
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Unveiling the Apathy: Understanding the Causes of Student Disengagement in Student Governance

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ABSTRACT

This study delved into the causes of student disengagement in any form of student-based governance of the University of Cebu College of Arts and Sciences Department's Student Body Organization (CAS-SBO) during the academic year 2023-2024. A descriptive phenomenological research design was employed, exploring participants' experiences in student governance, how these experiences influence their lack of total disengagement and the strategies that could revitalize their engagement and active participation in the said area. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews with twelve students selected via linear snowball sampling, focusing on those with prior governance experience who did not participate in recent CAS-SBO activities. Thematic content analysis revealed nine emergent themes: (1) Lack of Connection, Inequality in Representation, and Faculty Intervention as essential experiences in student governance; (2) Student Unfamiliarity, Feeling Unrepresented, and Unmet Expectations as reasons for disengagement; and (3) Inclusive Activities, Addressing Electoral Disparity, and Empowered Leadership as potential strategies to increase engagement. Based on these findings, the study recommends regular CAS-SBO general assemblies, teambuilding exercises, leadership seminars, and the election of representatives for each degree program to foster more vital student involvement and improve representation. The study also suggests future research topics, including electoral system reforms and former CAS-SBO presidents' experiences.

KEYWORDS

Student Governance, Disengagement, Student Body Organization, Student Services, Descriptive-Phenomenological.

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1. Introduction

It is widely recognized that student governments are the most immediate link between the students and the university. With education regarded as one of the critical factors necessary for the simulation and production of active citizens, future leaders, and advocates, among others, student governance and the platforms for engagement and involvement that it provides stands as an essential staple of the student experience (Patrick, 2022) (May 2009) (Saha, 2001).

According to Patrick (2022), student governance has shifted from being extracurricular to a more participative role in governing. The existence of recognized student body organizations or student councils tasked to be the studentry's voice further confirms its importance. However, such a reputation is in question because there is an emerging pattern of disengagement from student governance. According to various scholars, the spectrum of disengagement spans from the exhaustion to the underutilization and neglect of student governments (Chima, 2023) (Dialde, 2023) (Pedroso & Tagabi, 2023)

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(Patrick, 2022) (Corder & Timm, 2021) (Tajik, 2020) (Duma, 2015) (May 2009).

On one side, scholars argue that disengagement stems from the discouraging image that a student government paints itself. According to May (2009), student leaders' challenges during their tenures inspire discouragement from other students to engage in the same. These challenges may include high levels of stress, less free time, social alienation, and the possibility that their grades may suffer (Pedroso & Tagabi, 2023) (Corder & Timm, 2021) (May 2009).

Other scholars, however, claim that the budding disengagement from students is likely due to student governments being insignificant and almost nonexistent nowadays (Dialde, 2023) (May 2009). They argue that the lack of faculty recognition and collaboration reduces the roles of student governments into ceremonial functions or mere tokenism (Duma, 2015) (May 2009) or inspires an institutional reward system (Chima, 2023) (Tajik, 2020) that motivates them to do their minimum functions.

These arguments from both sides explain that a weakened student-university relationship breeds disengagement from participating in student governance (Leuscher, 2020). However, few studies have hinted that socio-cultural factors (Alomary et al., 2023) (Hussein et al, 2023), how well-established a school's campus-based party politics is (Patrick, 2022), and the confidence of the students in their student leaders (Mwagi & Monda, 2023) may explain a thing or two about student politics—factors that neither conforms to the narratives of exhaustion or underutilization of the student-university relationship.

Further, the studies cited maintain the conception that the development of disengagement is prior to the individuals' exposure to the elements at play in the present milieu (i.e., defective student-university relationship) and discount the possibility of it being a response to a previous, first-hand experience with student governance. In consonance with this, the researchers intend to separate this study from pre-existing literature by exploring the causes of student disengagement through the experiences of students who were once extensively engaged in student governance but curiously disengaged from it, uncharacteristically, at present.

2. Theoretical Background

This study is anchored mainly on Lewin's field theory, which suggests that behavior is a function of a person and the environment (Lewin, 1926, 1943). It argues that an individual's structuring and defining of his goals and the very emergence of the need to engage in something and how to pursue them largely depends on how he relates to his environment. People learn to structure their life spaces—needs and goals—while relating to their nearer environment, such as their caregivers, teachers, and role models (Fircks, 2022) embedded in an over-reaching meaning-making system called culture. Fircks (2022) substantiated these using contextual situations: "The need for peace develops especially in times of ongoing war. The need for social stimulation develops particularly in times of isolation. The need for care develops in a care-deprived environment." This theory is vital to this study because it scaffolds the premise of this study and all the other related studies postulating that disengagement from student governance, to a large extent, is influenced by external stimuli—the emergence of the student's need to engage, or the lack thereof, in student governance, is influenced by how conducive their environment is for student engagement.

For most scholars, the roots of the stimuli that breed disengagement are in the milieu of school politics. Corder Timm (2021) and May (2009) argued that students are discouraged from engaging because student governance jeopardizes the social life of student leaders. The challenges of their involvement in student governance include social alienation, less free time (May 2009), and sometimes the inability to keep up with friends (Corder & Timm, 2021) as they juggle their multiple responsibilities. Furthermore, according to the study of Pedroso and Tagabi (2023), in comparison to their counterparts in the United States and China, tertiary students involved in student governance in the Philippines have a higher tendency to burnout because of the negative behavior of the people that they work with (e.g., fellow students, colleagues, superiors/faculty).

Other scholars argue that student disengagement is likely due to student governments being insignificant and almost nonexistent nowadays and that they have been motivated by a transactional system (Chima, 2023) (Dialde, 2023) (Tajik, 2020) (May 2009). In his study, May (2009) argued that the lack of faculty recognition reduces the roles of student governments to ceremonial functions or mere tokenism. He added that student governments only serve as placeholders for the university or the institution to give the impression of student participation because student bodies and councils are often subject to strict management. Leuscher (2008) attributed this to the faculty's use of the rise of managerialism in universities to peddle themselves as "managers." He stated that managerialism on campuses tends to depoliticize and undermine the collective nature of student governance. May (2009) added that this could also manifest in student government advisors influencing the students between meetings and having the capacity to veto decisions—an advisor's

role must only be to teach, plan, and develop leadership activities. Duma (2015) furthers this argument by saying that the faculty is sometimes resistant to collaborate with student leaders because it has become accustomed to functioning without student leaders being central to its work, and the university and the students often hold each other at arm's length because they are unsure of the role that each other should play.

