

RESEARCH BRIEF

# A Predictive Model of Volunteer Engagement to Department of Social Welfare and Development's Kapit Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan—A Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services

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The implementation of anti-poverty programs has been the centerpiece among many nations over the past decades (World Bank, 2006). There has been significant progress made in alleviating poverty, yet, a clear majority of people still lives in extreme poverty. According to the most recent estimate by the World Bank in 2013, the global poverty rate remains unacceptably high to a figure of about 766 million or 10.7% of the world's population (World Bank, 2016). Access to important social services like food, water and sanitation, healthcare, and education remains to be limited among the poor and vulnerable families despite prolonged efforts. In the Philippines, poverty incidence was estimated at 21.6% in the year 2015 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2016). Poverty in the Philippines is a multifaceted issue that is caused by many factors. One that is commonly pinned down is poor governance associated with unaccountable bureaucracies and unjust legal systems that hinder the furtherance of the public good (Asian Development Bank, 2009). It has been well-documented that the dominant model of top-down, state-controlled development initiatives over the last 50 years tend to be restricted and less

maximized (Fung & Wright, 2003; Mansuri & Rao, 2013). Hence, there is a strong need for scaling up of new approaches and processes to effectively meet the needs of the community.

Kapit Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan-Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (KALAHI-CIDSS) is one of the flagship programs initiated by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) that embodies the innovative shift in eradicating poverty in the Philippines. The approach underpinned in KALAHI-CIDSS is different from its traditional counterparts because it is in the spirit of the community-driven development approach or CDD (Mansuri & Rao, 2004). In CDD, the poor is positioned as a stakeholder in shaping and implementing interventions—involving the community in the local decisions and channeling assistance directly to the grassroots level (Mansuri & Rao, 2013).

This community-based approach holds a great deal of promise as an effective platform for poverty reduction. Nonetheless, there are also practical challenges for its potential to be fully realized. One of the hurdles that has been documented in KALAHI-

CIDSS is maintaining the engagement and participation of the volunteers in the planning and implementation of the program (e.g., Asian Development Bank, 2016; World Bank, 2006). Identifying the specific variables theorized to influence engagement of community volunteers is worthy of research attention because it offers vast implications on how to optimize the design and implementation of this new paradigm to community development.

In the present investigation, the wealth of theoretical and empirical resources in social psychology was deployed as a lens to explain such a proposition. We drew from integrative behavioral theories (e.g., Ajzen, 1991) and came up with a coherent set of predictors. These are descriptive norms, collective efficacy, attitude, and external factors. It is important that this set of psychological variables be given a closer look in the future implementations of KALAH-CIDSS to harness the potential for participatory development and to sustain positive social change in a community.

### **Overview of KALAH-CIDSS**

KALAH-CIDSS is a CDD initiative of the Philippines' DSWD (Asian Development Bank, 2012, for a review). Its main objective is to empower the poor communities through increased involvement in the design and implementation of projects aimed for improved access to basic public services. Moreover, the philosophy of this initiative is aligned with the development frameworks of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) crafted by the United Nations.

The theory of change of KALAH-CIDSS rests on four assumptions (Asian Development Bank, 2012). First, it enables the community residents to secure their development needs through active participation. Second, it ensures that the projects being selected and implemented closely reflects the actual need of the community. Third, it promotes the establishment of transparent and accountable governance processes through citizen empowerment. Fourth, it helps in instituting local government processes and practices that are responsive and accountable.

The KALAH-CIDSS proposition in the Philippines, thus far, has proven to be effective in strengthening participatory development and

community mobilization. It has already put up more or less 6,000 community projects to over 1.3 million households in the poorest provinces nationwide (World Bank, 2013).

### *Engagement of Community Volunteer*

KALAH-CIDSS is a community organizing effort. Kramer and Specht (1983) defined community organization as a method of intervention in which a change agent helps a community to participate in collective action to deal with their needs and problems. Evaluation studies on KALAH-CIDSS generally revealed that it had improved the lives of people in their respective communities (e.g., Asian Development Bank, 2016). One of the apparent facilitators for the success of this development initiative is its ability to cultivate long-term collective action and engagement among its members (Labonne & Chase, 2011). Progressive changes are achieved by people who are responsive in their aspirations of a better community, otherwise realized in the longest time with the state making centralized decisions (Mansuri & Rao, 2004).

