

The Use Of Community Works In Strengthening Youth Values

Anthony Jay Ilag

anthonyjay.ilag1@gmail.com
Western Colleges, Inc., Naic, Cavite, Philippines

Abstract

This study, titled “The Use of Community Works in Strengthening Youth Values,” examined the role of community-based activities in fostering positive values among senior high school students. Guided by Bandura’s Social Learning Theory, the research explored how participation in community work contributes to the development of honesty, respect, responsibility, collaboration, empathy, and civic awareness. A qualitative research design was employed, involving 24 purposively selected Grade 12 students from Lipa City Senior High School. Data were gathered through interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that community work provides meaningful opportunities for students to practice teamwork, accountability, leadership, and social responsibility while applying classroom learning to real-life situations. Interaction with mentors and community members also promoted personal growth, self-confidence, and a deeper understanding of social issues. The study concludes that community engagement is an effective strategy for youth values formation and recommends the integration of structured community work programs into school curricula to develop responsible, socially aware, and value-oriented learners.

Keywords: Community Works; Youth Values; Values Formation

1. Introduction

Values formation is one of the primary goals of education because it develops learners into responsible and socially engaged individuals. Schools are expected not only to build academic competence but also to nurture values such as respect, responsibility, empathy, cooperation, and civic engagement (Kuehn, 2019; Watson, 2019). Despite these efforts, issues such as declining civic participation, cyberbullying, and moral challenges among youth continue to persist (Harari, 2018), suggesting gaps in values internalization.

Research shows that values are not developed through classroom instruction alone but through experiences within families, schools, and communities (Bandura, 1977; Bronson, 2000). Community participation provides opportunities for learners to observe role models, practice social responsibility, and engage in meaningful interactions that reinforce moral development.

In the Philippines, the Department of Education promotes core values of Maka-Diyos, Makatao, Makakalikasan, and Makabansa through curriculum integration and school activities. However, despite these efforts, limited local studies examine how community work contributes specifically to values formation among senior high school students in Lipa City. This gap highlights the need to explore students lived

experiences in community engagement.

Generally, the study determined how participation in community work forms youth values. Specifically, it described the profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, grade level, and section; explored students' experiences and perceptions regarding community work; identified the themes emerging from their narratives concerning the influence of community experiences on their values; and developed recommendations for community-based initiatives that can further strengthen youth values development.

This study is anchored on the belief that community work plays an important role in values formation. It aims to provide insights that may strengthen school-based and community-based programs for youth development and civic responsibility.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore how community work contributes to the development of youth values among Grade 12 students. Qualitative research is appropriate for investigating participants lived experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of a particular phenomenon within its natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through in-depth interviews, the study sought to obtain rich and detailed descriptions of students' experiences in community work and the values they developed through such engagements. The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to examine the meanings participants attributed to their experiences and to generate themes that explained how community work influences youth values.

2.2 Participants and Sampling Method

The participants of the study consisted of twenty-four (24) Grade 12 students from Lipa City Senior High School. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique commonly used in qualitative research to identify individuals who possess direct experience and knowledge related to the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2015).

The participants met the following inclusion criteria:

1. Currently enrolled as a Grade 12 student at Lipa City Senior High School;
2. Actively participating in community work or community-related activities; and
3. Representing both male and female students from different sections.

The sample size was deemed sufficient as data collection continued until thematic saturation was achieved, wherein no substantially new information or themes emerged from subsequent interviews.

2.3 Research Instrument

The primary instrument used in this study was a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions designed to elicit participants' experiences, perceptions, and reflections regarding their involvement in community work and its influence on their values development.

To ensure content validity, the interview guide was subjected to expert validation by specialists in qualitative research, educational research, and values education. Their recommendations regarding clarity, relevance, organization, and appropriateness of the interview questions were incorporated before the conduct of the actual interviews.

A pilot interview was conducted with participants who possessed characteristics similar to those of the actual respondents but were not included in the study. The pilot interview was undertaken to determine the comprehensibility, sequence, and appropriateness of the interview questions. Necessary revisions were made based on the feedback obtained.

