

Leadership Competencies and Community Involvement of 4-H Club Members: A Systematic Review of Youth Development Literature

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Abstract: This review synthesizes existing literature on youth leadership competencies and community involvement within agricultural youth organizations, particularly the 4-H Club framework. The objective is to establish how leadership skills—thinking, caring, doing, and living competencies—intersect with civic engagement dimensions such as literacy, social inclusion, agricultural extension, and resilience. Literature was gathered from databases including ERIC, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar, covering studies published between 2010 and 2025. Findings reveal that structured youth organizations like 4-H significantly enhance leadership development, civic participation, and agricultural engagement. Positive Youth Development (PYD) frameworks, emphasizing competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring, align closely with the 4-H pillars of Head, Heart, Hands, and Health. However, gaps remain in localized empirical studies, particularly in Philippine contexts where socio-economic disparities, limited resources, and inconsistent institutional support affect outcomes. This synthesis underscores the importance of integrating leadership training with community involvement initiatives to strengthen rural youth organizations. Recommendations highlight the need for context-specific interventions, mentorship programs, and policy support to maximize the transformative potential of 4-H Clubs.

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I. INTRODUCTION

➤ Background Context

Youth organizations such as the 4-H Club play a pivotal role in rural development by fostering leadership skills and civic engagement. Anchored in the four pillars of Head, Heart, Hands, and Health, the 4-H model aligns with global Positive Youth Development frameworks. In the Philippines, 4-H Clubs are supported by the Department of Agriculture and local government units, yet challenges persist in translating national policies into localized leadership outcomes.

➤ Scope and Purpose

This review focuses on literature addressing leadership competencies and community involvement among youth in agricultural organizations. It covers studies on the 4-H Club program, leadership development frameworks, demographic and organizational influences, and civic engagement outcomes. Literature outside the scope of structured youth organizations or unrelated to leadership/community involvement is excluded.

➤ Thesis Statement / Objective

The review aims to synthesize research on how leadership competencies among youth intersect with community involvement, identify systemic barriers, and highlight gaps in localized studies relevant to Philippine 4-H Clubs.

II. METHODOLOGY

➤ Search Strategy

Databases: ERIC, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, Philippine E-Journals. Search terms: *4-H Club, youth leadership competencies, community involvement, Positive Youth Development, agricultural youth organizations.*

➤ Selection Process

• Inclusion Criteria:

- ✓ Studies focusing on youth leadership competencies in structured organizations.
- ✓ Research examining community involvement outcomes.

✓ Published between 2010–2025.

• *Exclusion Criteria:*

- ✓ Studies focusing solely on adult leadership.
- ✓ Non-youth civic organizations unrelated to agriculture.

III. MAIN BODY

➤ *Theme 1: The 4-H Club Program and Positive Youth Development*

The 4-H Club philosophy of “Learning by Doing” aligns with PYD frameworks emphasizing competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring (Lerner et al., 2021; Arnold & Gagnon, 2020). Studies show that structured youth organizations enhance agricultural knowledge, leadership skills, and self-efficacy (Jones & Lerner, 2020; Pasiona, 2026).

➤ *Theme 2: Leadership Competencies in Youth Organizations*

Leadership competencies include communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and resilience. Brennan et al. (2019) and Anderson (2015) found that youth develop these skills through project leadership and adult partnerships. The 4-H pillars provide a framework for critical thinking, interpersonal skills, and ethical living. Mentorship and shared decision-making further strengthen leadership development (Osumo & Letigio, 2025).

➤ *Theme 3: Profile Characteristics and Leadership Development*

Demographic and socio-economic factors influence leadership outcomes. Age and experience correlate with stronger leadership skills (McElravy & Hastings, 2014). Gender inclusivity in youth organizations reduces traditional disparities (Haryati et al., 2024). Educational attainment enhances critical thinking and organizational skills (Geza et al., 2021). Socio-economic constraints may limit participation, but structured organizations provide compensatory opportunities (Pasiona, 2026).

➤ *Theme 4: Community Involvement and Civic Engagement*

Community involvement encompasses civic literacy, social inclusion, agricultural extension, and resilience. Studies highlight that youth participation in structured organizations fosters responsibility, cooperation, and citizenship (Anderson, 2015). PYD frameworks emphasize that youth are capable of positive contributions when given opportunities for civic engagement (Arnold & Gagnon, 2020).

➤ *Significance*

This synthesis underscores the transformative potential of 4-H Clubs in rural development. It highlights the need for localized empirical studies to inform project proposals that strengthen youth leadership and community engagement.

➤ *Future Research*

- Conduct context-specific studies on 4-H Clubs in Philippine cities like Vigan.
- Explore mentorship models that integrate adult-youth partnerships.
- Investigate the long-term impacts of leadership training on civic engagement and agricultural sustainability.

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IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

➤ *Summary of Main Findings*

Structured youth organizations like 4-H enhance leadership competencies and community involvement. PYD frameworks align with the 4-H pillars, reinforcing the importance of experiential learning. Demographic and socio-economic factors influence outcomes, while mentorship and organizational support strengthen leadership development.