

Lived Experiences of Youths Who Underwent Project Metamorphosis: A Case in Buguias, Benguet

Joe Nari A. Baygan¹, Leah M. Donato²

Kickerkix@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-7932-9373>

Benguet 1st PMFC, Philippine National Police, Philippines¹,

University of the Cordilleras, Baguio City, Philippines²

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Abstract

The Project Metamorphosis was launched by the Benguet First Provincial Mobile Force Company to mobilize the youths in a leadership-building activity and educate them of the bad effects of joining Communist Terrorist Groups. These skills could be used by the youths in handling dynamic pressures in their lives. Since its inception in 2018, Project Metamorphosis has primarily benefited youths in Buguias, Benguet and there have been no studies conducted to review the project. This study determined the extent of the effect of Project Metamorphosis on the youth participants in Buguias, Benguet, and the problems they encountered while attending the said project. This study used a qualitative method which collects the data directly from the respondents through interviews. Further through thematic analysis of the data gathered, it answered the problem with these findings: 1. The Project Metamorphosis has a positive impact on the participants' personal growth, teamwork, leadership skills, communication abilities, and awareness of societal issues. 2. The findings on the challenges encountered by the participants showcase a comprehensive approach to learning and development within Project Metamorphosis, encompassing experiential learning, mentorship, time management, and emergency preparedness. In conclusion, the lived experiences of the participants indicated collaboration with other members led to their realization that teamwork and unity are necessary. Also, indication that participants who joined the Project cultivated knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Moreover, the challenges encountered by the participants revealed the inadequacy of activities to achieve the desired outcome. Therefore, the study proposes a modification of the Project's program of activities.

Keywords: Youth Leadership and Development, Project Metamorphosis, Buguias, Benguet

Introduction

The future of the youths is ensured best when they are guided right. Today's generation has an easy grasp of information through technology and socialization; this information may properly guide or mislead the youths on what they dream of becoming. When the youths are misled, the nation's future also follows for it is with the youths that the nation's future is held. When the youths are guided well, they ensure a progressive nation when they become future leaders.

The challenge is now with the people who care for the nation's future, the Government. General De Leon espoused that to oppose CTG propaganda, one needs only to speak the truth and concentrate on battling misinformation rather than constantly demonizing the group (PNA, 2019). The youths must be protected against misinformation, and they deserve to be informed by the Government of what is right, especially about social issues.

Campaigns on Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) being conducted are also incorporated into some programs like Project Metamorphosis, an anti-terrorism awareness project. Metamorphosis is a process by which there is a physical, moral, and spiritual development involving a conspicuous and relatively abrupt change. The project Metamorphosis is similar to the Youth Development Session (YDS) which is initiated by the Department of Social Welfare and Development, and this is being implemented for the beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilya Program. Through the sessions, the youths will be shaped to become contributing members of society who can support their own families; Also, they can build relationships and form peer support groups in this setting (DSWD, 2015). In partnership with several Police Units, the activities build the leadership skills within the participants in handling dynamic pressures and stress they'll have to face in life.

In the Global Youth Development Index Report, a more comprehensive view of development, frequently based on sociological findings emphasizes young people's experiences and how they offer chances for life management and unique, culturally shaped growth (The Commonwealth, 2016). Thus, the youths are encouraged to be "engaged as early and as often as possible" to experience problem-solving situations that best benefit them (Lindsay, J.E., et al., 2021). International research also shows that youths who participate in youth development and youth leadership experiences are more likely to do well in school, be involved in their community and have a positive transition through adolescence to adulthood. On record, there is none that supports the Project Metamorphosis' effects on the youths however, its similarity to the youth development programs may be assumed. In addition, Rajagopal, S., et. al. (2022) suggested that outside of official interventions, Positive Youth Development frameworks may be spontaneously used. He further encouraged that a further study is required to demonstrate the effectiveness and long-term viability of the PYD approach's beneficial outcomes.

In the Asian studies, Jaafar, M., et al. (2015) suggested that the provision of formal educational programs and training workshops for local adolescents intended to facilitate their participation in various development programs can help achieve the goal.

