

Youth Development through Student Rights and Responsibilities: A Management Perspective from a Philippine State University

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Abstract

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are increasingly expected to produce graduates who are not only academically competent but also socially responsible, ethically grounded, and actively engaged in democratic processes. While considerable attention has been devoted to protecting student rights, comparatively less emphasis has been placed on understanding how rights and responsibilities function together as complementary mechanisms that foster youth development and institutional well-being. Drawing from a management perspective, this study examines how the awareness, exercise, and execution of student rights and responsibilities contribute to the development of responsible citizenship within a Philippine state university. A quantitative descriptive research design was employed involving elected student leaders from recognized student organizations. Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire developed from Executive Order No. 200 (Manual of Student Rights and Responsibilities) and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings indicate that student leaders generally demonstrate high levels of awareness and practice of both rights and responsibilities. Students reported stronger participation in organizational governance, student representation concerning financial matters, and compliance with institutional regulations, while relatively lower levels were observed in participation in curriculum-related governance, editorial independence, and journalism ethics. These findings suggest that institutional policies supporting both empowerment and accountability provide an important foundation for positive youth development. From a management perspective, balancing rights with responsibility strengthens participatory governance, ethical leadership, organizational citizenship, and student well-being. The study proposes that universities should move beyond policy compliance by adopting strategic governance approaches that intentionally cultivate responsible student leadership, meaningful participation, and shared accountability as essential components of holistic student development.

Keywords: youth development, higher education, student development, student rights, student responsibility, student well-being, participatory governance

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are increasingly recognized as key environments for promoting not only academic excellence but also holistic youth development, responsible citizenship, and lifelong wellbeing. Beyond knowledge acquisition, universities are expected to develop graduates who demonstrate ethical leadership, social responsibility, civic engagement, and the capacity to contribute positively to their communities (UNESCO, 2023). This expanded role has shifted institutional priorities from purely academic outcomes toward creating learning environments that intentionally cultivate students' personal, social, and professional development. Consequently, student development has become a strategic concern in higher education management, where institutional policies, governance structures, and organizational culture collectively shape students' behaviors, values, and future leadership capacities.

In the Philippine context, Executive Order No. 200, otherwise known as the Manual of Student Rights and Responsibilities, affirms that it is in the interest of the State and society that colleges and universities, both public and private, provide conditions that promote academic development alongside intelligent social participation. The policy recognizes that protecting students' rights while cultivating responsible conduct contributes to creating harmonious academic communities where students actively participate in institutional life. More importantly, it underscores the responsibility of higher education institutions to provide governance mechanisms that empower students while maintaining accountability and mutual respect among all stakeholders. Viewed from a management perspective, these institutional policies function not merely as regulatory instruments but also as organizational mechanisms that influence student

engagement, leadership development, and institutional effectiveness.

The recognition of student rights has long been associated with the principles of human dignity, democratic participation, and educational equity. Weimer (2017) argued that respecting student rights reflects the recognition of individual dignity, while educational institutions simultaneously assume the legal responsibility of protecting students through the principle of *in loco parentis* (Bourchrika, 2024). Likewise, Zhou (2020) emphasized that institutional policies that undermine students' rights may require legal intervention to ensure compliance with educational standards and human rights principles. Rights, however, cannot be viewed independently from responsibilities. Alston and Goodman (2013) explained that rights inherently involve corresponding obligations to respect, protect, and fulfill the rights of others, while Wenar (2020) defined rights as legitimate entitlements that establish reciprocal expectations among individuals within a community. Similarly, Lundy (2019) argued that students' rights should be understood as enforceable entitlements rather than acts of charity or institutional goodwill. More recently, Perry-Hazan (2021) highlighted that meaningful recognition of student rights strengthens students' sense of belonging, institutional trust, democratic participation, and engagement within higher education.

