Lived Experiences of Student Leaders in Kalinga State University, Dagupan Campus

Rodolfo B. Tucay Jr., Abigail B. Quimosing, Atty. Johnny D. Wayet

Kalinga State University, Philippines

Received: 19 Oct 2020; Received in revised form: 19 Dec 2020; Accepted: 24 Dec 2020; Available online: 31 Dec 2020

©2020 The Author(s). Published by Infogain Publication. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Abstract—This study analyzed the lived experiences of the student leaders in Kalinga State University, Dagupan Campus. It made use of qualitative research design, employing phenomenological method by Moustakas (1994). The study revealed that there are negative and positive lived experiences of the student leaders, five (5) positive and five (5) negative themes respectively. As to the positive impact of student leadership to the studies of the participants, it was revealed that students engaging in leadership positions would tend to become well-rounded persons - developing critical thinking skills, decision-making or problem solving skills, socialization skills, and communication skills. On the other hand, the negative impact of student leadership to the studies of the respondents is that student leaders tend to struggle with time management, especially when there is too much demand of responsibilities.

Keywords—lived experiences, student leaders, ethno-methodology.

I. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is one of the most defined words in all sorts of organizations, may it be in business or in the academe; may it be among the professionals or among the students.

In the school, long it has been a culture – making student leadership as part of the curriculum – to develop leaders among students. Thus, providing a vehicle for them to perform their tasks and that is through electing their own officers and managing their own organizations.

Nelson (2017) posited that the best way to make students prepared for future job is student leadership. This is also true to Ravasini (2017) when he further discussed that it is important for students to experience leadership opportunities during their schooling to learn the art of building relationships within teams, defining identities and achieving tasks effectively.

Moreover, students perform better academically, socially, and emotionally when they are meaningfully engaged (Edwards, 2018). That is why in the school, establishing student organizations or clubs is highly encouraged.

Further, this study aimed at analyzing the lived experiences of the student leaders in Kalinga State University, Dagupan Campus. Specifically, it sought answers to: 1) to identify the themes on the lived experiences of the student leaders; and 2) to determine the effects of the lived experiences of the participants to their studies.

II. METHODOLOGY

The researchers made use of qualitative research design, employing ethno-methodological approach introduced by Harold Garfinkel in 1967.

Careful selection of participants was undertaken through purposive random sampling. The 35 participants were asked to write their narration regarding their experiences as student leaders. However, only 8 were interviewed which include the presidents of each organization.

Moreover, in gathering first-hand data on the lived experiences of the participants, the researchers made use of
open-ended questions for their written narrative essays that were substantiated with interviews. Data analysis procedure was partly adapted from the research procedure of Clark & Minami (2015) – recorded interviews, transcription, reduction, and regrouping and coding.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Lived Experiences of the Respondents as to Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes on Positive Experiences</th>
<th>Lived Experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modelling good leadership</td>
<td>1. “Being an officer is a big responsibility to do because I have to be a good model or example to other students.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. “As a student leader, I should be a good model to everybody and I can say that I made my duty as a leader.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. “As a student leader, we should be a model though it is hard to follow the rules and regulations sometimes, because we are not perfect.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. “I should do all what the school policies for the student leaders should also the model for fellow students at KSU, Dagupan Campus.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. “I am trying my best just to be a good leader.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to communicate</td>
<td>1. “When I am leader I am enhancing my skills how to communicate with others.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. “...learning to listen to someone though I know that I am the leader…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. “A leader do not just talk, but also listens.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making friends with fellow students</td>
<td>1. “I get to know new faces and friends…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. “As an officer, I am friendly and approachable so that they can talk to me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking rationally</td>
<td>1. “You may boost your capacity to think for the betterment of your fellow students and for the betterment of the school as well.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. “As the president, I think very well of the activities that would improve the club and my fellow students.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Updated to current issues on school matters</td>
<td>1. “I have learned to be well-oriented and updated on what is going on around me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. “There are lots of things that I don’t know yet, but because of the organization, I learn a lot of things.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Themes on Negative Experiences

...
### Disobedience by fellow students

1. “Some students disobey us.”
2. “I lose confidence when I know other students do not obey what I say… nakakawalang gana lang…”
3. “Many students are not cooperating in activities.”

