

Navigating Role Conflict: Perceptions of Student Leaders in Balancing Academic Responsibilities and Leadership Duties

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ABSTRACT

Tension in balancing academic and public service responsibilities is a problem in leadership. I explore the tension student leaders face in balancing academic and public service duties. Using a qualitative descriptive research design, interviewing eight purposively selected student leaders, and analyzing the data through thematic analysis, I found that student leaders are expected to demonstrate active leadership, academic competence, and constant availability while fulfilling academic and public service responsibilities. School heads, local government officials, educators, and families may collaborate to provide support mechanisms that help student leaders balance academic competence, leadership, and public service responsibilities, thereby reducing role conflict and stress. Future studies may use quantitative approaches and prescriptive research to develop intervention programs for student leaders.

Keywords: Navigating role conflict, perceptions of student leaders, balancing academic responsibilities, leadership duties

INTRODUCTION

The Problem and Its Scope

Students who were community leaders experienced tension in balancing their academic responsibilities and leadership duties in educational and public service settings worldwide. Recent studies have emphasized that students who serve as leaders experience severe inter-role conflict and tension when navigating dual responsibilities in academic and leadership environments (Wulansari & Affandi, 2024; Tucay et al., 2023). Global initiatives promoting youth participation in governance and community engagement have further highlighted the experiences of student leaders who face acute structural tension while trying to balance civic obligations with rigid educational expectations (UNESCO, 2026).

In several countries, student community leaders experienced role tension as a problematic issue in educational and public service settings. In Indonesia, student leaders who took on community and organizational responsibilities were reported to experience significant inter-role conflict and tension, which splits their learning focus and negatively impacts their long-term academic achievement (Cahya et al., 2025). In Malaysia, university student leaders involved in heavy civic action and community-facing projects similarly face heightened operational stress. Balancing external societal advocacy with intense institutional requirements forces them to navigate complex priority dilemmas, resulting in chronic time poverty, task management struggles, and severe work-life balance depletion (Jafri & Abd Rahman, 2025). Strikingly similar patterns appear globally; studies investigating student leaders in higher education highlight that navigating rigid administrative protocols alongside the personal pressures of being a civic role model yields profound levels of both academic and leadership exhaustion (Lelina, 2026).

In the Philippine context, students who were community leaders experienced role tension, particularly among those involved in youth governance organizations such as the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK). Student leaders were expected to actively participate in community programs, leadership initiatives, and public service activities while maintaining academic performance. Recent Philippine studies have highlighted that student

leaders experience acute tension and role conflict when balancing educational demands with local leadership expectations (Lina & Agbon, 2025; Santos & Toribio, 2025). The extensive involvement of Filipino youth in community and public governance roles—particularly within the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK)—has further exposed severe systemic strain. Quantitative and qualitative tracking demonstrates that managing active community-facing mandates leads directly to clinical burnout, an inability to remain physically available for rigid course schedules, and a statistically significant decline in student GPAs during their periods of public service (De Jesus, 2026; Lina & Agbon, 2025).

Student community leaders experienced role tension that led to negative consequences, affecting their academic engagement, leadership performance, and personal well-being. Studies have shown that prolonged tension among student leaders may contribute to emotional exhaustion, psychological stress, decreased academic motivation, and difficulty in sustaining leadership responsibilities (Ventura et al., 2025). Other studies further emphasized that community leaders experienced significant tension that directly affected their academic engagement, emotional well-being, and overall effectiveness in fulfilling civic and public service responsibilities (Tucay et al., 2025). These consequences highlighted the importance of examining the experiences of student community leaders as they balance academic and leadership roles.

