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FEATURE

**Promises and Dilemmas of Participation
in Environmental Projects: Narratives
from the Young People of Ilocos Norte**

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Abstract. *The battle cry among environmentally-conscious individuals exerts great influence among the youth. This paper elaborates the perspectives and experiences of the youth in pursuing environmental projects. Anchored on Stern, Dietz, Abel, Guagnano, and Kalof's (1999) value-belief-norm theory for social movement, we examined how youth participation poses excitement and anxiety, most specifically among students. The narrative inquiry, which includes in-depth semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis, was used to obtain rich data from three individuals who are active members of an environment-conscious youth organization in Ilocos Norte. The findings were analyzed and organized into narratives. The promises of youth participation include the existence of a vibrant and active youth organization in the province, full government support, and fulfillment of an intergenerational responsibility. The dilemmas include time constraints, conflict with schooling, and decreasing interest. Other interesting themes were also noted. It is recommended that young people participate in social movements on environmentalism.*

Keywords: environmentalism, young people, narrative, environmental science, Ilocos Norte, Region 1, Philippines, Asia, students, teachers

Introduction

The moment one is born, an intimate relationship with the environment is established. This connection makes human beings a unique creation because of the innate ability to protect and nurture the environment where they live. The actions they take shape the future of the place where they live, work, and play. It is then imperative to maintain such a harmonious relationship with the physical and natural environments. Alongside the development of human society are the numerous changes in the physical and human environments throughout recorded history. The changes that happened have influenced the present-day social, political, economic, and environmental conditions. In particular, the environment has undergone many changes for millennia that resulted from natural processes and human activities. Focusing on the environment, global changes are continuously monitored by scientists and environmental activists because of the impending threat of environmental degradation aggravated by wanton mistreatment of the human race. DeSombre (2018) notes, however, that most people ignore these problems and tend to put them out of their minds. She adds that these people feel powerless to address huge global environmental concerns.

The world's modern era has witnessed dramatic environmental issues that gripped nations across the globe. These issues include global climate change; overpopulation; solid and hazardous wastes; and water, soil, and air pollution; among others. To illustrate the increasing concern on global environmental issues, nations convened in Copenhagen, Denmark last December 2009 to discuss global climate change and measures of mitigation to curb its impact. These nations expressed their desire to mitigate global climate change through an agreement known as the Copenhagen Accord (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change [UNFCCC], 2009), which aims to combat climate change by stabilizing "greenhouse gas concentration in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system" (UNFCCC, 2009, p. 2). The contamination of agricultural soils has affected food security. Water pollution left millions without potable and safe water for consumption.

With these problems, action is necessary. Each environmental issue has shaped the consciousness of every citizen such that increased public awareness is inevitable. The media is considered a powerful force in providing information or misinformation about these. For example, Fortner et al. (2000) examined media portrayal of global warming and the certainty of the media's information and assessed public knowledge about key topics in global climate change. They found that media reports were scarce and more than half of the references made were hedged. In addition, Antilla (2005) found that several news articles framed environmental concerns as a debate, controversy, or uncertainty.

The youth of today, also considered as the "millennials," are too exposed to media; hence, their consciousness about the environment is influenced. While their primary concerns include schooling, job seeking, and enjoyment of adolescent life,

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it is also imperative that the society include them in efforts and initiatives that protect the environment and promote sustainability. The youth have special responsibilities in relation to the preservation and protection of the environment. This is because young people have to live for an extended period with the deteriorating state of the environment, thereby forcing them to generate effective responses to these environmental challenges.

Schools fully integrate environmental education in the curriculum. This is an initial step toward developing environmental consciousness among young people. It is a manner of equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and values of protecting the environment. Through science-based ecological knowledge, young people will truly appreciate harmonious coexistence of humans and the environment. This notion is related to the curricular goal of developing scientific literacy and environmental literacy among the youth. In the National Science Education Standards (National Research Council, 1996), scientific literacy is defined as the knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and processes required for personal decision making, participation in civic and cultural affairs, and economic productivity. In addition, these standards stress the development of scientifically-literate students who can identify scientific issues underlying national and local decisions and express positions that are scientifically and technologically informed. On the other hand, Disinger (2005) defines environmental literacy as a behavior in an environmentally-responsive manner that includes skills (human interactions with environment), affect (emotional traits), and behavior (activities that improve the quality of the environment). Decision making in relation to environmental protection is required of young people who are scientifically and environmentally literate. Longino (1990) argues that individual decision making is important when urgent action is required to mitigate the negative consequences of environmental concerns. Longino (1990) adds that personal autonomy in decision making rests on one's own values, beliefs, and social context and personal responsibility refers to actions that are attributed to an individual's intentions.