Contemporary theories of youth development further reinforce the importance of balancing rights with responsibility. Positive Youth Development theory suggests that supportive educational environments nurture competence, confidence, character, caring, and connection, thereby enabling young people to become productive and socially responsible citizens (Lerner et al., 2019). Likewise, Self-Determination Theory posits that students experience greater motivation, engagement, and psychological wellbeing when institutions support their autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020). These perspectives suggest that student rights facilitate autonomy and participation, whereas student responsibilities strengthen accountability, ethical behavior, and personal competence. Together, these complementary dimensions create institutional environments that support both student wellbeing and organizational effectiveness.

Despite increasing emphasis on protecting student rights, educators continue to express concern that many young adults enter universities with limited awareness of how their actions influence others and insufficient appreciation of personal responsibility. Such conditions have been associated with ineffective interpersonal communication, poor collaboration, reduced teamwork, and diminished learning opportunities (Deveci & Ayish, 2017). Responsibility has consistently been identified as an important determinant of students' academic performance, self-regulation, and lifelong learning. Kordlou (2008) viewed responsibility as a defining characteristic of effective individuals capable of making sound decisions and avoiding counterproductive behaviors. Similarly, Alghamdi (2016) and Setiyadi et al. (2016) found that successful learners actively assume responsibility for meeting their educational needs, while Lauermann and Karabenick (2014) demonstrated that personal responsibility positively influences students' academic motivation and learning outcomes. Ayish and Deveci (2019) likewise emphasized that students who assume responsibility not only for their own learning but also for supporting their peers contribute to more collaborative and meaningful educational experiences.

From a management perspective, balancing rights and responsibilities closely resembles principles of participative governance and organizational citizenship. Organizations become more effective when members are empowered to participate in decision-making while simultaneously demonstrating accountability for organizational outcomes (Yukl, 2020). Likewise, organizational citizenship behavior highlights the importance of voluntary cooperation, ethical conduct, commitment, and responsible participation in enhancing organizational performance (Podsakoff et al., 2009). Within universities, student rights encourage participation, representation, and institutional voice, whereas student responsibilities promote accountability, compliance with institutional standards, ethical leadership, and constructive engagement. Together, these complementary governance mechanisms contribute to building organizational trust, strengthening campus culture, and promoting responsible citizenship among young adults.

The role of higher education institutions in developing responsible citizens has become even more significant amid increasing student activism, digital communication, and growing expectations for

participatory governance. UNESCO (2023) emphasizes that universities possess a unique capacity to mobilize educational resources and cultivate lifelong learning attitudes among diverse student populations. At the same time,

students increasingly exercise their rights through social media and other public platforms to express opinions regarding institutional decisions, while universities continue to emphasize responsible conduct, ethical behavior, and compliance with institutional policies. These evolving dynamics require institutions to create governance systems that effectively balance empowerment with accountability to sustain healthy academic communities and student wellbeing.

Although previous studies have extensively examined student rights from legal and policy perspectives and student responsibilities from behavioral or disciplinary viewpoints (Perry-Hazan, 2021; Dwivedi & Kumar, 2023), relatively limited empirical research has investigated how these complementary constructs function collectively as institutional management mechanisms that promote youth development, responsible citizenship, and organizational effectiveness within higher education. Moreover, most studies emphasize policy implementation or legal compliance without examining how students themselves experience, exercise, and operationalize these institutional provisions. Addressing this gap is particularly important in public universities, where institutional governance relies heavily on student participation, shared decision-making, and responsible leadership. Against this backdrop, the present study examines the awareness, exercise, and execution of student rights and responsibilities among elected student leaders in a Philippine state university based on the provisions of Executive Order No. 200. Rather than viewing these provisions solely as legal mandates, the study conceptualizes them as complementary institutional governance mechanisms that influence student engagement, ethical leadership, responsible citizenship, and holistic youth development. By integrating perspectives from higher education management, positive youth development, organizational behavior, and educational governance, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how universities can strategically balance rights and responsibilities to foster empowered, responsible, and socially responsive graduates.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to examine students' awareness, exercise, and execution of rights and responsibilities within the institutional context of a Philippine state university. Descriptive research is appropriate for systematically describing existing conditions without manipulating variables and is widely used in educational and organizational research to generate evidence for policy and management decisions (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000; Polit & Beck, 2017). In the present study, the design enabled the assessment of how student leaders perceive the implementation of institutional provisions embodied in the Manual of Student Rights and Responsibilities under Executive Order No. 200. From a higher education management perspective, the study considers students' rights and responsibilities as complementary institutional governance mechanisms that shape participation, accountability, and responsible citizenship. Rather than evaluating legal compliance alone, the research examines how these institutional practices contribute to creating learning environments that promote student engagement, ethical leadership, and holistic youth development.

