

An Inquiry into the Role of Fraternity in Members' Success in the Community

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ABSTRACT

Fraternity involvement is recognized in our society today. As can be seen, people join fraternity organizations on the basis that members receive a variety of benefits from being a part of them, even though the majority frequently criticize and question the benefits to members as well as the community as a whole from being a part of these kinds of organizations. This study aimed to determine the lived experiences of fraternity members and identify the contributing factors and the roles of fraternities in their success within their involvement in the organizations. The semi-structured interview was conducted with researcher-made guide questions through the snowball sampling method. Results from the gathered data revealed that fraternities render financial assistance to members; they are contrivers of leadership skills to college members; promote brotherhood and sisterhood among members; provide a network as support for college graduate and undergraduate members; improve members' personal development; and support the government's activities in the community. With these results from the gathered data, the researchers suggest using this paper for the general public to be informed, to clear up the tainted thoughts that people have about fraternities, and for people to educate themselves about fraternities for the betterment of the community.

Keywords: Organization, involvement, sense of belonging, brotherhood, leadership

INTRODUCTION

Fraternity involvement exists today in our society. As observed, people join fraternity organizations. Through membership in such groups, members enjoy various benefits, even though the majority often criticize and doubt the positive impact on members, as well as on the community, for participating in these kinds of organizations. The question of what the roles of the members of these organizations in the community are is still at large and not well understood. According to the study by Phillips & Rogers (2021), fraternity can be defined as the trait or condition of being brotherly, highlighting the notion of a close-knit community among people or groups. Furthermore, it is a group of people with shared values and ideals who work together to achieve common goals. Kokemuller (2021) also believes that joining a fraternity or sorority can be a proactive approach to avoiding social isolation, or it can just be a means for a socially inclined person to form an immediate bond with frat brothers or sorority sisters. Lewis et al. (2019), believe people continue to portray fraternities in an unflattering light due to the rumors that they've heard and the movies that they've seen. Additionally, people avoid fraternities, assuming that they are all about cliques and partying, but despite these negative preconceptions, fraternity involvement does offer many social, academic, and professional benefits to their members (Bello & Palarisan, 2022).

Today, we see fraternal organizations that can either be culturally based or community-based (Thao, 2019). According to the statement by Ouellette (2020), contrary to what others are saying, fraternity members are not

gangsters, although they share commonalities. Fraternities started as school-based organizations; however, due to some cases of hazing and tension between fraternities, some schools disregard the presence of fraternity organizations. In connection with this, to maintain and strengthen the fraternity, leaders in the fraternities continue their journey as an organization that has a mission and vision for their community.

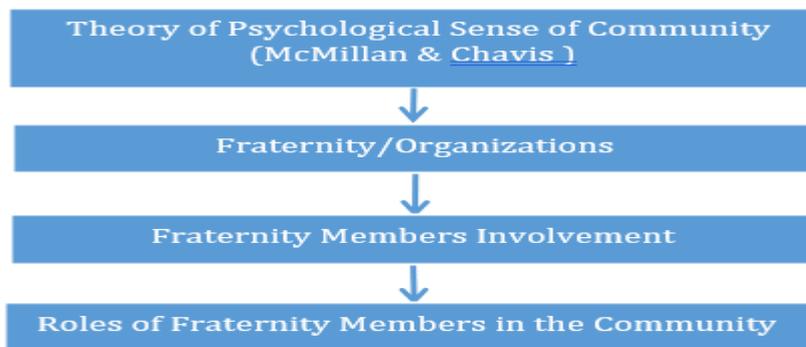
As observed by the researchers, there is no known study that deals with inquiring about the role of fraternity members in the community. Therefore, the researchers aimed to determine the lived experiences of members and identify the contributing factors to their involvement in the community. Furthermore, the researchers believed that by conducting this study, the perspectives of different members of various fraternities regarding their involvement in the community would be understood. This is amid the negative perceptions of the role of fraternities that were circulating in the community.

The study aimed to explore the role of fraternities in members' success in the community.

