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"ADDA A": There is Something Youth Can Do - a Critical Discourse Analysis on Maximizing Civic Engagement of Kk Members in Local Governance

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Abstract

Youth participation in local governance is often celebrated in rhetoric but contested in reality. In the Philippines, the Katipunan ng Kabataan (KK) is legally constituted as a collective consultative body in every barangay. While its purpose is to represent youth voice in policy, planning, and development, its actual impact remains inconsistent and often symbolic. This study uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how KK members from both districts of La Union province navigate institutional structures, assert agency, and redefine their civic roles within barangay governance. Drawing from interviews, assembly records, and youth development plans involving 25 KK members across rural and urban barangays, this study surfaces a five-phase framework of civic transformation: Awareness, Discipline, Decision, Action, and Accountabily, coined by participants as "ADDA A," meaning "There is!" in Ilocano. The study contributes to Political Science by mapping the political socialization of youth in subnational governance, and to Public Administration by highlighting youth-led discursive strategies that shape policy spaces despite systemic adultism. ADDA A serves as both a grounded theory and a practical framework for institutionalizing genuine youth participation at the barangay level.

Keywords: Katipunan ng Kabataan , participatory governance , critical discourse analysis, political socialization, youth policy, public administration

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Introduction

Youth participation has long been embedded in the normative aspirations of the Philippine state. The 1987 Constitution recognizes the youth as "a vital sector in nation-building," a statement that has been institutionalized through legislative mechanisms such as Republic Act No. 10742 or the Sangguniang Kabataan Reform Act of 2015. This law mandates the creation of the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) Council and the Katipunan ng Kabataan (KK) in every barangay, with the KK formally recognized as the collective consultative assembly of the youth in each locality. In principle, these youth bodies are designed to influence community planning, budgeting, and implementation of youth-responsive programs. In practice, however, the ideal of participatory governance remains uneven and often symbolic, especially at the grassroots level.

The Katipunan ng Kabataan, unlike its SK counterpart, does not wield formal power over barangay decision-making. Its legitimacy is drawn from its consultative mandate—a role that is highly dependent on whether local officials and SK leaders recognize it as a venue for meaningful dialogue. This raises critical questions about the authenticity of youth engagement. While barangays conduct KK assemblies to comply with statutory requirements, many youth report that these forums are cursory and performative. Participants are often called to "participate" in processes already decided in advance. Deliberation becomes a ceremony, and consultation a checklist. The youth may be present, but not truly heard.

Such dynamics are not unique to the Philippines. Literature on participatory governance across the Global South reveals a persistent gap between institutional form and substantive function. Cornwall (2008) describes this as the proliferation of "invited spaces" - arenas in which marginalized actors are offered participation without the means to exert real influence. These structures signal democratic inclusion but frequently preserve existing hierarchies. In these spaces, youth are "included" as symbolic actors whose presence legitimizes adult authority rather than enabling genuine co-governance. Bessant (2004) and Gaventa (2006) similarly argue that the language of participation has become so routinized that it often masks the exclusionary and tokenistic tendencies embedded in bureaucratic culture.

This paradox is magnified in semi-rural regions like La Union, where traditional deference to elders, political patronage, and gendered expectations further complicate youth involvement. While some youth leaders are highly active in their barangays, many others navigate systems that are structurally dismissive of their capacities. Even when youth articulate ideas, initiate projects, or raise concerns, their contributions are often framed as idealistic, premature, or lacking in gravitas. This adultism—where age is

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equated with competence—creates barriers to political legitimacy and narrows the discursive space in which youth can claim authority.

One recurring cultural barrier is the skepticism directed at youth by older generations. The question "Sumanao kayo, apay adda aya met maaramidanyo tapno mabaliwan iti sistema?"—which roughly translates to "You talk a lot, but is there anything you can do to change the system?"—echoes through family gatherings, community meetings, and even institutional spaces. This statement, often internalized by youth as doubt, delegitimizes their voice and reinforces a belief that experience is tied to age. For the researcher and many of the participants, this question was not only rhetorical but existential—a provocation that simultaneously undermines and motivates youth political identity.

