

EXPLORING THE DIMENSIONS OF ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION IN SANGGUNIAN KABATAAN ELECTION

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SDGs: **Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions)**

ABSTRACT

Electoral participation, particularly through voting, is recognized as a central component of democratic engagement, yet youth involvement in local governance remains limited due to persistent institutional and structural barriers. This study examined the underlying dimensions shaping youth electoral participation in the Sangguniang Kabataan elections in Panabo City. Using an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design, the research began with a qualitative phase involving in-depth interviews with eight purposely selected youth participants to generate meaningful insights into their experiences and motivations. The thematic analysis produced forty-two unique statements that informed the development of a structured survey instrument. The quantitative phase then surveyed 220 respondents across four barangays through quota sampling, employing a forty-two-item questionnaire to assess the factors influencing youth engagement in local elections. Exploratory Factor Analysis conducted using SPSS identified five primary latent constructs: Perceived Institutional Effectiveness, Youth Leadership Motivation, Civic Voice, Civic Responsibility, and Community Attachment. The study concluded that enhancing civic education, promoting youth leadership development, and improving institutional responsiveness are essential strategies to encourage greater youth participation in democratic processes. These insights provide valuable guidance for policymakers seeking to strengthen inclusive and meaningful youth political engagement in communities.

Keywords: ***Youth, Electoral Participation; Sangguniang Kabataan Election; Exploratory Mixed Methods Study; Panabo City***

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INTRODUCTION

Electoral participation is the active involvement of people or groups in political processes, especially through voting, and it is a key part of democratic engagement. Voting is the main way citizens express their preferences and shape government decisions (Alanazi, 2025). However, despite this essential role, systemic barriers continue to hinder full participation among many sectors, especially the youth, creating a persistent need for reforms that empower young people and ensure their voices are meaningfully represented in governance.

In the Philippines, the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) represents a significant institutional mechanism that enables youth involvement in local governance. Established by the Local Government Code of 1991, the SK provides persons between 15 and 30 years of age with opportunities to engage in community decision-making (Atanoza-Megriño, 2024). As a developmental platform, it prepares future leaders by cultivating civic responsibility, governance awareness, and citizenship values (Mascara, 2024). Furthermore, Article V of the 1987 Philippine Constitution guarantees the right of all citizens, including the youth, to vote, highlighting the importance of their participation in fostering an inclusive democratic system.

Demographic statistics further illustrate the potential influence of youth voters. According to the Commission on Elections [COMELEC] (2023), 52% of registered voters nationwide are aged 18 to 40, with 1.6 million classified as new voters aged 15–30. In the 2022 national elections, youth constituted 33% of the electorate, with particularly high representation among individuals aged 18–24 (University of the Philippines Population Institute, 2022). These numbers underscore the significant electoral impact of young citizens. Despite this, youth engagement especially in SK elections remains limited, indicating a persistent challenge in transforming numerical potential into meaningful political participation.

Poor civic training, difficulties in participation, and adult manipulation within youth institutions hinder effective engagement and weaken trust in democratic processes (Flores et al., 2021). Studies also show uneven opportunities for participation, with SK leaders generally being more politically involved than ordinary youth constituents, reflecting clear gaps in political knowledge and engagement (Flores et al., 2021). Broader analyses laid emphasis on the notion that that civic awareness, legal frameworks, and social support systems collectively influence youth electoral behaviors.

Worldwide, youths have continued to engage more in informal political participation as opposed to formal political participation via elections. The information from the data indicates that youth aged between 18 and 29 years showed low levels of engagement as compared to other age groups in terms of voting, contacting their representatives, and participating in consultations, but had higher rates of sharing political posts on social media platforms and demonstrating in 2023 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2025). Such trends indicate that youth are not politically apathetic but tend to channel their political energy into informal forms of political participation (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2020).

The structural challenges faced by youths in formal political participation include low level of trust in the system, lack of political agency, and disparities in participation opportunities.

Findings from research on youth disengagement indicate that institutional challenges and political inefficacy remain key factors that explain youth's decreased participation, especially where youths find themselves detached from the mainstream political system (Zhang, 2022). Further, studies examining barriers to youth voting reveal barriers such as voter registration problems, weak civic knowledge, and poor political responsiveness, which affect youths' electoral participation (University of California, Davis, 2024).

From these findings, youth political apathy cannot be seen as only an individual problem, but a structural democratic issue. The recent international studies point out that low youth political participation decreases representational inclusion and limits democratic institutions from reflecting the issues and priorities of the younger generation (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2020). Therefore, there is a need for more local research to produce context-relevant information for guiding reform policies and increasing youth inclusion in the governance process (International Foundation for Electoral Systems [IFES], 2025).

Although much academic work is being done in regard to youth political participation, little studies have been done in regard to the political engagement of youths in SK elections specifically in Panabo City. This is crucial since Panabo City has become a relevant site in looking into youth political participation due to its urbanization, large population of youth, and barangay governance structure (Open Space Centre, 2025).

This study is anchored on two complementary theoretical perspectives: the Civic Volunteerism Model (CVM) and Social Capital Theory, both of which explain why individuals choose to participate or abstain from political activities such as voting.

The Civic Volunteerism Model proposes that political participation is shaped by resources (such as skills and knowledge), psychological engagement (including interest and motivation), and mobilization from family, peers, or institutions (Verba et al., 1995). In the context of SK elections, this model suggests that youth participation is influenced by their level of civic preparation, motivation to engage, and the extent to which institutions encourage their involvement.

Social Capital Theory emphasizes the importance of networks, trust, community attachment, and shared norms in shaping civic behaviors (Putnam, 1995). Strong community ties and supportive relationships within local institutions enhance youths' likelihood of actively participating in elections and local governance. In SK elections, factors such as community attachment, positive peer influence, and supportive social structures become crucial predictors of youth engagement.

