



## Electoral Integrity, Housing Inclusion, and Youth Governance in the Philippines: A Document-Based Systems Analysis for Inclusive Societal Transformation

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### Abstract

Philippine democracy and development have been influenced by electoral credibility, housing inclusion, and youth participation. These governance areas are often studied separately. Limited attention has been given to how they interact as part of a wider system of inclusive societal transformation. This study examined how electoral integrity, affordable housing policy, and youth governance collectively shaped inclusive development in the Philippines. A qualitative document analysis was used. Laws, executive issuances, administrative circulars, budget documents, institutional assessments, policy reports, and selected credible news accounts published from 2018 onward were reviewed. A PRISMA-inspired procedure was applied to guide document identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion. The final corpus was analysed through thematic coding and systems-thinking integration. Findings showed that electoral integrity was weakened by disinformation, vote-buying, public trust concerns, and transparency issues in automated elections. The Pambansang Pabahay para sa Pilipino Program, or 4PH, reflected strong policy commitment to address the housing backlog, but affordability barriers, targeting issues, land governance constraints, and uneven access continued to limit its pro-poor impact. Youth participation through the Sangguniang Kabataan and Local Youth Development Council mechanisms had a stronger legal foundation, but its implementation remained affected by capacity gaps, weak continuity, and limited outcome tracking. Across the three domains, trust, vulnerability, and accountability emerged as key governance



mechanisms. Electoral trust shaped institutional legitimacy. Housing vulnerability increased exposure to clientelist practices. Youth participation supported local accountability when linked to planning, budgeting, and monitoring. The study concludes that inclusive societal transformation requires integrated reform rather than isolated policy action. Electoral transparency, pro-poor housing finance, transparent beneficiary targeting, youth capacity development, and cross-agency coordination should be strengthened, especially in underserved regions such as Caraga.

**Keywords:** Electoral Integrity, Disinformation, Vote-Buying, Affordable Housing, 4PH, Youth Participation, SK, LYDC, Systems Thinking, Philippines

## 1. Introduction

Inclusive societal transformation is contingent upon the interaction of credible institutions, equitable socio-economic policies, and participatory governance mechanisms. In democratic contexts, these elements shape both state legitimacy and citizen well-being (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2019). In the Philippines, three governance arenas have emerged as critical determinants of such transformation: electoral integrity, social housing and affordability, and youth participation in local governance.

Electoral integrity remains central to democratic consolidation. Recent studies have highlighted the increasing role of disinformation ecosystems, digital manipulation, and persistent vote-buying practices in shaping electoral outcomes in the Philippines (Arugay & Baquisal, 2022; Bradshaw & Howard, 2019). These dynamics undermine public trust and weaken institutional legitimacy, which are essential for effective governance. At the same time, socio-economic vulnerabilities, particularly housing insecurity, continue to affect large segments of the population. The national housing backlog and affordability constraints remain significant despite policy initiatives such as the Pambansang Pabahay Para sa Pilipino (4PH) program (Ballesteros et al., 2022).

Youth participation represents another critical dimension. The institutionalization of youth governance through the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) and Local Youth Development Councils (LYDCs) reflects an effort to embed participatory democracy at the grassroots level. However, evidence suggests that while legal frameworks have expanded, implementation outcomes remain uneven due to capacity gaps and weak integration into local governance systems (Flores et al., 2021; United Nations, 2024).

Despite extensive research within each domain, these areas are often examined in isolation. This fragmented approach limits understanding of how electoral integrity, socio-economic conditions, and participatory governance interact. Feedback loops exist across these domains: weak electoral credibility may reduce trust in public programs; housing precarity may increase susceptibility to clientelist practices; and youth participation mechanisms may either strengthen accountability or reinforce governance disparities. Addressing this gap requires an integrated analytical perspective.

### Rationale of the Study

The study was grounded in the need to move beyond sectoral analysis toward a systems-oriented understanding of governance. Existing literature has documented electoral vulnerabilities, housing affordability issues, and youth participation challenges separately. However, limited attention has been given to how these domains interact to influence inclusive societal outcomes.

A cross-domain synthesis was necessary to identify underlying mechanisms that connect governance processes. Such integration enables the identification of structural bottlenecks and policy leverage points that may not be visible in single-sector analyses. This approach aligns with recent calls for interdisciplinary governance research that captures complexity and interdependence in public systems (Meadows, 2022).



