

Partisanship and performance of youth leaders in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to determine the partisanship and performance of youth leaders locally known as Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) officials in the Second District of Negros Oriental, Philippines. This study also aimed to determine the profile of the youth leaders and the extent of partisanship before and after the election. There were 153 youth leaders who participated in the study. The descriptive research design with the quantitative method of data gathering was utilized. The questionnaire was the primary data-gathering tool triangulated with focus group discussions and interviews.

Based on the data collated, the following findings were revealed: The majority of the youth leaders are aged 22 - 26 years old, males, single, studying in college, receive a monthly honorarium of P 5,001 - 6,000, and do not have any official political party. There is a high extent of partisanship before and after the election. The programs implemented were focused on equitable access to education, environmental protection, climate change, youth employment and livelihood, health, anti-drug abuse, gender sensitivity, sports development, and capability building. The youth leaders have high performance in the programs focusing on sports development, anti-drug abuse, environmental protection, and health. On the other hand, the programs on climate change, equitable access to education, gender sensitivity, and youth employment and livelihood are rated "moderate".

1. Introduction

In Asia, the Philippines is a country that allows youth representation in government. As early as 1975, Presidential Decree 684 created the Kabataang Barangay (KB) as a youth council where the youth could express their views and participate in community affairs. In 1991, the Local Government Code established the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) as the governing body of the KB composed of a set of leaders elected by the youth in the barangay to represent them and deliver youth-oriented programs. To establish changes and create enabling mechanisms for meaningful youth participation in nation-building, Republic Act 10742 (SK Reform Act) was enacted on January 15, 2016. At the barangay level, the elected SK chairperson is a part of the local legislature as an ex-officio member of the Sangguniang Barangay. He or she is also the chairman of the barangay's Committee on Youth and Sports Development. Each barangay's youth leader receives a ten percent (10%) share of the barangay funds for its programs (RA 9160). Hence, the youth leader not only promotes youth representation but also serves as a training ground for future country leaders beyond the barangay level.

After election and assumption to office, the youth leaders are required to support the full development of the youth, instill social commitment and good citizenship, supplement efforts of the government in training the youth, and encourage and assist the young in promoting sports, social and cultural activities. It is also expected that in the performance of their mandate, they will show integrity, honesty, and accountability as an essential requirements of successful governance. Leaders who value these virtues are those with a good conscience. It is believed that society will be conscientious if leaders with conscience administer it. Despite this ideal claim, youth leaders are not detached from the political frame where partisanship is a potent force that may affect their performance in both positive and negative trajectories. Most specifically, the youth leaders are crucial performers since they are the only elected officials receiving monthly honorarium equivalent to what the barangay councilors are also receiving. With the raising of the age level requirement, the youth leaders are mature enough to assess their performance. Performance assessment is imperative since they have to give back what is due to the taxpayers who paid taxes that went partly to their monthly honorarium. The results of this study could fill the gaps in existing knowledge about youth partisanship and performance in programs.

2. Review of related literature

In a democratic country, partisanship is inevitable. Consequently, it is a product of freedom of choice and the liberal mind of all citizens to select their political party affiliation. Most partisans support and fight for their political parties. The word partisan came from the word *partei* (party), which refers to the relation to some kind of fighting, warring, or politically active group. In Germany, partisan means party adherent (*parteigänger*) or someone who adheres to a party or front that he/she supports through collaboration and cooperation (Schmitt, 1963). In the United States, partisanship can be an attachment to either the conservative Republicans or the liberal Democrats. Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes (1960) in their book, *The American Voter*, defined partisanship as “both a set of beliefs and feelings that culminate in the sense of psychological attachment to a political party” (p. 23). In the same context, partisanship is an identity strengthened by social affiliations to gender, religious, or ethnic group that generate stability in partisan identification and vote choice (Green, Palmquist, & Schickler, 2002; Huddy & Bankert, 2017).