Significance of the Study

This study aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) by emphasizing systems that support student leaders in balancing their dual responsibilities as learners and community contributors. Using a descriptive approach, it moved from understanding students' perceptions of their roles, exploring their perceptions in negotiating academic, personal, and social responsibilities. It also resonates with the mission of Holy Cross of Davao College, which fosters holistic development and socially responsible leadership. The findings validate students' perceptions, highlighting how they manage multiple roles as leaders, learners, role models, and family members. For teachers, it provided insights into integrating leadership experiences into academic guidance. For the researcher, it deepens understanding of the complexities of student leadership, and for future researchers, it offers a foundation for further study on the interplay between responsibility and academic growth.

Research Question

This study aimed to describe the tension experienced by Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) officials in balancing their public service duties and academic responsibilities. It sought to explore their personal narratives, emotions, and perceptions to gain a deeper understanding of how they navigate their dual roles as student leaders and public servants. Specifically, this study is guided by the following research questions:

- What are the perceived expectations of Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) officials in balancing their public service duties and academic responsibilities?
- What are the perceived responsibilities of Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) officials in balancing their public service and academic responsibilities?

Assumptions

I assumed that the expectations faced by student SK officials are shaped by their dual roles as learners and youth leaders, which influence how they balance academic and public service responsibilities. It was further assumed that their overlapping responsibilities affect their time management, coping abilities, and responses to the demands and expectations arising from both school and community leadership. Guided by Role Conflict Theory, the study also presumed that student leaders continuously adjust to competing responsibilities through various coping and adaptation strategies. Moreover, it was assumed that participants' perceptions could yield insights beyond initial assumptions, contributing to a deeper understanding of role conflict, personal growth, identity formation, and leadership development among student leaders.

Theoretical Lens

This study is anchored on Role Conflict Theory by Kahn et al. (1964), which explains how individuals experience tension when they perform multiple roles with incompatible expectations and responsibilities. According to the theory, role conflict occurs when the demands of one role conflict with the expectations of another, making it difficult for individuals to perform effectively. By applying this framework, the study sought to explore how student SK officials experience and manage the expectations attached to each role, how these experiences shape their behaviors and decisions, and how navigating these responsibilities contributes to their personal growth, leadership development, and academic journey. Rather than focusing solely on conflict, the theory provides a lens to examine the meanings, strategies, and adaptive processes that emerge as student SK officials negotiate the demands of their dual roles.

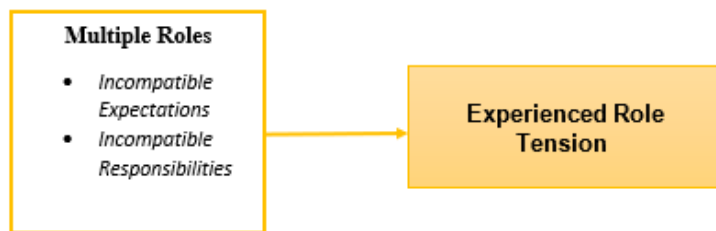


Figure 1. Theoretical Paradigm based on Role Conflict Theory by Khan et Al. (1964)

METHOD

In this section, I presented the research methodology I used. It covers the research design, research locale, participant sample, sampling, data-gathering techniques, data analysis procedures, and the study's trustworthiness.

Research Design

In this study, I utilized a qualitative descriptive research design. This approach aimed to provide a clear and detailed description of the perceptions of student Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) officials as they balance their academic responsibilities alongside their roles as youth leaders. According to Sandelowski (2000), qualitative descriptive research focuses on presenting participants' accounts in a straightforward and comprehensive manner while remaining close to their actual experiences and perspectives. Through this approach, I gathered detailed descriptions of how participants manage their dual responsibilities, including their perceptions, adjustments, and insights regarding their academic and leadership roles. This method was appropriate for the study because it enabled a practical, in-depth understanding of participants' experiences in relation to Role Conflict Theory.

Research Locale

I conducted this study in Braulio E. Dujali, Davao del Norte, a municipality in the province of Davao del Norte. It is a community setting, shaped by its rural-agricultural context, local governance structures, and social dynamics, that provides an appropriate venue for examining the multiple roles of student Sangguniang Kabataan officials, as their academic responsibilities and youth leadership experiences are influenced by the unique conditions and community needs within the municipality.