## Significance of the Study

This study contributes to both academic and policy discourse. From a theoretical perspective, it advances a systems-based understanding of governance by linking institutional trust, socio-economic vulnerability, and participatory accountability. From a practical perspective, the findings provide policy-relevant insights for government agencies, particularly those involved in electoral management, housing delivery, and youth development.

The study is significant for institutions such as the Commission on Elections (COMELEC), the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD), and local government units implementing youth governance mechanisms. It offers an integrated framework for improving program design, transparency, and inclusiveness. The findings are also relevant for underserved regions, where governance challenges are often compounded by limited institutional capacity.

## Aim of the Study

This study aimed to analyze how electoral integrity, affordable housing programs, and youth participation interact to influence inclusive societal transformation in the Philippines and to propose integrated, policy-oriented reforms.

## Research Questions

1. What integrity issues characterized recent Philippine elections, and what reforms were being implemented?
2. How does the 4PH program address affordability, targeting, and delivery challenges?
3. To what extent do SK and LYDC mechanisms translate into meaningful and sustained youth participation?
4. What integrated reform strategies can advance inclusive societal outcomes, particularly for vulnerable populations?

## Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study was anchored in a systems thinking framework. Systems thinking emphasizes the interconnectedness of social, political, and economic subsystems and the presence of feedback loops that shape outcomes (Stermann, 2019). Electoral integrity, housing policy, and youth governance were conceptualized as interdependent subsystems that collectively influence societal transformation.

The framework also incorporated institutional theory, which posits that the effectiveness of policies depends on the capacity, coordination, and accountability of implementing institutions (North, 2018). In the Philippine context, institutions such as COMELEC, DHSUD, and the DILG–NYC ecosystem play critical roles in translating policy into outcomes.

A rights-based perspective was integrated to emphasize that access to housing and participation in governance are fundamental social rights. These rights are closely linked to broader development goals, including those articulated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11 (sustainable cities) and SDG 16 (strong institutions) (United Nations, 2024).

Based on these theoretical foundations, the study developed a conceptual model structured around three cross-domain mechanisms:

**Trust Mechanism.** Electoral credibility strengthens institutional legitimacy. Higher trust increases citizen engagement and compliance with public programs, including housing initiatives.

**Vulnerability Mechanism.** Housing insecurity increases socio-economic vulnerability. Vulnerable populations are more susceptible to vote-buying and clientelist practices, which weaken democratic processes.



**Accountability Mechanism.** Youth participation enhances local monitoring and feedback systems. Strong accountability mechanisms improve transparency and program effectiveness across governance sectors. These mechanisms provide a framework for understanding how governance domains interact and where policy interventions can generate systemic improvements.

## 2. Review of Related Studies

### Electoral Integrity, Disinformation, and Transactional Politics

Electoral integrity has been examined as a core condition for democratic stability, particularly in contexts where institutional trust is fragile. In the Philippines, recent scholarship has emphasized the growing influence of disinformation ecosystems in shaping electoral outcomes. Coordinated online campaigns and algorithm-driven content dissemination have been shown to distort political narratives and influence voter behavior (Arugay & Baquisal, 2022). These dynamics shift electoral competition away from policy-based evaluation toward identity-based and emotionally driven narratives.

Institutional assessments have noted that elections in the Philippines continue to face challenges related to fairness and transparency despite procedural compliance. The persistence of misinformation, weak regulatory enforcement, and uneven campaign oversight contributes to declining public trust in electoral institutions (Freedom House, 2024). Disinformation has been observed to operate across multiple platforms, including private messaging channels, making it difficult to regulate and counter effectively (Bradshaw & Howard, 2019).

Vote-buying remains a significant concern in the electoral landscape. Empirical studies indicate that financial inducements influence voting behavior and weaken accountability, as voters who receive material benefits are less likely to demand performance-based governance (Leight, 2020). In the Philippine setting, vote-buying has been linked to socio-economic vulnerability, where economically disadvantaged voters are more susceptible to transactional political practices.

The literature establishes that electoral integrity is shaped by both institutional arrangements and socio-economic conditions. However, most studies focus on electoral processes as isolated systems, with limited attention to how economic insecurity and governance participation influence electoral behavior.

### Affordable Housing and Social Protection

Housing is widely recognized as a fundamental component of social protection and inclusive development. Access to adequate and affordable housing contributes to improved health outcomes, educational stability, and economic productivity (UN-Habitat, 2020). In developing economies, housing affordability remains a persistent issue due to income constraints, rapid urbanization, and limited access to financing mechanisms.