Yet youth are not passive recipients of exclusion. Recent studies in political science and youth studies challenge the notion that young people are merely "citizens in training." Scholars like Cammaerts et al. (2014) and Checkoway and Aldana (2013) contend that youth are already political actors who engage in a spectrum of practices ranging from formal policy advocacy to subcultural resistance. Participation, in this view, is not something bestowed upon youth by benevolent institutions. It is a site of negotiation, contestation, and performance—a process in which young people construct agency through language, behavior, and strategic adaptation.

This research builds upon that perspective by focusing not on institutional outputs, but on youth discourse. Specifically, it explores how members of the Katipunan ng Kabataan in La Union interpret, navigate, and respond to the challenges of political participation in their barangays. Rather than evaluating programs or policy implementation, the study foregrounds narratives—what youth say, how they say it, and what their discourses reveal about the lived politics of inclusion and exclusion. The premise is that discourse is not peripheral to governance; it is central. The language of youth—both in formal settings and in everyday expressions—offers insight into the deeper tensions and potentials of grassroots political life.

To interrogate these dynamics, this study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly the approach articulated by Fairclough (2001), which examines language at three interrelated levels: textual production, discursive practice, and social practice. This framework allows for a layered reading of how youth construct meanings around their roles, how they challenge or conform to institutional scripts, and how they mobilize speech as a form of action. CDA is especially useful in revealing how power is embedded in the very structures of participation, who gets to speak, who is listened to, and what forms of speech are recognized as legitimate.

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The study draws from qualitative data collected across the two legislative districts of La Union. Twenty-five KK members, aged 16 to 30, were purposively selected from a range of coastal and upland barangays, ensuring diversity in terms of geography, gender, and governance exposure. Data sources include in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, minutes of KK assemblies, SK resolutions, and public-facing materials such as youth-led social media posts. The use of multiple data types allows for triangulation and a richer understanding of the discursive ecosystem in which youth operate.

Situated within the disciplinary intersections of Political Science and Public Administration, this study offers three primary contributions. First, it adds to theories of political socialization by emphasizing the discursive and performative aspects of youth political identity. Traditional models focus on civic education and formal electoral behavior, often underestimating how youth develop political consciousness in localized, informal, and often adversarial settings. Second, it critiques the assumption, prevalent in many development frameworks that structural inclusion (i.e., the mere existence of youth councils or assemblies) equates to meaningful participation. Legal frameworks, while necessary, are not sufficient; what matters is how these structures are enacted, inhabited, and contested. Finally, this research contributes to the practice of governance by elevating the voice of a sector often treated as supplementary. It argues that youth are not future citizens, they are present agents whose participation demands more than legal acknowledgment; it requires cultural legitimacy, institutional responsiveness and discursive recognition.

In recent years, the twin crises of democratic erosion and youth disengagement have sparked anxieties in political discourse. In the Philippines, youth are alternately romanticized as change agents or pathologized as apathetic. Both framings are reductive. This study refuses to ask whether youth participation is working; instead, it asks how youth are working participation, how they use language, relationships and political imagination to bend the limits of the spaces they are given. In doing so, it surfaces the textures of agency that are often missed by policy audits and development indicators. Participation is not only about outcomes. It is about meaning-making, identity formation, and moral struggle.

Ultimately, this research argues for a shift in how youth engagement is conceptualized in governance. It is not enough to count youth attendees or validate legal compliance. Scholars and practitioners alike must look at how youth perform citizenship, how they construct legitimacy, and how they reimagine the boundaries of the political. Because if we truly listen, not merely record the voices of the young, we may find not silence, but strategy; not apathy, but adaptation; not absence, but assertion.

Method and Procedures

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Research Design

This study employed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its primary research design, informed by the three-dimensional model of Norman Fairclough (2001), which analyzes language across three levels: textual features (vocabulary, grammar, cohesion), discursive practices (production, distribution, and consumption of text), and social practices (ideological and institutional structures shaping discourse). This design is rooted in the understanding that language is not merely a reflection of social reality but a tool through which power is exercised, identities are constructed, and legitimacy is either reinforced or contested. CDA is particularly suitable for interrogating participatory governance narratives, as it reveals the subtle ways in which inclusion, exclusion, and resistance are embedded in the everyday speech of actors navigating state structures.

To complement the analytical depth of CDA, the study also integrated grounded qualitative methods (Charmaz, 2014), especially during the coding and theory-building phases. Grounded theory principles allowed for the inductive development of themes based on participant accounts, documents, and observed practices, rather than imposing predefined frameworks. This methodological pairing, CDA and grounded qualitative analysis ensured that the findings were both linguistically sensitive and thematically emergent.

