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Out-of-School Youth Civic Engagement in the Microcosm of Society

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Abstract
The youth sector is at the heart of society; they can inspire social change. Out-of-school youth leads the global crisis of declining youth engagement. Past investigations linked the problem to apathy and that the out-of-school youth is an underserved sector without the means to activate their agency effectively. The advent of the 4th Industrial Revolution put in place new platforms where typologies of civic engagement are carried out, and there are external and internal factors that influence these. As the barangay reflects the larger Philippine society, this study examined the typologies of civic engagement that Filipino out-of-school youth participate in both in the traditional and non-traditional settings, the factors that influence their civic engagement participation, and their perceived significance of civic engagement. The study operated on a mixed-method design, which combined quantitative and qualitative research design elements to answer the research questions. The findings show that the modern youth manifested their intense participation in diverse social activities through digital civic engagement; they value civic engagement; they have a comprehensive understanding of what is happening around them; and they are conscious of their role and willing to do what they can to enrich their communities. To enhance the brewing potentials of their transformative character, existing public and private institutional mechanisms, programs, and networks must be strengthened and/or new ones created and explored geared towards fostering a more inclusive and healthy development of the out-of-school youth. The future promise of any nation can be directly measured by the present prospects of its youth.

Keywords: Youth Sector, Out-of-School Youth, Civic Engagement, Digital Civic Engagement, Barangay

1. Introduction

The barangay is a social fabric – a miniature representation of the larger Philippine society. As the primary political unit of the Philippines, its structure permits a more thorough understanding of the civic and political conduct of people belonging to a community. The dynamics and systems result in a comprehensive scope of

interactions that determine individual and collective choices. It influences people (Cruz et al., 2020, p. 14) by yielding organic dialog, feedback, and intervention in reflecting larger-scale desires and aspirations (Adorable, 1979, p. 47). The youth sector is at the heart of this society, which has a historical association with socio-political mass movements (Samonte, 1970, p. 161; Velasco, 2005, p. 80). They transpire social change by studying the conditions of marginalized sectors by building linkages, exchanging ideas, confronting issues, and bridging differences to empower society (Labor, 2018). They also form the largest population in terms of age demographic, making them a driving force regardless of their engagement and participation.

1.1 Definition of Out-of-School Youth

Youth is defined as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, according to the United Nations. On the other hand, the Philippine Statistics Authority (2015) described out-of-school youth as persons aged 15 to 24 years who are not attending school, have not finished any college or post-secondary course, and are not working. Generally, in the Philippines, except the Cordillera Administrative Region, there is 14.5% to 20.4% of youths in the country fall under the category of out-of-school youth (PSA, 2013).

1.2 Significance of Youth in the Community

Several papers established youth cognizance, critical thinking, progressive articulation, and permeability to mobilizations (Samonte, 1970; Velasco, 2005, p. 80; Leano, 2019; Cabo, 2018; Lanuza, 2015, p. 99). In The Youth in Nation-Building Act, youth participation in national development was mandated (*'Republic Act 8044,'* n.d.), defining the youth as people aged 15 to 30 – a critical age wherein the youth form their own identity, philosophy, and personality into adulthood (Damon, 2009; Pontes et al., 2017). Faulkner (2021, p. 6) asserted the complexity of this period, posing those patterns, causes, and reasons, or the lack thereof, shift constantly. The life-cycle effect (Smith, 2017), which transpires as a mark of aging, theorizes this process by citing how psychological and physical changes result in renewed beliefs and behaviors. It goes hand-in-hand with the period effect (Erkulwater, 2012), which focuses on the influence of social, historical, and cultural environments. But Kuperminc et al. (2004) argued that youth agency is beyond the sense of self and community. The theory of nigrescence (Cross, 2016; Duncan, 2010) surmised the politicization of all identities, which begins with a stigmatized perception of the self, ushering withdrawal and disinterest from society and its issues, confronting negative feelings, awakening the self to their unequal position in society; interpretation of oppressive experiences leading to a changed identity and newly absorbed ideology; seeking a model for orientation as a political subject once attachment to personal meaning is lost; and, internalization of the new identity, aligning goal-oriented action to collective values and self-efficacy.

