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LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCES OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT COUNCIL OFFICERS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the leadership practices and experiences of junior and senior high school student council officers using the Student Leadership Practices Inventory (S-LPI) which is categorized into: (1) Model the way, (2) Inspire a shared vision, (3) Challenge the process, (4) Enable others to act, and (5) Encourage the heart. To find out if junior officers practice leadership skills differently as compared with senior officers, the researchers utilized independent *t*-test. Interviews were also conducted to describe their experiences as student leaders. The results of the study revealed that the senior officers were rated higher as compared to the junior officers in terms of the five leadership practices. There was no significant difference, though, between the two groups in their leadership behavior. Interviews among the student leaders were also conducted and their responses yielded the theme meaningful leadership experiences.

Keywords: student leaders, leadership practices, leadership experiences

Schools are institutions whose main purpose is to teach students. However, aside from developing them academically, they are also exposed to activities that hone them holistically through involvement in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities which happen outside of their classroom requirements. These include participation in clubs and organizations where membership is based on interest in a particular subject or skill. However, there are also student organizations whose members serve the school, their fellow students, and become a breeding ground for future leaders such as the student council or government whose officers are elected by the student body and hold positional roles. These officers not only organize different programs or activities but also represent the students in different school events.

The student council or government is “an autonomous, unified, and the highest democratic representative of the student body and is founded on the principles of participatory democracy, responsible servant-leadership, collaboration, unity, accountability, and efficiency in serving the student body” (DepEd Memo No. 47, 2014, pp. 3-4). One of its objectives is to help

develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making. It empowers the students to strive for excellence in academics, social responsibility, and leadership. Thus, private and public schools in the Philippines from elementary up to college have their own student council or government.

Students at Baliuag University who have leadership potentials are encouraged to run for different positions (president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, auditor, and 8 senators) in the grade school as well as junior or senior high school student council provided that they meet the requirements in the constitution and by-laws of the council. Students have to form their political parties, present their programs or plan of actions, and launch a campaign in order to win the votes of their schoolmates. A candidate who receives the highest number of votes serves for one school year and becomes part of the student council. A faculty adviser is assigned by the principal to guide and help them in implementing their projects such as Cleanliness Campaign, Outreach Programs, Teachers' Day Celebration, and Intramurals.

The formation and existence of a student council is part of Baliuag University's program of developing and cultivating its students' leadership skill outside the classroom set-up. The skills and insights that the students could gain from working with their fellow students, organizing and setting up projects and activities are valuable experiences that they can use later on when they are already in college, in the work in their community. In fact, leadership is being developed as early as grade school through class organizations wherein the officers are elected by their classmates and are given simple tasks and responsibilities by their class adviser based on the position that they are elected in. Some of these tasks that they have to perform are helping the teachers maintain classroom discipline and cleanliness. These simple tasks progress to more challenging responsibilities which enhance their leadership qualities and experiences as they move on from grade school to junior and senior high school.

Leadership experience is an important aspect to consider when determining the behavior of the leader (Cagle as cited in Boerrigter, 2015). In fact, in a study on leadership-shaping experiences, the findings revealed that majority of the leaders that were examined have experienced more leadership roles at high school as compared to non-leaders (Amit et al., 2009). Their experiences in a high school leadership position increases leadership skills (Rouse, 2012). Similarly, it was found out that those with previous leadership experiences have high level of leadership (Atwater et al., 1999) and that the combination of training plus experience in leadership has an influence on leadership capabilities (Wan Muda et al., 2017).

Aside from leadership experience, Spillane et al. (2004) mentioned the importance of investigating leadership practices in order to understand leadership in organizations. In a meta-analysis of the relationship

between 11 leader-centered practices and organizational outcomes, results showed that the greater use of leadership practices was associated with positive outcomes (Dunst et al., 2018). These leadership practices and skills are important to students to help them find employment which may result in professional competence, higher earnings, or even engagement in social change (Jensen, 2017; Kois et al., 2016; Soria et al., 2013; Kuhn & Weinberger, 2005).

