School Organization Involvement Of College Students: A Phenomenological Inquiry

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Abstract — Students' experiences in college vary widely, shaped by the complex balance between academic responsibilities and extracurricular involvement. Among these, active participation in campus organizations often emerges as a transformative component of students' academic journeys. It provides opportunities for self-expression, leadership development, peer engagement, and personal growth. This phenomenological study aims to explore the lived experiences of college students who are actively involved in school organizations, focusing on how this involvement affects their academic performance, leadership skills, emotional well-being, and overall productivity. The study investigates students' perceptions, motivations, and challenges to present a holistic understanding of organizational participation in the college setting. Using in-depth interviews with purposively selected participants from a state university, the research reveals that organizational involvement contributes significantly to students' holistic development. Participants reported improved academic discipline, enhanced communication and leadership abilities, stronger social relationships, and emotional resilience. However, challenges such as over-commitment, time management issues, and academic stress were also prominent, often affecting students' ability to balance responsibilities effectively. This study is grounded in the goals of national and global development frameworks such as Sustainable Development Goals 4 (Quality Education) and 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), as well as AMBisyon Natin 2040. Findings emphasize the need for institutional support to maximize the benefits of student organization involvement while minimizing potential drawbacks. Ultimately, the study recommends promoting sustainable, inclusive student programs that foster leadership, academic excellence, and personal empowerment.

I. INTRODUCTION

Campus organizations have long served as a fundamental aspect of college life, offering students avenues for self-expression, leadership development, social engagement, and community service. These groups do not merely provide extracurricular activities; they serve as platforms for building essential life skills and shaping future-ready individuals. This study conducts a phenomenological inquiry into the lived experiences of college students who are actively involved in school organizations. It specifically examines their perceptions, motivations, and challenges to uncover the influence of such engagement on their academic performance and personal growth.

Sumague concluded that involvement in extracurricular activities, such as clubs and organizations, enhances students' leadership capabilities, communication skills, and academic achievement [1]. Similarly, Smith and Chenoweth found that active participation in school organizations contributes to the development of leadership qualities such as confidence, optimism, persistence, and responsibility [2]. These experiences also enhance relational competencies, including teamwork, stress management, and conflict resolution. Moreover, engagement in student organizations cultivates a sense of belonging and accountability, which may positively affect academic motivation and productivity [3, 4, 2].

This study aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, particularly Target 4.4, which aims to increase the number of youth with relevant skills for employment and entrepreneurship. It also supports SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), especially Target 8.6, by promoting youth development and reducing disengagement from education. Campus organizations foster crucial competencies—such as leadership, communication, and time management—that prepare students for professional environments [5, 1].

The research further connects with AMBisyon Natin 2040, which envisions Filipinos leading strongly rooted, comfortable, and secure lives. Student organizations empower youth to become skilled, resilient, and community-oriented individuals who contribute meaningfully to national development. Through active participation, students cultivate leadership and decision-making abilities essential for becoming part of a competent and dynamic workforce [6, 7, 8].

Despite these known benefits, the relationship between school organization involvement and academic success remains underexplored, especially in higher education. Much of the existing literature focuses either on leadership development or academic outcomes separately, overlooking how these dimensions intersect in the lives of student leaders. Moreover, challenges such as time constraints, organizational conflicts, and balancing academic responsibilities with extracurricular involvement present complexities that affect students' academic experiences. Ramos emphasized these difficulties [9], while Fazzlurrahman et al. found that organizational participation may negatively impact students' GPA due to the time and energy diverted from academic work [10].

Additionally, the university environment—including faculty-student interactions—plays a significant role in influencing students' academic orientation [11]. Understanding why students choose to engage in organizations is critical to shaping meaningful and sustainable programs. As Haines pointed out, effective student organization programming hinges on institutions understanding the motivations and drivers of student engagement [12].

Consequently, this study seeks to address these gaps by examining the lived experiences of college students who are active members of school organizations. It specifically explores how participation in these organizations influences students' academic performance and overall productivity, taking into account the role of leadership development and personal growth. Furthermore, it analyzes the relationship between leadership skills and academic outcomes to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of student involvement in campus organizations. By collecting and interpreting the lived experiences of participants, the study

aims to provide deeper insights into how organizational engagement shapes students' academic trajectories and personal development.

