

## Student Leaders' Involvement and Practices in University Governance and Academic Performance

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### Abstract

Student participation in university governance is an essential element of democratic, participatory higher education institutions. However, the relationship between student participation and academic achievement in the Philippine context has not been sufficiently explored. This descriptive-correlational study aimed to investigate the involvement and governance practices of 162 student leaders of a private university in Western Visayas, Philippines, during the AY 2024-2025, which used a validated 30-item instrument. The study found that the levels of involvement and governance practices of student leaders were consistently high to very high, especially in communication, ethical conduct, and community outreach activities. On the other hand, lower engagement was observed in advocacy, initiatives, and budgeting, underscoring the need to empower student leaders in decision-making and expertise-based activities. Variations in student leaders' governance participation were influenced by age, but variations in sex, program, and position did not reveal significant differences. What was more important was the lack of correlation between governance and academic performance, highlighting the parallel and separate nature of leadership and learning in student development. Significantly, no correlation was found between governance and academic performance, highlighting the separate and parallel nature of leadership and learning in a student's development. The study recommends a reporting framework, leadership training, mentorship, and financial literacy programs for student governance and development.

**Keywords:** Student leadership, university governance, academic performance, higher education, Philippines.

### Bio-profiles

Edna Maricon Arca is a tenured faculty member and Program Head of the College of Business Management and Accountancy at her beloved alma mater, formerly West Negros University, now STI West Negros University (STIWNU). With 14 years of higher education experience, she has directed academic programs and faculty development, strengthened student governance, and spearheaded community outreach initiatives. She integrates ethical responsibility, inclusivity, and innovation into teaching and leadership, while pursuing doctoral studies in Public Administration focused on student leadership involvement, governance practices, and academic performance



## Introduction

### Rationale

The presence of student groups in university governance demonstrates their essential role in establishing democratic administrative systems. Governance theories emphasize accountability, transparency, and integrity as fundamental elements for institutional success (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). Universities, through their governance structures, provide students with opportunities to contribute to decision-making processes, ensuring that their voices shape institutional policies and direction. This principle aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal No. 4, which advocates for inclusive and equitable access to quality education. Student leaders, through councils, committees, and consultative bodies, serve as representatives of the student body and ambassadors of the institution, fostering collaboration and trust among stakeholders (Teixeira et al., 2021).

Participation in governance activities enables students to develop decision-making abilities, accountability, integrity, and a sense of community (Kahu & Nelson, 2018). These experiences shape their academic identity and motivation, contributing to holistic development. However, student leaders often struggle to balance academic obligations with governance responsibilities, creating tension between leadership commitments and academic success (Tinto, 2016). While international research has examined these dynamics, empirical studies in the Philippine context remain rare. This gap underscores the need for localized research on the connection between student leadership practices and academic performance.

This study investigates how student leaders' active involvement in university governance affects their academic performance. Specifically, it examines three domains of governance participation—budgetary participation, community engagement, and communication activities—to assess their impact on academic success. Using a descriptive-correlational design, the study aims to provide empirical evidence on whether student leadership practices contribute to or operate independently of academic achievement.

The findings of this study are expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions. Empirically, it enriches the limited Philippine literature on student governance and academic performance. In practice, it offers universities guidelines for designing policies that balance academic success with leadership development, ensuring that student leaders are recognized for both their academic achievements and their contributions to institutional governance. Ultimately, the study highlights the importance of holistic student development and the creation of transparent, accountable systems that strengthen participatory governance in higher education.



## Literature Review

### *Student Leaders' Involvement in University Governance.*

International scholarship consistently emphasizes the importance of student participation in governance as a cornerstone of democratic higher education. Birnbaum (2000) and Kezar & Holcombe (2017) argue that students are not passive recipients of policy but proactive stakeholders whose involvement enhances accountability, transparency, and legitimacy. Kezar, Holcombe, and Guma (2018) further demonstrate that student representation in councils and committees fosters responsiveness to student needs and strengthens institutional credibility. However, Nyoni and Bonga (2020) caution that superficial or tokenistic participation can undermine engagement, highlighting the need to examine the quality of involvement rather than its mere existence.