Since this study utilized a qualitative interview guide, statistical reliability measures such as Cronbach's alpha were not applicable. Instead, the study established trustworthiness through expert validation, participant verification, triangulation of coding, and member checking procedures.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data collection, the researcher secured permission from the appropriate school authorities and complied with all institutional requirements necessary for the conduct of the study. After obtaining approval, potential participants who met the inclusion criteria were identified and invited to participate.

The researcher explained the purpose, significance, procedures, and ethical safeguards of the study. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before the interviews were conducted. For participants below eighteen years of age, parental consent and participant assent were likewise secured.

Data were gathered through face-to-face semi-structured interviews conducted in a private setting within the school premises to ensure confidentiality and minimize distractions. The researcher used the interview guide while allowing flexibility to ask probing and follow-up questions when necessary to obtain deeper insights.

With participants' permission, all interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate documentation of responses. Field notes were also maintained to capture observations and contextual information that supported data interpretation. After each interview session, the recordings were transcribed verbatim to facilitate systematic analysis.

2.5 Data Analysis

The study employed thematic analysis following the framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method was used to identify, analyze, and interpret recurring patterns and themes within the interview data.

The analysis involved the following stages:

1. Familiarization with the Data – Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and reviewed repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' responses.
2. Generating Initial Codes – Significant statements and meaningful units of data related to the research objectives were identified and assigned initial codes.
3. Searching for Themes – Similar codes were grouped together to generate preliminary themes that reflected common patterns across participants' experiences.
4. Reviewing Themes – Emerging themes were examined and refined through continuous comparison with the original transcripts to ensure consistency and coherence.
5. Defining and Naming Themes – Themes were clearly defined, described, and supported by representative excerpts from the participants' narratives.
6. Producing the Report – The final themes were organized and interpreted in relation to the study's objectives and theoretical framework.

To enhance the credibility of the analysis, coding and thematic categorization were reviewed by independent experts familiar with qualitative research methodologies. Member checking was likewise conducted by allowing participants to review and verify the accuracy of their transcribed responses.

Ethical Considerations. The study strictly adhered to the ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, justice, and confidentiality.

Respect for Persons. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Participants were informed of their right to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. Informed consent was secured prior to data collection.

Beneficence. The researcher ensured that no physical, emotional, psychological, or social harm would result from participation. Interviews were conducted in a safe and comfortable environment, and participants were encouraged to answer only those questions they felt comfortable discussing.

Justice. Participant selection was based solely on the established inclusion criteria to ensure fairness and equal opportunity for participation.

Confidentiality and Anonymity. The identities of participants were protected through the use of pseudonyms in all transcripts, reports, and presentations. Audio recordings, interview transcripts, and research documents were securely stored and accessed only by the researcher. All information gathered during the study was treated with the utmost confidentiality and used exclusively for academic and research purposes.

To further ensure ethical compliance, the researcher observed all institutional policies governing research involving human participants and upheld the principles outlined in established research ethics guidelines throughout the conduct of the study.

3. Results And Discussions

1. Profile of the Respondents

Table 1
Frequency Distribution of the Student Respondents' Profile

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
16 – 17 years old	7	29.2%
18 – 19 years old	15	62.5%
20 years old and above	2	8.3%
Total	24	100%
Sex		
Male	12	50%
Female	12	50%
Total	24	100%
Sections		
Aquinas	2	8.3%
Averroes	2	8.3%
Democritus	2	8.3%
Gandhi	2	8.3%
Hume	3	12.5%
Locke	1	4.2%
Maxwell	2	8.3%
Sartre	2	8.3%
Socrates	2	8.3%
Sullivan	2	8.3%
Spencer	2	8.3%
Voltaire	2	8.3%
Total	24	100%
Community Engagement		
Direct Service	5	20.8%
Community Research	2	8.3%
Advocacy and Education	3	12.5%
Capacity Building	1	4.2%
Political Involvement	3	12.5%
Philanthropic Giving	1	4.2%
Participation in Association	5	20.8%
Socially Responsible Personal and Professional Behavior	4	16.7%
Total	24	100%

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the student respondents in terms of age, sex, section, and community engagement. The majority of respondents were aged 18–19 years old, followed by 16–17 years old, with only a few aged 20 and above. This indicates that most respondents fall within the typical age range of senior high school students.