In considering the two sides of the coin, partisanship has both positive and negative trajectories. Positively, partisanship can place candidates in the election and put them in public office. However, political officials tend to be committed to a platform drafted by the party, and deviation from them might not be possible (Lucardie, 2015). Partisanship is democratic when it cohesively disperses issues of political relevance into a coherent program of the government. It can also be pluralist when it respects the fact that there exists a plurality of legitimate interpretations of the common good (Herman, 2017). Partisans’ acknowledgment of their partiality, meaning, that they cannot speak for the entire group, contributed to democratic politics (Bader & Bonotti, 2014) that regulate rivalry and compromise (Rosenblum, 2008). Partisanship involves efforts to harness political power not for the benefit of one social group amongst several others but for that of the association’s common good. Furthermore, partisanship should be valued both as a vehicle for channeling public justifications as seen from the outside and as an associative practice required to sustain and enhance political commitment among party members. As a form of political friendship, partisanship is characterized by the shared and mutual commitment of the member to political principles and goals constitutive of the activity or party. On the other hand, they also pointed out the negative issues of partisanship, which they called “pathologies”. Partisanship lacks a self-correcting mechanism for dealing with the dysfunctions of too much

conformity to a party. Members of the party may put loyalty to their party above reason and conscience. Similarly, partisans came into conflict with others by avoiding clear pronouncements about where they stand on important political issues (White & Ypi, 2011). When clarity of issues is also present, these issues tend to be constructed aligned to that of the party for fear that deviation might divide the party. Still, in defense of partisanship, Asunka (2016) asserts in his study that the degree of partisan attachments among citizens has important implications for political accountability. This attachment can lead to the proper functioning of democracy and the overall welfare of citizens.

In 1991, the Local Government Code or Republic Act 7160 gave the youth another opportunity to participate in governance from the local level to the national level through the creation of the *Katipunan ng Kabataan (KK)* and the *Sangguniang Kabataan (SK)* directly. In December 1992, the first-ever *Sangguniang Kabataan* election was held wherein 42,000 barangays participated (*SK Operations Manual 2017*). Commissioned research by United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Balanon et al. (2007), looked into the effectiveness of SK councils across the country. Among the key findings of the study was that the SK's performance for the past ten years has been generally weak, in terms of coming up with legislation, promoting the development of young people, submitting reports, and holding consultations with their constituents. On the other hand, the discovered notable strengths of the SK, are tremendous potential to develop the next generation of leaders, engage the youth in the community, and teach them accountability, honesty, and creativity.

In the study of Fernandez and Shaw (2013), the SK councils of Infanta and Makati City spent their funds mostly on sport-related projects like organizing basketball tournaments and the construction and maintenance of basketball courts. Substantial amounts were also allocated to beauty pageants. Projects on livelihood, education and training, health and nutrition, and environmental protection were lacking or even hardly given emphasis. A similar study by Concepcion and Tancinco (2016) showed that SK has moderately implemented its projects. This finding is attributed to the lack of much-needed support from the barangay officials, particularly in terms of budget allocation. Other results include the significant relationship of youth projects, programs, and activities to the source of budget allocation that will contribute to the development of the barangay. Parallel to this study is the study of Malaluan, Baja, Carandang, Vergara, and Tamayo (2014), which assessed the performance of SK officials' performance of duties and functions as mandated by the Local Government Code of 1991. The results showed that the SK officials were able to perform their duties and tasks with a rating of "good". A review of the provisions of the local government code was recommended, and that evaluation is done based on annual and year-end reports. An investigative study on the regulation of the *Sangguniang Kabataan* conducted by Balod and Gono (2010) revealed that there was no proper delineation of tasks among SK's supervising agencies like the National Youth Commission (NYC), the Department of and Interior and Local Government (DILG) who are tasked to oversee and monitor the SKs. The lack of proper monitoring bred dishonest practices such as corruption and bribery. Parallel to this study is by Reyes and Lopez (2014), reported that corrupt practices also existed in the SK National Federation (SKNF). Agency heads pointed out that the SKNF officials are too young and are ill-equipped to carry out their duties.

3. Theoretical basis

Partisanship is a potent stimulus on political behavior in developing and even developed countries. The social identity theory provides a robust foundation for the study of partnership and political involvement (Green et al., 2002; Huddy & Bankert, 2017). Social identity theory

originated from the concept of social identity developed by Henri Tajfel on social factors in perception, belief, and behavior in 1959 (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). This theory posits that social categorization, like nationality, political affiliation, group, etc., which one feels that they belong to a definition of who they are in terms of the defining characteristics of the category. There is a social identity that both describes one's attributes and prescribes one's behavior. The social identity one forms becomes descriptive and prescriptive as to what one thinks, feels, behaves, and acts.

