Research Paper

A Phenomenological Inquiry of Student Leaders' Experiences to Develop the Student Development Evaluation Tool of Bacolod City College

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Abstract

This phenomenological inquiry described the universal essence of the student development experience at Bacolod City College (BCC), a Local University and College (LUC), to develop a context-specific, valid Student Development Evaluation Tool. The study addressed a critical gap: existing generic evaluation frameworks are inadequate for the unique, resource-constrained environment of Philippine community colleges. Adopting a phenomenology design, the research captured the subjective realities of twelve (12) purposively selected student leaders from BCC. Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews and rigorously analyzed using Colaizzi's Method. The inquiry yielded seven interconnected thematic horizons defining the core phenomenon: the student development experience is characterized by a constant tension between student aspirations and profound institutional limitations. The themes identified were: 1) Operational Exhaustion on Leadership (due to lack of formal training); 2) Organizational Invisibility for Student Engagement (caused by physical and communicative barriers); 3) Mandatory Obligation on Activities (engagement driven by attendance requirements); 4) Unmet Expectations and Support for Arts and Sports (deficient facilities/funding); 5) Personal Subsidy for Resources (leaders absorbing operational costs); 6) Horizon of Bureaucratic Delay (inefficient administrative processes); and 7) Environmental Constraints (inadequate physical facilities). The findings confirm a profound disparity where student efficacy is consistently hampered by systemic infrastructural and organizational deficiencies. This reality fosters a cycle of leader liability and operational exhaustion, relegating student development to a mandatory obligation. The resulting seven-section Student Development Evaluation Tool is directly rooted in these empirical narratives, providing BCC with a context-specific framework to quantifiably measure and address these structural deficiencies, offering a model for evidence-based decision-making for other LUCs.

Keywords: *Student Development, Phenomenology, Student Leaders, Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs), Student Affairs and Services, Institutional Constraints, Evaluation Tool.*

INTRODUCTION

Student development is a foundational pillar of the modern Higher Education Institution (HEI), extending the educational mandate far beyond mere academic instruction. It encompasses the intentional design of programs and services aimed at nurturing students' cognitive, moral, psychosocial, and leadership capacities, ultimately preparing them for active citizenship and professional success (CHED Memorandum Order No. 9, series of 2013). In dynamic educational environments, effective student development programs are essential for fostering student engagement, retention, and leadership capacity, thereby contributing to a vibrant campus ecosystem and producing well-rounded graduates. This mission is particularly critical within the Philippine higher education system, specifically for Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs), community-oriented institutions (community colleges) established by local government units to

provide accessible, affordable tertiary education to underserved populations. A prime example is Bacolod City College (BCC), a public institution mandated to serve the youth of Bacolod City, many of whom come from resource-limited backgrounds and rely on the college for equitable academic opportunities.

However, while the importance of student development is universally acknowledged, LUCs like BCC, often face significant systemic and financial constraints that impede the implementation of these programs (De Vera, 2025). Unlike State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) which receive direct and consistent national appropriations, LUCs like BCC are primarily dependent on local government funding. This structural reliance renders their operational budgets highly susceptible to the fiscal capacity of the Local Government Unit (LGU) and the shifting priorities of local administration. Consequently, these institutions frequently grapple with infrastructure deficits, such as insufficient laboratory facilities and limited physical space for student hubs, as well as staffing challenges characterized by a reliance on contract-of-service instructors rather than permanent faculty (De Vera, 2025). Furthermore, delays in the reimbursement of tuition subsidies under the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act (RA 10931) can create cash flow bottlenecks that further squeeze the funds available for non-academic programs (Philippine Institute for Development Studies [PIDS], 2025; Beronibla, 2024). This scarcity of resources often results in student leaders and organizations bearing the financial and logistical burdens, restricting the scope and impact of student initiatives. Consequently, there is an urgent need to shift focus from merely offering programs to ensuring that the limited resources available are utilized efficiently and targeted precisely to address the most critical and context-specific student development needs.

The current research landscape presents a significant gap: most established student development evaluation tools and frameworks are generic or designed for well-resourced, traditional universities, rendering them inadequate for the unique context of Philippine community colleges. To address this, the current study rejects a purely exploratory or quantitative approach in favor of Descriptive Phenomenology. The phenomenological design was chosen to deepen contextual understanding in a community college (Bulawat et al., 2025) by moving beyond surface-level assessment and capturing the universal essence of the student development experience as lived and perceived by the key informants, the student leaders. By meticulously describing their lived experiences concerning leadership development, organizational support, administrative efficiency, and resource challenges, this study can generate the deep, contextual data required to build an evaluation tool that is valid, relevant, and actionable within the resource realities of BCC.

The practical significance for Bacolod City College (BCC) is in the delivery of a custom-designed Student Development Evaluation Tool grounded in the empirical narratives of its student leaders. This enables the institution to move beyond generic metrics and precisely evaluate program efficacy within the context of its specific operational realities. On a broader scale, the resulting framework serves as an adaptable benchmark for other Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs), offering a model for evidence-based decision-making that optimizes limited resources and addresses the unique challenges of community-based institutions.