THEORETICAL/ CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

According to McMillan and Chavis' Theory of Psychological Sense of Community, "*it is a sense of belonging, a sense that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to being together.*" This theory consists of four components: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and emotional connection. The Sense of Community is a key feature of successful communities, with successful groups defined as active where members contribute regularly. With the idea of this theory, our study relates to the perception of a "sense of community" and its elements, since every fraternity organization is a group that requires membership to be identified, and it influences the lives of the members in various ways. It also caters to the needs of a member who is a part of the organization and shares an emotional connection to the system. They can broaden their ideas not only within their group but also to the people in the community through this type of interaction. The researchers of this study hoped to investigate the role of fraternity organizations in members' success in the community using these ideas.

Figure 1. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework of the Study



Methods

Design

The Phenomenological Research Design was utilized in this study. Humans, by their very nature, have various individual traits, and as a result, they will have diverse opinions on some situations. Through phenomenological design, this allows the researchers to delve into the perspectives of the informants who have experienced the life of being a fraternity member within the community. As stated by Ki (2019), by using phenomenology as a design, there is always value to be discovered by concentrating on people's perceptions of an event that will provide a more comprehensive picture of some phenomena.

Setting

The setting for this study was at the informants' and researchers' venue of choice within the vicinity of Sogod, Southern Leyte. This is to ensure that the venue for the conduct of the study is convenient for both informants

and the researchers. Sogod is a 2nd class municipality in the province of Southern Leyte, Philippines. According to the 2020 census, it has a population of 47,552 people. Also, the researchers found that there is a Unity of the Covenant in Sogod, wherein various fraternity organizations are included in it which convinced the researchers to conduct the study in the said municipality.

Participants

The target population in this study was members of the fraternities in Sogod, Southern Leyte, aged 18 and above. There were no gender restrictions to participate in this study. Fraternities, namely Alpha Phi Omega (APO); Alpha Kappa Rho (AKRho); Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE); Zeta Psi Omicron (Zetans); Sigma Phi Youth Movement Association (Spyma); Tau Gamma Phi (Tau Gamma/Triskelion); Gamma Kappa Phi (Kappans); and Beta Sigma Omega Phi (Betans), are the fraternities in Sogod, Southern Leyte who were able to participate in the study.

Measures

The study utilized a face-to-face semi-structured interview, in which the researchers were the ones to ask guide questions and take down notes. The researchers used a semi-structured interview with researcher-made guide questions to maintain structure and focus during the interview, but also to provide the researchers with the ability to probe the participants for additional details to gather the respondents' insights about the role of fraternities in the community.

Procedure

In selecting potential respondents, the researchers utilized the snowball sampling method. The snowball sampling method was applied when it was difficult to access subjects with the target characteristics. According to Simkus (2023), in the snowball sampling method, the researchers start with initial participants who fit to be respondents of the study and expand the sample by asking those initial participants to identify others who take part in the study.

The first thing the researchers did was send a letter of request to the municipal mayor of Sogod, Southern Leyte, for the list of registered fraternities in the area. After obtaining the list of registered fraternities, the researchers contacted the leaders of each organization, who served as the intermediaries. The screening instrument was given only to the leaders who served as the connection between the researchers and the prospects. The eligible respondents were invited to participate in the study. Consent forms containing details about the study were given to each of the respondents. Once they understood the consent forms and agreed to participate in the study, the setting and date of the focus group discussion were then scheduled. The gathering of data in this study was through the notes that were taken by the researchers and audio recorders during the focus group discussion. The gathered data were then analyzed with the use of John Creswell's thematic analysis, which follows a systematic process for coding data in which specific statements are analyzed and categorized into themes that represent the phenomenon of interest. To respect the privacy of the respondents, after analyzing the data, respondents were coded as R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, and so on, together with their statements.

Data Analysis

After collecting the data from the interviews of the fraternity members, the researchers analyzed and interpreted the data through thematic analysis. According to Naeem et al. (2023), thematic analysis is a good method to use for a set of qualitative data, especially when attempting to figure out something about people's ideas, beliefs, knowledge, and experiences. Creswell's thematic analysis is a structured method for categorizing data; particular statements are examined and grouped into themes that best capture the phenomenon of interest. To respect the privacy of the respondents, after analyzing the data, the respondents were coded as R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, and so on, along with their statements.

