



## RESEARCH PAPER

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## Involvement of Filipino student leaders on environment-related programs, projects and activities

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### Abstract

Damage to the environment is one of the major threats that humankind is facing today. Protection and preservation of the environment for sustainable development is the prime concern ahead of the human community. The study endeavors to assess the level of involvement of student leaders in the promotion of environmental education and protection. The aim to the study was to assess the level of involvement of student leaders in promoting environmental and protection by the organizations in implementing environment-related initiatives. Findings of the study revealed that student leaders have a fair level of involvement to the different environment-related activities initiated by the student government. It is also evidential that the student-leaders are manifesting awareness and concern towards environmental protection activities. This is a good start for the student leaders to have a better understanding of environmental problems and issues arising at present time. Further, limited organizational funds, no sustainability of the different environmental-related activities, time constraints were the expressed very serious and serious problems encountered by the student leaders. Student leadership through student organizations is an effective tool in promoting environmental education and protection provided that will be given strong support. Student empowerment through student organizations can promote student involvement in the most pressing concerns of environment protection.

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## Introduction

Students are change agents (Spira, 2013). They are part of sustainable development efforts (Levin, 2000); a producer of school outcomes and their involvement is fundamental to all improvement (Weidner, 2005). Their inputs, leadership and decision making were at the forefront of environmental education activities (Ramirez, 2017). No doubt, the youth of today through student organizations can be an important tool in the promotion of environmental education and protection. It is therefore worthy to look at the environmental initiatives of student organizations in academic institutions.

Young people are one of the most promising sectors of the society. They can be promoters of change, young as they are because of their natural dynamism and willpower, they can bring the fresh perspective, energy, drive and a sense of what is possible (Jokinen, 2016). Youth in the academe, being educated and informed have greater opportunity to be involved and take part in addressing environmental concerns.

Student organizations may present opportunities for collaboration. It can help build the network and can provide valuable skills (Foubert, 2006) and invaluable experiences (Hernandez, 1999) that they can contribute to the implementation of environmental protection advocacy. Involving student leaders contribute in shaping organizational goals (Wallner, 2005). Involving students in educational reforms is a practical thing to do. They have unique knowledge and perspectives that can make reform efforts more successful. Involving students in environmental advocacy may lead to successful implementation of environmental protection and advocacies because to involve students is to involve energy and enthusiasm (Levin, 2000).

According to Chutia (2014), environmental responsibility is the ability to act independently and make necessary decisions about the environmental issues. It is very important to impart knowledge about different issues of the environment to learners and other target groups for sustainable development. In

this regard, environmental education can play a very significant role to develop such kind of behavior among the people in general and students in particular. Kumar & Patil (2007) affirmed that students with environmental education background had a better environmental attitude towards environmental pollution and related issues. In like manner, Veselinovska & Osogovska (2012) affirm that the school is the best place for the development of all components of environmental awareness, in this sense, it is important to cultivate environmental contents through teaching and extracurricular activities. This study aims to assess the level of involvement of student leaders in promoting environmental and protection. Specifically, it aims to: (1) assess the students' level of involvement on environmental protection activities; (2) describe the student organizations' initiatives and activities that address environmental issues and problems; (3) identify problems and constraints encountered by the organizations in implementing environment-related initiatives.

## Materials and methods

### *Method of Research*

This study descriptive survey method of research. It described and surveyed the Student Leaders' Level of Involvement, environmental attitude, and problems encountered in the different environment-related program projects and activities (PPAs).

### *Participants and Research Instruments*

The data of the study came from the surveyed responses of 48 student leaders. A complete enumeration of the student leaders was employed. The researcher prepared a self-constructed questionnaire and was used in determining the level of content and face validity, acceptability and functionality of the developed training module. This has also undergone validation to ensure it is appropriate to be used for its purpose. Part 1 of the questionnaire elicited the student leaders' Level of Involvement in the different environment-related program projects and activities (PPAs). Part II focused on the attitude towards Promoting Environmental Protection, and Part III. Drew out the Problems Encountered in the Implementation of environment-related Programs, Projects, and Activities (PPAs).

### Data Gathering Procedure

Seeking approval through formal communication letter from the authorities concerned to float the questionnaire started the data gathering stage. Upon informed consent, the researcher ensured proper consultation for the schedule of the administration of the questionnaire. Distribution and retrieval were personally executed by the researcher. As agreed upon by the concerned authorities and the researcher, data gathered was properly kept to ensure its confidentiality and were strictly used for research purposes only. The elicited quantitative data had undergone checking, scoring, analysis and interpretation with the help of the statistician. Every item in the questionnaire was analyzed and interpreted.

### Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, mean and rank, were used to describe the gathered data. The researcher utilized Weighted Mean in order to analyze and interpret the data that provided the answer to the specific problems posed in this study. Through this procedure, the extent of students' involvement in environment-related PPAs and their environmental attitude were obtained. This study is only limited to the responses made by the respondents in the administered adapted questionnaire. Perception of the respondents was measured using a five-point Likert scale with its numerical scale, statistical limits and verbal description: 4.20-5.00: Very High Extent; 3.40-4.19: High Extent; 2.60-3.39: Moderate Extent; 1.80- 2.59: Low Extent; 1.00-1.79: Very Low Extent.

## Results and discussion

### *Student Leaders' level of involvement on environmental protection activities*

A glance at Table 1 indicating the Student Leaders' Level of Involvement in the different environment-related program projects and activities (PPAs). Results showed that the respondents have a moderate extent of involvement as shown in the overall mean of 3.32. It can be inferred from the finding of this study that the student- leader respondents have a fair level of involvement to the different environment-related activities initiated by the student government.

**Table 1.** Student Leaders' Level of Involvement in the different environment-related program projects and activities (PPAs).

Student PPAs	Mean (n=48)	Std. Deviation	Description
1. Clean-up drive	3.68	.926	High Extent
2. Tree planting drive	4.02	.933	High Extent
3. Waste management	3.70	.921	High Extent
4. Community service	2.39	.843	Low Extent
5. CLAYGO (Clean as You Go) Campaign	3.41	.918	High Extent
6. Organic Vegetable Gardening	3.25	.910	Moderate Extent
7. Fruit Bearing Tree Seedlings Dispersal	3.66	.930	High Extent
8. Environment and Conservation Fund Raising	2.16	.833	Low Extent
9. Students' Environmental Forum	3.27	1.364	Moderate Extent
10. Earth Day Celebration	3.66	.952	High Extent
11. Adopt-A-Tree Program	3.18	1.044	Moderate Extent
Over-all Mean		3.32	Moderate Extent

Legend: 4.20-5.00: Very High Extent; 3.40-4.19: High Extent; 2.60-3.39: Moderate Extent; 1.80- 2.59: Low Extent; 1.00-1.79: Very Low Extent.

The table also reveals that tree planting activity obtained the highest mean of 4.02 (SD=.933), followed by clean-up drive with the mean of 3.68 (SD=.926), waste management also registered a mean of 3.70 (SD=.921), whereas CLAYGO (Clean as You Go) Campaign also showed a mean of 3.42 (SD=.918), Fruit Bearing Tree Seedlings Dispersal obtained the mean of 3.66 (SD=.930), and earth day celebration registered a mean of 3.66 (SD=.952). These top six PPAs were participated by the respondents in the high extent. Meanwhile, community service and Environment and Conservation Fund Raising activity obtained the means of 2.39 (SD=.843) and 2.16 (SD=.833) respectively were participated by the student leaders in low extent level. Sequentially, Organic Vegetable Gardening with the mean of 3.25 (SD=.910), Students' Environmental Forum gaining the mean of 3.27 (SD=1.364), and Adopt-A-Tree Program acquiring the mean of 3.18 (SD=1.044) were participated by the students in a moderate extent.

Findings manifested an average level of involvement of the student leaders in the different environment-related program projects and activities (PPAs).

The motive for environmental protection is evident in the conduct of the different environment-related activities. Indeed, student leadership through the student organizations can also be an effective tool for environmental advocacy and protection; their input, leadership and decision making were at the forefront of environmental education activities (Ramirez, 2017). The youth dynamism and creativity added with better access to information (Peleman, 2016), can bring about fresh perspective (Jokinen, 2016) that may lead to the promotion of environmental advocacy. Hence, the student leaders can be the potential partners of an educational institution in the promotion of environmental education and protection but their knowledge, skills, and dynamism should be enhanced.

#### *Student Leaders' Attitude towards Environmental Protection*

The results presented in Table 2 are referring to the student leaders' attitude towards environmental protection. An overall mean of 3.73 shows that they have a favorable level of attitude towards environmental protection. This generally implicates that as student leaders, they manifested positive awareness and concern towards environmental protection. This is a good start for the student leaders to have a better understanding of environmental problems and issues arising at present time. And perhaps the dissemination and deepening of the ideas will be better if student leaders will be provided more training, fora, and seminars to enhance their understanding and ultimately their level of participation to the different environment-related program projects and activities (PPAs).