The social identity theory entreats the function of socio-cognitive processes such as categorization and self-enhancement. Categorization is a process of producing group-distinctive stereotypical and normative perceptions and actions. It operates on social and non-social stimuli to bring into focus experiences that are subjectively meaningful to a particular perspective. Meanwhile, self-enhancement refers to beliefs about the nature of relations between the in-group and out-group, which may lead to possibilities of social mobility or social change. It guides the social categorization process such that in-group norms and stereotypes mostly favor the in-group, at the same time, provide a positive light of oneself in relation to others (Hogg et al., 1995).

The underpinnings of the social identity theory are significant in understanding the nature and ability of the party to motivate political action. Partisans take action precisely because they wish to defend or elevate the party's political position (Huddy & Bankert, 2017). The sense of partisan identity that one feels enables one to claim that the failure and success of the party are also their own. Partisanship can arouse emotions that drive party members to political relations and engagements like programs and projects. One's behavior, actions, and performance are motivated and guided by partisanship rooted in social identity.

3. Methodology

This study utilized the descriptive design using the quantitative method of data collection. Using the descriptive design, the study described what is in the field or the need to explain why something occurs. Creswell (2012) argues that a research problem can be best answered by describing a trend in which the researcher seeks to establish the overall tendency of responses from individuals and note how this tendency varies among people.

The purposive survey included all the youth leaders elected as SK chairpersons of the Second District of Negros Oriental in the 2018 election. However, only 153 out of 170 SK chairpersons participated in the study. This number comprises 90% of the target population.

The instrument used in the study is a researcher-made questionnaire, which draws insights from related literature, particularly on the written works of White and Ypi (2011) and Huddy and Bankert (2017). A pilot test was conducted on 30 youth leaders in the first or third district of Negros Oriental. The data was analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha to measure the instrument's reliability. The pilot test results generated a reliability coefficient of 0.88.

The self-administered questionnaire contained questions that asked for the profile of the respondents, the extent of partisanship before and after the election, and performance on the programs implemented to be answered using the 3-point Likert Scale. In the extent of partisanship, the 3-point Likert Scale descriptions are 3 = always (partisanship is always practiced), 2 = often (partisanship is often practiced), and 1 = sometimes (partisanship is sometimes practiced). As to performance on the implemented programs, the 3-point Likert Scale of 3 = high (there is a high performance), 2 = moderate (there is a moderate performance), and 1 = poor (there is a poor performance).

Coordination with the city/municipal mayors was made before the conduct of the study. The respondents were assured that the study was voluntary and non-incriminatory and that the results would benefit them in the future. The respondents can withdraw anytime if they feel uncomfortable with the study. All the names of the respondents were kept confidential.

Hypothesis

H1: There is no significant difference between the extent of partisanship before and after the election

H2: There is no significant difference between the males' and females' extent of partisanship

4. Result and discussion

4.1. Results

Table 1

Profile of the respondents

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Age (yrs)		
19 - 21	44	28.76
22 - 26	108	70.59
Did not indicate	1	0.65
Gender		
Male	96	62.75
Female	57	37.25
Civil Status		
Single	139	90.85
Married	14	9.15
Educational Attainment		
High School Level	3	1.96
High School Graduate	8	5.23
College Level	76	49.67
College Graduate	66	43.14
Monthly Honorarium		
3,001 - 4,000	6	3.92
4,001 - 5,000	13	8.50
5,001 - 6,000	28	18.30
6,001 - 7,000	23	15.03
7.001 - 8,000	18	11.76

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
8,001 - 9,000	13	8.50
9,001 - 10,000	9	5.88
10,001 - 11,000	14	9.15
11,001 - 12,000	6	3.92
12,001 - 13,000	8	5.23
> 13,000	13	8.50
Did not indicate	2	1.31
Political Party		
Independent	114	74.52
NPC	23	15.03
LP	6	3.92
NP	5	3.27
Abante	1	0.65
PDP	1	0.65
Did not indicate	3	1.96

Age. The highest number of respondents is within the age bracket of 22 - 26 years old, constituting 70.59%. This is followed by the 44 respondents, within the age bracket 19 - 21 years old, comprising 28.76%. Only one (1) respondent did not indicate his/her age. The mean age of the respondents is 22 years.