Given the scope of fraternity as a research topic, ethical guidelines were observed throughout the conduct of this study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after providing them with a clear explanation of the study's objectives, scope, and procedures, while ensuring that participation was voluntary and that they

retained the right to withdraw at any time. To preserve anonymity and confidentiality, all personal identifiers were removed from the dataset, and responses were coded, with the data securely stored and accessible only to the researchers. The questionnaire was designed to be neutral, respectful, and culturally sensitive so as not to reinforce stigma, bias, or discomfort among respondents. Participants were also reminded that they could decline to answer any item they found intrusive. The ethical use of data analytics was also emphasized, with findings presented only in aggregate form to prevent any individual from being singled out or stigmatized based on their participation level. Furthermore, the study underwent expert validation and adhered to the institutional research ethics policies prior to data collection, ensuring that the rights, dignity, and well-being of participants were safeguarded at all stages of the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The sole purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of and identify the role of fraternity members in the community. This chapter presents the results of the gathered data from the interviews. Throughout the study, the role of fraternity organizations was identified through face-to-face semi-structured interviews using audio recorders and field notes. Each interview lasted approximately 5 to 15 minutes. The researchers were able to interview 30 informants who were members of different fraternity organizations in Sogod, Southern Leyte, namely APO, AKRho, SAE, Zetans, Spyma, Tau Gamma, Kappans, and Betans.

To protect the identity of the respondents, they were coded as R1 (Respondent 1), R2, R3, R4, R5, and so on. After gathering the data, the researchers transcribed it and were able to create themes. The results of the thematic analysis revealed significant themes that illustratively delineate their responses to the roles of the fraternity in the community shared during the interviews. These themes are presented and discussed in the subsequent pages.

Theme 1: Render financial assistance to exigent members

This has been identified as one of the themes based on the results analyzed by the researchers. Based on the responses, fraternity members put forth effort whenever members are in financial need of help. This act contributes meaningfully to the community since members of fraternities are also members of the community.

Fraternity members give aid whenever members require financial assistance. Fraternity members work together with other members to support individuals in need during emergencies like the aftermath of natural disasters, the pandemic, and when members are desperately in need of financial assistance.

"Ja kuan, for example, mo tabang mi sa mga brothers namo labi na kadtong pag-Odette motabang mi. Sa kadto pong sa Baybay motabang pod mi bisan ginagmay ra." [We help our brothers, especially those who are in need, for example, during Odette. We also extended our help in Baybay (Leyte).] -R4

"Kung may kapatid kaming alanganin, minsan nag-aambag-ambag. Para matulungan lalo na kung yong magulang ng kapatid naming ay may sakit." [If one of our brothers is deeply in need, we sometimes give him financial assistance to help him, especially if our brother's parents are ill.] -R6

According to one of the respondents, if you are a member of a fraternity with a specific financial need and a reason to support it, some of that money may be coming straight to you. Old money and new money alike join together in the treasury of a fraternity.

These statements provide insight into one of the roles of a fraternity for its members, which is to help members who are in need. Apart from activities and lifelong friendships, one of the most important things that fraternities are known for is having organizational funds.

Theme 2: Contrivers of leadership skills for college members

Another theme that has been found in the results analyzed by the researchers is influencing college members to hone their leadership skills. Based on the responses, members were thankful that they were part of their fraternity, and through this, they could develop their leadership skills.

Fraternity members were able to gain abilities and leadership skills with the help of their co-members. The researchers found that joining fraternal organizations possibly influenced the leadership development of the respondents.