In the Philippines, young people are taught to be *makakalikasan* or pro-environment. This is one of the core values of the Department of Education being inculcated to every teacher, employee, pupil, or student. It is along this line of reasoning that the youth are essential components of all efforts to save and protect the environment. Hess (1997) notes that citizens' participation, including the youth, is frequently observed in environmental issues. Driskell (2002) contends that the young people are valuable members of the community. Their education about environmental protection is worth investing on. He adds that the young people's fresh and new perspectives could be powerful vehicles for social and environmental transformation. Hart (2008) argues that the youth have the right to shape their future. He further notes that young people around the world are becoming enthusiastically involved in environmental action. Sadly, Hart (2008) observes that societies tend to manipulate this young people's energy and passion

by involving them in superficial and short-term actions in their respective communities. The Philippines is one of the countries with enthusiastic youth groups that care about the environment. With the ecological knowledge and leadership potentials honed in the school, these young Filipinos plan and implement environmental projects that benefit the communities they live in. With their continuous engagement with collaborative environmental projects, they gain rich and diverse experiences.

This present study was pursued to explore through empirical means the perspectives, successes, and challenges of youth participating in environmental projects. The four compelling reasons for pursuing this research include the following: (a) the young people have a large stake on the environment being the next generation of citizens and to fulfil their mission for intergenerational responsibility. (b) A better understanding of the successes of young people in environmental projects would inspire others to participate. (c) A better understanding of the challenges would inform policy makers and the more matured populace to innovate and streamline ways of making the experiences meaningful and fulfilling for the youth. (c) The findings of this study are expected to be instrumental in initiating environmental projects that are contextualized and localized for the benefit of the immediate communities, especially the vulnerable.

Review of the Literature

This section provides the review of literature and related studies which informed the researchers in identifying the gaps and addressing them through the research study. Using available print resource materials, Google search, and the free site of the Digital Online Access Journals, the following available published literature resources were located, examined, and synthesized to provide a picture of what other scholars have investigated.

Environmental education is currently considered as an integral part of the efforts to inculcate an awareness and concern about the environment. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (2018) defines environmental education as a process that allows individuals, endowed with a deep understanding of environmental issues and capable of making informed decisions, to explore environmental issues, engage in problem solving, and take action. This subject is borderless and applicable among the nations that care about the protection of the environment. When children and youth are properly educated, habits, routines, rules, and social norms on environmental protection are developed and honed (DeSombre, 2018). The author further contends that people tend to disregard and misuse the environment due to lack of or inadequate knowledge.

Ethics and environmental education are related. Blahova (2016) identified the place and role of philosophical-ethical theory within environmental education, which is an integral part of ethics education, especially in Slovakia. Blahova

(2016) points out to the need to integrate ethics in environmental education to develop critical and creative thinking among the students. Environmental education should go beyond ecology and environmentalist scopes and be approached from an interdisciplinary perspective. Żeber-Dzikowska, Chmielewski, and Wojciechowska (2016) elaborate on an important aspect concerning ecological and environmental education in the context of complex ethical issues. To these authors, not only does ethics refer to environmental protection, but also becoming familiar with nature.

Environmental education in the basic education level. In the basic education level, several studies on environmental education and its related pedagogical process were conducted. Guimarães, Rodrigues, and Malafaia (2017) assessed the use of rapid assessment protocols of rivers as environmental education instruments in Brazilian elementary schools. Using questionnaires, the data obtained showed that the rapid assessment protocols provided and/or helped to instill social values, knowledge, skills, actions, and competencies linked to the environmental conservation of local rivers among the students. In Indonesia, Rachman, Matsumoto, and Kodama (2017) found the use of problem-based learning in environmental education as an effective teaching and learning strategy. Using carefully matched pairs of lessons (one in a relatively natural outdoor setting and one indoors), Kuo, Browning, and Penner (2018) observed subsequent classroom engagement during an indoor instructional period, replicating these comparisons over 10 different topics and weeks in the school year, in each of two third grade classrooms. They found that more lessons in nature in formal education increases classroom engagement. To add a new dimension in an outreach activity, Weeks and Oseto (2018) conducted a study with a series of university entomology outreach programs using insects as a vehicle for teaching environmental education among fifth grade students. They found that the lessons had a significant impact on student interest in environmental and entomological topics and all students found the lessons to be more interesting, valuable, and important over the course of the year. Behavioral change as informed by knowledge and attitude may be necessary for environmental action to happen. This was evident in the study of Lefkeli, Manolas, Ioannou, and Tsantopoulos (2018) who used a questionnaire to record the knowledge and attitudes of 612 elementary school students with regard to energy saving. The findings show that the students believe that recycling contributes to the protection of the environment and that energy saving is needed to reduce environmental pollution.