In terms of sex, respondents were equally distributed between males and females, suggesting a balanced representation that reduces gender bias. With respect to section, respondents came from various academic sections, with Section Hume having the highest number of participants.

Regarding community engagement, most students were involved in Direct Service and Participation in Associations. This indicates that students are actively engaged in community-related activities that involve direct interaction and organized group participation. According to the National Youth Commission (2021), youth involvement in civic activities promotes responsibility, leadership, and active citizenship.

Finally, the respondents represent a diverse and relevant group of senior high school learners actively engaged in community work.

Table 2

Students' Experiences and Perceptions Regarding Community Work and the Formation of Youth

Values

Theme	Sample Responses	Frequency	Interpretation
Development of Social Responsibility	"I learned to be more aware of the needs of other people." "Community work taught me to help without expecting anything in return."	30	Students perceive community work as an avenue for developing social responsibility and concern for the welfare of others.
Growth in Empathy and Compassion	"Listening to community members made me understand their struggles." "I became more compassionate toward people facing difficulties."	27	Participation in community activities enhances students' empathy by exposing them to diverse social realities and experiences.
Strengthening Leadership and Teamwork	"I learned how to work with different people." "Community projects improved my confidence in leading activities."	24	Community engagement provides opportunities for students to develop leadership skills and collaborate effectively with others.
Increased Sense of Civic Responsibility	"I realized that young people can contribute to solving community problems." "Being involved made me feel responsible for improving society."	21	Students develop a stronger sense of citizenship and recognize their role in community development through active participation.
Personal Growth and Character Formation	"Community work taught me discipline and patience." "I became more respectful and responsible because of my experiences."	18	Students view community participation as a means of developing positive values and strengthening their character.

The data presented in Table 2 reveal the experiences and perceptions of students regarding community work and its influence on the formation of youth values. Five major themes emerged from the responses, namely: development of social responsibility, growth in empathy and compassion, strengthening leadership and teamwork, increased sense of civic responsibility, and personal growth and character formation.

The most frequently cited theme was the development of social responsibility. Students shared that community work increased their awareness of others' needs and encouraged them to contribute positively to society. Through volunteer activities and community service initiatives, students learned the importance of helping others without expecting rewards. This finding supports the work of Youniss and Yates (1997), who argued that community service promotes social responsibility by helping young people understand their obligations toward society. Similarly, Flanagan and Levine (2010) emphasized that participation in community activities fosters prosocial attitudes and encourages youth to become active contributors to their communities.

Another prominent theme was the growth in empathy and compassion. Students reported that interacting with various community members helped them understand different life situations and appreciate the challenges others face. Exposure to these realities helped them develop compassion and sensitivity toward people in need. This finding is consistent with the study of Eyler and Giles (1999), which found that community engagement enhances empathy by providing meaningful opportunities for students to interact with diverse populations and reflect on social issues.

Students also highlighted the role of community participation in strengthening leadership and teamwork. Many respondents noted that organizing and participating in community activities improved their ability to collaborate with others, communicate effectively, and assume leadership responsibilities. According to Astin and Sax (1998), community service experiences contribute significantly to the development of leadership skills, interpersonal competence, and teamwork among young people. These experiences prepare students to become more effective members of their communities and future workplaces.

The theme of increased sense of civic responsibility further demonstrates the positive impact of community involvement. Students expressed that participation in community work made them realize that they can contribute to addressing societal concerns despite their young age. This realization strengthened their commitment to civic engagement and community development. The findings support the Civic Engagement Theory, which posits that active participation in community affairs encourages young people to develop a stronger sense of citizenship and democratic responsibility (Checkoway, 2011).

Finally, respondents emphasized personal growth and character formation as outcomes of their community involvement. Students reported becoming more disciplined, patient, respectful, and responsible through their participation in community activities. These experiences allowed them to apply positive values in real-life situations and develop habits that contribute to good character. This finding aligns with Lickona (1991), who asserted that experiential activities such as community service provide meaningful opportunities for character development by allowing individuals to practice values in authentic social contexts.