Communication emerges as a critical enabler of meaningful participation. Kuh et al. (2015) found that weak communication channels between administrators and student leaders reduce engagement, while Brennan and Willis (2016) showed that governance participation enhances civic responsibility and integrity. These findings underscore that involvement is multidimensional, encompassing not only presence in governance structures but also active communication, outreach, and accountability. In the Philippine context, student involvement is shaped by institutional frameworks and cultural norms. The Education Act of 1982 provides a legal foundation for student participation (Torres, 2021), while CHED (2017) recognizes student councils as partners in policy formulation. Local studies highlight cultural values such as *pakikipagkapwa-tao* and *pakikisama* as influential in consensus-building and in participation in governance (Santiago, 2017). Abad (2016) and Sumicad (2024) note that levels of involvement vary across institutions, while Esguerra (2022) points to digital platforms as expanding opportunities for engagement. Collectively, these studies affirm the relevance of student governance but reveal variability in practice and outcomes.

### *Student Leaders' Governance Practices*

Governance practices refer to the strategies and behaviors student leaders employ to fulfill their roles. Dugan & Komives (2010) highlight the importance of relational and process-centered practices such as collaboration, consultation, and accountability. Rosch & Collins (2017) found that practices emphasizing communication and feedback enhance organizational effectiveness and leadership confidence. Financial management is another critical domain: Cedeño et al. (2014) and Northouse (2019) argue that budgeting and financial accountability develop strategic and ethical skills essential for sustainable governance. Community outreach, meanwhile, extends leadership beyond the institution, fostering civic responsibility and social awareness (Brennan & Willis, 2016). Local studies echo these themes. Reyes & De Guzman (2018) emphasize financial transparency as central to organizational legitimacy, while Hernandez & Sunio (2019) highlight communication as a best practice for building trust. Malubay (2020) underscores the importance of relational leadership for Filipino student leaders, and Del Castillo (2020) links extension programs to civic engagement. However, challenges persist: hierarchical governance structures and role strain often limit effective practice (David,



2023; Villanueva, 2018). These findings suggest that while governance practices are recognized as essential, their effectiveness depends on institutional support and the balance of responsibilities.

### *Academic Performance of Student Leaders*

Research has long explored the relationship between leadership involvement and academic achievement. Internationally, Pascarella & Terenzini (2005) and Bowman (2011) found that leadership participation positively influences GPA, persistence, and graduation rates, primarily through enhanced self-regulation, motivation, and time management. Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons (2002) similarly emphasized the role of self-efficacy and goal-setting in academic attainment. However, Hevel, Martin, and Pascarella (2015) caution that excessive involvement can lead to role conflict and stress, negatively affecting academic focus. Rosch & Collins (2017) argue that time management strategies mediate the relationship between leadership and performance, suggesting that outcomes depend on how responsibilities are managed.

Philippine studies reinforce these findings. Salazar (2016) and Rivera (2019) highlight discipline, perseverance, and time management as benefits of leadership roles. Dizon (2017) and Cruz (2018) link leadership involvement to critical thinking, resilience, and academic drive. Lim & Gonzales (2021) emphasize the importance of stress-coping strategies in sustaining academic success among student leaders. Dela Cruz & Bautista (2019) further note that leadership activities enhance resilience and academic outcomes. These studies collectively suggest that leadership involvement can support academic achievement, but only when balanced with institutional support and personal coping mechanisms.

### **Theoretical Underpinnings**

This study is anchored in an integrated theory based on Arnstein's 1969 conceptualization of the Ladder of Citizen Participation and Social Exchange Theory, as conceptualized by Homans (1958), Blau (1964), and Emerson (1976). Arnstein's conceptual framework of participation as a hierarchical distribution of power serves as a paradigm for evaluating the extent of student leaders' real influence in the governance of their universities. Social Exchange Theory will also complement this structuralistic point of view by explicating the relational motivations that drive students' involvement.

Social Exchange Theory affirms that individuals participate in social exchange because they perceive costs and benefits. Thus, individuals are social members who maintain relationships through reciprocity. In this respect, participating in student leadership not only entails discharging duties of representation but also earning accolades, building a network, and fostering self-development. While Arnstein's "ladder of participation" and the SET model both contribute a necessary, albeit different, piece of this puzzle, their integration allows for the dual assessment of the structural dimension, the level of authority and decision-making power, as well as the relational dimension and its exchange with various actors such as the administrator, faculty, and peers. It is in this context that the study's analyses are derived: the communicative



practices illustrate relational exchange, community involvement parallels the participatory ladder, and financial management captures concepts of accountability and cost/benefit analysis.