In the Philippines, housing policy reforms have aimed to address long-standing backlogs and improve access for low-income households. The establishment of the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development and the implementation of the Pambansang Pabahay Para sa Pilipino (4PH) program reflect efforts to scale housing delivery. However, research indicates that affordability challenges continue to limit access for the poorest sectors. High amortization costs, strict eligibility criteria, and weak land governance systems have been identified as major barriers (Ballesteros et al., 2022).

Studies have also highlighted the limitations of supply-driven housing strategies. While large-scale housing programs increase the availability of units, they often fail to reach marginalized populations due to financial and institutional constraints. Issues such as land availability, urban planning inefficiencies, and inter-agency coordination further affect program implementation.



Housing insecurity has broader implications beyond economic well-being. It has been associated with increased vulnerability to political manipulation, including vote-buying and clientelist practices. Despite this, the relationship between housing conditions and political behavior remains underexplored in existing literature, which tends to treat housing primarily as a development issue rather than a governance concern.

## Youth Participation and Local Governance

Youth participation has been recognized as a critical element of democratic governance and sustainable development. Inclusive participation strengthens civic engagement and enhances accountability mechanisms within public institutions (United Nations, 2024).

In the Philippines, youth governance has been institutionalized through the Sangguniang Kabataan system and supported by Local Youth Development Councils. Legislative reforms have expanded the roles of youth in planning, budgeting, and community development processes. These reforms aim to create structured pathways for youth engagement in governance (Flores et al., 2021).

Despite these advancements, implementation outcomes remain uneven. Studies have shown that variations in local capacity, limited training opportunities, and weak institutional support hinder effective participation. Youth engagement is often limited to consultative activities rather than sustained involvement in decision-making processes.

The literature emphasizes the importance of capacity-building and institutional integration in achieving meaningful participation. Without structured support systems, youth participation risks becoming symbolic rather than transformative. Existing studies focus primarily on participation as a civic or educational process, with limited attention to its impact on governance outcomes and policy implementation.

## Synthesis and Research Gap

The existing body of literature provides substantial insights into electoral integrity, housing policy, and youth participation. Electoral studies highlight the role of disinformation and vote-buying in shaping political outcomes. Housing research focuses on affordability and structural constraints in program delivery. Youth governance literature examines participation frameworks and institutional reforms.

These domains, however, are largely examined independently. The interaction between electoral processes, socio-economic vulnerability, and participatory governance remains insufficiently explored. There is limited empirical work that explains how housing insecurity may influence electoral behavior or how youth participation may strengthen accountability across governance sectors.

Key concepts such as trust, vulnerability, and accountability appear across different strands of literature but are rarely integrated into a unified analytical framework. This fragmentation limits the ability to understand governance as a system of interrelated processes.

The present study addresses this gap by adopting a systems-thinking perspective that links electoral integrity, housing policy, and youth participation. It contributes to the literature by providing an integrated analysis of governance mechanisms and by identifying cross-domain interactions that influence inclusive societal transformation.

## 3. Methodology

### Research Approach and Design



A qualitative research approach was employed in this study. Qualitative approaches are appropriate when complex social phenomena are examined through interpretation of textual and contextual data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study adopted a qualitative document analysis combined with narrative analysis. Document analysis enabled systematic examination of policy texts and institutional records, while narrative analysis supported the interpretation of implementation experiences and public accounts. This design was suitable for synthesizing multi-sector governance evidence across elections, housing, and youth participation.

### Data Sources and Selection

Data were derived from multiple credible sources to ensure triangulation. Primary materials included laws, executive orders, administrative circulars, and official resolutions from Philippine government agencies such as COMELEC, DHSUD, DILG, and NYC. Policy briefs and budget documents from legislative bodies were included to capture program financing and implementation directions. Institutional and watchdog reports, including those from Freedom House and NAMFREL, were examined to assess governance quality and electoral integrity. Peer-reviewed journal articles and research reports were incorporated to strengthen analytical depth. Selected news features were used cautiously to provide contextual narratives where primary documentation was limited, consistent with qualitative synthesis practices (Bowen, 2009).

