

Research Article

Mapping Youth Council Health-Related Initiatives: Basis for the Creation of Sustainable Health Development Program

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Abstract: The Sanggunian Kabataan (SK) or Youth Council is where the voice of the youth can be heard and can also participate in the local governance, and their projects and programs must align with the nine centers of participation, especially the health aspect. The study aims to identify the projects and programs of selected SK barangays and Local Government Units, as well as their challenges in implementing the health-related program to their constituents. The study utilizes a qualitative-descriptive research design using document analysis. The study shows that the various programs proposed by the selected SK barangay and Local Government Unit are relevant to education, awareness, and training of the youth to prevent as well as to spearhead the information to other youth, especially in the issues of HIV and AIDS, mental health, illegal drug use, and teenage pregnancy. Its effectiveness also has challenges such as priorities between school or work, or youth leader, lack of facilities, budget, and partnership, and the lack of information dissemination. The researcher recommends revisiting the local youth development plan, and this study will be considered as one of their basis in creating health-related programs, especially in Dumlog, Talisay City, Cebu. An in-depth study to be published that analyzes and evaluates the effect of different sources, messages, and target audiences on the determinants of uptake of public health evidence for prevention in the Philippine barangays.

Keywords: Development Program, Health, Integrative Review, Sustainability, and Youth Council

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1. Introduction

"Youth is the hope of the nation", a saying from Dr. Jose Rizal, a Philippine national hero, that emphasizes the role of youth for nation-building. Youth is the backbone of the nation. From that mantra, the youth are participating in various activities that can help the community. In the global perspective, many youths are socially aware and they participate in social engagements, such as Greta Thunberg and Xiuhtezcatl Martinez, who advocate for climate action and for the aspect of quality education. Malala Yousafzai and Nicholas Lowinger are advocating for it and helping many youths to acquire quality and accessible education. For social justice, Jaylen Arnold is one of the advocates of an anti-bullying campaign and shares his experiences of bullying and encourages his peers to practice tolerance, encourage self-worth, and speak out. In science and technology, Gitanjali Rao was recognized for the innovation she made as well as for campaigning for anti-bullying and climate action. Lastly, Avi Schiffman created a website to provide information about COVID-19, especially on its beginnings [1,2,3,4,5,6,7]

In the same vein, the Department of Health [8] in the Philippines adhered that one's health is one's wealth, and one's present health is the key to a bright and healthy future. Therefore, everyone is entitled to be healthy and health-literate through the department's programs, as it strives to help everyone achieve this ambitious goal. The study by [9] provides social work practitioners with an understanding of the importance of enabling youth voices and linking youth personal and collective well-being with sustainable development.

Furthermore, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended strengthening the capacity of organizations to engage safely, effectively, and meaningfully in ways that enable young people to augment their knowledge and to lead on health and rights [10].

On the other hand, youth are more socially aware since the explosion of social media and social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, X, and the like are accessible to the youth, and many of them would post their sentiments about a socio-political issue. Social issue awareness is one of the advocacies of the youth to solve [11]. For instance, the issue about the rise of cases of HIV and AIDS among youth allows the youth to provide a solution through education and a frequent reminder to youths who are sexually active. In addition, to curb the level of people infected, conduct seminars in every locality and provide contraceptives and protection. However, in the Philippines, there is still a stigma surrounding the victim, and it keeps haunting them. It is the reason why many SKs would give a program to every youth in the barangay and even distribute the correct information about HIV and AIDS through pamphlets and flyers, and even post it on their official social media sites, since it is part of the nine centers of participation, which is the health.

