

EXPLORING THE ENGAGEMENT OF CITY GOVERNMENT ON YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS: THE CASE OF PANABO CITY

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SDGs: **Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities); Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institution)**

ABSTRACT

This study discusses the partnership between the city government and youth groups in Panabo City with emphasis on how the interaction between both contributes to civic turnout and enhances local governance. Adopting a qualitative single case study method, we collected the data by using open-ended questions whereby the youth leaders would give written accounts courtesy of their lived experiences and participation with the local government. Eight (8) informants took part in the study, and they presented useful information that has enabled one to get a more in-depth view of the youth-government collaboration. The results showed that there are twelve major themes of both enabling factors and structural problems. Moreover, the research highlights the opportunity of the institutionalization of the inclusive governance systems that can identify and empower youth as critical stakeholders in the local decision-making and community growth, outlining the necessity of the long-term assistance to ensure the full potential of youth and consequent development effects.

Keywords: ***Civic Participation; Local Governance; Panabo City; Youth Leaders; Youth Engagement; Qualitative Research***

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INTRODUCTION

In today's world, youth organizations are committed to empowering young people to take an active role in their communities. Wray-Lake and Abrams (2020) characterize civic engagement as an experience-based process in which participation is frequently in the form of informal, local participation, especially when youth are backed by the community and institutions. Moreover, this study engagement was defined as structured, community level interactions between the city government of Panabo and youth organizations, comprising provision of resources, policy consultation, collaborative activities, and reward mechanisms. Fu and Jiang (2019) defined that while young individuals have talent and potential, not everyone has the same chances to flourish, especially those in the less privileged. Existing gaps are still notable in the case of Barangay District III, Babatngon, an ongoing issue in limited awareness about youth organizations and their purpose, inadequate resources, and insufficient local support, that hinders participation (Cadano, 2023).

Challenges reflect broader problems faced by community-based organizations around the world, where non-government organizations (NGOs) and youth groups are both required to have strong relationships with local institutions to achieve sustainable development outcomes (Abiddin et al., 2022). Marah et al. (2024) also explained that youth participation is important with the existence of international framework. However, evident gaps persist between policy intentions and their actual implementation that indicates for further examination on how youth engaged in governance. While youths are regarded as agents of change, they are usually seen as an industry in need of special support and interventions based on the social problems usually prevalent among their age cohort (Satispi & Taslim, 2019).

This study corresponds to the Youth in Nation-Building Act of 1995 (RA8044) that was established to encourage active involvement of youth in community development and in local governance. It aims to nourish leadership, civic awareness, and volunteerism among young people. However, challenges still persist on the ground. This research is guided by the Collaborative Governance theory introduced by Ansell and Gash (2008), as discussed in Bianchi (2021). The theory emphasizes the value of cooperation among key stakeholders, particularly youth organizations and the city government. It points out that meaningful collaboration happens when roles are clearly defined, goals are shared, and both sides have the ability to influence outcomes. At the heart of this framework is open communication, where both parties actively participate in decision-making and ensure that the voices of the youth are heard in governance matters. The theory also explained the importance of involving young people in participatory activities such as decision-making and volunteer work. These efforts are important forms in civic engagement that support youth inclusion and development (Brady et al., 2020). In addition, the activities and inputs that young people undertake in community peace building, development, human rights, politics, and change processes vary with context and location. In the majority of cases, the machinery of youth engagement in civil society determines their experiences. Civil Society Organization CSOs are essential for international development; however, their influence on policy and practice is often constrained by shifts in political, social, and financial landscapes (Natil, 2021). While extensive research has examined the limitations and vulnerabilities of youth influence and power, less attention has been paid to the policies

and conflicts that give rise to the unique circumstances and dynamics in which youth and their CSOs operate.

For the past two decades, innovative studies have led to the importance of youth. These are the people who can change the face of the community through their active involvement in the councils, participatory action research, and urban planning projects. Asherov and Gross (2024) found that feeling of community and belief in collective power are main factors which influence the involvement of youth in the local councils and the community resilience was identified as the main mediator in that relationship. Williams (2024) looked into the concept of youth empowerment through projects, showing that inquiry initiated by youth is instrumental not only in methodological but also in theoretical innovations. Building on such a viewpoint, Holsen et al. (2025) studied the implementation of youth participatory action research in lower secondary schools in Norway and found that the issues of balancing youth autonomy and adult guidance as well as the difficulties in nurturing civic engagement in the structured educational setting arise. These collective works not only represent the different modes whereby young people can make significant contributions to the social fabric but also point to the necessity of providing them with structured opportunities to participate, to speak up, and to co-create.