Environmental education in higher education. At the university level, studies across the globe also examined environmental education for the youth in higher education. Sustainable development, being one of the pillars of environmental education, is given emphasis at the university level. Hsiao (2017) posits that advocates of sustainable development should revisit the paradigm of universities in order to be effective conduits of knowledge and skills pertaining to sustainable development. He then recommends that universities should adhere to the paradigm

of liberation education in response to the ideals of sustainable development. Perello-Marín, Ribes-Giner, and Pantoja-Díaz (2018) contend that student participation and co-creation in higher education should be in place in the context of Education for Sustainable Development. Still on university-based sustainability education issue, Crespo, Míguez-Álvarez, Arce, Cuevas, and Míguez (2017) evaluated 10 works of students in the Masters of Thermal Engineering program. These works were analyzed to determine the ability of the students to incorporate sustainability principles in their outputs. It was found that the students generally do not consider or consider to a lower extent the economic criteria opposite to the environmental, technical, and social dimensions.

A case study by Cleverdon, Pole, Weston, Banga, and Tudor (2017) employed a range of methods including waste and energy audits, as well as questionnaire surveys both with students and landlords to examine their environmental attitudes, beliefs, and practices. It was found that there was an increased awareness and engagement with the concepts of sustainability among the students. The landlords were focused primarily on conservation of energy and water.

Views, perceptions, and knowledge about the environment. Diverse views, perspectives, and knowledge about the environment are also evident in studies conducted by scholars whether quantitatively or qualitatively. For example, Esteban Ibañez, Amador Muñoz, and Mateos Claros (2017) analyzed the knowledge of university students in Spain with respect to the Environment and Environmental Education to find out their behavior and the actions they would take to improve the environment around them. The findings revealed that students have some degree of environmental knowledge but minimal knowledge about environmental education. They also expressed concern about the preservation of the environment and that caring for this influences the quality of life. In the Philippines, Panganiban-Lualhati (2017) investigated the level of competency on Environmental Education Content of 21 Bachelor of Elementary Education pre-service teachers. Using a survey, it was found that the respondents are least competent on ecological foundations while competent on conceptual awareness, investigation and evaluation, and environmental action skills. In another context, an action research was conducted by Rushayati, Hermawan, and Meilani (2017) to oil palm plantation employees to mitigate global warming through environmental education. The study revealed that the environmental education provided for them had been able to increase their perception on environmental conservation.

In another study involving parents and teachers, Vodopivec (2017) examined the socio-emotional area of environmental education in the preschool level. The researcher found that in this area, parents prefer cooperation, positive self-image, subordination to adults, and orientation to success while teachers prefer cooperation, positive self-image, encouraging independence, and self-determination. Efthimiou, Ntouras, and Panagopoulos (2017) measured the attitudes on Protected Areas of Forestry students in Greece using a questionnaire.

Based on the results of this survey it was found that the majority of the sampled students showing more biocentric attitude to *protected areas* and support positive environmental attitudes. It was further found that there is a relationship between the level of knowledge about protected areas and the attitude towards the environment.

Youth participation, promises, and challenges. The participation of the youth in worthwhile activities at home, school, and the community is an essential ingredient for holistic development. The United Nations and governments around the world recognize the role of the youth in development. In particular, environmental protection should be one of the endeavors in which these youth are part of. The youth are at the midst of the sustainability issue being the heirs of what is left at present. Head (2011) argues that there are three main reasons for greater voice and participation of young people across a variety of institutional settings and policy areas: (a) young people have the right to be nurtured, protected and treated with respect, and where appropriate be involved and consulted. (b) Improvement of services for young people requires their views and interests to be well articulated and represented. (c) There are developmental benefits arising from participation, for both the individuals themselves and for civil society as a whole. In terms of youth's participation in governance, Feringa and Tonkens (2017) identified the style in which young people participate in local youth councils. Using multiple case studies, it was found that the style of participation can be characterized as being "internally focused" and emphasizing "responsibilization" which makes local youth councils a place for bonding rather than for bridging social ties.

Environmental projects that involve the young people result to rich experiences. Samuelson (2013) examined the effects of an environmental project for young people in Moldova. The students' participation in the project was related not just to a determination to solve environmental problems, but also to a desire to be part of a global trend, to gain experience, and to make useful contacts. Delia and Krasny (2018) used narrative inquiry to explore participant experiences in a multi-year agriculture internship program conducted by a food justice organization in New York. For the students, they regard the organization as somewhere to belong, to be pushed, to grapple with complexity, to practice leadership, and to become yourself. In Europe, Jardim and Marques da Silva (2018) examined the generational motivations and attitudes of a group of 11 European young people to participate in a European Voluntary Service project during a period of one year. Using ethnographic methods, results clearly indicate that young people have an instrumental relationship with volunteering, which is mainly focused on the individual benefits that they believe they will acquire in their personal and professional life. Volunteering is an opportunity for them to escape and to overcome the persisting challenges and constraints posed by our society. In Singapore, Pey and Saidul Islam (2017) explored how environmentalism is represented differently through various discourses by the state, non-government

organizations, and youths. The researchers argue that state-society cooperation in environmentalism is hindered by lack of clear and effective communication channels, as well as expertise and knowledge barriers. Youth participation has led to an altered dynamic of state-society relations and a greater variety in discourses on environmental advocacy.