Gender. Ninety-six male respondents comprised 62.75% of the total sample size, while fifty-seven females composed the remaining 37.25%.

Civil Status. One hundred fifty-nine 159 (90.85%) are single, while fourteen (9.15%) are married.

Educational Attainment. Seventy-six, or 49.67% of the respondents, are at the College level. This is followed by 66 or 43.14% who are college graduates. Only 8 or 5.23% are high school graduates, and 3, or 1.96% have reached the high school level.

Monthly honorarium. The highest number of respondents, which is 28 (18.30%), indicated that they received P 5,001 - 6,000 per month for services rendered as the SK chairperson of the barangay. This is followed by 23 (15.03%) who received P 6,001 - 7,000. Eighteen or 11.76% received P 7,001 - 8000. Fourteen (9.15%) of the respondents answered that they received P 10,000 - 11,000. The mean average of the monthly honorarium is P 9,500.

Political party. The highest number of respondents, which comprised 114 (74.51%), answered that they are independent. This is followed by 23 (15.03%), who replied that they belonged to the Nationalist Peoples' Coalition (NPC). Six respondents (3.92%) answered that they belonged to the Liberal Party (LP).

Table 2

The extent of the SK chairpersons' partisanship before and after the last election

Partisanship	Before Election		After Election	
	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
I believe that I can help my political party in performing its duties	2.39	Always	2.48	Always
I believe that I can create harmonious relationships with my party members	2.42	Always	2.41	Always
I want my party to achieve the platforms that were promised during the election campaigns	2.55	Always	2.45	Always
I know my role and function as a member of my party	2.49	Always	2.57	Always
I am aware of my party's values and goals	2.39	Always	2.54	Always
I am willing to support my party's political agenda	2.49	Always	2.56	Always
I am willing to work and coordinate with my other party members	2.57	Always	2.61	Always
I feel that I am obligated to help others in the party	2.37	Always	2.43	Always
I am committed to my party's programs	2.39	Always	2.50	Always
I obey the rules of the party and my party leaders	2.52	Always	2.57	Always
I attend party meetings regularly	2.58	Always	2.64	Always
I participate in the formulation of my party's plans	2.47	Always	2.60	Always
I vote for my party's members	2.51	Always	2.53	Always
I campaign for my party to other voters	2.31	Often	2.38	Always
I will support my party leaders	2.56	Always	2.63	Always
Aggregate Mean	2.47	Always	2.53	Always

Before the election, the youth leaders "always" believed that they could help their political party in performing its duties ($wx = 2.39$) and could create harmonious relationships with party mates ($wx = 2.42$). They want their party to achieve its platforms that were promised during the election campaigns ($wx = 2.55$), know their roles and functions as members of their party ($wx = 2.49$), and are aware of their party's values and goals ($wx = 2.39$). They are also willing to support their party's political agenda ($wx = 2.49$) and to work and coordinate with their party members ($wx = 2.37$). They feel obligated to help others in the party ($wx = 2.37$); committed to their party's programs ($wx = 2.39$); obey the rules of their party and party leaders ($wx = 2.52$); attend party meetings regularly ($wx = 2.58$); participate in the formulation of party's plans ($wx = 2.47$); vote

for their party members ($wx = 2.51$) and support their party leaders ($wx = 2.56$). On the other hand, the item on campaigning for their party to other voters was only answered “often” with a weighted mean of 2.31. In totality, the youth leaders had responded to “always” to the items on partisanship as manifested by the aggregate mean of 2.47, which also implies high partisanship.