Sample and Sampling Technique

In this study, my participants were eight (8) school-enrolled Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) officials aged 18 to 25 years old who were actively managing both academic responsibilities and leadership roles. These participants were individuals who simultaneously fulfill their duties as students and youth leaders, engaging in SK-related activities such as community programs, meetings, and decision-making processes while meeting

academic demands. This number is consistent with qualitative research recommendations for in-depth exploration, which typically involve 6 to 20 participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I employed purposive sampling to deliberately select participants who met the study's criteria, ensuring they could provide rich, detailed narratives that capture the lived experiences of student SK officials navigating dual responsibilities across their academic and leadership contexts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data Gathering Technique

In this study, I used in-depth interviews as the data collection method. In-depth interviews are a qualitative technique that involves one-on-one, open-ended conversations to explore participants' experiences, meanings, and perspectives in detail. It allows flexibility for probing and follow-up questions, enabling the researcher to gain rich, comprehensive insights into the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Analysis Technique

I used thematic analysis to examine data from in-depth interviews, a qualitative method that identifies, organizes, and interprets patterns or themes within a dataset. This approach, valued for its flexibility, provides a rich and detailed understanding of qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I systematically coded the data, grouped similar meanings, and developed themes that capture the essence of participants' perceptions. The method was appropriate, as it enabled the organized and systematic interpretation of the shared experiences of minors working at an early age.

Trustworthiness of the Study

In this study, I ensured trustworthiness by following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility and dependability were maintained through accurate reflection of participants' experiences and careful documentation, while confirmability and transferability were addressed through transparent methodology and detailed contextual descriptions. These measures allowed the study to obtain ethical clearance from the Society for Moral Integrity and Legal Ethics (SMILE)

RESULTS

In this section, I presented the results of my study on the high demands of fulfilling basic family needs, which compelled minors to work at an early age. I also provided the summary of the findings along with the modified paradigm.

Expectations in Balancing Public Service Duties and Academic Responsibilities

As I listened carefully during the interview, one participant expressed strong pressure from the expectation of being constantly present and active in SK activities while managing academic responsibilities. Participant 1 stated...

Makaimpluwensiya siya sa unsaon nako pag manage sa akong time og responsibilities kay nagaexpect man sila nga present ko permente sa tanan meetings og active ko makaparticipate sa tanan activities... (It influences how I manage my time and responsibilities because they expect me to always be present in meetings, actively participate in activities, and contribute ideas in every project.) (T-IDI-1, Lines 1-4) Another participant narrated the demanding expectations they experienced of handling SK responsibilities alongside school requirements, particularly during report submissions and barangay events. Participant 2 explained in a weary tone...

Wala gyud me tulugay ana po. Magbuntag me ana sa office and also kana pud, though di nako maatiman ang akong mga pasahunon ana.(We really do not get enough sleep during those times. We stay until morning in the office, and because of that, I cannot attend properly to my school requirements.) (T-IDI-2, Lines 1-4)

One participant further emphasized the emotional burden caused by these expectations, sharing...

Ang akong mga kauban kay nag-expect sa akoo nga always ko active, responsible og available sa tanan activities og meetings pero at the same time studyante pa man ko lisod siya para sa akoo. (My fellow officials expect me to always be active, responsible, and available in all activities and meetings, but at the same time I am still a student, so it is difficult for me.) (T1-IDI-1, Lines 5-8)

One participant also described the expectations placed upon her as the regular Master of Ceremony in barangay events...

Ako na ang ginaasahan nila ba nga mag MC everytime niya og di nemu na siya mahemu og tarung kay murag maulaw gyud ko. (They already expect me to be the MC every time, and if I do not do it properly, I would really feel embarrassed.) (T-IDI-2, Lines 8-10)

Despite the pressure, the participant acknowledged the meaningful role of expectations in personal growth, stating...