Theoretically, this inquiry challenges dominant student development models—often predicated on resource-available, Western contexts- by establishing a framework specifically for resource-constrained ecosystems. It nuances the existing literature by redefining student leadership in this context not merely as role fulfillment, but as a mechanism of "structural gap-filling," where student agency functions to compensate for institutional deficits. By documenting this dynamic, the study offers a novel theoretical contribution: it shifts the discourse from analyzing how institutions support student leaders to understanding how student leaders sustain institutional vibrancy despite systemic scarcity.

Therefore, this study is primarily designed to describe the universal essence of the student development experience at Bacolod City College. Specifically, this phenomenological inquiry seeks: 1) To describe the lived experiences of student leaders regarding the current state of Leadership Capacity Development; 2) To delineate their experiences with Student Engagement in Co-Curricular Organizations and the Enhancement of Student-Centric Activities; 3) To understand the leaders' perspectives on Support for Arts and Athletic Development and the challenges posed by Institutional Resource Allocation and Financial Support; 4) To describe the impacts of Administrative Efficiency and Procedural Streamlining and the state of the Physical Plant and Facilities on their development work; and ultimately, 5) To utilize these richly described lived experiences to develop a context-specific Student Development Evaluation Tool for Bacolod City College.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Theoretical Framework
Bridging Paradigm Assumptions to Practical Evaluation

This research moves beyond philosophical declaration to establish a theoretical foundation for understanding and evaluating the complex lived experiences of student leaders at Bacolod City College (BCC). This approach combines phenomenology with established theories in student affairs, specifically Astin's Student Involvement Theory (SIT) (Choi et al., 2024) and the Organizational Support Theory (OST) (Henning & Roberts, 2023), thereby justifying the structure and content of the resultant Evaluation Tool.

Philosophical Assumptions.

This qualitative inquiry is anchored in a constructivist paradigm, asserting that reality is complex, relative, and socially constructed. This necessitates an interpretive methodology to capture the essence of subjective experience, particularly concerning the "student development experience," which is understood not as a standardized, objective fact but as a collection of multiple, socially constructed realities.

The study's ontological position of subjectivism and multiplicity seeks to uncover the core meaning and structure (essence) of the lived experience (Morozov, 2022) as perceived and interpreted by the participants. Reality, in this context, exists in the form of individual consciousness and is uniquely constructed by each student leader based on their perceptions and direct experiences within the constrained environment of BCC.

The corresponding epistemological stance is interpretivism, which seeks knowledge not through detached measurement but through deep, empathetic understanding, or Verstehen (Shamsi, 2024). Knowledge is constructed collaboratively as the researcher interprets rich narratives. Crucially, the rigour of this approach is maintained through the practice of epoché, or bracketing (Praveena & Sasikumar, 2021). This process ensures the researcher sets aside personal biases and assumptions, grounding the derived knowledge and thus the evaluation tool's eventual constructs directly in the participants' lived world.

Furthermore, the research's axiological position recognizes that all inquiry is value-laden (Pretorius, 2024), guided by a commitment to generating contextual knowledge for practical and emancipatory impact. Constructivist evaluation principles maintain that the focus of assessment should be on extrinsic usefulness in a specific, local setting rather than universal merit constructions (Gruba, 2024).

Because the challenge at BCC is rooted in highly localized constraints, the evaluation tool must be derived from and responsive to local, subjective realities to possess this necessary worth. The rigour imposed by the phenomenological method guarantees that the raw data forming the

instrument's foundation are authentic, securing the instrument's contextual validity and practical utility.

Astin's Student Involvement Theory (SIT)

Astin's Student Involvement Theory (1984) provides a critical mechanism for interpreting the relationship between a student leader's efforts and their developmental outcomes. SIT posits that desirable outcomes in higher education are a result of how students change and develop through co-curricular involvement. For this study, SIT justifies measuring student leadership engagement. SIT dictates that the Evaluation Tool must specifically assess the student leader's investment of energy and the self-reported efficacy of that investment in yielding specific developmental outcomes.

Organizational Support Theory (OST)

Provides the foundational framework for understanding the reciprocal relationship between an organization and its members (Eisenberger et al., 1986). It proposes that employees (or students, in this context) develop a global perception, known as Perceived Organizational Support (POS) (Sun, 2019), regarding the extent to which the organization values their contributions and genuinely cares about their well-being. Through OST as an overarching theoretical framework, the evaluation can effectively link the operational realities and structural shortcomings of BCC (e.g., resource limitations, unsupportive systems) to the student leaders' subjective well-being and developmental trajectory.

Synthesis of Prior Studies

The Context of Student Development Constraints. The research context of Bacolod City College (BCC) is not isolated but is situated within broader global discourses on student development and specific regional challenges facing Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs) in the Philippines (CHED Memorandum Order 18, series of 2022; Bayudan-Dacuycuy et al., 2023; Cajes, 2024; De Vera, 2025). A synthesis of relevant literature confirms the necessity of a context-specific, phenomenological evaluation framework.

Student Development in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

Contemporary models emphasize holistic growth, fostering competence across multiple domains, intellectual, emotional, physical, and social (Astin, 1984; CHED Memorandum Order 9, series of 2013). A critical component of this supportive environment is the institutional commitment to Student Affairs and Services (SAS). The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) (2022) confirms that the quality and effective implementation of these programs, specifically student welfare services (guidance, counseling, orientation) and student development services (leadership training, student organizations, student discipline), are significant predictors of holistic student development.