Together, these theories provide a coherent framework for analyzing youth electoral participation. They support the study's identified dimensions such as civic voice, civic responsibility, youth motivation, institutional effectiveness, and community attachment which emerged as central constructs through exploratory factor analysis.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the study, which is to investigate the significant factors of electoral participation in the elections of Sangguniang Kabataan (SK). In this model, various variables, expressed as Factor 1, Factor 2, and Factor 3 indicate various

dimensions of participation in voting. The research examined and provided meaning to these variables with the view to discovering the different circumstances that defined the participation of young people in the local elections.

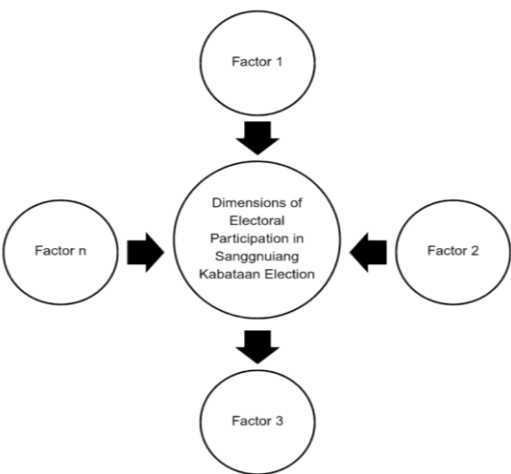


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

While youth voter participation has been widely studied, there remains a noticeable lack of research focused specifically on the SK elections. In particular, few studies have investigated the challenges, motivations, and contributing factors that impact the political engagement of young people at the local level, especially in the context of Panabo City.

Identifying the factors that motivate or discourage youth from participating in Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) elections is essential to understanding their civic experiences. Such insights are particularly valuable to policymakers, local leaders, and civil society organizations who aim to promote active youth citizenship and meaningful participation in governance. To address this need, the study employed exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to determine and cluster the main variables influencing youth involvement in SK elections.

The research specifically focused on the experiences of young voters in Panabo City, examining not only motivations and barriers but also the lessons they learned throughout the electoral process. These findings aim to guide local governments and civic leaders in designing youth engagement strategies that strengthen participation in local governance.

Grounded in the Civic Volunteerism Model (CVM) and Social Capital Theory, the study highlights the interplay of personal motivation, institutional support, and community attachment in shaping youth civic engagement. The results offer practical insights for improving youth leadership programs, enhancing SK official training, and tailoring COMELEC voter

education campaigns. However, the study is limited to selected barangays in Panabo City, which may affect the generalizability of its findings.

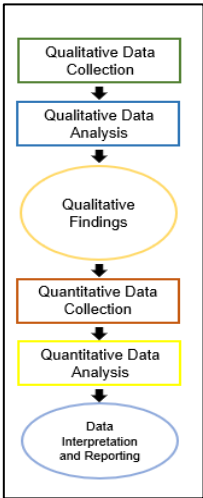


Figure 2. Exploratory Sequential Mixed-Methods Process (Patel & Moitra, 2021)

Moreover, this conforms to SDG 16, which focuses on establishing peaceful, inclusive societies and the establishment of transparent and accountable institutions. A key part of this goal is understanding what drives or hinders youth participation in elections. Factors such as knowledge of one’s rights, access to civic education, and community encouragement all play important roles. Equally important is ensuring that the voices of marginalized youth are heard and valued. Delving into these aspects helps uncover both obstacles and opportunities for improving youth engagement in SK elections. In doing so, we not only empower the next generation of leaders but also contribute to building a more representative and democratic society, where diverse perspectives are respected in the decision-making process.

.METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The type of mixed method used in the study was an exploratory sequential research design as depicted in Figure 1. Branum (2019) differentiates between three main types of mixed-method research, and one of them is the exploratory sequential approach. This design starts with qualitative study to identify a phenomenon in depth, which is followed by the introduction of quantitative study to measure or test the patterns or themes observed in the qualitative study. As a result, empirical observations can be used to formulate hypotheses, thus improving the validity and reliability of the ensuing quantitative measures. Besides, this method allows the determination of the variables and constructs of interest that would not be identified in quantitative research only. Moreover, combining the qualitative and quantitative results will

enable a holistic interpretation of the research problem, as the qualitative data will give the quantitative results a context and depth. Thus, this sequential integration helps to create a coherent and detailed framework, which results in a more subtle and correct interpretation of the participants and phenomena studied.

Table 1
Distribution of Research Participants

Barangay	Qualitative Phase	Quantitative Phase
Gredu	2	55
New Visayas	2	55
San Francisco	2	55
San Vicente	2	55
Total	8	220

Research Locale and Participants

The study was conducted in the most populated barangays of Panabo City, specifically Barangay New Visayas, Barangay San Francisco, Barangay Gredu, and Barangay San Vicente. These locations were determined based on voter population data from the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) and the Philippine Statistics Authority (2020). Participants in both phases were 18–30-year-old youth registered as SK voters in the selected barangays. They were also required to be active members of youth organizations or have documented involvement in community affairs to ensure relevance to the research objectives.

Qualitative Phase Participants. Eight participants took part in the in-depth interviews. This number aligned with the recommendation of Guest et al. (2006), who stated that 8–12 participants are generally sufficient to reach data saturation in qualitative studies. A purposive sampling technique was used (Etikan et al., 2016), allowing the selection of individuals who could provide rich, relevant insights into electoral participation in the SK elections.