Furthermore, our study is backed up by Sustainable Development Goal 10, which is to reduce inequalities and open opportunities to all youth organizations to perform well without discriminating. Also, the city government would treat each youth organization fairly. Sustainable Development Goal 16 is also aligned to this study to minimize harmful impacts among youth, building effective strong institutions, accountability, and more inclusiveness. This could help in the decision-making process that could strengthen their organization and the local government setting, and it promotes peace and social justice within the communities. Effective volunteer management has been identified as a key factor in sustaining organizational participation and maximizing community impact (Araque, 2025).

The focus of this study is on the current youth involvement in Panabo City and its contribution to local government among young people. Focusing on the engagement of youth leaders will help to derive its decision-making process in local governance. Despite the growing population among youths, there is a key issue that requires attention: What support do the youth organizations receive from the city government in Panabo City? What are the major challenges in the engagement that youth organizations experience in implementing their projects? What learnings do youth leaders in Panabo City get from their engagement with the city government? Exploring the contributions of youth organizations in Panabo City will not only allow us to understand the youth leaders but also the city government's contribution to the development of youth.

This study adds pivotal results on the association between youth organizations and city governance and certain significant implications of the same to local governance and the youth civic engagement. In the case of the city government of Panabo, the findings will indicate the necessity of fostering work-together with the youth groups in view of civic engagement, leadership, and volunteering. These findings can be utilized by the local youth organizations in

order to shape and enhance more inclusive projects, especially to disenfranchised youth helping in the overall betterment of the youth engagement practices.

Thereupon, researchers state that the extension of this research is comprehensive and will gain insights into the manner in which such youth organizations leaders will be involved in the city government. This research aims to explore the support, challenges, learnings, and experiences that strategies as youth leaders navigate their responsibilities within their organizations. This research is limited to the experiences and viewpoints of young leaders within Panabo City. The results may not fully reflect on any government representatives or agency, as the study focuses on qualitative interviews and observations with only youth leaders. This provides a focused exploration of youth engagement and leadership in Panabo City, within the bounds of specific demographic and geographic context.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The qualitative method used in the research was chosen because of the capacity of the qualitative method to represent depth and richness of the interrelation process between youth organizations and local youth leaders. The qualitative inquiry should be conducted on what and how the participants are acting, experiencing and their thoughts. It is open and exploratory that participants are able to openly discuss their views and disagreements regarding two-person interaction and group activities in this way. Case study benefited the research in terms of process and outcomes (Schoch, 2020). A single case study with a holistic approach provides intense scrutiny of intricate phenomena in their actual context, yielding rich qualitative information. Chowdhury and Shil (2021) point out its capability to seize detailed interactions.

This method is useful in the interpretation of cases, allowing the researcher to have a deep insight into the subject (Coombs, 2022). The study employed interviews, document analysis, and participant observations as a method of gathering rich and detailed information that helped in shedding light on how city governments and youth organizations interacted, negotiated, and collaborated to generate authentic youth engagement opportunities (Kratochwill, 2021). This is consistent with the works by Bennett and Hays that show how efforts of youth can affect the policies of municipalities, showing that youth involvement can lead to the effect on municipal politics (Bennett & Hays, 2022). Collaborative governance comes up as one important model in order to increase youth participation. The observations of the youth-based policies in Ghana by Boadu lead to the need to have intersectoral cooperation between government institutions, NGOs, and youth associations in enhancing viable youth empowerment policies (Boadu, 2024).

Research Locale and Participants

Purposive sampling was employed in this study to deliberately select participants who possessed the relevant knowledge, experience, and leadership role to address the scope in the research objectives. This method of sampling is widely used in qualitative research because it

allows the researcher to find information-rich participants who can provide in-depth information about the phenomenon being researched, instead of randomly selecting participants. Furthermore, the participants are carefully selected based on the specific characteristics that are needed in the study such that the collected data is relevant, credible and related to the research objectives (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). The coastal town of Panabo City, which is part of the Davao del Norte province of the Philippines, had a land area of 251.23 square kilometers (97.00 square miles) which is equivalent to 7.43 percent of the total land area of the province. Panabo City is a city that boasts of a rich community where various groups of youths play leading roles in securing social interaction and development of the community. Panabo City, Davao del Norte, Philippines, was chosen as the research site because it is a context that allows for the study of the relationship between the city government and youth organizations. The city is a local government body that has active and well-known youth organizations, which engage in community development and governance-related activities, making it relevant for the study of the experiences of young leaders in their collaboration with government institutions.