By definition, community members are engaged when each plays a meaningful role in the decision-making or implementation of programs affecting them (Bassler, Brasier, Fogel, & Taverno, 2008). An action of a group member that is directed at improving the conditions of the group is an action that represents engagement in collective action (Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990). Hence, engagement happens when citizens are actively involved in determining community issues and help in developing effective solutions for the common good.

While citizen participation plays a role in promoting positive changes in a community, many development initiatives struggle with relatively low participation levels (e.g., Chaskin & Peters, 2000), jeopardizing their success and longevity (Foster-Fishman et al., 2006). For instance, the participation rate of volunteers during village assemblies is often low according to the key findings of KALAH-CIDSS tracer study by Asian Development Bank (2016) and impact analysis study of World Bank (2006). This a substantial issue especially that the key variable to the success of this initiative is the active participation of its stakeholders.

Examining the extensive literature on community development, there is only a sizable share of studies on community engagement that exists (e.g., Arcinas, 2002), and still less, is known about the plausible psychological factors that can influence long-term engagement of the poor in community efforts. Again, this is a deep concern for KALAH-CIDSS because the sustainability of its implementation depends largely on the levels of engagement of its volunteers. Several theories can be drawn from social psychology to understand the factors and conditions that can plausibly drive engagement. These theories are outlined below.

### *Social Norms*

Norms refer to shared expectations and rules regarding what others do and what others think one should do (Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990). Norms have been diversely used in the tradition of social psychology, but there is a distinction in the use of the term. There are two types of norms: injunctive norms and descriptive norms. Injunctive norms prescribe what is regarded as acceptable or unacceptable behavior (Reno, Cialdini, & Kallgren, 1993). On the other hand, descriptive norms denote what is typically done by people in a specific situation (Cialdini, Kallgren, & Reno, 1991). These types of norms have distinct effects on behavior (Kallgren, Reno, & Cialdini, 2000).

Recent researches support the idea that descriptive norms are powerful determinants of socially significant behaviors (e.g., Ajzen, 1991; Manning, 2009, for a meta-analytic review). It has also been revealed in classic studies that perceptions of behaviors of others would lead one to behave similarly (Asch, 1956). Descriptive norms provide a frame of reference to measure up the prevalence of a behavior and how far away behaviors are from this norm (Cialdini et al., 1991). In the context of community-based programs, positive actions such as increased engagement can be promoted by harnessing the power of shared beliefs (Smircich, 1983). That is, if people perceive that their community is engaged, they will be impelled to be personally engaged as well. Foster-Fishman and Long (2009) referred to this as “neighborhood norms for activism,” which pertains to the individual expectations

and perceptions that their neighbors will pursue an action to improve their neighborhood.

We believe that descriptive norms will influence the participation of volunteers in the KALAH-CIDSS. When they perceive their neighbors to be involved in the program, they might want to involve themselves as well.

### *Collective Efficacy*

Collective efficacy is built on the concept of self-efficacy in psychology. Both are derived from Bandura’s (1997) social cognitive theory which rests on the idea of having the ability to influence one’s situation. Bandura defined collective efficacy as “a group’s shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given level of attainments” (p. 477). In contrast to self-efficacy, which pertains to an individual’s perceptions of the ability to pursue a course action, collective efficacy refers to the group’s combined beliefs of how much they can perform as a unit.

In psychology, collective efficacy has been associated with understanding group goal attainment (e.g., Gibson, 2001; Lent, Schmidt, & Schmidt, 2006). For individuals who work interdependently toward the accomplishment of a common goal, group perceptions of efficacy are important (Katz-Navon & Erez, 2005). A group member’s evaluation of their team competence, therefore, would serve as a predictor to commit in the group’s goal. Bandura (1997) further stressed that these beliefs influence behavior by determining how much effort is exerted on the group’s objectives and how much the outcome is valued. Studies in community psychology point out that when residents perceive a high-level collective efficacy in their neighborhood, they are more likely to engage in community development efforts (e.g., Darmofal, 2010; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997; Yoon, 2011).

