, which highlights how social ties and community cohesion contribute to the well-being of individuals and the resources available to an entire community. It examined the experiences of SHS student leaders with their civic engagement activities on leadership development. Student leaders suggest self-reflection to identify opportunities for personal growth and leadership development. Promoting civic engagement in the academic curriculum may enhance leadership skills and guide future pursuits. Teachers may enhance ethical leadership skills by collaborating with student leaders in civic engagement activities. Additionally, the Department of Education may incorporate civic engagement qualities into its curriculum to develop students' leadership skills. Community stakeholders may recognize and adapt various pedagogical approaches in civic education to meet student needs and comprehension levels. They should also encourage active student engagement in discussions to ensure their perspectives are considered in civic education programs. Future research may explore the long-term experience of civic engagement activities on leadership development among SHS student leaders, focusing on community service projects that benefit the students and the community rather than advocacy or any political activities. Comparative analyses across different groups of student leaders across different public schools may evaluate the impact of mentorship, organizational support, and community resources.

The study on civic engagement and leadership skills validity faced challenges due to fluctuating participant availability and response patterns, affecting results reliability. The use of arts-based data complicated the synthesis process, highlighting the need for flexibility in research methodologies and potential recall bias. Factors like purposive sampling, participant availability, school culture, socioeconomic circumstances, geographical location, religious affiliations, community dynamics, and evolving societal elements influenced the study. The small sample size of five participants may not accurately represent the civic engagement activities and leadership styles of student leaders at San Francisco High School. The research used Putnam's social capital and Dewey's experience learning theories to understand and interpret leadership development through civic engagement, but applying Dewey's theory to broader societal contexts was complex due to the personal influence and vulnerability of social capital.

Conclusions

This study arrived at the following conclusions: The research concludes that participation in civic engagement is necessary for the development of the character, values, and leadership abilities of high school student leaders. Critical thinking, communication, teamwork, empathy, and perseverance are all attributes that are essential for effective leadership. Activities such as community service and participation in school organizations are examples of activities that promote these traits.

The ability of senior high school student leaders to collaborate, communicate, negotiate, and resolve conflicts is considerably improved

when they are actively involved in school and community initiatives. Through participation in these activities, students may cultivate empathy and social awareness, which in turn helps them build compassionate leadership skills and a robust sense of civic responsibility.

The findings of the research indicate that activities that involve civic engagement are exceptionally important for the development of decision-making and problem-solving skills among student leaders. Students will be better prepared to become engaged agents of good change in their communities if they participate in these activities, which emphasize critical thinking, empathy, and resilience. These activities contribute to both personal growth and individual development.

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