In the Philippines, there are no studies made to support youth development programs; however, it is being conducted nationwide. Quimoyog, (2022) quoted, "Various government agencies joined together to empower youth members of the indigenous community of Lidlidda town in Ilocos Sur through a Youth Leadership Summit (YLS)". A series of information and awareness campaigns on the importance of youth in nation development and the CTG's deceptive recruitment campaigns took up the entire three-day event. The Project Metamorphosis was launched in Buguias, Benguet by the Benguet First Provincial Mobile Force Company to make the youths aware of the deceptive recruitment and propaganda of the communist terrorist groups. It is in this town where Benguet First PMFC is based, and it is the primary recipient of the implementations of the project metamorphosis. There have been no studies done yet to assess this project.

The success of this study will benefit the following: first, the researcher, for having produced baseline data on the current practices in Project Metamorphosis; second, the Benguet First Provincial Mobile Force Company with its innovative recommendations that can be applied by the organizers, facilitators and mentors; and, third, the youth participants of Buguias and the Province of Benguet as the main benefactors of the Project Metamorphosis.

The idea that the youths can be partners for peace and agents of good change, moving beyond “youth as victims or perpetrators of violence” has gained acceptance from the international community. The approval of the historic United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250, which codifies the role of youth as partners in peacebuilding in December 2015, provides the most convincing proof of this (Prellis, 2016). Further, the author added that many young people want to be a part of something bigger than themselves, and they sometimes battle for it. Unfortunately, the young people's aspirations are occasionally used by criminal gangs and extremist movements, these aspirations may also be used by these movements to influence them to support positive narratives that promote peace over violence. In particular, if it is accompanied by initiatives to invest in young people as partners and leaders in peacebuilding.

Lindsay et al., (2021) suggested that the youths can't lead if they can't participate, so program managers must recognize and address these problems if they want to foster truly inclusive leadership. In addition, engaging the youths in programs and activities and recognizing their efforts are most crucial, but so are organizational ethos and the local political economy. Throughout the project, the youths must be involved as early and frequently as possible because the young people are considered to be the ones that have the best self-awareness and the energy and imagination to approach problems from many angles.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to assess the impact of Project Metamorphosis on the development of youth participants in Buguias, Benguet. It sought to fulfill the following specific objectives:

1. Explore the personal and shared experiences of the youth in Buguias, Benguet, who participated in Project Metamorphosis
2. Identify challenges encountered by the youth participants during the implementation of Project Metamorphosis.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative method, specifically a case study, which collects the data directly from the ten respondents who have undergone Project Metamorphosis from its launch in 2018 until the present year through face-to-face interviews. The study used purposive sampling in choosing the respondents. In selecting the participants, the researcher employed selection criteria to ensure that participants met the eligibility requirements and had similar characteristics. Additionally, the researcher standardized the data collection tool which helped reduce the subjectivity in the collection of data. The responses of the youth were triangulated through the validation of documents from the police records and school records, as well as recognitions acquired from the barangay. In addition, the researcher also validated. The data from the respondents' parents, teachers, peers, or people close to them. Further data gathered was analyzed through thematic analysis.

Results and Discussions

The effect of the participants' experiences in the project metamorphosis and the problems they encountered while attending.

1. The Lived Experiences of Youths in Buguias, Benguet Who Underwent Project Metamorphosis

The following are themes that describe the experiences of the project metamorphosis participants and the substantial transforming effects on them.

1.1. Establishing teamwork and collaboration

Unity and teamwork are essential in achieving successful outcomes in activities that require invention, problem-solving, and creativity. The participants experienced a transformation in their understanding of the importance of collaboration and teamwork, leading to increased productivity and better results. For activities that need invention, problem-solving, and creativity, collaboration is essential to achieve the required outcome (Khawam et al., 2017). The participation of every member of the team eventually develops teamwork and unity. From the responses of the participants, they depicted that unity and teamwork were developed as they engaged in every activity in the Project Metamorphosis. The study findings underscore participants' active involvement in teamwork, as evidenced by their contributions to assigned tasks, leading to a collective understanding of the essential role of unity within the project metamorphosis. Moreover, participants' recognition of the importance of self-awareness and understanding one's capabilities has contributed to the development of leadership skills among those in charge. These revelations find resonance in Holz-Clause's (2022) research, which emphasizes effective communication as pivotal in collaborative problem-solving. The study collectively highlights the interconnectedness of collaboration, self-awareness, leadership, and communication in achieving project objectives and personal growth.

