The Influence of Political Culture on Youth Officials' Leadership Styles and Civic Engagement

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ABSTRACT: Recognizing the underlying cultural factors that influence political attitudes can aid in resolving conflicts and promoting social cohesion. This study explored the influence political culture on Youth Officials' leadership styles and civic engagement. The study was conducted in one of the universities in Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental. The descriptive-correlational design was used in the study. There were 135 students who served as the respondents selected through a purposive sampling technique. The researcher-made Youth Officials Political Culture, Youth Officials' Leadership Styles, and Youth Officials' Civic Engagement Questionnaires were used as research instruments. Weighted Mean and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient were used as statistical tools to analyze the data gathered. Results revealed that the youth officials perceived political culture in their respective barangays was very highly participant. The youth officials' leadership style was democratic, while their civic engagement was to a very great extent. The perceived political culture generally influenced the respondents' leadership styles and civic engagement. Political culture holds a major factor on how the youth officials lead their constituents and engage themselves in civic activities. It is recommended that youth officials sustain their democratic practices in governance to encourage citizens to participate freely in collective political action and influence decision-making processes.

KEYWORDS: democracy, leadership style, participation, political culture, Youth Officials

INTRODUCTION

In a society where the spread of knowledge, technology, and information exchange in the era of globalization is prevalent, which gives a multifaceted and complex meaning to politics, political culture is an important template to look into in understanding government and political phenomena (Jordan et al., 2021). It provides a deeper understanding of the complex interactions between society, politics, and governance, making it a fundamental concept in the study of political science and its sub-field of public administration (Kozacov, 2023).

Political culture refers to the attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments that shape and give meaning to the political process (Outram, 2022). It includes the underlying assumptions and rules that influence behavior within the political system (Paden 2023). It is not the same as public opinion; instead, it is concerned with what is considered normal and acceptable, as well as what is abnormal and unacceptable (Schilling 2022).

In the field of political science, it is articulated as collective opinions and normative judgments that a population holds about its political system (Shively & Schultz, 2022). It is important to note that political culture is not about attitudes toward specific individuals like a president or prime minister (Go, 2020). Instead, it encompasses how people perceive the political system as a whole and their belief in its legitimacy (Winkler, 2024).

Hence, political culture, in its most generic sense, refers to a set of interconnected cognitive and evaluative models that provide individuals within a political community with a framework to understand their role as political actors, as well as the roles of others, the community itself, and the institutional structure they are a part of (Rose et al., 2019). Therefore, individuals' views, attitudes, and feelings about their government constitute the foundation of political culture (Kitromilides, 2024).

With this, there might be a lack of comprehensive research that specifically examines how political culture influences the leadership styles and civic engagement of youth officials. Existing studies focused more broadly on youth participation or political culture at the national level, overlooking the unique dynamics within youth leadership structures (Weiss, 2020; Kitanova, 2020).

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This study intended to contribute to filling this gap by providing nuanced insights into the contextual factors influencing youth leadership.

Several scholars have advocated categorizing a wide range of leadership styles used by leaders in politics, industry, and other sectors. Psychologist Kurt Lewin developed his framework in the 1930s, which has since influenced many different approaches. Previous studies focused broadly on youth participation in politics or leadership styles in general (Omotayo & Folorunso, 2020; Pontes et al,. 2019) but lacked an emphasis on the relationship between political culture and leadership among youth officials.

This study was chosen to explore how the prevailing political culture in different localities influences the leadership styles adopted by youth officials. It sought to investigate the values, norms, and practices embedded in political culture that shape the leadership approaches of youth leaders. It aimed to identify how the values, attitudes, and expectations inherent in political culture impact the willingness and ability of youth leaders to actively participate in community governance and decision-making processes.

Civic engagement among youth is vital for the development of democratic societies. By examining the relationship between political culture and civic engagement among youth officials, the study identified strategies to promote active citizenship and participation in governance processes among young people. Ultimately, the study may empower youth officials by providing them with a deeper understanding of the factors that influence their leadership roles and civic engagement. The knowledge can aid youth leaders in navigating the complexities of local politics more effectively and contribute meaningfully to community development and social change.