This expectation, this pressure for me kanang murag stepping stone pud siya para sa amoa... (These expectations and pressures somehow became stepping stones for us.) (T-IDI-2, Lines 11-13)

One participant spoke about the pressure caused by limited participation due to academic schedules. Participant 3 shared...

Mapressure gyud ko kay kailangan man nemu magpaka SK gyud kay uban makita nemu nga nagatrabaho niya sa akoo is dili active... (I really feel pressured because you are expected to fully perform as an SK official, yet sometimes I cannot be active because of school schedules.) (T-IDI-3, Lines 1-4)

The participant further stressed the burden of fulfilling two important roles simultaneously...

Student ka then kailangan gyud ka mutrabaho pud as an SK official so pressure siya. (You are a student, but you are also expected to work as an SK official, so it is really pressuring.) (T-IDI-3, Lines 5-6)

Another official highlighted the expectations connected to academic achievement and leadership responsibilities. Participant 4 remarked thoughtfully...

Gusto nako makapasar dapat makagraduate pud and of course kanang daku pud og grado... (I want to pass, graduate, and of course have good grades.) (T-IDI-4, Lines 1-2)

The participant also recognized the expectations coming from the community...

Naa'y expectations sa atoa ang mga tao nga diba giboto ta because they feel like mapagkatiwalaan ta sa barangay...(People have expectations of us because they voted for us and believe that we are trustworthy.) (T-IDI-4, Lines 4-6)

Participant 4 additionally reflected on how these responsibilities shaped personal growth and time management...

Nakatabang pud ni siya as a student para somewhat ang time management ang nakat-unan nako...(This also helped me as a student because I learned time management.) (T-IDI-4, Lines 9-10) One participant described the intense pressure experienced during barangay events. Participant 5 explained...

Ang pressure nga ilang ginahatag sa amoa nga mahan-ay ang kada event is kanang makulba-kulbaan gyud ka...(The pressure they give us to organize every event properly really makes you nervous.) (T-IDI-5, Lines 1-3)

The participant further shared how repeated exposure to expectations gradually developed confidence in handling responsibilities...

The more nga makaagi ko sa pressure kay the more nga marela ko sa paghandle og paghan-ay sa event. (The more I experience pressure, the more relaxed I become in handling and organizing events.) (T-IDI-5, Lines 4-5)

Participant 6 emphasized the expectations received both from family and the barangay community. The participant explained sincerely...

Responsibilidad gyud nako nga magtarong og skwela siyempre ginagastuhan ko sa akong mga ginikanan... (It is really my responsibility to study well because my parents are supporting my education.) (T-IDI-6, Lines 1-3)

The participant also acknowledged the oath and responsibility attached to public service...

Naga expect sila sa akong isip usa ka official nga mabuhay nako akong mga responsibilidad... (They expect me as an official to fulfill my responsibilities.) (T-IDI-6, Lines 4-5)

Another participant openly discussed the pressure caused by expectations of constant availability. Participant 7 stated...

Naay expectation nga dapat active ko pirmi sa mga meetings ug activities.” (There is an expectation that I should always be active in meetings and activities.) (T-IDI-7, Lines 1-2)

The participant further revealed how these expectations intensified role conflict...

Kini nga expectations makadugang sa akong role conflict isip estudyante ug official. (These expectations add to my role conflict as a student and official.) (T-IDI-7, Lines 4-5)

Participant 8 also expressed a similar experience of balancing expectations from barangay leaders and academic obligations. The participant explained...

Naga-expect sila nga responsable ko ug dali ra ma-contact kung naay activities. (They expect me to be responsible and easily reachable whenever there are activities.) (T-IDI-8, Lines 1-2)

The participant added...