1.2. Development of Knowledge, Skills and Attitude

Skills are not gained only by watching, but also by experiencing. As noted by the participants on their experience in project metamorphosis the activities they have undergone developed their skills. The study's findings consistently resonate with the significance of effective communication skills for establishing robust social networks and connections, echoing the insights of Canada, (2015). Through improved communication, participants not only enhance their interpersonal relationships but also utilize their refined communication abilities to disseminate knowledge. Moreover, the research underscores that Project Metamorphosis participants acquire new abilities and recognize the value of engaging in extracurricular activities for personal development. These outcomes highlight the transformative power of constant skill practice in cultivating exceptional leadership qualities, where responsibilities, role modeling, and volunteerism become integral aspects. Overall, participants' responses underline their proactive approach to academic endeavors, showcasing an initiative-driven attitude towards learning, problem-solving, and commitment.

The study results corroborated the findings of Llego (2022) who claims that students who participate in extracurricular activities can pick up new skills, meet new people, and discover new hobbies. He noted that they can also gain confidence and develop leadership qualities. The study results revealed that the importance of learning indicated that awareness deepens understanding and enlightenment. Respondents do not only learn but are also encouraged to lead, explore, and learn more outside of their comfort zones.

1.3. Activeness overcomes weakness and boosts confidence

The participants' level of understanding of instructions and participation in all the simultaneous activities displays how active they are. Being alert and active in every activity was emphasized as a key to contributing effectively to the team's tasks. The study results indicate that the more active the participants are, the more they can comprehend instructions; thus, they can solve any given task. As they maintain being active, they constantly become active in every activity they participate in.

The study result is supported by the recommendation of Rajah (2017) that the youth would gain from participating in a lively public speaking arena. The speakers' nervousness would immediately disappear if they developed the practice of believing in themselves and being comfortable in an unfamiliar setting when speaking in front of an audience.

The study findings indicate that most respondents claimed that the confidence boost is still in effect, even in their future engagements. As they kept communicating, they also continued boosting their confidence.

The lived experiences of youths in Project Metamorphosis encompass a tapestry of transformative themes. From recognizing personal development through teamwork, skill enhancement, and leadership to heightening alertness and enhanced communication skills, these youths' engagement in the project prompted overcoming fears, boosting confidence, and fostering a willingness to make sacrifices for growth. Moreover, the importance of learning emerged as a cornerstone, deepening their awareness, honing their critical thinking, and amplifying their academic development. Overall, these interconnected themes vividly illustrate the profound impact of Project Metamorphosis on the participants' holistic development and perspectives. Project Metamorphosis had a profound and positive impact on the participants' personal and social development.

2. The Challenges Encountered by the Youths in the Implementation of Project Metamorphosis

The following themes are carefully analyzed based on the statements of the respondents about the challenges that the participants have encountered in the implementation of Project Metamorphosis.

2.1. Inadequate activities to achieve desired outcomes

This theme indicates more challenging experiences; some participants suggested the inclusion of more physical and challenging activities, such as survival exercises. They felt that facing fears and experiencing intense activities would have a greater

impact on their transformation. Some respondents suggest adding more challenging experiences because they claim that it is better if you feel it. The participants felt that time constraints limited their ability to fully engage in activities, as a result, there is leniency among the facilitators and pressure among the participants to perform well. Proper time management and more time allotment for activities could alleviate these challenges. A study revealed that due to time constraints, the participants were less sensitive to reward values while making repeat decisions, which led them to make low-reward decisions more frequently (Wu et al., 2022).

The findings underline participants' preference for increased experiential learning in Project Metamorphosis, reflecting their eagerness to engage in physically challenging activities that contribute to personal growth. Concurrently, the desire for a dedicated "gospel hour" suggests a need for morale-boosting elements within the program. Moreover, the study highlights how time constraints impact facilitators' ability to oversee team dynamics, emphasizing the importance of effective time management strategies. Lastly, the study underscores the holistic nature of the program's impact, indicating that removing any activity disrupts the transformational process, emphasizing the inclusion of impactful activities when feasible.