Quantitative Phase Participants. The sample size was found adequate for the generation of reliable quantitative data and representation of each barangay in the study. In order to minimize sampling bias and to be able to obtain a representative finding, respondents were proportionally allocated according to the population size of each barangay. Respondents had to be registered Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) voters on election period and residents of the selected barangays to participate. The sample size met the minimum recommendation of 200 participants for accurate factor recovery in Exploratory Factor Analysis (De Winter, 2009; Watkins, 2021). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was later applied to assess data suitability for factor analysis, with higher values indicating adequacy for EFA.

Data Gathering Instruments

Qualitative Instrument. An open-ended interview guide served as the instrument for the qualitative phase. It consisted of three main sections including the topic, three core interview

questions, and six probing questions. The interview guide was reviewed by a panel of evaluators to ensure clarity and appropriateness. It was also translated into the local language to avoid misunderstandings and ensure participant comprehension.

Quantitative Instrument. A 42-item survey questionnaire was used for the quantitative phase. The items were developed directly from the themes generated during qualitative analysis. Responses were measured using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from “Strongly Disagree” (1) to “Strongly Agree” (7). Instrument reliability was ensured through a pilot test involving 30 respondents. Results yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.991, indicating excellent internal consistency (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data collection, the researchers sought approval from the Dean of the Institute of Leadership, Entrepreneurship, and Good Governance at Davao del Norte State College, as well as the research adviser. Letters were delivered to barangay offices to obtain permission to conduct community-based research.

Qualitative Phase Procedure. After approval, qualified participants were invited through official barangay coordination. During interviews, participants were given informed consent forms detailing the purpose of the study, data privacy measures, and voluntary participation. Audio recordings were made with permission. After transcription, all audio files were permanently deleted to protect confidentiality. The qualitative findings were analyzed and used to construct the survey questionnaire for the quantitative phase.

Quantitative Phase Procedure. After validating the survey tool through pilot testing, the questionnaire was distributed to the participants across the four barangays. Respondents were informed that participation was voluntary and that responses would be used solely for research. Completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately to ensure integrity and completeness of the data.

Data Analysis

Qualitative Analysis. The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Interview transcripts were coded to identify recurring patterns and extract themes relevant to youth electoral participation, following the methodological guidance of Braun and Clarke (2006). Coding was performed carefully to avoid duplication and ensure reliability, allowing the researchers to isolate the most significant factors affecting engagement in SK elections.

Quantitative Analysis. Quantitative data from the survey were tabulated and subjected to Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was used with an eigenvalue cut-off of 1.0 or higher. Factor loadings of at least +0.40 were considered meaningful, consistent with Kaiser’s (1958) recommendations. Varimax rotation was applied to determine the underlying latent constructs. This process allowed the researchers to identify the structural dimensions influencing youth electoral participation.

Ethical Considerations

Before interviewing all the respondents, they were informed about the objectives and methods of the study. They maintained their rights as responses were confidential meaning privacy and anonymity. The identities of the youths were not related with any political activity. Participation was not forced or pressured as it ensured that the choices taken by the participants were free and voluntary. There were strict ethical guidelines considered that encouraged fair playing as well as inspired the respondents to be responsible throughout the study process. These guidelines guaranteed that participants were comfortable and esteemed during the procedure. Through these codes of conduct, the study maximized trust, integrity, and credibility in data collection process, and the welfare, rights, and dignity of the entire youth respondents involved.

RESULTS

Findings of Qualitative Phase

The in-depth interview (IDI) provided qualitative insights into the factors influencing youth participation in the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) elections. Eight transcripts were analyzed, resulting in forty-two key statements reflecting personal, social, and institutional experiences of young voters. These statements were organized as indicators of SK electoral participation (Table 2) and summarized into five broad dimensions highlighting common themes and features that shape youth involvement in the electoral process.

Table 2
Conceptual Themes of Youth Participation in Sangguniang Kabataan Elections

Conceptual Themes of Youth Participation in Sangguniang Kabataan Elections	
1.	There is a clear promotion of youth voices in local governance.
2.	There is an opportunity to contribute to shaping the future of my barangay.
3.	It allows the youth to influence leadership decisions.
4.	It gives meaning to my civic responsibilities.
5.	There is a space for meaningful democratic engagement among the youth.
6.	It shows my commitment to being a responsible citizen.
7.	There is a belief that my vote can make a significant impact on the community.
8.	There is a sense of political empowerment gained from participating in elections.
9.	I have a strong interest in the outcomes of SK elections.
10.	I believe young people have the capacity to lead effectively.
11.	I feel responsible for promoting good governance by voting.
12.	I am aware of the qualifications of SK candidates before voting.
13.	There is an opportunity to learn about the importance of voting through seminars and other educational activities.
14.	There is encouragement from my family to participate in the SK elections.
15.	There is motivation from community leaders to engage in the electoral process.

16. There is influence from my peers to be politically active.
 17. There is support from youth organizations in my barangay.
 18. There is a strong sense of community when engaging in electoral activities.
 19. There is inspiration to become a future leader by participating in elections.
 20. There is a belief that voting is an act of service to my community.
 21. There is a personal interest in running for the SK office in the future.
 22. There is an opportunity to contribute to the development of my barangay.
 23. There is fulfillment in participating in youth civic activities.
 24. There is the belief that civic duty should be instilled from an early age.
 25. There is a rising awareness about the importance of elections, strengthening youth engagement.
 26. I can contribute to strengthening trust in the electoral system by voting.
 27. Accurate information empowers youth to participate actively in elections.
 28. An increasingly responsive SK system addresses real youth concerns.
 29. There is improved financial support that enables more youth to run for office.
 30. There is a connection between my community experiences and my interest in politics.
 31. There is motivation to vote based on the positive impact of previous SK initiatives.
 32. There is inspiration drawn from witnessing youth leaders create meaningful change.
 33. There is growing involvement after attending community meetings or forums.
 34. There is increased trust in SK elections due to positive campaign experiences.
 35. There is a notable role for digital campaigns in raising awareness about voting.
 36. Vote manipulation can be prevented with greater youth participation in elections.
 37. There is a belief that SK elections should be managed more professionally.
 38. There is measurable improvement in governance within the barangay as a result of my participation.
 39. There is evidence that youth engagement leads to better barangay programs.
 40. There is potential for real community change when the right youth leaders are elected.
 41. There is a significant contribution from SK officials to youth development projects.
 42. There is greater inclusivity in local governance due to higher youth participation.
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Findings of Quantitative Phase