Objectives of the Study

This study explored influence of political culture on youth officials' leadership styles and civic engagement.

METHODS

Research Design. The descriptive-correlational design was used in the study. The descriptive method is a purposive process of gathering, analyzing, classifying, and tabulating data about prevailing conditions, practices, processes, trends, and cause-effect relationships and then making adequate and accurate interpretation of such data with or without or sometimes minimal aid of statistical methods (Calderon, 2006).

Research Setting. The study was conducted at one of the universities in Ozamiz City. This institution has been granted Autonomous Status by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and a certified ISO 20001:2018 Quality Management System by DNV-GL Australia Pty Limited.

Respondents. The respondents of this study were the youth elected Officials from different barangays in the province of Misamis Occidental and neighboring provinces. The respondents were enrolled in general education courses in the university during the Second Semester, School Year 2023-2024. A total of 135 students served as the respondents who were selected using a purposive sampling technique.

Research Instruments. This study used a researcher-made instruments namely: Political Culture Questionnaire, Level of youth Officials' Leadership Styles Questionnaire and Extent of Youth Officials' Civic Engagement Questionnaire with a 4-point Likert scale.

Data Gathering Procedure. Before the gathering of the data, the researcher sought permission from the Dean of the Graduate School of Misamis University. After approval was obtained, the researcher asked permission from the instructors teaching General Education courses for the conduct of the study among the target respondents. After obtaining the necessary approval, the researcher prepared the consent form for the respondents and explained the importance of the study to them. The data gathering was conducted within the premises of the research locale. The researcher personally administered the survey questionnaires to the respondents. The answered instruments were retrieved immediately. The data gathered were tallied for statistical analysis, and interpretation of the results followed.

Ethical Considerations. The paper was submitted to the Misamis University-Research Ethics Board (MUREB) for review and approval before the start of the data gathering. The researcher asked the respondents for voluntary participation to ensure the ethical aspect of the study's conduct. The participants were informed that they would not be harmed in any way. Respect was prioritized for the dignity of the respondents. Security of the respondents' information, the utmost degree of confidentiality of study data, and the anonymity of research participants were guaranteed.

Data Analysis. The study used the following statistical tools in analyzing the data gathered: *Weighted Mean* and *Standard Deviation.* These tools were used to determine the level of perceived political culture, the youth officials' leadership styles, and civic engagement.*Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient.* This tool was used to explore the relationship of political culture to leadership styles and civic engagement among the youht elected officials.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Level of Youth Officials' Perceived Political Culture

The overall level of political culture among youth officials, as shown in Table 1, is rated as "High" (M=3.13, SD=0.50). Among the specific constructs, the highest mean score is observed in the "Participant" construct (M=3.37, SD=0.43), indicating that youth officials perceive themselves as highly involved in and supportive of the political system. The "Parochial" construct follows with a mean score of (M=3.05, SD=0.56), while the "Subject" construct has the lowest mean score of (M=2.98, SD = 0.52), yet still falls within the "High" range.

The findings suggest that youth officials generally perceive their political culture as active and engaged, with a particularly strong sense of participation in the political process. This high level of political culture, especially in the "Participant" construct, implies that youth officials are not only aware of but also involved in political activities, which is crucial for their role in local governance. The relatively lower score in the "Subject" construct, while still high, might indicate a lesser degree of passive compliance or acceptance of authority without active involvement. The balance between these constructs reflects a healthy engagement in civic duties while maintaining an awareness of the broader political system.

The high level of political culture among youth officials underscores the importance of fostering political awareness and active participation among youth leaders (Guarino, 2019). University programs aimed at enhancing civic engagement and political education could further strengthen these qualities. For the concerned personnel, such as university administrators and local government units, this implies a need to support initiatives that encourage active political participation and leadership development among young officials. By doing so, they can ensure that future leaders are well-prepared to engage with and contribute positively to the political landscape (Bashir et al,. 2023).