Researchers have identified the importance of identifying leadership practices. Two of the instruments used to determine the practices of leaders are the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) and the Student Leadership Practices Inventory (S-LPI), both created by Kouzes and Posner (2002, 2008). These were based on their case studies involving 1,200 managers about their best experiences as leaders. The same case study approach was also used in the development of the student version (S-LPI) which investigated whether college students' leadership behaviors were comparable with those of the managers. Various studies have already been conducted using the LPI and S-LPI to identify the leadership practices of leaders at a pharmaceutical company (McBee, 2013); volunteer leaders (Posner, 2015); principals in US and Thailand (Karuna et al, 2014); school counselors (Mason, 2010); graduate students (Edwards & Aboagye, 2015); nursing students (Foli et al, 2014); student-athletes (Lund, 2013); and high school students (Ghamrawi et al., 2018).

This study aims to compare the leadership practices and experiences of junior high school (JHS) and senior high school (SHS) student council officers of the Baliuag University. The results of this study can be used to help them identify their strengths and weaknesses in terms of their leadership skills which can be the basis of the school in developing leadership programs for the students. Also, the results of this study may help the administrators and teachers in further enhancing other co-curricular activities that can develop the leadership potentials of the students.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the following theories: transformational leadership theory and experiential learning theory.

Transformational leadership theory. The concept of transforming leadership was first introduced by James Macgregor Burns (1978) in his research on political leaders. According to Burns (1978), transforming leadership exists when leaders and followers help each other and create significant change in the organization and the people behind it. It also involves redesigning the employees' perceptions, values, expectations, and aspirations. Bass (1985) further extended the work of Burns and used the term "transformational" instead of "transforming."

Transformational leadership theory pertains to leadership that creates a positive change in the followers by taking care of each other's interests and the group as well. In this leadership style, a leader stimulates and inspires other people to achieve extraordinary outcomes (Robbins & Coulter, 2007; Warrilow, 2009) and is characterized by patterns of behaviors. These behaviors are (1) charisma or idealized influence which acts as a role model by behaving in admirable ways such as displaying convictions and taking stands; (2) inspirational motivation which articulates a vision that inspires the followers with optimism about future goals; (3) intellectual stimulation where the leader challenges the assumptions, stimulates and encourages creativity of the followers; and (4) personal and individual attention where the leader acts as a mentor or coach by providing advice and appreciating an individual's contribution to the team (Warrilow, 2009).

Experiential learning theory. This theory provides a model of the learning process and its origins can be traced in the experiential works of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget. The term experiential refers to the important role of experience in the learning process. Kolb's learning styles and experiential learning cycle (1984) explains how learning occurs through a four-stage cycle: (1) concrete experience such as doing/having experienced an activity; (2) reflective observation as in reviewing/reflecting on the experience; (3) abstract conceptualization where new implications or ideas are drawn; and (4) active experimentation such as application and testing of the idea or plan for new experiences (Kolb et al., 1999).

Experiential learning has been found useful in assessing students' leadership approaches and in encouraging the development of their leadership competencies (Turesky & Wood, 2010). Studies found out that students could benefit from an experiential leadership education (Warnick et al., 2014), and that experiential learning can be used as a framework for analyzing the leadership potential of students (Turesky & Wood, 2010).

Researchers believe that effective leaders must draw from Kolb's four-stage cycle since they are always learning as they lead and must develop the capability to choose the appropriate stage based on the situation. For example, in concrete experience, the leaders can register and draw on tangible qualities coming from experiences such as facilitating meetings and providing feedback. In abstract conceptualization, the leaders, upon developing their conceptual understanding, can create symbolic representations that they can use in analyzing data for a plan. In reflective observation, the leaders can reflect on their actions, observe others or ask for feedback regarding their performance to clarify their values and priorities. Lastly, in active experimentation, leaders can choose a strategy to come up with a solution to a problem in an organization (Turesky & Wood, 2010).

Research Questions

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the leadership practices of junior and senior high school student council officers as perceived by the students they served?
2. Do junior student council officers practice leadership differently from senior student council officers as perceived by the students they served?
3. How do the junior and senior high school student council officers describe their experiences as student leaders?

Method

Research Design

This study combined both qualitative and quantitative methods to understand the leadership practices and experiences of the JHS and SHS student council officers. The quantitative part of this study used the Student Leadership Practices Inventory (S-LPI) developed by Kouzes and Posner (2003) wherein the JHS and SHS students rated their student council officers when it comes to their leadership behavior and actions. The qualitative part utilized interviews with the JHS and SHS student council officers using open-ended guide questions to describe their experiences as student leaders. The participants answered the questions either in English or Filipino, and each interview lasted for 15-20 minutes.