There are also perceived challenges in youth participation in environment-related activities and local governance. For example, Fielding and Hornsey (2016) notes that local residents, scientists, and environmentalists are sometimes divided on their beliefs about environmental issues. These intergroup tensions influence attitudes, beliefs, and actions. Joyce, Wade-Mdivanian, Anderson-Butcher, and Gibson (2014) point out to the influence of funding on youth participation in quality extended learning opportunities in schools. Recruitment, scheduling, maintaining momentum, and assessment are also perceived challenges that hinder the youth from participating in worthwhile projects and activities (Walsh, Hewson, Shier, & Morales, 2014). It is therefore evident that youth participation is not exempt from internal and external challenges. This is indeed consistent with the value-belief-norm theory that one's support to environmental endeavors and activities are contingent upon capabilities and constraints.

The literature as synthesized and examined shows a diverse interest among scholars. It must be noted that environmental education is given emphasis as a conduit for developing environmentalism. While scholars have explored how pedagogical techniques significantly increase students' environmental knowledge, there is an apparent gap in terms of a more vivid picture of how this knowledge is put into action whether at home, school, or community. The studies on environmental education in the college level are limited to proposed frameworks that inform policy making among universities. There is a perceived gap in the literature in terms of the successes, potential tensions, and resolutions that youth encounter in their participation. While local governance gives credit to the youth, there is still a dearth of intensive studies about actual and lived experiences of young people who advocate environmentalism at the local level.

In light of the identified gaps in the literature, this study was conducted to explore the perspectives, successes, and challenges of young people who participate in environmental projects through the narratives of their storied lives as youth advocates for the environment. More specifically, it attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What environmental projects do young people engage in?
2. What positive effect, if any, results from their participation?
3. What challenges, if any, do the youth encounter in their participation to these projects?
4. How do they navigate through these challenges?

This present study is anchored on the value-belief-norm theory of movement support by Stern, Dietz, Abel, Guagnano, and Kalof (1999). In this theory as applied to environmentalism, individuals who accept a movement's basic values, believe that valued objects are threatened, and believe that their actions can help restore those values experience an obligation (personal norm) for pro-movement action that creates a predisposition to provide support; the particular type of support that results is dependent on the individual's capabilities and constraints. Individuals take action on environmental concerns that affect them based on their basic values, personal and collective capacities, and limitations.

Methodology

This section elaborates the design, methods, and procedures in conducting this study. It provides a thorough discussion of how data were obtained and treated in order to capture the phenomenon being investigated. It also discusses the ethical considerations and reflexivity of the researchers.

Research Design

The principles and tenets of narrative inquiry were employed in this study. Narrative inquiry assumes that individuals construct reality by sharing stories and critical incidents in life, hence, the turning events in one's experiences. In this study, the individual narratives attempt to show a sequence of action (Riessman, 2008). Narrative analysts tend to know how and why events happened the way they did. Narratives embedded from interview talk, observations, and documents were good avenues in representing the thoughts, ideas, experiences, actions, and beliefs of the three young people who participated in the study.

Research Setting

The study was conducted in the province of Ilocos Norte, Philippines. The participants came from different municipalities. The province has an active youth organization which plans and implements environment-related projects within the province. The province is also known as a tourism hub in the country and home to pristine forests and coastal waters.

Sampling

There were three participants in this study. Purposive sampling was employed in this study. Inasmuch as the phenomenon being investigated is about participation to environmental projects, the following selection criteria were used: (a) youth must have been actively involved in any environmental project within the community; (b) must be between the ages of 18 and 24 as per definition of "youth"

by the United Nations; (c) must be an active member of a recognized youth organization; and (d) must have attended or still attending school.

Data Collection

The study was conducted during the schools' summer break in 2017. The research involved multiple sources of data. The data obtained and analyzed for this study include interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents from the three participants. The interviews conducted were consistent with the position of Marshall and Rossman (2006) that participants express meaning freely about their perspectives in their involvement in environmental projects.

Two in-depth interviews were conducted for each participant. A uniform interview guide was used for the three participants. After building rapport and gaining trust and confidence, the participants provided documents and pictures related to the study. Likewise, they allowed the researchers to observe them during their usual meetings with the local youth organization and the implementation of their planned activities and projects in the community.

