



**Peer-Review Report Form**

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|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Manuscript Title:</b> | Rural Filipino Youth Participation in Local Governance: A Systematic Review of Barriers |
| <b>Type of Article:</b>  | Original Article                                                                        |

**FIRST ROUND**

**Editor**

| <b><u>General Comments and Recommendations</u></b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The reviewers acknowledge the significance of your manuscript and recommend several revisions to further improve its clarity, coherence, organization, and overall scholarly quality. In addition, you are advised to thoroughly review and validate all references included in the manuscript. Please ensure that all cited sources are accurate, accessible, and retrievable through Google Scholar to uphold the credibility and reliability of the study. Additionally, make sure to include the DOI or website link for every reference to facilitate verification and accessibility of sources. Furthermore, only sources that are cited within the manuscript should appear in the References section, and all entries listed in the References section must also be cited in the text. For example, if 20 unique sources are cited in the manuscript, then only those 20 sources should be included in the References section. Please note that repeated citations of the same source within the text are counted as a single reference entry; therefore, the total number of references may be lower than the total number of in-text citations. |

**Reviewer 1**

| <b><u>General Comments and Recommendations</u></b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
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| The submission presents a relevant evaluation of youth civic involvement. However, severe contradictions and structural flaws demand immediate correction before publication. While the initial foundation appears robust, you must resolve fundamental discrepancies to achieve true academic rigor. A thorough evaluation reveals significant weaknesses in consistency. |

| <b><u>Specific Comments and Recommendations</u></b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| The title accurately reflects the systematic review method and the precise topic of barriers to rural youth civic involvement. The abstract appropriately summarizes the background, objectives, methods, results, and conclusion. However, the abstract claims adherence to the PRISMA framework, yet subsequent sections reveal methodological deviations that weaken this assertion. |
| The theoretical foundation effectively utilizes Gaventa and Hart to frame the analysis. The legal context correctly cites the Local Government Code of 1991 and the SK Reform Act. Despite these strengths, the synthesis of earlier literature needs deeper critical analysis rather than mere sequential summary to truly justify the research gap.                                   |



A massive contradiction exists about authorship since the header lists three authors, yet the author contribution section explicitly states that Tabugoc is the sole author who conducted all tasks. The ethics statement and conflict of interest sections also use first person singular pronouns and claim an independent study. The PRISMA flow diagram indicates the exclusion of 923 records after title and abstract evaluation, but the text lacks a rigorous explanation of bias mitigation since only one person performed the evaluation.

The discussion robustly connects the empirical results back to political socialization theory and provides clear policy directions. The conclusion aligns well with the synthesized evidence. The reference list is current, but you must ensure all citations explicitly match the final author count once corrected.

Please indicate your recommendation by checking the appropriate box below.

| <u>Decision</u> |                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                 | Accept the manuscript for publication.                                                                                                   |
| /               | Reconsider the manuscript after the authors have satisfactorily addressed and complied with the reviewers' comments and recommendations. |
|                 | Reject the manuscript, as it is not suitable for publication.                                                                            |

## Reviewer 2

| <u>General Comments and Recommendations</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| The topic is relevant and potentially useful, especially for rural youth governance in the Philippine setting. However, I have serious concern on the reliability of the evidence base. Several problems are not only reporting weaknesses; they affect whether the 54-study synthesis and the main conclusions can really be trusted.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <u>Specific Comments and Recommendations</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| The 54 included studies are not sufficiently traceable. The methodology states that detailed information was extracted from all 54 studies, but the Results presents only aggregate design counts and a summary of theme frequencies. There is no study-level characteristics table where the reader can verify the location, sample, design, population, findings, and quality rating of each included study. More seriously, the reference list does not allow all 54 included empirical studies to be identified. Thus, frequencies such as 41 of 54 studies for institutional barriers or 38 of 54 for personal barriers cannot be independently checked.    |
| I have difficulty accepting the search process as reproducible. The manuscript gives general clusters of search terms, but not the actual database-specific search syntax, fields searched, filters, Google Scholar retrieval limit, and complete search execution details. Reference-list searching is also reported, but it is not clear how many additional records came from this process. Another unusual issue is that 1,100 records were identified and still 1,100 records proceeded to screening, meaning apparently zero duplicate records from five overlapping databases. This is very difficult to understand for a systematic search of this size. |
| The meaning of rural is not operationally controlled, although rural population is the core of the paper. The eligibility criteria allow rural or semi-rural studies without defining how these were classified. At the same time, search terms such as Mindanao, Visayas, Luzon, and provincial                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |



Philippines cover many urban and highly urbanized settings also. This creates uncertainty whether the final 54 studies really represent the population claimed in the title. There is another conceptual problem because policy and document analyses are classified together with empirical studies even though the eligibility criteria specify Filipino youth aged 15–30. How the age and rural criteria were applied to documentary studies is not evident.

The quality appraisal is too subjective to support the synthesis. Different and apparently adapted criteria were used for qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods, and policy studies, but there is no scoring system, threshold, appraisal matrix, or basis explaining why 38 studies became high quality, 12 moderate, and 4 lower quality. The paper also states that lower-quality evidence was treated with caution, but the Results does not show where or how this was done. Therefore, the quality appraisal presently has almost no observable effect on the evidence synthesis.

The manuscript treats frequency of themes as if it represents strength of evidence. Institutional barriers appearing in 41 studies does not establish that institutional barriers are the strongest or primary cause of low participation. Thirty-five of the 54 studies are qualitative, and the included evidence comes from very different designs, populations, sample sizes, and analytical approaches. No comparable effect magnitude or weighting is presented. Because of this, statements that participation is primarily structural rather than motivational and that structural conditions are the strongest constraints go beyond what simple study-count frequencies can establish. This affects the central argument in the Abstract, Discussion, and Conclusion.

There is a serious reference-integrity problem that makes me question the reliability of the review corpus. At least two DOI entries checked do not correspond to the articles listed in the manuscript. The DOI given for Tiongson, 10.1016/j.jdeveco.2019.01.004, actually belongs to Jiao Shi's article on vertical FDI in the Journal of Development Economics, not a study of rural Philippine youth. Likewise, DOI 10.1111/aspp.12578 attributed to Ilagan actually belongs to Eddie Hearn's article on South Korea and trade attitudes. These are not small referencing mistakes because both sources are used as evidence in the synthesis. If bibliographic identity of included studies is uncertain, the validity of the whole systematic review becomes uncertain also.

**Please indicate your recommendation by checking the appropriate box below.**

| <u>Decision</u>          |                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Accept the manuscript for publication.                                                                                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Reconsider the manuscript after the authors have satisfactorily addressed and complied with the reviewers' comments and recommendations. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Reject the manuscript, as it is not suitable for publication.                                                                            |



**SECOND ROUND**

| <b><u>Decision</u></b>                                                                                                                   | <b><u>Editor</u></b> | <b><u>Reviewer<br/>1</u></b> | <b><u>Reviewer<br/>2</u></b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Accept the manuscript for publication.                                                                                                   | /                    | /                            | /                            |
| Reconsider the manuscript after the authors have satisfactorily addressed and complied with the reviewers' comments and recommendations. |                      |                              |                              |
| Reject the manuscript, as it is not suitable for publication.                                                                            |                      |                              |                              |