Furthermore, the current relationships between youth organizations and the local government provide an opportunity to capture local context-specific learning on how young people can be engaged in decision making processes and the barriers and opportunities to achieving this. The study aims to gain insight into how the city government interacts with youth organizations, and, through this, Panabo City was selected to allow the researcher to gather rich and insightful qualitative data from participants with first-hand experience with the phenomenon under study. The recent statistics provided by the Philippines Statistics Authority (PSA) estimate the same, and the total population of the city is 208,464 with 18.7 percent of the youth being between 10 and 29 years. Specifically, 40,356 are in the age bracket of 10-19 and 35,416 are in the age bracket of 20-29.

The study focuses on civic engagement of youth organization leaders. Participants were selected from incumbent President and Vice President of known youth organizations as they have firsthand knowledge and direct experiences in dealing with the City Government of Panabo. They have leadership roles and are very active in organizing organizational activities, communicating with local government, and youth-related programs and initiatives. The functions allow them to draw rich insights from their experience and context in collaborating with the city government with youth organizations and provide the most suitable participants for accomplishing the goals of this qualitative inquiry. The framework in this study is the youth leaders and the city government of Panabo. The study involved a total of 8 participants from various youth organizations In Panabo City, organizations like the Pag-asa Youth Association of the Philippines (PYAP), Panabo Youth Leaders Organization (PYLO), 4H Club Panabo, Talentadong Panaboans Organization (TPYO), Panabo Youth Talented Artists Organization (PYTAO), Unlad Kabataan Panaboan (UKP), Panabo Youth Responders Organization (PYRO) and Kabataan Kontra Droga at Terorismo (KKDAT) were involved. Involving the youth organizations in city youth engagements was all about listening to their views and incorporating their ideas and solutions into the development process (Hegazy et al., 2024). The sample size of eight participants is informed by (Tiffany-Kinder 2020) as referred to by (Subedi 2021). When it comes to choosing youth informants in this study, putative informants must meet some criteria in ensuring that they have already had the experience and have the eye to youth participation and practice vis a vis the city government.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection process has a number of major steps in a case study. First, the researchers will carry out interviews out of campus in order to explore the roles of the participants. First of all, permission was sought with the program chairperson. Subsequently, formal requests were made to sampled participants of youth organizations requesting them to allow the researcher to carry out in-depth interviews with the youth leaders. As Roller (2020) notes, the interviewer/participant relationship is the key to the process, and it helps to discover valuable insights. The dry run assisted the researchers to know areas in the guide that could be improved. The development of the feedback on the dry run was also recorded and considered during the preparation of the actual data collection. The additional steps include an analysis of a Google Forms, where the records of answered questions were collected, transcribed, and analyzed to find themes in it, which do not have biases, and, in other words, conclude an open-ended conversation. It is remarkable that, in comparison to other types of in-depth interviews (IDI), the interview methodology used in a qualitative study is not that combative or confrontational, it does not deliberately generate a conflict situation to provoke the interviewee. Rather, it is based on the creation of a trusting relationship with which every piece of feedback is appreciated, and open confessions thrive.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, one will also need to meet the aim of the research. What support do the youth leaders receive from the government? What are the major challenges that youth organizations experience in implementing their projects and activities? What insights and learning do youth leaders in Panabo City gain from engaging with the city government? Applying the collaborative governance theory, the youth groups are used as the stakeholders of public institutions.

In analyzing the data collected from our in-depth interviews, the researchers utilized a thematic analysis approach. The first step of the process involved converting the interviews into Google Forms and reviewing the responses, which allowed the researchers to familiarize themselves with the data and identify recurring themes. Narrative analysis also applies as it navigates and manages identities that allow subject and experience into the research Bamberg (2020). The use of open-ended questions allows to add depth to the answer from the participants' viewpoints (Rutledge & Hogg, 2020), it may uncover significant themes regarding the roles of participants, the barriers they faced, and the dynamic relationship between youth and city government.