II. METHODS

This study employed a descriptive phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of college students actively participating in school organizations and how such involvement influenced their academic performance, leadership abilities, communication skills, and personal growth. The design enabled the researchers to uncover rich, subjective insights rather than generalizing findings. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, focusing on themes such as time management, leadership development, and the challenges faced by student leaders. The study was conducted at a state university in Cebu City, where interviews took place in settings chosen for participant comfort—classrooms, offices, campus lounges, or online platforms like Google Meet and Zoom. Participants were purposively selected based on their active involvement in organizations under the College of Teacher Education. Data saturation determined the final number of participants, each of whom was anonymized using codes (e.g., SL1, SL2). Semi-structured interviews allowed for guided yet open-ended discussions, following Creswell's (2013) recommendation for phenomenological research. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using Colaizzi's (1978) method of thematic analysis. This process included identifying significant statements, formulating meanings, clustering them into themes, and validating the structured findings with participants. Ethical clearance was granted by the university's Research Ethics Committee (REC Code 1269 / 2024-10 Comighud et al.). Informed consent was obtained, participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was maintained throughout. Participants received minimal tokens of appreciation (₱20 via GCash and school supplies), and they were informed of their right to withdraw at any point. This approach ensured the responsible conduct of research and the integrity of the participants' contributions.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study explores the lived experiences of college students involved in school organizations, focusing on how their participation influences their academic performance, personal growth, social well-being, and productivity. Table 1 presents the themes and subthemes derived from the data sets, using the phenomenological method outlined by Colaizzi. These themes encompass the academic and personal development of students, their social and emotional well-being, time management and productivity, and the challenges they face, providing a comprehensive understanding of their experiences and growth through organizational involvement.

Table 1. Summary of Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Holistic Student Growth	1.1 Academic performance 1.2 Leadership Development 1.3 Personal Development
2. Social and Emotional well-being	2.1 Emotional resilience 2.2 Peer relationships
3. Efficiency and Productivity	3.1 Time management Skills 3.2 Task Accomplishment
4. Challenges and Limitations	4.1 Over commitment and Stress management 4.2 Balancing Multiple Responsibilities

1. Holistic Student Growth

Leadership roles in school organizations expose students to challenges and opportunities that promote both academic and personal growth. Balancing studies with organizational duties helps develop time management, accountability, and communication skills. These experiences make students more disciplined, organized, and confident. This theme highlights the transformative impact of leadership involvement, with three sub-themes identified: Academic Performance, Leadership Development, and Personal Growth.

1.1. *Academic Performance*

Balancing academics with organizational involvement can enhance academic performance when managed effectively. Student leaders develop time management, goal-setting, and prioritization skills that support academic success despite added responsibilities. One student noted improved grades after learning to manage time *(SL4),* while another made up for missed lessons after prioritizing an organizational task *(SL1).* Others shared that initial struggles gave way to better academic outcomes as they adapted *(SL3).* These reflections show that with proper balance, organizational involvement can positively impact academic achievement.

1.2. *Leadership Development*

Leadership development plays a vital role in both academic and personal growth. Through organizational involvement, students enhance essential skills such as communication, decision-making, and problem-solving—abilities that directly support academic success and future career readiness. One student shared that taking on leadership responsibilities improved their adaptability and professional skills *(SL6).* Others reflected on how leadership experiences taught them to motivate peers, manage responsibilities, and become more accountable in both academic and organizational tasks *(SL2, SL5).* These experiences reflect how leadership fosters discipline, confidence, and a deeper understanding of educational roles. As supported by Kouzes and Posner's Leadership Practices, effective leadership builds self-efficacy and prepares individuals to take on greater responsibilities, contributing to long-term success [13].

1.3. *Personal Growth*

Participation in leadership roles in school organizations fosters personal growth by developing qualities beyond academics, such as empathy, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence which are essential for handling academic pressures and future careers. Through reflective leadership, students assess strengths, accept limitations, and pursue self-improvement. One student noted that years of involvement helped them "assess strengths and weaknesses and turn them into opportunities for personal growth" *(SL3).* Another highlighted empathy, saying leaders must "connect with people, understand their needs, and put yourself in their shoes." Confidence and creativity also grew, with some becoming more comfortable "expressing creative ideas and collaborating" *(SL7).* Others learned to set boundaries, realizing "it's okay not to say yes to everything" since leadership decisions affect others *(SL1).* These accounts show how involvement shapes students into reflective, empathetic, and socially aware individuals, enhancing their academic journey, personal identity, and emotional resilience—key goals of leadership development including responsibility, critical thinking, and emotional maturity.

2. Social and Emotional Well-Being

Social and Emotional Well-Being highlights the role of emotional support and peer relationships in student leaders' development. Social and emotional learning shows that strong support networks are key to managing stress and promoting well-being. Leadership roles help foster resilience and build connections that support students through academic and personal challenges. Two sub-themes emerged: Emotional Resilience and Peer Relationships.

2.1. *Emotional Resilience*

Leadership roles in school organizations play a key role in developing emotional resilience among student leaders by exposing them to real challenges that require stress management, emotional stability, and seeking support. These experiences help students build the capacity to handle academic pressures and interpersonal difficulties. Several students reported that

involvement made them emotionally stronger and more adaptable during hardships. One shared that it "helped in terms of being emotionally resilient" by teaching them to "handle challenges during tough times" *(SL6)*. Another emphasized that the sense of belonging within the organization boosted their confidence and positivity during difficult moments *(SL3)*. This shows that emotional resilience develops through both individual coping and supportive social environments. Consistent with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, social interaction and peer support in student organizations foster cognitive and emotional growth, buffering stress and promoting well-being amid leadership demands.