**Table 1. Included Documents for Qualitative Synthesis**

No.	Document/Source	Year	Document Type	Governance Domain	Reason for Inclusion
1	COMELEC election-related resolution/report	2022–2024	Government document	Electoral integrity	Provided evidence on electoral processes, transparency, and reform mechanisms
2	Freedom House Philippines country report	2024	Institutional assessment	Electoral integrity	Provided assessment of political rights, civic freedoms, and electoral concerns
3	NAMFREL election monitoring report	2022–2024	Watchdog/institutional report	Electoral integrity	Provided evidence on election monitoring, transparency, and integrity issues
4	DHSUD policy document on 4PH	2023–2024	Government document	Affordable housing	Provided evidence on program objectives, implementation, and housing delivery
5	Executive Order No. 34 on 4PH	2023	Executive issuance	Affordable housing	Established policy direction for land mobilization and program coordination
6	PIDS housing policy report	2022	Policy research report	Affordable housing	Provided analysis of affordability, access, and housing constraints
7	NYC/SK reform-related document	2018–2024	Government/youth governance document	Youth participation	Provided evidence on institutional mechanisms for youth governance
8	DILG/LYDC-related circular or guidance	2018–2024	Administrative document	Youth participation	Provided evidence on local youth development planning and council mechanisms

Table 1 presents the documents included in the qualitative synthesis. It identifies the sources used in the study, their year of publication, type of document, governance domain, and reason for inclusion. The table shows that the analysis was based on credible sources, including government documents, policy reports, institutional assessments, and research-based publications. It also demonstrates that the selected documents covered the

three major areas of the study: electoral integrity, affordable housing, and youth participation. This table strengthens the transparency of the methodology because it allows readers to see the exact documentary basis of the analysis.

### Search Strategy and Scope

The document search covered the period from 2018 to the present to capture recent reforms and policy developments. Keywords were organized into three domains: (1) electoral integrity (e.g., disinformation, vote-buying, automated election system), (2) housing policy (e.g., 4PH, affordability, DHSUD), and (3) youth governance (e.g., SK, LYDC, youth participation). Searches were conducted across official government portals, academic databases, and institutional repositories. This domain-based search structure ensured systematic coverage of relevant literature and policy documents.

### Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria required documents to be Philippine-focused, published from 2018 onward, and originating from credible or verifiable sources such as government agencies, peer-reviewed journals, or recognized institutions. Documents were required to present traceable data, policy content, or analytical insights. Exclusion criteria removed duplicate records, documents lacking clear authorship or credibility, purely theoretical works without contextual application, and sources without sufficient methodological transparency. These criteria ensured the reliability and relevance of the dataset.

### Screening and PRISMA-Inspired Procedure

A PRISMA-inspired process was applied to improve transparency in document selection. Identification involved compiling an initial pool of 50 records. Screening was conducted based on relevance to the research domains and removal of duplicates. Eligibility assessment involved full-text review of documents against inclusion criteria. A final set of 17 documents was retained for synthesis. This structured filtering process enhanced replicability and methodological rigor in qualitative reviews (Page et al., 2021).

### Data Extraction and Analytical Procedure

A structured data extraction matrix was developed to organize key information from each document. Extracted variables included publication year, document type, institutional source, thematic domain, and key findings related to governance issues. Analysis proceeded in two stages. First, within-domain thematic coding was conducted separately for elections, housing, and youth governance. Second, cross-domain integration was performed using a systems-thinking framework to identify interrelationships. Themes were generated through iterative coding and constant comparison, consistent with qualitative content analysis methods (Schreier, 2012).

**Table 2. Coding Matrix for Qualitative Document Analysis**

Initial Codes from Documents	Categories	Final Themes	Governance Mechanism
Disinformation, misinformation, online political manipulation, weak voter awareness, emotional campaign narratives	Digital electoral risks	Electoral integrity risks weakened public trust in democratic processes	Trust
Vote-buying, patronage politics, material inducements, political dependency, poverty-linked voting behavior	Transactional electoral practices	Electoral vulnerability was reinforced by socio-economic hardship	Vulnerability
Automated election concerns, audit trail	Electoral	Transparent and auditable election	Trust