From the interviews, documents, and observations, a narrative for each participant was written to highlight their perspectives, tensions, and solutions in their participation to local environmental projects. Several iterations and revisions were necessary. Member check was also employed at the end of the data collection process.

Data Analysis

The result of the interviews, observations, and other artifacts from the three participants were analyzed through narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995) and inductive analysis (Charmaz, 2006). As an analytic approach, narrative analysis utilizes narrative reasoning in the construction of a plot drawn from descriptions of actions, events, and happenings in the data obtained from the participants (Polkinghorne, 1995). The descriptions as revealed by the participants are eventually made into a story in which data elements are linked together in order to create a coherent whole. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) posit that a narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience. In addition, the narratives were further analyzed using an inductive approach. This was done through coding. Salient themes and recurring ideas or patterns that emerged from the narratives were noted and elaborated (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Ethical Considerations

Three ethical issues were considered in this study. These included informed consent, confidentiality of information given, and researcher's roles and

responsibilities. Informed consent was vital to establishing trust and confidence between the researchers and the participants. The authors explained well the nature of the study and the expectations associated with their participation. Part of this ethical duty is to ensure that the young people's participation in the study was purely voluntary. The use of force, coercion, and intimidation was never employed as these are manifestations of gross disrespect to the fundamental rights of others. Likewise, consent from the participants was obtained prior to the study. In the absence of an established research ethics review board in the public school system at the time of the study, the authors took the initiative to observe all ethical principles in conducting empirical studies. As such, they were strictly guided by the three universally-accepted ethical principles: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. To comply with these principles, research participants were oriented with utmost respect and without deception as to the scope of the information to be obtained. Likewise, the consent form was an integral part of the orientation before any data collection procedure was carried out.

The confidentiality of information provided by the participants was taken seriously. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants. No names of persons, places and events were used without the permission of the participants. The authors recognized that it was their role to protect the participants from any physical, emotional or psychological harm. The participants were given the chance to discontinue if they feel uncomfortable with the research process.

Reflexivity Statement

In this study, the authors were positioned primarily as outsiders. They recognized the impact of being school teachers conducting research with young people and bringing their teaching and research experiences to the study. In addition, the issue of cultural sensitivity may have influenced the participants in framing their responses so as to be consistent with their convictions that everyone should be respectful of other peoples' cultural and social backgrounds. The questions that were asked to the participants elicited different opinions about their participation in environmental projects. Their responses were based on their personal knowledge, experiences, and socio-political beliefs.

The authors' academic preparation and various experiences also shaped their belief systems on various issues. They were prepared as science teachers from a teacher education program that values environmentally-literate individuals. As school teachers, it is possible that the participants felt the need to provide accurate and precise answers that are based on science. Likewise, the researchers recognized the power dynamics involved in the gathering of data. This perceived dynamics was counterbalanced by the skillful interview techniques employed by the participants. Building rapport was essential in relieving the stress and anxiety and the apparent need to be scientifically correct in all their statements.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the data obtained and the interpretation of these findings. First, the data were organized into narratives for each of the respondents—Rhea, Erika, and Liza. The following are excerpts from the individual narratives of the three participants showing critical incidents and significant events that shaped their perspectives about participation in environmental projects as young people.

To provide context into the narratives, Rhea, Erika, and Liza are all members Sirib Ilokano Kabataan Association or SIKA, a government-recognized youth organization under the provincial government of Ilocos Norte. This is an organization of the young people of Ilocos Norte established under the auspices of Governor Imee R. Marcos. Its main goal is to unite all the Ilocano youth to share their time and energy and carry out activities that lead to positive outcomes for the communities. Aside from governance, leadership, and scholarship, SIKA instituted activities for environmental protection. In the succeeding parts, the words or phrases in bold font are the themes generated from the three narratives. These themes, in turn, help in providing answers to the research questions raised in this study.

Narrative 1. Cleaning, Greening, Serving, and Learning: The Story of Rhea

I am Rhea from Laoag City, 23 years old and an active member of SIKA or Sirib Ilokano Kabataan Association in the Province of Ilocos Norte. My story revolves around four important dimensions of youth environmentalism – cleaning, greening, serving, and learning.