Although seemingly contradictory, Luescher's (2020) findings linking these as symptoms of a defective student-university relationship corroborate these arguments. Furthermore, in his study, he stated that student governance bears two complementary meanings depending on what "student" means. If "student" refers to "an active political agent" or commonly known as a student leader involved in governing a student body or council, the term "student governance" is therefore synonymous with "student participation." However, if "student" refers to "a passive subject of governance" or someone subjected to a system of rules governing students. Student government, therefore, involves the nature and extent of the system of student rules, which represent a codified conception of the student-university relationship (Luescher, 2020). This finding benefits this study for the reason that it demarcates student disengagement as not just the disinterest to run for a position or hold an office but also the ultimate detachment of ordinary students from participatory gestures such as, but not limited to, voting, volunteering, attending meetings, and keeping in touch with the know-hows of their organization.

Moreover, according to his expansion of the Lewinian Field Theory, Fricks (2022) reiterated that a person and his environment are indispensable. According to him, one of the common mistakes in applying the theory is that it tends to generalize with zero regard for intricacies and nuances. He argued that while it aligns with Lewinian theory that while the environment certainly plays a vital role in the emergence of goals, the response that it inspires (i.e., to pursue it or not) often depends upon the unique social situatedness in time, which is why two people might react to the same stimuli contrastingly.

In line with this is the result of the study conducted by Alomary et al. (2023) about the factors that influence female student participation in Palestinian universities. When viewed through the theory of planned behavior lens, the proposed study model accounted for 70% of the variation in the intentions of female students to run for student council elections despite several factors that deter them from participating in the elections and engaging in student governance.

Weighing on the premise of structural inequality, Hussein (2023) clarified that there is still a need for a diverse team, for they are more likely to remain objective and solve problems faster, given the aspect of representation. Their study also showed that a stark difference in the representation rates (be it according to gender, race, population, etc.) could sustain a lack of motivation on the part of the students because, having had little to no representation, it would limit their awareness, interest, and, ultimately, support for a student body action or policy (Hussein, 2023) (Grace, 2020). However, according to Mwagi and Monda (2023), the same effect would also happen if the student body does not have the students' confidence as their representatives. A careful analysis of the results of their study conducted in a secondary school in Kisii South-Sub County, Kenya, concluded that the student leaders' poor academic performance, bad personal character, and unfulfilled leadership role expectations corrode the confidence of the students in their capacity to fulfill their functions.

This study also relates to Kelman's Theory of Social Influence (1958), which states that social influence or "socially induced behavior" occurs whenever a person (P) changes his behavior as a result of induction by another individual or group, which he referred to as influencing agents (O) (Kelman, 1958). He added that behavior may be positive or negative, and the induction may be through direct or symbolic contact, with the latter being an indirect exposure to an institutional symbol (Khan, 2017). It hints at how a system or a structure works, how it favors a specific sector (Alomary et al., 2023) (Hussein, 2023) if it is dysfunctional and weakly established (Patrick, 2022), or if there is a lack of trust from the students to their student leaders (Mwagi & Monda, 2023) and may serve as an influencing agent that could induct negative behavior causing for them to disengage.

Through his diagram of the Structure of a Social Influence Situation, Kelman illustrated that three things are prerequisites for the induction of a behavior to exist: (1) a goal is essential to P and must be activated, (2) O must be relevant to achieving the goal that has been activated, (3) there must be sufficient motivation to accept the behavior induced. Further, according to Cialdini's (1984) take on influence and persuasion, there must be consistency or a repeated application in order to follow through and develop a habit out of influence (Schenker, 2022) (Ballinger, 2017) (Tsang, 2012).

Supplementary to this theory is William Glasser's Choice Theory (1998). Glasser explained that all behaviors are purposeful, provoked by internal motivation, and that the choices that come from them— how humans see and react to things and how they choose them to impact them— are part of their relentless effort to meet basic needs (Loovas, 2020). He structured his theory on two things or, as he called it, worlds: the Perceived World and the Quality World. The Perceived World breeds the basic human needs of a person, which often functions after the dictation of a universal genetic impulse (e.g., physiological

and psychological needs) constant to all human beings (Glasser, 1998). In other words, it describes what a person needs (Loovas, 2020). Furthermore, if the Perceived World births a person's needs, the Quality World,

On the other hand, it gives motivation and pictures of how to meet those needs. At the same time, the Perceived World is universal; the Quality World is uniquely different from person to person—the emergence of needs happens to everyone, but the patent on how to satisfy each of those needs differs relatively from one another. Glasser attributed this to what he coined as the Perceptual System.

Through his Perceived World Model and Perceptual System, he argued that an individual must undergo the filtration stages to decide whether to engage or pursue an object: the knowledge filter and the valuing filter. In the knowledge filter, the individual weighs and decides if the object is worth resources (e.g., time, effort, attention) to proceed to the next filter. In the valuing filter, the individual then labels the perceived object with one of the following values: the positive value—when it satisfies the individual's needs; the negative value—if it hinders the individual from attaining his/ her needs; the neutral value—if it neither satisfies nor hinders his/ her needs (Glasser, 1998). Glasser explained that because individuals come to every situation with knowledge and experience—and, therefore, different values—their response to it is more likely subjective. This further accentuates the gap of existing literature which attributes student disengagement from student governance to the student-university relationship only because Glasser's theory, apart from corroborating Lewin's field theory, introduces neutrality as a classification of apathy and scaffolds the results of non-conforming literature that suggest other stimuli such as lack of institutionalization and trust in the establishment of a student government may inspire student disengagement (Mwagi & Monda, 2023) (Patrick, 2022) or other factors that are socially protruding and broader than mere student-university relationship such as socio-cultural cleavages (Alomary et al., 2023) (Hussein, 2023) aforementioned in this study—depending on how students relate to them in both Perceived and Quality Worlds.

Kelman's Theory of Social Influence (1958) and Glasser's Choice Theory (1998) are vital pillars of the theoretical foundation of this study because they provide a comprehensive and systematic diagram of the behavior-motivation relationship. Through these theories, this study understood that there is a prerequisite for induction of behavior to exist:

- A person's (e.g., student) goal (e.g., the need to disengage) must be activated.
- An influencing agent (e.g., defective student-university relationship, socio-cultural cleavages, under institutionalization) must be relevant (e.g., positive, negative, or neutral value) to the achievement or satisfaction of the goal.
- There must be sufficient motivation based on the person's Perceived World and Quality World to accept the induced behavior (e.g., disengagement).

The value of Kelman and Glasser's theories would eventually extend to the latter parts of this study, for they will help the researchers as a scaffolding mechanism for analyzing and interpreting the data they would gather.

