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Research Article

Empowering Youth Leadership: Insights into Sangguniang Kabataan Officials' Role in Delivering Youth Development Programs and Services

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ABSTRACT

The Youth Council, which the Filipinos call *Sangguniang Kabataan* (SK), represents youth in every smallest political unit in the Philippines called a *barangay*. In the body of research, the youth themselves provide direct insights into how SK delivers as an official government body. However, research on roles and methods for leading youth programs and services in Region XII remains scarce. To fill the existing research gap, the researcher conducted a descriptive study in *barangays* of a municipality in Region XII, describing the experiences of SK officials in planning, implementing, and evaluating youth development programs and services. The seven participants were purposively selected using the following criteria: be a present SK official in 2023-2024; be at least 23 years old; and have at least 5 years of experience in the SK governance. A semi-structured interview was utilized in collecting the data, and thematic analysis in discovering the main patterns and recurring themes. The findings revealed that SK leaders approach program planning in a deliberate, collaborative, and evidence-based way. Their leadership during implementation shows adaptability, ethical behavior, and systematic operations. The program evaluation process was action-oriented, strategic, and reflective. A conceptual framework was developed, and implications for youth governance, program implementation, and policy development were derived from findings. The study further highlights that youth leadership at the barangay level fosters inclusive, participatory, and sustainable local development, demonstrating that active youth involvement in planning, implementing, and evaluating community programs contributes directly to achieving SDG 11 by strengthening resilient, people-centered, and well-governed human settlements.

Keywords: *Leadership, Planning, Region XII, Sangguniang Kabataan, Youth development programs*

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Introduction

Youth councils around the world operate as vital platforms which allow young people to participate in governmental processes and decision-making activities. Research shows that when youth participate in community planning through their contributions to discussions, the community receives benefits from their ideas and energy. Augsberger et al. (2024) attested that many municipal youth councils worldwide serve as spaces in which young perspectives help in shaping local governance. Global Youth Council goes one step further, arguing that youth leadership is an essential partner in developing and implementing programs, and not treating young people as merely recipients (Oracion & Cornelia, n.d.).

In the Philippines, the *Sangguniang Kabataan* (SK), founded in 1991, operates as the local government system that elects members between 15 and 30 years old from every *barangay*, the smallest political unit in the country. The program enables them to develop leadership skills, to make community decisions (Abao et al., 2025; Samboang et al., 2024) and to participate in governance activities (Tribucio & Difuntorum, 2025). And through Republic Act No. 10742, the SK Reform Act of 2015 provided additional resources to strengthen the SK system. The law enables SK councils to develop their own program plans while managing their financial resources, which includes using 10% of the *barangay* budget for youth projects (Damat, 2025).

Being granted with such a good deal of program and financial autonomy, the SK officials use their allocated funds to create and execute their plans that include the Comprehensive Barangay Youth Development Plan and the Annual Barangay Youth Investment Plan, both of which support national development objectives (Atanoza-Megriño, 2024). The National Youth Commission monitors these programs to ensure they fulfill their mission to protect youth health and environmental resources while supporting complete youth development (Moral & Estoral, 2025; Tabanao et al., 2025).

Running an SK council becomes difficult despite these resources. Young leaders encounter difficulties when they attempt to manage their

public responsibilities together with their schoolwork or job commitments which results in stress (Piolo et al., n.d.). Some people experience difficulties because senior *barangay* officials provide them insufficient help while local political families exert pressure on them which affects their ability to make independent decisions (Lastimado et al., 2025). Young people encounter difficulties when they try to interact with SK officials because public skepticism exists which stems from previous corruption and bad governance (Bautista, 2021).

The SK leaders have the duty to develop and implement youth programs while assessing their programmatic outcomes. The existence of laws and guidelines fails to create uniform results because *barangays* possess different abilities to monitor and evaluate their programs which leads to sustainability challenges (Orboda et al., 2025). The evaluation process demands special attention because it holds particular significance for programs which focus on disaster preparedness and mental health support and environmental conservation efforts (Ancheta, 2022). Therefore, evaluation capacity at *barangay* level, according to Yusingco (2022), should be strengthened in order to ensure that youth programs are effective and responsive to community needs.