Cleaning. As a child, I was nurtured and reared by a family that values cleanliness – physically and morally. Cleaning is never a difficult task as it only entails sweeping the yard, putting trash on the right bin and keeping the lawn in order. But when I joined the youth organization, cleaning goes beyond these simple tasks. Cleaning is ensuring that all corners of a place are free from trash, especially those that put people in danger. Cleaning requires the proper segregation of wastes and enjoining every member of the community to do the same. One significant experience is going to the schools during the Beskwela Express to help students, teachers, and parents prepare the school for the opening of classes. I feel a sense of responsibility to help in this endeavor being a member of the community. As a SIKA member, I was not required to join. But the idea of cleaning the school to

make it safe for playing and learning motivated me to join in this annual activity. Another important activity is the organization's projects SIKAtubigan and SIKAlinisan which were extended to the residents of Pasuquin, Solsona, and Laoag. My membership to the youth organization improved my attitude toward the environment. In effect, my thoughts are "cleaned" from any doubt that youth activism is a potent instrument to encourage others to become youth environmental warriors.

Greening. The forest is usually pictured as a green environment. The term "green" in the context of climate change denotes technologies, structures, and processes that reduce our carbon footprint. Greening at SIKA is not on sophisticated technologies that reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Rather, greening at SIKA is the reforestation of denuded forests in support to the National Greening Program. I often lament that most tree planting activities that I have observed are for publicity purposes only; to me, tree planting should be a continuing act. Greening, for SIKA, is giving the plant TLC—tender loving care. Greening the environment is part of my "intergenerational responsibility" as I believe that what I plant will eventually benefit the next generations. Green also denotes health. Indeed, I help improve the "health" of the environment. I help maintain a "healthy" environment where everyone breathes fresh and clean air, uses clean water, and plants on safe soils.

Serving. To be a good leader, one must learn to be a servant. I learned and honed my leadership and service-oriented skills through SIKA. Alongside the cleaning and greening of communities, I extend community service to the people, most especially to the poor, marginalized, elderly, and the vulnerable. I take every task in the organization from the point of view of "servant leadership". The most instrumental activity that helped me to develop a sense of "servant leadership" is the Capitol Express (CAPEX) regularly conducted by the Provincial Government of Ilocos Norte, under the leadership of Governor Imee R. Marcos.

Learning. Schools are the basic places for learning among young people. For me, being involved in environmental projects in the province is in itself a learning experience. Every activity offers a learning experience. Every moment shared with the people is an opportunity to learn. Being with the natural environment and helping to preserve it is a learning opportunity for every SIKA member. Environmental projects implemented in the rural and forested areas, coastal communities, hazard-prone barangays, and urban places hone ecological and environmental knowledge. For example, SIKAtubigan project allowed me to learn more about river and watershed systems and how to effectively manage these. Coming from a non-science background, I felt limited in my knowledge and skills. But willingness to learn allowed me to understand and appreciate these environmental systems.

I do not regret being involved in environmental projects. I recognize some limitations and weaknesses. As an employed individual, I divide my time for my
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secular work and SIKA activities which sometimes pose challenge. I also observe the indifference and disinterest of most young people on environmental activities due to commercialization, technological advancements, and overemphasis on incentives.

**Narrative 2. A Sense of God-Inspired Environmentalism:
The Story of Erika**

I am Erika, from Bacarra, 18 years old and an active member of SIKA or Sirib Ilokano Kabataan Association in the Province of Ilocos Norte. My story on environmentalism revolves around one important Bible verse in Philippians 4:13—“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

As a high school student, I was an active member of the Youth for Environment in Schools Organization or YES-O. Aside from my sterling academic achievements, I am also an environment warrior, being vigilant in my local community as to potential pollution problem that arises from human activities. Indeed, I invoke my favorite verse in my studies and her advocacy. I gain strength from a divine source as revealed by my statements during the interview.

I believe that the youth have potentials of protecting the environment. I believe that capitalizing on the young people’s interest could motivate them to join in environmental projects such as tree planting, coastal clean-up, and recycling. Tree planting starts in the backyard or any vacant soil located near or inside the school. It can be a part of a requirement of a certain subject, or can be a daily routine that can be included in homeroom cleaning and greening. Coastal cleaning is considered as a community service in which it's an act to lessen the garbage that may harm the people living there and more importantly the species living underwater. Recycling can be considered as a norm in different schools all over the country. This also involves transforming indigenous raw materials into a more useful product through Investigatory Projects. My advocacy for the environment requires “strength” which comes from a divine source. When joining SIKA activities in different places in the province, I hold on to the belief that people could change their views about the environment through proper education. I need to participate in educating people from all walks of life. While this is a gargantuan task, I believe in the “strength” that comes from a Divine Being.

As a youth servant and leader on environmental activities, I feel the positive impact of joining these activities to me as an individual and to her fellow SIKA members. Participating in environmental activities promotes camaraderie, increases social intelligence, develops a sense of responsibility, increases awareness about the environment, gives joy, excitement, and fulfillment, incites youth action on environmental protection, and gets one closer to the Creator.

