

Awakening the Collective Soul: Exploring Civic Consciousness in Fostering Community Development and Social Responsibility

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Abstract

This study explores the civic consciousness on community development and social responsibility of the ROTC students. The participants of the research consist of 20 students who are enrolled in Quirino State University Main Campus. This qualitative study was utilized a phenomenology study method in which lived experiences of several individuals are described as related to a phenomenon they have in common. Content/narrative analysis was utilized and purposeful sampling technique was used. The findings revealed that the students developed and experienced leadership skills, a bond of camaraderie was formed, horizon were widen and character development, friendliness, communication skills, act of kindness, self-confidence, and social responsibility were fostered. With these findings, the researcher recommends strengthening civic consciousness remains essential for building informed, engaged, and socially responsible citizens in an evolving global landscape.

Keywords: Civic, consciousness, community, development, responsibility, social

1. Introduction

The spirit of civic consciousness is an active awareness of rights, duties, and responsibilities linked to the well-being of their community. It entails realizing and embracing the obligation to promote communal cooperation, peace, and security as well as to advance society and unity. The growth of democratic values, social cohesiveness, and active engagement in civic responsibilities like voting and community organizing all depend on civic consciousness.

It represents a form of social awareness that helps individuals prioritize the greater good over their own selfish desires and collaborate for the benefit of the entire community. To equip students with the ability to be responsible, engaged citizens and future leaders, educational institutions play a critical role in nurturing this awareness, especially among younger

generations. Enhancing civic awareness fosters a sense of belonging and responsibility as citizens.

The essential importance of examining civic consciousness in the development of dynamic, fair, and participatory communities. These factors encourage informed and active citizenship: Grasping civic consciousness aids in nurturing individuals who recognize their rights, duties, and positions within society, allowing them to take an active role in democratic activities and communal affairs. Such involvement is crucial for maintaining democracy and enhancing social unity.

Promoting social responsibility and community growth: Civic awareness fosters a sense of obligation to the common good, encouraging individuals to actively contribute to societal welfare, social justice, and improvements within their communities. Fostering the emergence of responsible future leaders: By concentrating on the youth and students, particularly in higher secondary education, exploring civic consciousness assists in molding the leaders and decision-makers of tomorrow who can sustain democratic principles and inclusive governance.

Improving national identity and democratic principles: Education about civic responsibilities, connected to civic awareness, promotes a common comprehension of national heritage, democratic values, and the significance of active involvement, thereby bolstering a unified national identity and democratic ethos.

Gathering information on civic consciousness offers valuable knowledge for policymakers and educators to create impactful programs that encourage civic participation and tackle issues like political indifference or social division.

Research has indicated that young students exhibit modest levels of civic consciousness, with variations noted by gender and location (rural versus urban). Nevertheless, there are still issues with completely comprehending the elements that affect civic consciousness and knowing how to interact with populations that are less aware. For example, compared to their urban and female peers, male and rural students typically demonstrate lower levels of civic consciousness, suggesting the need for specialized community and educational initiatives. The need for more pragmatic, action-oriented approaches in civic education that link knowledge with real-world participation is further highlighted by the observed gap in the relationship between civic knowledge and active engagement.

Hence, more study is required to fill up these gaps and find practical solutions for raising civic awareness among a range of demographics. Building societies that are inclusive, cohesive, and democratically engaged requires this understanding.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to explore the civic consciousness on community development and social responsibility of the ROTC students.

1.2 Research Question

1. What are your experiences on civic consciousness on community development and social responsibility.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study made use of a qualitative design of research. The researcher used the phenomenology study method in which lived experiences of several individuals are described as related to a phenomenon they have in common. The participants were asked to narrate their experiences in civic consciousness on community development and social responsibility on blank sheets of paper. The participants' responses were carefully analyzed in words. A list of themes was generated from the analysis made.

2.2 Research Participants and Sampling

This study involved a purposive sampling to determine the respondents who are Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) officers of Quirino State University Main Campus.

Furthermore, the participants are purposely chosen/selected. By using the purposive sampling approach, 20 students were chosen. Out of 20 student participants, three of them were female and seventeen were male, their ages ranging from 18 to 22 years old.

2.3 Data Gathering Procedure

The participants were instructed to answer an open-ended question by narrating and describing in their own words their experiences in civic consciousness.

The researcher administered the data-gathering procedure personally and collected the outputs and serialized them as ready for analysis.

2.4 Data Analysis

In analyzing the data collected from the participants' outputs, the researcher used the content analysis process. Content analysis is suitable for capturing the words of participants in text or written documents.

In addition, the use of content analysis, especially when a researcher uses gist and analyses in a study. Gist analysis is appropriate for qualitative research since it enables the researcher to capture the meaning of the statements made by the participants concerning the phenomenon being studied. The gist analysis was used to identify the experiences in civic consciousness.

The completed sheets of paper were read several times to get an overview of their contents. The reading was done closely, repeatedly, and intently until they became familiar with its contents and were in positions to conceptualize statements made by the participants. The researcher came up with notes about the statements made by the participants. Key concepts and ideas were identified in the notes.