The literature on collective self-efficacy is still growing and can potentially be expanded as an explanatory construct in community development studies. Toward the said end, we strongly theorized in the present study that perceptions of collective efficacy could influence the personal engagement of volunteers of KALAH-CIDSS.

### Attitudes

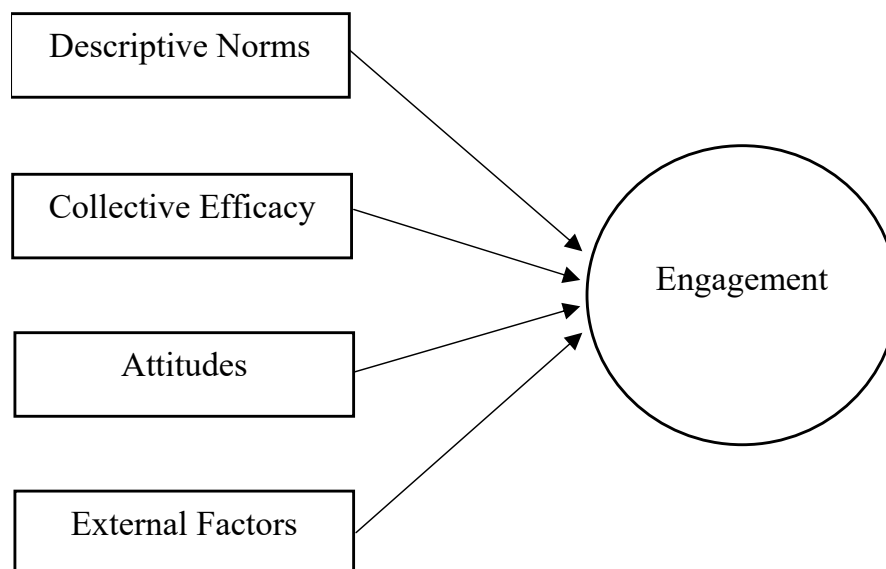
An attitude refers to a favorable or unfavorable evaluative response towards a person or an event (Eagly & Chaiken, 2005). Evaluative responses can be conceptually classified as affective, cognitive, and affective components (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960). The affective component involves feelings or emotions evoked by an attitude object. The cognitive component involves thoughts, beliefs, and ideas about the attitude object. The propensity to act or behave in certain ways is the behavioral component of attitude. These three components of attitude are usually in alignment with each other (Rosenberg, Hovland, McGuire, Abelson, & Brehm, 1960). Supporting this idea, a meta-analysis by Glasman and Albarracín (2006) found that there is a substantial correspondence among the different components of attitudes. In general, the link between attitude and behavior is examined through the relationship between the first two components (affect and cognition) and the third (behavior).

Positive attitudes of the local people toward community development play a role in determining their involvement in community improvement efforts. Early studies in community attitude provide support for this contention (e.g., Andrews & Withey, 1976; Ayres &

Potter, 1989; Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976). Hence, the present study utilizes the attitude concept as one of the theorized predictors in the proposed model of engagement to KALAHICIDSS of community volunteers.

### External Factors

A myriad of external factors can also potentially reduce the engagement of the local volunteers to KALAHICIDSS (Asian Development Bank, 2012). For example, in attending village assemblies, volunteers must forego a large portion of their time otherwise spent for caring for children, doing household chores, and especially for livelihood. Missing a day's income will considerably hurt their household budget—thus, prioritizing their livelihood over participating in community activities. Community volunteers of KALAHICIDSS also do not get any personal incentive (e.g., monetary compensation) for sharing the cost of the collective action entailed. Some would even have to walk or travel hours to reach the place for village assemblies in far-flung villages. Supervision of the facilitators and staff and delivery of the materials needed for the subprojects are also part of the operationalization of external factors in the study. Hence, these tremendous external constraints,



**Figure 1.** Model of engagement to KALAHICIDSS.

among others, might get in the way of sustaining the engagement of the volunteers.

The present study aims to propose a social psychological model that purports to delineate the determinants of engagement of KALAHY-CIDSS' community volunteers. This model includes four predictor variables. They are descriptive norms, collective efficacy, attitudes, and external factors (see Figure 1). The model permits the examination of the strength of each variable and the entire model in predicting engagement to KALAHY-CIDSS.