Moreover, in their study, Weinberg and Walker (1969) (as cited by Tefera, 2021, and Mugume and Leuscher, 2017) claimed that student governance and national politics fall within each other. In their study, they found that there exists a systemic linkage between campus-based politics composed of an elected body of officials and a country's political system—saying that the student governments are microcosms of the national government, which corroborates Saha's (2001) statement that regards education as one of the critical factors necessary for the simulation and production of active citizens. Hulko (2021) stated that participation in student governance develops students' leadership qualities and skills in working with a team. Esterhuizen (2009) added that skills gained through student government experience are of life-long value because of their positive influence on civic involvement and political effectiveness. Saha (2010) also stated that student governance and the overall involvement in the decision-making of their respective institutions are emblematic and mirror the democratic ideals of a country (Wong & Ng, 2021). In an inquiry about the rationale of students in joining student governments, Haines (2019), Zhang et al. (2018), and Plante (2016) cited connection to the institution, developing network, social interaction and belongingness, professional experience, personality development, leadership, development, organizational and management skills, and the desire to develop interpersonal relations with the teachers and other students as some of the reasons (Mitra, 2022).

The significant increase in the role of students in higher education, which shifted away from mere extracurricular activities to something more focused on participating in the governance of institutions, is the reason for all of these. It is significantly transformed in various ways that remain to be traced (Patrick, 2022) (Leuscher, 2008) (Janc, 2004), and some scholars argue that student governance serves as a conduit for academic institutions to train students to be future leaders and advocates in more extensive fields which may include politics (May 2009).

It proves problematic when examined under the lens of Berger and Luckman's (1966) Social Construction of Reality. This theory suggests that capitalization, or "the act of implanting a convention or norm to a society" and that not only do we construct our society, but "we also accept it as it is because others have created it before us," is cast into a pattern by meaning or the perception of a thing. If this theory is coupled with the immediate literature of Saha (2010, 2001) and Wong and Ng (2021), it suggests that a factor as significant as the scale of the Philippine government influences student governance. Furthermore, the extensive reserve of research on Philippine politics paints it as a dysfunctional democracy characterized by under-institutionalized political parties (Mainwaring & Torcal, 2005; Hicken, 2014, as cited by Teehankee, 2023) and weak electoral participation (Legara and David, 2015, as cited by Batara, 2021); student disengagement may be a trickle-down effect of the country's weak political system. Studies of participation by Youniss et al. (2002, as cited by Dos Santos et al., 2022), Cabo (2016), Sta. Maria and Diestro (2009) and Johnson (2005) supplement this by claiming that the problem with the country's politics has led to disillusionment, development of apathy, and cynicism and has influenced disengagement from any form of participation.

Legara and David's (2015, as cited by Batara, 2021) study mainly brings intrigue. They say weak electoral participation (e.g., low voting turnout) indicates low-level participation and disengagement. Following data issued by CAS' Commission on Election, the last CAS-SBO 2023 elections only garnered 135 votes from all its four programs, with A. B. Psychology generating 66 votes, A.B.- Political Science with 44 votes, A.B.- English and Literature with 17 votes, and Bachelor of Performing Arts with eight votes. Also, only one party ran for the election, the CASANAG (2023-) party, a newly established political party. It is also worthy of mention that CASANAG's candidate for president was a former member of the former ruling party CASALIGAN (2022-2023). This trend of high birth rate and death rate of political parties has been ongoing in CAS, having had four political parties vying for election in the past three years: in 2020, HIGALA (2020) pit against KALIDAD (2020-2022), the former sought for re-election but lost against CASALIGAN (2022-2023). The pattern reveals a lack of institutionalization (Patrick, 2022) (Mainwaring and Torcal, 2005, and Hicken, 2014, as cited by Teehankee, 2023) among parties with only one party who sought election and the others were either disbanded after losing the election or after finishing their terms.

This study's extensive references to the studies of Alomary et al. (2023), Hussein (2023), which stated that socio-cultural and racial aspects affect participation in student leadership, Mwagi & Monda (2023), which stated that student bodies not having the trust of the students affect the latter's engagement, Patrick (2022), which emphasized the importance of a well-established campus-based party politics to the overall student governance, and Saha (2010, as cited by Wong and Ng, 2021) which stated that a student government is a microcosm of the national government does not signify that the conduct of this study is premeditated and its results are predetermined; they only serve as conformational indicators that the causes of student disengagement in student governance may exist outside the student-university relationship—that it may be more significant than the intersection of student involvement and faculty interference. Should the results of this study echo the same literature as mentioned above, it will not prove to be redundant as such consistency will formally integrate them into a catalog of causes for student disengagement. However, with the theories and other literature cited in this section, this study proceeds with confidence that it will unveil other causes that would further the discourse regarding the topic.

3. Objective of the Study

This study delved into the causes, down to its core, of student disengagement in the Student Body Organizations of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Cebu during the academic year 2023-2024. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions: What are the participants' experiences about student governance? How do these experiences influence their disengagement from student governance? What strategies, suggestions, and interventions can be implemented to revitalize their engagement in student governance?

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive research design and employs a phenomenological method since it aims to discern the meanings that participants placed on their responses (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, this qualitative study follows an inquiry to describe and understand a phenomenon (i.e., student disengagement in student governance) within its natural setting (i.e., the school).

4.2 Research Environment

The research setting for this study was the University of Cebu - Main Campus, situated on Sanciangko Street, Cebu City, 6000 Cebu. The university is one of the four campuses under the University of Cebu that are non-sectarian, private, coeducational, primary, and higher education institutions in Cebu City. As of 2023, it offers 32 regularly updated courses distinguished in different college departments. This study specifically focused on the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) Department, which houses the four programs that it offers (i.e., A.B.- Political Science, AB- English Language and Literature, AB- Psychology,

and A.B.- Performing Arts) on the 2nd floor of the Don Manuel Gotianuy Building. The CAS-Student Body Organization (CAS-SBO) serves as its student organization/government, and officers are elected at large by all CAS student members through a majoritarian system.

4.3 Research Participants

The research participants for this study were third-year and fourth-year students under CAS, taking up A.B.- Political Science, AB- English Language and Literature, AB- Psychology, and A.B.- Performing Arts, and are actively enrolled in the first semester of the Academic Year 2023-2024. The researchers deemed it necessary for the participants to have spent at least two years in the department.

The participants were selected using a linear snowball sampling method. This sampling method is characterized by a chain or a network of referrals that continues until it reaches the desired sample or data saturation (Nikolopoulou, 2023). Snowballing afforded the researchers an efficient and cost-effective way to access the target audience who would otherwise have been unattainable and relatively difficult to reach (Polit-O'Hara & Beck, 2006), considering that there is hardly any comprehensive and official list of disengaged students under CAS. Given that this study's inquiry revolves around disengagement as a specific trait or characteristic prerequisite to the goals of this study, utilizing this sampling method allowed the researchers to effectively narrow down the entire population of students to the desired sample based on the recommendations of the participants—more commonly known as "seeds"—themselves.