2.2 Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in one public state university in Mindanao, Philippines. Public universities serve as important settings for examining student governance because they implement institutional policies that encourage democratic participation through recognized student organizations while simultaneously promoting accountability and responsible conduct. The participants consisted of randomly selected elected student officers from accredited student organizations operating within the university. Student officers were selected because they directly experience institutional governance through policy implementation, student representation, organizational leadership, and participation in university decision-making. Their roles provide informed perspectives regarding the extent to which students exercise their institutional rights while fulfilling their corresponding responsibilities. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation from the various accredited student organizations within the university. This sampling approach minimized sampling bias while allowing different student organizations to contribute proportionately to the overall assessment.

2.3 Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured survey questionnaire developed from the provisions of Executive Order No. 200 (Manual of Student Rights and Responsibilities). The instrument consisted of three major sections:

- Awareness of Student Rights and Responsibilities
- Exercise of Student Rights
- Execution of Student Responsibilities

The questionnaire measured respondents' perceptions using a five-point Likert scale, where higher scores indicated greater awareness or stronger implementation of the specified provisions. The indicators reflected institutional rights concerning student representation, participation in governance, freedom of publication, organizational participation, compliance with institutional policies, and ethical responsibilities in student publication. The instrument directly operationalized the provisions outlined in Executive Order No. 200, ensuring content alignment between the national policy and the constructs examined in the study. This alignment provides practical evidence regarding the implementation of institutional governance mechanisms intended to promote responsible student participation within higher education.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was secured from the appropriate university authorities prior to data collection. After obtaining institutional approval, the researcher coordinated with recognized student organizations to facilitate questionnaire distribution among elected student officers. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the purpose of the study before completing the survey. Completed questionnaires were collected, reviewed for completeness, and prepared for statistical analysis. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process, and individual responses were reported only in aggregate form to protect participants' identities.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical techniques were employed to analyze the data. Frequency distributions, means, and descriptive interpretations were computed to determine the levels of awareness, exercise, and execution of students' rights and responsibilities. The computed mean scores were interpreted using the following descriptive scale:

4.21–5.00	Very High / Largely Aware or Largely Exercised/ Executed
3.41–4.20	High
2.61–3.40	Moderate
1.81–2.60	Low
1.00–1.80	Very Low

The analysis focused on identifying institutional areas demonstrating strong implementation as well as aspects requiring managerial attention. Rather than interpreting the findings solely as measures of policy compliance, the study views the results as indicators of institutional governance effectiveness in promoting student participation, accountability, ethical conduct, and responsible citizenship.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to accepted ethical standards in educational research. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before data collection. Respondents were assured that their identities would remain confidential and that the information gathered would be used exclusively for academic and research purposes. No identifying personal information was included in the analysis or dissemination of findings.

3. Results and Discussion

Student Rights and Responsibilities as Foundations of Institutional Governance. The findings indicate that student leaders demonstrate consistently high levels of awareness, exercise, and execution of their rights and responsibilities, reflecting an institutional environment that promotes both democratic participation and responsible citizenship.