Statistical measures confirmed the suitability of treating electoral participation as a construct for factor analysis. The study used the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy, Bartlett's test of sphericity, eigenvalues analysis, Cattell's scree plot, and principal component analysis (PCA) with a rotated component matrix. These methods together empirically verified the factorability of the 42 variables related to youth electoral participation.

The KMO measure yielded a value of .945 (Table 3), which Kaiser (1960) classifies as "marvelous." This indicates that the variance among the survey items is sufficiently high, partial correlations are minimal, and the dataset is well-suited to identify underlying latent structures through factor analysis.

Table 3
KMO and Bartlett's Test

Measures		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.945
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	10253.114
	Df	861
	Sig.	.000

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity produced a highly significant result (Chi-Square = 10,253.114, df = 861, $p < .001$), indicating that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix and the variables are sufficiently interrelated for factor extraction. These results confirm the factorability of the dataset and support conducting exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on the 42 items measuring youth electoral participation.

Using the latent roots criterion (eigenvalues > 1.0), five factors were extracted (Table 4) based on the Kaiser criterion (Kaiser, 1960). The first factor had an eigenvalue of 24.464, explaining 58.247% of the total variance. Factor 2 had an eigenvalue of 2.221 (5.288% variance), Factor 3 = 1.471 (3.502%), Factor 4 = 1.149 (2.737%), and Factor 5 = 1.139 (2.712%). These results indicate that a substantial portion of variance is accounted for by the first dominant construct, with the remaining factors contributing incrementally, supporting the identification of interpretable and reliable latent dimensions.

Table 4
Latent Roots Criterion

	Eigenvalues	Proportion Variance	Cumulative Variance
Factor 1	24.464	58.247	58.247
Factor 2	2.221	5.288	63.534
Factor 3	1.471	3.502	67.037
Factor 4	1.149	2.737	69.774
Factor 5	1.139	2.712	72.485

Cumulatively, the five factors accounted for 72.485% of the total variance, exceeding the commonly recommended 60% threshold for exploratory factor analysis in social sciences (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). This indicates a strong factor solution with sufficient explanatory power and construct validity. Factor 1, with the largest share of variance, likely represents intrinsic motivational and attitudinal dimensions of electoral participation, encompassing civic engagement, youth voice in governance, and democratic participation.

The remaining factors capture additional meaningful dimensions: Factor 2 reflects structural or informational enablers such as voter education and access to electoral platforms; Factor 3 represents leadership aspirations and role modeling; Factor 4 embodies community

and peer influences; and Factor 5 signifies institutional trust and perceptions of governance outcomes (Torney-Purta et al., 2001).

These findings align with existing literature on political socialization and youth civic engagement, highlighting the importance of civic efficacy, access to information, community support, and trust in institutions as predictors of youth electoral behavior (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). They underscore the need for responsive frameworks like the Sangguniang Kabataan to cultivate political consciousness and meaningful participation.

Catell's Scree Plot. The scree plot shown in Figure 3 is the result of principal component analysis executed on the 42-item scale meant to explore factors that affect electoral participation in the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) election. It is this graphical pictorial display of the eigenvalues versus the number of components that is used in determining the optimal number of components to retain. As shown in the figure, there is a distinct inflection point or "elbow" occurring between the fifth and sixth components, indicating a natural break in the data. This graphical pattern supports the retention of five components, which is consistent with the findings from the latent root criterion (Table 4), where five components had eigenvalues greater than 1.0

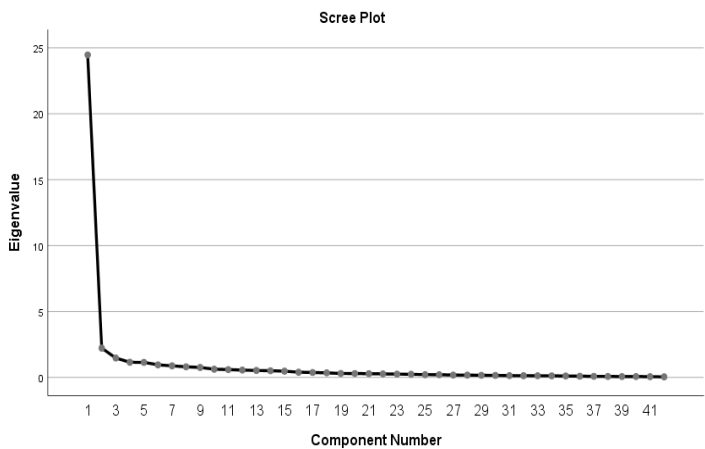


Figure 3. Catell's Scree Plot

The steep drop in eigenvalues after the first component, from approximately 24.464 to just above two, followed by a gradual leveling off, indicates that the first five components account for most of the variance, while subsequent factors contribute minimally and may reflect random error or less interpretable dimensions (Cattell, 1966). The scree test, as proposed by Cattell (1966), is a reliable method for determining the number of factors to retain, especially when used alongside the Kaiser criterion, reinforcing the five-factor solution.