Ethical Considerations

As the researchers of this study, the researchers hold the responsibility of establishing a professional foundation for their work, upholding integrity and honesty, and contributing knowledge to the general public. Aside from that, gathering information from certain participants and transcribing the responses from post-interviews are quite critical. The accumulated information went through a thorough analysis of the adviser and data analyst. The results were presented to a panel critiquing, to ensure the research's reliability and validity. Ethical considerations are essential for qualitative research, as it explores the experience of individual

lives. The researcher remained cautious to avoid biases that may have jeopardized the integrity of the study. These measures are carefully designed to ensure ethical integrity of the research, right of participants as well as the credibility and confidentiality of this research procedure.

The researchers uphold to ensure that it follows the criteria and study guidelines, ensuring ethical values. The prerequisites of these are: Consent Agreement and Voluntary Participation, these involved participants must fill out the consent agreement form before the interview, accentuate willingness participation and the privileged to refuse. Innominate and Confidentiality, all involved participants remained anonymous, to guarantee the reliability and confidentiality during the gathering of data while protecting the participants privacy. Interview Procedure, Exclusive interview in the uninterrupted setting was to be performed, with the respect given to confidential communication of the study. These measures are carefully designed to ensure ethical integrity of the research, right of participants as well as the credibility and confidentiality of this research procedure. In order to follow all these principles, one criterion of the research is to develop trust and transparency between the researchers and the interested participants through the highest status of academic and ethical rigorousness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are a total of eight informants participating in the in-depth interviews, consisting of one female and seven males, ages between 20 and 29. The selected participants were incumbent presidents and vice-president currently serving in youth organizations in Panabo City. The views collected from their answers provided a detailed analysis of the assistance that the city government has been providing to them. Their leadership experiences could give them the relevant information about the operation and the cooperation of youth organizations with the local stakeholders. The informants were assigned anonymous names to ensure confidentiality as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1
Demographic Profile of the Informants

Sex	Code	Year Established	Years of Service
Male	7	1974 - 2023	1 - 5 years
Female	1	2021	2 years
Total	8		

A list of participants came up with the participation identification process and was collected to cover several youth organizations in Panabo City, Davao del Norte. The requirements were that the selected individuals are presently holding the office as the president of the youth organizations and must have at least one year experience in civic structures and two years in existence organizations. Youth organizations were picked because of their community work, government work and youth representation. This section covers the results of

the City Government of Panabo's support for youth groups. The themes explain various ways that youth-centered activities are supported and worked on by youth leaders.

Table 2
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Support Received by Youth Organizations from The City Government of Panabo

Major themes	Description
Youth Empowerment Through Participatory Developmental Initiatives	<i>This focuses on how young people become more engaged and confident when they are involved in creating and carrying out programs in their communities.</i>
Public Support That Highlights Youth Talents	<i>This describes how youth are given platforms to express themselves and opportunities to lead, their talents are nurtured, and their confidence is strengthened, encouraging further engagement in community and leadership activities.</i>
Official Recognition That Builds Organization Strength	<i>The youth leaders explain how recognition brings legitimacy, increases their credibility, and often leads to access support, resources, and collaborative opportunities with other stakeholders.</i>
Access to Local Government Operational Support	<i>This theme shows how youths shared that such support plays a crucial role in sustaining their activities and delivering their projects effectively.</i>

The results indicated that participatory developmental activities promoted by the city government contributed to building youth empowerment through youths' active participation, engagement in community activities and leadership roles. Participants spoke about how they felt valued, listened to, and trusted as partners to community development as a result of the local government's consistent support. This finding agrees with Schulz (2024), who emphasized that trust in civic and local institutions increases the likelihood of young people engaging in lawful civic and community activities. The current study also contributes to the body of knowledge because it demonstrates that supporting civic involvement through government can also help build young people's confidence to start and maintain community-based programs.

The outcome indicated that the level of support and opportunities for talent to be shared promoted greater youth group involvement in community and leadership activities. Participants identified that recognition via public events and programs was a source of motivation to build their confidence and visibility within the community. This result aligns with Reguindin (2023), who discovered that Filipino youth leaders' leadership qualities, civic values and active involvement are enhanced through community engagement. On the other hand, Tabunda and Mina (2022) also agree with the current finding that youth engagement in local governance and community-based programs improves youth engagement and promotes inclusive development. This current study brings additional richness by showing how public recognition can be a motivating force and help sustain youth involvement in community efforts.