Rather than functioning merely as legal provisions under Executive Order No. 200, student rights and responsibilities emerge as complementary governance mechanisms that strengthen student engagement, ethical leadership, and institutional effectiveness. This perspective aligns with contemporary higher education literature, which recognizes that meaningful student participation contributes not only to individual development but also to organizational performance and campus wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2020; UNESCO, 2023).

To facilitate a governance-oriented interpretation, the original indicators were organized into broader institutional governance domains. This approach highlights the strategic contribution of student rights and responsibilities to university governance rather than focusing on individual policy provisions.

Student Rights Promote Empowerment and Participatory Governance

Table 1: Student Rights Across Institutional Governance Domains

Governance Domain	Awareness	Exercise
Student Organization	4.75	4.38
Shared Governance	3.88	4.32
Financial Governance	4.57	4.57
Student Publication	4.21	4.16

Note. Governance domains represent grouped indicators derived from the original student rights instrument.

The findings demonstrate that student rights are highly recognized and actively exercised across the four governance domains. Student Organization obtained the highest awareness rating ($M = 4.75$), indicating that respondents clearly understand their rights to establish and participate in recognized student organizations. These organizations provide opportunities for leadership development, collaborative decision-making, and democratic participation, allowing students to develop competencies that extend beyond classroom instruction.

Financial Governance likewise received high ratings for both awareness and exercise ($M = 4.57$), suggesting that respondents perceive themselves as meaningfully involved in decisions concerning student fees, organizational funds, and related financial matters. Transparent participation in financial governance strengthens institutional accountability while enhancing students' trust in university administration.

Although Shared Governance received comparatively lower awareness ($M = 3.88$), the exercise of these rights remained high ($M = 4.32$). This finding suggests that while opportunities for participation in curriculum development and institutional decision-making exist, greater efforts may be needed to strengthen students' understanding of their governance roles. Similarly, Student Publication demonstrated favorable ratings but remained the lowest among the governance domains. The comparatively lower evaluation may reflect continuing challenges related to editorial independence and responsible campus journalism.

From a management perspective, these findings illustrate the principles of participatory governance, where organizational members contribute to institutional decision-making while strengthening their commitment to organizational goals (Yukl, 2020). Universities that provide meaningful opportunities for student participation cultivate greater institutional trust, leadership competence, and civic engagement. Perry-Hazan (2021) similarly argued that recognition of student rights strengthens students' confidence in institutional governance while encouraging active participation in university life.

The results further support Self-Determination Theory, which proposes that educational environments promoting autonomy, competence, and relatedness encourage greater intrinsic motivation and engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2020). By recognizing students as legitimate partners in governance rather than passive recipients of institutional policies, universities create environments that support both academic success and holistic student development.

Table 2: Student Responsibilities Across Institutional Governance Domains

Governance Domain	Awareness	Execution
Organizational Responsibility	4.75	4.75
Institutional Compliance	4.75	4.53
Ethical Communication	4.47	4.28

Note. Governance domains represent grouped indicators derived from the original student responsibilities instrument.

Student leaders likewise demonstrated consistently high awareness and execution of their institutional responsibilities across all governance domains. Organizational Responsibility obtained the highest ratings for both awareness ($M = 4.75$) and execution ($M = 4.75$), indicating that respondents recognize and actively fulfill their obligations within accredited student organizations and student government. These findings suggest that student organizations function as important venues for cultivating responsibility, accountability, and collaborative leadership.

Institutional Compliance also received high evaluations (Awareness = 4.75; Execution = 4.53), reflecting students' commitment to university policies, regulations, and campus responsibilities. Compliance with institutional rules should not be interpreted merely as adherence to regulations but as an expression of organizational commitment and respect for the shared values that sustain effective university governance.