Usahay kay ginapa-prioritize nila ang SK responsibilities kaysa sa akong pagskwela. (Sometimes they prioritize SK responsibilities more than my studies.) (T-IDI-8, Lines 6-7)

Going back to the participants’ responses, there was a common feeling of pressure and emotional strain in managing their academic responsibilities and SK duties. I saw one of my participants scratch his forehead as he explained his obligations, reflecting the stress he experienced in managing both roles. I also heard hesitation in their voices and saw their expressions grow heavy as they narrated their experiences. One participant lowered his head as he shared his perceptions and experiences, reflecting the genuine pressure he felt in trying to fulfill both his academic and leadership roles. These accounts revealed that the expectations placed on student leaders involve not only responsibility and commitment but also emotional strain and constant adjustment in meeting the demands of both school and public service.

Responsibilities in Balancing Public Service and Academic Responsibilities

As I listened during the interview, one participant described the constant responsibility of managing academic tasks while fulfilling SK duties. Participant 1 stated...

As a student po kasagaran akong ginamanage ang mga assignments, projects, ug quizzes sa lain-lain subjects. Kinahanglan pud ko mo-attend sa klase adlaw-adlaw ug mo-review para sa exams. (As a student, I usually manage assignments, projects, and quizzes in different subjects. I also need to attend classes daily and review for exams.) (T-IDI-1, Lines 1-3)

The participant further shared the challenge of handling overlapping academic and SK responsibilities...

Tungod ani nga mga overlapping expectations kay makafeel ko og pressure niya maglisod ko og unsaon nako pagbalance both roles specially kung conflict ang schedule... (Because of these overlapping expectations, I feel pressured and find it difficult to balance both roles, especially when schedules conflict.) (T-IDI-1, Lines 4-6)

Another participant reflected on the responsibility of maintaining academic performance despite the demands of SK work. Participant 2 explained in a determined tone...

Ako gyud ginatry akong best nga makapasa sa tanan ipasa sa teachers og maka accomplish sa tanan ipaaccomplish sa teacher... (I really try my best to submit all the requirements and accomplish everything asked by the teachers.) (T-IDI-2, Lines 1-3)

The participant also described how SK preparations often consume time intended for schoolwork...

Sometimes gyud ang akoang mga projects and everything kay murag mapabayaan nako ba kay mauna man gyud nako siya...(Sometimes my projects and school tasks become neglected because SK responsibilities come first.) (T-IDI-2, Lines 9-11)

One participant spoke about the responsibility of completing both academic and SK activities despite schedule conflicts. Participant 3 stated...

Attendance, activities like magpasa og requirements. (My responsibilities include attendance, activities, and submitting requirements.) (T-IDI-3, Lines 1-2)

The participant further admitted the difficulty caused by overlapping schedules...

Ang challenging kay schedules, magsabay-sabay ang mga requirements sa school then mga activities sa SK. (The challenging part is the schedules because school requirements and SK activities happen at the same time.) (T-IDI-3, Lines 4-5)

Another participant highlighted the demanding nature of balancing leadership and academic development. Participant 4 expressed thoughtfully...

Being an SK is very challenging because juggling those activities, handling those activities and experiences. (Being an SK official is very challenging because of juggling and handling different activities and experiences.) (T-IDI-4, Lines 1-2)

The participant additionally revealed how school and SK tasks overlap throughout the day...

Usahay sa school pako maghemu og minutes of the meeting...(Sometimes I even make the minutes of the meeting while I am in school.) (T-IDI-2, Lines 13-14)

The participant also emphasized the responsibility of striving for professional growth while serving the community...

I want to achieve professional development to serve my constituents." (I want to achieve professional development so I can serve my constituents.) (T-IDI-4, Lines 3-4) One participant shared that attending school regularly remained a primary responsibility despite SK obligations. Participant 5 remarked...

Of course ang kanang pagsulod sa skwelahan daily... if ever nga naay conflict kay ma manage ra man gihapon siguro... (Of course, attending school daily is important, and even if conflicts arise, I still try to manage them.) (T-IDI-5, Lines 1-2)

The participant further described the challenge of leading youth while studying...