2.2. Peer Relationships

Peer relationships significantly contribute to the social and emotional well-being of student leaders by providing support, motivation, and a sense of belonging. These connections help students cope with academic stress, enhance social skills, and maintain a positive outlook. One student noted that making friends with fellow leaders helped them manage stress and academic pressure *(SL2)*. Another shared that being surrounded by driven peers inspired them to strive for excellence both academically and organizationally *(SL7)*. Strong friendships formed through shared experiences also served as emotional support during challenging times *(SL3)*. Other participants mentioned social growth and improved relationships with both peers and faculty as outcomes of their leadership roles *(SL1, SL6)*. These findings align with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), which emphasizes the critical role of peer relationships in shaping an individual's emotional development and well-being.

3. Efficiency and Productivity

The third theme of this study is identified as Efficiency and Productivity, emphasizing how involvement in school organizations shapes students' abilities to balance multiple responsibilities effectively. Leadership roles require students to develop prioritization, strategic planning, and discipline, all of which are essential for maintaining productivity and achieving success in both academics and organizational tasks. Analysis of the responses led to the identification of the following sub-themes: Time Management Skills and Task Accomplishment.

3.1. Time Management Skills

Effective time management helps student leaders balance academic and organizational responsibilities. Leadership roles enhance prioritization skills, allowing students to handle multiple tasks efficiently. Students emphasized planning and scheduling, such as setting priorities *(SL1)*, making to-do lists *(SL3),* and using handwritten calendars to manage deadlines and reduce procrastination *(SL4)*. They also highlighted the importance of setting realistic goals *(SL3)*. These strategies show how student leaders use planning tools to stay productive and manage their responsibilities effectively.

3.2. Task Accomplishment

Leadership roles sharpen discipline, adaptability, and focus—traits essential for productivity. Managing multiple responsibilities, student leaders develop strategies to efficiently balance academic and organizational tasks. One shared, "Joining a school organization made me stricter about deadlines, boosting my productivity" *(SL12)*. Another highlighted the importance of to-do lists for tracking and prioritizing tasks *(SL3),* while another noted that planning solves half the problem by clarifying what to do first *(SL2)*. A student also reflected on improved time management juggling both roles *(SL1)*. These insights show how leadership fosters discipline, strategic thinking, and resilience, helping students enhance productivity and achieve academic and personal growth.

4. Challenges and Limitations

Challenges and Limitations explores the difficulties student leaders face in balancing academics with organizational duties. While leadership roles support growth, they also bring challenges such as over-commitment, stress, and managing competing priorities. These issues reflect the complexities of maintaining productivity and well-being. The sub-themes identified are: Over-Commitment and Stress Management and Difficulty in Balancing Responsibilities.

4.1. Over commitment and Stress Management

Over-commitment to academic and organizational duties often leads to stress and burnout. Student leaders face overlapping deadlines and heavy workloads, affecting both performance and well-being. One shared, "Organizational tasks can be overwhelming... but I learned to manage stress and take breaks" *(SL5)*. Others mentioned sleep deprivation *(SL2)* and the intense pressure of managing both roles *(SL4, SL7)*. These experiences highlight the strain of over-commitment and the need for boundaries, rest, and self-care to sustain academic and emotional balance.

4.2. Balancing Multiple Responsibilities

Balancing academic and organizational responsibilities is a significant challenge for student leaders, often causing stress and risking underperformance. Students shared how this balancing act affected their decisions and routines. One said, "I had to prioritize council duties over academics, but I learned to weigh things" *(SL2)*. Another admitted skipping class for an organizational task but made efforts to catch up later *(SL1)*. Some struggled broadly with time management, feeling drained and unable to give 100% to either area *(SL6)*. Another noted the difficulty of choosing between academic and organizational duties *(SL9)*. These experiences highlight the demanding expectations on student leaders and the need for adaptability and resilience. According to Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1997), belief in one's capabilities increases the likelihood of successfully managing multiple roles. Therefore, enhancing self-efficacy and time management is crucial for students to balance academics and extracurricular effectively.

IV. CONCLUSION

The lived experiences of college students involved in school organizations reveal a complex yet enriching journey that profoundly shapes their academic, personal, and professional development. Participation in campus organizations serves not merely as an extracurricular pursuit but as a transformative platform where students cultivate essential life skills. These include leadership, time management, emotional resilience, strategic planning, and interpersonal communication—each playing a vital role in both academic performance and long-term success. Findings indicate that while students often struggle with over-commitment, emotional stress, and the challenge of balancing multiple responsibilities, they also develop adaptive coping strategies such as prioritization, scheduling, and peer support. Leadership roles, in particular, contribute to increased confidence, self-awareness, and a deeper understanding of others. The emotional and social support gained from peer relationships within these organizations significantly bolsters students' ability to manage stress and sustain motivation. Moreover, the discipline and accountability required in leadership and organizational roles translate into improved task accomplishment, enhanced productivity, and personal growth. Students learn to navigate complex demands through resilience and reflective decision-making—skills that extend far beyond the academic sphere. Ultimately, involvement in school organizations equips students with a robust set of competencies that prepare them not only to succeed in their educational journey but also to become future-ready, responsible leaders in their chosen fields.

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