Retaining five factors aligns with psychometric best practices that balance parsimony and interpretability (Costello & Osborne, 2005). These factors likely correspond to civic motivation, community influence, access to electoral information, leadership aspirations, and institutional trust.

The Rotated Component Matrix (Table 5), obtained using Varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization, shows the factor loadings of each item on the five components. Only loadings above 0.50 were interpreted, consistent with standard guidelines (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013), confirming the multidimensional structure of youth electoral participation.

Table 5
Rotated Component Matrix for the Dimension of Electoral Participation in Sangguniang Kabataan Election

Item Number	Dimension 1	Dimension 2	Dimension 3	Dimension 4	Dimension 5
39	0.829				
40	0.768				
37	0.761				
42	0.75				
41	0.689				
8	0.487				
21		0.767			
19		0.627			
17		0.621			
14		0.62			
28		0.544			
1			0.754		
2			0.749		
5			0.697		
3			0.618		
11				0.684	
10				0.56	
26				0.532	
20					0.762
18					0.618
30					0.591

The rotated solution demonstrates construct validity and conceptual coherence, confirming the multidimensional nature of electoral participation among Filipino youth. Each factor exhibits thematic unity, with no significant cross-loadings above 0.40, thus supporting discriminant validity among constructs (Costello & Osborne, 2005). These results support the continued use and further refinement of the survey instrument to assess youth participation and inform SK electoral reforms.

Dimension 1: Perceived Institutional Effectiveness. This yielded six items from the factor extraction process. The coefficient pattern for these items ranges from 0.487 to 0.829, as

shown in Table 6. This variation reflects a cohesive yet multi-faceted grouping of indicators that collectively highlight the perceived effectiveness and democratic responsiveness of SK institutions. The high loading values suggest meaningful contributions from each item to the construct, affirming the internal consistency of the dimension. Notably, Item 8 posted the lowest coefficient loading at 0.487, while Item 39 reached the highest at 0.829. Nevertheless, all loadings exceed the minimum threshold of ± 0.40 , indicating statistical adequacy and conceptual alignment.

Table 6
Constructs and Loadings under Dimension 1

Dimension	Description	Items	Constructs	Loadings
Perceived Institutional Effectiveness	<i>It revolves around how youth perceive the SK's institutional impact, particularly in areas of program quality, inclusivity, and leadership accountability.</i>	39	There is evidence that youth engagement leads to better barangay programs.	0.829
		40	There is potential for real community change when the right youth leaders are elected.	0.768
		37	There is a belief that SK elections should be managed more professionally.	0.761
		42	There is greater inclusivity in local governance due to higher youth participation.	0.75
		41	There is a significant contribution from SK officials to youth development projects.	0.689
		8	There is a sense of political empowerment gained from participating in elections.	0.487

These items reflect the sentiment that youth participation in governance results in tangible community outcomes. The presence of Item 8, which touches on political empowerment, further emphasizes that electoral engagement among youth is seen not as tokenistic but as substantively impactful, which is supported by Gaventa's (2006) framework on participatory governance and civic agency. The consistently high factor loadings in this dimension reinforce the idea that youth empowerment and civic efficacy are crucial drivers of SK electoral participation. This affirms the findings of Flanagan and Levine (2010), who observed that young individuals are more likely to sustain political involvement when their participation yields observable and meaningful change in their communities.

Table 7
Constructs and Loadings under Dimension 2

Dimension	Description	Items	Constructs	Loadings
Youth Leadership Motivation	<i>It encapsulates how leadership aspirations and external encouragement from families, peer groups, and youth organizations influence young people to either vote or run for SK office.</i>	21	There is a personal interest in running for the SK office in the future	0.767
		19	There is inspiration to become a future leader by participating in elections	0.627
		17	There is support from youth organizations in my barangay.	0.621
		14	There is encouragement from my family to participate in the SK elections	0.62
		28	An increasingly responsive SK system addresses real youth concerns.	0.544

The findings illustrate that when youth perceive clear pathways to leadership and receive positive reinforcement from their social environments, their civic motivations are strengthened. This aligns with Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory, which argues that self-efficacy, when nurtured through supportive contexts, increases the likelihood of intentional civic actions. Moreover, this factor supports the social context model of political behavior (Verba et al., 1995), which posits that political engagement is significantly shaped by an individual's embeddedness in affirming social networks. The convergence of leadership ambition with social motivation underscores the role of collective validation in sustaining youth participation in democratic processes.

Dimension 3: Civic Voice. This dimension comprises four items with factor loadings ranging from 0.618 to 0.754, as detailed in Table 8. The highest coefficient was recorded in Item 1 (0.754), followed closely by Item 2 (0.749), while Item 3 had the lowest at 0.618. All items surpass the acceptable threshold of ± 0.40 , reflecting strong statistical significance and alignment with the construct. These loadings indicate a consistent and coherent pattern related to youth perceptions of civic participation, voice, and influence in governance.

The themes represented here resonate with the normative ideals of participatory democracy, where elections are viewed not merely as symbolic exercises but as active venues for deliberative inclusion (Dahl, 1998). This factor also ties into the framework of political socialization, which explains how individuals develop civic attitudes and identities, especially during adolescence (Torney-Purta et al., 2001). The responses suggest that SK elections play a formative role in nurturing civic responsibility, as young people begin to see themselves as

active agents capable of influencing leadership and governance decisions. The consistent loading of items on this component affirms the internal coherence of the construct and highlights the importance of democratic voice in youth political engagement.