Hence, this present study seeks to investigate the experiences of SK officials related to their leadership works, particularly how they plan, implement, and evaluate youth development programs at their *barangay*. The locale of the study is at a selected municipality in Region XII, Philippines. The researcher also aims to develop a conceptual framework and identify the implications of the findings for youth governance, program execution, and policy development, especially that local governance system needs stronger ties with SK because this relationship serves as the base which establishes community development programs that enable all residents to participate in sustainable development (Mascara, 2024). The study connects policy objectives to practical implementation which provides knowledge that will help design better future policies and improve youth program effectiveness (Vedra & Sabijon, 2025).

Materials and Methods

This section outlines the research design, participants, instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures used to conduct the study.

Design

The study investigated how *Sangguniang Kabataan* (SK) leaders experience their leadership roles through a qualitative research study that used descriptive research methods. The researcher selected this method to study how people experience their life situations and how they behave and what they think (Creswell & Poth, 2023). The researcher aimed to study the methods SK leaders use to develop and execute youth development programs in their local area. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews to collect data which enabled SK officials to discuss their responsibilities and obstacles and achievements in full. The youth leaders who participated in the study received encouragement to present authentic work experiences as examples from their professional lives.

Participants

The study included seven officials from the *Sangguniang Kabataan* who worked at a local government unit in Region XII of the Philippines. The researcher used non-probability purposive sampling because he needed participants who had actual work experience with youth governance. The selection process used specific criteria which required candidates to be a present SK official in year 2023-2024; be at least 23 years old; have at least 5 years of experience in the SK governance; and be willing to participate in the study. Based on the criteria, the researchers were able to identify seven qualified participants. The research process followed necessary ethical guidelines throughout its entire duration. The study purpose was explained to all participants who then chose to participate in the research. The researcher used pseudonyms to protect participant identities while removing all elements that could identify them from the study recordings. The study allowed participants to choose whether to take part because the researcher explained to them that they could leave the research process whenever they wanted.

Instrument

Researcher created an interview guide which he used to collect data, but he later improved the guide through the Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) process which Castillo-Montoya developed in 2016. The researcher used interview questions to test research objectives because he developed the questions through expert validation of the guide. Three experts in language and research reviewed the interview guide which he used to provide feedback that improved the guide's clarity, relevance, and overall usability. The researcher conducted pilot testing of the guide which produced test results that helped him make necessary changes before developing the final version. The researcher developed a semi-structured interview guide as the final tool which permitted him to ask preplanned questions while enabling him to add extra questions during the interview process. The approach enabled participants to provide detailed descriptions of their experiences that allowed researcher to gain better insights into their leadership activities. The guide contained two primary sections which included initial questions and main questions that aimed to investigate leadership experiences.

Data Gathering

The study researcher maintained all required ethical standards throughout his research activities. He got permission from the proper authorities before collecting any data. The participants received complete information about the study objectives their rights and the methods which would protect their personal data. The participants selected the time and place which would suit them for their interviews. The interviews were recorded after the participants granted their consent to ensure accurate documentation of their responses. All information was used only for the study, and the recordings and written notes were deleted after the study to keep participants' information private.

Data Analysis

The researcher used thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) to evaluate the data that he had collected from the interview

process. The researcher in this study recorded every word spoken by the participants during their interviews and transformed it into text segments. The researcher started the coding process after completing the transcription work by identifying the main concepts that interviewees had discussed. The theme analysis was conducted after the grouping of codes. The procedure involved grouping codes according to their appearance patterns and their link to similar content in the transcript. The researcher developed themes after assessing how well the themes matched the problem descriptions. The researcher enlisted a panel of experts to assess the study's thematic methodology to assure the accuracy and integrity of the emergent themes.

Result and Discussion

This section discusses the emergent themes identified in the researcher's data analysis. The descriptions of each sub-problem of the leadership experiences of the SK officials were presented in detail.

Planning Programs and Services

The leadership experiences of the SK officials in terms of planning the youth development programs and services can be described as, collaborative, deliberate, and evidence based.