Using this integrated framework, this study examines the relationship between university students' leadership involvement in university governance and academic performance. The respondents' profiles, such as age, sex, program, and leadership position, are considered moderator variables that may affect the relationship between governance participation and academic performance. Governance involvement is assessed across three domains: (1) communication and information dissemination, (2) community outreach programs, and (3) financial management. The framework assumes that student leaders invest time and effort in governance roles to gain reciprocal benefits, such as recognition, Astin's development, and academic success. Following Astin's (1984) Theory of Student Involvement, involvement in university governance is likely to enhance learning and development; however, even high levels of involvement can cause stress and divert academic attention (Misra & McKean, 2000). Accordingly, the degree of involvement and academic performance are assessed to ascertain whether university governance has a positive or negative effect, or whether such an effect is independent.

By bringing together structural and relational approaches, this approach provides a comprehensive method for examining the impact of participation in governance on academic outcomes. It also has important implications for institutions in crafting mechanisms to support both leadership and academic success, thereby increasing the effectiveness of participatory governance in higher education.

## Objectives

This study aimed to determine the level of student leaders' involvement and practices in university governance and how these relate to their academic performance in a highly urbanized city in the central Philippines during AY 2024-2025. Specifically, it examined the level of student leaders' involvement in governance across three domains-communication and information dissemination, community outreach programs, and financial management- and assessed their practices in these same areas. It further analyzed whether levels of involvement, practices, and academic performance varied across demographic variables, including age, sex, program, and position in the student council or organization. Finally, the study investigated whether significant differences and relationships exist among governance involvement, governance practices, and academic performance, thereby providing empirical evidence on the extent to which student leadership participation contributes to, or operates independently of, academic achievement.



## Methodology

This chapter discusses the research design, the study locale, respondents, the data-gathering instrument, validity and reliability, the data-gathering procedure, analytical schemes, and statistical tools.

### Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational, cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationship between student leaders' involvement and governance practices and their academic performance. A descriptive design was chosen to portray the current state of student leadership involvement and practices, while the correlational component allowed for testing associations between governance participation and academic achievement. This design aligns with the study's theoretical framework, which integrates Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation and Social Exchange Theory, by capturing both the structural and relational dimensions of student governance.

### Locale of the Study

The research was conducted at a prestigious private university in a highly urbanized city in Central Philippines. The institution, with approximately 14,000 students enrolled per semester, offers programs across six colleges and has attained Level IV accreditation from PACUCOA and ISO certifications for quality management. Its vibrant student body and active governance structures provided an ideal setting for examining leadership involvement and its academic implications.

### Respondents of the Study

The respondents comprised 162 student leaders holding official positions in recognized governance bodies and student organizations. From a population of 277 student leaders, the sample size was determined using Cochran's formula and selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across academic programs and governance groups. Stratification by organizational membership and academic affiliation enhanced the sample's validity and minimized bias.

### Data-Gathering Instrument

Data collection was carried out using a researcher-developed survey questionnaire designed to capture both demographic information and governance-related experiences of student leaders. The instrument consisted of two parts: the first section gathered respondent



profiles, including age, sex, academic program, leadership position, and academic performance measured through a general weighted average (GWA). The second section assessed student leaders' involvement and governance practices across three core domains—communication and information dissemination, community outreach programs, and financial management. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale (5 = Always to 1 = Almost Never), allowing for quantitative evaluation of the frequency and consistency of leadership involvement and practices. This structured design ensured that the instrument provided reliable data for analyzing the relationship between governance participation and academic performance.

### Instrument Validity and Reliability

The instrument underwent content validation by four subject matter experts in management, public administration, educational management, and statistics. Items were rated using a 5-point scale, yielding a validity index of 4.84 (Excellent). Reliability was tested through a pilot study with 30 respondents, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients indicated strong internal consistency: 0.898 (Good) for involvement items and 0.948 (Excellent) for practices items. These results confirmed the instrument's suitability for the main study.

### Data-Gathering Procedure

Ethical clearance and institutional approvals were obtained from the university registrar, the dean, and the student affairs office. Respondents were recruited through official student organizations, and participation was voluntary, with informed consent obtained before data collection. Surveys were administered both online and in-person to maximize accessibility. Confidentiality was strictly maintained: no personal identifiers were collected, and data were anonymized, securely stored, and protected in accordance with institutional research ethics protocols.

### Research Ethics Protocol

The research was conducted in full adherence to ethical standards for research with human participants, in accordance with APA principles and institutional protocols. Prior approval was obtained from the university registrar, the dean, and the student affairs office. Participation was voluntary, with informed consent obtained after respondents were provided with precise details regarding the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks, and anticipated benefits. Confidentiality was safeguarded by anonymizing responses, excluding personal identifiers, and storing all data securely in password-protected electronic files and locked facilities. Respondents were assured of their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. Upon completion of the research, all data will be permanently destroyed to ensure privacy and uphold ethical integrity.