2.2. Inadequate mentors to supervise

The second theme indicates the observation of the participants to address some areas that they see as a problem. These include supervision and health concerns. These were indicated based on the responses of the participants. The participants expressed the need for mentors' presence and guidance throughout the activities. Proper supervision is crucial for providing instructions, resolving conflicts, and ensuring that participants understand and execute the tasks correctly. The study result indicated the importance of supervision among the participants of Project Metamorphosis. Mentors' consistent presence and active involvement in guiding the participants can lead to more positive and impactful learning experiences.

The findings are corroborated by O'Conner (2019) who concluded that make sure to have an emergency response plan in place, including tools, personnel who have received first aid training, pertinent contacts, and a medical kit, to detect any bad impacts and find solutions. To sum up, the importance of preparedness for any emergencies must also be prioritized.

The study findings emphasize participants' strong inclination towards experiential learning within Project Metamorphosis. Their eagerness to immerse themselves in physically demanding activities signifies a genuine drive for personal growth. The desire for a designated "gospel hour" underscores the need for elements that uplift morale and foster a positive environment. Furthermore, the study underscores the significance of effective time management in addressing time constraints, allowing facilitators to better oversee team interactions and activities. Importantly, the study highlights the integral role of mentor

supervision, illustrating the positive impact of mentors' consistent presence and active guidance on participants' learning journey. It is important to have a well-thought-out response plan and necessary resources for handling unforeseen situations. Overall, the findings showcase a comprehensive approach to learning and development within Project Metamorphosis, encompassing experiential learning, mentorship, time management, and emergency preparedness.

Conclusions

In light of the findings of the study, the following conclusions are derived.

1. The collaboration among participants in Project Metamorphosis underscored the necessity of teamwork and unity. This initiative has been instrumental in fostering the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Active engagement in the project significantly improved participants' comprehension of instructions and their ability to complete various activities. Continuous involvement led to increased participation in all activities, facilitating the overcoming of personal challenges, such as fear of crowds. Consequently, a notable enhancement in self-confidence was observed among the majority of respondents, further augmented as they continued to communicate and interact within the group. Moreover, the acquisition of knowledge through observation, listening, and direct experiences concerning societal issues not only enlightened the participants but also motivated them to assume leadership roles, venture beyond their comfort zones, and pursue further learning. These developments hold potential benefits for both governmental and community spheres.
2. The evaluation of the project revealed several challenges impacting the desired outcomes. A significant finding pointed to the inadequacy of the range of activities provided, with respondents advocating for the inclusion of more physical activities coupled with spiritual sessions (e.g., gospel hour) to enhance morale. The removal of any activity was perceived as detrimental to the transformational process, suggesting a need for the integration of more impactful and diversified activities. Additionally, the importance of proper time management emerged as a critical factor in the execution of activities. Another critical aspect highlighted was the shortage of mentors, underscoring the crucial role of mentor supervision in fostering a positive and impactful learning environment. Effective mentorship was deemed essential, particularly in emergencies, to ensure that health and safety priorities are adequately addressed.

Recommendations

In relation with the findings and conclusions of this research, the following are recommended: To maintain consistency with the previously refined format and enhance clarity, let's structure the recommendations based on the research findings and conclusions:

1. Given the transformative impact of Project Metamorphosis on its participants as highlighted by their lived experiences, it is recommended that the Benguet First Provincial Mobile Force Company seeks to strengthen and broaden its partnerships and collaborations. Engaging with more stakeholders aligned with the project's objectives could significantly enhance financial and logistical support, facilitating the continuation and expansion of its implementation across wider

areas. Additionally, while this study focused primarily on the participants' lived experiences, there is a suggestion for future research to explore the broader impacts of Project Metamorphosis, providing a more comprehensive understanding of its effectiveness and areas for improvement.

2. The research identified several challenges faced by participants, including the inadequacy of activities to achieve desired outcomes, insufficient mentorship, and unclear instructions during emergencies. In response, the following measures are recommended: The Benguet First Provincial Mobile Force Company should conduct a thorough review of the current program of activities. This review should aim to ensure a balanced mix of physical activities and morale-boosting initiatives, incorporating both positive and impactful activities. The goal would be to prevent any disruption in the transformational process while ensuring timely management of all activities. Before the project's commencement, mentors should undergo orientation and training sessions. These sessions would equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively supervise and guide youth participants, emphasizing their duties and responsibilities. Establishing clear guidelines for emergencies is crucial. These guidelines would provide unified instructions to be followed during emergencies, ensuring the safety and well-being of all participants.

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