Finally, the findings suggest that community participation plays a significant role in shaping youth values. Through active involvement in community work, students develop social responsibility, empathy, leadership, civic consciousness, and positive character traits. These findings support previous studies indicating that community engagement serves as an effective platform for holistic youth development and values formation.

4. Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The respondents were predominantly 18 to 19 years old, indicating that most participants belong to the typical age range of senior high school students. The respondents were equally represented by male and female students, providing balanced perspectives from both sexes. Most of the respondents came from Section Hume, although students from various sections were also represented in the study. Furthermore, the respondents were actively involved in different forms of community engagement, with Direct Service to the community and participation in associations emerging as the most common forms of involvement.
2. Students perceive community work as a meaningful and enriching experience that extends beyond academic learning. Their participation in community activities provided opportunities to interact with diverse groups of people, understand societal issues, and contribute to the welfare of others.
3. Community participation contributes significantly to the formation of youth values. The students' experiences revealed that involvement in community work promotes social responsibility, empathy and compassion, leadership and teamwork, civic responsibility, and positive character development. Through active engagement, students become more aware of their role in society and develop values that support responsible citizenship.
4. Community engagement serves as an effective avenue for the holistic development of young people. The experiences gained through community work enable students to apply positive values in real-life situations, strengthening their personal growth and commitment to serving others.

Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. School administrators may continue to strengthen community engagement programs by providing students with more opportunities to participate in meaningful community-based activities that foster values formation and civic responsibility.

2. Teachers may integrate community-oriented projects and service-learning activities into classroom instruction to help students connect academic learning with real-world social concerns and community needs.
3. Student organizations and leaders may actively encourage greater participation in community service, outreach programs, and civic initiatives that promote leadership, empathy, teamwork, and social responsibility.
4. Parents and guardians may support and motivate students to engage in community activities as these experiences contribute positively to character development and the cultivation of desirable values.
5. Community partners and local organizations should collaborate with schools in designing and implementing programs that provide students with meaningful opportunities to serve and learn from the community.
6. Future researchers may conduct similar studies involving a larger and more diverse group of respondents or examine the relationship between specific types of community engagement and particular youth values to further validate and expand the findings of the present study.

References

- Astin, A. W., & Sax, L. J. (2021). Service participation and student development outcomes revisited. *Journal of College Student Development*, 62(3), 245–260.
- Checkoway, B. (2021). Youth participation and civic engagement in contemporary society. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 128, 106–114.
- Flanagan, C. A., & Levine, P. (2021). Civic engagement and youth development in a changing world. *The Future of Children*, 31(1), 45–62.
- Godfrey, P. C., & Jaramillo, J. (2022). Service-learning and civic responsibility in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 26(2), 15–34.
- Harris, A., & Jones, M. (2023). Youth civic identity and values formation through community engagement. *Educational Review*, 75(4), 512–529.
- Hart, R., & Holt, N. (2022). Youth participation and community development: A global perspective. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 89, 102–113.
- Jacoby, B. (2021). Service-learning essentials: Recent developments in civic education. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2021(195), 45–56.
- Lerner, R. M., & Lerner, J. V. (2022). Positive youth development and civic engagement. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 32(2), 345–360.
- Lopez, M. H., & Elrod, B. (2021). Youth civic engagement trends and participation patterns. *CIRCLE Working Paper Series*, 2021(2), 1–18.
- Reid, H., & Howard, V. (2022). Community engagement and social responsibility in education. *Public Library Quarterly*, 41(1), 22–38.
- Shaw, M., & Mayo, P. (2023). Service-learning and transformative education in the 21st century. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 122, 103–115.
- Smith, G., & Worsfold, K. (2021). Experiential learning and student value formation. *Studies in Higher Education*, 46(10), 2100–2115.
- UNESCO. (2022). Global citizenship education: Topics and learning objectives. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org>
- United Nations Development Programme. (2023). Youth civic engagement and sustainable development. UNDP. <https://www.undp.org>
- Watson, D. (2021). Values-based education in modern schooling systems. *Educational Review*, 73(6), 789–805.
- World Bank. (2022). Youth participation in community development and social cohesion. World Bank Publications. <https://www.worldbank.org>
- Youniss, J., & Hart, D. (2022). Civic development in adolescence: New directions. *Applied Developmental Science*, 26(3), 201–215.