### Missed Classes due to Mandatory Meetings

1. “..when I must attend the meeting no matter what happens even if I have a class.”
2. “Sometimes, it is complicated for me to attend during the activities of officers because I was forced to attend the said activity instead of entering my class.”
3. Attendance is a must because if I will not attend, I will have a penalty.”

### Criticisms from Fellow Students

1. “Sometimes we hear bad words and bad things.”
2. “Sometimes, when sharing your opinion, they won’t consider because you’re just a new officer. They just talk and talk behind you.”

### Time constraint

1. “Being a student leader is very hard because you need to budget your time.”
2. “Sometimes, my attention to my studies is taken away. I don’t have time sometimes helping my family at home because sometimes we have to finish some activities… and meetings…”

### Unsatisfaction with the position

1. “This is my first time to be an officer of higher position… there is no significant experience that I encountered because I am not satisfied with my position.”
2. “I just feel like I’m not doing anything in my position. It just attend meeting. That’s it!”

---

**Positive Themes**

1. **Seen as Role Model by Fellow Students**

   Being a leader is being a model. As to this first positive theme which identified five(5) common lived experiences, it implies that the participants know very well their role as student leaders. That is to be a good model to their fellow students as they lead them with integrity, honesty, and justice.

   Webster & Webster (n.d.) posited that a good leadership role model sets high standards of accountability for themselves and their behaviors. They introduced the five(5) leadership roles. One of which is “Is ready to lead,” which he further defined as leaders are those who lead by example. “They are honest, sincere, and practice what they preach.”

   Marshall, Pories, and Daughety (2014) introduced the five leadership practices which include “Model the Way.” They further described it as recognizing that leaders model the behavior they expect and that the behavior is based upon personally held values and beliefs. Hence, this elaborates that student leaders hold their own values and beliefs that are reflected on their manner of leading their fellow students. The student leaders also are social beings, having their own unique representations of their beliefs and practices, that eventually what they tend to model to their fellow students.

2. **Enhanced Communication Skills**

   Based on the findings, the student leaders of KSU experienced leadership as stage for communication. This is for the fact that from the very start, when they were still campaigning for their positions, they were communicating themselves already. They would have never become officers if they do not know how to speak out their ideas. Hence, being a leader is also being a communicator.

   There is this maxim that “speech is the best show man puts on.” We can tell that in man’s speech or the way he
communicates, tends to reflect his thoughts, aspirations, and his personalities.

3. **Made New Friends with Fellow Students**

   There is such a compound term as “social leader,” as offered by Andy Nelson. He expounded that being a social leader is acknowledging that there is a team of people responsible for the creation and implementation of all decisions and ideas.

   As defined by Ravasini (2017), leadership is about the art of motivating, influencing, and directing people so that they work together to achieve the goals of a team or a broader organization. Indeed, it is about a team -- a group.

   Politically, every position is power. May it be a student position in the school, still power exists -- power to influence fellows in order to achieve common goal. With that, the need to rule over others with any given position also demands leaders to become social persons. They will always be needing others people in order to lead.

4. **Developed Rational Thinking**

   It is with deep sense that every leader is a thinker or must be a thinker. This is for the fact that in order to solve problems and arrive to sensible decisions, leaders must do use their minds. It is also for a fact that some organizations fail because of the incapacity of leaders to decide sensibly.

   According to Alyson Doyle on his post in June 2019, “thinkers or logical thinkers observe and analyze phenomena, reactions, and feedback and then draw conclusions based on that input. They can justify their strategies, actions, and decisions based on the facts they gathered.” Hence, that elaborates further the need for student leaders to become a thinker.

5. **Updated to Current Issues on School Matters**

   Static leadership does not welcome change. As posted by Abigail Phillips in 2014, an editorial director, “Leadership is not a static endeavor;” and that “successful managers does not only acknowledge development, but also willing to navigate their team through change.”

   Henceforth, such organization stays as is without development. Through embracing new updates to the current issues, especially on school matters, leaders are also opening doors for the organization to improve. It corroborates with the study of Black (2010) that empowering students to have a discernible impact on their school environment is an optimal outcome of student leadership.