"Pagsud pod nahog fraternity diha pod na sharpen ang ahong leadership skills na mo da kog tao." [When I joined the fraternity, I was able to gain skills on how to lead people.]-R10

"Makaingon ko na successful ko as a leader kay nabuhat na mahiusa na mahiusa mi." [I can consider myself a successful leader because I was able to unite our group.]-R14

"Pagkasod naho aning Zettans, after four months nahimo kong officer dayon. Until now, secretary ko og treasurer gihapon ko," [After four months of being a member of Zettans, I became an officer. Until now, I am the secretary and the treasurer.]-R5

"Mag-lead man mi labi nag naay mga activities na buhaton, mao ng ma hasa ang among paglead sa tao." [We are given the chance to lead, especially during activities. That is why we are able to strengthen our leadership skills.] -R16

"Mauwawon man ko sauna pero kadtong pagsud naho okay ahong papa nga officer man pod maong gipa try pod ko na ma officer og didto ko nakakat-on og unsaon paglead sa organization ug sa ahong kapwa members." [Before, I was a shy person, but when I joined the fraternity, they gave me a chance to lead because my father had been one of the officers of our fraternity, so they allowed me to be one of the officers, and there

I was able to learn how to lead an organization, including my members.]-R21

Each member of the organization has the opportunity to lead. Members employ interpersonal skills for coaching and growth while drawing on the assets of the community to accomplish shared objectives. Members also actively participate outside of their organization, learning about various intersectional community experiences.

With the statements of the respondents, the researchers concluded that fraternities serve as a significant leadership development opportunity for their members. By encouraging leadership development opportunities for both their officers and members, fraternities support the growth of capable leaders within their chapters. By encouraging leadership development opportunities for both their officers and members, fraternities support the growth of capable leaders within their chapters.

Theme 3: Promote brotherhood and sisterhood to members

This theme was also created through the results analyzed by the researchers. According to the responses gathered by the researchers from fraternity members, the majority of them say that fraternity creates a strong bond that connects members whom they consider brothers and sisters.

Joining a fraternity gives you the chance to interact with current and former members of your chapter. It offers members chances and possibilities to make connections with others.

"Sila ang nagsilbing paagi nga mas daghan pakong nakaila na mga tao dili ra ngari sa Southern Leyte but the whole Philippines na gyud." [They served as a way for me to have acquaintances not just in Southern Leyte but the whole Philippines.]-R5

"Guidance, consider yourself as brother and sister. Promote brotherhood."-R21

"Kuan sila, mura silag family napod naho. Brotherhood ana." [They are like my family.]-R4

"Kapatiran kasi ang fraternity parang kapatid mo narin lahat yan. Propotektahan mo sila tsaka propotektahan ka nila." [Fraternities and fraternity members are like your brothers and sisters because you will protect them and at the same time they will protect you.]-R6

The majority of fraternities concur that the core value of fraternity life is brotherhood. The fraternity's spirit is what unites its members and inspires them to work toward loftier objectives. Also Philips and Rogers (2021) stated that to claim manhood, one must be a member of a brotherhood (fraternity). Nevertheless, brotherhood should be a mindset rather than something that is imposed on a person. Brotherhood is a process in which your fraternity brothers will stick by you and support you no matter what difficulties you face.

The idea behind a fraternity is that since people are social creatures by nature, they naturally want to associate with other people. He can't be friends with all of them equally, or even many of them, but he might be close to some of them. A fraternity offers structure, a setting where close relationships can grow and result in true brotherhood.

Theme 4: Networking as support for college graduate/undergraduate members

Networking is one of the themes created from the results analyzed by the researchers from the responses of the members of the different fraternities. Most of them say that they expect help from the other members of the fraternity in terms of exchanging resources, job opportunities, etc.

Researchers found that fraternity members support their co-members in their academic journey and in finding income or jobs. Some offer assistance with their tuition fees, provide scholarships, help others with their school projects, and also assist members in finding a job.