## Analytical and Statistical Schemes

A mix of descriptive, comparative, and correlational forms of analysis was adopted in this study to systematically address its objectives and issues. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to profile respondents in terms of age, sex, program, and leadership position, as well as to assess the levels of involvement and governance practices across the domains of communication and information dissemination, community outreach programs, and financial management. A comparative analysis was conducted to assess differences in involvement, practices, and academic performance across demographic groups. The Mann-Whitney U test was used for the analysis of non-parametric data. At the same time, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to assess academic performance and test differences in mean scores between the groups. Relational analyses were employed to explore associations among governance involvement, governance practices, and academic performance, using Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation to assess the strength and direction of the relationships. This nonparametric test was deemed appropriate given the ordinal nature of Likert-scale data and the absence of normality assumptions. To ensure consistency in interpretation, mean scores derived from the Likert scale were categorized into five levels: very high (4.50–5.00), high (3.50–4.49), moderate (2.50–3.49), low (1.50–2.49), and very low (1.00–1.49). Academic performance was likewise interpreted using score ranges aligned with verbal descriptors, allowing results to be communicated in a way that is both statistically precise and easily understood. For example, higher General Weighted Average (GWA) scores were described as Outstanding or Very Satisfactory, while lower scores were categorized as Fair or Needs Improvement. Collectively, these analytical and statistical schemes provided a rigorous framework for describing patterns, testing group differences, and establishing relationships, thereby aligning the methodological approach with the study's theoretical and conceptual framework.

## Results and Discussion

This section summarizes the study's findings, which come from careful data gathering, in-depth analysis, and thoughtful interpretation. After this, meaningful conclusions were drawn from the initial phase, offering valuable insights.

### Level of Student Leaders' Involvement in University Governance in the Areas of Communication and Information Dissemination, Community Outreach Programs, and Financial Management



**Table 1**

*Level of Student Leaders' Involvement in University Governance in the area of Communication and Information Dissemination*

<b>Communication and Information Dissemination</b>		
<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
<i>As a student leader, I</i>		
1. provide frequent updates and information about university policies to students	4.45	High Level
2. use appropriate channels (e.g., meetings, social media) to share relevant information	4.58	Very High Level
3. ensure that my organization's decisions are properly disseminated to its members	4.67	Very High Level
4. gather and report student issues to the university administration	4.10	High Level
5. encourage open dialogue between students and school officials	4.22	High Level
6. help explain university policies and guidelines to students when they seek clarification	4.48	High Level
7. verify the accuracy of information before sharing it with others	4.69	Very High Level
8. use formal and respectful communication when addressing university concerns	4.73	Very High Level
9. provide timely responses to student inquiries related to governance issues	4.45	High Level
10 initiate communication efforts to promote transparency in university governance	4.57	Very High Level
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.49</b>	<b>High Level</b>

Table 1 presents data showing the level of student leaders' involvement in University Governance in the area of Communication and Information Dissemination.

The overall mean score is 4.49, indicating a high level of student leaders' involvement in communication and information dissemination.

Item number 8, "use formal and respectful communication when addressing the university," obtained the highest mean score, 4.73, interpreted as a "very high level" of student leaders' involvement.

Item number 4, "gather and report student issues to the university administration," got the lowest mean score, 4.10, interpreted as a "high level" of student leaders' involvement.

The results indicate that student leaders are fully engaged in communication and information dissemination activities, as shown by their high levels of involvement in almost all areas. The best practice of student leaders, which is the use of formal and respectful communication in addressing university concerns, portrays their professionalism in their



activities. The lower score in gathering and reporting student issues to the administration indicates this area could be improved, yet it still reflects high levels of participation.

It is consistent with Philippine-based scholarship, suggesting that students' roles in university governance, especially those in communication, have historically remained marginalized in decision-making. Systemically, the inclusion of students in governance has been demonstrated in Philippine-based institutions, albeit constrained by pyramidically entrenched administrative structures that are procedurally oriented rather than serving students' needs (Esguerra, 2022; Sumicad, 2021). Therefore, the communication roles exercised by student leaders are solely consultative. According to Reyes and De Guzman (2018), for instance, the structures of shared governance in higher education institutions in the Philippines prioritize institutional stability and administrative accountability over student representation. Although students' participation is acknowledged, their exercise of influence, as exercised by student leaders, is limited and defined within established governance structures.

Consistent with these findings, the present results suggest that student leaders' involvement in communication is mainly symbolic, as evidenced by lower levels of issue reporting and advocacy. It emphasizes the importance of having a strong feedback and reporting system for Philippine universities, allowing student leaders to serve as conduits for student concerns and making the institutions more responsive and inclusive in governance.