## Methods

The study is quantitative in design. A survey method was utilized wherein respondents filled up a questionnaire pertaining to the set of theorized variables.

A total of 488 KALAHY-CIDSS' volunteers of Tuburan, Cebu, Philippines participated in the paper-and-pencil survey. The respondents' mean age is 41.7 years ( $SD=12.11$ ); 5.5% of these respondents are males ( $N=27$ ) and 94.5% are females ( $N=461$ ). The average years of community residence is 31 years. The municipality of Tuburan is composed of 54 villages, with a total land area of 22,450 hectares (National Statistics Office, 2013). According to the current census, it has a population of 58,914 residents (National Statistics Office, 2013).

DSWD granted approval to the research team in conducting this study. Data were collected by a three-person research team between October and December 2016. Data gathering was done in coordination with

the regional staff of DSWD, Region VII. The study only sampled volunteers from one community due to coordination-related matters.

The 30-item questionnaire created for this study consists of five domains that capture the variables—with four items for descriptive norms, six for group efficacy, six for attitudes, nine for external factors, and five for engagement. Items were measured using the 5-point Likert scale anchored at 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). A higher score indicates high level of each of the variable. The scale is internally consistent with Cronbach's alpha of .855. Subscales' Cronbach alpha ranges from .689 to .853. The minimum acceptable value for Cronbach's alpha of basic research measures is ideally .70 (Pallant, 2005), but values modestly below .70 are also acceptable (Kline, 1999).

Standard multiple regression analysis was used to test how well the theorized set of predictors influence the outcome variable and how much is contributed by each predictor.

## Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for each of the variable measured in the study. All mean scores are above the statistical midpoint of each scale. This indicates that the participants in the study scored relatively high in each of the variables measured.

The results of the standard multiple regression indicated that 36.10% of the variance of engagement is explained by the aforementioned four predictors ( $R^2= .361$ ,  $F(4, 483) = 68.20$ ,  $p < .001$ ). It was also found that descriptive norms ( $\beta = .211$ ,  $p < .001$ ),

**Table 1**  
*Means and Standard Deviations of the Variables*

Variables	N	M	SD
Descriptive Norms	488	4.43	.611
Group Efficacy	488	4.33	.668
Attitudes	488	4.29	.594
External Factors	488	3.69	.787
Engagement	488	4.33	.750

**Table 2**  
*Multiple Regression Statistics*

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>
Constant	0.22	0.26	
Descriptive Norms	0.26	0.05	.21*
Group Efficacy	0.23	0.05	.20*
Attitude	0.44	0.05	.35*
External Factors	0.02	0.04	.02

*Note:*  $R^2 = .36$ . \* $p < .001$

group efficacy, ( $\beta = .203$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and attitude ( $\beta = .350$ ,  $p < .001$ ) are statistically significant predictors of engagement, accounting for 3.13%, 3.31%, and 9.06% of the unique variance, respectively. Furthermore, attitude is the strongest predictor of engagement. However, external factors ( $\beta = .022$ ,  $p > .001$ ) is not a statistically significant predictor of engagement, accounting only for 0.04% of the unique variance. Table 2 shows the summary of the regression analysis.

## Discussion

The study offers insights on how engagement of people at the grassroots to community development can be influenced, to some extent, by important social psychological factors such as descriptive norms, collective efficacy, and attitudes. In the context of KALAHICIDSS, the predictive model can inform its implementing agency, DSWD, on the plans and strategies that can be formulated to foster the engagement of volunteers to the program.

Descriptive norm is one of the significant predictors of volunteer engagement with KALAHICIDSS. It can be inferred that engagement of people in community-based programs increase when the people in the community recognize that those around them support such activity. It is, therefore, important for people in the community to perceive their engagement as something “normal” for everyone in the community. One of the critical activities that can be done by

DSWD is to develop well-designed strategies that involve communication efforts such as educating and informing the public about how people in the community have been actively supporting the causes of KALAHICIDSS. This can serve as a catalyst to generate an impression of an empowered and responsive community, prompting its members to also lead productive lives themselves.