1.3 Observed Problems

It is crucial to address a few matters first before proceeding further. First, principal factors leading to the downward trend are observed mainly in Western democracies where the youth is privileged with quality socioeconomic rights and benefits. Lower stakes are tied to the out-of-school status, so it is rarely socially isolating, stigmatized, or afflicted by culture shock (Roberts et al., 1982, p. 2). This contrasts with the shared lack of appreciation, validation, or encouragement experienced by the Filipino urban and rural youth; attributed to the decline in Filipino youth participation are self-related factors such as agency, knowledge, time, and nature of the political activity (Sta. Maria & Diestro Jr., 2009, p. 298).

Second, these factors clash with alternative ways people act nowadays (Adler & Goggin, 2005, p. 249; Abdullah et al., 2021, p. 848). Recent studies have broken down two typologies of civic engagement, which involve global, national, or local-level practices centered on community building (Velasco, 2005; Brady et al., 2020): 'traditional' which generally comprises voting, volunteering, electoral campaigning, and collaboration, community service, activism, and organizational mobilizations (Lanuza, 2015; Leano, 2019); and 'non-traditional' which exhibits lawful, sometimes digital, but unconservative methods such as protests, boycotts,

creation and dissemination of propaganda, and radical campaigning (Samonte, 1970; Sta. Maria & Diestro Jr., 2009; Warren et al., 2014).

Third, past studies examine the youth's relationship with politics from an adult-centered viewpoint without considering their lived situations and contradictions (Malafaia et al., 2021). Declining engagement in the sector is also primarily observed in the behavior, belief, and lifestyle of those with access to education or employment (Edgerton, 1971; Sta. Maria & Diestro, Jr., 2009; Pontes et al., 2017) or is limited only to electoral processes (Cabo, 2018; Cruz et al., 2020; Abdullah et al., 2021). Consequently, new forms of civic engagement are frequently poorly categorized, creating inconsistencies within political narratives, while youth agency is also invalidated, undocumented, and tends to fade from the political radar.

Fourth, there is a rampant socioeconomic and socio-political disservice to the youth (Malafaia et al., 2021). For example, education is a pillar of civil society, boosting social capital and playing an essential role in ensuring the development of human potential and conscious awareness (Campbell, 2006, p. 25; Sears & Hyslop-Margison, 2007, Pontes et al., 2017). But the education crisis disables the youth from realizing their transformative character, and other institutional mechanisms do not maximize the opportunity to program the youth toward active engagement.

What needs to be done is to construct an all-around engagement routine that the out-of-school youth can value in being critically informed, active, and committed. The positive youth development theory (Burkhard et al., 2020) offers a strengths-based perspective that sees the youth as a resource to be developed. This is a key to cultivating active and engaged citizenship; skills, knowledge, personal and social history, and assets must be considered in youth programming. Experiential conditions, opportunities, and support the out-of-school youth look forward to, and the cumulative weight of knowledge and effort that contribute to their position as political subjects should then be considered in the analysis (Aspiras & Aspiras, 2021).

1.4 Research Problem

This study aimed to examine out-of-school youth civic engagement in the barangay to:

(1) Determine the typologies of civic engagement the out-of-school youth participates in;
(2) The factors that influence their civic engagement participation; and
(3) Why civic engagement matters to them.

2. Method

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The study's conceptual framework is patterned around a gear model with revolving cogs. In line with this study, the leading actors are the Out of School Youth (dependent variable) from the selected rural areas as they perform and participate in diverse social activities through media that can be classified as traditional (mediator variable) or digital (mediator variable). These activities prompt engagement which is inherently influenced by socioeconomic status, engagement spaces, social environment, education, youth-adult cooperation, and access to information as the key factors (independent variable). Wherefore they can bestow on the development of society and the empowerment of the local and national community.
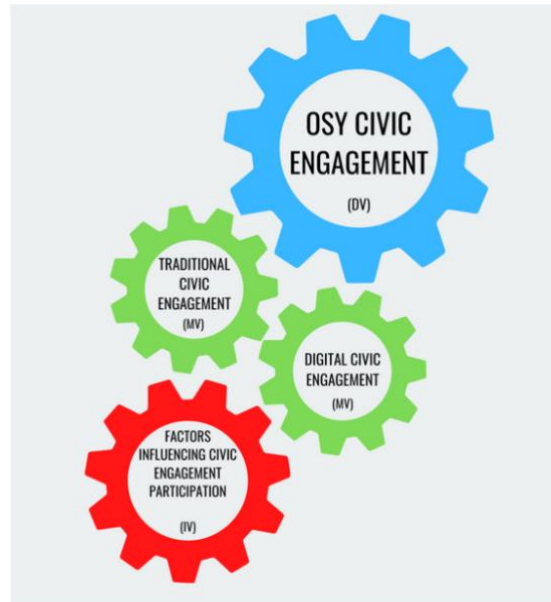
Figure 1: Gear Model