**Table 2**

*Level of Student Leaders' Involvement in University Governance in the area of Community Outreach Programs*

Community Outreach Programs	Mean	Interpretation
<i>As a student leader, I</i>		
1. help plan and implement outreach activities that benefit local communities	4.20	High Level
2. encourage fellow students to participate in university-led outreach programs	4.48	High Level
3. work with other organizations to address community needs	4.30	High Level
4. integrate social responsibility into the projects we initiate	4.46	High Level
5. reflect on how community outreach impacts my personal and academic growth	4.49	High Level
6. represent the student body in university-community engagement events	4.41	High Level
7. take the initiative to propose outreach programs to our council or group	4.07	High Level
8. monitor the outcomes of our community service projects	4.23	High Level
9. ensure our community outreach activities align with the university's mission	4.44	High Level



10. seek feedback from beneficiaries to improve our outreach initiatives	4.35	High Level
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.34</b>	<b>High Level</b>

Table 2 presents data showing the level of Student Leaders' Involvement in University Governance in the area of Community Outreach Programs.

The overall mean score is 4.34, indicating a high level of student leaders' involvement in community outreach programs.

Item number 5, reflect on how community outreach impacts my personal and academic growth," obtained the highest mean score, 4.49, interpreted as a "Very High Level" of student leaders' involvement.

Item no 4. "Take the initiative to propose outreach programs to our council or group," got the lowest mean score, 4.07, interpreted as "High Level" of student leaders' involvement.

This result suggests that, although student leaders are actively involved in outreach programs, they are less proactive in initiating new programs. The implication here is that student leaders might be more reflective, focusing on existing outreach opportunities rather than innovating on-campus outreach initiatives.

The findings are consistent with research conducted in the Philippines, which shows how institutional frameworks in higher education restrict student autonomy and transform student leaders from program initiators into participants. Local research has found that, despite encouraging student participation in outreach programs, their design and development remain primarily in the hands of the administration (Del Castillo, 2020; Esguerra, 2022). The result is that student leaders involved in community outreach programs continue to focus on implementation rather than on program development.

This is supported by the current study's findings, which show that, while student leaders actively engage in outreach initiatives, their ability to initiate and manage them independently is limited. It emphasizes the necessity for the Philippine context to guarantee the availability of mechanisms and governance structures that facilitate the development of student leaders' capacity to organize and carry out outreach initiatives.

**Table 3**

*Level of Student Leaders' Involvement in University Governance in the area of Financial Management*

<b>Financial Management</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
<i>As a student leader, I</i>		
1. participate in the budgeting process for student organization activities	4.14	High Level
2. ensure transparency in reporting financial transactions	4.44	High Level
3. monitor and record the financial transactions of our organization.	4.35	High Level
4. follow university policies on the proper use of funds	4.60	Very High Level



5. collaborate with officers to make financially sound decisions	4.56	Very High Level
6. submit financial reports to the appropriate university offices on time	4.39	High Level
7. practice accountability in handling financial matters	4.58	Very High Level
8. organize events that are both impactful and financially viable	4.52	Very High Level
9. value ethical practices when dealing with monetary resources	4.65	Very High Level
10. pursue education on managing student finances and budgeting.	4.40	High Level
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.46</b>	<b>High Level</b>

Table 3 presents data on the level of Student Leaders' involvement in University Governance in the area of Financial Management.

The overall mean score is 4.46, indicating a High Level of involvement in financial management.

Item no. 9, "Value ethical practices when dealing with monetary resources," obtained the highest mean score, 4.65, indicating a Very High Level of student leaders' involvement.

Item no. 1, "participate in the budgeting process for student organization activities," received the lowest mean score, 4.14, indicating a High Level of student leaders' involvement.

It implies that student leaders, although exhibiting excellent ethical practices in spending money, are not very active in the technical and procedural aspects of budgeting. Thus, the finding suggests that student leaders prioritize ethics-based financial management over active participation in financial planning and resource allocation processes.

The result corroborates Philippine empirical studies that highlight the structural challenges faced by student leaders in financial governance. (Reyes & De Guzmán, 2018; Esguerra, 2022) A study conducted in the Philippines indicates that the process of financial decision-making and budgeting is mainly restricted to the schools, where student leaders are consulted and have little to no influence on fund distribution. Even though student leaders are expected to be ethical, open, and accountable, institutions' financial structures often limit their engagement to procedural compliance rather than allowing them to be active decision-makers.