4.4 Research Instrument

The researchers utilized a guided, semi-structured interview of open-ended questions to gather and collect the necessary data for this study's thorough analysis. The questionnaire design consisted of three main sections to facilitate data collection. The first section was designed to obtain the participants' lived experiences; the second section inquired about the relationship between their experiences and their disengagement; the third section sought 17 first-hand suggestions. The semi-structured interview also allowed the researchers to ask follow-up questions during the interview.

4.5 Research Procedure

4.5.1 Data Collection

Before commencing the interviews, the researchers contacted the Office of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences Department for her approval to conduct this study on CAS grounds. After that, the researchers roamed the 2nd floor of the Don Manuel Gotianuy Building for CAS students, which may fit the description of the study's participants. The initial data collection process was divided into two (2) recruitment waves: where wave one (1) was composed of five (6) seed participants who were qualified for the inclusion criteria and were recruited directly by the researchers; wave two (2) was composed of participants that were identified through the referral of the seed participants. This chain of referrals continued until data saturation was achieved.

Furthermore, considering the significance of a shared trait among the participants—vis-à-vis the phenomenon—to attain the research goals, a linear snowball sampling works best when specific criteria for identifying the participants and their qualification is employed (Nikolopoulou, 2023). To this end, all included participants:

1. Have prior experience serving in a student government or other student organizations with similar functions in an elected or appointed position during Senior High School, Junior High School, and Primary School,
2. No experience serving under CAS-SBO in an elected or appointed position,
3. Did not vote in the 2023 CAS-SBO elections, and
4. Has stayed for at least four semesters under CAS.

To help narrow down the research environment, the researchers also obtained data from the CAS Commission on Elections that lists down the names of students who voted in the previous CAS election—implying who not to approach.

Initial contact was made with the seed participants by approaching students or messaging them via Facebook Messenger and asking them questions per the criteria above. Once their qualification was established, they were provided with an explanation of the purpose of this study and were asked about their willingness to partake as participants.

After identifying seed participants, the researchers complied with the precondition of interviewing by presenting them with an Informed Consent Form. The form outlined the study's purpose, research procedures, and the participants' rights, including data confidentiality. Only those who willingly provided their consent were included as wave one (1) participants.

Following signing the Consent Form, the interview date and time were scheduled at a mutually agreeable location. The seed participants were given the discretion to suggest the date, time, and place of the interview that was convenient for them. The researchers confirmed the date and time of the interview to the seed participants the day before the scheduled interview to ensure that they were still available and willing to proceed with the interview on the agreed schedule. Each participant was interviewed at length and was faithful to the stipulations of the consent form.

Before the interview, the researchers reviewed the informed consent form for the participants, emphasizing the research description, their rights, and data confidentiality. They were also reminded that the interview was recorded via phone for documentation and transcription purposes and that the interviewer would also be actively taking notes. The interview then proceeded, spanning 30 to 40 minutes for each interviewee; the semi-structured questionnaire afforded the participants the luxury of expounding on their responses and allowed the researchers to ask follow-up questions to delve deeper into the responses.

Upon conclusion of the interview, the seed participants were then asked for referrals and recommendations for participants that would constitute the second wave. The above process was faithfully repeated once obtained, identified, and screened. After each interview from both waves, the participants were reassured of confidentiality regarding the information they shared, which will be kept anonymous throughout this study. Each researcher shall oversee the safekeeping of the recording.

4.6 Data Analysis

The researchers employed thematic analysis, following the process by Bricki and Green (2007), to analyze the collected data. Data analysis began with a thorough review of interview transcripts and a comparison of detailed interview field notes. The researchers identified vital quotations, recurring patterns, consistencies, distinctions, and relationships within the data. These categories were integrated and correlated to identify emerging themes that addressed the study's objectives. Noteworthy quotations were incorporated into the discussion, ensuring participant anonymity. Once common themes were identified, they were refined in collaborative discussions and validation processes between the researchers. After satisfying the thorough review and analysis requirements, the researchers finalized everything to compose their interpretations and analysis and build their conclusions.

5. Results and Discussion

This qualitative study was based on data from thoroughly understanding the participants' transcribed responses. Each participant's transcribed responses were thoroughly reviewed to identify the overall sense of the information covered. Significant statements were gathered, recorded, and encoded from the transcripts of the interviews and questionnaires. The significant statements were appropriately encoded for efficient tracing with their designated code names out of their respective participant and response numbers. Seventy-two (72) significant statements indicated the causes of student disengagement from student governance.

Core meanings were then formulated for the seventy-two (72) significant statements. The seventy-two (72) coded formulated meanings clearly described the causes of each participant's disengagement.

The core meanings shared with similar thoughts and structural patterns were then grouped and categorized into cluster themes. There were 13 cluster themes, which were later improved and regrouped into sub-themes by integrating two or more cluster themes. Nine (9) sub-themes were developed because of merging the cluster themes. The significant themes emerged after further integrating the seven sub-themes. Nine (9) emergent themes represented the significant themes that provide meaning to the study's three (3) sub-problems.

Thirteen (13) cluster themes were developed and reorganized into nine (9) sub-themes, which were then divided into nine (9) significant themes known as emergent themes, following a comprehensive formulation of the core meanings utilizing thematic analysis. The nine (9) primary themes that emerged from the emerging themes were used to add meaning to the study's subproblems. The overall themes and emerging themes are listed below.

I. Experiences of the Participants in Student Governance

1. Lack of Connection
2. Inequality in Representation
3. Faculty Intervention

II. Effects of the Experiences to the Participant's Disengagement from Student Governance

1. Student Unfamiliarity

2. Feeling Unrepresented
3. Unmet Expectations

III. **Strategies, Suggestions, and Interventions to Revitalize the Participant's Engagement**

1. Inclusive Activities
2. Addressing Electoral Disparity
3. Empowered Leadership

The themes were developed to describe the study's answers to its research questions. Each of the three (3) main themes with their corresponding emergent themes are discussed here:

5.1 Experiences of the Participants with Regard to Student Governance

The themes constructed under this sub-problem described the participants' experiences with student governance in CAS-SBO and how it led to their disengagement. The following are the themes developed to describe the responses of the study's key participants to the sub-problem number 1:

5.1.1 Lack of Connection

This theme was developed from the participants' responses citing and describing instances involving the CAS-SBO that led them to disengage and its actions that are contradictory to the participant's view about how student governance should work based on their experiences from previous affiliations with organizations of the same function.