Youth now are more empowered, and they really know their rights and privileges [12]. With the information they gain, it makes they are empowered and undecivable. Many youth organizations are now present globally with their respective purpose, and these organizations are from non-government organizations or from the religious sector, created at school, or formed by the government. Many of the youth received training and seminars given by different sectors to equip them as soon they can become leaders in the community. In the future, they can lead their localities or any groups with competence and the heart of serving the people wholeheartedly. On the other hand, the study of [13] revealed that despite the efforts made by youth in empowering each other, there are still lapses that discourage other youth to be empowered as well as joining youth organizations, such as a lack of interest, no invitation, lack of self-confidence, lack of time, and financial constraint. In addition, the report from the [14] shows the solution for more youth active engagement, such as building trust and confidence so that every youth feels that they belong to a certain organization, empowering cultures and relationships with other youth, and building awareness, skills, and knowledge. In addition, it also reveals the four (4) processes of empowerment that need time and attention, and this is cyclical. It starts with reflection, next is to plan, then to learn, and lastly to do. Empowering youth is important as this is an indicator of a good leader who can positively influence others and empower as well.

In the Philippine setting, the youth defined by the Republic Act no. 8044 or an Act Establishing the National Youth Commission, that “the critical period in a person's growth and development from the onset of adolescence towards the peak of mature, self-reliant and responsible adulthood comprising the considerable sector of the population from the age of fifteen (15) to thirty (30) years.” [15,16]. The 1987 constitution also emphasizes the essential role of the youth in nation-building, and the state must promote and protect the youth holistically, and patriotism and nationalism must be kept in mind and heart by the youth. The youth is also encouraged to be involved in public and civic affairs [17]. Sangguniang Kabataan, or the youth council, is the governing body of the youth assembly or Katipunan ng Kabataan of every barangay. They are elected by the members of the Katipunan ng Kabataan in elections conducted by the Commission on Elections [18]. In addition, it provides a platform for young individuals to engage in local governance and advocate for youth interests [19]. The precursor of the Sangguniang Kabataan was the Kabataang Barangay that was established on April 15, 1975, through the virtue of Presidential Decree 684 that created the Kabataang Barangay and was signed by the former president Ferdinand Marcos Sr. [20]. However, the Kabataang Barangay was abolished through the creation of Katipunan ng Kabataan, and the Sangguniang Kabataan was incorporated into the Local Government Code of 1991. The Sanggunian Kabataan is the governing body of the Katipunan ng Kabataan that an individual must age 15 and above to be part of the Katipunan ng Kabataan [21,15]. The role of each official from the SK Chairperson to its councils are stipulated at the Local Government Code of 1991, Chapter eight (8), sections 423 to 439 that provides the term of office, functions, composition, and the like, and the additional functions and power is stipulated in the Republic Act no. 10742 that provides SK a clearer function in the barangays.

On the other hand, in the creation of the Sangguniang Kabataan programs, they are required to follow the nine (9) centers of participation that make the programs of SK diverse and can cater to many aspects and not only focus on sports. The nine (9) centers of participation are created for the SK officials can create comprehensive plan for the youth development of their place and it became effective by the virtue of Joint Memorandum Circular No.1, Series of 2019 with the Department of Interior and Local Government, National Youth Commission, and the Department of Budget and Management, wherein that the comprehensive youth development plan is necessary prior in releasing SK fund. The following are the nine (9) centers of participation: (1) health, (2) education, (3) economic empowerment, (4) social inclusion and equity, (5) peacebuilding and security, (6) governance, (7) active citizenship, (8) environment, and (9) global mobility [22]. On the other hand, barangay is local term for a village and it is the basic political unit [23] and its creation is stated in the Local Government Code of 1991, section 386, it states there that a composition of a barangay, *“(a) A Barangay maybe created out of a contiguous territory which has a population of at least two thousand (2,000) inhabitants as certified by the National Statistics Office except in cities and municipalities within Metro Manila and other metropolitan political subdivisions or in highly urbanized cities where such territory shall have a certified population of at least five thousand(5,000) inhabitants: Provided, That the creation thereof shall not reduce the population of the original Barangay or Barangays to less than the minimum requirement prescribed herein.*

On the other hand, the Sanggunian Kabataan faces issues and controversies such as political dynasty and corruption [24]. In the editorial from the Philippine Daily Inquirer, it really criticizes the nepotism and the corruption that are prevalent, yet it is more practiced than making appropriate SK programs such as drug symposiums, seminars for youth improvement, and the like [25]. Additionally, [26] states the challenges that they experienced to gain youth participation to SK programs are the availability of the SK officers since some of the officers have the prior engagements that is more important than the program (e.g. family emergency), the school and work priorities since some of the officials are part of the workforce whether in public or private institutions, insufficient compensation, inactive youth participation, and lack of budget and facilities. On the other hand, the Sangguniang Kabataan faces numerous issues due to corruption and political dynasties.