2.1 Participants

The respondents of the study were 70 individuals aged 15 to 24 years old identified as out-of-school youth. All respondents were residents of three rural provinces in Luzon: Abra, Aurora, and Pangasinan. Ten respondents each were selected from seven barangays, such as (a) Barangay Buli, La Paz, Abra; (b) Barangay Poblacion East, Bautista, Pangasinan; (c) Barangay Tamaro, Bayambang, Pangasinan; (d) Barangay Anis, Laoac, Pangasinan; (e) Barangay Carmay East, Rosales, Pangasinan; (f) Barangay Puelay, Villasis, Pangasinan; and, (g) Barangay Poblacion Zone 2, Dinalungan, Aurora. All respondents were also individually provided a copy of the questionnaire.

2.2 Sampling Procedure

Convenience sampling was employed as the sampling procedure to select desirable respondents due to the unavailability of comprehensive statistical data on the out-of-school youth population in the Philippines. It is a non-probability sampling technique that allows the random selection of respondents as data sources with no additional limits (Lavrakas, 2008). Moreover, it provides an equal and fair sample, leading to reliable data collection (Sauders et al., 2018, as cited in Business Research Methodology). Convenience sampling does not define any inclusion criteria for respondent selection, but the researchers of the study employed three general criteria: (a) out-of-school youth status; (b) age; and (c) area of residency.

2.3 Research Instruments

The study utilized a combined three-part questionnaire checklist and survey as the research instrument to gather quantitative and qualitative data from the respondents. A questionnaire checklist permits researchers to collect quantitative information about the respondents' attitudes, experiences, and opinions through items following a fixed scheme (Lavrakas, 2008). A survey enables to reveal views, experiences, narratives, or accounts through open-ended questions to produce long-form answers, which pull in profound and diverse feedback from the respondents (Ponto, 2015). The researchers designed the questionnaire checklist and survey from scratch based on the study's specific research questions.

Part I of the questionnaire collected the demographic profile of each participant, including their name, age, sex, area of residency, and highest educational attainment. However, the study only utilized the analysis of the

respondents' answers on the sections of age, residence, and educational background. Names were optional and were merely operated as a marker to avoid confusion about the data collected.

Part II of the questionnaire employed the variable checklist instrument. Part II-A focused on typologies of civic engagement, delineated into two sections: digital and traditional. Each section was given its respective definitions, and each had seven-item statements. The respondents indicated their level of agreement with statements on a 4-point Likert scale running from "never" to "always." An example item is "I react to materials related to social and political issues others have posted or shared on my timeline." Part II-B focused on the factors influencing civic engagement participation, delineated into six factors, each with five corresponding examples. The respondents distinguished all the factors influencing them by ticking all that applied. An example item is "I have access to socioeconomic conditions such as," which choices included "income or occupation."

Part III of the questionnaire employed a survey instrument by only posing a short essay question that the respondents could answer in two sentences, focusing on civic engagement's significance to the out-of-school youth and their communities. The respondents indicated their feedback and insight by answering why civic engagement among out-of-school youth matters to them and their community.

2.4 Research Design

The study operated on a mixed-method design, which combined quantitative and qualitative research design elements to answer the research questions. The concurrent triangulation method was explicitly employed to validate the results generated by each research instrument. It allows researchers to collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously before tabulation into a numerical form along a continuum (Kroll & Neri, 2009).