The participants pointed out the lack of consultation by the CAS-SBO to the students. This stemmed from the participants' experiences where they were unable or discouraged to join an activity because it conflicts with their schedule, or the activity is not organized properly. During the one-on-one interview with participant 4, they answered:

The event is not totally flexible sa schedule sa mga students
... they should try to at least think of a proper... schedule every event so that everyone will have the chance to engage. *(The events are not flexible to the schedule of the students. They should schedule the events properly so that everyone will have the chance to engage.)*

Participant 6 added:

The way sila muhatag ug mga activities kay... padung na... midterm, exams... *(The way they schedule their events make it even harder to participate because they hold it when the exams are close.)*

Participant 8 added:

Imporanti man jud diri is communication... which is the key man jud... maka engage pod sila... kanang mga student na wala kaayug alam na... *(What is important is communication which is the key to... allow them to engage.)*

Participant 11 added:

Wala juy... pag-connect namo, kanang mangutana gyud ba nga unsay ganahan. *(They do not connect with us like consulting us about our interests.)*

Apart from consultation, the participants also pointed out the issue of proper coordination with the lack of information dissemination and the manner of how the activities are organized as some of its manifestations. Participant 2 said:

It wasn't intentional... it was just... wala ko na update. *(It was... not intentional— I was just not updated...)*

Participant 5 added:

I'm informed... when it's already happening.

Participant 6 added:

About atong... sa... tatak form... last Intrams. Libog kaayo to... dili organized... murag dili... maayo pagkabuhata... *(The Tatak Forms last Intramurals [2022] was really not organized well and was terribly executed.)*

Participant 9 added:

If we are to assess the SBO for what it is, it is a cobbling-together of people that largely cannot agree on one direction. It's a discordant kind of process that ultimately leads to confusion.

The participants also pointed out that the CAS-SBO's inability to connect has cost them the capacity to build rapport and, consequently, to gain the trust and confidence of the students.

Participant 6 answered:

I think, siguro... kuan... don't know how to build a rapport...*(I think they do not know how to build rapport.)*

Participant 10 answered:

Ila usa siguradohan nga ilahang mga sakop, ilahang mga constituents, syempre kanang kuan nila, kanang suod nila. *(They should make sure they can connect and engage with their constituents.)*

Mas naa ang confidence level kay of course they know nga ang mga officers naa gyud sa side namo nga mga students...kay lahi raman gyud di ba kung masulti nato atong mga concerns adto sa mga higher ups. *(They will be closer to the students and have their confidence because they are actually doing something to address even the simple issues. It is better when we can voice out our concerns to the higher ups for it to be solved that way.)*

Participant 12 answered:

These types of organization is only active when there is a school event... unfortunately but beyond that being the concerns of the students and such they're just absent right?

These responses reaffirmed the studies of Mwagi and Monda (2023) and Nyamwamu (2007) which implied that the connection between the students and the student government may be disruptive with the absence of communication given that the latter assumes as the former's proxy or representative as one of its functions. Kelman's (1958) theory furthers this point by providing the assumption that the CAS-SBO's inability to generate engagement is because, as influencing agents, they are not connected and relevant to students. Moreover, according to Patrick (2022), the trajectory of the role of student governance has shifted away from merely being extracurricular to a more participative role in governing to and, for Haniff and Daya (2023) and Jones and Harvey (2017), this role is disrupted by their lack of connection with the students given that they cannot represent their sentiments in their dialogues and policy-crafting with the school. Ultimately, for Mwagi and Monda (2023), this lack of connection spells out that the CAS-SBO does not have the confidence of the students.

5.1.2 Inequality in Representation

This theme was developed from the participants' citing of their experiences involving the CAS-SBO's inability to uphold the general interest as one of the factors for their disengagement. Participant 5 said:

If I were to ideally think of student body that would represent CAS better, it would be a student body that would... uphold people's interest at large not just push for... individualistic interest.

Participant 7 added:

Akong huna-huna ba mura'g naa guro'y tribalism... kanang mga newer officers... mura'g maka feel sad ka nga mura'g naa sila'y sense of superiority... sa akong nabantayan man kay... naa man gud sila'y specific subset nga pangutan'on nya di bitaw maka represent sa tanan. *(I think there is Tribalism. I think the new officers have this sense of superiority in them because I noticed that they only consult a specific subset which does not represent the entire CAS.)*

Participant 8 added:

Kanang mo enter... gusto mo commit as a leader na na jud silay ma-buhat or naa jud silay matabang... not just psych students but also other departments. *(I think those who plan to*

become a student leader should make sure that they can actually do something to help the other students and not just those who are under the same degree program.)

This theme corroborated the findings of Hussein (2023) involving structural inequality in student governance. In his study, he stated that there is a need to diversify the student body and its student leaders, for they are more likely to remain objective that way—having come from different subsets in the studentry—and solve problems faster given the variety of inputs. It also worthies of mention that the participants' responses proved to be opposite with the results of Alomary et al. (2023) which showed that structural inequality, contrastingly, inspired motivation from the underrepresented to run for a position in student governance. Lewin's (1926, 1943) Field Theory and the annotation made by Fricks (2022) elaborated that while the environment certainly contrasting suggesting emergence of goals, the response that it inspires (i.e., to pursue it or not) often depends upon the unique social situatedness in time, which is why two people might react to the same stimuli contrastingly—suggesting that the existence of the aforementioned elements does not preclude disengagement.

5.1.3 Faculty Intervention

This theme was developed from the participants' citing excessive faculty intervention in the function of CAS-SBO which restrains its autonomy which, them, contradicts their respective views about student governance. Participant 1 said:

Wa raba ko ka feel nga gina control mi ato nga time... Unlike karon... murag gina filter ba. (It did not feel like our student government, then, was being controlled... unlike CAS-SBO. It feels like they are being filtered.)

Kana ganing... sunod-sunoran lang japun sila... they cannot act... as independent nga organization... kay kuan man, musunod raman sila kung unsa'y gusto... sa faculty. (The should be the voice of the students. They cannot act as an independent organization if they get easily swayed and controlled by the faculty.)

Participant 2 added:

Honestly... saila pamamalakad... first thing na mosolod sa imong utak ba kay, "mao ni?" ambot if sa culture na nila mao nang na andan nila. (Honestly, I was really disappointed with how they manage things... Maybe they are used to that culture.)

Participant 3 added:

Naanad man gud ko like sa una SHS ko or H.S... if... ikaw ang leader, you should... organize og mag decide... ang teacher just for guidance and everything...(When I was in Senior High, I was used to the idea that the student leaders should organize and decide and that teachers are only there for guidance.

Traditional man gud sila... I don't want to run ug dili ko mo-run... murag masira akong gipracticisan sauna ba... akong mga principles... kay dili man jud ko makapractice gud... diri. (They have a traditional setup... I do not even want to run because I doubt if I can practice or uphold my principles here.)

This theme corroborated the studies of Corder and Timm (2021) and May (2009) which argued that student disengagement, particularly from running into a position in the student government, may be caused by the negative experience of the officers. Although, it is less about jeopardizing their social life and more about jeopardizing their principles due to the interference of the faculty. Duma (2015), May (2009), and Luescher (2008) argued that the reduction of the roles of student governments to ceremonial functions is due to the faculty acting as "managers." Duma (2015), however, added that faculty is sometimes resistant to collaborate with student leaders because it has become accustomed to functioning without student leaders being central to its work and that the university and the students often hold each other on another arm's length because they are unsure of the role that each other should play. A pattern showing that the students' previous experiences with student governance also holds bearing in their decision whether to engage or to disengage can also be picked up from the participants' responses.