Challenges and Institutional Constraints in Philippine LUCs

The student experience at BCC is defined by the unique operational realities of Philippine Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs) (Cajes, 2024; De Vera, 2025). Higher education expansions implemented without ensuring concomitant quality in educational products and services raise significant concerns regarding the overall educational value and graduate preparedness (PIDS, 2025). These quality issues stem directly from chronic budget constraints and inadequate infrastructure. Furthermore, LUCs struggle to recruit and retain qualified faculty due to stringent Commission on Higher Education (CHED) (2013) criteria and intense competition with private

institutions offering higher compensation (Montallana, 2024). While some LUCs receive central government funding to cover tuition after meeting compliance standards, the systemic budget constraints persist.

The Lived Experiences of Student Leaders

Phenomenological studies focusing on student leaders in the Philippine context reveal a critical tension between the high developmental gains (Lorenzo et al., 2025) achieved and the significant personal sacrifices required. On the positive side, involvement consistently fosters high levels of competence. Student leaders report becoming well-rounded individuals (Tucay et al., 2023), developing crucial skills such as decision-making, problem-solving, socialization, communication, and critical thinking. Conversely, the negative experiences center on significant depletion and academic disruption. The primary challenge is acute time management (Atienza et al., 2022) difficulty due to the high demand of responsibilities (Tucay et al., 2023). Academic cost represents a direct consequence of low Perceived Organizational Support, where the institution demands high input but fails to protect the student's core academic function. Beyond academic disruption, student leaders experience significant emotional labor (Pedroso et al., 2023), including dealing with peer criticism (Tucay et al., 2023), feeling unheard, and navigating organizational politics. The Evaluation Tool must capture the subjective weighting of this trade-off to determine if the developmental benefits outweigh the unsustainable academic and personal costs.

Gaps in Existing Leadership Evaluation Tools

Standardized instruments often exhibit deficiencies in core areas. From Vlachopoulos and Makri (2024), institutional leaders frequently report a significant gap between the importance of assessment features, such as the ability to pinpoint student needs, measure progress toward specific learning targets, and personalize instruction based on results, and their actual capability to perform these tasks (Pearson, 2024). These standardized metrics often struggle to capture the complex, interactive behavioral, affective, and cognitive dimensions of engagement. By synthesizing constructs from the phenomenological essence of the student leaders' experiences, the resulting instrument is guaranteed to have local utility.

RESEARCH METHOD
Research Design

This study employs a Qualitative Phenomenological Research Design. This approach is specifically chosen to move beyond simple facts and explore the subjective, lived experiences (or Lebenswelt) of the participants. The primary aim is to describe the universal essence (or invariant structure) of the phenomenon, the student development experience, as perceived by the BCC student leaders. The design requires the researcher to bracket personal preconceptions (Praveena & Sasikumar, 2021) to allow the participants' realities to emerge authentically, ensuring the resulting evaluation tool is grounded in genuine experience rather than theoretical assumptions.

Tool Development and Future Validation

The development of the Student Development Evaluation Tool of BCC is directly grounded in the study's phenomenological findings. The seven interconnected thematic horizons extracted from the data analysis were translated into specific evaluation domains, with the qualitative narratives serving as the basis for item construction. While the primary output of this study is the generation of these context-specific items, their psychometric validation is reserved for a subsequent phase of research. In this future study, the tool will undergo rigorous content validity review using the Lawshe method (Romero-Jeldrese et al., 2023), facilitated by experts in student affairs and services,

specifically practitioners from the Philippine Association of Practitioners in Student Affairs and Services (PAPSAS). Following expert review, the tool will be pilot-tested to establish its internal consistency and face validity using the Good and Scates method (Darwish, 2022). This distinct phased approach ensures that the instrument is first deeply rooted in the authentic lived experiences of the students before being subjected to statistical verification.

Research Participants

The study's participants will consist of 12 student leaders purposively selected from 7 distinct organizations at Bacolod City College (BCC) during the second semester of SY 2024-2025. This sample size follows the phenomenological criterion of data saturation, ensuring sufficient depth of information rather than statistical generalization. To be eligible, participants must be enrolled students in any bachelor's degree programs during the second semester of SY 2024-2025, any year level, but must have held a leadership position for a minimum of at least 1 semester. The selection process involves obtaining referrals from the Office of Student Affairs and Services, followed by direct invitations to mitigate selection bias. The final group represents a mix of student government, department council, campus press/ publication, and interest clubs/organizations, with deliberate consideration given to diversity in gender and leadership roles. These individuals are considered key informants due to their active involvement and intimate knowledge of the institution's student development programs, policies, and resource limitations.

Credibility and Dependability of the Tool

To ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative data, which forms the basis of the final evaluation tool, four key strategies were employed. (1) *Credibility* (the qualitative equivalent of internal validity) was established through Member Checking, where the participants reviewed the final thematic description of their experiences to confirm that the research accurately reflects their perspective. (2) *Confirmability* (the qualitative equivalent of objectivity) was maintained by developing a detailed Audit Trail of all research decisions, data analysis steps, and methodological choices. This record allows an external reviewer to trace the data from the raw responses to the final themes. A Reflexive Journal was also maintained to document the researchers' biases and assumptions, ensuring these were bracketed during analysis. (3) *Transferability* (the qualitative equivalent of generalizability or external validity) was addressed by providing a Rich Description of the setting, context, and participants. This detailed information allows readers to judge the extent to which the findings might be applicable or "transferable" to their own specific context. (4) Dependability (the qualitative equivalent of reliability) was ensured by the provided detailed audit trail of the data gathering and analysis procedures, allowing external reviewers to understand and confirm the consistency of the findings, given the data provided.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection was conducted through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. This method was crucial for phenomenology as it allowed the researcher to gather rich, descriptive narratives essential for understanding lived experiences. The questions explored the challenges and perceptions of the student leader regarding the current situation of the Student Development Office of BCC (see Appendix A), specifically focusing on the Leadership Development Plan, the OSAS program (for interest clubs, campus organizations, activities, and events), and related policies.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the interviews were analyzed using *Colaizzi's Method* of