Locale and Participants

The study was conducted in the province of La Union, located in the Ilocos Region of Northern Luzon, Philippines. La Union presents a politically diverse landscape, comprising both urbanizing coastal municipalities (e.g., San Fernando City, Bauang, Agoo, San Juan) and more remote, upland barangays (e.g., Bagulin, Sudipen, Santol, Burgos). These settings offer contrasting terrains of youth engagement, shaped by different governance styles, socio-economic development, and cultural norms.

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select twenty-five (25) youth participants aged 16 to 30 years old, all of whom were recognized members of the Katipunan ng Kabataan (KK) and had participated in at least two local governance mechanisms, such as assemblies, development planning consultations, youth council meetings, or barangay projects. The sample included both male and female participants, as well as youth from coastal and upland barangays, to ensure representational diversity. The sampling continued until thematic saturation was reached - defined as the point at which no new conceptual categories emerged from the data.

Below is a demographic summary of participants:

Table 1. Demographic Summary of Participants

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Characteristic	Count
Total Participants	25
Age Range	16–30
Gender (Male/Female)	12/13
District (I / II)	13 /12
Barangay Type (Urban/Rural)	14 / 11

Data Sources

The study utilized multiple data sources to triangulate perspectives and validate emerging patterns:

1. In-depth semi-structured interviews with each of the 25 participants, averaging 45–60 minutes, focusing on their experiences of participation, voice, exclusion, and agency in barangay governance.
2. Two focus group discussions (FGDs) with selected participants (one in District I and one in District II), which facilitated collective meaning-making and allowed discourse to emerge in peer interactions.
3. Document analysis of youth development plans, barangay consultation minutes, SK resolutions, and official communiqués referencing KK assemblies.
4. Social media content authored or shared by KK members (e.g., Facebook event write-ups, infographics, livestream recordings) to trace how youth framed their civic identity publicly.

All interviews and FGDs were conducted in a mix of Ilocano, Filipino, and English, depending on the comfort of the participant. These were transcribed verbatim and translated into English for uniformity in analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The research followed ethical principles guided by the Philippine National Ethical Guidelines for Health and Social Science Research. Participants were provided with informed consent forms detailing the study's purpose, voluntary participation, confidentiality assurances, and the right to withdraw at any time. For participants below 18 years old, parental assent was secured in writing. All data were anonymized using codes (e.g., LGU1, LGU14) to preserve participant identity and locality confidentiality.

The researcher exercised reflexive neutrality, especially in recognizing power dynamics during data collection. As a scholar with prior involvement in youth governance training programs in the province, the researcher bracketed preconceptions and made deliberate effort to allow participants to define their own terms of engagement and critique.

Data Analysis

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Data were analyzed using the following layered approach:

1) Textual Analysis – Initial line-by-line coding of interview and FGD transcripts identified linguistic patterns: common phrases, rhetorical strategies, and narrative structures. Recurrent lexical choices (e.g., "wala kaming boses," "pinakinggan pero hindi sineryoso") were flagged for interpretive coding.
2) Discursive Practice Analysis – This layer examined how youth discourses were produced and circulated, particularly the strategic framing of youth inputs during assemblies, the adaptation of formal policy language, and how social media was used as a counter-space to institutional narratives.
3) Social Practice Analysis – Finally, the discourses were contextualized within broader political and cultural frameworks, including hierarchical governance culture, generational dynamics, gender norms, and the legal architecture of RA 10742.

Thematic codes were then clustered using grounded theory techniques: open coding (initial categorization), axial coding (relating codes across interviews and settings), and selective coding (identifying core themes that reflect the civic transformation journey of participants). Memos were maintained throughout to track analytic decisions and evolving interpretations.

The credibility of findings was enhanced through member-checking, where summary interpretations were shared with selected participants for validation, and peer debriefing with fellow qualitative researchers for theoretical clarity.

Results and Findings

Phases of Civic Transformation Among Katipunan ng Kabataan Members in La Union

The analysis of interview data, documentary evidence, and discursive materials revealed a recurring progression in how KK members made sense of and acted upon their role in local governance. Rather than static engagement or spontaneous activism, their political development unfolded in phases, often cyclical, reflective, and emotionally charged.

