

Assessing the Implementation of the Youth for Environment in Schools Organization (YES-O) in Junior High Schools: Basis for Strengthening Environmental Sustainability Education Policies

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Abstract: Given the pressing global concerns and issues on the environment, the Department of Education in the Philippines urges schools to strengthen their roles in the pursuit of environmental awareness by enhancing environmental education. The Youth for Environment in Schools Organization (YES-O) continuously implements activities for students' actions and movement toward safeguarding, protecting, and conserving the environment, which also targets the 'Makakalikasan' core value. This study aimed to assess the program implementation on environmental awareness and education through the lens of YES-O, and the findings will serve as potential inputs to existing policy relevant to sustaining effective school-based activities for the enhancement and strengthening of environmental sustainability education. The findings revealed that the performance of the implementing schools on the five mandated objectives of the organization was very satisfactory. Among the mandated objectives, the schools obtained an outstanding performance in Objective 1 while very satisfactory in the other remaining objectives. The other four objectives also positively contributed to the overall performance of the participating schools. The implementation of the YES-O program in schools can be further sustained through strengthening their networking, linkages, and partnership strategies to engage convergence and synergize the environmental education because of the mandated activities of the YES-O program implementation. Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation purposes should be strategically implemented to ensure that existing policy on environmental education are observed. Inputs to policy anchored from the findings of this study are provided to effectively implement through sustainable actions.

Keywords: *Environmental Awareness, Program Implementation, Youth for the Environment in Schools Organization*

INTRODUCTION

The Philippine constitution clearly articulates the responsibility of the state to promote national awareness of the role of natural resources in economic growth and the importance of environmental conservation and ecological balance toward sustained national development. In 2008, the Republic Act No. 9512 (an act to promote environmental awareness through environmental education and for other purposes) also known as the "National Environmental Awareness and Education Act of 2008" was enacted. As a response to the call for enhancing environmental awareness and education, the Department of Education established the Youth for Environment in Schools – Organization (YES-O) as a school-based curricular organization that serves as a significant venue for students' actions and movement toward safeguarding, protecting, and conserving the environment for future generations. This is the only recognized co-curricular environmental club or organization in schools and consolidates all other environmental and/or ecology clubs and organizations in schools with primary programs or projects for the environment or ecology in the said organization (DepEd Order No. 72, s. 2003). The establishment of the YES-O shall have the following objectives: (a) Be aware and create awareness in others of the state of the Philippine environment and ecology, including prevailing issues and concerns relative thereto; (b) Establish specific and doable programs; projects and activities to address issues and

concerns on the environment and ecology; (c) Network with other government and non-government organizations, including YES Organizations in other schools within the division and region, concerning support and assistance to programs, projects, and activities of the organization; (d) Encourage community participation and initiative in environmental and ecological movements and actions; and (e) Develop among members and the community proper environmental values, skills, and attitudes. The practices of the schools with successful implementation of the YES-O program, such as personal advocacy, resource availability, flexibility, integrated school efforts, participatory approach, and monitoring and evaluation strategies, offer a wide opportunity for a strong foundation in achieving the mandated objectives of the YES-O (Cadiz & Cortez, 2024).

In view of the pressing global concerns and issues on the environment, the DepEd in the Philippines urges all public and private schools to lead the role of environmental awareness by enhancing environmental education and by pursuing effective school-based activities that seek to preserve and protect the environment (DepEd, 2011). It was also mentioned that public and private schools should undertake the following activities: (a) intensifying lessons regarding the environment on all science subjects. Environmental concerns shall also be used as tools for classroom drills, discussions, and activities and shall be taught and integrated into the related learning areas; and (b) encouraging school administrators, officials, and teachers to use various instructional materials such as books, visual aids, teaching guides, and materials in making the students aware of the concerns and issues on the environment, which shall promote students' participation in environmental activities and advocacies and instill in their minds the need to preserve and protect the environment. As part of the integration of environmental education into the curriculum, teachers facilitate students with science programs to help them understand the scientific process and use the data to help protect species, habitats, communities, and ecological processes. They impart the value of environmental education and with decision makers to advocate for environmental education. Through this, students can work together with the teachers and with the community to help them engage in finding solutions to conservation issues from loss of biodiversity to climate change. Therefore, teachers help to connect the students to nature and build stewardship values on protecting and loving the environment. Environmental education should not only act in the context of formal education but can also be applied in informal contexts, allowing a multipurpose application, serving to raise awareness, and transmit knowledge, allowing individuals to develop attitudes and behaviors (Correia & Ramos, 2024).