The researcher then reread data and highlighted significant statements, sentences, or quotes.

This process provides an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon. Related statements were grouped together to form meaning units for emerging themes from the significant statements.

Key events in the participants' histories and stories were chronologically sorted. The coding and themes determined from the data analysis were not predetermined by the researcher but emerged through the analysis process. After coding was complete, relationships were created between categories by comparing and contrasting coding from the different cases. The themes that emerged were derived from the students' experiences.

2.5 Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations were ensured throughout the study. The participants were given an informed consent and were asked to volunteer for the study understanding all the rights of withdrawal and refusal. There was no data sought which could exhibit participants' direct identity like names, telephone numbers, address, area or national identification number.

3. Results and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the civic consciousness on community development and social responsibility of the ROTC students.

The findings revealed that the students who participated in this study discovered their skills and experiences. The identification and emerging of the interesting themes relative to their experiences which the researcher classified into different categories:

Skills and Experiences Discovered

Theme 1: Widen Horizon

Widen horizon means expand one's range of interests, activities, and knowledge.

Two participants elaborated, "I have an amazing and productive experience in the programs of ROTC".

This affirms that, if all youth are to be prepared for life in a democracy, civic educators, schools, and civic programs for youth must also work to ensure the equitable distribution of learning opportunities. Unfortunately, data indicate that classrooms with students whose parents are of relatively high socio-economic status (SES), who are White, and who are academically more successful are far more likely than others to experience civic learning opportunities, such as chances to debate issues, engage in simulations, and perform community service. This causes both a civic opportunity gap (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008) and a civic achievement gap (Levinson, 2012). In addition, they reflect the movement from agenda-setting to opinion formation and action taking (Kahne et al., 2015).

Also, civic educators, both as individuals and in conjunction with long established programs implemented by groups such as the Center for Civic Education and the Constitutional Rights Foundation, have long promoted practices aligned with the project method, active learning (Owen, 2015), and youth participatory action research (Camarota & Fine, 2008). These

types of practices involve studying community issues through interviewing community members, designing surveys, or producing a report or presentation for the public. Youth can now benefit from developing abilities to use digital media when engaged in such activities.

Likewise, engaging in dialogue and expressing one's perspective to those in positions of authority is an important form of civic and political engagement (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996). The affordances of digital media have greatly expanded youth opportunities to engage in discussion with those who hold differing perspectives, to argue for their points of view, to comment on civic and political issues outside of formal structures and institutions, and to express feedback to government agencies, corporations, and other organizations through avenues such as petitions and online campaigns. The number of youth taking advantage of these opportunities for dialogue and feedback in and out of school is growing. (Smith, Schlozman, Verba, & Brady, 2009).

In addition, the digital landscape has expanded supports by providing interest driven, participatory learning opportunities—also known as *connected learning*—to ever more young people both in-school and out, as well as online (Ito et al., 2013). Young people now have innumerable opportunities with digital and social media to share, create, make, do, and expand their engagement in collective and self-guided learning while pursuing knowledge and expertise around something they care deeply about. Such practices appear to promote a kind of digital social capital by developing the skills, exposure to group norms, and social networks that, in turn, facilitate civic and political engagement (Jenkins et al., 2009; Kahne et al., 2013).

Thus, while providing opportunities for face to face discussions of controversial civic and political issues in contexts moderated by educators has long been and continues to be a best practice by civic educators (Hess, 2009), additional learning opportunities will be needed to support youth to navigate and address the risks, as well as take advantage of the expanded opportunities with online dialogue and feedback.

Theme 2: Character Development

Personality development involves all of the factors that influence how our personalities form and change over time.

Three participants mentioned, "Through this, my character is being shaped to become stronger and more resilient".

The participant also explained, "This molded me into a better person".

This confirms that values deal with fundamental and important parts of social life. Shared values, invested with deep emotional significance, are moved to participate in the fate of the people around you and the fate of the country as well. It is the teaching as a conscious activity of students, as a process, realizes in their perception of certain objects and processes, comprehension of the studied facts, phenomena, and ties between them, generalization of the perceived facts, consolidation and application of knowledge (M. A. Danilov, 2005). In addition, these definitions imply engagement through established institutions; however,

recent studies have shown that engagement could also be personalized (Eimhjellen et al., 2018).

Theme 3: Eco-friendly

Eco-friendly means not harmful to the environment, or trying to help the environment.

The participant explained, “Through participating in tree planting activity, I felt joy and consider myself as an advocate in preserving our environment”.

Generally, following from (Rubin’s, 2007) and (Hardy et al.’s, 2010) studies in different countries linking civic identities to civic engagement, the findings of this study suggest the need for civic educators to explore the civic identities of their learners from different contexts such as gender, location, socioeconomic background, and ethnic (cultural) background. This is because civic identities can hinder or encourage community volunteering and environmental protection through means such as environmental sanitation. However, environmental attitudes and sanitation practices have been consistently found to be poor (Ekong, 2015; Ogunbode, 2013) and community volunteering is not popular.