The effects showed that official recognition by the city's government had an influence on strengthening youth organizations by giving them increased legitimacy, credibility, and access to opportunities and resources. The respondents stated that formal recognition facilitated the participation of organizations in community programmed and enabled them to collaborate with the government offices. The result supports David and Buchanan (2020) who highlighted that increased youth participation is more effective when institutional arrangements and local government structures are in place. The present study does much to broaden this view as it suggests that the recognition process is not just administrative, but it can be a source of confidence and an identity for the youth leader as well.

The results explained that the city government's operational support, including resources, logistics or activity assistance, was important to support the youth-led projects. Participants shared their experience of using government support to carry out programs and their organizational efforts. This discovery aligns with Shagott (2023) who stated that involving youth in planning, service development and community activities enhances leadership and responsibility among the young people. The current study builds on this by revealing that even when support is given in a practical way, such as through providing logistical support or access to resources, youth leaders consider this to be meaningful evidence of government engagement and partnership.

Table 3
Major Themes and Core Ideas on Challenges Faced by Youth Organizations in the Engagement of Implementing their Projects

Major themes	Description
Identified Constraints within Organizational Communication Pathways	<i>This focuses on the poor and unclear communication between youth organizations and local government units where poor guidance, unclear information, and missing contact points are barriers to effective coordination and lead to delayed decisions.</i>
Deficiencies in Organizational Support Mechanisms	<i>This showcases how the youth leaders shared some struggles for youth to have an impact on local governance, characterized by slow responses, little assistance, and insufficient financial or institutional support for their endeavors.</i>
Institutional Constraints in Executing Projects	<i>It is centered on the institutional and logistical challenges that limit project implementation, such as constrained resources, long approvals, missing consistent support, and difficulties in community mobilization, usually leading to delays and lowered impact.</i>
Internal Disengagement among Youth Organization Members	<i>This sustaining active participation among youth organization members, where low turnout, volunteer fatigue, and ineffective communication practice often break project implementation and sustainable development over the long term.</i>

This section addresses issues that youth organizations encountered in the project in terms of their access to the city government. The themes emphasize factors that affect collaboration and project implementation.

The results revealed that there were problems in coordination, problem-solving and decision-making between youth organizations and the city government due to unclear and inconsistent communication. Participants felt uncertain about who and how to contact, and how to address organizational concerns, which slowed down projects and reduced engagement. This finding resonates with Checkoway (2011) as cited in Sala-Torrent and Planas-Lladó (2024) which highlights the importance of providing local authority with channels of dialogue that are accessible and structured to ensure meaningful youth participation. Moreover, Evans et al (2023) offer some insight into the current findings, by saying that poor communication between the organization can stifle organizational momentum and lead to frustration and disengagement among youth leaders.

The outcomes indicated that many youth leaders perceived the view of government support being inconsistent, short-term, and inadequate to support the growth of an organization. Participants voiced complaints regarding slow responses, inadequate instructions and guidance, and the absence of permanent institutional support of their efforts. This is also notable by Jayme-Mora (2024) on the fact that youth support systems in the Philippines tend to concentrate on strengthening individual leaders instead of building up organizational structures. Thus, Sanderson and Kemp (2023) conclude that poor funding, low levels of institutional assistance, and insufficient connections to wider systems are all detrimental for the long-term impact of youth organizations, which is similar to the findings of the present study.

The results explained that the youth organizations faced institutional challenges including inadequate financial resources, delays in approval processes, logistical difficulties, and inconsistent support, impacting their ability to implement projects. Other challenges cited by participants were low community involvement and volunteer burnout, which further hindered organizational momentum. This aligns to Cadano (2023), which found systemic barriers to be playing a role in why youth are not participating in projects, and also why they are not active. This is in keeping with Cadano (2023) who identified systemic barriers as contributing to non-participation in the youth and to delays in community projects. In addition, Meherri (2021) provides an explanation for the current finding, as it is demonstrated that the lack of institutional support can diminish the level of volunteering and decrease the participation time

The results further explain that keeping youth members engaged was still significant issue for youth groups. The participants reported low attendance, volunteer boredom and challenges in motivating members to attend regularly. This finding aligns with Kanosvamhira (2026), who discovered that when youth participation initiatives do not have sufficient depth or structure, it may be difficult to achieve the desired long-term impact. In addition, Aposaga (2023) adds nuance by emphasizing that sustaining volunteerism is a recurring challenge for youth leaders despite the important contributions of youth organizations to community development.