Lisod pud siya kay naay kasagaran mga batan-on is mga demanding... (It is difficult because many of the youth are demanding.) (T-IDI-5, Lines 4-5)

Participant 6 emphasized the responsibility of studying well in response to family expectations. The participant stated sincerely...

Responsibilidad gyud nako nga magtarong og skwela siyempre ginagastuhan ko sa akong mga ginikanan... (It is really my responsibility to study well because my parents are supporting my education.) (T-IDI-6, Lines 1-2) The participant also revealed the challenge of catching up with school requirements during busy barangay schedules...

Usahay po kay maglisod ko og apas sa requirements labi na og ting busy sa barangay... (Sometimes I struggle to catch up with requirements, especially during busy times in the barangay.) (T-IDI-6, Lines 5-6)

Another participant described the broad range of academic responsibilities expected from a student. Participant 7 shared...

Daghan ko og academic responsibilities nga akong giatubang parehas sa paghuman sa assignments, group projects, ug pag-andam para sa exams.” (I face many academic responsibilities such as finishing assignments, group projects, and preparing for exams.) (T-IDI-7, Lines 1-3)

The participant further expressed the challenge of balancing SK obligations with academic goals...

Naay mga times nga kinahanglan nako mu-absent o magpabilin og dugay sa meetings ug activities. (There are times when I need to be absent or stay long in meetings and activities.) (T-IDI-7, Lines 8-9)

Despite the difficulties, the participant viewed the role positively...

Para nako, ang SK role usa ka challenge pero usa pud kini ka oportunidad nga makat-on og daghan.” (For me, the SK role is a challenge, but it is also an opportunity to learn many things.) (T-IDI-7, Lines 12-13)

Participant 8 openly described the pressure created by school-related requirements and SK obligations. The participant explained...

Mga school-related activities sama sa projects, exams, ug deadlines usa sa mga rason sa conflict nga akong ma-experience. (School-related activities such as projects, exams, and deadlines are among the reasons for the conflict I experience.) (T-IDI-8, Lines 1-2)

The participant added...

Kinahanglan nako mag-adjust pirmi sa akong schedule aron ma-balance ang duha ka responsibilidad. (I constantly need to adjust my schedule to balance both responsibilities.) (T-IDI-8, Lines 5-6)

The participant further reflected on personal aspirations and the pressures connected to the SK role...

Kinahanglan nako i-prioritize ang mga proyekto ug meetings nga usahay matunong sa akong klase o exams. (I need to prioritize projects and meetings that sometimes coincide with my classes or exams.) (T-IDI-8, Lines 9-10)

Reflecting on my participants’ responses, there was a shared sense of difficulty in managing the dual responsibilities of being both students and Student Sangguniang Kabataan officials. Throughout the conversations, I saw their faces turning red as they tried to hold back their emotions while discussing the pressures of balancing academic and public service responsibilities. One participant repeatedly shook his head as he narrated experiences in which school examinations overlapped with SK activities, reflecting the stress and challenges of fulfilling both roles simultaneously. These accounts revealed that student leaders experience