Before the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools were guided by the policies prescribed in the implementation of activities in schools through the initiative of the YES-O. One important activity in ensuring effective implementation is the monitoring and evaluation of the YES-O program implementation in schools. It was stated in Enclosure No. 7 of DepEd Order No. 093, s. 2011, the components of the YES-O monitoring and evaluation. The template form targets the proper implementation of the YES-O program, which primarily focuses on the YES-O profile, describes the proper implementation of the YES-O mandated PPAs, and identifies the gaps, concerns, and issues encountered by the implementing schools of the YES-O program. The results of the monitoring and evaluation help the monitoring and evaluation team to provide technical assistance to schools. Likewise, the implementing schools should conduct their monitoring and evaluation in the context of their implementation of the mandated PPAs. Environmental education can enhance the integration of knowledge by presenting real problems that can be studied or simulated and providing topics and problems that can be adjusted to the developmental levels of students. In the study of Gayeta et al., (2025), findings reveal that providing age-appropriate environmental topics and activities can improve understanding, encourage critical thinking, and promote active participation in environmental actions. Environmental advocacies and eco-movement may likewise be institutionalized in the school through student organizations like YES-O. Schools should expand experiential and community-grounded learning opportunities that cultivate action competence wherein learners demonstrate stronger environmental engagement when they participate in real-world activities and observe tangible outcomes within their communities (Espinosa et al., 2026).

Various environmental activities mandated by the YES-O can be considered a holistic approach to promoting environmental care and sustainable development and have proven to be more relevant

today. A YES-O Camp, for example, is a good avenue to allow participants to familiarize themselves with the mandated programs, projects, and activities pertinent to the Youth for Environment in Schools (YES), which will be integrated with their science curriculum; teach how to sustain the environment through initiatives to take action; instill environmental values to every learner to be involved in worthwhile and doable projects/activities for the environment; and train young leaders on the aspects of leadership, management, teamwork, and volunteerism. For monitoring purposes, as stipulated in DepEd Order No. 52, s. 2011, schools shall register their respective YES-Os at the Division Office where their school is situated on or before June 30th. For this school year, registration shall start on or before September 30, 2011, but not later than October 30, 2011. It is also mandated, as per DepEd Order No. 72, s. 2003, that the regional and division education supervisors in science shall lead, coordinate, and monitor the conduct of activities pertinent to the YES Organization in their respective areas of jurisdiction. The science department head and facilitator/club adviser-teacher herein designated as school-based moderator and assistant school-based moderator, respectively, shall lead and operationalize the YES activities at the school level with the guidance of the school head/principal. However, even though schools are mandated to establish YES-O, in recent years, monitoring and evaluation have been weak. Issues such as weak monitoring and evaluation, time constraints in the conduct of activities, lack of funds for training, and uncoordinated and overlapping projects by different youth organizations. Different stakeholders must be aware and take part in improving the YES-O to revive and strengthen the program. In line with the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BELCP), the DepEd issued a Memorandum (OUA Memo 00-1021-0204) on recommended Programs, Projects, and Activities of the Youth for Environment in Schools – Organization (YES-O) for School Year 2021-2022. It is stated in the memorandum that all regional directors, schools' division superintendents, and school heads are directed to ensure the smooth implementation of the YES-O program by appropriating funds. Moreover, the School Governance and Operation Division (SGOD) through the Youth Formation Officers is required to monitor the compliance of the YES-O implementation in schools. Furthermore, in Paragraph 4-e, the YES-O implementing schools are instructed to submit an Annual Accomplishment Report duly endorsed by the school head to the division Youth Formation Officer using the prescribed template.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study assessed the implementation of the Youth for Environment in Schools Organization (YES-O) in selected junior high schools in the National Capital Region (NCR), Philippines, as perceived by former YES-O student officers. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of YES-O implementation in the selected junior high schools, as perceived by former YES-O student officers, in terms of the following DepEd-mandated objectives:
 - 1.1. Environmental awareness and consciousness
 - 1.2. Development and implementation of feasible environmental programs, projects, and activities (PPAs).
 - 1.3. Networking and partnerships with government and non-governmental organizations
 - 1.4. Community participation and environmental initiatives; and
 - 1.5. Development of environmental values, skills, and attitudes
2. What is the overall level of YES-O implementation in the selected junior high schools based on the five DepEd mandated objectives?
3. What policy recommendations can be proposed based on the findings to strengthen YES-O implementation and environmental sustainability education?