2.5 Data Collection Method

The researchers coordinated with the Sangguniang Kabataan councils of the target barangays. Questionnaire distribution and data collection were performed by select researchers face-to-face, ensuring that everyone observed all health protocols of respective local government units and university regulations. The researchers first sought the respondents' consent for participation, and those who consented were assured of confidentiality. The respondent participants were briefed about the nature of the study and that the questionnaire would only take a maximum of ten minutes to complete. They were assisted by select researchers throughout the entire answering procedure and were guided accordingly in order to resolve their concerns immediately if they encountered any difficulties on certain portions.

The terms used in the questionnaire were given a brief definition to make them basic and easy to understand and were also constructed with simple phrasing for the respondents' convenience. For example, Digital Civic Engagement in Part II-A of the questionnaire was given a definition of "online forms and virtual practice of civic engagement." All respondents were subjected to the same degree of assistance and were permitted to use the dialect they were most comfortable with to verbalize their insights.

2.6 Data Analysis

Collected data were subjected to the following statistical and non-statistical measures:

Weighted Mean. The researchers employed the weighted mean to assess the respondents' preference as a typology. It combines the means of two or more groups of different sizes, taking the size of the groups into account when computing the overall or grand mean (Vogt, 2005). Each data point in a set was multiplied by a value determined by whatever attribute contributed to the data point in a weighted mean (D. Clark-Carter, 2010).

The verbal descriptions of the weighted mean used for digital and traditional civic engagement typologies were as follows: [1.00 - 1.74] as "never" that has the operational definition of an event that at no time have it ever occurred; [1.75 - 2.49] as "rarely," not often or the occurrence is seldom; [2.50 - 3.24] as "sometimes," occasionally or happened rather than all of the time and; [3.25 - 4.00] as "always," at all times or on all occasions.

Percentage Frequency Distribution. The researchers employed the percentage frequency distribution to determine the factors that influence the civic engagement participation of the respondents. It displays data that specifies the percentage of observations existing for each data point (Lavrakas, 2008) and helps express a relative estimation of how many people fall into a particular category or how many instances an occurrence happens.

Thematic Analysis. The researchers applied thematic analysis to dissect the respondents' insight and identify patterns in meaning concerning how they value civic engagement for themselves and their communities. It is a tool that determines, recalls, and reports recurrent patterns by searching a data set and describing data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It also includes interpreting codes, constructing themes, and integrating data coding into findings (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

2.7 Data Reliability

All distributed and collected questionnaire checklists were also subjected to reliability testing using Spearman's Rank-order Correlation with an interval of one week in a test-retest method to ensure that the instruments were accurate and reliable for data collection.

Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation. The researchers employed Spearman's Rank-order Correlation, a non-parametric test to determine the strength of a relationship between two variables, with $[r = 1]$ indicating a perfect positive correlation and $[r = -1]$ showing a perfect negative correlation, specifically, in Part II-A of the research questionnaire that utilized a Likert scale.

The calculation showed that there is a very strong positive correlation between the results from survey one and survey 2, which is statistically significant and reliable with a value of coefficient (Rs) of 0.93182 (refer to Appendix B).

2.8 Research Ethics

The researchers found no potential adverse cause or effect after carefully examining if the design or the procedure would endanger the people involved before the beginning of the study and preparing to prevent or mitigate such instances. The respondents were fully informed about the study's objectives, methods, and how their data will be collected and processed for scholarly purposes. The researchers also ensured confidentiality and data privacy protection per University regulations and the Data Privacy Act of 2012, including data stemming. The researchers also sought to safeguard the well-being of all respondents and their data, including those that may potentially be deemed sensitively related to race, ethnicity, religion, politics, health, or sexual orientation. The researchers further collected no supplementary data.

2.9 Research Value-Freeness

The study's design and the procedure are value-neutral; they did not imply the superiority of any divergent ethical positions. The researchers held their personal, political, and religious values from interfering with the research process, not to tolerate personal biases, prior assumptions, and emotional or personal involvement that could alter the study's findings or endanger the researchers and respondents alike.