"Og naa kay problema, naa sila makakuan dayon. Sila jud mo help sa imo problem sama inganang sa school og naa kay mga project." [If you have problems, they are always there to help you just like with school projects.]-R5

"Sauna kadtong studyante pako kay silay mo tudlo naho sa ahong mga assignments of magpatudlo labi na og naa koy projects ja diko ka afford mo palit kay mo tabang sila." [Before, when I was still a student, they were the ones who helped me with my assignments, and if there were projects that I could not afford to buy the materials needed for that project, they helped me.]-R19

"Pobre man lagi ta. Nagdako ko sa pobre raman na pamilya, maong diko maka-afford mo palit og para project, pero naa jud sila mo tabang." [I am poor. I grew up in a poor family; that is why I can't afford to buy things for my projects, but they are there to help me.]-R26

"Kanang mangita kag trabaho kay mo tabang man sila. Andam sila mo tabang basta maningkamot laman pod ka." [If you are in need of work, they will help. They are always ready to help you as long as you will work hard for it.]-R24

Wayles (2022) and Estoce et al. (2024) stated that Greek groups aid in the development of networks that frequently serve as a resource for students looking for internships, jobs, referrals, or workers. Networking is an essential component of college life, and Greek life offers one of the most solid bases for interacting socially with a network of friends. Long-term advantages may result significantly from the relationships made through your group, both inside your university and at the national level. More than nine million former members of fraternities and sororities are actively employed in the real world. By joining one of these groups, you gain membership in a select group. You can instantly connect with any other club members thanks to this membership. These relationships can be more helpful for landing interviews, obtaining letters of recommendation, and listing references as your college and career progress.

Fraternities continue to encourage scholarships by giving their members a wide range of opportunities. To name a few opportunities, fraternities can provide members with tutoring, academic counselors, study partners, and scholarships. There is more to life than just partying and volunteer work. To motivate their members to excel academically, socially, and professionally, fraternities also offer scholarships or other forms of financial assistance to their brothers and sisters. Being a member of a fraternity group is perceived advantage; if you graduate and look for employment, the fraternity brothers are there to lend a hand in helping you land a job.

Theme 5: Improve members' personal development

Improving fraternity members' personal development is one of the themes found in the data gathered. Mostly,

they said that members uplift each other's self-esteem and allow them to express their ideas as a sign of brotherhood/sisterhood.

Respondents claimed that members support one another's sense of self-worth and freedom to express themselves as a mark of brotherhood or sisterhood. The fraternity's members are able to step outside of their comfort zones and develop confidence. They have become more outgoing and self-assured since joining fraternities.

"Sauna kay mauwawon man ko pero karon kay kahibaw nako makipaghalobilo sa uban." [Before I was a shy type of person, but now I know how to socialize with others.]-R17

"Ganahan rajud ko magpujo sa ahong kwaro sauna ja kay gi encourage man ko ni papa na mo apil mao ming apil ko ja kadugajan ganahan napod ko na mag-apil-apil og mga activities sa frat." [Before, I only wanted to stay in my room, but my father encouraged me to join, and then I started to be interested in joining fraternity activities.]-R11

"Nakatabang jud sila, samot na kay sukad na ming apil kay komportable nako makipaghalobilo sa uban." [They really helped because since I joined the fraternity, I became comfortable socializing with other people.]-R21

The majority of fraternities engage in leadership and community outreach initiatives, which they may even coordinate, according to Lewis et al. (2019). By joining one, members are encouraged to develop new skills outside of their academic commitments. By helping with the preparation and organization of events ranging from money management to public speaking and meeting facilitation, they will first be able to polish their social skills. They'll get to know new individuals and learn how to communicate with them.

Theme 6: Support the government's activities in the community

From what the researchers observed and based on the responses of the participants, the school and other sectors in the community tap into the different fraternities, as they are recognized as NGOs. As the respondents have said, they are there to help and fulfill their mission in the community.

A significant aspect of fraternity life is doing service. Fraternities choose to devote time and money throughout the year to community service. If you join a fraternity, you will be automatically included in events and activities and have the chance to volunteer while having fun with friends.