5.2 Effects of the Experiences to the Participant's Disengagement from Student

5.2.1 Governance

The themes constructed under this sub-problem provided the effects of the participants' experiences to their disengagement from CAS-SBO. They sought to answer how their respective experiences influenced their perspective about student

leadership and their decision to disengage.

The following are the themes developed to describe the responses of the study's key participants to the sub-problem number 2:

5.2.2 Student Unfamiliarity

This theme was developed from the participants' responses that the lack of connection between them and the CAS-SBO disconnects them from familiarity with the latter's function, purpose, and even its officers. Participant 1 answered:

Murag ma feel gani nimo nga wala kaayo sila'y presensya. Dili nimo ma feel... naa ba gyud diay officers. *(It feels like they are not that present as officers.)*

Participant 3 added:

Dili sad nimo ma-feel ilang leadership or dili sad feel ilang day to day kuan ba engagement... I don't really know who actually... is the president right now.

(The lack of leadership and presence from its officers contributed to it. I do not even know who the president is right now.)

Need pa jud nila e-improve... nga makaingon ang tawo nga naa jud diay leader anhi sa... CAS. *(They... need to improve... establish their leadership presence here in CAS-SBO.)*

Participant 4 added:

When you compare gani other organization sa SBO... dili kaayu siya hands on sa tanan niyang members ...Dili kaayu nako sila makit-an totally sa school. *(Compared to other organization...CAS-SBO officers are not as hands on to its members and I do not usually see them in school.)*

Participant 5 added:

We don't know about them that much. There's no exposure like enough exposure to make you engage in the student body.

Participant 7 added:

Mura raman mi'g wala kabati sa ilang presence, makabati rami kung naay fees nga needed bayran... *(It seems that we cannot feel their presence unless there are fees that needed to be paid.)*

Participant 8 added:

Well... sa akong experience karon as of now kay... wala pakoy alam... Di pa jod kaayo sya known, bag-o pa para sakong pangdungog ba... *(As of now, I still do not know much about them... CAS-SBO is not that known yet and it is new to me. I am still observing the officers—if they are active or not.)*

Participant 10 added:

Dili kaayo visible sila. Although yes, naa sila sa social media and so on pero ug naa naka sa field... dili nako sila ma-feel lang gyud. (P 10-1 SS55) *(They are not that visible; yes, they are in social media but it does translate in the field... I cannot feel their presence.)*

Participant 11 added:

Wala ka nako nafeel nga kuan nga na'y SBO officer... wala ka'y interaction sa tanan ba, first hangtod kuan fourth year. *(It did not feel like CAS-SBO officers exist... from first year to fourth year, there is hardly any interaction.)*

Akong nabantayan ba, kailangan lang ka kung naa silay kailangan, pero ug wala na silay kailangan, wala rasad ka... kanang walay event, wala rasad. *(They are only there when they are in need of something. If there are no events, they are non-existent.)*

These responses confirmed the negative repercussions for a student government to not have the trust and confidence of the students set forth by the studies of Mwagi and Monda (2023), Haniff and Daya (2023), Jones and Harvey (2017), and Nyamwamu (2007). Answering to how the lack of connection affects them, the participants responded that they become distant and, ultimately, oblivious, and unfamiliar of the CAS-SBO and its functions. Moreover, various responses also indicated that the lack of officer visibility did not help with their unfamiliarity. Applying Berger and Luckman's (1966) Social Construction of Reality theory, if it remains unchecked, this may reduce the CAS-SBO to irrelevance on the side of the students.

5.2.3 Feeling Unrepresented

This theme was developed from the participants' responses that the inequality in representation tells them that the CAS-SBO does not cater to their needs. When asked, participant 2 answered:

Kaning... activities ani nga CAS kay murag it was designed for... a specific program. Example debate, ang mangapil lang ba kay mga POL SCI, so... murag di siya inclusive for all gani...*(Compared to events organized by other organizations, CAS-SBO activities were designed for a specific program and is not inclusive for all like debate having Political Science Students-only participants. That reflects the quality of student leaders that we have.)*

Participant 7 added:

Ang problema sad kay- naa man guy... subset nila nga mas daghan compared sa mga uban degree/program... once man gud nga nay specific group nga mas dominant sa lain, ilang opinions mas madungog g'yud... *(The problem is there is a subset that is more numerous compared to the other degree program. In my opinion, you will lose to population and numbers. Once there is a specific group that is relatively dominant, their opinions will matter more. It should be inclusive. That is why, if you are a leader, you should listen to the other groups' concern).*

Participant 9 added:

I don't think it represents me at all. I think- if I were to have an organization represent me as a student, it should have my best interest in mind. I think a lot of the activities that they have, that they've put out doesn't have to do anything with me at all.

Participant 11 added:

Group siya pero mura ko'g gi outcast bitaw. *([It's a group but I feel like an outcast].)*

The responses of the participants illustrated what Grace (2020) argued in their study. In their findings, they stated that a stark difference in representation rates—which, in this case, is caused by the inability of CAS-SBO to uphold the general interest—could sustain a lack of motivation on the part of the students who were not represented because it would limit their awareness, interest, and, ultimately, support for the student body. This idea was translated into the responses of the participants with their feelings of being an outcast, segregated, and simply unrepresented by a student body expected to do otherwise. If this is to be interpreted using Glasser's (1998) Choice Theory through his Perceived World Model and Perceptual System, it can be assumed that the participant's disengagement in response to this was because they attributed a negative value to any involvement with the CAS-SBO—meaning they see it as hindrance for the attainment of their needs. It is far out to say that it would qualify for neutral value in the same criteria given that inspired a negative reaction (i.e. disengagement).

5.2.4 Unmet Expectations

This theme was developed from the participants' responses that the excessive intervention of the faculty has hindered the CAS-SBO to meet the expectation set forth for them by their mandate as a student government. The intervention also affected the quality of their overall governance and leadership. Participant 1 answered:

They cannot act... as independent nga organization... kay kuan man, musunod raman sila kung unsa'y gusto sa... sa faculty. *(They cannot act as an independent organization if they get easily swayed and controlled by the faculty.)*

Participant 3 added:

I observe today... dili jud maka, maka practice... sa ilang power. *(From what I can observe today, they cannot practice their power because their advisers and the faculty is limiting them.)*

Participant 5 answered:

I realized that in college there's organization that function this way that I've come to realize that leadership organization is not always or as good as it would be.

It tends to pollute your view on how the [student] body works... that's not something I stand for as a leader.