3. Findings

3.1 Comparison Between Digital and Traditional Typologies

Table 1: Digital and Traditional Civic Engagement Typologies

Typology	Item Statement	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	Average Weighted Mean	Average Verbal Description
DE1	I react to materials related to social and political issues others have posted or shared on my timeline.	2.457	Rarely		
DE2	I repost or share content or material related to social and political issues.	2.071	Rarely		
DE3	I post my own opinion, comment, or insight on social and political issues.	2.143	Rarely		
DE4	I include links to stories and articles about social and political issues for others to read.	1.871	Rarely		
DE5	Encourage others to take action on political or social issues that are important to you.	2.228	Rarely		
DE6	**I encourage other people to vote.**	**2.528**	**Sometimes**		
DE7	I belong to a group that is involved in social and political issues, which works to advance a cause.	1.928	Rarely	**2.175**	**Rarely**
TE1	I attend meetings on school, community, local, and regional or national affairs.	2.214	Rarely		
TE2	**I work with fellow citizens to solve a problem in our community.**	**2.386**	**Rarely**		
TE3	I am an active member of a group that tries to influence public policy or government.	1.843	Rarely		
TE4	I attend political campaigns or rallies.	1.800	Rarely		
TE5	I work or volunteer for a political party or candidate.	2.014	Rarely		
TE6	I contact government officials(s) about issues that are important to me – online and offline.	2.243	Rarely		
TE7	I sign petitions on issues that are important to me – digitally or on paper.	1.928	Rarely	2.061	Rarely

*(Note. Digital Civic Engagement is abbreviated as **DE** and Traditional Civic Engagement as **TE**.)*

Table 1 exhibits the comparison between digital and traditional typologies of civic engagement. The respondents were instructed to check which practices in both digital and traditional typologies of civic engagement they engage in or are familiar with. 'Rarely' is the most common verbal description between the two typologies, congruing with thirteen other item statements. Only DE6 emerged with a 'sometimes' verbal description, which

is above average. The comparison also depicted that the respondents lean more towards digital civic engagement activities, with a 2.175 average weighted mean than traditional civic engagement, with only a 2.061 average weighted mean, which has TE2 as its highest weighted mean with 2.386 also a 'rarely' verbal description.

3.2 Factors that Influence Civic Engagement Participation

Table 2: Factors Influencing Civic Engagement Participation

Factors			Frequency		Percentage
F1	I have access to socioeconomic conditions such as…	1. Income / Occupation	33	145	17.77%
		2. Healthcare	38		
		3. Government Support / Subsidiary	33		
		4. Basic Education	41		
		5. Others	0		
F2	I learn from engagement in spaces such as…	1. LGU Facilities	25	149	18.26%
		2. School / Educational Facilities	35		
		3. Household / Family Structure	42		
		4. Social Media and the Internet	47		
		5. Others	0		
F3	**I am influenced by my social environment, such as…**	**1. Family / Neighborhood / Peer Group**	**58**	**156**	**19.12%**
		2. Academic Community / School	29		
		3. Religious Community	30		
		4. Barangay Projects	39		
		5. Others	0		
F4	I have obtained a form of education such as…	1. Formal Education	65	113	13.85%
		2. Alternative Learning System or ALS	9		
		3. Non-Formal Education	21		
		4. Home Schooling / Self-Study	18		
		5. Others	0		
F5	I have participated in youth-adult partnership projects such as…	1. Electoral Activities	23	112	13.72%
		2. Voluntary and Charitable Works	22		
		3. Sports and Fitness Programs	43		
		4. Youth Training / Seminar Programs	24		
		5. Others	0		
F6	I have access to information such as…	1. Public Library	12	141	17.28%
		2. Print Media	22		
		3. Broadcast Media	46		
		4. Digital Media	61		
		5. Others	0		
Total			816	816	100%

*(Note. Factors are abbreviated as **F**.)*

Table 2 presents the factors which influence civic engagement participation. The respondents were instructed to check all which apply as influential factors in their civic engagement participation as out-of-school youth. Of six factors, each with five examples, F3.1 was the most influential, with 19.12 percent. It is followed by F2.4 at 18.26 percent, F1.4 at 17.77 percent, F6.4 at 17.28 percent, F4.1 at 13.85 percent, and F5.43 at 13.72 percent.

3.3 Justifications and Motivations Behind Civic Engagement

Table 3: Identified Key Themes on Civic Engagement Participation Significance to Self and Community

	Themes	Tally[a]	Rank
T1	**Community inclusion, representation, and participation**	**40**	**1**
T2	Sociopolitical consciousness and action	39	2
T3	Self-empowerment to cultivate social change	36	3
T4	Sense of belonging in an ever-changing society	8	6
T5	Spirit of civic unity and cooperation	24	5
T6	Patriotism, good citizenship, and national development	26	4
T7	None	6	7

*(Note. Themes are abbreviated as **T**. Tally of respondents are abbreviated as **R**.)*

The total sum of the distinct key themes identified from the collected data set of all 70 respondents.