Phenomenological Data Analysis (Gumarang et al., 2021). This systematic, seven-step process was ideal for rigorously extracting the essential meaning from narrative data: 1) All interview transcripts were read repeatedly to achieve a sense of the whole; 2) Significant statements pertinent to the phenomenon were extracted; 3) Meanings were formulated from these statements; 4) The formulated meanings were grouped into themes (horizons); 5) An exhaustive description of the phenomenon was developed; 6) The fundamental structure of the phenomenon was formulated; and 7) The findings were validated through Member Checking with the participants.

Ethical Considerations

The study strictly adhered to ethical research principles. Informed Consent was secured from all participants, detailing the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Anonymity and Confidentiality were maintained by assigning pseudonyms and keeping all data secured. Participants were explicitly informed of their Right to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. Finally, the research protocol was submitted to the institution's ethics review board for approval before the commencement of data collection.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Profile of the Respondents

The participants in this study consisted of 12 student leaders purposively selected based on their active involvement in BCC's co-curricular programs. The selection ensured representation across various organizational types and levels of study, allowing the research to capture the student development experience from diverse temporal perspectives (see Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of Research Participants

Year Level	f	%	Position/s Held
Freshmen	2	17	Committee Heads
Sophomore	2	17	Secretary/ Committee Head
Junior	4	33	Treasurer/ President/ VP/ PIO
Senior	4	33	Governor/ President/ VP/ Editor-in-Chief

The distribution across class standings was deliberate, as year level and leadership tenure critically shape the nature of the lived experience. Newer leaders (Freshmen and Sophomores) were included to capture the immediate confusion or culture shock associated with navigating undocumented institutional procedures (Abarientos et al., 2025). Conversely, the inclusion of long-term leaders (Juniors and Seniors) was essential to document the cumulative exhaustion (Chong et al., 2025) and specific frustrations regarding academic interference that evolve after years of service. This mix ensures the phenomenological inquiry reflects both the initial confrontation with institutional constraints and the long-term coping strategies developed by students.

To uphold strict ethical standards and ensure data privacy, all participants are identified using alphanumeric pseudonyms (P1–P12) rather than their real names. Their specific roles and year levels are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Participant Code and Position in Organization

Year Level	Year Level	Position/s Held
P1	Freshman	Committee Head
P2	Freshman	Committee Head
P3	Sophomore	Club Secretary
P4	Sophomore	Head of Logistics
P5	Junior	Treasurer

P6	Junior	President
P7	Junior	Vice-President
P8	Junior	Public Information Officer
P9	Senior	Governor
P10	Senior	Vice-President
P11	Senior	President
P12	Senior	Editor-in-Chief

Presentation and Discussion of Themes

Operational Exhaustion on Leadership

BCC's student leaders struggle to successfully lead and manage their jobs due to a chronic lack of comprehensive leadership development. A pervasive sense of operational exhaustion and developmental neglect characterized the lived experience. Participants articulated that their roles required an expertise that the college had not systematically provided, forcing a cycle of immediate crisis management rather than sustained growth.

This developmental deficit manifests in several ways:

1) Role Conflict and Burnout: Leaders frequently carry multiple duties, leading to stress and role conflict.

   "Student leaders often take on multiple roles and responsibilities, which can lead to feeling overwhelmed and stressed." (P6)

2) Lack of Guidance and Training: The absence of comprehensive formal training and regular direction led to developmental stagnation.

   "Without consistent guidance, student leaders may struggle to navigate complex situations, make informed decisions, and effectively manage their responsibilities." (P12)

3) Dysfunctional Group Dynamics: This burden was compounded by a perceived culture where dysfunctional leadership styles and the invalidation of ideas led to a "fear of voicing out.

   "Wrong leadership style. Invalidation of Ideas or suggestions among other leaders." (P8)

This actively undermined team cohesion and psychological safety. Research confirms that low psychological safety in student teams inhibits open communication and the effective exploration of diverse perspectives (Rațiu et al., 2025). The core need identified was for formal, practical training in areas like event planning and budgeting. Senior leaders (Juniors/Seniors) reported a more acute sense of exhaustion, having accumulated multiple years of responsibilities without the necessary training, in contrast to newer leaders whose exhaustion stemmed more from the immediate operational shock of their roles.

For the theoretical linkage, this theme aligns with empirical studies (Atienza et al., 2022; Tucay et al., 2023; Lorenzo et al., 2025) on student leadership burnout and the social change model of leadership, which emphasizes the importance of institutional support for skill development. The findings extend the concept of operational exhaustion by linking it directly to an institutional failure in providing structured training, suggesting that the exhaustion is not merely due to high workload but systemic developmental neglect.

Organizational Invisibility for Student Engagement.