Furthermore, the data on the table showed that the youth leaders answered “always” on all items on the extent of partisanship after the election. They believe that they can help their political party perform its duties ($wx = 2.48$) and create harmonious relationships with party mates ($wx = 2.41$). They want their party to achieve its platforms that were promised during the election campaigns ($wx = 2.45$), know their roles and functions as members of their party ($wx = 2.57$), and are aware of their party’s values and goals ($wx = 2.54$). They are also willing to support their party’s political agenda ($wx = 2.56$) and to work and coordinate with their party members ($wx = 2.61$). They feel obligated to help others in the party ($wx = 2.43$); committed to their party’s programs ($wx = 2.50$); obey the rules of their party and party leaders ($wx = 2.57$); attend party meetings regularly ($wx = 2.64$); participate in the formulation of party’s plans ($wx = 2.60$); vote for their party members ($wx = 2.53$); campaign for their party to voters ($wx = 2.38$) and support their party leaders ($wx = 2.56$). Overall, the aggregate mean of 2.53 implied a great extent of partisanship.

To sum up, going by the verbal descriptions, consistency in the respondents’ responses is manifested except on the second to the last item wherein from often, it became always. However, scrutiny of the figures, which serve as the bases of descriptions, the difference is also observable, as made plain in the aggregate weighted mean of both the before and after a set of ratings. Nonetheless, whether the difference is significant or not can be ascertained. Hence, another comparative analysis was performed, shown in the succeeding table.

Table 3

t-Test results comparing the extent of partisanship before and after the election

Extent of Partisanship	n	Mean	t-stat	t-crit	df	p	Decision
Before	153	2.46	3.85	2.14	14	0.001	Reject H1
After	153	2.52					

The table shows that the p-value (0.001) is smaller than $\alpha = 0.05$; hence, we reject the null hypothesis (H1). There is sufficient evidence of a significant difference between the mean scores before and after the election. Likewise, the critical value of the test (2.14) with $\alpha = 0.05$ and $df = 14$, which is 2.14, is also smaller than the test statistic $t = 3.85$. The null hypothesis (H1) is rejected, and there is sufficient evidence of a significant difference between the mean before-election and after-election scores. With the results generated, the same conclusion is reached that there is a significant difference between the extent of partisanship before and after the election.

After the election, the extent of partisanship among youth leaders increased. This observation can be explained based on the effects of having a social identity with the party or group to which one belongs before the election. The social identity theory espoused that social identity motivates people to elevate themselves and the party’s status for political change. The sense of partisan identity that one feels enables one to claim the failure and success of the party as their own. Thus, bringing with them the party identity, they will increase their political standing through engagement in programs and projects. There may also instance that youth leaders rely on their party for political support and assistance during their term of office. Mobilization of resources can be quickly done if one has the help of their party members.

Table 4*t*-Test results comparing males and females' extent of partisanship

The extent of Partisanship	n	Mean	t-stat	t-crit	df	p	Decision
Male	96	2.46	-0.26	2.04	28	0.78	Accept H2
Female	57	2.47					

From another perspective, the mean score of males' and females' extent of partisanship is looked into for comparison using *the t*-Test. In this case, the p-value is 0.78 is larger than alpha = 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis (H2) cannot be rejected. Further, the t- critical value turns out to be 2.04. Since the test statistic of -0.26 is less than the t-critical value, the null hypothesis (H2) cannot be rejected. A decision to accept the null hypothesis (H2) is made, which means there is no significant difference in the extent of partisanship between males and females. This would mean that the males and female youth leaders have a similar degree of partisanship shown during their term of office.

Table 5

Performance of the implemented programs

Programs	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
Sports development	2.61	High
Anti-drug abuse	2.48	High
Environmental protection	2.37	High
Health	2.35	High
Capability building	2.34	High
Climate change	2.22	Moderate
Equitable access to quality education	2.15	Moderate
Gender Sensitivity	2.11	Moderate
Youth employment and livelihood	2.00	Moderate
Aggregate Mean	2.29	Moderate

Performance evaluation of programs is generally conducted to ascertain the successful delivery of services. The performances on the programs focusing on sports development (wx = 2.61), anti-drug abuse (wx = 2.48), environmental protection (wx = 2.37), health (wx = 2.35), and capability building (wx = 2.34) are rated as "high." Meanwhile, the programs on climate change (wx = 2.22), equitable access to education (wx = 2.15), gender sensitivity (wx = 2.11), and youth employment livelihood (wx = 2.0) are rated "moderate".