Participant 10 answered:

Like siguro one to ten murag mga naa rana sila sa 5... bati jud siya nga style. *(I am to rate them out of ten, they are a five... I do not like their style.)*

The responses under this theme suggested that excessive faculty intervention has brought more harm than good to the CAS-SBO. In his study, Haley (2023) highlighted the importance of the role that the faculty plays in scaffolding the success of the student body. The responses of the participants, however, drew the line between supporting and intervening. For Dialde (2023), a faculty's undue restraint and hold over a student body would likely reduce it to insignificance or, worse, non-existence. The responses also showed that participants think that the CAS-SBO is being subdued willingly, although there were no indications that it is inspired by a transactional system as hinted by the studies of Chima (2023) and Tajik (2020).

5.3 Strategies, Suggestions, and Interventions to Revitalize the Participant's Engagement

The themes constructed under this sub-problem provided strategies, suggestions, and interventions that could revitalize their engagement in CAS-SBO. They were rooted from questions asking the participants on how they think CAS-SBO should function as a student government that would better represent them and how they would react to these changes vis-à-vis their disengagement.

The following are the themes developed to describe the responses of the study's key participants to the sub-problem number 3:

5.3.1 Inclusive Activities

This theme was developed from the participants' responses that organizing more inclusive activities would help CAS-SBO to establish a connection with the students— activities that would cater to their interests and serve as platform for them to engage. Participant 1 answered:

Akong consideration in terms sa kanang pag attend ug activities if beneficial or interesting ba sya. *(I would consider joining an event if it is beneficial or interesting.)*

Participant 2 added:

Lahi man jud ang culture pag senior high... ang mga a ctivities gani kay... na angay jud siya saimong strand... inclusive... ra gihapon. *(My exposure to the culture of student leadership in senior high was different; everyone was coordinated and our activities cater to the interests of the strands but was inclusive at the same time.)*

Participant 3 added:

I could actually balance my time, kung mo-join ko... it... should be a way for me to meet people. Widen my connection ba. *(I can actually balance my time...avenue to meet other people and widen my connection.)*

Need pa jud nila e-improve... mohatag jud sila ug mga avenues... sa mga students nga maka engage sila, magkaila-ila sila... like mga projects ba. *(They should give avenues to students to engage and connect with them.)*

To create more events... engagement jud dapat... naa syay academic mga involvement but most of the time socially interactive ang mga tao. *Create more engaging events... college should be about student engagement—it involves both academic and social interaction.)*

Participant 11 added:

Makakuan... nga dili... ma-misunderstanding nga kuan nga gipasagdan raka. *(Misunderstandings would be lessened... it would feel like you are included.)*

Nindot ang CAS. In a way nga... ang mga students mas close sa officers, mas naa ang confidence level... ug malahi gyud ang akoang, akong perspective. *(CAS would be better. In a way that the they will be closer to the students and have their confidence... my perspective about them would change.)*

This theme indicated that the disconnection of the students from the CAS-SBO due to its inability to rally their interests and the unfamiliarity that it bred consequential to the loss of trust and confidence (Mwagi & Monda, 2023) (Haniff & Daya, 2023) (Jones & Harvey, 2017) (Nyamwamu, 2007) can be solved through inclusive activities as the medium to connect. For this to happen, CAS-SBO would need to consult, collaborate, build rapport, and, ultimately, connect with the students; this includes putting their interests and needs into consideration upon planning for an activity and heralding their concerns to the higher ups. By doing these things, the CAS-SBO would allow itself to open to a more involved studentry—backed by trust, confidence, strong participation.

5.3.2 Addressing Electoral Disparity

This theme was developed from the participants' responses that the CAS-SBO's problem with representation can be solved through addressing the problem of its electoral system and the disparity between the populations of its sub-organizations. Participant 7 answered:

Akong opinion is... mapilde g'yud ka nila sa... population lage. Mapilde ka nila sa ilang numbers... if ikaw ang leader dapat bisag dili pa ka part ato nga... group of people ani nga demographic- ani nga degree programs... dapat to their relief, naa gyud kay knowledge regarding ato nila, and dapat maminaw sad ka nila. *That is why, if you are a leader, you should listen to the other groups' concern.)*

Mangita sila'g paagi ba nga... magnify... if possible... naay individual representatives per program. *(They should find a way to magnify CAS-SBO... if possible, there should be a representative in the student body per degree program.)*

Participant 9 answered:

There is a huge problem with the electoral system... the college is largely dominated by the greater population force which is... Pol-Sci and Psych. So, both of them... are the leading forces... and I think, right now, it's very unfair because the CAS is led by people with the largest number of supporters behind them. And we don't exactly have that with the others. Of course, they're going to vote for their own kind. Of course, they're going to vote because they want to support one of their own. And what that spells for us is that we're missing out on a lot of potential from the other people... It is perpetuated by the current system and it's very unfair. (P 9-1 SS49)

If we were to have more engagement and more support... I would be very happy if we actually got –like– a bolstering force for our smaller orgs. For example, Lit and BPA. (P 9-6 SS54)

Participant 11 answered:

Mura'g nakahuna huna man ko'g kuan gud... kung mo run ko ba as a President CAS-SBO, president gyud sa LIT, murag nakakuan ko sa akong utok ba, murag nasudlan ko'g kanang kuan mga negative thoughts. *(I once considered to run for CAS-SBO or for Lit Society president or but I get discouraged by negative thoughts [losing].)*

This theme suggested that the phenomenon of underrepresentation in the CAS- SBO caused by undue inequality in representation and the sentiments of being unrepresented from the students is rooted on its electoral system which favored those sub-organizations with larger populations over the other. This can be factually illustrated by observing the course of student leadership in CAS; its presidency for the last five years has been secured by students from the Psychological Society and from the Political Science Society—two of the CAS-SBO sub-organizations with the largest population. CAS-SBO is yet to have a president from the Literati Society and/or the Performing Arts society which have smaller populations. Upon observing the data procured from the CAS-COMELEC from last CAS-SBO elections, the decreasing trend of voter turnout from

Literati and Performing Arts Societies spells out that the disengagement has taken form in students not opting to vote as well which according to Luescher (2020) is one of the indicators for student engagement. Moreover, this also confirmed the studies of Weinberg, and Walker (1969) (as cited by Tefera, 2021, and Mugume and Leuscher, 2017) that there exists a systemic linkage between campus- based politics as it mirrored the results of Legara and David (2015) weak electoral participation is indicative of low-level engagement.