Table 1: Level of Youth Officials' Perceived Political Culture

Constructs	M	SD	Remarks
Participant	3.37	0.43	High
Subject	2.98	0.52	High
Parochial	3.05	0.56	High
Overall Level of Political Culture	3.13	0.50	High

Scale: 3.25-4.0(Very High); 2.50-3.24(High); 1.75-2.49 (Low); 1.0-1.74 (Very Low)

Level of Youth Officials' Leadership Styles

Table 2 presents the level of leadership styles among the respondents, with an overall leadership style rated as "High" (M=2.82, SD=0.87). Among the specific leadership styles, the "Democratic" style is rated "Very High" with a mean score of (M=3.56, SD=0.59), indicating a strong preference among the respondents for participative decision-making and inclusive leadership. The "Laissez-faire" style follows with a "High" rating (M=2.56, SD=0.97), suggesting that respondents also exhibit a tendency towards a more hands-off approach in leadership. The "Autocratic" style, however, is rated "Low" with a mean score of (M=2.35, SD=1.05), reflecting a minimal inclination towards authoritarian leadership among the respondents.

The data suggests that the respondents predominantly favor a democratic leadership style, emphasizing collaboration, consultation, and collective decision-making. The very high rating for the democratic style aligns with contemporary leadership ideals that value team input and shared responsibility. The high score for the laissez-faire style indicates that while respondents prefer a democratic approach, they are also comfortable with allowing their team members autonomy, possibly fostering innovation and self-directed work. On the other hand, the low rating for the autocratic style implies a limited reliance on top-down decision-making and control, which might reflect a leadership environment that values openness and participation over rigid authority.

The preference for democratic leadership among the respondents suggests that leadership development programs should focus on enhancing skills in communication, team-building, and inclusive decision-making (Vutula, 2021). University administrators and leadership mentors could benefit from promoting these values, ensuring that future leaders are equipped to manage teams effectively in a collaborative and participative manner. The relatively high laissez-faire style also indicates the need to balance autonomy with guidance, ensuring that leaders can delegate effectively while maintaining accountability. By de-emphasizing autocratic tendencies, leadership training can further cultivate an environment that fosters creativity, engagement, and mutual respect among team members.

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Table 2: Level of Youth Officials' Leadership Styles

Constructs	M	SD	Remarks
Autocratic	2.35	1.05	Low
Democratic	3.56	0.59	Very High
Laissez-faire	2.56	0.97	High
Overall Leadership Style	2.82	0.87	High

Scale: 3.25-4.0(Very High); 2.50-3.24(High); 1.75-2.49 (Low); 1.0-1.74 (Very Low)

Extent of Youth Officials' Civic Engagement

Table 3 illustrates the extent of civic engagement among the respondents, with the overall engagement rated as "Very Great Extent" (M=3.54, SD=0.60). Among the specific constructs, "Community Service" ranks highest with a mean score of (M=3.59, SD=0.58), suggesting that respondents are highly involved in activities that benefit their community. "Political Involvement" and "Social Change" both have a mean score of (3.53), with standard deviations of 0.57 and 0.63, respectively, indicating strong participation in political activities and efforts to bring about social change. The "Collective Noun" construct, while slightly lower, also reflects a "Very Great Extent" of engagement with a mean score of (M=3.51, SD=0.63).

The findings indicate a robust level of civic engagement among the respondents, with all constructs being rated as "Very Great Extent." The highest level of engagement in community service suggests that respondents are particularly committed to contributing to their communities, which could be reflective of a strong sense of social responsibility. The high scores in political involvement and social change imply that respondents are not only aware of but also actively participating in the political process and advocating for societal improvements. The engagement in collective action further demonstrates a willingness to collaborate with others in achieving common goals, emphasizing the respondents' commitment to civic duties.

The high level of civic engagement among the respondents points to a well-developed sense of civic responsibility and active participation in societal issues (Dang et al,. 2022). For university administrators and community leaders, this suggests an opportunity to further harness this engagement by providing more avenues for students and young leaders to participate in community service, political activities, and social change initiatives. Programs that support civic education, leadership development, and community involvement could help sustain and even enhance this level of engagement, ensuring that these individuals continue to contribute positively to their communities and society at large.