The findings of current research support the earlier claims, revealing that student leaders' participation in financial management is characterized by high ethical awareness but is restricted by low procedural participation. It indicates that Philippine universities should offer financial governance training and clearly delineated roles for student leaders to enable their relevant participation in budgeting and financial control. Reinforcing these mechanisms might increase student leaders' financial literacy, decision-making ability, and overall governance capacity, thereby making university governance more inclusive and accountable.

### Level of Student Leaders' Practices in University Governance in the Areas of Communication and Information Dissemination, Community Outreach Programs, and Financial Management



**Table 4**

*Level of Student Leaders' Practices in University Governance in the area of Communication and Information Dissemination*

<b>Communication and Information Dissemination</b>		
<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
<i>As a student leader, I</i>		
1. provide frequent updates and information about university policies to students	4.48	High Level
2. use appropriate channels (e.g., meetings, social media) to share relevant information	4.57	Very High Level
3. ensure that my organization's decisions are properly disseminated to its members	4.62	Very High Level
4. gather and report student issues to the university administration	4.17	High Level
5. encourage open dialogue between students and school officials	4.21	High Level
6. help explain university policies and guidelines to students when they seek clarification	4.49	High Level
7. verify the accuracy of information before sharing it with others	4.66	Very High Level
8. use formal and respectful communication when addressing university concerns	4.72	Very High Level
9. provide timely responses to student inquiries related to governance issues	4.49	High Level
10 initiate communication efforts to promote transparency in university governance	4.55	Very High Level
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.50</b>	<b>Very High Level</b>

Table 4 presents data on the level of Student Leaders' practices in University Governance, specifically in the area of communication and information dissemination.

The overall mean score is 4.50, indicating a Very High Level of practice in communication and information dissemination.

Item no. 8, "use formal and respectful communication when addressing university concerns," received the highest mean score, 4.72, indicating a Very High Level of student leaders' practices.

Item no. 4, "gather and report student issues to the university administration," got the lowest mean score, 4.17, interpreted as a High Level of student leaders' practices.

This result implies that while student leaders demonstrate very high levels of formality and respect in their communication practices, they are comparatively less proactive in consolidating and relaying student concerns to the administration. Student leaders' communication practices tend to focus more on following the correct procedure than on advocating for and representing the students' voices.



The finding is consistent with studies in the Philippines, which show that student participation in university communication structures is formal primarily and procedural, with little involvement in advocacy. Local research shows that students' perspectives. However, student leaders are still engaged in communication and consultation processes that are mediated through hierarchical, administrator-centered governance systems; hence, the level of genuineness in student representation is constrained (Esguerra, 2022; Sumicad, 2021). Consequently, the methods of communication employed by student leaders are primarily focused on meeting requirements and being formal, thereby rarely allowing them to deliberately voice concerns or have an impact on policy.

The results of the present study support these perceptions, indicating that the communication practices of student leaders are commendable in procedural engagement but ineffective in advocacy and issue escalation. Hence, there is a significant call for the universities in the Philippines to fortify their feedback and reporting systems. It, in turn, will give student leaders the freedom and authority to serve as the most efficient channels for student demands. By improving these systems, higher education institutions can become more responsive, inclusive, and participatory in their governance.

**Table 5**

*Level of Student Leaders' Practices in University Governance in the area of Community Outreach Programs*

<b>Community Outreach Programs</b>		
<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
<i>As a student leader, I</i>		
1. help plan and implement outreach activities that benefit local communities	4.21	High Level
2. encourage fellow students to participate in university-led outreach programs	4.45	High Level
3. work with other organizations to address community needs	4.29	High Level
4. integrate social responsibility into the projects we initiate	4.44	High Level
5. reflect on how community outreach impacts my personal and academic growth	4.50	Very High Level
6. represent the student body in university-community engagement events	4.42	High Level
7. take the initiative to propose outreach programs to our council or group	4.09	High Level
8. monitor the outcomes of our community service projects	4.21	High Level
9. ensure our community outreach activities align with the university's mission	4.40	High Level
10. seek feedback from beneficiaries to improve our outreach initiatives	4.35	High Level
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.34</b>	<b>High Level</b>



Table 5 presents data on the level of Student Leaders' Practices in University Governance, specifically in the area of Community Outreach Programs.

The overall mean score is 4.34, indicating a High Level of practices in the community outreach program.

Item no. 5, "reflect on how community outreach impacts my personal and academic growth," obtained the highest mean score, 4.50, interpreted as a Very High Level, of student leaders' practices.

Item no. 7, "take the initiative to propose outreach programs to our council or group," got the lowest mean score, 4.09, interpreted as a High Level of student leaders' practices.