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-survey research design to assess the implementation of the Youth for Environment in Schools Organization (YES-O) in eight selected junior high schools across eight school divisions in the National Capital Region (NCR), Philippines. The design was used to determine the level of implementation of the five DepEd-mandated objectives under DepEd Order No.

72, s. 2003, and to provide a basis for strengthening environmental education policies.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The respondents were 72 former YES-O student officers from eight selected junior high schools across eight school divisions in NCR. The schools were purposively selected based on their YES-O implementation practices. The respondents were chosen based on their previous involvement in the organization's programs, projects, and activities and their familiarity with its implementation in their respective schools.

Research Instrument

This study used a researcher-developed survey questionnaire based on the five objectives of YES-O under DepEd Order No. 72, s. 2003. The instrument was validated by 11 validators from various academic institutions and obtained a general weighted mean of 3.71, interpreted as highly acceptable. Its internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.702, indicating acceptable reliability. The questionnaire was administered online to assess the implementation of the five mandated objectives.

Data-Gathering Procedure

The researchers secured ethics approval and coordinated with the appropriate DepEd regional, division, and school authorities before conducting this study. The validated questionnaire was administered through an online survey platform to selected former YES-O student officers. The respondents were informed of the purpose of the study, and their voluntary participation and informed consent were secured. The collected responses were organized and reviewed before statistical analysis, and confidentiality was maintained in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Data Analysis Procedure

The collected data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, and weighted means as applicable. The weighted mean was used to determine the level of implementation of each of the five YES-O objectives, while the overall weighted mean summarized the program's implementation. The results were interpreted using the study's established adjectival scale and are presented in tables with corresponding discussions of the results. The findings served as the basis for developing recommendations to strengthen environmental education and implement YES-O.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Performance of the YES-O Program Implementation in the NCR Secondary Schools based on DepEd-mandated Objectives

DepEd Mandated Objectives	Mean	VI	Rank
Objective 1-Be aware and create awareness in others of the state of the Philippine environment and ecology, including prevailing issues and concerns relative thereto	4.51	Outstanding	1
Objective 2-Establish specific and doable PPAs to address issues and concerns on the environment and ecology	4.44	Very satisfactory	2
Objective 3-Network with other government and non-government organizations, including YES-O in other schools within the division and region, regarding support and assistance to programs, projects, and activities of the organization	3.83	Very satisfactory	5
Objective 4-Encourage community participation and initiative in environmental and ecological movements and action	4.00	Very satisfactory	4
Objective 5-Develop among members and the community the	4.22	Very	3

proper environmental values, skills, and attitudes

Overall 4.20

satisfactory
Very
satisfactory

Legend:	Range	Adjectival Rating
	4.500 – 5.000	Outstanding (O)
	3.500 – 4.499	Very satisfactory (VS)
	2.500 – 3.499	Satisfactory (S)
	1.500 – 2.499	Unsatisfactory (US)
	below 1.499	Poor (P)

The table provides a summary of an overall computed mean of 4.20 interpreted as “very satisfactory,” which reflects the overall performance of the YES-O program implementation in the junior high schools in NCR based on five DepEd-mandated objectives. Among the five YES-O objectives mandated by the DepEd, the participating schools in only objective 1 exhibited an “outstanding” performance, while the rest of the objectives exhibited “very satisfactory” performance. This reflects that the respondents are very much aware of the current state of the environment in the country as well as the current issues and concerns that our environment is facing. Moreover, the drive of the schools through its YES-O program in intensifying the creation of awareness in others, especially to the learners, is effective.