4.2. Discussion

Inevitably, age signifies the level of maturity aside from the stage of development to where one belongs. The age bracket of 18 - 24 years old is classified as the "core youth" to target programs per age aggregation. Data on gender reveal male domination in youth leadership. Hega (2003) elucidated that although the Philippines had advanced in female political leadership, the political landscape is still male-dominated. This condition runs parallel to the notion that Filipino women are as competent as men in the political field (Lungren & Petrosiute, 2016).

Educational attainment fosters social outcomes and contributes to the active participation of individuals in society (Toscano, Rodrigues, & Costa, 2017). Belonging to Generation Z, youth leaders emphasize educational attainment, and they believe that education is the foundation for their future success and prosperity (Trevino, 2018). In this study, the level of educational attainment is one of the vital trajectories of analysis on the performance of these youth leaders, given the data that most of the respondents are studying in a college or have even earned their bachelor's degrees. Society expects that the higher educational attainment attained, the higher the knowledge level gained by the individual.

As the *ex-officio* member of the Sangguniang Barangay (SB), a youth leader elected as chairperson is entitled to receive a pro-rata honorarium for every session he or she has attended. The rate of honorarium of barangay officials is based on the salary schedule being implemented by the city/municipality which the barangay belongs. Nonetheless, it is noted that honoraria of P 5,001- 6,000 are quite small to compensate for the service given by the youth leaders. The small amount of honorarium might be a factor that contributes to the level of performance, considering the purchasing power it gives and the rising inflation in the country. Similarly, this low incentive may not psychologically motivate them to work hard and perform their various responsibilities.

The majority of the youth leaders have no specific political party, which complies with the provision in the Omnibus Election Code that barangay elections shall be non-partisan and shall be conducted expeditiously and inexpensively. Nonetheless, some of them admitted that they have a group comprising of "kagawads" or youth councilors who run alongside them during the election. This group can be either a loose alliance or a non-partisan party formed based on mutual understanding and support. Apropos, political participation is associational in nature. As a multi-dimensional phenomenon, youth political participation can be channeled through formal political processes, self-organization, or associational nature (Velasco, 2005). The youth leaders engaged in political associational involvement when they formed groups to promote common goals during the election collectively. Furthermore, the anti-dynasty provision in the SK Reform Law may also be a possible reason for youth leaders to have no political party during the election.

Despite being non-partisan, some barangay captains and officials gave their support during the election through indirect and discrete means. The village leaders play an essential role in fostering unity and cohesiveness in the barangay. Still, such support may not warrant a blatant show of partisanship. It could be that the support was not sought but voluntarily given or merely incidental since the data on the political party showed that most of the youth leaders had no political party when they ran during the election. Likewise, a good campaign strategy is vital in winning the election. The house-to-house campaign proved to be an effective strategy since personal appearance accounts for voting behavior. In a psychographic study on voting behavior by the Institute for Political and Electoral Reform in 1995, results revealed that the voters considered what benefits they could get directly from the candidates. Through the house-to-house campaign, the voters felt assured of what benefit they could get from voting for the candidate.

In a democratic society, partisanship can be a product of freedom of choice and the liberal minds of all citizens to choose their political affiliation. To sum things up, going by the verbal descriptions, consistency in the respondents' responses is manifested except on the second to the last item wherein from often, it became always. Partisanship is an identity strengthened by social affiliations in a group or party (Huddy & Bankert, 2017) as a set of beliefs and feelings that culminate in the sense of psychological attachment to a political party (Campbell et al., 1960). Though partisanship in barangay elections is discouraged by Commission on Elections (COMELEC), data showed that partisanship is unavoidable. When youth leaders submitted their certificates of candidacy, some started as an independent or lone candidates, while others formed

a loose association or group having the same platforms and agenda. The latter led to a feeling of attachment and belongingness to a particular group as they campaigned together for votes, shared efforts, and collaborated to win. Hence, what had begun as an informal group became an indirect image of a party with no political branding and formal party registration.