Research evidence has shown that people with more knowledge or education are more likely to be environmentally concerned and produce more positive environmental behavior (Ajaps & McLellan, 2015; Chanda, 1999; Zsóka, Szerényi, Széchy, & Kocsis, 2013). Many studies have argued that education or environmental knowledge is not sufficient for generating positive environmental behaviors (e.g., Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002), yet some experimental studies (e.g., Duerden & Witt, 2010) show that, if implemented strategically, environmental knowledge and education can stimulate positive environmental behaviors.

This result is in consonance with previous research findings that have found rural residents to be more protective of and interactive with the environment (Hinds & Sparks, 2008; Huddart-Kennedy, Beckley, McFarlane, & Nadeau, 2009).

Theme 4: Communication Skill

Communication skills refer to the ability to convey information effectively.

The participant discussed, “We helped and assisted in crowd control; through this, I learned to communicate nicely.”

Communication skill developed thru civic activity as a way to interact and respond quickly to the needs of the community.

Theme 5: Act of Kindness

Compassion means sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others.

The participant explained, “This experience taught me how to be a good person, especially showing concern for others.”

This emphasized that civic educators interested in providing opportunities for youth to be active in the community have often focused on service activities, such as tutoring, or

volunteering, or fundraising for widely supported charitable causes (Walker, 2000; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Likewise, the altruistic reason of simply helping others has been emphasized as a key motivating factor for volunteering (Jack et al., 2011).

However, many online mobilization efforts are disconnected from institutional and grassroots organizations or organizing efforts, limiting their ability to build and sustain collective capacity (Ganz, 2014). Thus, educators must not only teach youth how to gain support for a cause through a petition or online fundraising effort, but must also help youth learn to critically examine requests for their support and how to connect efforts, where possible, to institutions and organizations that can help build and sustain powerful organization.

Theme 6: Self-confidence

This validate that a person's capacity to see themselves as competent and accountable members of society is directly related to their level of self-confidence, which is a crucial component of civic consciousness. Self-esteem, self-referentiality, self-consciousness are important aspects of civic self-identification, according to research on personal civic identity. High self-confidence strengthens a person's sense of agency and responsibility by empowering them to actively engage in social issues, take a civic stance, and consciously identify with civic society (Bespalova, 2019).

Theme 7: Leadership Skill

Leadership skill is the ability to motivate people toward a goal, which means you influence what people do.

Six participants experienced leadership skills with others.

Three participants mentioned, "This experience developed my skill in leading my team in a proper way of interaction and how to handle them, especially during crowd control".

The participant also explained, "This experience helped me to develop my skills in leadership".

Two participants also elaborated, "This opportunity helped me learn how to guide others".

Leadership skills denotes the ability to lead and influence the group for the common good of the community.

In Roncesvalles, & Gaerlan, (2020) research it is observed that the implementation of authentic leadership positively promotes the organizational citizenship behavior by teachers in higher education.

Theme 8: The bond of camaraderie was formed

Camaraderie is a mutual trust and friendship among people who spend a lot of time together.

The participant explained, "This experience helped me to develop how to deal with and mingle with others."

Camaraderie is a way of building relationship through civic engagement with a common goal

in a certain community.

Theme 9: Social Responsibility

Social responsibility is an ethical concept in which a person works and cooperates with other people and organizations for the benefit of the community.

The participant explained, “Engaging in community service develops a sense of duty towards society. Community engagement builds connection.”

This affirms that civic engagement is defined as acting upon a heightened sense of responsibility to one’s communities, which involves developing a wide range of activities including developing civic sensitivity, participation in building civil society, and benefitting the commons (Jacoby, 2009); the participation of individuals in civil life and groupings (Putnam, 2000) is useful for peace and national development.

Likewise, youth had chances to mobilize others through involvement in community-based youth organizations that provide opportunities for youth to organize and mobilize others to bring about change in their communities and the broader society (Rogers, Mediratta, & Shah, 2012). Similarly, youth can also mobilize others by drawing on the affordances of social media platforms that bypass the need for bureaucratic structures or organization (Bimber, 2003; Earl & Schussman, 2007). In addition, a significant value of digital media and participatory politics may be the avenues they provide for young people to cultivate and extend their voice beyond the classroom and school into the community and broader culture (LeSure & Cohen, 2015). Although not the only relevant practices, we highlight these because they are analogues to the main practices identified as part of a broader participatory culture (Jenkins et al., 2009).

4. Conclusions and Future Works

This study explores the civic consciousness on community development and social responsibility of the ROTC students. The findings revealed that the students developed and experienced on leadership skills, a bond of camaraderie was formed, horizons widened, and character development, eco-friendliness, communication skills, acts of kindness, self-confidence, and social responsibility were fostered.

Existing literature underscores the significance of civic consciousness in fostering responsible citizenship. Strengthening civic consciousness remains essential for building informed, engaged, and socially responsible citizens in an evolving global landscape.

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Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request.

Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that there are no competing or potential conflicts of interest.

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