Collective efficacy is another significant predictor of local volunteers’ involvement with KALAHICIDSS. As suggested by Bandura (1997), beliefs about collective efficacy are powerful because they inform actions and behavior. When a community perceives that together they can solve a common problem and achieve a common goal, they share a sense of collective efficacy. It is the social glue that holds individuals together to put more effort into advancing the betterment of the entire community. Hence, the belief that a community can work as one should be nourished and developed by DSWD through KALAHICIDSS. One is providing an avenue for the local stakeholders to converge and coordinate in an organized municipal-level dialogue. This will permit volunteers to assess the development status of community projects and to identify problems in implementation. This will then be supplemented by group capacity-building tools to develop the needed skills for the volunteers to work together as a unit.

Attitude is the strongest predictor among the four variables. Our results further indicate that if

DSWD is interested in increasing the engagements of stakeholders of KALAHICIDSS, the agency should induce attitudes that predict the behavior they want to promote. People will participate if they are strongly convinced of the benefits and policies of the program. In a theoretical sense, an individual who holds a favorable attitude toward an object is expected to form favorable behaviors with respect to the object (Rosenberg et al., 1960).

Getting people to participate in KALAHICIDSS is difficult given that the community often lacks knowledge about the program's contents and rules. The lack of information is a significant barrier because it might bring about unfavorable and cynical attitudes about the program. To address this, DSWD should employ strategies to induce attitude change. One strategy is intensifying mass campaign efforts to provide wide dissemination of the aims of KALAHICIDSS and how it works. In addition, municipal-wide surveys on people's attitude about the program can be commissioned by DSWD. Subsequent creation of data pool from the surveys would then help DSWD in making informed decisions pertaining to participatory planning. Participatory planning should be incorporated as a process throughout the cycle of implementation and evaluation to establish strong favorable attitudes toward KALAHICIDSS and subsequently foster greater engagement of the volunteers.

Support was not found for the impact of external factors on engagement. Although previous evaluation studies (e.g., Asian Development Bank, World Bank) found that personal investments of volunteers such as money, time, and effort affect their participation in KALAHICIDSS activities, this study was not able to arrive at similar results. This could be partly because these evaluation studies are mainly descriptive in nature and do not provide a direct test on the impact of such factors on engagement. Furthermore, external factors could have an effect, however this effect is not substantial in comparison to other variables. In this case, the level of beliefs held by an individual about how others are behaving, the ability to achieve a goal as a collective entity, as well as general attitudes, are the significant contributors of engagement in KALAHICIDSS. The study offers the overarching

insight on integrating beliefs-based variables into an encompassing psychological model of engagement to community initiatives.

Certain limitations can be identified in the present study. A more diverse and large sample could have been used in the study to permit more robust testing of models than usually is possible in small and unrepresentative samples. The study only sampled volunteers from one municipality. It raises the question of the conclusiveness of the findings when data collected at different intervals from different communities are to be compared. The nature of social interactions, political systems, history, and geography are varied across communities and points in time, and these might also have had a confounding influence on the results of the study.

To advance and refine the knowledge in this fertile research enterprise, there are valuable directions worth pursuing. First, we look forward to theoretical developments related to creating more powerful models in explaining engagement to community-led poverty reduction efforts. It might be fruitfully explored in future researches to further fine-tune the predictive model. Second, there is a broad typology of programs that constitute the CDD initiative. Thus, it may be worthwhile to investigate the phenomenon of engagement in the context of other CDD-based programs other than KALAHICIDSS.

## Conclusion

The study was able to show that descriptive norms or beliefs on the responsiveness of the community toward local action, collective efficacy or beliefs about the ability to collaborate effectively, and favorable attitudes about the development initiative are influential in the engagement of the volunteers in KALAHICIDSS. To sustain the development brought about by such a program, it could be high time that DSWD taps into these social psychological variables. It must position people in the community as agents of change and empowered stakeholders who are capable of planning and implementing services that are beneficial to their respective communities.

## Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank the Social Psychology Group of the University of San Carlos for their insight and support in this research endeavor. We also would like to express our gratitude to Mr. Paulo Frangelyco Magallon for facilitating our communication with DSWD.

## Ethical Clearance:

The study was approved by the institution. Consent and Confidentiality were observed throughout the duration of the study.

## Conflict of Interest:

None.

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