Student leaders experienced significant challenges in generating and sustaining meaningful participation, a phenomenon defined by organizational anonymity and logistical barriers. BCC's student organizations are facing challenges in attracting and retaining active members, hindering student engagement and the overall co-curricular experience. Key barriers to engagement include:

1) Logistical Barriers: The most immediate barrier was the lack of dedicated office spaces, which created organizational anonymity, making it difficult for students to physically locate and connect with groups.

"Students are having a hard time locating the offices of such clubs or organizations because they are not provided with offices." (P4)

2) Perceived Lack of Value: Some students reported a perceived lack of benefits when considering participation, suggesting that the current activities failed to demonstrate tangible value (Crabtree, 2023).

"Promote inclusivity because some other students are deciding whether or not to join because it comes with no benefits." (P7)

3) Communication and Time Constraints: This issue was exacerbated by busy student schedules and insufficient communication channels. The lack of diversity and inclusivity further narrowed the appeal.

"Many clubs and organizations struggle with maintaining active membership. Students often juggle school, work, and family responsibilities, leaving them with limited time for extracurricular activities." (P12)

"Improve communication channels to raise awareness about the available clubs and organizations." (P8)

Theoretically, these barriers align with organizational theory in higher education (Tierney, 2023), where physical (Børte et al., 2023) and communicative infrastructure (Singun, 2025) are essential for legitimacy and member recruitment. The findings specifically highlight how the lack of a "third space" (dedicated physical office space) creates an insurmountable barrier to new student engagement, reinforcing the idea that structural support is a precursor to student participation.

Mandatory Obligation on Activities.

The student-centric activity experience was fundamentally defined by a feeling of procedural compliance over authentic participation. The core issue is that the current implementation of student-centric activities at Bacolod City College lacks effectiveness in engaging students meaningfully. Activities often failed to genuinely engage students, becoming compulsory requirements.

1) Attendance-Driven Compliance: Engagement was frequently driven by the need for attendance requirements.

"Students should come to activities wholeheartedly, not just because of attendance." (P1)

2) Logistical and Safety Failures: Logistical failures, such as delayed or insufficient information dissemination and activities running late into the night, raised safety concerns and alienated upperclassmen.

"Fast Information Dissemination of the Activity; there are times that the announcement of activities is late, like the activity is already for tomorrow." (P8)

"Make sure to include the 3rd year and 4th year students, even if they're also busy, but be understandable and convince them in a proper way. Start on time and avoid ending the activity at a very late time, consider the student's security and safety, esp at night." (P10)

3) Narrow Scope: There was a notable deficiency in events promoting cultural exchange and social responsibility (e.g., community service), indicating a narrow scope in the existing developmental programming.

"There are not many organized events that celebrate diversity, promote cultural exchange, and foster a sense of community." (P12)

"There is a lack of students who volunteer in the community to develop a sense of social responsibility." (P11)

"Overall, a strong focus on inclusivity and variety could enhance these programs further." (P6)

Upperclassmen (Juniors/Seniors) articulated this theme most strongly, as their tight academic loads made late, mandatory activities a significant source of frustration, directly limiting their ability to participate wholeheartedly. Linking to the theoretical framework, this theme directly challenges the principles of experiential learning and student development theory, where activities should foster intrinsic motivation, not compliance. The findings demonstrate that when institutional processes prioritize "seat time" over genuine learning outcomes, the developmental value is diminished (Chung et al., 2022).

Unmet Expectations and Support for Arts and Sports.

The lived experience of Arts and Athletic development was one of infrastructural deficiency and public disappointment. Student artists and athletes are perceived to be unsupported and demoralized by a lack of institutional commitment. Key sub-issues include:

1) Infrastructural and Resource Deficiencies: The core barriers were inadequate facilities and equipment, coupled with a severe deficiency in professional coaching and dedicated funding.

"There is a lack of facilities and equipment for sports and cultural arts." (P2)

"… no funding, some sports don't have proper coaches, they just settle for who they have." (P9)

2) Failure to Meet Regional Expectations: This structural neglect directly hindered skill development and led to widespread disappointment, particularly following the failure to meet performance expectations in regional competitions like ALCOR VI.

"It's sad to hear that during ALCOR VI, many expected that Bacolod City College would be good at sports... but BCC didn't meet the expectations." (P11)

"...it lacks support when it comes to sports and culture..." (P10)

3) Lack of Incentives: The absence of adequate incentives and resources further diminished the motivation of student-athletes and performers.

"... limited when it comes to the needs of a representative or player of the school to be motivated to win..." (P9)

"BCC's culture and arts program is supposed to provide a good and memorable experience for the students." (P4)

This finding highlights a fundamental gap in institutional resource allocation and its impact on co-curricular success. The concept of unmet expectations serves as a unique emotional barrier to development. This aligns with organizational support theory, where perceived lack of institutional investment in these areas is interpreted as low value, leading to diminished student motivation and achievement (Zangrandi & Caldeira, 2022).

Personal Subsidy for Resources.

The phenomenon of financial support was defined by operational austerity and leader liability. BCC's student organizations face significant financial constraints, hindering their ability to effectively operate and achieve their goals. Consequently, student leaders are often forced to personally absorb the costs of institutional programming.