This section shares the themes that further explain the experiences of youth leaders in engaging with the City Government of Panabo and the learnings they obtained. These findings help to provide a picture of how their experiences helped them develop as leaders, managers of organizations, and collaborative governance.

Table 4
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Knowledge Youth Leaders in Panabo City Get from their Engagement with the City Government

Major themes	Description
Demonstrating Adaptability	<i>This captures how youth organizations are able to adjust to changing circumstances that reflects their capacity to remain active, relevant, and effective leaders.</i>
Youth develop good citizenship through involvement in the community	<i>This describes youth participation in the community. Young people gain a deeper understanding of their civic roles, strengthen their commitment to public service, and develop values such as accountability, cooperation, and social responsibility.</i>
Skill-building helps shape youth leaders	<i>This describes different opportunities for skills that will lead to developing young people into effective leaders. Training, practical experiences, mentorship initiatives and decision-making skills that are necessary for leadership positions in their communities.</i>
Youth Contributions Improve Community Response	<i>This emphasizes how youth leaders contribute to more inclusive and timely actions, allowing the community to better address the needs of its members.</i>

The results showed that being adaptable, open to new ideas and making decisions in a practical way were aspects learned by youth leaders during their interactions with the city government. Participants shared their experiences of how they are becoming more flexible and reflective leaders after facing challenges and collaborating with various stakeholders to overcome them. This is a similar conclusion to that of Marshall et al. (2021) who highlighted the need for openness, responsibility and reflective practice in order to be good leaders and grow professionally.

The results implied that involvement in civic and community activities fostered a greater sense of citizenship among youth leaders, as well as a sense of responsibility and civic participation. Participants recognized that mentoring and guidance from the city government were significant factors in their own and leadership development. This was a finding that aligned with what DuBois (2021) discussed about how mentoring programs can have positive effects on mentoring behaviors, accountability and active citizenship when formalized institutions are in place.

The results showed that youth leaders acquired practical skills like communication, negotiation, advocacy, problem-solving and organizational management from interacting with government programs. For participants, leadership development was a process that arose from activity rather than theory. This is corroborating with Chavez et al. (2024) who stated that YPLs acquire leadership abilities through participation in community and government programs.

Results showed that youth leaders were more responsive to community needs when they are directly involved in identifying community concerns and addressing them. Participants shared examples on how their work had significant meaning and purpose in response to real community issues. This finding aligns with Castillo (2023), who discovered that opportunities that allow youth to become involved with real community concerns facilitates increased youth participation. Similarly, Mariano (2025) enriches the current result by demonstrating how reflective and participatory spaces stimulate young people to talk about social problems and build their relationship with community development.

Implication For Practice

This research showed how youth leaders in Panabo City were resilient and committed towards enhancing positive change in their societies despite prevailing challenges. It is directly related to young people's participation and continues dialogue and acknowledgment of their leadership potential around civic engagement. Study underscores the need for an enabling environment where young people's organizations can engage actively and effectively in local governance. Authentic youth participation goes beyond symbolic representation. It also needs continuous engagement, respect for what they can do, and entry to spaces of decision-making (Mitchell, 2022).

Youth councils and participatory structures in local governments around the world create critical pathways for young people to contribute meaningfully to governance Augsberge et al. (2024). Improved engagement between youth organizations and government institutions has the potential to produce a more responsive and inclusive community. Mentoring in leadership development programs strengthens the capacity of young leaders to influence decision-making processes and develops the potential skill that can contribute to the youth organizations Arshad et al. (2021). The findings derived from this study will guide future research and aid in practical applications in public administration, specifically on developing participatory structures that fuse the voices of the youth in framing community development.

This paper addresses the role of civic engagement of youth organizations in Panabo City in achieving forms of democracy at the local level. The findings show that young people are not just the passive consumers of the programs, but they are the active members of the community who take an initiative to start the project, bring up the issues in their community to make an impression on the local decision making. Their involvement is however influenced by the lack of arenas of debate, limited involvement in the decision-making process in the situation of the administration of the society, and insufficient institutional support.