Participants and Sampling Procedure

There were two participants in this research study: (1) the JHS and SHS student council officers and (2) the JHS and SHS students of Baliuag University for school year 2017-2018. Using purposive or criterion-based sampling, all of the 27 JHS and SHS student council officers were involved in the study which consists of 2 presidents, 2 vice-presidents, 2 secretaries, 2 treasurers, 2 auditors, and 17 senators. In this sampling procedure, the participants were selected based on accessibility, proximity, availability, and willingness to participate (Dornyei, 2007).

The second group of participants were the junior and senior high school students. Their responses were elicited from the leadership behaviors and actions being exhibited and practiced by the council officers. Using Slovin's formula, a total of 225 JHS and 329 SHS students were involved in the study.

Instrument

The Student Leadership Practices Inventory (S-LPI) measures on a 4-point scale the frequency of 30 specific leadership behaviors and actions that the JHS and SHS student council officers are using. The internal reliability of the inventory has a fairly set Cronbach alpha coefficients at about the .70 level and above (Posner, 2012). All of the items were rephrased for better understanding of the participants.

The behaviors are categorized into five leadership practices:

1. Model the Way - Clarify values by finding your voice and affirming shared ideas; set an example by aligning actions with shared values.
2. Inspire a Shared Vision - Envision the future by imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities; enlist others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations.
3. Challenge the Process - Search for opportunities by seizing the initiative and by looking outward for innovative ways to improve; experiment and take risks by constantly generating small wins and learning from experience.
4. Enable Others to Act - Foster collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships; strengthen others by increasing self-determination and developing competence.
5. Encourage the Heart - Recognize contributions by showing appreciation for individual excellence; celebrate the values and victories by creating a spirit of community.

For the qualitative part of the research, the JHS and SHS student council officers were asked to answer an interview questionnaire which highlights their leadership experiences.

Data Collection and Analysis

Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the students following the approval of the principals. The researchers then explained the items, the purposes of the study, and the directions to the participants for answering. Enough time was given to them to think of their answers, and confidentiality of their answers was ensured by not requiring them to write their names.

The profile of the respondents was described in terms of frequency count and equivalent percentage. The responses of the student council officers were tallied, and weighted mean was computed based on the assigned numerical rate: 1 – Little Extent; 2 – Some Extent; 3 – Moderate Extent; and 4 – Great Extent. The mean average was interpreted using the following:

Computed Weighted Average	Interpretation
3.25 – 4.0	Great Extent (GE)
2.50 – 3.24	Moderate Extent (ME)
1.75 – 2.49	Some Extent (SE)
1.0 – 1.74	Little Extent (LE)

To determine if the leadership practices of JHS student council officers are different from the SHS student council officers, the researchers utilized an independent *t*-test. To describe the experiences of the junior and senior student council officers as student leaders, the researchers interviewed the student leaders using the following open-ended guide questions: “Describe your experiences as a student leader” and “What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of being a student leader?”. Before the interview, the researchers assured the participants of their anonymity. Their answers were then recorded, transcribed, analyzed, coded, and organized into themes. Open coding and thematic analysis were used to interpret the qualitative data of the study.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Enable others to act

Indicators	Junior High School Students			Senior High School Students		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpre- tation	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpre- tation
1. They like cooperating with us.	2.90	0.97	Moderate Extent	2.91	0.78	Moderate Extent
2. They like listening to our opinions.	2.71	1.01	Moderate Extent	2.87	1.55	Moderate Extent
3. They treat us with dignity and respect.	3.18	0.91	Moderate Extent	3.02	0.78	Moderate Extent
4. They support our decisions.	2.77	0.96	Moderate Extent	2.92	1.43	Moderate Extent
5. They give others the chance and freedom to do their task in their own and most convenient ways.	2.91	0.95	Moderate Extent	2.91	0.73	Moderate Extent
6. They give others a chance to assume leader roles.	2.84	1.00	Moderate Extent	2.85	0.82	Moderate Extent
Overall Mean	2.89		Moderate Extent	2.91		Moderate Extent

Table 1 shows the “Enable Others to Act” characteristics of the junior and senior high school student leaders. With a mean of 2.84 (JHS) and 2.91 (SHS) and a verbal interpretation of Moderate Extent, the student leaders are perceived to foster cooperative relationships, actively listen, treat others with respect, support decisions that others make, give people choices on how to do their works, and provide leadership opportunities for others.

The table shows that the JHS and SHS student leaders still have to work on how they influence others to also become leaders. They need to share with others the ideas and opportunities to become leaders as well.