Collaborative Decision-making

The SK leaders showed how youth programs and services require teamwork between organizations to succeed. Council members described planning as a shared responsibility carried out through discussions, negotiations, and teamwork. The collaborative efforts of youth organizations enable better program connections, which result in improved community outcomes according to Magan and his colleagues. SK officials use collective decision-making to design programs that better serve the needs of their youth audience (Campos and Rivera, 2024; Tagorda & Mangotara, 2024).

The program activities demonstrated strong collaboration through environmental protection work and social inclusion efforts and global citizenship development which were established as primary SK youth

participation areas. The leaders must tackle every problem that affects youth to create programs which address all needs of young people within the community. The programs achieve improved reach together with increased audience acceptance because of this strategy (Castillo et al. 2025). SK officials demonstrate active collaboration through open communication and shared decision-making because this process produces positive results for both their council and the community they serve (Rey & Espiritu 2023). The group conducts regular talks and shared planning sessions to create programs which address the diverse and complicated demands of young people.

The process requires active youth participation which goes beyond their role as symbolic representatives. Young people participate in all aspects of decision-making processes which demonstrates SK's dedication to inclusive leadership and shows that youth participation is vital for safeguarding rights and advancing community development efforts. The research demonstrates that this type of engagement enables programs to become stronger while instilling a feeling of ownership and empowerment to those who participate (Flores III, Ballar, Yap, & Deinla, 2022). SK officials use collaboration as their main method to maintain program flexibility and community service on a flexible basis even when they encounter resource shortages and member absenteeism problems.

Deliberate Planning

The SK officials create their program plans from their strong dedication and sense of duty. Their work usually begins by listening closely to what young people in the community want and need. Through needs assessments they gather information about the concerns interests and future goals of their peers. SK leaders develop their programs through real-life experiences that enable them to create activities which will successfully achieve their desired results (Gange et al., 2024).

The SK leaders need to examine all available resources before they will accept any proposed plan. The organization assesses its available resources which include personnel and community support to determine if the planned

activities can proceed as scheduled (Frimpomaa-Afrane, 2025). Their structured approach enables them to optimize resource usage while preventing implementation issues. The organization establishes clear and measurable objectives through SMART objectives which serve as benchmarks for determining achievement. The organization establishes various objectives which help young people acquire academic and sports and communication, and technology skills (Estilong et al., 2025).

The equal importance of youth participation extends to the process of creating programs. SK officials listen directly to young people through their various contact methods which include consultations and discussions and informal conversations. The community active participation enables programs to solve actual community problems while meeting the unique requirements of the local area (Lastimado et al., 2025). SK officials use youth feedback to create development programs which accurately represent the needs and dreams of their community.

Evidence-Based Program Design

Sangguniang Kabataan officials use the nine youth participation centers as their foundation for developing program activities according to their findings. The framework helps to ensure that their programs deliver essential components which support youth development. SK officials develop their programs according to established areas because these areas provide them with better program development which results in more dependable program outcomes. Programs which combine practical experience with research results show better outcomes than programs which lack dedicated design (Baluan & Carurucan, 2025).

The SK officials depend on young people from their communities to provide their opinions. The organization collects data through surveys and community meetings and informal discussions to learn about the preferences of young people. The feedback enables them to develop programs which maintain both relevance and ability to meet their goals. Actual data usage enables programs to achieve their practical objectives while keeping their

operational flexibility and developing new methods (Gumela & Tayaban, 2025). The officials encounter difficulties at the same time. Council members who miss meetings because of budget constraints which limit their attendance create a situation which reduces both program capacity and program duration.

SK officials view their work as a learning process that continues through their experience of facing various challenges. The organization uses feedback from young people to assess program effectiveness which enables them to make continuous program enhancements. The approach establishes a more robust connection between policy objectives and research outcomes and community requirements which exist in the actual world (Baygan & Donato, 2024). The combination of evidence-based planning with ongoing evaluation processes leads to youth program development which achieves higher levels of accountability and effectiveness and long-term sustainability across various communities.

Implementing Programs and Services

The leadership experiences of the SK officials in implementing youth development programs can be described as adaptive, ethical, and systematic.