Table 3 illustrates the justifications and motivations behind civic engagement participation. The respondents were asked to provide a two-sentence answer on why civic engagement participation is essential to them and their community. Of 70 respondents, seven did not provide feedback. Among 63 respondents, T1 emerged to have substantial significance with 40 overall counts.

4. Discussion

4.1 On Digital and Traditional Typologies of Civic Engagement

From the results of Table 1, the respondents prefer digital civic engagement. Modern youth civic actions link to frequent social media use, and such consumption is still increasing (Lee et al., 2012, p. 686; Zyad, 2021). It had a relatively more significant impact on youth civic engagement because expressing concerns and opinions to probe issues happens in real time. The youth sector finds it more appealing as it does not confine youth participation to a single array of actions or timeframe (Cabo, 2018, p. 262). Virtually encouraging other people to participate in the electoral process (DE6) is the most common practice. This is followed by reacting to issues shared on their timeline (DE1), encouraging others to take action on issues that affect them (DE5), vocalizing an insight (DE3), reposting digestible content or material for others (DE2), joining organizations that advance a good cause (DE7), and hyperlinking articles (DE4). The results concur that the youth have a comprehensive understanding of what is happening around them and are conscious of their role in society, their environment, what issues are materializing, and how to resolve them (Lanuza, 2015; Labor, 2018; Leano, 2019).

Secondary are traditional engagement practices, which conform to the adult-centric bias of what youth participation should take form. Working with members to solve community problems (TE2) is the most common traditional practice observed by the respondents. Kahne et al. (2008) posited that socialization through social networks effectively reinforces community norms and values. It enhances trust in leaders and institutions representing the people, which may explain why the respondents have also considered contacting their respective local government officials (TE6). The results also implied that the respondents associate themselves with their schools and neighborhoods as they attend caucuses about the school, community, local, regional, and national affairs (TE1), where reciprocity and concern, grounded on the commitment to civic participation, are raised collectively. Other respondents indicated that they work or volunteer for a political party or candidate (TE5), sign petitions on issues important to them (TE7), and self-mobilize as active members of groups and organizations influencing public policy or government (TE3). These interactions display social capital, and such exposure orients people on how to behave in a more socially committed manner to advance specific agendas. An

example of this is how the respondents shared they are also open to attending political campaigns and rallies (TE4), despite being the least active practice observed. These results affirm that the youth can inspire social change by connecting with their networks, exchanging ideas, working collectively to confront issues, and learning about people's differences and struggles to empower society (Labor, 2018).

The study found that digital civic engagement is considered the preferred medium and typology for out-of-school youth. It can be said that technological advancement paved the way for an additional means of being socially and politically aware and active through online platforms such as social media. People now, particularly the youth, are more expressive in sharing their thoughts or opinions on various issues online than in traditional civic engagement.

4.1.1 Preferred Medium of Typology

The study determined that digital civic engagement is considered the preferred medium and typology for out-of-school youth, with an average weighted mean score of 2.175, particularly item six: "I encourage people to vote." It can be said that technological advancement paved the way for an additional means of being socially and politically aware and active through online platforms such as social media. People now, particularly the youth, are more expressive in sharing their thoughts or opinions on various issues on the internet compared to traditional civic engagement. Furthermore, the researchers also determined the most common factor influencing OSY's civic engagement—social environment (peers and relatives) with a score of 19.12%; and the least factor was youth-adult partnership with a score of 13.72%.

The findings of this study indicate that while the social environment can inspire and strengthen the youth to move into the world and that engaging in various spaces creates meaningful relationships and networks that demonstrate good collaborative and reciprocal acts, socio-economic conditions provide frameworks that either aid or jeopardize the chances of the youth to commit to a reasonable and transformative engagement, access to information is encouraged but restricted through unequal material conditions, education alone is not as heavily persuasive when it comes to mobilizing the youth, and youth-adult partnership is failing to ground the essence of civic engagement. Given these conditions, the challenge lies in improving the individual and structural dimensions externally and internally influencing the Filipino out-of-school youth.