The table also reveals that item number 3 (They treat us with dignity and respect) has the highest mean for the JHS and SHS student leaders. This means that officers are perceived to be respectful and polite when talking and dealing with the students during programs, activities, and in their daily interaction with them. In fact, respectfulness is one of the attributes of leadership characters identified by Sarros et al. (2014) in their study on character and leadership. Moreover, Mihelič et al. (2010) mentioned that one of the characteristic behaviors of ethical leadership is respecting each individual.

Table 2. Encourage the heart

Indicators	Junior High School Students			Senior High School Students		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpre- tation	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpre- tation
1. They usually give praises for a job well done.	2.76	0.94	Moderate Extent	2.80	0.77	Moderate Extent
2. They like encouraging us when we do specific tasks.	2.78	0.89	Moderate Extent	2.80	0.72	Moderate Extent
3. They are vocal in showing their appreciation to the contributions of others.	2.94	0.91	Moderate Extent	2.87	0.77	Moderate Extent
4. They praise us publicly for showing commitment to our work and values.	2.63	0.92	Moderate Extent	2.90	1.45	Moderate Extent
5. They like celebrating accomplishments and they make sure to celebrate them every once in a while.	2.82	0.97	Moderate Extent	2.78	0.81	Moderate Extent
6. They recognize people creatively, trying out new ways of rewarding people.	2.87	0.97	Moderate Extent	2.95	0.81	Moderate Extent
Overall Mean	2.80		Moderate Extent	2.85		Moderate Extent

Table 2 shows the “Encourage the Heart” characteristics of the junior and senior high school student leaders as perceived by other students. With an over-all mean of 2.80 (JHS) and 2.85 (SHS) and a verbal interpretation of

Moderate Extent, the student leaders are seen to praise people, encourage others, provide support and appreciation, publicly recognize alignment with values, celebrate accomplishments, and creatively recognize others.

This means that like any other criteria in transformational leadership, both the junior and senior high school student leaders have still more to learn. They still have to be able to express their praise and appreciation for others even those who are not leaders. They also need to find more creative ways of celebrating victory.

In terms of the highest mean in the indicators, item number 3 (They are vocal in showing their appreciation for the contributions of others) has the highest mean (2.94) for the JHS which could suggest that the JHS student leaders acknowledge the contributions of their fellow students for the success of any program or activity. This is in-line with one of the key elements of successful leadership which is treating others with love, compassion, and appreciation for other people's contributions (Reave, 2005).

For the SHS, item number 6 (They recognize people creatively, trying out new ways of rewarding people) has the highest mean (2.95) since the SHS student leaders have to think of different ways on how they can reward students to further encourage them to participate in their programs.

Table 3. Model the way

Indicators	Junior High School Students			Senior High School Students		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpre- tation	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpre- tation
1. Our leaders show how they like us to do things.	2.69	0.86	Moderate Extent	2.77	0.76	Moderate Extent
2. They always make sure that we behave the way we agree to behave.	2.80	0.88	Moderate Extent	2.72	0.8	Moderate Extent
3. They always keep their promises and commitment.	2.66	0.91	Moderate Extent	2.71	0.8	Moderate Extent
4. They try to understand how their actions affect our performance.	2.79	0.88	Moderate Extent	2.83	0.75	Moderate Extent
5. They make sure that we adhere to the values that we have agreed upon.	2.79	0.84	Moderate Extent	2.89	0.75	Moderate Extent
6. They are vocal of their values and principles.	3.06	0.90	Moderate Extent	2.95	2.01	Moderate Extent
Overall Mean	2.80		Moderate Extent	2.81		Moderate Extent

Table 3 shows the mean and verbal interpretation of the junior and senior high school student leaders' "Model the Way" characteristics. It shows an overall mean of 2.80 (JHS) and 2.81 (SHS) with a moderate extent verbal interpretation. This means that the junior and senior high school student leaders, as perceived by other students, show exemplification of actions in a moderate way by showing personal example, align others with principles and standards, follow through on promises, get feedback about actions, build consensus on values, and talk about values and principles.

It can clearly be seen that JHS and SHS student leaders still have so much to learn when it comes to modeling the way to students. There are still a number of things that they have to work on to be able to exemplify leadership to the other students.