"Kaayohan sa community kay mag community servicing, feeding, and the rest ana maaajo ang mga activities." [We do servicing, feeding programs, and other activities for the betterment of the community]-R2

"Successful ang akrho kay mutabang man mi sa komunidad sa ginagmay na paagi maduolan man mi." [Akrho is successful because we help the community]- R1

"Tapos minsan pag tinatawag kami ng LGU. Lalo na yong pagka Odette madaming ano yon mga relief goods na magdidiskarga kayo, para ipamigay sa mga tao ung ano." [Sometimes the LGU will ask for help from us, just like after Odette, we helped provide goods to the community.] -R6

"Na encourage ko ug apil ing ani kay naa koy nakita na kaayohan sa pagtabang nila sa community." [I was encouraged to join because I've seen fraternities helping the community.]-R7

"Nakita naho na naa sa ila ang pagka God-fearing, kaning helping each other pareha anang community service." [I have seen that they are God-fearing, and we help each other just like doing community service.]-R11

Projects for the betterment of humanity are one of the goals of the fraternity. According to Tull et al. (2022), fraternity and sorority members develop their values through curricular and co-curricular activities. It supports numerous and varied charitable endeavors, serves as scout leaders, participates in volunteering activities during times of environmental crises like typhoons and floods, and is prepared to share with the less fortunate in any form of assistance and support.

They offer services in which members are obligated to take part, instilling a spirit of voluntarism in them. Fraternities are well known for providing direct service to their communities. Additionally, fraternities have been known to raise money for nearby charities. While most fraternities participate in some type of community service, service fraternities prioritize volunteer and charitable activities; some may also organize fundraisers for good organizations, encourage other students to volunteer, or support food drives, according to Thompson (2022).

Some responses occur negatively at first due to what they have said when they haven't yet joined the fraternity because of what other people say, such as:

Theme 1: Excessive pride

As the members said, they have heard this kind of comment from other people in the community that led to conflict between different fraternities, such as gang wars or riots in the streets of the community.

Because other members before were undisciplined, they tended to have this attitude way back in time, and they found this group as their ally to whatever they wished to do or make. As F12 said, "*Ug naay mga kaaway ang ubang membro mulaban man pud maong magkagubot nahinuon pero sauna pero karun kay naa namay mga taw nga naglead nga mamahimong maajong mga membro ang naa sa among fraternity wala nay mga ingani.*" [If there were conflicts with other members from other fraternities, groups in the fraternity called the other members for backup, and this led them to riot. However, due to the people that led the organization, we can discipline ourselves.] This means that they can discipline themselves because of good leadership.

This is also an intriguing part of joining a fraternity, where some fraternities Theme 2: Joining a fraternity could lead to extreme physical pain

practice a process called "initiation rites," in which, before becoming official members, they have to experience this as a sign of their commitment to the organization. However, due to news about the extreme processes of initiation rites, other people now call it hazing, which is prohibited by laws or institutions, leading to valuing the fraternity less in the eyes of others.

"Initiation rites" are part of becoming an official member; they have to experience this as a sign of their commitment to the organization. However, due to news about the extreme processes of initiation rites, other people now call it hazing, which is prohibited by laws or institutions, leading to valuing the fraternity less in the eyes of others. As another member said, "*Makadungog mi sa ubang taw na pasakit-sakit ra daw sa lawas anang muapil-apil og fraternity pero dili man ingon ana sa amo nga frat wala namay ingana run kay naa namay anti-hazing law.*" [We've heard from other people that joining a fraternity only gives us pain; however, in our fraternity, we don't do that kind of rite because it's against the law.] - F13

This means that over time, this act is not practiced by many fraternities since it is against the law, the Republic Act No. 8049, also known Anti-Hazing Act of 1995.

CONCLUSION

The study shows that, as implied by McMillan and Chavis' Theory of Psychological Sense of Community, the sense of community is a key feature of successful communities composed of the elements of membership, influence, integration, fulfillment of needs, and emotional connection. Since every fraternity organization is a group that requires membership to be identified, it influences the lives of the members in various ways. It meets the demands of a person who belongs to the organization and has an emotional bond with it. They can expand their views outside of their community and its people. In the process of collecting the data and with the results presented, the researchers witnessed how they established good relationships with the people in the community. The role of the fraternity on its members clearly impacts the lives of these individuals, which has made them succeed in the community.

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