4.2 On Factors Influencing Civic Engagement Participation

The results of Table 2 corroborate the hypothesis that there are various factors influencing the civic engagement of the out-of-school youth – some more influential than others – and they all must be taken into account to properly gain a thorough understanding of the declining youth participation crisis.

The social environment (F3) is noted as the most influential factor; the family, neighborhood, and peer group (F3.5) are underscored as the most effective circle. Being primary agents where behaviors can be observed and modeled during a person's developmental years, they provide a stimulus that triggers the youth to become engaged (Salamon, 2009). Academic institutions (F3.2), religious structures (F3.3), and local government units (F3.4) are also socializing mechanisms that support youth development. Quality education imbued with nationalism, emphatic religious beliefs and feelings, and comprehensive government intervention and interaction have a strong correlation with youth volunteerism and aid in building sensible civic development (Kirby, Marcelo & Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2009; Lay, Gimpel & Schuknecht, 2003; Fromme & Reeve, 2012).

However, even though the family is an effective social environment, engagement in spaces (F2) is the preferred platform for learning. The respondents view social media and the internet (F2.4) as the most comfortable space they can engage in and learn from, reestablishing the observation of Lenzi et al. (2016) that online information consumption wields a strong influence on civic engagement participation. Households (F2.3), educational institutions (F2.2), and local government facilities (F2.1) only come second. These factors are substantiated further by socioeconomic conditions (F1), such as basic education (F1.4), government support (F1.3), healthcare (F1.2), and income or occupation (F1.1). Access to information (F6) does fall much behind. Digital media such

as movies, documentaries, sites, and social media (F6.4); broadcast media such as television or radio (F6.3); print media such as newspapers, magazines, billboards, and posters (F6.2); and public libraries (F6.1), respectively, are outlets by which the respondents admitted they source information from to become well-informed.

The respondents also conveyed that their educational background affects their civic engagement, but education (F4) is only second to the last of all the factors. It can be concluded that the respondents have experienced formal education (F4.1), which is in contrast to the stereotype that they are uneducated. Some of the respondents shared that they have had informal education (F4.3) or technical-vocational training, were homeschooled (F4.4), or underwent the alternative learning system or ALS (F4.2). Youth-adult partnerships (F5) lag behind with voluntary and charitable works (F5.2), such as feeding programs and donation drives, indicated as least effective. Neither electoral activities (F5.1) nor youth training and seminars (F5.4), which center on civic and political involvement, work. What the respondents were overwhelmingly familiar with were barangay-sponsored sports and fitness programs (F5.3).

In the end, the most common factor influencing OSY's civic engagement—was social environment (peers and relatives), and the least factor was a youth-adult partnership. The findings of this study indicate that while the social environment can inspire and strengthen the youth to move into the world and that engaging in various spaces creates meaningful relationships and networks that demonstrate good collaborative and reciprocal acts, socioeconomic conditions provide frameworks that either aid or jeopardize the chances of the youth to commit to a reasonable and transformative engagement, access to information is encouraged but restricted through unequal material conditions, education alone is not as heavily persuasive when it comes to mobilizing the youth, and youth-adult partnership is failing to ground the essence of civic engagement. Given these conditions, the challenge lies in improving the individual and structural dimensions externally and internally influencing the Filipino out-of-school youth.

4.3 On the Significance of Civic Engagement

Ultimately, the study identified six themes that highlight the importance of civic engagement among out-of-school youth for self and community: community inclusion, representation, participation, sociopolitical consciousness, self-empowerment, belonging to an ever-changing society, civic unity, and patriotism. Out-of-school youth view civic engagement as a sense of responsibility and a way to contribute significantly to the community. To foster civic engagement, both youth and adults must be comfortable and determined to reflect on goals and resources. Teaching youth how to be engaged should not be limited to classrooms and family discussions. Burkhard et al.'s (2020) positive youth development theory suggests that youth programming should encompass wider social and economic concerns, focusing on the development path and the ability to change. This can only happen if society recognizes out-of-school youth's transformative character, social networks cease to stigmatize the sector, and the national government and local government units frame strengths-based programs for the youth sector's benefit.