Further analysis of the indicators reveal that item number 6 (They are vocal of their values and principles) has the highest mean for both the JHS and SHS student leaders (3.06 and 2.95, respectively). This could suggest that in order for their programs to be implemented successfully, they have to let the students know their beliefs and objectives. In fact, on becoming a leader, one must define and be aware of his values, morals, and character (McCoy, 2007 & Mullane, 2009).

Table 4. Inspire a shared vision

Indicators	Junior High School Students			Senior High School Students		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpre- tation	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpre- tation
1. They are futuristic and tell us what to expect in the future.	2.69	0.93	Moderate Extent	2.71	0.77	Moderate Extent
2. They tell us what we should be able to do.	2.89	0.92	Moderate Extent	2.91	0.79	Moderate Extent
3. They tell us that they want us to be better persons in the future.	2.54	0.98	Moderate Extent	2.81	0.75	Moderate Extent
4. We always have a compromise between our interests and goals.	2.62	0.86	Moderate Extent	2.84	0.73	Moderate Extent
5. They are very enthusiastic when talking about the future and what we can do.	2.72	0.97	Moderate Extent	2.91	0.76	Moderate Extent
6. They speak passionately about the meaning and purpose of everything that we do.	2.90	0.97	Moderate Extent	3.00	0.75	Moderate Extent
Overall Mean	2.73		Moderate Extent	2.86		Moderate Extent

Table 4 shows the “Inspire a Shared Vision” characteristics of the junior and senior high school student leaders as perceived by other students. The mean is 2.73 (JHS) and 2.86 (SHS) with a verbal interpretation of moderate extent. It means that JHS and SHS student leaders tend to look ahead and communicate about the future, describe ideal capabilities, talk about vision of the future, show others how their interests can be realized, paint “big pictures” of group aspirations, and communicate purpose and meaning.

It can be seen that still, there are areas of improvement for the junior and senior high school leaders when it comes to inspiring a shared vision. They need to be more open to other students and communicate more with others so that they will also be informed of the goals of the student body.

Further comparison of the indicators also showed that item number 6 (They speak passionately about the meaning and purpose of everything that we do) has the highest mean for the junior and senior high school leaders (2.90 and 3.00). This result shows that they are passionate whenever they discuss to their fellow students their projects or activities. Related to this, a passionate leader makes people want to work harder and smarter because they do it with a sense of purpose, thereby making people eager to participate in a task (CIMA, 2001).

Table 5. Challenge the process

Indicators	Junior High School Students			Senior High School Students		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpre- tation	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpre- tation
1. They provide us with activities which would develop our skills and abilities.	2.98	0.95	Moderate Extent	2.91	0.82	Moderate Extent
2. They give us a chance to try new methods and ideas.	2.76	0.93	Moderate Extent	2.87	0.82	Moderate Extent
3. They are innovative and do things differently, making the task easier.	2.76	0.90	Moderate Extent	3.02	0.8	Moderate Extent
4. When things do not go our way, they ask, “What can we learn from this experience?”	2.48	0.99	Some Extent	2.92	0.78	Moderate Extent
5. They make sure to divide big projects into smaller and more achievable tasks.	2.96	0.91	Moderate Extent	2.91	2.92	Moderate Extent
6. They like trying out new things, new solutions.	2.96	0.96	Moderate Extent	2.85	0.76	Moderate Extent
Overall Mean	2.82		Moderate Extent	2.91		Moderate Extent

Table 5 shows the “Challenge the Process” characteristics of the junior and senior high school leaders as perceived by other students. With an overall mean of 2.82 (JHS) and 2.91 (SHS) and a verbal interpretation of Moderate Extent, student leaders are perceived to develop skills and abilities, help others to take risks, search outside of the organization for innovative ways to improve, ask what the leaders and the students can both learn, set certain goals and milestones, and take initiative in experimenting.

Based on the above table, JHS and SHS student leaders still have to improve on initiating innovation and risk taking. They still have to think of ways to execute certain goals in a more innovative way. Also, they still have to be specific of the goals that they set for the organization.

Table 5 also reveals that item number 1 (They provide us with activities which would develop our skills and abilities) has the highest mean for the junior high school student leaders (2.98) and this is evident on the different activities that they have conducted that focuses on improving students’ skills and abilities such as sports, arts, writing, communication skills, etc. For senior high school student leaders, item number 3 (They are innovative and do things differently, making the task easier) has the highest mean (3.02). This statement supports Klemm’s (n.d.) assertion that leaders must know that creativity and innovation are the lifeblood of their organization which can lead to superior ideas and programs.