Adaptive to the Needs of Situation

The *Sangguniang Kabataan* officials demonstrate their ability to execute successful program implementation through their capacity to adapt their work methods according to different operational situations. The team develops new schedules and modifies existing plans by changing their work duties whenever they face unexpected challenges to maintain program operations. The youth leaders purpose to find better work methods which will help them meet the requirements of their participants. Acacio et al. (2025) states that youth programs need this kind of flexibility because both program conditions and student requirements frequently change.

The organization believes that making changes will help them achieve their goal of keeping young people involved in programs. The organization will change its programs to achieve their original objectives while

maintaining youth participation. The activities of SK officials remain relevant and attractive to young people because they concentrate on their interests and needs (Alviola, 2025).

The systems and structure of an organization provide a foundation that enables its personnel to adapt to changing circumstances. The SK officials maintain operational flexibility through their established communication system, which includes scheduled meetings and their defined leadership structure (Cal et al., 2023). The balanced leadership method enables programs to handle obstacles while it provides empowerment to participants, and it enhances the authority of youth leaders within their community.

Ethical Practice

SK officials demonstrated through their shared stories that ethics functions as the central element of their leadership approach. The team members explained their work responsibilities through their implementation of successful programs while protecting the safety and dignity and well-being of all young participants. Ethical leadership requires these leaders to create just and considerate choices which help young people develop into active community members and governmental leaders. Balmeo et al. (2024) describe ethical leadership as a leadership style which prioritizes both care and responsibility and youth development needs which extend into their entire life span.

The experiences of SK officials showed that involving young people in decision-making brings two benefits because their confidence rises and their responsibility level increases. Youth participants maintained their full involvement throughout the entire program duration while sharing their thoughts and assisting with problem resolution. Young people provided feedback which led to activity changes because they required better solutions that ensured fair treatment for all participants (Pablo et al., 2025).

Officials defined ethical leadership through two essential practices which require leaders to listen to youth perspectives and demonstrate authentic care for young people. The two qualities establish trust between adults and

youth because they create an environment which makes young people feel safe to express their ideas. The method demonstrates moral leadership because it promotes educational advancement and creative development and enables participants to succeed (Palangdao, 2023). The SK leaders demonstrate their values through their efforts to create open communication spaces and build community ties and their practice of acknowledging youth achievements during all program events.

Systematic Execution

The Youth Council executives demonstrate their program execution abilities through three essential characteristics which include their persistent work ethic and their ability to maintain order and their use of established operational procedures. The officials explained that they follow approved plans and agreed-upon schedules to keep activities on track. They accomplish program objectives through their methodical document assessment process which verifies that all activities finish according to established deadlines (Piolo et al., n.d.).

The officials described their operational challenges which included physical exhaustion and resource shortages and continuous operational problems. The organization continues its operations because its employees maintain their dedication to work while explaining that "plans must go on." Their standard procedure compliance allows them to demonstrate their accountability while they work to support young people. The two core responsibilities of their leadership work involve program management and maintaining concentration through difficult times (Batchar, 2024).

International youth programs demonstrate similar findings with their challenges arising from insufficient resources and low program participation rates (Lelwic-Ojeda & Akintola, 2023). The study demonstrates that organized leaders who maintain their focus can successfully overcome all existing obstacles. SK officials maintain their dedication to program goals while demonstrating resilience and commitment to good governance during challenging times.

Evaluating Programs and Services

The leadership experiences of the SK officials in evaluating youth development programs can be described as action-oriented, strategic and reflective.

Action-Oriented Review

The theme "evaluating youth development programs is action-oriented" shows that *Sangguniang Kabataan* officials see evaluation as more than just a routine task. The officials consider evaluation to be an active process which continuously produces results that assist them with decision making and upcoming activities. The officials use evaluation to assess current operations while establishing their future requirements and discovering better ways to assist young people through their evaluation process. Rey and Espiritu (2023) explain how evaluation functions as a vital leadership tool which organizations use for their program development work.

The officials' testimonies showed that evaluation leads to actual program improvements through assessment. The team used feedback from youth together with attendance records and direct observations to make decisions about necessary activity changes and needed strategic changes and required resource redistribution. Evaluation functions as a beginning point which enhances programs because it demonstrates how leaders handle new obstacles by using evidence-based methods (Polit & Beck, 2021).