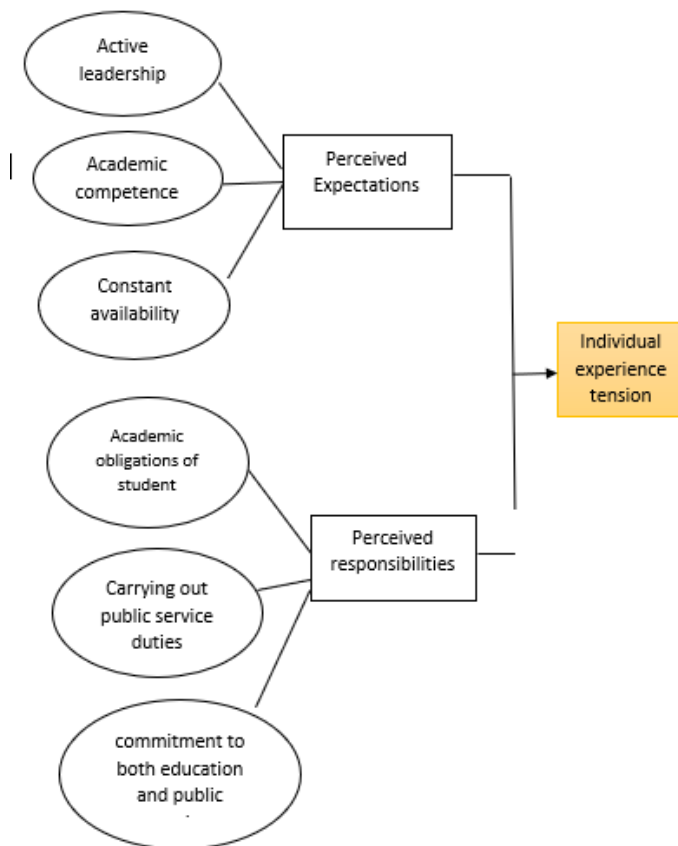
emotional strain, constant adjustment, and resilience in managing conflicting demands while remaining committed to both education and public service

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The perceived expectations of Student Sangguniang Kabataan officials in balancing their public service and academic responsibilities are active leadership, academic competence, and constant availability.

The perceived responsibilities of Student Sangguniang Kabataan officials in balancing their public service and academic responsibilities are fulfilling their academic obligations, carrying out public service duties, and maintaining commitment to both education and public service through proper time management, prioritization, and continuous role adjustment.

Modified Paradigm



DISCUSSION

In this section, I presented the discussion of the findings based on the themes derived from the study's results. I presented the implications for practice and the future direction of the students.

The Weight of Two Callings

The participants' responses revealed three closely connected expectations placed on Student Sangguniang Kabataan officials: active leadership, academic competence, and constant availability. These expectations show that their responsibilities as students and youth leaders do not always operate separately. Instead, both roles require attention and commitment, creating situations in which academic and public service demands may occur at the same time.

Active leadership, as reflected in the participants' accounts, involves fulfilling their responsibilities as SK officials and remaining engaged in public service. At the same time, they are expected to continue meeting their academic obligations and maintain competence as students. The expectation of constant availability

further adds to these demands, as their responsibilities as youth officials may require attention even while academic tasks are ongoing. In this sense, the participants are expected to remain committed to both roles despite the competing demands placed on their time and attention.

This pattern is consistent with Ortega's (2023) study, which explains that student leaders are expected to actively fulfill their leadership responsibilities while maintaining satisfactory academic performance. Ortega emphasized that leadership requires students to remain responsible, engaged, and responsive to organizational demands. A similar pattern emerged in the present study, where Student SK officials were expected to remain active in public service without neglecting their academic responsibilities. This suggests that leadership responsibilities do not replace academic expectations; rather, both continue alongside one another.

The same observation also reflects the findings of Pusta and Singh (2025), who found that youth leaders are often expected to remain accessible to their constituents while fulfilling academic obligations. Their study further noted that youth leaders are viewed as role models who are expected to manage both leadership and scholastic responsibilities. In the present study, constant availability adds another layer to this dual role. Student SK officials are expected not only to perform well in school and carry out public service duties, but also to remain responsive when community concerns arise. This makes it difficult to completely separate academic time from leadership responsibilities.

In contrast, Bespartochna (2023) maintained that student leadership responsibilities do not necessarily require constant availability or create significant academic pressure among youth leaders. Some student leaders in that study viewed their responsibilities as flexible and manageable, allowing them to maintain academic performance without excessive organizational or community expectations. The difference observed in the present study may reflect the nature of the participants' positions as elected youth officials. Unlike student leaders whose responsibilities may be limited to school-based organizations, Student SK officials are also accountable to members of their communities, which may require a more sustained level of involvement and availability.