This study reveals a five-phase grounded framework of civic transformation developed from the discursive experiences of Katipunan ng Kabataan (KK) members in La Union: Awareness, Discipline, Decision, Action, and Accountability - collectively identified as "ADDA A," drawn from the Ilocano phrase meaning "There is!" The ADDA A framework emerged as a response to the recurring exclusion, frustration, agency, and innovation experienced by the youth as they navigated the political structures of barangay governance.

1. Awareness: From Symbolic Participation to Political Awakening

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The first recurring experience shared by KK members was the moment of realization—when they became acutely aware that their inclusion in local governance was largely performative. Youth were often invited to assemblies, photographed, or listed in attendance sheets, but their ideas were sidelined, their concerns omitted from minutes, and their presence treated as decorative compliance.

"They asked us to attend the barangay assembly. We were there from start to end. But when the minutes came out, not one youth suggestion was recorded."
— 18, female, LGU12

Some participants described the experience as disillusionment, others as a spark of anger. Either way, it marked a break from the initial naïveté that "at least we are involved." For many, this awareness came after witnessing programs launched without consultation or funds allocated to youth initiatives with no youth input.

"A mental health program was implemented in our barangay. None of us were asked, even though we had existing youth-led activities already. It was frustrating."
— 21, male, LGU3

In rural areas, this realization often took longer, due to limited exposure to policy processes and higher deference to elders. In contrast, urban youth were quicker to recognize when their input was tokenized, possibly due to prior civic exposure and digital literacy.

Still, across both settings, the emotion of exclusion became a cognitive trigger, initiating what Tisdall (2021) frames as the shift from "invited presence" to "critical subjectivity." The youth began to ask: What are we really here for?

2. Discipline: Mastering the Language of Legitimacy

After the political awakening came a second phase: discipline. Youth began to realize that outrage alone would not shift power. To be taken seriously, they had to learn the rules of the game, the formats, language, and bureaucratic rhythms that governed barangay decision-making.

"At first, I just complained on Facebook. No one cared. Then we wrote a formal letter, cited the Youth Development Plan, attached signatures—and the council responded."
— 20, female, LGU9

Discipline took on multiple forms: drafting proposals, attending meetings religiously, submitting position papers, quoting legal provisions. It was a strategic adaptation that converted frustration into tactical engagement. Male and female participants alike reported that the shift from informal to formal discourse became the turning point in how adult officials perceived them.

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In upland municipalities, this discipline included adjusting to the cultural etiquette of speaking last, writing instead of interrupting, and citing barangay norms, evidence of political learning embedded within a cultural matrix.

"We couldn't demand things like in the city. Here, respect is shown by being patient. But we still insisted—just more politely, and with more research."
— 23, male, LGU19

This stage was where many youth began performing what Cornwall (2008) called "institutional mimicry" mastering technocratic behaviors to access influence, even in spaces originally not designed for them.

3. Decision: Risking Voice in a System Not Built for You

The third phase was characterized by critical intervention. Here, youth chose to risk participation in moments where they were neither invited nor expected to speak. This decision often made under conditions of uncertainty was not procedural; it was moral, emotional, and political.

"They were discussing curfew rules. No youth was listed as a speaker. I just stood up and said, 'Excuse me, you're talking about us.' My voice was shaking, but I had to."
— 17, female, LGU7

For others, it meant confronting SK officers or barangay treasurers, filing public complaints, or submitting alternative proposals. The decision to speak was often met with resistance, especially from older male officials who equated assertion with disrespect.

"I was warned that I was being arrogant. But if I didn't speak, we'd get another year of budget with no youth say."
— 22, male, LGU16

This phase was also gendered. Young women in conservative barangays described tremendous anxiety before voicing dissent, but also noted that speaking once gave them courage to intervene again.

"It took all my strength to speak in front of the barangay captain. I was shaking. But after, some mothers approached me saying, 'Good job, you said what we couldn't.'"
— 18, female, LGU20

This stage reflects what Gaventa (2006) theorizes as claiming space—where actors push beyond what is institutionally given, and generate discursive ruptures that redefine legitimacy.