Table 8
Constructs and Loadings under Dimension 3

Dimension	Description	Items	Constructs	Loadings
Civic Voice	<i>It reflects a shared belief among youth that electoral participation, particularly in the SK context, is a legitimate platform for expressing concerns, contributing to decisions, and shaping the trajectory of their communities.</i>	1	There is a clear promotion of youth voices in local governance	0.754
		2	There is an opportunity to contribute to shaping the future of my barangay.	0.749
		5	There is a space for meaningful democratic engagement among the youth.	0.697
		3	It allows the youth to influence leadership decisions.	0.618

Dimension 4: Civic Responsibility. This dimension was defined by three items with factor loadings ranging from 0.532 to 0.684, as outlined in Table 9. The highest loading emerged from Item 11 (0.684), followed by Item 10 (0.560) and Item 26 (0.532). Despite the smaller number of items, the loadings indicate a cohesive pattern centered on internalized civic responsibility and institutional trust, with all coefficients exceeding the ±0.40 threshold for statistical significance.

Table 9
Constructs and Loadings under Dimension 4

Dimension	Description	Items	Constructs	Loadings
Civic Responsibility	<i>It reflects normative attitudes that frame voting as both a moral obligation and a means of reinforcing public trust in democratic institutions.</i>	11	I feel responsible for promoting good governance by voting.	0.684
		10	I believe young people have the capacity to lead effectively.	0.560
		26	I can contribute to strengthening trust in the electoral system by voting.	0.532

The sentiments captured in this dimension suggest that for many youth, electoral participation is not just strategic or interest-based but deeply rooted in a sense of ethical responsibility and institutional faith. This highlights the importance of strengthening civic education and public trust as foundational elements in cultivating an engaged and accountable electorate.

Table 10
Constructs and Loadings under Dimension 5

Dimension	Description	Items	Constructs	Loadings
Community Attachment	<i>It emphasized an emotional and experiential bond between the youth and their local communities.</i>	20	There is a belief that voting is an act of service to my community.	0.762
		18	There is a strong sense of community when engaging in electoral activities.	0.618
		30	There is a connection between my community experiences and my interest in politics	0.591

Dimension 5: Community Attachment. This final dimension emerged from three items with factor loadings ranging from 0.591 to 0.762, as detailed in Table 10. Item 20 had the highest loading at 0.762, followed by Item 18 (0.618) and Item 30 (0.591). While this component includes fewer items, its statistically significant loadings indicate a robust conceptual alignment, highlighting how youth participation in elections is shaped by community attachment and civic-minded service.

Youth respondents expressed that participating in SK elections is not just a political act but a form of community service, rooted in solidarity and shared local experiences. This perspective aligns with communitarian theories of civic life (Etzioni, 1993), which posit that civic engagement is strengthened by collective identity and moral obligations to the community.

Furthermore, this dimension resonates with place-based models of civic participation (Checkoway & Aldana, 2013), which emphasize the role of localized experiences in fostering youth political involvement. The presence of this factor suggests that personal identification with the barangay and a sense of belonging are key motivators for electoral participation, particularly when voting is seen as a means to uphold and contribute to community well-being.

DISCUSSION

Framework for Dimensions of Electoral Participation

Figure 4 illustrates the framework of this study. The exploratory factor analysis identified five key dimensions influencing electoral participation in the Sangguniang Kabataan Election. These dimensions are (1) Perceived Institutional Effectiveness, (2) Youth Leadership Motivation, (3) Civic Voice, (4) Civic Responsibility, and (5) Community Attachment. These factors explain why employees in local government contemplate leaving their positions.

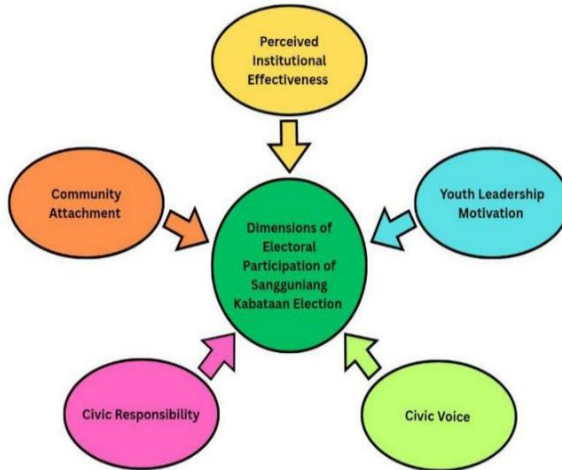


Figure 4. The Framework of Dimensions of Electoral Participation

Dimension 1: Perceived Institutional Effectiveness. Perceived Institutional Effectiveness is key in local governance. When institutions are seen as ineffective or unaccountable, many young people disengage, avoiding the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) elections. They believe involvement will not produce measurable change. Youth apathy is reinforced by weak governance where poor service delivery and lack of transparency persist.

This dimension aligns with the Civic Volunteerism Model (CVM), which holds that individuals who view institutions as trustworthy and responsive are more likely to participate. When young people observe government programs addressing urgent needs such as disaster preparedness and healthcare, they gain confidence that their voices and efforts can bring improvements. Perceived effectiveness builds trust and motivation for civic engagement.

Balanon (2005) argues that meaningful youth involvement fosters civic responsibility and institutional trust. Yet many local government units still fail to institutionalize mechanisms such as the Local Youth Development Councils (LYDCs), mandated to engage youth in planning (Flores et al., 2022). Weak institutional support reinforces the belief that politics is

closed to innovation and leadership. The rebuilding of youth confidence in the political framework will hinge on reforms in governance, continued investment in youth involvement, and the institutionalization of youth input in the formulation of responsive public policy.