Groups organized by the youth leaders can also be in the form of political friendship characterized by members' shared and mutual commitment to principles and goals. This speaks of an associative practice where informal rules of the group (party) further shape their association leading to unity despite obstacles (White & Ypi, 2011). Subsequently, unity of purpose and direction influence one's beliefs and shape his/her identity. As postulated in the social identity theory by Tajfel (1959), party members think, feel, behave, and act according to the party's attributes, goals, and platforms as they take the party's identity to be their own. Engaging in a party or group before and after the election is cognizant of the fact that man by nature is a political animal. The Greek philosopher Aristotle (1953) spoke of the nature of man as a political animal and as a citizen of the city-state. As a part of the state, the individual has to live with others and abide by its rules. Aristotle further contended that if a man cannot live in the state, he has no need of it or is sufficient for himself, then he must be either a god or a beast. Youth leaders need other fellow youth before and after the election. They continually form mutual relationships with others, getting support and cooperation.

Nalzar (2018) argued that barangay and SK elections as non-partisan are only a perception, imagination, and misnomer. The previous scenario showed politicized elections, as in the case of a particular urbanized city where barangay captains affiliate themselves with high government officials despite the claims of being neutral and independent. He added that the non-partisan character of the barangay had been an illusion since some barangay officials solicit financial support from the municipal, city, and provincial officials and pledge their allegiance to a political party. Nonetheless, in reality, partisanship may be silently practiced and not verbalized by some government officials despite the claim of being non-partisan.

The increase in the chairpersons' ratings on his/her extent of partisanship after the last election can be discussed in the context after the election. As neophytes in the political arena, some youth leaders felt that their knowledge was limited; hence, they had to consult other veteran politicians for advice. Likewise, they also asked their fellow chairpersons for insights, especially if they encountered the same problems and issues. These experiences somehow increased their belongingness and affiliation to a particular group or party. Similarly, some youth leaders faced problems with the release of their budget, thus, pushing them to resort to alternatives to raise funds for their programs. One of these alternatives is the solicitation of financial assistance and donations from municipal, city, and provincial officials. Support from these government officials is also needed in the request for logistics like transportation use of facilities and equipment, sponsorship to game uniforms, prizes, and others. Hence, due to these circumstances, partisanship cannot be avoided since youth leaders have to approach politicians for support and assistance.

Within two years and despite budgetary constraints, some youth leaders could implement their programs. The programs are based on the issues that prevail in their respective barangays, which they formulated in their CBYDP - a three-year rolling plan. The programs implemented are also aligned with the Philippine Youth Development Plan (PYDP) 2017 - 2022 of the National Youth Commission (NYC) (National Youth Commission, 2018). Participation is the key concept embedded in this plan, which means activity among the youth. The youth should be action-oriented and immersed in programs and projects conceptualized and implemented that would translate to proactive engagement in the years to come. Positively, there is an alignment of youth programs and the youth agenda. However, the youth programs could not cover all the youth per age segments

and sub-sectors. The most number of programs on education is on giving of school supplies, tutorials, and feeding of school children. Although these are laudable and commendable, the beneficiaries of these programs do not strictly belong to the youth sector.

Furthermore, programs on environmental protection and climate change adaptation are only short-term. Clean-up drives are done only once a week or even once a month. Although waste management is emphasized, proper waste segregation is still not fully applied. The programs on environmental protection are also done in coordination with the local government units. Due to budgetary limitations, the youth leaders chose to implement programs that do not require expenses or no expenses at all. Volunteerism is also encouraged in clean-up drives where the youth can help clean streets, river banks, coastal areas, and the like.

On the other hand, programs for disaster risk reduction are only minimal. This is similar to the findings of Fernandez and Shaw on youth participation in disaster risk reduction. The youth are not given an active role in risk reduction, and so much more needs to be done to engage young people in building disaster resilient communities (Fernandez & Shaw, 2013). The programs on youth employment and livelihood indicate promises of economic empowerment. Livelihood trainings on t-shirt making, rug making, siopao, and siomai making can enable the youth to gain skills for income-generating ventures. However, the strategic recruitment of participants to these trainings is needed. These trainings should cater to unemployed youth and other sub-sectors of the youth, such as out-of-school youth and youth with special needs. Likewise, entrepreneurial activities and employment enrichment should also be provided to the working youth. Healthy living is vital to the development of the country. It includes exercise, medical and dental attention, reproductive, sexual, and psychosocial health (National Youth Commission, 2018). Youth programs already implemented focused on feeding malnourished children, Zumba, and seminars on health education. Emphasis on pressing health issues among youth people such as reproductive health, mental health, HIV, alcoholism, and drug abuse should have been made in the planning stage of the programs.