While environmental action is urgent, my groupmates and I feel the need to plan appropriately the activities to be implemented. I regularly join the SIKA

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Youth Orientation and the Leadership Camp where potential action plans are usually conceptualized and presented. One apparent tension arises when ideas of members clash. A healthy discussion is necessary. Ego is sometimes put at the center of the discussion. But all is well that ends well, as they say. To navigate through this tension, more senior members intervene and resolve the conflicting ideas. If these young people put their ego at all times, then the environment shall suffer. As an individual and a student, I sometimes feel the tension of dividing my attention between SIKA responsibilities and school work. Again, I navigate through this challenge through the strength from my Creator.

Narrative 3. Fulfilling an Intergenerational Responsibility: The Story of Liza

I am Liza, from Bacarra, 23 years old and an active member of SIKA or Sirib Ilokano Kabataan Association in the Province of Ilocos Norte. As a youth, my story on environmentalism revolves around one important point, that is, a sense of responsibility.

Responsibility to the family. As a child then as an adolescent, my chores at home are not limited to the usual activities. I was trained to be environmentally-conscious. To me, it is my responsibility to make our home as clean and safe as possible. Trained on this aspect, I feel prepared when I became a member of SIKA. My family has trained me well in caring for the environment. Beyond my family is a new family – the SIKA. As such, I participate actively in the activities that bind the “family”. I enjoy joining the Capitol Express (CAPEX) where they provide basic services to the poor, marginalized, youth, elderly, and the vulnerable.

Responsibility to the community. I am conscious of my responsibility to the community. Even at a young age, I participated in cleaning drive along the highway. I was and still active in environmental activities such as tree planting and coastal clean-up. As a SIKA member, I take pride in joining projects that protect the environment. These include SIKAlinisan and SIKAtubigan.

Responsibility to the generations to come. I am not a selfish person who only thinks of my personal benefits. Rather, I show that enthusiasm to help preserve the environment for the next generation. It is indeed an expression of “intergenerational responsibility”. While the term “intergenerational responsibility” was not coined by me, my intimate connection with the environment and my passion for its protection are evident in my experiences. The authors were reminded of this legal terminology that was invoked in a celebrated Philippine case when a group of young people sued the government for their failure to protect the environment so that future generations will benefit. My disposition clearly shows my concern for a clean and pollution-free environment which next generations deserve to enjoy. In particular, my participation to the SIKAtubigan left an indelible mark in her life as a citizen. I felt the urgency of protecting river and

watershed systems as these are frail and vulnerable systems. Without a healthy watershed system, the next generations will truly suffer.

Overall, my experiences with SIKA are worthwhile. I felt an intensified sense of responsibility as a person, as a citizen, and as a molder of the world for the next generations to enjoy. I also shared the challenges I encountered as a youth environmentalist. In planning for activities, tensions arise when diverse ideas are presented. Resolution occurs when all the best ideas are put together and put into action, not for their personal benefit but for the communities they serve.

Environmental Projects Participated in

As revealed by Rhea, Erika, and Liza, youth of their age differ in the environmental projects they join. This is usually based on their interests. These activities include coastal clean-up, tree planting, river and watershed protection, and clean and green activities. In schools, students are usually required to clean the surroundings as part of the regular school calendar. It was also revealed that there is full government support to SIKA thereby making it a viable platform for youth environmental activism. However, Erika noted an obvious drawback as regards tree planting activities. In her narrative, “Rhea laments that most tree planting activities that she observes are for publicity stunts only. She adds that tree planting should be a continuing act.” This is her observation of tree planting activities initiated by most schools in the province. This is consistent with Hart’s (2008) similar observation that society tends to manipulate youth’s enthusiasm for their environment by involving them in superficial actions.

Impact of Participation

Rhea, Erika, and Liza felt that SIKA is an extension of their families. The impact of their participation goes beyond the usual personal satisfaction. The positive impacts, while not quantitatively determined, include an intensified sense of intergenerational responsibility, closer relationship with the Creator, appreciation of servant leadership, and continuous learning opportunities. To these three environmental advocates, SIKA provides an avenue to promote camaraderie, increase social intelligence, develop a sense of responsibility, increase awareness about the environment, give joy, excitement, and fulfillment, incite youth action on environmental protection, and be closer to the Creator. This finding agrees with Samuelson’s (2013) study that participation in environmental projects was related to the desire to be a part of a global trend, to gain experience, and to make useful contacts.

Challenges Encountered in Participation

The challenges encountered are the inevitable dilemmas of youth participation. These include time constraints due to schooling and employment, school work

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versus organizational activities, and decreased interest of most young people in the community. These challenges, including recruitment, maintaining momentum, and assessment, are also found as roadblocks to youth participation (Walsh et al., 2014). Aside from these, clashing ideas also pose a dilemma. This arises when diverse ideas have diverse solutions to offer. Indeed, the finding agrees with Head's (2011) argument that young people's views and interests should be well articulated and represented.

