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Research Article

Determinants of Non-Participation in Women's Associations: A Qualitative Inquiry in Bonifacio, Misamis Occidental

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine the reasons for the non-participation of members of the association's programs and activities. Using a descriptive-qualitative approach and semi-structured interviews with 20 non-participating members from four barangays, this study identified key reasons for non-participation, including familial responsibilities, political divisions, poor leadership, interpersonal conflict, and perceived unfair distribution of benefits. The analysis revealed that familial responsibilities, political issues, and leadership deficiencies were the most significant barriers to participation. Moreover, the study also identified factors that could encourage the members to actively participate in the association's programs and activities, including providing financial assistance, celebrating women's month activities, providing livelihood programs, and the wide dissemination of information by the officers in charge. The study suggests that Women's Associations must improve leadership and communication that will foster inclusivity and ensure equitable resource distribution.

Keywords: *Financial Assistance, Livelihood Programs, Member Engagement, Non-Participation, Women's Association*

Background

Members of the Women's Association play a crucial role in promoting economic empowerment and gender equality worldwide. Members' non-participation will affect the association's success. The association provides a platform for women to come together, share

resources, and access opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable to them individually. Thus, the success of Women's Association programs and activities depends heavily on the active participation of their members. When women are not participative in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the

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association's programs and activities, it is more likely to be unsuccessful. In an association, it is extremely important to determine the causes of member's non-participation as it affects the whole association and some of its active members.

According to Kang (2020), Women's Associations have played a significant role in various aspects, including economic, social, and political spheres, as they bring together individuals to achieve common goals. However, some members are not fully engaged in the programs and activities implemented by the association. Switzer (2025) emphasized that a lack of engagement often arises when members do not feel connected to the association, leading to reduced effort in their participation. Such disengagement highlights the essential role that associations and non-government organizations play in training and empowering women to secure immediate livelihoods through venture creation and entrepreneurship (Gupta, 2021).

Women's associations play a vital role in empowering women and promoting gender equality worldwide (English, 2021). These organizations offer a platform for women to connect, share resources, and access opportunities that they might not have access to individually (Steele et al., 2023). Thus, the success of these associations heavily depends on active participation from their members, as it enhances the effectiveness of programs aimed at social, economic, and political development. However, Aju and Adeosun (2020) asserted that many associations face challenges in engaging their members, which can significantly hinder the achievement of their goals.

In the municipality of Bonifacio, Misamis Occidental, several Women's Associations have been established with clear policies designed to encourage member participation. These policies include regular attendance at monthly meetings, annual registration, payment of dues, and penalties for non-compliance, such as exclusion from receiving assistance. The associations are guided by these democratic frameworks to ensure sustainability and to maximize the benefits for their members. Despite these well-structured guidelines, the issue of non-participation remains prevalent in some of the local Women's Associations.

Despite these established policies and the associations' reliance on active member engagement for their programs and activities, attendance reports from association leaders and secretaries show that a significant portion of the membership, approximately 30-40%, demonstrates minimal or no participation in association activities, prompting this study to investigate its root cause. This trend has been consistent over time, despite the clear policies in place that mandate participation for receiving benefits. Leaders of these associations report ongoing concerns about low engagement levels, which could potentially affect the long-term success and sustainability of the association's efforts. Understanding these causes is critical for addressing the problem and enhancing the long-term viability and effectiveness of these important community organizations (McWood, 2021).

The researchers were determined to identify the reasons for members' non-participation in the association's affairs, activities, and programs. Specifically, this study sought to answer these problems:

1. What are the primary barriers to participation in Women's Association programs and activities?
2. What enabling factors can promote greater member engagement?

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The Theory of Planned Behavior proposed by Ajzen (1991), and it has been widely used in various fields. The theory pre-supposed that behaviors are influenced by these factors namely, attitude, subjective norms, and (perceived behavioral control. These factors predict the behaviors of members that might be the cause of not being participative in the programs and activities. In the study of Rizzo and Columna (2020), the theory predicts behavior quite well in comparison to the ceiling imposed by behavioral reliability.

Influencing Factors on Participation

The study of Sulaiman et al. (2014) highlighted the factors that influence the participation of the community using the socio-ecological model developed by Bronfenbrenner

(1974), and these are Individual, Community, Organizational, and Governmental factors. The study reveals that these factors make a substantial contribution to both a positive outlook and impactful community participation such as strong social ties, shared values, and a sense of belonging within a community to create a supportive environment that encourages individuals to participate, share resources, and collaborate for mutual benefit. Thus, Ahmed and Kader (2023) present a more critical view of the uneven implementation of community participation, with instances of stereotypical engagement further raising concerns about genuine empowerment.