Dimension 2: Youth Leadership Motivation. Youth leadership motivation results from the interaction of internal motives and external influences. Internal factors include personal values and leadership role models, while external determinants involve community influence and available resources. When young people feel supported and guided, they are more likely to assume formal roles such as positions in the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK). Conversely, limited mentorship, political education, and inclusive spaces restrict their leadership aspirations.

The Civic Volunteerism Model (CVM) highlights psychological involvement as essential, and youth motivation reflects this. Although external factors such as campaigns or political events can spark engagement, long-term motivation is shaped internally through values, beliefs, and exposure to supportive environments. Youth who grow up in communities where civic involvement is modeled by parents, schools, youth leaders, or mentors develop a stronger sense of purpose and responsibility. This drives them to volunteer, lead school or barangay activities, or participate in governance programs like SK elections.

Santos and Dela Cruz (2024) stress that mentorship and community inclusion build leadership confidence, enabling youth to pursue leadership roles. The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2020), likewise, underscores that youth engagement strengthens democratic participation and civic values. However, without accessible platforms and institutional support, many motivated youths hesitate due to fears of tokenism and limited opportunities. Strengthening collaboration among schools, civil society, and government is essential to nurture meaningful youth leadership.

Dimension 3: Civic Voice. The findings highlight that youth respondents view the SK elections as an important platform for expressing concerns, participating in decision-making, and influencing community direction. This aligns with Dahl's (1998) principle that democracy requires substantive discussion, and the SK elections provide a legitimate channel for youth to engage in governance and develop a sense of collective responsibility. Verba et al. (1995) further argue that political participation extends beyond voting to include discussions and involvement in community decisions, which the SK elections make possible.

The Civic Volunteerism Model (CVM) emphasizes civic voice, which involves expressing opinions, questioning institutions, and holding leaders accountable. Civic voice develops through experiences such as attending forums or joining youth groups and encourages the transition from passive to active participation.

Digital governance tools also enhance participation. Lagura (2017) notes that these tools improve access to information and support youth engagement, while Boulianne (2015) finds that digital media reduces participation barriers and creates new spaces for political discussion. Social media enables youth to influence decisions and promote transparency.

Lagura (2025) similarly shows that LGU e-governance platforms strengthen civic voice, accountability, and youth involvement in local governance.

Dimension 4. Civic Responsibility. Civic responsibility is essential to an active democracy. Responsive governance, where institutions listen and act on citizen concerns, strengthens participation. When people see their votes and voices recognized, their sense of civic duty and trust in government increases. Social capital, closely tied to civic responsibility, refers to networks, shared norms, and trust that promote collective action for the common good. Civic responsibility develops in environments where cooperation and reciprocity are evident. Youth involved in school or organizational groups experience collective responsibility firsthand, learning how activities such as volunteering, attending consultations, and voting contribute to broader societal goals. Participation in barangay SK elections demonstrates youth civic responsibility and their readiness to influence community development.

Civic responsibility also includes commitment to voting, civic discussions, and community decision-making. Campbell (2006) explains that civic duty is learned through socialization, trust in institutions, and positive participation experiences, which thrive when the government is responsive. Electoral trust, the belief that elections are fair and produce accountable leaders, is strengthened by clean procedures and official responsiveness (Norris, 2014). Levi and Stoker (2000) similarly argue that trust grows from performance and results. Public consultations, participatory budgeting, and digital civic platforms sustain engagement between elections.

Dimension 5. Community Attachment. Political participation is significant to the youth's identity and sense of belonging. Their involvement in the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) elections is driven not only by civic duty but also by emotional and experiential ties to their barangay. Youth view participation as service and solidarity, affirming their role in shaping the community. High levels of community membership strengthen belonging, which supports long-term civic engagement and contributes to Social Capital. When youth feel included and recognized as part of the community, they are motivated to invest time and effort into building a caring and active environment. Daily interactions, local events, and cultural or sports activities help create identity and discourage disengagement. This sense of belonging fuels motivation to vote, participate in discussions, or volunteer, as youth who are proud of their barangay join SK efforts out of genuine interest in its growth.

This dimension is based on communitarian perspectives, where collective identity and social connectedness amplify civic responsibility. The barangay is a political and cultural environment in which people can form emotional attachment and sense of belonging that can facilitate active engagement. Research has shown that community attachment enhances civic responsibility by enhancing the strength of shared values, trust, and identity (Dang et al., 2022). In addition, emotionally engaged youth are more willing to participate in civic and political life, since the strength of social bonds has a strong impact on participation (Ballard et al., 2019). Participation in SK elections becomes an opportunity to influence decisions and contribute to welfare. Service-oriented involvement in SK initiatives builds leadership skills and civic values (Catapang, 2024), fostering agency and sustained commitment to public service.

Youth participation in local governance is shaped by institutional performance, personal motivation, emotional connection, and trust in democratic processes. Young people are more likely to engage when their involvement produces tangible change. Motivation stems not only from recognition or leadership aspirations but also from a sense of responsibility and the desire to contribute to their communities. Participation is most meaningful when youth feel included, heard, and supported by accountable systems that respond to their expectations.

Conversely, institutional failures and elections that ignore youth voices reduce credibility and trust, discouraging engagement. When young people perceive that their input is unacknowledged, they may regard politics as irrelevant or inaccessible. In contrast, those who feel a strong connection and belonging to their community participate because it aligns with their identity and values.

Civic action requires an enabling environment in which governance is participatory, leadership is promoted, communication is open, and all feel they contribute. Such environments foster active, empowered citizens who view governance not as distant or abstract but as a shared responsibility. When youth are included meaningfully, civic engagement becomes a pathway for developing committed and service-oriented members of society, who see their participation as both impactful and integral to their identity.