It is observed that in Objective 1 (Be aware and create awareness in others of the state of the Philippine environment and ecology, including prevailing issues and concerns relative thereto) the favorable items for the respondents obtained a similar computed mean of 4.63 and interpreted as “outstanding”. This indicates that the YES-O program was highly effective in promoting environmental awareness among students and encouraging them to share this knowledge with others. The results suggest that schools successfully conducted activities, campaigns, and information drives that increased students’ understanding of environmental issues and concerns. It also reflects the active participation of students in spreading awareness within their schools and communities, helping foster a culture of environmental responsibility. The findings can be linked to the role of schools in implementing the YES-O program to foster awareness in the school and community about the current state of the environment in the country and the prevailing environmental issues and concerns that need to be addressed through education. Immersing the students in real situations can make them more engaged and take action on how to contribute to possible means of addressing environmental problems. For students to apply environmental education knowledge and skills in real-life settings, there is a need to enhance integration strategies so that students are not only active in attending school programs but also in applying what they learned in school at home and in their respective communities (Corpuz et al., 2022). This implies that it can be achieved through the active participation of teacher-advisers in various trainings, workshops, and related to environmental education sponsored by various government agencies, local government units (LGUs), and private NGOs and institutions to widen the knowledge of teachers and equip them to facilitate the YES-O in schools. Moreover, by attending those engagements, they can also increase their networking and partnerships with those agencies and institutions for the PPAs of the YES-O.

The performance of the YES-O program implementation in the NCR secondary schools based on Objective 2 (Establish specific and doable PPAs to address issues and concerns on the environment and ecology) obtained a computed overall mean of 4.44 interpreted as “very satisfactory.” This suggests that the schools were proactive in planning and implementing relevant initiatives that responded to the environmental needs and concerns of their schools and communities. The rating depicts the commitment of YES-O members and school coordinators in developing well-organized and practical activities that promote environmental awareness and action. It also shows that the programs implemented were generally appropriate, attainable, and beneficial in encouraging students to become more involved in environmental protection efforts. Through the leadership of the school principals, they have allotted funds to finance the activities of the YES-O. Other sources of funds were generated from the membership fees, donations from the stakeholders, and income-generating projects conducted by the YES-O. This shows that the schools find ways to conduct the mandated PPAs of the YES-O utilizing the available resources, including human resources, which are vital components of collaboration. Results for Objective 2 also show that there are schools that did not include projects and activities with

a focus on environmental education because of prioritization of projects and activities that are based on immediate actions to address the problems identified as priority improvement areas. Prioritizing essential programs and activities strengthens financial management practices, ensuring that Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) funds are utilized effectively (Codon & Estera, 2026).

The performance of the YES-O program implementation in the NCR secondary schools based on Objective 3 (Network with other government and non-government organizations, including Youth for Environment in Schools (YES) Organizations in other schools within the division and region, regarding support and assistance to programs, projects, and activities of the organization) obtained a computed overall mean of 3.83 interpreted as “very satisfactory.” This illustrates that the schools were able to establish collaborative relationships that provided support and assistance for the implementation of environmental programs, projects, and activities. The result also shows that schools recognized the value of working with different organizations to strengthen their environmental initiatives. Through these partnerships, YES-O members were given more opportunities to participate in meaningful activities, share best practices, and access resources that contributed to the success of their programs. The students had the chance to initiate partnerships with various stakeholders. Collaborations with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local authorities, and environmental projects should be established to encourage learners’ active participation in environmental decision-making processes (Onbaşılı & Yalman, 2025). As part of a shared approach to promoting sustainability, the study shows that the learners were able to communicate with various agencies in the public and private domains through numerous collaborations. However, these findings are only true to a few YES-O implementing schools that are beneficiaries of a financial grant from the government and non-government sectors to support their PPAs. Establishing authentic relationships through open communication and responsiveness to feedback ensures that community members feel understood and respected, which facilitates the active involvement of non-government organizations (Teng-Calleja et al., 2026). Grants to community-based youth organizations and an increase in sources of financial support by strengthening their collaborations and partnerships with local government units are also recommended (Estilong & Lansang, 2025).