The evaluation functions as an important tool which helps youth governance organizations to maintain their responsibility towards their duties. SK officials use the results to explain their decisions and share program outcomes with stakeholders because they want to demonstrate their dedication to transparent and responsible leadership (Damit, 2025). The process achieves two essential goals because it protects public assets while ensuring that programs successfully address the development requirements of young people.

Strategic Program Analysis

The Youth Council officials employ assessment techniques which enable them to evaluate the effectiveness of their programs while

monitoring their progress towards achieving their objectives. The organization maintains a structured financial system which requires them to document their spending and evaluate every financial transaction for complete documentation needed in their audits and financial statements. The practice demonstrates their dedication to financial management with integrity and transparent operations which Rey and Espiritu (2023) highlight.

The evaluation process of a program assesses both its financial status and its operational effectiveness. Program officials assess their accomplishments by collecting input from young participants and important community members. The program team uses their encountered implementation difficulties as educational tools to enhance upcoming projects. The program team uses all of the collected feedback to enhance their program delivery. The organization conducts two assessment meetings per year to evaluate their achievements and tackle their existing challenges according to (Garcia et al., 2023).

The assessment of program results requires comparison between actual results and the original targets. The officials assess existing performance to discover improvement needs which they use to develop upcoming programs. Evaluation serves two purposes because it functions as a mandatory requirement and helps organizations achieve ongoing progress. The researcher Acacio et al. (2025) demonstrate that officials utilize reflection and planning to enhance program results while optimizing their resource management.

Reflective Evaluation

The Youth Council officials demonstrate their organizational skills through their active involvement in both the program development process and the program assessment process. The team evaluates program performance through both successful elements and unsuccessful elements to develop their future program development plans. Their assessment process achieves its purpose through their combination of reflection and data analysis and strategic planning (Amante et al., 2024).

The reflective process requires individuals to engage in two main activities which include

deep thinking and emotional control. The officials celebrate program success through their recognition of achievements while they analyze success factors to establish which practices should be duplicated. Council members analyze program problems through joint evaluation which includes analyzing obstacles and providing mutual assistance while working toward finding solutions. The team uses this method of reflection to maintain their composure and concentration while they work on program development instead of becoming disheartened (Baygan & Donato, 2024).

The practice of reflection needs to happen continuously because it requires more than a single execution. The officials gather feedback from youth participants which they use to

develop their future programs. The leadership style of this organization requires leaders to maintain open-mindedness while acquiring knowledge through their experiences and making necessary adjustments (Magan et al., n.d.). The Youth Council develops its leadership abilities through this method while enhancing the standards and operational efficiency of the programs which it manages.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the findings of the study, the conceptual framework, presenting the leadership experiences of the SK officials, or youth council, in advancing youth development programs and services was developed.

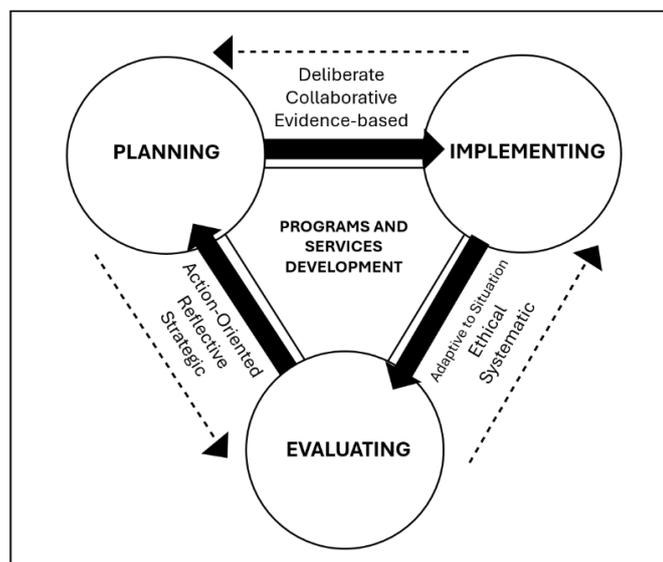


Figure 1. Experiences in Advancing Youth Development Programs and Services

The framework above shows the developmental cycle of advancing youth programs and services as part of the leadership roles of SK officials. This generally synthesizes the experiences and considerations in undertaking specific projects to be carried out for youth in the communities. The cycle highlights the continuous process of planning, implementing, and evaluating programs and services as synthesized from the generated data sets. It implies that planning stage entails implementing stage; implementing stage entails evaluating stage;