   Therefore, student organizations provide platform for students to get updated not only of issues on school matters, but also all around them and their future endeavors after graduating from studies.

**Negative Themes**

6. **Disobedience by Fellow Students**

   It is always true that in every team, there will always be the members who are supportive and obedient and the otherwise or the disobedient. On the part of the student leaders, that is the challenge for them.

   According to one of the student leaders, it was really hard to lead people sometimes because they do not want to follow. Disobedience by their fellow students through not cooperating in the activities of the organization also sounds disappointing on the part of the student leaders. With that, it may affect their leadership performances. However, this may become a means for the student leaders to reflect or introspect if their leadership style is effective or the other way around.

   Hence, it might be high time for the student leaders to look into their leadership styles. May it coach leadership style, visionary, servant, autocratic, Laissez-faire, democratic, Pacesetter, or transformational, there is indeed a need for every leader to know it so that they would come to know which might be effective for the type of group they have. There is a need to consider a leadership style may be leading a meeting, a project, a team, or an entire department (www.indeed.com).

7. **Missed Classes due to Mandatory Meetings**

   Of all the possible negative effects of entering to student organizations, especially for leaders is when they miss their classes. Negligence of classes, sometimes, is set forth already by the capacity of the student leaders to manage their studies and at the same time their positions in any organization.

   When interviewed, mostly the reason why student leaders tend to neglect their classes over the set meeting of the organization is the fine imposed when an officer missed to attend. Though there would be considerations on their part to take special quiz, they made elaborations that it is still a different story to be listening to the actual explanations of the instructor and to participate in the class activities.

8. **Criticisms from fellow students**

   Jody Michael in *How to Handle Negative Feedback as a Leader*, stated that “leaders are not immune to feeling
challenged when they are on the receiving end of negative feedback.”

Indeed, leaders are also human beings with emotions. They also needed to be heard, especially when sometimes misinterpreted of their words and actions. To the other officers, they say that their noviceness in the position or just because they are new, others do not tend to respect them and even speak of criticisms at their back.

Everybody is entitled of his/her own opinion. That is a fact. However, weighing words before uttering them is still the best strategy for a wise person. That is something a leader must possess -- the ability to make sensible decisions. In that case, students would tend to gain their respects and that even if they are new officers, they still deserve to be heard and they deserve their positions.

4. **Time constraint**

Of the negative lived experiences of the student leaders, one is time constraint. Their time is divided to their studies, their families, and other social responsibilities.

As could be noticed on the following excerpts from the narrative essays of student leaders, there is indeed a difficulty on the management of time on their studies. One of the effects that could be noticed is that the focus of the student leaders to their studies is being diverted to the organizations they are leading.

It corroborates with the findings of Waters, Marzano and McNulty (2003) that there are effects of leadership on student achievements, may it be positive or negative impact. For other students, they can be achievers and at the same time leaders. However, to other student leaders, it is really hard, especially those bread winners and with families of their own or have child responsibilities.

5. **Unsatisfaction with the Position**

It is one of the reasons why student leaders fail to achieve their goals or accomplish less. That is because they do have the drive or inner motivation to pursue. When student leaders are not satisfied with their positions, they do not feel like they are doing anything or contributing anything to the organization. Sometimes, they just see it for compliance.

**Effects of the Lived Experiences of Respondents to their Studies**

According to Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003), there are effects of leadership on student achievements, may it be positive or negative impact. This study found the following effects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Effect</th>
<th>Negative Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students engaging in leadership positions would tend to become well-rounded persons – developing critical thinking skills, decision-making or problem solving skills, socialization skills, and communication skills</td>
<td>Student leaders tend to struggle with time management, especially when there is too much demand of responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IV. CONCLUSION**

The lives of student leaders comprise both positive and negative experiences. This also results to the fact that there are positive and negative effects of student leadership to their studies as they try to balance their studies and their responsibilities as officers.

**REFERENCES**

[1] Allegheny College (n.d.). Student Leadership and Involvement. [https://sites.allegheny.edu](https://sites.allegheny.edu)


Published by Elsevier Ltd. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.03.340

devolution.

ISSN: 2456-7620
https://dx.doi.org/10.22161/ijels.56.80