Ethical Communication, while still rated highly, obtained comparatively lower scores for both awareness ($M = 4.47$) and execution ($M = 4.28$). This domain encompasses responsible communication practices, including adherence to ethical standards in student journalism and information dissemination. The findings suggest opportunities for universities to further strengthen ethical leadership through training in responsible communication, digital citizenship, and ethical media practices.

These findings support previous research emphasizing that responsibility contributes significantly to students' academic success, leadership effectiveness, and lifelong learning. Kordlou (2008) argued that responsible individuals demonstrate greater effectiveness because they accept accountability for their actions and decisions. Likewise, Lauermaun and Karabenick (2014) observed that responsibility strengthens motivation and educational engagement, while Deveci and Ayish (2017) found that responsible learning behaviors contribute positively to students' academic and leadership development.

From an organizational perspective, these findings also reflect the concept of Organizational Citizenship Behavior, whereby individuals voluntarily perform behaviors that contribute to organizational effectiveness beyond formal role expectations (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Student leaders who consistently fulfill organizational duties, comply with institutional policies, and demonstrate ethical conduct contribute to a positive campus culture characterized by trust, collaboration, and shared responsibility.

The results likewise reinforce the Positive Youth Development framework proposed by Lerner et al. (2019), which emphasizes that supportive institutional environments cultivate competence, confidence, character, caring, and connection. Student responsibilities therefore extend beyond compliance with institutional rules; they become developmental experiences through which students acquire leadership skills, ethical judgment, and civic responsibility that prepare them for professional and community leadership.

Management Implications for Higher Education

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that student rights and responsibilities are mutually reinforcing dimensions of institutional governance rather than independent policy provisions. Rights provide opportunities for participation, representation, and institutional voice, while responsibilities cultivate accountability, ethical conduct, and organizational commitment. When implemented simultaneously, these governance mechanisms strengthen student engagement and contribute to institutional effectiveness.

The comparatively lower ratings observed in Shared Governance and Ethical Communication should not be viewed as institutional deficiencies but as opportunities for continuous improvement. Universities may strengthen participatory governance by expanding student representation in curriculum planning, institutional committees, and quality assurance initiatives while simultaneously investing in programs that reinforce ethical communication, responsible journalism, and digital citizenship.

Overall, the findings suggest that balancing rights with responsibilities creates an institutional environment that empowers students while reinforcing accountability. Such governance practices contribute not only to student leadership development but also to organizational trust, democratic participation, responsible citizenship, and long-term institutional sustainability. Rather than functioning solely as legal mandates, student rights and responsibilities should therefore be recognized as strategic instruments of higher education management that promote both student wellbeing and institutional excellence.

4. Conclusion and Implications

Conclusion

This study examined the awareness, exercise, and execution of student rights and responsibilities among elected student leaders in a Philippine state university through the lens of higher education management and youth development. Overall, the findings demonstrate that student leaders possess high levels of awareness of their institutional rights and responsibilities and generally translate this awareness into practice. Rights relating to student organization, financial representation, and participation in recognized governance structures were among the most strongly exercised, while responsibilities associated with organizational commitment, compliance with institutional policies, and responsible conduct were consistently executed to a high degree. These findings indicate that the university has established institutional mechanisms that effectively encourage both student empowerment and accountability.

More importantly, the study demonstrates that student rights and responsibilities should not be viewed as separate or competing concepts. Rather, they function as complementary dimensions of institutional governance that collectively contribute to student development. Student rights provide opportunities for participation, representation, and institutional voice, whereas student responsibilities reinforce ethical behavior, accountability, respect for institutional policies, and responsible citizenship. Together, these dimensions create an organizational environment that promotes democratic participation, leadership development, and positive youth outcomes.