5.3.3 Empowered Leadership

This theme was developed from the participants' responses that organizing more inclusive activities would help CAS-SBO to establish a connection with the students— activities that would cater to their interests and serve as platform for them to engage. Participant 1 answered:

Independent na sya nga... organization... mas maka gama sila'g mga programa nga beneficial jud sa mga students and i-live up gud nila ang... mandate... nila as SBO. (P 1-6 SS6) *(It would become an independent organization. They can live up to their mandate and make more programs that are actually beneficial to the students.)*

Participant 6 added:

Communication, collaboration... sense of leadership... ang pagdistribute lang jud sa... Kana ganing responsibilities sa CAS... murag naay lacking something sa ilaha.. *(Communication, collaboration, and the sense of leadership... they do not distribute the responsibilities well enough. I think that is something that they lack.)*

As a student organization... as an officer pud, dapat mufunction sila kanang makisabay gani sila sa mga estudyante... Muconnect sila sa mga estudyante... e connect ang organization ngadto sa mga estudyante. *(As a student organization, as officers, they should be able to get along and connect with the students. I think they do not know how to build rapport.)*

Maybe maosab akong perspective... basin... mujoin ko sa organization *(Maybe my perspective would change. Maybe I will consider joining the organization.)*

Participant 7 added:

Kanang... mabawasan ang dissatisfaction sa students sa ilang leadership. Kuan sad kanang... motaas ang engagements... Kuan sad naa sad ko'y mga kaila nga mangutana in ana moingon sad ko nga "oh nindot mana amoang program in ana nindot man mosulti ra hasta leaders namo nindot" di pareha karon ba kanang nay mangutana nimo... mura'g di sad ka katubag. *(It would lessen the student dissatisfaction to their leadership and their engagement would increase. If ever someone would ask me about CAS-SBO, I would be able to say that the department and the student leaders are good—unlike now.)*

Participant 8 added:

Kanang mo enter... nga... gusto mo commit as a leader, naa na jud silay ma buhat or naa jud silay matabang sa mga... students... committed ba siya sa kanang service of... nag buhat ba siya sa kanang duty. *(I think those who plan to become a student leader should make sure that they can actually do something to help the other students... they should be committed to the service and in doing their duty.)*

Participant 12 added:

I'm actually one of those... that actually believe that if you assume a certain position, you must act... *(I am one of those people who believes that if you assume a certain position, you must act accordingly)*

In a perfect world ... they can offer more they could offer a lot more and if those service... those services used by the students well then that's definitely a great step forward for... for every student there is. *(In a perfect world... they can offer a lot more services to every student there is.)*

A group that can do so... can fill in the gap as the student body organization kasi by doing things talaga they can... they can... they can give better services. *(A group that can do so can fill in their gaps as a student body organization. Because by really doing these things, they can give better student services.)*

This theme suggested that the participant's experience of encountering excessive faculty intervention that restrains the function and autonomy of CAS-SBO and consequentially hinders it from fulfilling the expectations of the students set forth by their mandate can be solved by empowering student leadership. However, the responses do not explicitly state that the faculty should loosen up and be less restrictive with the CAS-SBO like the results of Haley (2023) and Dialde (2023). There were no indications that the CAS-SBO is being subdued by a transactional system, as hinted by Chima (2023) and Tajik (2020) studies. The responses said that the CAS-SBO's compromising submission to the faculty is due to the quality of its student leaders. Treating faculty intervention as the root of the problem would only bring band-aid solutions because it would be fine if CAS-SBO had straightened its priorities. Only by empowering its officers can the CAS-SBO truly serve its mandate—with intervention or not.

6. Conclusion

This paper looked into the factors associated with student disengagement and non-participation in the College of Arts and Sciences Student Body Organization at the University of Cebu-Main for the academic year 2023-2024. It specifically sought answers to the following questions: What are the participants' experiences in student governance? How do these experiences contribute to their disengagement? What strategies, suggestions, and interventions could effectively enhance their involvement in student governance?

This qualitative study employed a descriptive phenomenological research design to explore the causes of student disengagement in student governance.

The informants of the study were twelve (12) students selected via linear snowball sampling. The researcher conducted an in-depth interview of the six (6) seed informants (prescreened to have: (1) prior experience serving in a student government or other student organizations with similar functions in an elected or appointed position during Senior High School, Junior High School, and Primary School; (2) no experience serving under CAS-SBO on an elected or appointed position; (3) did not vote in the 2023 CAS-SBO elections, and (4) has stayed for, at least, four semesters under CAS) and asked their recommendation for the other six (6) informants. The researcher utilized a semi-structured interview guide to gather the data. The data gathered were transcribed, recorded, coded, clustered, and categorized using Bricki and Green's (2007) thematic content analysis to extract the emergent themes.

Nine sub-themes emerged from the informants' responses, classified under nine key themes addressing the study's sub-problems. For the participants' experiences in student governance, the emergent themes identified were Lack of Connection, Inequality in Representation, and Faculty Intervention. Regarding the effects of these experiences on disengagement, the themes included Student Unfamiliarity, Feeling Unrepresented, and Unmet Expectations. Finally, the strategies, suggestions, and interventions to revitalize engagement were encapsulated in the themes of Inclusive Activities, Addressing Electoral Disparity, and Empowered Leadership.

As the results of this study were so promising, it is essential to acknowledge some limitations so as not to over-interpret and take the results out of context. The findings are tied explicitly to the experiences and perceptions of a small group of students within a single academic department, which may only partially represent the broader student body or the complexities of student governance across different contexts. The emergent themes—Lack of Connection, Inequality in Representation, and Faculty Intervention—reflect the particular environment and culture within the College of Arts and Sciences. As such, these findings might not directly apply to other departments or institutions with different governance structures and student dynamics. Additionally, the strategies and interventions suggested, like Inclusive Activities and Empowered Leadership, are based on the specific challenges identified in this study and may require adaptation to fit other contexts. Therefore, while this research provides a strong foundation for understanding student disengagement within this particular setting, further studies are needed to explore these issues in more diverse environments and student populations.

As the result showed, some implications for practice are recommended. First, it is recommended that the College of Arts and Sciences Student Body Organization (CAS-SBO) hold regular General Assemblies to consult with students regarding planned activities and to strengthen the connection between students and CAS-SBO officers. Additionally, regular teambuilding exercises and leadership seminars should be conducted to empower CAS-SBO officers, enhance their teamwork, and enable the organization to fulfill its mandate as a student government effectively. Furthermore, the election of representatives for each of the four-degree

programs within CAS is suggested to address the issue of underrepresentation, particularly for programs with smaller student populations.

Finally, the study suggests several avenues for future research to explore the dynamics of student governance further. Recommended topics include the impact of reforming the CAS-SBO's electoral system, the lived experiences of former College of Arts and Sciences Student Body Organization Presidents, and the perspectives of faculty advisers on the challenges and shortcomings of student government. Additional research could examine the relationship between voter turnout and student engagement in the CAS-SBO and student perceptions regarding potential reforms to the CAS-SBO Constitution. Lastly, exploring the connection between the volatility of political parties and the level of political maturity within the CAS-SBO is recommended.

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