As presented in Table 2, it can be noted that the item relating to the role of the student leader in environmental education and protection has the highest mean of 4.14 (SD=.683). It can also be noted that the item "I encourage students to participate in environmental-related activities" acquired the lowest mean of 3.16 (SD=.724). It can be inferred that the respondents have the moderate level of attitude in encouraging other students to participate in environmental-related activities.

**Table 2.** Attitude towards Promoting Environmental Protection.

Student PPAs	Mean (n=48)	Std. Deviation	Description
1. I help preserve the nature for humans, animals, and plants to live.	3.97	.635	High
2. I actively environmental-related activities.	3.89	.972	High
3. As a student leader, I have my role in environmental education and protection.	4.14	.683	High
4. As an officer of the Student organization, conducting community campaign for environmental protection is necessary.	4.00	.922	High
5. I am confident of my role as the vanguard of the environment.	3.31	1.013	Moderate
6. I encourage students to participate in environmental-related activities.	3.16	.724	Moderate
7. I help plan and formulate school policies concerning environmental protection in the campus.	3.47	1.010	High
8. I prefer to buy environmental friendly products (EFP).	3.89	.778	High
Over-all Mean	3.73		High

Legend: 4.20-5.00: Very High; 3.40-4.19: High; 2.60-3.39: Moderate; 1.80- 2.59: Low; 1.00-1.79: Very Low/ SD

Further, they highly agreed that as officers of the Student organization, conducting community campaign for environmental protection is necessarily obtaining the mean of 4.00 (SD=.922), they were also agreeable to help preserve the nature for humans, animals, and plants to live with the mean of 3.97 (SD=.635), in like manner, they manifest a high positive attitude in actively participating in environmental-related activities as evidenced by the mean of 3.89 (SD=.972), they also showcase high positive attitude in help plan and formulate school policies concerning environmental protection in the campus as confirmed by the mean of 3.45 (SD=1.01), and a favorable attitude prefer to buy environmental friendly products (EFP) with the mean of 3.89 (SD=.778).

Ajzen (1991) asserted that favorable or unfavorable attitudes towards a particular behavior are caused by one's behavioral beliefs; subjective norms result from normative beliefs and personal moral norms, while perceived behavioral control originates from control-related beliefs. Mean (2007) also pointed out that consciousness about the environmental matters and concerns with an attitude of protection of natural resources should be inculcated in the minds of the young, who will eventually become the future citizens of a nation. Magulod (2018) also confirmed that among university students, there is a significant relationship between environmental awareness and environmental attitude. Suggesting that the higher awareness the students about the environment, the higher the environmental attitude they exhibit. Hence, by providing knowledge to students about climate change, the higher they demonstrate the positive attitude towards environmental care is expected. The results presented in Table 3 indicated the problems Encountered in the Implementation of environment-related Programs, Projects, and Activities (PPAs). Based on the results, the overall weighted mean is 3.11 which means that there is a moderately serious problem being encountered by the student leaders.

The very serious problems encountered in the conduct of environment-related Programs, Projects, and Activities (PPAs) were the limited organizational fund with the highest mean of 4.58 (SD=.613). This implies that there is a need for the provision of additional Student Development Fund (SDF) to solve fiscal constraints encountered by student organizations to better deliver and implement environment related Programs, Projects, and Activities (PPAs). Likewise, no sustainability of the different environmental-related activities acquired the mean of 4.39 (SD=.573) which is still considered a very serious problem. This implies that there is a need for effective strategic planning of the student leaders to come up with environment-related activities having higher sustainability, outcome, and impact to students.

Consequently, time constraints obtained the mean of 3.85 (SD=.85), was considered a serious problem in the implementation of different activities which

brought about by the overloading academic tasks of student leaders involved. The student leaders also pointed out that initiating environmental related activities are not the priority projects of the organization with the mean of 2.10 (SD=.47) is a serious problem encountered by the student leaders. This, however, requires more orientations for student leaders on environmental issues and concerns. Other moderately serious problems were the tedious process of conducting the activity as evidenced by the mean of 3.39 (SD=1.08), lack of proper coordination with the mean of 3.33 (SD=1.17), and no linkages establish with other agencies and organizations obtained the mean of 3.35 (SD=.956). Further, rigid protocol in requesting a permit for the conduct of activity was assessed as a less serious problem encountered as shown with the mean of 1.95 (SD=.503) while lack of support from teachers and students is not a problem showing the mean of 1.54 (SD=.89).