The performance of the YES-O program implementation in the NCR secondary schools based on Objective 4 (Encourage community participation and initiative in environmental and ecological movements and action) obtained an overall mean of 4.00 interpreted as “very satisfactory.” This suggests that schools were generally successful in engaging students and community members in environmental programs, campaigns, and initiatives that promote environmental awareness and responsibility. The results further imply that participating schools were able to establish meaningful connections with their communities, fostering a shared commitment to environmental protection and sustainable practices. Strong collaboration and developed strategies with media outlets, local communities, and relevant stakeholders to raise public awareness on environmental issues and the importance of sustainability, wherein large audiences through events, workshops, campaigns, and mass media are reached (Yuva Association, 2023). The involvement of students in advocating community-based activities would also provide more opportunities in terms of the active engagement of people in the community and working together to initiate actions to solve local environmental problems. According to Yuva Association (2023), there is a need for more time and resources that should be provided for extracurricular activities related to environmental sustainability in schools, and students should be encouraged to take more initiative and ownership of environmental sustainability problems and solutions. However, the results show that there are schools that did not have accomplished activities relative to initiating and organizing community/civic organizations in the promotion of the mandate of the YES-O, which is part of their community-based approach to engaging the people in the community to participate because of limited resources, lack of participation of the immediate community stakeholders, and lack of collegial and administrative support. Some schools do not have established organizing community/civic initiatives. Students do not have an opportunity to be exposed to outdoor activities and practical exercises. According to Poškus (2024), while adolescents may have limited opportunities to fully participate in environmental citizenship, they will eventually transition into adulthood and gain the independence needed to engage more actively in civic and environmental

initiatives. Consequently, a major goal of education for environmental citizenship is to equip learners with the capacity to critically evaluate their understanding of environmental issues and develop the factual knowledge necessary to become informed and active environmental citizens.

The performance of the YES-O program implementation in the NCR secondary schools based on Objective 5 (Develop among members and the community the proper environmental values, skills, and attitudes) obtained an overall mean of 4.22 interpreted as “very satisfactory.” This implies that YES-O engages learners to think of innovative strategies that can help the school and community strengthen environmental protection, preservation, and conservation. Making everyone in the school an important member in advocating environmental protection and conservation through YES-O can strengthen the chance of conducting mandated PPAs successfully because of the support from one another. Everyone should take action, whether student officers, members of YES-O, or non-members who are willing to be part of the advocacy. The results of this study affirm that the findings of Poškus (2024) wherein adolescents who hold stronger pro-environmental attitudes are also more likely to have a greater understanding of factual environmental issues and, as a result, educational programs should not only be grounded in evidence but should also foster positive environmental attitudes and emphasize the importance of engaging in pro-environmental behaviors. Results further imply that there is limited integration of environmental-related topics and issues in the curriculum. The lack of knowledge and relevant training on pedagogical techniques about the manner of integrating environmental education in teaching and learning delivery has been a challenge for some teachers. The lack of teacher training, lack of resources, and time in the curriculum can limit and even affect the effectiveness of environmental education, especially in rural areas (Husin et al., 2025). Moreover, they also argued that many teachers felt unconfident enough to teach environmental education due to a lack of understanding of ecological or sustainability issues. It is recommended to provide more targeted and practical education support (Yuan et al., 2024).

Another salient finding is the inadequacy in terms of environmental-related activities that promote how learners can deal with multicultural societies and global communities as pro-environmental citizens. There is a lack of opportunities for learners to be exposed to activities that can establish and strengthen environmental citizenship. The findings of Abiprayu and Setiawan (2024) show that students have taken limited action regarding environmental issues, which means that students may have a high knowledge of environmental education awareness issues but lack the necessary action to overcome environmental problems. Similar findings of M et al. (2024) show that there is a gap between the personal world of the students, wherein most of the students are worried about the future and feel sustainability and the environment are important, and the social world of the students, in which they do not speak about it with friends or peers. Mashaba et al. (2022) further argued that the development of children requires that they are provided with relevant education and skills to enable them to understand what challenges exist in society and what they can do within their capacity to contribute to sustainability in their society, especially in fighting climate change.

Table 2 Inputs to DepEd Order No. 72, s. 2003 on Establishment of the Youth for Environment in Schools Organization

Specific Provisions of the Policy (DepEd Order No. 72, s. 2003)	Inputs to Policy based on the Findings of the Study
Item 3(a): Be aware of and create awareness among others of the state of the Philippine environment and ecology, including prevailing issues and concerns relative thereto.	The findings revealed that while schools demonstrated outstanding performance in environmental awareness, some teachers still experienced difficulties in integrating environmental concepts into classroom instruction. To strengthen the achievement of Objective (a), the policy may explicitly institutionalize regular and sustained professional development programs for YES-O advisers and teachers through division and regional training

Item 4(d): Symposia/Training as part of the regular programs, projects, and activities (PPAs) of YES-O.