4. Action: Youth as Community Problem-Solvers

Following assertion came the stage of practice. Many KK members moved from voice to voluntary governance—initiating programs, mapping community needs, and creating

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accountability mechanisms without being told to. Some acted independently from the SK, others collaborated after proving their capacity.

"We started a youth-run donation drive after a fire. The SK helped only after we had everything ready. That's when they took us seriously."
— 19, male, LGU10

These actions often addressed gaps left by adults: educational outreach, disaster response, peer counseling, sports clinics, mental health webinars. Action was framed not as a performance, but as proof of competence.

In resource-scarce upland areas, youth improvised creatively organizing free tutorials under trees, or barter drives during lockdowns. These "shadow initiatives" gained legitimacy after they succeeded.

"Walang budget? Kami mismo gumawa. Hindi kailangan hintayin ang SK. Kami ang kabataan, kami ang kikilos."
— 21, female, LGU22

This shift toward problem-solving governance reframed the KK not as passive consultees but as de facto implementers of public service, echoing Putnam's (1995) argument that trust and civic identity are built through horizontal action.

5. Accountability: Youth as Ethical Stewards of Public Trust

5. Accountability: Redefining Youth Citizenship Through Integrity
The final phase revealed a mature civic disposition. Youth did not merely act—they held themselves and their peers accountable. This stage reflected ethical stewardship, where transparency, monitoring, and self-regulation became central to their idea of leadership.

"After every activity, we post our expense breakdown. Even if it's just snacks, we report it. That's how we build trust."
— 20, male, LGU4

Others filed formal feedback letters to barangay captains, demanded liquidations from SK officers, or mediated internal conflicts among youth.

"We had a fellow youth leader who wasn't submitting reports. We didn't cancel her—we talked to her, gave her deadlines. She stepped up. That's real leadership."
— 23, female, LGU18

Unlike adult accountability mechanisms that rely on bureaucratic audits, youth accountability was often peer-based and morally anchored. It was relational, reflective, and values-driven suggesting an emerging civic ethic rather than mere compliance.

Naming the Framework: The "ADDA A" Model

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When asked to describe their civic journey, several participants used the Ilocano expression: “Adda a!” literally, “There is!” - to answer the recurring question they faced growing up: “Adda aya met maaramidanyo?” The youth reclaimed the phrase as a declaration of agency, not a rhetorical dismissal.

From this emerged a culturally embedded model of youth civic transformation: Awareness, Discipline, Decision, Action, Accountability - ADDA A.

This five-phase framework reflects a journey from invisibility to co-governance, and from invited presence to self-authorized leadership. It maps not only a political process, but a cultural resistance to systemic adultism. And it offers both scholars and practitioners a grounded theory of how civic agency among youth takes shape under constraint, and flourishes through courage.

Discussion

The emergence of the ADDA A framework - Awareness, Discipline, Decision, Action, and Accountability - complicates dominant narratives of youth participation in Philippine local governance. Far from the assumption that youth are passive recipients of civic training or mere constituents of the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK), this study demonstrates that members of the Katipunan ng Kabataan (KK) actively construct, claim, and contest their political agency in barangay spaces traditionally closed to them.

Rooted in the lived experiences of KK members across La Union, this five-phase framework is not linear but iterative. Participants moved back and forth across stages depending on context, relational dynamics, and institutional feedback. Yet across different barangays, one pattern held: youth began as symbolic participants and, through discursive and behavioral struggle, became ethical co-governors. In doing so, they did not merely seek space they redefined the very terms of inclusion.

1. Youth as Co-Producers of Governance

The first key contribution of this study is the reframing of youth from beneficiaries to co-producers of governance. Unlike dominant models that equate participation with attending meetings or being consulted (Hart, 1992), KK members in this study undertook tasks often reserved for institutional leaders: drafting proposals, initiating community programs, and monitoring public funds.

This challenges the technocratic assumption, common in public administration that creating participation structures (e.g., KK assemblies) is sufficient for democratic inclusion. As Hickey and Mohan (2004) argue, participation without transformation often reproduces hierarchy. The youth in La Union sidestepped these limitations by claiming discursive and procedural legitimacy, often independently of SK officers or barangay captains. By mastering the language of governance quoting Youth Development Plans,

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citing budget circulars, writing formal letters they became not clients of the state, but actors within it.