The researcher focuses on the health aspect since most of the SK programs have directly involve on education such as scholarship programs, giving of free school supplies and other related educational materials and sports wherein the “liga” is famous, as well as environmental aspect, wherein the SK officials would do clean up drive, coastal clean-up, and the like. On par with education, sports, and environmental aspects, health also must be given concern since a healthy community can make plans and programs successful. Moreover, the study of [27] states that there should be an increase in attention pertaining to the health of the youth, and also these health programs aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The study aims to (1) identify the health-related SK best practices of selected barangays nationwide; (2) identify the gaps of each health-related practice of selected barangays nationwide; and (3) create a health-related sustainable SK Program for Barangay Dumlog, Talisay City, Cebu.

2. Materials and Methods

This study utilizes a research design using documentary analysis. It is a systematic method for analyzing documentary evidence and answering specific research questions. Document analysis, like other methods of analysis in qualitative research, necessitates repeated inspection, evaluation, and interpretation of data to gain meaning and empirical knowledge of the construct under study [28]. The researcher uses both primary sources from the local youth development itself and the previous research from other researchers as secondary sources. The data were collected from various online sources that documented health-related SK programs. To ensure its reliability and credibility, the researcher selected materials published from 2020 to 2025 to ensure that the data reflect current trends in youth participation in health. The researcher follows the steps in document analysis as prescribed by [29], which

include defining the research question, selecting relevant documents, preparing and organizing them, reviewing and coding them, analyzing and interpreting the data, and presenting results and conclusions.

3. Results

This section discusses the various health programs implemented by selected barangays and local government units all over the Philippines. The researcher chooses the barangay and local government units according to their documented programs, that is indicated in their comprehensive youth development plan. These programs, utilized by selected barangays or local government units, can gain insights that can help and support the Sangguniang Kabataan of Barangay Dumlog in formulating their plans on improving the health aspect of every youth.

Table 1 shows the health programs implemented in selected local government units and barangays. The data sources are from the local youth development plan of the local government unit, as well as from the study of [26]. As shown in the table, the common health programs implemented by selected Sangguniang Kabataan barangays and local government units are relevant to the awareness and educating the youth about HIV and AIDS, as well as teenage pregnancy, reproductive health, sports fest, bloodletting activity, drug awareness, mental health awareness, and medical assistance. While other programs are relevant to health, however, these are implemented in some selected barangays, such as the distribution of health kits, parent-teen talks, and free counseling.

Table 1. The Health Programs Implemented in Selected Local Government Units and Barangays

Authors	Barangay/LGU	Health Programs
[30]	Davao Del Norte	• HIV symposium • Free HIV Testing • Reproductive Health Symposium • Sportsfests, Summer Sports Camp, Vegetable Appreciation (poster, slogan, booth), Walk for a Cause, IP Games • Establishment of Teen Tambayan Center within the provincial capitol • Free Counseling for the Youth. • 100% free advocacy (Free to live, Free to love, and Free to be) through acoustic jam,