Item 3(b): Establish specific and doable programs, projects, and activities to address issues and concerns on the environment and ecology.

Item 5: Regional Directors, Schools Division Superintendents, and School Heads are encouraged to organize, support, and strengthen YES-O.

Item 3(c): Network with other government and non-government organizations, including YES Organizations in other schools within the division and region, with regard to support and assistance to programs, projects, and activities of the organization.

Item 3(d): Encouraging community participation and initiatives in environmental and ecological movements and actions.

Item 4(a): Clean-up drives inside and surrounding school premises, including public and common areas in the community.

Item 3(e): Develop environmental values, skills, and attitudes among members and the community.

Rationale of DepEd Order No. 72, s. 2003: YES-O serves as a venue for students' actions and movements toward safeguarding, protecting, and conserving the environment for future generations.

Item 5: Encourages support and

plans.

Although Section 4(d) already identifies symposia and training as allowable activities, the policy may be expanded to require periodic competency-building initiatives focused on environmental education, sustainability, and pedagogy.

The study found that schools were generally able to implement YES-O activities because of administrative support, but access to financial resources varied across schools. To better operationalize Objective (b), Section 5 may be strengthened by providing clearer guidance on funding allocation, resource mobilization, and partnership-generated support for environmental PPAs. This can help schools implement more sustainable and impactful environmental programs.

As networking and partnership-building obtained one of the lowest ratings among the five objectives, the policy may further specify mechanisms for establishing formal partnerships with local government units, DENR offices, higher education institutions, NGOs, and private organizations. Clearer partnership guidelines may strengthen schools' access to technical expertise, financial assistance, and collaborative environmental initiatives, thereby enhancing the attainment of Objective (c).

The findings showed that schools need more opportunities to engage with community stakeholders in environmental activities. To strengthen Objective (d), the policy should place greater emphasis on community-based environmental programs by encouraging schools to involve parents, civic organizations, youth groups, barangay officials, and other stakeholders in planning and implementing environmental projects. This would allow learners to apply their environmental knowledge in real-life community settings.

The findings suggest that while environmental values are being developed, learners need more opportunities to practice environmental citizenship in the real world. To strengthen Objective (e), the policy may encourage student-led environmental projects, youth leadership activities, environmental research initiatives, inter-school collaborations, and participation in environmental advocacy campaigns. These opportunities can deepen learners' commitment to environmental stewardship and responsible citizenship.

Although the Order provides the objectives and

strengthening of YES-O implementation. Item 3(a-e): The five mandated objectives may serve as performance indicators for assessing the program's effectiveness.

recommended activities of YES-O, it does not provide detailed standards for assessing the implementation outcomes. Based on the findings, the policy may be enhanced through the establishment of a standardized monitoring and evaluation framework anchored on the five objectives. This framework may include measurable indicators, reporting mechanisms, and feedback systems to help schools identify their strengths, address implementation gaps, and share effective practices across divisions and regions.

The findings of this study indicate that while schools have successfully achieved high levels of environmental awareness and generally satisfactory implementation across all objectives, the policy may be strengthened by institutionalizing teacher capacity-building, providing clearer funding mechanisms, enhancing partnerships, expanding community engagement, promoting environmental citizenship, and establishing a strong monitoring and evaluation system. These enhancements would support the continued development of environmentally responsible learners and improve the overall effectiveness of YES-O implementation. The study of Cadiz and Cortez (2025) highlighted the need to expand community engagement and promote environmental citizenship, as this can help learners develop a stronger sense of responsibility and active participation in environmental conservation efforts beyond the school setting. Strengthening collaboration among schools, families, local government units, and other stakeholders can further support the achievement of YES-O objectives. Similar findings in the study of Corpus et al. (2022) imply that environmental education integration in curricular programs helps promote environmental knowledge, skills, and attitude among students, but involving other stakeholders, especially the family and the community, is also needed to ensure application beyond school or classrooms. Strengthening socioecological alignment across families, schools, and local institutions according to Espinosa et al., (2026) can further enhance the sustainability of environmental behaviors and contribute to the development of action competence, resilience, and environmental responsibility. Likewise, the mainstreaming of environmental education practices as recommended by Velepini (2025) is indispensable in the school curriculum, lifelong learning settings, and government and corporate policy frameworks to enable societies to become resilient.