This echoes Gaventa's (2006) distinction between "invited spaces" and "claimed spaces," where marginalized groups shift from being included to doing the including from attending to authoring. The ADDA A process affirms this transformation: youth moved from visibility to volition, from being counted to doing the accounting.

2. A Civic Grammar Rooted in Culture

Second, the framework's cultural grounding the reclamation of the Ilocano phrase "**Adda a!**" offers a localized idiom of empowerment. Rather than borrowing from abstract theories of youth development or globalized models of civic engagement, the youth framed their journey in their own tongue. This linguistic act is politically significant.

Language is not neutral; it is the medium through which power circulates. The choice to name a civic model after a colloquial phrase that was once used to dismiss them represents discursive resistance. As Wodak and Meyer (2016) argue, discourse can be a site of hegemony, but also of its rupture. The phrase "Adda a!" becomes a declarative rebuttal to the question "Adda aya met maaramidanyo?", one that transforms doubt into assertion, and cynicism into structure.

Moreover, the framework's phases mirror Ilocano and Filipino social values: Awareness as pagkamulat, Discipline as disiplina, Decision as paninindigan, Action as pagkilos, and Accountability as pananagutan. This makes the ADDA A model not only theoretically sound, but culturally resonant. It is, in effect, an epistemological intervention that asserts: youth do not need imported scripts to legitimize their agency, they have vocabularies of resistance rooted in lived experience and local language.

3. Discursive Legitimacy as Political Currency

This study also affirms the central premise of Critical Discourse Analysis: that power is negotiated through language. Youth legitimacy was not granted through age, experience, or credentials, it was often negotiated through how they spoke, what references they invoked, and how they structured their interventions.

The Discipline phase revealed that youth earned respect not only through behavior but by appropriating the vocabulary of adult governance. Proposals embedded in institutional logic were taken more seriously than impassioned speeches alone. This reflects Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital: the ability to mobilize dominant forms of discourse to secure recognition. In the La Union context, youth leveraged technocratic speech to traverse cultural deference, thereby subverting adultist assumptions about their lack of competence.

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Importantly, this was not mimicry for compliance. Participants selectively adopted institutional discourse while injecting values of transparency, solidarity, and emotional labor qualities often absent in bureaucratic language. This hybridization of speech and values constitutes a new civic grammar: one that redefines who can speak, what counts as legitimate talk, and how power listens.

4. Accountability as Civic Maturity, Not Compliance

A surprising yet consistent theme across barangays was the moral depth of youth-led accountability. The final phase of the framework – Accountability went beyond procedural compliance or reporting. It reflected an internalized ethic of leadership, where youth demanded transparency from themselves and each other.

Whereas adult officials often view accountability as external (e.g., audits, memos, formal complaints), youth accountability was peer-led and values-driven. Participants published financial breakdowns, held post-activity evaluations, and initiated dialogues when conflicts emerged within the KK. This form of horizontal accountability echoes the "civic republican" tradition in political theory, where responsibility to the common good is enacted through virtue, not surveillance.

This finding contradicts popular narratives that depict Filipino youth as apathetic, entitled, or disengaged. Instead, what emerges is a profile of ethical, reflexive citizenship, cultivated not through textbooks or modules, but through struggle, contradiction, and practice. When the KK filed feedback letters to the barangay, demanded SK financial reports, or documented their own projects, they were not just behaving like public officials they were becoming custodians of civic trust.

5. Institutional Structures Alone Are Insufficient

Finally, the ADDA A model underscores a critical insight for policymakers and scholars alike: legal structures without cultural change and discursive access will not democratize governance. RA 10742, for all its procedural promises, does not guarantee empowerment. In many cases, it has enabled performative participation assemblies done for compliance, youth seats that are silent, and reports that record presence but not perspective.

The ADDA A framework shows that meaningful youth participation emerges not because of structures but in spite of them when young people engage in discursive work, emotional labor, and tactical experimentation. If we are to move beyond tokenism, reforms must go deeper: building youth capacity for deliberation, ensuring adult officials are trained in intergenerational equity, and redesigning barangay governance models to integrate consultative feedback mechanisms that matter.

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In short, the KK should not be treated as a passive electorate of the SK. It is a civic laboratory a space where youth test governance, ethics, and democratic possibility. And when supported, it can be a crucible of leadership development far more organic and honest than many formal youth development programs.