4.3.1 Sense of Belonging in an Ever-Changing Society

Few respondents underscored that being an out-of-school youth makes them feel excluded from the happenings of society. Feelings of not belonging anywhere or identifying with anyone emerge, yet they cannot detach themselves from their communities. If the youth is inherently a base of the country's social class, if they are also voters, exclusion should be eradicated. The respondents also expressed that the continuous modernization of society also pressures them into either finishing school or entering the workforce because those who do not have as much are the most affected in society. A respondent also strongly conveyed that civic issues also matter to those who do not have a desirable upbringing, educational background, or decent lifestyle.

4.3.2 Spirit of Civic Unity and Cooperation

There are a number of respondents who acknowledged that there is a moral aspect behind having to respond to the needs of fellow citizens. Civic unity and cooperation promote moral development, and it is beyond the confines of just studies or self-empowerment.

4.3.3 Patriotism, Good Citizenship, and National Development

Community-building and nation-building are goals that the respondents were able to highlight. It was accentuated that collective action toward social change and justice can make communities safer for all. But poverty trumps the youth's brewing potential, and it must be eradicated, along with crimes such as violence and addiction. Conflict resolution was also stressed in the contribution to the country's development.

4.4 Significance of Civic Engagement Among Out-of-School Youth

As per the key themes drawn from the interview process, the study determined six themes that emerged as a result of why civic engagement among out-of-school youth matters to self and community, which are arranged according to tally and ranking: community inclusion, representation, and participation; sociopolitical consciousness and action; self-empowerment to cultivate social change; sense of belonging to an ever-changing society: spirit of civic unity and cooperation; and patriotism, good citizenship, and national development. The study found that out-of-school youth think that civic engagement matters primarily as a sense of responsibility and a way to contribute to something significant to the community.

According to Brabant & Braid (2009, p. 74), youth and adults alike must become comfortable and determined in undertaking the task of continuous reflection on goals and resources. Civic engagement should be for the long-term benefit of society and there is a need for good role models to exemplify social transformation. But teaching the youth how to be engaged should not be bounded within classrooms and family table talks alone (Sta. Maria et al., 2009; Andolina et al., 2001, p. 278). The youth must be provided with the social conditions and material resources to express their agency and they must be allowed to explore, piloted by principles and values, and validated by the social world as they grow into the knowledge so that they may establish their impact with a certain level of maturity when addressing social and moral problems (Sta. Maria et al., 2009, p. 15).

Burkhard et al.'s (2020) positive youth development theory and perspective allow space for the major stakeholder in shaping a country's present and future. Instead of looking into the negative characteristics of being an out-of-school youth, it proposes that youth programming must encompass issues of wider social and economic concerns. Focusing on the development path and the ability to change become fundamental in fostering the healthy development of civil society. This can only happen if the larger society realizes the out-of-school youth's transformative characterization; if social networks cease to antagonize and stigmatize the sector; and if the national government and its local government units frame strengths-based programs geared for the benefit of the youth sector.

5. Conclusion

Today, there are 1.2 billion young people aged 15 to 24 years, accounting for 16 percent of the global population of 8 billion, or one out of every six people worldwide. With certainty, the youth can be a positive force for development when provided with the knowledge and opportunities they need to thrive. Ideally, young people should acquire the education and skills needed to contribute to a productive economy, and they need access to a job market that can absorb them into its labor force. Without education, these young people have limited job opportunities and are prone to illicit activities (UNESCO Institute of Statistics [UIS], 2021). The influence transcends individual lives; it influences societies by impeding their social development. As observed by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015), among the greatest challenges facing many countries today are inadequate human capital investment and high unemployment rates among the youth.

While their place in the local, national, and global society is indispensable, they remain permeable to the social and material inequalities of this world. These sway their identities, worldviews, and behaviors, which contribute significantly to their socio-political activities as adults. The case of the out-of-school youth is no exemption, and this can be inferred from the out-of-school youth's declining civic engagement participation. For this reason, civic engagement is vital to developing the youth's awareness, their sense of belonging in society, their value for social responsibility, eagerness to improve and make a difference in their communities, and the culmination of civic duty. Only then can we consider the inclusivity of the youth as a firm sector of society capable of playing their role as well-situated civil society actors.

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