Comparison of JHS and SHS Leadership Practices

An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to compare JHS and SHS student council officers’ leadership practices. It was found out that there was no significant difference in the leadership practices of JHS and SHS student council officers when it comes to the following: Enable Others to Act [$t(10) = -0.3993$, $p^\circ .49$], Encourage the Heart [$t(10) = -0.9768$, $p^\circ .49$], Model the Way [$t(10) = -0.1914$, $p^\circ .49$], Inspire a Shared Vision [$t(10) = -1.9058$, $p^\circ .49$], and Challenge the Process [$t(10) = -1.1698$, $p > .05$].

Emerging Theme From the Interviews

After gathering the quantitative data, student leaders from both JHS and SHS were interviewed to describe their experiences as student leaders. One major theme that emerged during the interviews done was *meaningful leadership experiences*.

The junior high school and senior high school student leaders both have a variety of experiences. They have been exposed to additional extra-and co-curricular activities which are specially designed to hone their leadership skills.

A number of student leaders agree that the most common type of activity that they have done is organizing events for both the junior and senior high departments. Since both are under the basic education, they have almost the same set of activities and events done.

Respondent #1 (R1), the SHS student council president, said that he would never forget the experiences that he had in spearheading activities for the department because he had to do a wide array of tasks while planning the activity. He said, *“Di ko makakalimutan iyong Acquaintance Party. Don po kasi nasubok talaga ang galing naman sa pag-organize ng event. Ang dami kasi naming mga estudyante tapos ilan lang kaming student council. We did the planning, organizing, budgeting, tsaka liquidating. Mahirap po pala.”* (I will never forget the Acquaintance Party because we were really tested in organizing events. There were a lot of students but there were only a few student council members. We did the planning, organizing, budgeting, and liquidating. It was a tough job.)

Same goes for the junior high school student council. They also organize activities similar to the Senior High School. This includes taking part in the *Araw ng Wika*, Nutrition Month, Teachers’ Day, Christmas Party, and Foundation Day events of the department.

Since student leaders are still young, it can easily be assumed that they also experience different struggles. These struggles involve academic concerns, time management concerns, and social concerns.

BUSHS student council officer (R2), mentioned that she had some issues regarding her academic subjects and her leadership responsibilities. She said, *“Balancing my time as a student council officer and a student myself as well is difficult specially when I have to review for a quiz and organize an event at the same time.”*

Another respondent, R5, recalled that he experienced pressure and stress in balancing his academic and leadership obligations. He said that in school, there are so many things to do and on top of these are leadership responsibilities which cannot be ignored. He said, *“For me, one of these is the stress and pressure experienced at the same time. It is stressful when there are so many school works to do and an event to plan. There is pressure on how I should manage it all and finish it successfully.”*

Another aspect which the student leaders found a bit problematic was time management. Since they are still studying, they also have academic concerns that they have to address. Keeping the balance between leadership and academic activities seems quite difficult for students. Take for example the case of R3 where she said that she had moments when she really had time management problems and that she had to sacrifice one in place of the other. *“Dumating po*

yong time na sobrang daming activities sa school tapos may event po ang SC (student council). Di po talaga ko gano nakatulong sa SC non. Kasipo mahirap din naman po mga subjects ko. Tapos may mga obligations din po sa bahay. Minsan nga po kahit Saturdays na pumapasok pa din kami e. Either para po sa SC o para sa school activities. Pero di naman din po nakakapagsisi kasi nagka-time management po talaga ko non.” (It really came to a point when there were so many school works and then there was an SC event. I really wasn’t able to help the SC much. My subjects were quite difficult during those times and aside from that, I also had other obligations at home. There were even times when we had to go back to school even on Saturdays which may either be for academic purposes or SC purposes. But still, it was all worth it because I learned how to manage my time).

Another student, a junior high school council officer, experienced the same thing saying, “But being a student council officer also has its disadvantages. Like we are having a hard time catching up with our lessons and some teachers are inconsiderate of our situation. There are also times that we experience misunderstanding because of stress.”

Last of all the given challenges by the student leaders is their social concerns. Since they are all leaders, they deal with all the students in their respective departments, addressing the different issues raised by them.