This result suggests that, although student leaders are actively involved in community outreach and recognize its impact on their personal and academic development, they are less proactive in initiating new outreach programs. This finding suggests that student leaders tend to be less focused on innovation in community outreach activities.

The current study's findings support the Filipino-based literature in identifying that student leaders' participation in outreach is generally positive. However, their response is limited by a focus on compliance rather than innovation. According to local literature, student leaders are heavily involved in university-based outreach programs; however, they are often assigned implementation tasks rather than the planning or initiation stages (Esguerra, 2022; Malolos & David, 2019). It limits student leaders' ability to utilize their autonomy and creatively address the community's needs.

These findings suggest that universities should implement enabling policies and programs to build a policy and programmatic capacity among student leaders, enabling them to conceptualize and submit ideas for undertaking outreach activities. Empowering students to be more self-governing within outreach governance may enhance leadership skills and foster more responsive, community-driven engagement at the university.

**Table 6**

*Level of Student Leaders' Practices in University Governance in the area of Financial Management*

Financial Management		
Items	Mean	Interpretation
<i>As a student leader, I</i>		
1. participate in the budgeting process for student organization activities	4.13	High Level
2. ensure transparency in reporting financial transactions	4.44	High Level
3. monitor and record the financial transactions of our organization.	4.31	High Level
4. follow university policies on the proper use of funds	4.61	Very High Level



5. collaborate with officers to make financially sound decisions	4.56	Very High Level
6. submit financial reports to the appropriate university offices on time	4.40	High Level
7. practice accountability in handling financial matters	4.58	Very High Level
8. organize events that are both impactful and financially viable	4.56	Very High Level
9. value ethical practices when dealing with monetary resources	4.64	Very High Level
10. pursue education on managing student finances and budgeting.	4.40	High Level
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.46</b>	<b>High Level</b>

Table 6 presents data on the level of Student Leaders' practices in University Governance, specifically in the area of Financial Management.

The overall mean score is 4.46, indicating a High Level of practices in financial management.

Item no. 5, "value ethical practices when dealing with monetary resources," obtained the highest mean score, 4.64, interpreted as a Very High Level of student leaders' practices.

Item no. 7, "participate in the budgeting process for student organization activities," received the lowest mean score, 4.13, indicating a High Level of student leaders' practices.

This result indicates that, although student leaders place a strong emphasis on the value of integrity in the institution's financial resource management, they are relatively less involved in the budget planning process. They exhibit financial behavior aligned with the value of integrity rather than with planning and budget allocation.

It is in line with studies conducted in the Philippines, wherein results show the budgeting structures of higher education institutions are centralized, thus inhibiting the engagement of the student leaders in financial governance. (Reyes & De Guzmán, 2018; Esguerra, 2022) Locally conducted research has shown that the engagement of student leaders in the budgeting processes is still merely consultative, despite being mandated to be transparent and accountable.

Related findings are supported by the present research, which shows that the financial management behavior of student leaders has a strong ethical orientation but is weak in actively participating in the budgeting process. It highlights the need for universities in the Philippines to provide specialized mentoring, as well as systematic financial governance responsibilities, that will enable student leaders to participate actively in budgeting processes.

### Level of Academic Performance of Student Leaders when Grouped According to Age, Sex, Program, and Position in the Student Council/Organization



**Table 7**  
***Level of Academic Performance of Student Leaders When Grouped According to Age, Sex, Program, and Position***

Variable	Category	N	Mean	Interpretation
Age	Younger	59	93.53	Outstanding
	Older	103	92.82	Outstanding
Sex	Male	59	92.86	Outstanding
	Female	103	93.19	Outstanding
Program	Board	84	92.96	Outstanding
	Non-Board	78	93.19	Outstanding
Position	SSG	40	92.83	Outstanding
	CSO	122	93.16	Outstanding

Table 7 examines the *Academic Performance of student leaders when grouped by age, Sex, Program, and Position.*

The results under Objective No. 6 are the same irrespective of age, sex, year level, program, or organizational position. More specifically, younger leaders score slightly better (93.53) than their older counterparts (92.86). Compared to male leaders (92.82), female leaders (93.19) have slightly better academic performance. (92.73). Students in the board program (93.02) marginally outperform counterparts in the non-board program (92.86). SSG officers surpass CSO members (93.16) in all areas with a score of 94.29.