This difference provides a clearer understanding of the kind of pressure experienced by Student SK officials. The challenge does not simply come from holding two roles, but from having to meet the expectations attached to both at the same time. They are expected to remain academically responsible while also being active, visible, and available as youth leaders. The theme *The Weight of Two Callings* therefore captures the simultaneous responsibility they carry, as both education and public service continue to demand their commitment.

Dancing Between Deadlines

The participants' responses also revealed that balancing academic and public service responsibilities requires continuous time management, prioritization, and role adjustment. Their responsibilities include fulfilling academic obligations, carrying out public service duties, and maintaining commitment to both education and leadership. These experiences indicate that balancing the two roles is not a one-time arrangement but an ongoing process of responding to changing demands.

Academic and public service responsibilities may compete for the same time and attention. When these responsibilities overlap, the participants are required to determine which task needs immediate attention while ensuring that other obligations are not completely neglected. In this context, prioritization becomes more than simply organizing a schedule. It becomes a practical way of responding to competing responsibilities as they arise.

Continuous role adjustment also emerged as an important part of balancing both responsibilities. The participants move between their roles as students and public servants depending on the demands they face. This suggests that balance does not necessarily mean giving equal time to academics and leadership. Rather, it involves adjusting attention and priorities according to the urgency and importance of responsibilities.

This experience is consistent with Cahya et al.'s (2025) study, which argues that student leaders are responsible for maintaining academic performance while fulfilling leadership and community-related

obligations. The study emphasized that balancing multiple roles requires self-regulation, prioritization, and personal discipline. The present study reflects the same process, particularly in the participants' need to manage academic obligations while continuing to carry out public service responsibilities. Their experiences show that balancing both roles requires continuous decisions about how time and effort should be distributed.

A similar pattern can be seen in Pusta and Singh (2025), who argued that youth leaders use adaptive coping strategies and scheduling management to balance school responsibilities and public service tasks. Their study highlighted the importance of prioritizing responsibilities and adapting to competing demands. In the present study, time management, prioritization, and continuous role adjustment likewise serve as important ways of maintaining commitment to both roles. These strategies allow Student SK officials to respond to changing demands rather than depend solely on a fixed schedule.

On the other hand, Acosta-Olais (2026) suggested that student leaders can integrate academic and leadership responsibilities without significant difficulty through institutional support and collaborative leadership practices. The study also emphasized that leadership responsibilities may strengthen students' organizational skills and academic motivation. The present study adds a different perspective by showing that, even when leadership may provide opportunities for growth, Student SK officials still need to continuously manage, prioritize, and adjust their responsibilities. Their experiences suggest that balancing the two roles requires active effort, particularly when academic and public service demands overlap.

This contrast highlights an important nuance in the present study. Balance is not experienced as the absence of difficulty. Instead, it is achieved through continued adjustment. The participants remain committed to both education and public service by reorganizing their responsibilities according to changing circumstances and immediate demands.

Overall, the theme *Dancing Between Deadlines* captures the participants' experience of moving between two sets of responsibilities that may overlap and compete with one another. Their ability to continue performing both roles depend on time management, prioritization, and flexibility. Rather than eliminating the tension between school and public service, they learn to manage it through continuous adjustment and deliberate decision-making.

Implications for Practice

Upon reflecting on the modified paradigm, school heads, local government officials, and youth leaders may establish support mechanisms, such as flexible academic arrangements, leadership mentoring, time management training, and emotional support programs, to help in effectively balancing academic competence, active leadership, and public service responsibilities. Moreover, the paradigm emphasizes the importance of collaboration among educators, barangay officials, and families in fostering an environment that promotes academic success, responsible youth leadership, and reduced role conflict and stress among student leaders.

Future Directions

Future studies may further examine the relationships among perceived expectations, perceived responsibilities, and individual experience tension among student leaders by utilizing quantitative approaches. Prescriptive research may also be explored to design an appropriate intervention program to address role conflict among student leaders.

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