R7, a senior high school student, shared his insights on the way the other students treat them. He said, “There are, as I can say, a lot of challenges along the way... bad criticisms from our fellow students questioning if we’ve done our responsibilities as we said so, financially speaking, like on the funds needed to create an event [sic].” Since the student leaders also handle the financial aspects of all their activities, the student body sometimes questions them especially if the activity was not able to meet all of their expectations.

Despite the challenges encountered, the JHS and SHS students also had very important take away from being student leaders. They gained important lessons while playing the role of a leader like time management skills, social skills, self-growth and development, and leadership skills.

R5, a senior high school student, said that time management is the key to achieving all their goals as student leaders. He said, “It was hard to do them both (academic and leadership) but with time management, it was easily done. Time management is the absolute key! You can finish things when you manage your time wisely. A junior high school officer (S2), on the other hand, shared the same insights saying, “One of the best things I have experienced was to learn, to have knowledge about cooperation, working under pressure, and managing my time properly.”

Another advantage that students get out of being leaders is that they gain new friends. Their circle of friends become more diverse just like what S4, a junior high school officer, experienced when he said, “The advantages of being a student leader is that you experience things that you do not expect to happen. You meet different people with different attitudes and skills. You can make different memories with your fellow leaders.” Same goes with the student leaders of the Senior High School department. They also made mention of gaining new friends as a major advantage of being student leaders.

Self-growth and development is another aspect which is fully developed with the student leaders. Due to the activities that they do, they are exposed to different tasks which not only develop them as students but also as individuals. This can clearly be seen in the answer of S10, a Junior High School student, when he said, “When we became a student leader, we changed for the better. It boosted my confidence to lead other students. I became more friendly and respectful to others. Students respect us in every rule or direction that we give [sic].”

Lastly, the leadership skills of the students were honed more because of the trainings given to them. S1, a junior high school council officer, said, “The advantages of being a student council are: we can learn new things and discover our hidden talents; we can improve our leadership skills, and we are able to socialize with other people.”

Clearly, it can be seen that students gain a lot of experiences from becoming student leaders, aside from the challenges that they encounter.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study seeks to determine the leadership practices and experiences of junior and senior high school student council officers. Based on the results, it was found out that both the JHS and SHS student council officers exhibited at a moderate extent different leadership practices such as (1) Model the way, (2) Inspire a shared vision, (3) Challenge the process, (4) Enable others to act; and (5) Encourage the heart. This means that both JHS and SHS student leaders still have much to learn and work on to be able to exemplify the five leadership practices. In order to develop their leadership skills, teenagers need training, support, and guidance from their teachers (MacNeil, 2006 & Wade 1997). Likewise, leadership can also be enhanced by providing opportunities to students to develop responsible behaviors (Haynes-Tross, 2015). Based on these findings, it is recommended that additional trainings, seminars, and workshops be conducted by Baliuag University to further develop the leadership skills of the students.

Comparing the JHS and SHS student council officers' leadership practices, it was revealed that there was no significant difference in their leadership practices. The results suggest that JHS and SHS student council officers exhibit the same leadership practices despite their age differences. Although students' leadership qualities vary based on their age group, it can be noted that they have some common leadership qualities (Parlar et al., 2017) and this could be attributed to the activities that they conducted which were similar in terms of objectives and outcomes since both departments are under the basic education. Another factor that can be considered is that many of the SHS student council officers were also student council officers when they were in junior high school at Baliuag University. However, since studies have shown that age and experience have an influence on the development of leadership (Kotur & Anbazhagan, 2014; Belal & Bahaudin, 2004; McCall, 2004; Mirani et al., 2003; Robinson & Wick; 1992) it is important that the advisers and officers of both JHS and SHS student councils identify and come up with programs and activities appropriate to their age, skill, and year level so that they would be exposed to new situations, challenges, and experiences, thus building their leadership skills.

Finally, interviews with the JHS and SHS student council officers were conducted and one major theme that emerged was on meaningful leadership experiences. The results of the interviews suggest that although students encounter challenges in becoming leaders, still they have a number of experiences to gain where they learn to apply the skills that they have and at the same time, acquire other necessary skills. These results are in line with studies about student leadership experiences which revealed that students have positive experiences as leaders such as in time management, planning, organizing, budgeting, and other important skills. Moreover, they also faced challenging situations which gave opportunities for learning (Gowthaman, 2019; Hall et al., 2008; Logue et al., 2005). Hence, as a response in preparing future leaders, it is also recommended that Baliuag University come up with a leadership development program that can further hone the leadership potentials of the students from basic education up to college.

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