1) Financial Burden on Leaders: Tight budgets severely restricted the variety and scope of organized events. The funding process was perceived as inflexible, necessitating student leaders to cover deficits from their own pockets. As one participant lamented regarding this "*abono*" (out-of-pocket) culture:

"The student leaders have expensive contributions to make since the student leaders don't have funds." (P5)

2) Restrictive Funding Processes: The restriction on solicitations ("Bawal mag solicit") and the lack of a guaranteed, timely budget further compounded the problem. Leaders expressed frustration that their energy was diverted from leadership development to mere financial survival. One leader emphasized the need for a baseline allocation:

"I hope they can put at least [an] amount of a budget in clubs and organizations so that the students no longer brainstorm about [just] fundraising." (P6)

For the theoretical linkage, this theme introduces the concept of leader liability, the phenomenon where student leaders are forced to privately subsidize the public functions of the institution. This not only exposes a failure in institutional allocation but also aligns with the literature on organizational governance risk, where the lack of formal controls and budget management skills creates an environment ripe for potential financial mismanagement. This necessitates a shift toward a tiered and flexible budget structure.

Horizon of Bureaucratic Delay.

The lived experience of administrative interaction was dominated by feelings of bureaucratic delay and systemic inefficiency. The main issue is the bureaucratic barriers that make it difficult for student organizations at BCC to function effectively.

1) Impending Process: The long and time-consuming permission processes for event approval and funding requests served as a significant impediment to timely initiative implementation.

   "Some of their planned activities got canceled because they lacked time to plan and execute." (P3)

   "BCC could streamline the bureaucratic processes involved in running student clubs and organizations, such as event approvals, funding requests, and meeting space reservations." (P1)

2) Lack of Support: This inefficiency was compounded by a lack of timely administrative guidance and feedback.

   "Simplified paperwork, quicker approval times, and more transparent guidelines would reduce the administrative burden on student leaders and allow them to focus more on organizing activities and recruiting members." (P3)

   "Establishing a regular system for clubs to provide feedback on the effectiveness of current policies, resources, and support services can help the college adjust its offerings based on student needs." (P11)

Sophomores and Freshmen leaders, new to the institutional procedures, reported higher levels of confusion and discontent when navigating these complex, undocumented administrative hurdles, while Seniors had developed coping strategies but remained frustrated by the inherent inefficiency. The findings illustrate a gap between formal and informal organizational structures, where administrative inefficiency (Brace & Harvey, 2023) acts as a direct barrier to student self-governance. This reinforces principles of good governance in student affairs (CMO 9, series of 2013), which mandate streamlined processes, transparent guidelines, and quick response times (e.g., streamlined paperwork, quicker approval times).

Environmental Constraints.

The physical facilities experience was one of environmental discomfort and functional limitation. Inadequate physical facilities at BCC impede the successful execution of student activities and events.

1) Inadequate Infrastructure: The Activity Center, a central venue, was consistently described as having insufficient ventilation and lacking basic equipment like microphone stands.

   "Lack of ventilation at the Activity Center." (P9)

   "lack of a microphone stand and lack of sports equipment" (P4)

2) Functional Limitations: Suboptimal technical features (lighting, acoustics) and limited space created conditions of overcrowding during mandatory events.

"overcrowded if the event is mandatory…" (P2)

This theme directly supports the concept of environmental press in student development, where the physical setting either supports or hinders intended educational and developmental outcomes. The findings confirm that neglecting the quality of the physical plant (e.g., ventilation, acoustics) limits the institution's capacity to host safe, functional, and effective developmental activities (Yangambi, 2023).

Synthesis

Collectively, these seven horizons converged to define the core phenomenon: the student development experience at BCC was characterized not by a lack of student initiative, but by profound institutional limitations (Bayudan-Dacuycuy et al., 2023; Cajes, 2024; De Vera, 2025; Montallana, 2024; PIDS, 2025). The constant tension between the aspirations of the student leaders and the college's inadequate financial, infrastructural, and administrative systems created a pervasive cycle of leader liability and operational exhaustion (Tucay et al., 2023; Atienza et al., 2022; Pedroso et al., 2023). This systemic gap ultimately relegated student development from a vital pedagogical goal to a mere mandatory obligation (Henning & Roberts, 2023), while the inability to physically sustain effective programming led to organizational invisibility. This validated the necessity of the resulting context-specific Evaluation Tool (Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2024; Pearson, 2024) designed to quantifiably measure these very structural deficiencies.

CONCLUSIONS

This phenomenological inquiry successfully established the essential structure of the student development experience at BCC, confirming a profound disparity between the aspiration of holistic growth and the systemic reality of institutional limitations. The lived narratives of student leaders revealed a pattern of operational exhaustion and leader liability, driven by inadequate financial support, inefficient administrative processes, and a critical lack of formal leadership development. This study explicitly addressed the research objectives as follows:

1) Leadership Development - The inquiry found that the lack of comprehensive training and regular guidance leads to Operational Exhaustion and burnout (Theme 1).
2) Student Engagement - Findings show that the absence of dedicated spaces and adequate communication results in Organizational Invisibility (Theme 2), while the focus on compliance over value creates a Mandatory Obligation (Theme 3).
3) Arts/Sports & Support - The research confirmed that inadequate funding, facilities, and coaching result in Unmet Expectations and Support (Theme 4).
4) Administrative Efficiency and Funding - The study identified a lack of a guaranteed budget, forcing leaders into Personal Subsidy (Theme 5), and confirmed that complex, slow processes lead to the Horizon of Bureaucratic Delay (Theme 6).
5) Facilities - Finally, the inquiry established that the core venue is hindered by infrastructural shortcomings, creating significant Environmental Constraints (Theme 7).