Furthermore, Di Napoli et al. (2019), emphasized that active participation of women in associations served to empower their well-being at both individual and relational levels. This suggests that women may not see the value in their participation. Bokase (2020) highlighted the importance of leadership qualities such as empowerment, goal orientation, and a focus on both tasks and relationships. These qualities can foster a supportive and participative environment, leading to increased member participation. Additionally, surrounded by encouraging peers, challenges become shared endeavors. Teammates become cheerleaders, offering support and celebrating each other's successes. Participative leadership in the association can lead to a successful program at work by improving tasks and reducing counterproductive behavior (Fernandes et al., 2020)

Barriers to Participation

Moghaddam et al. (2018) identified barriers to members' non-participation, such as inadequate capabilities, lack of acceptance, restrictive social norms, and organizational problems. When members are not participative in the association's programs and activities, the association might not exist successfully as the members are one of the key aspects of why the associations keep going. There are many reasons why members are not actively participating in the programs and activities. The study by Flink et al. (2019) found that the study declined due to a lack of time, illness-related activities, or not having the energy needed to participate in the programs and activities.

Methodology

Research Design

The researchers employed a descriptive-qualitative research design to determine the causes of members' non-participation in the activities and programs among the four (4) selected barangays in the Bonifacio Misamis Occidental Women's Association. By employing this, the researchers aimed to understand the reasons behind the non-participation of members in the association. This method allowed researchers to explore the underlying reasons related to members' non-participation in the association's activities and programs. Other than that, the researchers can provide factors that may encourage the members to actively participate in the association's activities and programs. Baillie (2019) emphasized that a descriptive-qualitative research design approach is highly suitable for studies that aim to remain close to participants' descriptions of their experience rather than being overly theoretical

Research Instrument

A researcher-made interview guide questionnaire was used in gathering the data. This was used to determine the causes of members' non-participation in the association's programs and activities. The study of Roberts and Rosanne (2020) suggests that a researcher-made interview guide questionnaire can be more effective in conducting research. Furthermore, the interview guide was validated by two faculty experts in qualitative research and a social worker from the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office of Bonifacio.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before the conduct of this study, the researchers asked permission from the adviser to gather data. The researcher also provided a formal letter asking permission from the management and participants to conduct an interview face-to-face. Moreover, when the plea was permitted, a validated interview guide questionnaire was used to further strengthen the result of the study. The researchers interviewed five (5) members in each four (4) selected barangay Women's Association in the Municipality of Bonifacio, Misamis Occidental with a total of twenty (20) participants who are not actively

participative in the programs and activities, the participant's responses were recorded, and saturation was reached after 20 interviews, as no new themes emerged.

Data Analysis

The data analysis of this study was presented qualitatively. The researchers used a thematic analysis to identify, analyze, and report patterns within the data. It minimally organizes and describes data in rich detail. Thematic analysis using structured qualitative data

from focus groups can identify patterns and generate researcher-generated themes, offering a unique approach to qualitative research (Lochmiller, 2021). The researchers immersed themselves in the data by repeatedly reading over the material as they prepared for analysis. The data collection, note-taking, and coding transpired simultaneously from the onset of the research, and a sorting process facilitated project organization to achieve categorical saturation.

Result and Discussion

Table 1. Participants' Responses on their Primary Reasons for Non-Participation in a Women's Association

Themes			Description
Members Prioritizing Responsibilities	Prioritizing	Family	Family duties such as childcare, household management, and financial support hinder participation.
Political Issues			Political party alignment and disagreements lead to internal conflicts, reducing participation.
Poor Management by the Association's Officers			Ineffective leadership and lack of regular attendance by association officers led to poor organization.
Personal Conflict with Other Members			Conflicts and interpersonal disagreements between members hinder collaboration and participation.
Unfair Treatment in Distribution of Benefits			Bias and favoritism in distributing benefits discouraged members from engaging.

Table 1 shows several key factors influencing non-participation in the Women's Association. Family responsibilities emerged as a primary issue, as many participants cited childcare, household chores, and caregiving duties as reasons for not participating in association activities. This shows the time constraints that many women face when balancing their familial obligations with involvement in communal activities. Family obligations emerged as a significant deterrent, reflecting broader gender-role expectations consistent with prior research (Gross & Bettencourt, 2019). Political issues also played a significant role, with participants pointing to political party affiliations and internal conflicts that led to division and gossip within the association, reducing engagement. This study had the same findings with the study of Bjorvatn et al. (2019) and Lee (2020), who noted that political polarization can severely impact group dynamics and participation.