Before the SK Reform Law, sports and youth development have been the flagship programs of youth leaders in the barangay. Hence, it is not surprising to note that most programs are focused on sports tournaments. The same findings are in Ponce, Cahiles, Pimping, Jangao, Embornas, and Mendoza (2013) study that most SK programs are on sports, culture, and environment. Fernandez and Shaw (2013) also found out that most SK funds are spent on sports and the maintenance of basketball courts. Outwardly, young people are very interested in engaging in sports since they even clamor for games almost every year in what is popularly known as “*Liga*” or “*Padula*”. Most of these are team games, like basketball and volleyball. New games like Frisbee and Futsal are also introduced but are not yet popular among the youth. Some youth leaders believed that their programs should not be limited to sports. However, they are obligated to hold basketball and volleyball games since these are what the youth in their barangay want.

Capability-building programs shall focus on empowering the youth through leadership programs. The youth leaders are required to attend the mandatory trainings spearheaded by the DILG. Programs on social inclusion and social equity are not evident since only a few implement them. Young people should be given equal opportunities, social security, and protection in all aspects of their development regardless of gender, political beliefs, religion, ethnicity, beliefs, disability, specific needs, and socio-cultural status (National Youth Commission, 2018).

The performances on the programs focusing on sports development, anti-drug abuse, environmental protection, health, and capability building are rated as “high”. These findings run counter to the study of Balanon et al. (2007) that revealed the weak performance of youth leaders in terms of coming up with legislation promoting the development of young people and holding

consultations with their constituents. However, the previous study also found a huge potential, which led it to recommend that the weaknesses be addressed by affecting changes in existing policies. It is also imperative to underscore that these studies are only assessments of SK performance based on their functions embodied in the Local Government Code and not the present SK Reform Law. The functions of SK officials are more precise and explicit in the SK Reform Law than those in the Local Government Code.

When asked on what basis they rate their performance to be high, the youth leaders answered that they knew their programs were successful because of the peoples' positive feedback and customer satisfaction. Through the youth assemblies and constant dialogues, they heard the sentiments and specific needs of their fellow youth in the barangay, which served as guiding posts for their programs. On the other hand, the programs on climate change equitable access to education, gender sensitivity, and youth employment and livelihood are rated "moderate". These findings are consistent with those of Malaluan et al. (2014), which assessed youth leaders' performance to be "good" and recommended reformation rather than the abolition of youth leadership. Similarly, Concepcion and Tancinco's (2016) study showed that youth leaders have moderately implemented their projects. Significant measures have to be undertaken to improve and boost performance, given the fact that each youth leader is only given three years as the term of office.

5. Conclusions & recommendations

At a young age, youth leaders are given the chance to lead their fellow youth. This change is an opportunity to prove their leadership skills in the community. Though not explicitly seen, partisanship is still a part of their journey in politics. The youth leaders are able to perform their duties and responsibilities through the training and the efforts they have exerted. As young leaders, they are beset with challenges that not only hone their leadership capabilities but also prepare them for greater service. If left on their own, the responsibilities that every youth leader will encounter in the course of being a young leader may be too heavy to bear. Hence, the family and community may guide and support them along the way.

Based on the conclusions derived from the study, it is recommended that the youth leaders continue with mandatory training that could further capacitate them in their service. The inclusion of stress and time management training and emphasis on values of integrity and honesty are vital to leadership. Youth leaders should avoid partisanship in order to pave the way for real reforms in the political system of the country. Barangay officials should be aware of the provisions of the SK Reform Law and give them the chance to exercise their functions as independent entities. A mechanism of evaluation and monitoring should be formulated by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the National Youth Commission (NYC) on SK programs. Proper documentation of programs in the form of annual achievement reports and other modes of reporting should be submitted to the DILG and NYC offices. Other research may be conducted to assess the performance of youth leaders using other evaluation measures and another group of respondents. A study on the performance of youth leaders as to their performance on resolutions sponsored and other contributions in the community may also be done.

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