Initial Codes from Documents	Categories	Final Themes	Governance Mechanism
issues, procurement transparency, system review, election monitoring	transparency and reform	systems were needed to strengthen institutional legitimacy	
Housing backlog, high amortization cost, income limitations, low access to financing, exclusion of informal workers	Housing affordability barriers	Housing programs expanded access but remained limited for the poorest households	Vulnerability
Land availability, land governance, beneficiary targeting, inter-agency coordination, regional implementation gaps	Housing delivery constraints	Weak land governance and targeting affected equitable housing delivery	Vulnerability
4PH program expansion, Executive Order No. 34, beneficiary-centered access, government-bank-developer coordination	Housing policy reform	Policy expansion required stronger safeguards to ensure pro-poor implementation	Accountability
SK reform, LYDC mechanisms, local youth development plans, annual youth investment programs	Institutionalized youth participation	Youth governance frameworks created formal spaces for participation	Accountability
Training gaps, uneven local capacity, limited technical support, weak continuity, episodic participation	Youth governance capacity issues	Youth participation remained inconsistent across local government units	Accountability
Consultations, planning sessions, budgeting participation, monitoring roles, weak outcome tracking	Youth participation outcomes	Meaningful youth participation required integration into planning, budgeting, and monitoring systems	Accountability
Public trust, institutional legitimacy, citizen cooperation, program confidence, transparency	Cross-domain governance trust	Trust connected electoral credibility with wider confidence in public programs	Trust
Poverty, housing insecurity, social exclusion, political susceptibility, dependence on short-term incentives	Cross-domain vulnerability	Vulnerability linked housing precarity with susceptibility to clientelist politics	Vulnerability
Feedback mechanisms, local monitoring, civic participation, youth oversight, program responsiveness	Cross-domain accountability	Accountability linked youth participation with improved transparency and governance responsiveness	Accountability

Table 2 shows how the reviewed documents were coded and interpreted. The first column presents the recurring ideas found in the documents. These codes were grouped into broader categories, then developed into final themes. The last column shows how each theme was connected to the three mechanisms used in the study: trust, vulnerability, and accountability. This table makes the analysis more transparent because it explains how the themes were derived from the documentary evidence.

### Analytical Framework

The analysis was guided by a systems-thinking lens. This framework enabled examination of interdependencies among governance domains and identification of feedback mechanisms. Three analytical constructs—trust, vulnerability, and accountability—were used as integrative categories. These constructs were derived inductively from the data and served to explain how institutional processes interact to influence inclusive societal transformation.