According to Reguindin (2023), young leaders are vibrant and flexible, but they cannot have an impact unless there are meaningful avenues of engagement. In this respect, this paper demonstrates that Republic Act 8044, or Youth in Nation- Building Act of 1995, remains an effective legislation as it explicitly places the youth in societal matters. This gives credence to the necessity of involving the youth in real action, such that the youth might have a voice to be heard and with a viable effect on local government. The already uneven enforcement of this law on a local basis is also an opportunity that has been missed in regard to encouraging civic participation of the youth. RA 8044 should not only be a symbolic law but should be implemented

through structures like youth consultation mechanisms, participatory budgeting mechanisms, and capacity-building programs.

Bastida et al. (2024) had argued that, given their involvement, the youth groups are now a formidable source of human resources when it comes to use of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, the urgent need to institutionalize youth participation in governance. The present study also helps in the wider achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely, SDG 10- Reduced Inequalities and SDG16 -Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. By empowering the youth as citizens, marginalization of the youth by the government is minimized and there is a boost in their representation in the local 49 decision making.

The explanation of how a set of organizational activities fosters trust, institutional support, and the social capital by Chesmore et al. (2024) justified the concept that youth empowerment leads to more resilient and inclusive communities. Additionally, the results elaborated on the need to position the youth civic engagement not at its periphery, but at the core of good governance. In effect, youth organization participation in Panabo City is dynamic and vibrant in the democratic process. Their experiences talk of the possibilities and problems of real practice in civic engagement. Oyedare et al. (2025) emphasize that the youth leadership development are avenues through which the youths can be reshaped and reminded of their communities by actively involving themselves to collaborate with others of their age groups.

Concluding Remark

This study demonstrated the resilience of the youth leaders in Panabo City, determined to develop positive transformation in their societies in spite of challenges. The role of an enabling environment allowing the organization of the young people to participate actively and effectively in local governance is emphasized in the study. Youth involvement is more than symbolic representation, it should also involve constant interaction, appreciation of their ability to do, and access to arenas of decision-making (Mitchell, 2022). Participatory local government structures and youth councils across the world would offer essential pathways through which the youth can take an active role in the governance (Augsberger, 2024).

The possibility of creating a more responsive and inclusive community exists through the youth organizations and government institutions. Leadership development programs through mentoring strengthens the capacity of young leaders to shape the decision-making process and builds potential skills that can serve the youth organizations (Arshad, 2021).

The experiences and stories of young leaders in Panabo show that civic participation is not only participation; it is a power that enables the community to flourish. When the youth are put in leadership positions, provided with the right resources, and regarded as equal partners, they do not simply participate. They innovate, 51 inspire and build more inclusive futures. It is through this strength and collaboration that local governments and institutions can change the mobilization of young people into a long-lasting movement that will empower inclusive development. Youthful voices do not echo the present, but they are flints of the future ones. The results of the research based on this work will be used to carry out other studies and

to serve practice in the sphere of public administration, that is, to develop participatory structures, which will integrate the voices of the young generation in community building.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several methodological points to consider that should be noted when interpreting the results of the study. The first was the fact that the study was done only with the incumbent president and vice president of the already established recognized youth groups in Panabo City, Davao del Norte. The participants were exclusively chosen due to their personal experience in youth governance and their engagement with city government, but the results only represent the views and experiences of those with leadership roles in youth groups. Thus, the perspectives of average members, non-affiliated youth and other youth development stakeholders were not included in the research. Hence, the study was limited to one local government unit, thus giving an insightful context into the phenomenon studied. This approach setting allowed for in-depth analysis of the experience of youth engagement in Panabo City but may not necessarily capture the socio-political and institutional reality in other localities where the situation is varied.

Moreover, the study was qualitative, and focused on obtaining rich, detailed, and experience-based accounts from the informants. As such, the findings are not necessarily statistically generalizable to larger populations, but rather only offer contextual and interpretive insights. The use of self-reported self-narratives (based on interviews) was also largely relied upon in the study, and may have been subject to personal perceptions, recollections and experiences of the participants. The study is limited by these themes, but it provides some useful insights into the ways in which the City Government is engaging with youth organizations, and it enhances the existing body of knowledge on youth participation and local governance. Future research could benefit from larger sample of youth and multiple local government environments, as well as more yield holistic understanding of the nature of youth-government engagement in various settings.

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