Synthesis: A Theory from the Youth

What makes the ADDA A model distinctive is not just its thematic elegance, but its theoretical origin. It is not a theory about the youth, written by distant observers. It is a theory from the youth, born out of their questions, contradictions, frustrations, and courage. Its five phases reflect not an academic abstraction, but a lived pedagogy of civic becoming.

As such, it contributes to the political science literature on youth engagement by offering a grounded, culturally embedded, and discursively articulated model of political socialization. It also contributes to public administration theory by redefining what implementation and accountability can look like when ethics are not enforced from above but embraced from within.

In an era of growing political cynicism, this model reminds us that the future of participatory democracy may not come from policy directives, but from the quiet, persistent, and often unseen labor of young people who refuse to be dismissed. They do not wait for permission. They act with principle. And they carry with them a singular declaration rooted in Ilocano, but resounding far beyond: ***Adda a. (There is).***

Conclusion

This study began with a recurring cultural question that haunts youth political participation in the Philippines: *"Adda aya met maaramidanyo?"* - *"Is there really anything you can do to change the system?"* The answer, derived not from legislative texts or institutional blueprints, but from the lived experiences of youth in La Union, is quietly but powerfully clear: **Adda a** (There is) .

Through a multi-level Critical Discourse Analysis of interviews, documents, and youth-produced narratives, this research uncovered a five-phase framework that encapsulates the civic transformation journey of Katipunan ng Kabataan members: Awareness, Discipline, Decision, Action, and Accountability. These interlinked stages offer more than a typology; they form a theory of youth political becoming emergent, ethical and culturally situated.

At the heart of this transformation is not formal authority but discursive legitimacy. Youth in this study did not wait for power to be handed to them. They learned the rules, mastered the language, confronted exclusion, and carved space within a system not built for them. They moved from being symbolically present to being substantively influential not through entitlement, but through effort, clarity, and moral conviction.

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This challenges the persistent myth of youth apathy. What the data reveals instead is a generation of young Filipinos who are politically attuned, institutionally aware, and capable of generating civic solutions even amid neglect. Their struggle is not against the state per se, but against the conditions of conditional inclusion - those moments when participation is offered as performance, not partnership.

The *ADDA A* framework also contributes a cultural grammar of governance - a language of civic action that draws strength from local idioms, values, and vernacular resistance. In reclaiming "Adda a!" from a rhetorical dismissal into a declaration of agency, the youth have named their process of transformation in terms that are both locally rooted and politically radical. This is crucial. In a field often dominated by technocratic models and imported developmental benchmarks, the framework offers a Philippine-born, youth-driven, and Ilocano-informed theory of engagement.

For scholars of Political Science, this study urges a rethinking of political socialization. Rather than treating civic identity as a linear transition from inexperience to maturity, it should be viewed as a dialectical and performative process - emerging in response to barriers, cultivated through language, and asserted through lived action. Participation is not merely a policy objective. It is a relational and discursive endeavor that evolves through struggle.

For public administrators, the findings present both a critique and a roadmap. The presence of youth structures like the KK is insufficient if the cultural logic of governance remains adultist, extractive, and procedurally rigid. Youth participation must be supported by mechanisms that recognize peer accountability, non-hierarchical collaboration, and community legitimacy as valid forms of public leadership. The KK should not be sidelined as auxiliary to the SK, but treated as a civic engine capable of co-producing local development.

Moving forward, several directions emerge. Policy reforms must explore how to institutionalize feedback loops between KK and SK, ensure youth budget transparency, and train barangay officials on intergenerational leadership. Future research can replicate this study in other provinces or regions to see how the *ADDA A* model holds across cultural and institutional contexts. It would also be fruitful to explore how digital platforms shape or constrain these phases, particularly in the post-pandemic civic environment.

Ultimately, this study is a reminder that democratic transformation often begins not in national legislatures or policy documents, but in barangay halls, classroom blackboards, church basements, and social media threads - where young people gather, imagine, speak, act, and hold each other accountable. It is in these ordinary yet defiant spaces that the future of participatory democracy is being rehearsed- sometimes quietly, but always deliberately.

So the next time an elder asks a youth, *"Adda aya met maaramidanyo?"*, the answer need not be theoretical. It is already being lived, documented, and refined every day.

Adda a. There is something they can do. And they already are.

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