CONCLUSION

This study assessed the implementation of the Youth for Environment in Schools Organization (YES-O) in selected junior high schools in the National Capital Region, Philippines, as perceived by former YES-O student officers. The findings revealed that the implementation of the program was generally satisfactory across the five DepEd-mandated objectives. Environmental awareness and consciousness emerged as the most effectively implemented objectives, while networking and partnerships with government and non-government organizations received the lowest ratings. The findings indicate that YES-O provides an important avenue for promoting environmental awareness, encouraging student participation, and developing environmental values, skills, and attitudes. The implementation of environmental programs, projects, and activities reflects the commitment of schools, teachers, and student officers to environmental protection and sustainability. However, the findings highlight the need to strengthen external partnerships, expand community participation, improve access to resources, and provide more opportunities for learners to apply their environmental knowledge through practical and community-based activities. The study further emphasizes the importance of sustained administrative support, teacher capacity building, stakeholder collaboration, and systematic monitoring and evaluation in ensuring the continuity and effectiveness of YES-O implementation. Based on the findings, the proposed policy recommendations focus on enhancing teacher development, clarifying resource and funding mechanisms, strengthening partnerships, expanding community-based environmental initiatives, and establishing a systematic monitoring and evaluation framework

anchored on the five YES-O mandated objectives of YES-O. Overall, this study underscores the role of YES-O in developing environmentally responsible and actively engaged learners. Sustaining and strengthening its implementation through coordinated efforts among schools, families, communities, and government and non-government organizations may contribute to a more meaningful and sustainable culture of environmental awareness, stewardship, and action in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, school heads should continue to provide support, resources, and funding for YES-O programs and activities. Schools should strengthen partnerships with local government units, non-government organizations, and community stakeholders to support environmental projects. YES-O advisers should be provided with regular training and seminars on environmental education and sustainability to improve their knowledge and skills. Students should be encouraged to actively participate in environmental activities, such as clean-up drives, tree planting, waste management, and environmental campaigns, to develop their awareness and responsibility for protecting the environment. The Department of Education should strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of YES-O implementation and provide guidance to schools to ensure the effective implementation of its objectives. Finally, future researchers may conduct similar studies in other schools and regions and use interviews and observations to better understand the challenges and practices in implementing YES-O.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The data were collected through an online survey platform, which limited the opportunity to verify responses through direct observation, interviews, or document analysis. The absence of these complementary sources of evidence may have restricted a deeper understanding of the actual implementation processes, challenges, and contextual factors affecting the performance of the YES-O program in the participating schools. The study utilized a descriptive-survey design and relied solely on self-reported data gathered through an online questionnaire. Although this approach allowed for efficient data collection, the responses may have been influenced by personal experiences, memory recall, and respondent bias. Since the respondents were former officers recalling activities implemented during previous school years, some of their responses may have been affected by the passage of time or incomplete recollection of events.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future studies may be conducted in other regions of the Philippines and across different educational levels to explore the long-term effects of YES-O participation on learners' environmental knowledge, attitudes, values, and behaviors. Exploring how students apply environmental concepts and practices beyond the school environment can provide valuable insights into the program's contribution to developing environmentally responsible citizens. Other studies may investigate teachers' capacity to integrate environmental education into classroom instruction to fully understand the challenges, training needs, and best practices of teachers. These can help improve the delivery of environmental education and enhance learner engagement in environmental issues.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Philippine Normal University on April 20, 2022 (approval number 04202022-022). Proper coordination was made with the Regional, Division, and school authorities of DepEd National Capital Region. The informed assent of the student officers relative to their participation in this study was also ensured. The respondents voluntarily participated in the study; wherein informed assent was secured individually. The contents of the informed assents were stated in the online surveys before proceeding with the content of the survey questionnaires in compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Likewise, the key informants and FGD participants provided their consent and stated their intention to participate. They were given a brief orientation about their participation in the study. The respondents' responses were kept with utmost

confidentiality and safety. Since the respondents were aware of their participation in this study, their roles in the conduct of the research were fully disclosed, and the main purpose of this study was explained to them.

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AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No disclosure statement on the declaration of the use of AI.