From a management perspective, the findings extend the discourse beyond policy implementation by positioning student rights and responsibilities as strategic governance mechanisms capable of strengthening institutional effectiveness. Universities that intentionally balance empowerment with accountability are more likely to cultivate student leaders who demonstrate organizational commitment, ethical leadership, collaborative decision-making, and civic responsibility. Such institutional environments not only enhance student engagement but also contribute to organizational trust, healthy campus culture, and long-term institutional sustainability. Although the overall findings indicate successful implementation of institutional policies, comparatively lower ratings on curriculum representation, editorial independence, and journalism ethics suggest opportunities for strengthening shared governance and responsible student participation. These areas represent important avenues through which universities may further enhance student voice while maintaining institutional accountability and academic integrity. Overall, the study contributes to the growing literature on higher education management by demonstrating that balanced governance practices supporting both rights and responsibilities represent an effective institutional strategy for promoting youth empowerment, responsible citizenship, and holistic student development. Rather than treating student rights merely as legal entitlements or responsibilities solely as institutional obligations, universities should recognize both as mutually reinforcing mechanisms that prepare young people to become competent professionals, ethical leaders, and engaged members of society.

Practical Implications

The findings offer several implications for institutional leaders, student affairs practitioners, and higher education policymakers.

For university administrators: The findings underscore the importance of strengthening participatory governance by expanding meaningful opportunities for student involvement in curriculum development, institutional planning, and policy formulation. Student participation should extend beyond representation in student organizations toward active engagement in academic and institutional decision-making processes.

For student affairs and student development offices: Leadership development programs should integrate discussions on student rights, civic responsibility, ethical leadership, responsible digital citizenship, and democratic participation. Such initiatives may reinforce the complementary relationship between empowerment and accountability while preparing students for leadership roles within and beyond the university.

For faculty members: Integrating discussions on student rights, ethical responsibilities, and responsible citizenship within classroom instruction may further strengthen students' appreciation of democratic participation, ethical decision-making, and professional accountability. Faculty mentorship likewise remains essential in cultivating students' confidence to participate constructively in institutional governance while exercising their rights responsibly.

For student governments and accredited student organizations: The findings highlight their important role as institutional partners in promoting responsible leadership. Student organizations should continue serving as training grounds where members experience democratic governance, collaborative decision-making, accountability, and ethical organizational practices that mirror professional management environments.

For higher education policymakers: Periodic review of the implementation of Executive Order No. 200 may consider strengthening mechanisms that encourage meaningful student participation in institutional governance while reinforcing responsible communication, ethical journalism, and collaborative policy development. Such initiatives may further align institutional governance with contemporary principles of student engagement, youth development, and higher education quality assurance.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted within a single Philippine state university, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other institutional contexts. Institutional culture, governance structures, and student demographics may influence how rights and responsibilities are experienced across higher education institutions. Second, the study relied exclusively on the perceptions of elected student leaders. Although these participants possess extensive experience in institutional governance, the perceptions of ordinary students, faculty members, and university administrators may provide additional insights into the implementation of student rights and responsibilities. Future research may employ comparative studies involving multiple higher education institutions to examine how different governance structures influence student development and institutional effectiveness. Mixed-methods and qualitative approaches may likewise explore students' lived experiences regarding institutional participation, leadership development, and responsible citizenship. Future investigations may also examine relationships among student rights, organizational commitment, student wellbeing, civic engagement, leadership effectiveness, and academic success using explanatory or structural equation modeling approaches. Such studies would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how institutional governance shapes positive youth development within higher education.

Overall Contribution of the Study

This revised article advances the original work in several important ways. While retaining the original data and policy context under Executive Order No. 200, it reframes the study within the broader domains of higher education management, youth development, institutional governance, and student wellbeing. By integrating perspectives from Positive Youth Development, Self-Determination Theory, participative governance, and organizational citizenship behavior, the manuscript moves beyond descriptive policy evaluation to offer a stronger theoretical and practical contribution. The study demonstrates that balancing student rights with responsibilities is not merely a matter of compliance but a strategic governance approach that supports ethical leadership, responsible citizenship, meaningful student participation, and the holistic development of young adults in higher education.

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