Consequently, the student development experience has been diminished to a mandatory obligation rather than a vital educational goal, making it clear that student efficacy is hampered by systemic infrastructural and organizational deficiencies; these critical thematic horizons now form the empirical foundation necessary to construct a valid, context-specific Student Development Evaluation Tool.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study offer several conceptual and theoretical contributions:

1) This study refines existing theories of student leadership by defining "Operational Exhaustion" as a consequence of institutional developmental neglect, not merely individual stress. This challenges models that place the burden of skill acquisition solely on the student and highlights the institution's role as a mandatory partner in leadership education.

2) The emergent phenomenon of "Personal Subsidy for Resources" is conceptually defined as "Leader Liability," where the financial risk and burden of institutional operations are unfairly transferred to the student governance body. This extends organizational support theory by demonstrating how financial insecurity creates ethical and fiduciary risks for student leaders.

3) By using a phenomenological approach, this research provides a rich, context-specific understanding that can guide later institutional reforms or comparative research across other Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs). The seven themes serve as a model for understanding systemic barriers in resource-constrained community college environments.

Practical Implications and Strategic Recommendations

Based on the synthesis of the seven themes, the following specific, action-oriented recommendations are proposed to address the fundamental disparity between developmental aspirations and institutional capacity at BCC and other similar LUCs (see Table 3. Summary of Strategic Recommendations below).

Table 3. Summary of Strategic Recommendations (Actionable Policy)

Systemic Limitation	Strategic Recommendation (Actionable Policy)	Direct Outcome
Operational Exhaustion (Lack of training, burnout)	Implement Mandatory, Accredited Leadership Training: Focus on practical skills (event budgeting, conflict resolution, team management, values formation). Assign a trained staff mentor from OSAS to each major organization.	Mitigates "lack of regular direction," reduces burnout, and improves leadership efficacy.
Organizational Invisibility (Lack of dedicated space)	Allocate and Equip Dedicated Office Spaces: Provide permanent, accessible, and equipped offices for all accredited student organizations.	Legitimizes student governance, combats "organizational anonymity," and improves accessibility for new members.
Mandatory Obligation (Compliance over value)	Incentivize Voluntary Participation: Institute policies that promote intrinsic motivation and tie successful program outcomes to developmental learning rather than mandatory attendance requirements or headcounts.	Shifts the culture from procedural compliance to authentic engagement.
Unmet Expectations (Arts/Sports infrastructural deficiency)	Prioritize Capital Funding for Arts and Athletics: Begin with essential equipment procurement and the repair or construction of adequate training facilities.	Addresses "inadequate facilities and equipment" and professionalizes the co-curricular experience.

Personal Subsidy (Financial burden on leaders)	Implement a Transparent, Tiered, and Guaranteed Annual Budget: Ensure essential operational costs for all accredited organizations are covered by the college to remove the "personal subsidy" burden on student leaders.	Fosters financial integrity, removes leader liability, and enables long-term program planning.
Bureaucratic Delay (Inefficient approval process)	Streamline and Unify Administrative Processes: Implement a citizen's charter for event and funding requests with a mandated 48-working-hour approval turnaround, monitored directly by the OSAS Director. Additionally, institute bi-annual Student-Administrator Consultation Forums, convened by the OSAS Director through the Student Development Officer, to bridge the gap between student feedback and administrative implementation.	Reduces administrative burden, prevents activity cancellation, and provides timely support.
Environmental Constraints (Substandard facilities)	Procure and Maintain Necessary Technical Equipment: This includes microphone stands, reliable projectors, and appropriate lighting/acoustic systems to ensure all activities can be executed professionally and safely.	Ensures a safe, functional, and pleasant environment for student activities.

Role of the Student Development Evaluation Tool

The proposed Student Development Evaluation Tool (See Appendix B) is a direct and necessary outcome of this phenomenological inquiry. Its seven-section structure directly translates the seven "themes" extracted from the qualitative data, thus ensuring high contextual validity specific to Bacolod City College. By quantifiably measuring variables within these seven horizons (e.g., frequency of training, timeliness of budget, condition of facilities), the tool provides the institution with the empirical data needed to track progress on the strategic recommendations. For practical application, the Office of Student Affairs and Services (OSAS), in collaboration with the Quality Assurance (QA) Office, is designated to administer this tool annually at the conclusion of the academic year. The results are not intended for mere archiving; rather, they will directly feed into the institution's decision-making matrix. Specifically, domain scores falling below the "Satisfactory" threshold will serve as the primary justification for the realignment of the Annual Operational Plan (AOP), dictating priorities for facility repairs, budget augmentation, or leadership training modules for the succeeding fiscal year.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

The primary limitation of this study stems from its Qualitative Phenomenological Research Design and context-specific focus. By employing Descriptive Phenomenology and purposefully selecting only 12 student leaders from Bacolod City College (BCC) as key informants, the findings are intentionally non-generalizable. While this design allows for a deep, contextual understanding and the development of a locally valid Student Development Evaluation Tool for BCC, the resulting themes and the evaluation instrument itself may not be directly applicable to larger, nationally funded, or traditional universities without further adaptation and validation. The study's ontological position, that reality is a collection of subjective, socially constructed realities—means

the identified "universal essence" of the student development experience is specific to the lived world of the BCC student leaders, limiting its external validity to other institutional contexts.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

The questions are about the challenges and perceptions of the student leader about the current situation of the student development office of BCC:

1. What are your thoughts on the institution's OSAS program for student interest clubs and campus organizations? Give your assessment of BCC's student club or organization. Policies.