**Table 3.** Problems Encountered in the Implementation of environment-related Programs, Projects, and Activities (PPAs).

Problems Encountered	Mean (n=48)	Std. Deviation	Description
1. Limited organization fund	4.58	.613	Very Serious
2. Time constraints	3.85	.850	Serious
3. The tedious process of conducting the activity	3.39	1.086	Moderately Serious
4. Lack of support from teachers and students.	1.54	.898	Not a Problem
5. Lack of proper coordination	3.33	1.172	Moderately Serious
6. Not a priority project of the organization	2.10	.472	Serious
7. Rigid protocol in requesting a permit for the conduct of the activity.	1.95	.503	Less Serious
8. No operational action plan on environment-related activities	2.62	.489	Very Serious
9. No linkages establish with other agencies and organizations.	3.35	.956	Moderately Serious
10. No sustainability of the different environmental-related activities	4.39	.573	Very Serious
<b>Over-all Mean</b>	<b>3.11</b>		<b>Moderately Serious</b>

Legend: 4.20-5.00: Very Serious; 3.40-4.19: Serious; 2.60-3.39: Moderately Serious; 1.80- 2.59: Less serious; 1.00-1.79: Not a Problem

These findings implicate that in order for student organizations to effectively implement programs, projects and activities relating to the environment

there is a need for the university to empower the student leaders in terms of their roles and functions as well as to increase of allocation of funds for students services. Ramirez (2017) explains that the Philippine Center for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development, Inc. (PCEPSDI) believed that the youth of today can be the tool for environmental protection. Through their Green Youth Movement (GYM), it cited that the Filipino youth should be involved in green initiatives because a) they comprise 30% of the country's population, b) they are vulnerable to environmental degradation and disasters, c) they will inherit the responsibility of taking care of the environment, d) has high intellectual capacity for green initiatives, and e) has strong ability to mobilize.

Knapp (2000) opines that the ultimate goal of environmental education is to produce environmentally educated and responsible citizens, or someone who can make decisions that will curb environmental problems which are increasing in the new century. As defined by UNESCO, environmental education aims to develop an environmentally responsible citizen who has knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivation, and ability to work individually and collectively toward solutions of contemporary problems.

### **Conclusion**

The aim to the study was to assess the level of involvement of student leaders in promoting environmental and protection by the organizations in implementing environment-related initiatives. Findings of the study revealed that student leaders have a fair level of involvement to the different environment-related activities initiated by the student government. Among the PPAs commonly participated by the students were tree planting activity, clean-up drive waste management, CLAYGO (Clean as You Go) Campaign and, Fruit Bearing Tree Seedlings Dispersal. It is also evidential that the student-leaders are manifesting awareness and concern towards environmental protection activities. This is a good start for the student leaders to have a better understanding of environmental problems and issues arising at present time. Further, limited

organizational, no sustainability of the different environmental-related activities, time constraints were the expressed very serious and serious problems encountered by the student leaders. Student leadership through student organizations is an effective tool in promoting environmental education and protection. Student empowerment through student organizations can promote student involvement in the most pressing concerns of environment protection.

### **Recommendations**

This study offers the following recommendations: (1) to enhance the effective student participation in environmental education and protection, the University may provide additional Student Development Fund to solve fiscal constraints encountered by student organizations; (2) in order for the student leaders to initiate a sustainable action plan related to environment related activities, campus student advisers may be given higher extra teaching load for them to have more time in guiding student leaders in conceptualizing more effective and relevant environment related initiatives; (3) the university may take full advantage and possibility of inviting resource speakers from DENR, DA, and other related government and nongovernment environmental offices and organizations for further fora, seminars, and trainings for the students to ensure that the integration of environmental awareness is strengthened and sustained' (4) there is a need for better strategic planning by the student leaders to come up with more comprehensive campus-based environmental activities which can be participated by the students through hands on approach for them to be directly exposed is also important to increase their awareness and their environmental attitude; (5) and student leaders be given benefits in the form of scholarship, easy access to information in the library and opportunity to participate in capacity building activities to further equip them with time and skills in the exercise of their power and responsibilities as student leaders; (6) further studies with larger scope and samples should be conducted to validate the findings of this study.

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