Although these five dimensions are distinct, they interact in meaningful ways, forming a complex network that sustains youth civic engagement. A young person with strong Community Attachment (Dang et al., 2022; Ballard et al., 2019) may assume civic responsibilities driven by belonging and shared identity, which reinforces Youth Leadership Motivation (Santos & Dela Cruz, 2024) and encourages participation in volunteering, advocacy, or voting. Motivation alone is insufficient without confidence that actions are impactful, highlighting the role of Perceived Institutional Effectiveness (Balanon, 2005; Flores et al., 2022). Responsive and trustworthy institutions empower youth to assert Civic Voice (CVM), knowing their perspectives are valued, while ineffective institutions disrupt engagement.

Thus, the dimensions reinforce each other in a self-sustaining system. Holistic strategies that address multiple dimensions simultaneously are crucial for fostering a deeply rooted culture of youth civic participation, ensuring engagement is consistent, meaningful, and long-lasting.

Conclusion

This study examines the causal sources driving the target reality that youth voters contribute to electoral participation in the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) elections in Panabo City using an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design. The study started with the qualitative interviews, which provided in-depth, personal information to the young interviewees. The above findings were then used to derive the structured survey, which was applied in the quantitative component to statistically prove conclusions in the central motivators of youth engagement.

Based on the data, five core dimensions were identified as key to interpreting youth in the electoral political process: Perceived Institutional Effectiveness; Youth Leadership

Motivation; Civic Voice; Civic Responsibility and Community Attachment. These dimensions, in concert, portray a broad variety of how and why youth are motivated and their experiences in that, whether involving individual ambition and democratic citizenship, or institutional confidence and a strong emotional attachment to their communities.

The qualitative results indicated the existence of diverse civic experiences and expectations among young people, which were later verified and confirmed by the application of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) in the quantitative stage. Of great importance, the findings indicate that youth engagement is not motivated only by leadership aspiration or confidence in political governance. Instead, a great feeling of devotion and belonging to the community is another vital factor. These findings confirm the need to study electoral activities in a multidimensional way and not to focus on demographic criteria.

The research was grounded on two major theories, namely the Civic Voluntarism Model and Social Capital Theory. Such models offered the basis of carrying out an inquiry into the role of access to civic resources, psychological preparedness, and community-based networks in fostering youth engagement. The results indicate that enhancing these spheres by responsive institutions, participatory platforms of the youth, and conducive civic cultures can significantly increase participation in local democratic activities.

In addition to adding to the local discourse, this study fills a very interesting gap in the literature relative to youth involvement in municipality barangay-level elections in the Philippines. While global studies on youth political engagement offer valuable insights, this study adds a localized perspective, grounding those broader concepts in the specific context of Philippine grassroots governance. The findings not only affirm trends seen in international literature but also highlight the unique experiences and challenges faced by Filipino youth in participating meaningfully in governance at the community level.

The study's framework and dimensions found in this study are essential for future program implementation and policy development that aims to increase youth participation. It also acts as a basis for a confirmed mixed-methods study, in which a larger and more varied youth population from different cities or regions can be used to test and further refine these validated dimensions.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were formulated based on the study's findings and conclusions, grounded in social capital theory, which emphasizes the importance of trust, networks, and shared norms in fostering civic engagement and collective action.

Local Government Units (LGUs). Findings can guide LGUs to institutionalize sustainable, youth-inclusive projects that build trust and civic accountability. Youth consultation frameworks and electoral structures should ensure genuine participation rather than merely appearing compliant (Gabriel et al., 2019).

For the SK and LYDC (Local Youth Development Council). Youth organizations are encouraged to implement leadership and mentorship programs to develop aspiring leaders.

When given real opportunities in locally owned governance, youth gain confidence, civic spirit, and a commitment to public service (Reguindin, 2023).

For Human Resource and Youth Affairs Offices. Strengthening civic education and inclusive democratic forums raises youth awareness of governance and voting. Feeling informed and heard increases participation in decision-making processes.

For Community-Based Organizations and Schools. Localized civic engagements, volunteer work, and peer-led projects strengthen community attachment. Emotional ties to the barangay foster youth participation, a sense of belonging, and shared responsibility. Programs like PAGPAKANUG model leadership development and civic duty.

For COMELEC and Policy Makers. Policies should streamline and digitalize SK registration and election information, improving accessibility and engagement (Anzar et al., 2024).

Policy Recommendation. A systematic youth participation framework for LGUs should ensure continuity, inclusivity, and authentic youth voice, emulating DILG and CSC merit-based election processes.

The following recommendations are developed from the study's findings and conclusions and rooted in Social Capital Theory, which focuses on how trust, networks, and shared norms can help to support civic engagement and collective action.

To enhance the participation of youth in strengthening trust, civic accountability, leadership development, mentorship, civic education, and meaningful involvement in local governance, sustainable and youth-inclusive programs should be implemented. Youth are given chances to participate in decision-making processes, which enhances their confidence, involvement in civic responsibilities, and commitment to public service (Gabriel et al., 2019).

In addition, policies should facilitate youth inclusion in electoral processes by simplifying and digitalizing electoral registration and electoral information, as well as ensuring continuities and inclusivity in citizen youth participation systems.

Further research should replicate the measures of youth electoral involvement through Confirmatory factor analysis and validate youth electoral participation dimensions, while mixed-methods approaches improve reliability and instrument standardization across regions. Additionally, future research is advised to explore and examine the challenges LGUs and COMELEC face in using technology to digitize elections and sustain youth mentorship programs. This can guide the development of equitable, credible, and inclusive digital electoral processes. Researchers could also explore collaborations between COMELEC, NGOs, and educational institutions to support initiatives like PAGPAKANUG, ensuring youth leaders are trained, guided, and actively involved in civic engagement for long-term impact.

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