Table 3: Extent of Youth Officials' Civic Engagement

Constructs	M	SD	Remarks
Community Service	3.59	0.58	Very Great Extent
Collective Action	3.51	0.63	Very Great Extent
Political Involvement	3.53	0.57	Very Great Extent
Social Change	3.53	0.63	Very Great Extent
Overall Extent of Engagement	3.54	0.60	Very Great Extent

Scale: 3.25-4.0(Very Great Extent); 2.50-3.24(Great Extent); 1.75-2.49 (Less Extent); 1.0-1.74 (Least Extent)

Relationship between Perceived Political Culture and the Youth Officials' Leadership Styles

Table 4 presents the test of significant relationship between the respondents' level of political culture and their leadership styles. Several variables show a significant relationship, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (Ho). Specifically, a highly significant positive relationship is observed between the "Subject" construct and the "Autocratic" (r = 0.44, p = 0.00) and "Laissez-faire" (r = 0.39, p = 0.00) leadership styles. Similarly, the "Parochial" construct has a highly significant positive relationship with both the "Autocratic" (r = 0.40, p = 0.00) and "Laissez-faire" (r = 0.41, p = 0.00) leadership styles. Additionally, the "Participant" construct is significantly related to the "Democratic" (r = 0.32, p = 0.00) and "Laissez-faire" (r = 0.20, p = 0.02) leadership styles.

The significant relationships suggest that respondents with higher levels of "Subject" and "Parochial" political culture tend to adopt more autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles. The positive correlation with the "Autocratic" style might indicate that respondents who view themselves more as subjects within the political system may prefer a more directive approach to leadership. Likewise, those with a parochial political culture, who may be more locally or narrowly focused in their political engagement, might also lean toward more authoritative or less interventionist leadership styles. On the other hand, the significant relationship

between the "Participant" construct and the "Democratic" leadership style suggests that individuals who are actively involved in the political process tend to favor collaborative and inclusive leadership approaches. The significant association with the "Laissez-faire" style may imply that these individuals also value autonomy in leadership, allowing team members more freedom.

The non-significant relationships observed include the "Participant" construct with the "Autocratic" leadership style (r = 0.13, p = 0.12) and the "Subject" construct with the "Democratic" style (r = 0.05, p = 0.55). Additionally, the "Parochial" construct shows no significant relationship with the "Democratic" style (r = 0.01, p = 0.90). These non-significant findings suggest that these specific aspects of political culture do not strongly influence the preference for these particular leadership styles among the respondents. For instance, the lack of a significant relationship between the "Participant" construct and the "Autocratic" style might indicate that those who are more engaged in the political system do not typically prefer a top-down leadership approach. Similarly, the absence of a significant relationship between the "Parochial" construct and the "Democratic" style might suggest that a narrow or localized political focus does not necessarily correlate with a preference for participative leadership.

The findings of this study have important implications for both youth officials and those involved in their leadership development. The significant correlations between certain political culture constructs and leadership styles suggest that the political beliefs and engagement levels of young leaders can influence how they choose to lead. For university administrators and local government units, these results highlight the need to tailor leadership training programs to address the specific political culture of youth officials. Programs that emphasize the importance of democratic and participative leadership could help mitigate the tendencies toward more autocratic or laissez-faire approaches that are associated with certain political culture traits. Additionally, understanding these dynamics can help in designing interventions that encourage a more balanced leadership style, promoting both effective governance and positive civic engagement.

Table 4: Relationship Between Perceived Political Culture and the Youth Officials' Leadership Style

Variables		r value	p value	Decision
	Autocratic	0.13	0.12	Do not reject Ho
Participant	Democratic	0.32**	0.00	Reject Ho
	Laissez-fair	0.20*	0.02	Reject Ho
	Autocratic	0.44**	0.00	Reject Ho
Subject	Democratic	0.05	0.55	Do not reject Ho
	Laissez-fair	0.39**	0.00	Reject Ho
	Autocratic	0.40**	0.00	Reject Ho
Parochial	Democratic	0.01	0.90	Do not reject Ho
	Laissez-fair	0.41**	0.00	Reject Ho

Ho: There is no significant relationship between the level of political culture and the respondents' leadership styles.
Note: Probability Value Scale: **p<0.01 (Highly Significant); *p<0.05 (Significant); p>0.05 (Not significant)

Relationship between Perceived Political Culture and the Youth Officials' Civic Engagement

Table 5 presents the relationship between the respondents' level of political culture and their extent of civic engagement, with a focus on identifying significant relationships where the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected.