		and other clean, fun activities
[26]	Loakan, Baguio City	• Adolescent sexual reproductive health seminar. • Seminar and outreach on teenage pregnancy and family planning • Parent Teen Talk • Blood Donation Drive • Medical assistance for youth, aged mothers, and PWD youth. • Basic first aid training
	Pinsao Pilot, Baguio City	• ARH Seminar • Hygiene kits distribution • Blood donation drive • Supplemental feeding for lactating mothers • Mental health awareness • Sports fest
	Trancoville, Baguio City	• Health kit/hygiene kit distribution • Seminar/Webinars: General reproductive health. • Medical assistance for the youth, aged, mothers, and PWD youth. • Innovative health kit bags • Reproductive health seminar/ quiz bee • Webinars on teenage pregnancy • Nutrition month • HIV and AIDS seminar • First aid training • Seminar on anti-illegal drugs • Competition regarding creation of sustainable kits
	Brookspoint, Baguio City	• Health kit distribution • Proper hand-washing demonstration • HIV seminar and testing • Mental health awareness

		• Information dissemination on youth pregnancy • Personality development
[31]	City of Ilagan, Isabela	• Mental Health Seminar with Psychological First-Aid Workshop • Free online and in-person consultation and counselling sessions. • HIV/AIDS Seminar • Establishment of free HIV/AIDS Laboratory Testing and Medical Consultation in PGI-owned and maintained hospitals in the province. • Seminar on promoting AHD and Reproductive Health • Participation to the Todas Dengue, Todo Na'To! Before and during rainy seasons in respective communities. • Conduct of Dugong Kabataang Isabeleno blood-letting activity.
[27]	Cuenca, Batangas	• Free medical and dental check-ups. • Health and sex education/ seminars. • Mental health awareness and psychological support.

Challenges of the Implementation of Selected SK Health-Related Programs

The SK programs to aid the health of the people are excellent. However, there are still lapses that can be incurred during the implementation of the programs. All stakeholders should be equipped with essential health knowledge for them to be able to develop healthy behaviors as well as become health promoters in their communities. The kinds of health messages that people receive close to home, in their own 'world,' are also among the most influential in determining their health behaviors [32,33]. Develop a comprehensive plan for how the program will be carried out, including timelines, resource allocation, and designated personnel. Also, plans for how the program's progress and impact will be monitored and evaluated must be part of the structured processes. Establish the program's goals and specific, measurable objectives that align with the identified needs as well. This would also lead to

providing a clear direction, facilitating progress tracking, ensuring accountability, and allowing for effective evaluation and decision-making in the field of health among young students.

Managing Priorities: School or Work and Serving the People

The program is present, but the beneficiaries are absent. Attendance is one of the issues in implementing this program. The study of [26] shows that various factors, such as the non-availability of the Sangguniang Kabataan officials as well as other youths, because to their prior commitment, which involves schooling and work. Education is a very integral part of the youth, so it is given that their education must be given priority, and these officials are students and workers in different fields. [34] added that one of the best ways to make good decisions about the prioritization of tasks is to understand the requirements of each. In addition, being a student also means hanging out with friends, attending sports events, cookouts, picnics, and having a part-time job. With all these activities, there are plenty of things to do as a student; yet time may still be very short and paucity in all facets. Hence, in such a situation, Prioritizing Work is the best tool to justify every single item of work [35]. Henceforth, time management is crucial, and it can have a significant impact on an individual's overall performance and achievements. The findings of [36] recommended that schools consider designing relevant programs that will cultivate working students' time management skills and thereby enhance their academic performance.

Lack of Budget, Facilities, and Partnership

Health programs are needed by the youth in the community. However, the lack of budget and facilities hinders the progress of their programs as well as lessens their effectiveness. Budget is very important to the success of the activity. The Department of Budget and Management is the one that supervises the giving of budget to the Sangguniang Kabataan per barangay, but the budget allocation will depend on the size of the barangay. Meaning, the SK officials face difficulties in making programs because of the limited budget given by the national government. This finding is relevant, as claimed by [37] that moving from input-based budgeting to health budgets that are formulated and executed based on goal-oriented programs can help build stronger linkages between budget allocations and sector priorities.