The results presented here suggest that student leadership roles could actually enhance academic Achievement rather than impede it. The consistently high scores across all groups indicate the development of time management, accountability, and goal orientation—qualities beneficial to academic success—through participation in leadership. Younger and lower-year students may have a slight advantage because they are more driven to succeed early in their academic careers. At the same time, their roles may be better suited to SSG officers due to their structured nature and visibility.

Indeed, according to Pansacala et al. (2024), student leaders have more well-developed organizational and decision-making skills, which further contribute to their academic success. Ventura et al. (2025) noted that leadership positions that instill discipline and resilience in academic pursuits are more successfully developed if there is support for mental health and institutional frameworks. Aquino and San Luis (2025) believe that involvement in leadership develops a growth framework that supports both academic performance and personal growth.

Such leadership, therefore, needs to be continuously developed within each institution, with academic support systems that foster student leaders who are also academically prepared and capable of effectively governing the affairs that affect students.



## Results with Significant Differences

Variable	Significant difference observed	Mean/Interpretation	Relational Insight
Age	Younger leaders scored slightly higher academically (93.53 vs. 92.82)	Outstanding	Younger leaders may be more driven early in their academic careers, while older leaders show maturity in governance practices.
Sex	Female leaders marginally outperformed males (93.19 vs. 92.86)	Outstanding	Female leaders balance academic diligence with leadership roles, while male leaders excel in encouraging peer participation.
Program	Non-board students slightly higher (93.19 vs. 92.96)	Outstanding	Non-board programs may offer flexibility, while board programs demand heavier workloads, influencing governance involvement.
Position	CSO members slightly higher (93.16 vs. 92.83)	Outstanding	CSO's collaborative structure may complement academic pursuits, while SSG officers carry more formal responsibilities.
Governance Practices	High to Very High across communication, outreach, and finance	4.49 overall mean	Strong in communication and ethics; advocacy, initiative, and budgeting remain areas for growth.
Academic Performance	No significant correlation with governance involvement	Consistently Outstanding	Leadership and academics function as parallel dimensions—governance builds transferable skills, while academic success depends on other factors.

The analysis showed that student leaders performed consistently well across all categories, with a mean score above 92 in each instance, indicating Outstanding academic performance. Though there were no significant differences, minor differences provided interesting results. Younger student leaders (93.53) performed slightly better than older student leaders (92.82), suggesting that the earlier students began exhibiting leadership qualities, the higher their motivation. Female student leaders (93.19) performed slightly better than male student leaders (92.86), suggesting that women are better at balancing academic and leadership roles. Also, non-board students (93.19) performed slightly better than board students (92.96),



possibly because board students are too busy with school and cannot devote adequate time to leadership roles. CSO members (93.16) performed slightly better than SSG officers (92.83), implying that teamwork is important in academic and leadership roles.

### Relational Analysis

The above findings indicate that leadership and academic achievement can be seen as parallel factors in student development. Governance participation helps students develop transferable skills that are essential to their academic success, though these skills are not directly related to their performance. Though small differences are noted in relation to age, sex, program, and position, these may be subtle factors: young people may be highly motivated to lead, women may be balancing responsibilities and maintaining consistency in their leadership roles. CSO members may be benefiting from a collaborative model. Leadership is essential to a student's overall development without compromising academic success.

### Conclusion

This study concludes with an examination of student leaders' involvement and governance practices and their relationship to academic achievement. The study established that student leaders have high or very high involvement in communicative, community outreach, and financial management activities, characterized by professionalism, ethics, and inclusiveness in the governance structures. The diversity in age, sex, program type, and organizational role indicates that student leadership is representative in terms of involvement; however, student leaders' involvement was affected by age in most cases. Younger student leaders were found to be involved in communicative roles, while older student leaders were found to portray ethical and decision-making roles in governance structures. Despite their involvement in governance, no significant correlation was found between leadership involvement and academic performance. The academic performance of students remained excellent across all groups, regardless of demographic characteristics and leadership involvement, indicating that academic performance and leadership are parallel constructs in student development. Governance participation is associated with the development of generic skills such as accountability, effective time management, and perseverance, while other factors are related to academic performance. The study adds to the body of knowledge that supports the role of student governance in holistic student development without compromising academic performance. It emphasizes the need for institutional support systems that transcend mere representation and promote shared decision-making, mentorship, financial literacy, and reporting mechanisms, among others, in student governance and academic support, so that universities can groom student leaders who are academically and gubernatorially equipped to contribute to participatory governance and academic excellence.



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## Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest related to the conduct, analysis, or reporting of this study. No financial, personal, or professional relationships influenced the design, data collection, interpretation, or conclusions presented. The research was carried out independently, and no external parties had any role in shaping its outcomes.

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