The results show highly significant positive relationships between the "Participant" construct and all dimensions of civic engagement: "Community Service" (r = 0.42, p = 0.00), "Collective Noun" (r = 0.49, p = 0.00), "Political Involvement" (r = 0.50, p = 0.00), and "Social Change" (r = 0.53, p = 0.00). These findings suggest that respondents who are actively involved in the political process are also more likely to engage in various forms of civic activities. The strong correlations with "Social Change" and "Political Involvement" indicate that participants who perceive themselves as active members of the political culture are likely to take initiatives that contribute to societal transformation and participate in political actions.

In the "Subject" construct, there are significant relationships with "Collective Noun" (r = 0.18, p = 0.04) and "Social Change" (r = 0.21, p = 0.01). These correlations suggest that respondents who see themselves as subjects within the political system, though less actively engaged compared to participants, still show some level of civic involvement, particularly in collective and social change activities.

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Regarding the "Parochial" construct, there are significant relationships with "Community Service" (r = 0.21, p = 0.02) and "Social Change" (r = 0.25, p = 0.00). This indicates that those who are more parochial in their political culture, possibly focused on local or narrow concerns, are nonetheless likely to engage in community service and contribute to social change.

The non-significant findings are seen in the relationships between the "Subject" construct and "Community Service" (r = 0.13, p = 0.12) and "Political Involvement" (r = 0.12, p = 0.17), as well as the "Parochial" construct with "Collective Noun" (r = 0.22, p = 0.10) and "Political Involvement" (r = 0.12, p = 0.16). These results indicate that for those with a subject or parochial political culture, engagement in community service and political involvement is not significantly influenced by their political beliefs. The lack of significant relationships suggests that these respondents might not see a direct connection between their political culture and their involvement in these specific civic activities.

The findings have important implications for those involved in civic education and political engagement programs, particularly within the context of youth officials. The significant relationships highlight the need to foster a more active political culture among the youth to enhance their civic engagement. For instance, training programs that encourage participation in the political process could lead to greater involvement in community service, political activities, and efforts toward social change. Moreover, understanding the different ways in which political culture influences civic engagement can help tailor these programs to address the specific needs and tendencies of different groups, whether they identify more as participants, subjects, or parochials. This can ultimately contribute to more effective leadership and community involvement among young leaders.

Variables		r value	p value	Decision
Participant	**Community Service**	0.42**	0.00	Reject Ho
	Collective Action	0.49**	0.00	Reject Ho
	Political Involvement	0.50**	0.00	Reject Ho
	Social Change	0.53**	0.00	Reject Ho
Subject	**Community Service**	0.13	0.12	Do not reject Ho
	Collective Action	0.18*	0.04	Reject Ho
	Political Involvement	0.12	0.17	Do not reject Ho
	Social Change	0.21**	0.01	Reject Ho
Parochial	**Community Service**	0.21*	0.02	Reject Ho
	Collective Action	0.22	0.10	Do not reject Ho
	Political Involvement	0.12	0.16	Do not reject Ho
	Social Change	0.25**	0.00	Reject Ho

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the Youth Officials exemplify a deep commitment to fostering an inclusive and participatory political culture within their communities. Their active engagement in political processes reflects a recognition of the importance of citizen involvement in decision-making, which they prioritize by valuing the input and participation of both their team members and constituents. This approach to leadership not only strengthens collaboration but also enhances the overall effectiveness of governance.

Furthermore, their roles and responsibilities are significantly influenced by the prevailing political culture, which serves as a guiding framework for how they perform their civic duties and interact with their communities. They see political culture as essential to shaping their leadership, decision-making, and engagement in governance initiatives. By actively participating in and promoting activities that benefit the common good, they help cultivate a political environment where shared responsibility, accountability, and civic participation are the cornerstones of community development. This dedication underscores the pivotal role the youth plays in strengthening democratic values and governance at the grassroots level.

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