Facilities are also essential to the success of every activity. However, the facilities such as the covered court, youth centers, and the like are also used by the barangay itself for other activities that are not relevant to SK. Every barangay has one covered court that is multi-purpose, and sometimes, they are going to book it before implementing an event or program. Other barangays have no proper SK offices that can secure their things, as well as the necessary documents. [38] proved that Alliance or partnership initiatives to promote health across sectors, across professional and lay boundaries, and between public, private, and non-government agencies do work. They work in tackling the broader determinants of health and well-being in populations in a sustainable manner, as well as in promoting individual health-related behavior change.

Partnerships are also important, particularly in the health sector. The SK officials must have partnered with different institutions to implement health-related activities in the barangay. They can coordinate and partner with the Rural Health Units, medical schools, non-government organizations, private sectors, and other health institutions to effectively implement their health-related programs effectively implement since these partner institutions can provide professionals who can be resource speakers or facilitators, or trainers for health-related symposiums and seminars. That result is congruent with the description of [39] since it brings people and organizations together to tackle health challenges and create better opportunities for everyone. By working as a team, sharing resources, and listening to the community, public health agencies and their partners can make a real, lasting difference.

Lack of Information Dissemination

Some of the youths do not know that the program exists because of a lack of information dissemination. In addition, the study of [40] majority of its respondents have never taken part in SK activities because of time limitations, lack of enthusiasm, and insufficient knowledge of SK activities. Barangay SK has its Facebook pages as well as its other social media sites, but it still needs to boost its postings so that they can be transparently seen on

the Facebook pages of its constituents. That is why [41] underscored that the process of information dissemination is a strategic study in information and communication science, since a successful information dissemination process will enable the provision of significant multiplying effects. Furthermore, some investigations underscore the imperative of cultivating a dynamic and responsive communication framework to foster sustainable improvements in global public health. Dissemination is a critical element of the knowledge translation pathway, and a necessary step to ensure research evidence is adopted and implemented by key end users to improve health outcomes [42,43].

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, youth is the hope of our nation, and it must be trained for the betterment of all. The Sangguniang Kabataan is the platform where the youth can be heard and can contribute something to the development of the barangay. All SK programs must align with the nine centers of participation from the Joint Memorandum Circular No.1, Series of 2019, with the Department of Interior and Local Government, National Youth Commission, and Department of Budget and Management, which states that a comprehensive youth development plan is required before the release of SK funds. The study shows that the various health programs from selected barangays and LGUs are essential to keep the youth healthy and aware, especially regarding issues such as HIV and AIDS, teenage pregnancy, illegal drug use, mental health awareness, and the like. From these issues, the selected SK barangay or LGU has implemented programs to mitigate the mentioned issues, and mostly focuses on education, awareness, and training that can be useful to them in their everyday life. On the other hand, the challenges that the SK officials face in implementing the health-related programs are the priorities between work/school or being a youth leader, lack of budget, facilities, and partnerships, and lack of information dissemination. There is a need to reflect on the role of Sanggunian Kabataan officials to intensify their programs concerning health that can address the health problems, such as the rise of HIV and AIDS cases, teenage pregnancy, usage of illegal drugs, and mental health crisis, as this is for the betterment of the youth. Based on the data collected from various online sources, the researcher recommends that the SK official of Barangay Dumlog, Talisay City, Cebu, revisit their youth development plan in the health aspect and make this study one of their references in making plans and programs, especially for health that it can be comprehensive and align with the SDGs.

The researchers recommend exploring other variables, such as behavioral, biological, social, or psychological factors, in future studies. Durable structures that facilitate planning and decision-making, such as local committees and councils, are key factors in successful alliances or partnerships for health promotion. Engage in participatory budgeting to allow residents to help decide how public health funding is used in their community and conduct power mapping exercises with internal teams and partners to identify influence, build transparency, and co-create power-sharing plans. There is involvement of community empowerment agents who receive training from relevant agencies, who join voluntarily, and commit to participating in health development. Finally, there were significant gaps in the integrative review literature that target audiences on the determinants of uptake of public health evidence. Such studies are important as they can help inform and improve the effectiveness of current and future dissemination practices in public health contexts among youth students in the barangays.

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