Navigating Through the Challenges

Resolutions to the perceived challenges are evident as stated by Rhea, Erika, and Liza. Time management resolves the problem with scheduling. Yielding to more practical ideas resolve conflicts in planning. The decreasing interest of young people in the province is resolved through intensive advocacy campaigns during Capitol Express. School-based SIKA is established with number of members constantly increasing. The presence of a "big brother" image of older members also encourages young people to join. The most significant way to encourage youth participation is to capitalize on their interests and strengths. This finding supports the value-belief-norm theory (Stern et al., 1999) which posits that an individual's acceptance of a movement's basic values is dependent on his or her capabilities and constraints.

The rich data obtained from the participants clearly support and extend the theoretical underpinnings of the value-belief-norm theory (Stern et al., 1999). In support to this theory, the study evidently showed how the capabilities of the three environmental activists were invoked and utilized in order to effect change within their respective communities. As they deal with observed negative impact of man's wanton treatment of the environment, they activated their personal norms, values, and beliefs, felt that there is a threat to the environment, and initiated a response to avert such threat. As to the participants' constraints, navigating through the challenges is not an easy task. As warriors for the environment, it is imperative that they effect both personal and collective attitudinal changes. Through this manner, they see both the short-term and long-term effects of one's positive action toward the environment.

The value-belief-norm theory offers a sound and comprehensive account for the support for environmental action. As such, it has captured the essential dimensions of youth participation in environmental projects within the context of the young people's capabilities and constraints. The theory, as postulated by the authors, clearly captures and summarizes the "conjunction of values, beliefs, and personal norms that impel individuals to act in ways that support movement goals" (Stern et al., 1999, p. 83). The three participants in this study epitomize this conjunction. Notably, one important dimension stood out from the narratives, that is, intergenerational responsibility. It is with this humble note that intergenerational responsibility is an extension of the theory of the conjunction of values, beliefs, *December 2018, Vol. 21, No. 2*

and personal norms as far as environmentalism is concerned. This responsibility stems from the feeling that future generations have the innate right to enjoy an ecologically balanced environment. In the Philippines, this concept has transcended even the constitutional laws and has been cited in the legal practice as an overarching principle to illustrate the state's responsibility to protect the environment for its present and future generations. Hence, value-belief-norm theory could be potentially extended by way of integrating intergenerational responsibility as the belief that drives environmentalism among the citizens, especially the youth. It should be clearly noted that the existing theory has objectively shown the links of the different variables toward a pro-environment action. While the theory captures the values, beliefs, and personal norms in the context of individual and collective feelings, it is also imperative to account for the individual's sense of intergenerational responsibility as a driver for a pro-environment action. It should also show how this responsibility is amplified into specific actions. The researchers, though, recognize the premature advancement of this proposition without further validation and elaboration in future studies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Youth participation in environmental projects and activities are instrumental in sustaining a clean and healthy environment. As revealed in this study, young people's storied lives are tied to their environment. Educating the young people with ecological and environmental concepts but is devoid of their connection to the natural environment is meaningless. The study revealed the potential for action among the youth as far as environmental protection is concerned.

Based on the findings, youth of today are engaged in environmental projects that are community-specific. These include coastal clean-up, tree planting, river and watershed protection, and clean and green activities. Positive impacts to youth participants were noted. Youth participation in environmental projects provides an avenue to promote camaraderie, increases social intelligence, develops a sense of responsibility, increases awareness about the environment, gives joy, excitement, and fulfillment, incites youth action on environmental protection, and makes one closer to the Creator. The challenges or dilemmas encountered include time constraints, conflict with school activities, and decreased interest of young people in the community. These dilemmas are resolved through proper time management and intensive campaign among the youth taking into consideration their strengths and limitations. The study provided rich information about the storied lives of the three youth environmentalists as revealed in the narratives.

In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby advanced:

1. Local government units should establish and sustain their own local youth organizations that address environmental concerns. Governance of these

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organizations should emanate from the young people to intensify their sense of responsibility.

2. Environmental activities for young people should be properly planned, thoroughly implemented, and sustainable.
3. Further empirical studies should examine more intensively the lived experiences of youth environmental activists in the context of pressing concerns.
4. Quantitative and qualitative studies should also look into gender and age differences in youth action about the environment.

Young people around the world have the enthusiasm to build a better future. It is time to take advantage of young people's idealism and energies. It is time to develop young people who are reflective and critical thinkers (Hart, 2008). The young people of today believe in the promises of youth action and are resolved to deal with the dilemmas in their participation to environmental projects and activities.

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