2. What suggestions can be made to improve BCC's Leadership Development Plan?

3. What issues are faced by BCC's student interest clubs and campus organizations?

4. What recommendations for improvement do you have for BCC's policy regarding student interest clubs and campus organizations?

5. What are your thoughts on the institution's OSAS program for student activities and events?

6. What issues arise during BCC's student activities?

7. What suggestions for improvement can you make for BCC's student activities?

Appendix B

Student Development Evaluation Tool
for Bacolod City College - Student Development Unit

Instructions: Please read each statement carefully and select the option that best reflects your level of agreement or satisfaction. Your honest responses are valuable for improving student life at Bacolod City College.

Scale:
1 = Strongly Disagree / Very Dissatisfied
2 = Disagree / Dissatisfied
3 = Neutral
4 = Agree / Satisfied
5 = Strongly Agree / Very Satisfied

Section 1: Leadership Capacity Development
This section assesses your perception of the college's support for developing student leadership skills.
1. The college provides comprehensive leadership development programs for student leaders.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
2. I feel adequately supported by the college in managing my leadership roles and responsibilities without feeling overwhelmed.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
3. There is consistent guidance available for student leaders to navigate complex situations and make informed decisions.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
4. The college offers opportunities to develop networking skills for student leaders.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
5. Formal leadership training provided by the college effectively enhances student leaders' skillsets and knowledge.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
6. Leadership styles within student organizations are generally inclusive and promote team cohesion.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5

Section 2: Student Engagement in Co-Curricular Organizations
This section evaluates your engagement with and satisfaction regarding co-curricular organizations.
1. It is easy to locate and connect with student clubs and organizations on campus.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
2. My busy schedule allows me sufficient time to participate actively in extracurricular activities.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
3. Communication channels effectively inform students about available clubs and organizations and their activities.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
4. I perceive clear value and benefits in joining student clubs and organizations.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
5. Student clubs and organizations at the college promote diversity and inclusivity.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
6. I am satisfied with the efforts of student organizations to attract and retain active members.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5

Section 3: Enhancement of Student-Centric Activities
This section focuses on the effectiveness and quality of student-centric activities and events.
1. Student activities and events at the college meaningfully engage students beyond just attendance requirements.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
2. The timing of student activities considers students' academic and personal commitments, especially for upperclassmen.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
3. Information about student activities is disseminated in a timely and sufficient manner.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
4. The college offers a diverse range of activities that promote cultural exchange and social responsibility.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
5. I feel motivated to participate in community service activities organized by the college.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
6. I am satisfied with the overall quality and variety of student-centric activities at the college.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5

Section 4: Support for Arts and Athletic Development
This section assesses the support provided for arts and athletic programs.
1. The college provides adequate facilities and equipment for arts and athletic programs.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
2. There are sufficient coaching and training resources available for student-athletes and artists.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
3. Arts and athletic programs receive sufficient funding to support their needs, equipment, training, and competition fees.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
4. The college meets expectations regarding athletic performance in regional competitions.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
5. Student-athletes and artists receive adequate support and incentives to motivate their participation and achievement.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
6. I am satisfied with the college's commitment to enriching the cultural landscape through its arts and culture programs.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5

Section 5: Institutional Resource Allocation and Financial Support
This section evaluates the financial support and resource allocation for student organizations.
1. Student organizations have sufficient financial resources to operate effectively and achieve their goals.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
2. The funding processes for student organizations are flexible and responsive to their evolving needs.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
3. Student leaders are not burdened by significant personal financial contributions for organizing events and activities.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
4. The college provides timely budget allocation for student activities.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
5. Access to resources like meeting spaces, technology, and promotional materials for student clubs is adequate.
   ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5

Section 6: Administrative Efficiency and Procedural Streamlining
This section assesses the efficiency of administrative processes for student organizations.
1. The permission processes for student initiatives are streamlined and not time-consuming.
  ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
2. Administrative assistance and direction for student leaders are clear and sufficient.
  ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
3. There are timely feedback mechanisms in place for student organizations to address their needs and concerns.
  ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
4. The college effectively addresses bureaucratic challenges faced by student clubs (e.g., event approvals, funding requests).
  ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
5. I am satisfied with the overall administrative support for student organizations.
  ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5

Section 7: Physical Plant and Facilities
This section evaluates the adequacy and quality of physical facilities for student activities and events.
1. Activity centers have sufficient ventilation.
  ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
2. Lighting and acoustics in activity centers are optimal for performances and presentations.
  ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
3. Activity centers provide adequate space to prevent overcrowding and discomfort during events.
  ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
4. Necessary equipment (e.g., microphones, sporting equipment) is readily available and in good condition for student activities.
  ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
5. Windows in activity centers are adequately covered for artificial lighting and projectors when needed.
  ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5
6. I am satisfied with the overall physical facilities available for student activities and events.
  ( ) 1   ( ) 2   ( ) 3   ( ) 4   ( ) 5