Moreover, poor management by the association's officers was another key barrier, with several participants expressing frustration over ineffective leadership and a lack of organization. This issue asserts that participative leadership is crucial for fostering member engagement. Jais et al. (2021) emphasized that poor leadership can weaken organizational productivity and sustainability. Interpersonal conflicts between members also hindered participation, confirming Hemame's (2023) assertion that personal conflicts disrupt communication and collaboration within groups.

Lastly, unfair distribution of benefits was cited by several participants, which may lead to disengagement and dissatisfaction. This finding is supported by Li et al. (2021), who argued that a fair and transparent distribution system is essential for promoting inclusivity and encouraging active participation. Collectively, these barriers highlight the need for leadership

reforms among women's associations in Bonifacio, Misamis Occidental, thereby promoting inclusive practices and mechanisms that

address both the logistical and interpersonal challenges within the association.

Table 2. Participants' Responses on Factors Encouraging Active Participation in the Women's Association

Themes	Description
Providing Financial Assistance	Financial aid promotes active participation by reducing financial barriers.
Celebrating Women's Month Activities	Celebrating Women's Month activities fosters unity, promotes gender equality, and encourages participation.
Providing Livelihood Programs	Livelihood programs enhance economic opportunities, which encourage active participation.
Wide Dissemination of Information	Timely and effective communication by officers promotes transparency and participation.

Table 2 shows the factors that can encourage active participation in the Women's Association where providing financial assistance is one of the strongest motivating factors, as it alleviates financial barriers and enables members to fully engage in the association's programs. Participants expressed that even small amounts of financial aid, such as cash or goods, would significantly enhance their involvement. This supports the study of Gross and Bettencourt (2019), who highlighted that financial assistance supports women's participation by empowering them to overcome financial challenges. Consequently, Sugie and Conner (2020) also noted that the effectiveness of such assistance can vary depending on the type of program and the recipients' political involvement.

Additionally, celebrating Women's Month serves as another motivating factor, as it promotes gender equality, inclusivity, and provides an opportunity to celebrate women's contributions. Joyce et al. (2021) and Tran & Lo Chin (2020) emphasize that such celebrations foster unity and encourage participation, helping to increase women's voices in various spheres. Providing livelihood programs is also crucial, as these initiatives provide economic opportunities, build skills, and promote self-sufficiency. Fasakin and Popoola (2019) and Manlosa (2022) noted that livelihood programs, such as agricultural cooperatives and income-generating activities, contribute to

both community empowerment and environmental sustainability.

Lastly, the wide dissemination of information by association officers is vital for ensuring transparency and encouraging participation. Research by Aggarwal et al. (2021) and Melro & Oliveira (2019) suggests that effective communication significantly strengthens commitment and fosters collaboration, enhancing the association's success and growth. These findings highlight the importance of combining financial, social, and informational support to create an inclusive environment that encourages active participation in the association's activities.

Conclusion

The study implies that addressing both practical and relational barriers to participation is essential for the success of community-based organizations like the Women's Association. This can be achieved by ensuring fair leadership, providing financial assistance, and fostering a sense of unity. Moreover, improving communication and providing leadership development opportunities for officers will enhance the overall effectiveness of the association. These changes will foster a more inclusive and well-organized atmosphere, enabling members to engage more actively and contribute to achieving the association's objectives. Additionally, to foster engagement,

associations must prioritize leadership development, transparent communication, and equitable distribution mechanisms, thereby enhancing institutional trust.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends:

1. That the Women's Association may implement a "kamustahan program" where members can freely express their concerns and suggestions. It is also recommended that the association allow members to provide feedback to the association leaders. The association could also establish clear communication channels, such as social media platforms or group messaging, to keep all members informed.
2. The provision of leadership development programs to enhance the management and leadership skills of officers through the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office (MSWDO) and may also conduct feedback sessions to assess leadership effectiveness and offer leadership training for association leaders.
3. Barangay leaders, particularly those overseeing the committee responsible for managing the association's affairs, should evaluate leadership candidates based on feedback gathered from the members.
4. Future research should explore the impact of the Women's Association on its members and further assess the leadership skills of its officers to guide future improvements.

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