and evaluating entails planning stage. The thick black arrows show such a process, while the broken-lined arrows emphasize the retrospection process. The retrospection process implies that a current course of action should reexamine the past course of events, which would lead to more calculated and purposeful measures. Along the transitions was the nature of each stage. These describe how the experiences of the SK officials could be and how their roles or responsibilities should be carried out.

Implications for Youth Governance, Program Implementation, and Policy Development

The research findings of this study have implications across youth governance and program implementation, and policy development. The study uses Youth Council official real-life experiences as its main research method to demonstrate actual youth governance processes which exist beyond official reports and policies. The young leaders demonstrate their program management abilities through their stories which show their methods for planning programs and executing programs and their methods for evaluating programs while dealing with resource shortages and uneven team participation and administrative hurdles. The training and mentorship and capacity-building program design needs to address actual challenges which youth leaders experience in order to enhance their program management skills (Amante et al., 2024; Acheron et al., 2025).

Young people need to take part in all stages of program development according to the study findings. The initiatives maintain their effectiveness after youth participate in all three stages of program development because they remain involved in planning execution and program evaluation (Cal et al., 2023). Organizations and partner institutions must establish active partnerships with young people who will share their ideas and work together on projects. When organizations engage youth in program development they create better programs which teach young people to assume responsibility while developing their support for future work (Gumela & Tayaban, 2025).

The study shows specific methods which can enhance both policy development and administrative functions. The existing problems which include incomplete documentation and limited funding and weak coordination demonstrate the necessity of establishing proper procedures and improving financial control and providing more technical assistance according to Salazar and Sacramento (2024). The youth leaders who design their programs based on real community conditions will achieve better results which include increased program transparency and better program implementation and stronger youth governance. The results

demonstrate that youth councils which receive strong support function as effective platforms which enable young people to develop their leadership abilities and achieve real empowerment in their local communities.

Insights

The research demonstrates that youth development programs need structured teamwork, which requires research methods that scientific testing has demonstrated to be effective. The youth leadership program enables young participants and adult stakeholders to work together for community needs assessment and priority setting and program development. Program solutions to youth problems stem from their effective use of inclusive methods. The planning process achieves its goals through data analysis and public consultations and the establishment of specific targets. The programs achieve better results because team collaboration improves their value and execution efficiency.

The Youth Council leaders demonstrate their ability to execute programs through their ethical leadership which enables them to handle their duties while they protect the interests of the program participants. The team creates solutions which enable programs to run continuously despite facing sudden obstacles. They establish a secure atmosphere through their ethical practices which safeguard the wellbeing and safety and respect of all program participants. The team maintains operational stability through their adherence to scheduled work times and their accomplishment of planned activities, which establishes trust with stakeholders and demonstrates their professional competence.

Youth Council officials use practical assessments and reflection to monitor their program performance. The team examines financial records and program results and participant feedback to create reports which show areas that need to be improved. The team uses group discussions to investigate their successful and challenging program elements which need to be modified for their upcoming projects. The Youth Council uses assessment practices to maintain successful programs that fulfill the requirements of local youth.

Lastly, the findings show important details about United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 11, which aims to create Sustainable Cities and Communities through the evidence of youth leadership at the *barangay* level that enables communities to develop through inclusive, participatory, and sustainable methods. Youth Council officials who plan youth programs show that grassroots governance improves when young leaders participate in evidence-based planning, public consultations, and stakeholder decision-making. The ethical leadership of program staff, combined with their dedication to protecting participant welfare, creates secure and welcoming community environments which form crucial components of sustainable human settlements. The youth initiatives maintain their responsibility to local communities by monitoring program results through financial transparency, participant feedback, and reflective evaluation. Youth councils use these leadership practices because they function as program implementers and community resilience builders, social participation drivers, and inclusive governance promoters, which help them achieve SDG 11 through their work on people-centered local development.

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