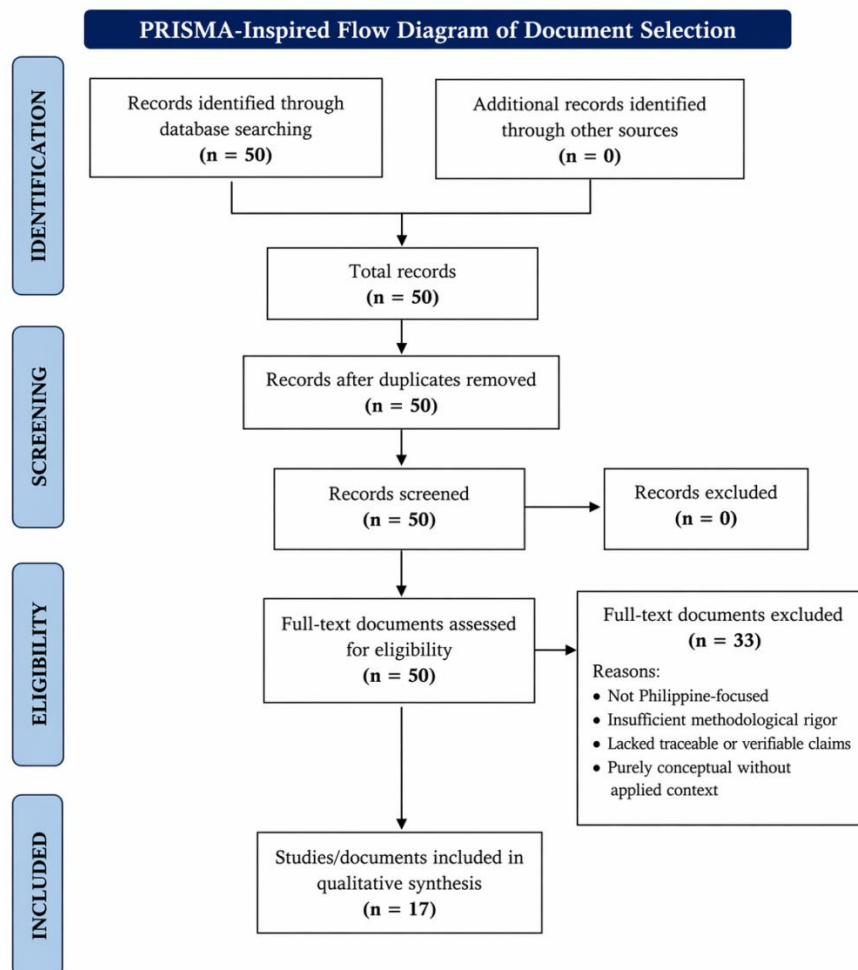
## Trustworthiness and Rigor

Several strategies were applied to ensure research rigor. Credibility was strengthened through triangulation of multiple data sources. Dependability was addressed by maintaining a transparent audit trail of document selection and coding procedures. Confirmability was supported by grounding interpretations in documented evidence. Transferability was enhanced by providing detailed contextual descriptions of Philippine governance systems. These criteria align with established standards for qualitative research quality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## Ethical Considerations

The study relied exclusively on publicly accessible documents. No human participants were involved, and no personal or sensitive data were collected. Ethical risks were minimal. Proper citation and attribution were observed for all sources to maintain academic integrity.

## 3. Findings



**Figure 1. PRISMA-Inspired Flow Diagram of Document Identification, Screening, Eligibility, and Inclusion for the Qualitative Synthesis**

Figure 1 presents the PRISMA-inspired workflow used to ensure transparency and rigor in the document selection process for this study. The process began with the identification of 50 records through database searching, with no additional records obtained from other sources. After confirming that no duplicates were present, all 50 records proceeded to the screening stage, where none were excluded based on initial relevance criteria.

During the eligibility phase, all 50 full-text documents were assessed in detail. A total of 33 documents were excluded due to reasons such as lack of Philippine focus, insufficient methodological rigor, absence of verifiable or traceable claims, and purely conceptual content without applied context.

The final stage resulted in 17 documents being included in the qualitative synthesis. These selected sources formed the empirical and analytical basis for examining electoral integrity, housing policy, and youth participation. The structured filtering process ensured that only credible, relevant, and policy-informative materials were included, thereby strengthening the validity and reliability of the study's findings.

## Findings per Research Question

### Research Question 1: What integrity issues characterized recent Philippine elections, and what reforms were underway?

The findings indicated that electoral integrity in the Philippines was shaped by two persistent risks and one evolving reform trajectory. First, disinformation emerged as a systemic challenge. It operated through networked influence campaigns that amplified identity-driven narratives rather than policy discourse. This shifted electoral competition toward emotional and symbolic engagement, thereby weakening rational decision-making and increasing public distrust.

Second, vote-buying remained embedded in local electoral practices, particularly in economically vulnerable communities. Transactional politics normalized the exchange of material incentives for votes, reinforcing patronage systems and weakening accountability. This condition was closely linked to socio-economic precarity, suggesting that electoral integrity cannot be examined independently of material conditions.

Third, institutional reforms were observed in the form of strengthened advisory mechanisms and calls for improved transparency in the automated election system. These included proposals for audit trails, open system reviews, and procurement transparency. These reforms signaled a transition toward technology-neutral transparency frameworks, where credibility depends on both technical reliability and verifiable openness.

**Table 3. Summary of Findings on Electoral Integrity**

Key Issue	Evidence from Documents	Interpretation	Reform Implication
Disinformation and misinformation	Reports and studies showed that online political manipulation, misleading narratives, and coordinated digital campaigns affected voter judgment.	Electoral choices were influenced not only by platforms and policies but also by emotional, identity-based, and misleading information.	Civic education, media literacy, and stronger monitoring of digital campaign practices should be strengthened.
Vote-buying and patronage politics	Documentary evidence showed that vote-buying remained present, especially in economically vulnerable communities.	Poverty and social insecurity made some voters more exposed to short-term material inducements during elections.	Anti-vote-buying campaigns should be linked with poverty reduction, social protection, and local accountability programs.
Weak public trust in electoral systems	Institutional assessments noted concerns about transparency, election credibility, and public confidence in electoral processes.	When citizens doubt the fairness of elections, trust in government programs and institutions may also weaken.	COMELEC should strengthen public communication, audit transparency, and stakeholder participation.

Key Issue	Evidence from Documents	Interpretation	Reform Implication
Automated election transparency concerns	Policy discussions emphasized the need for audit trails, independent system reviews, and transparent procurement.	Technical reliability alone was not enough. Election credibility also required visible and verifiable openness.	Technology-neutral transparency standards should be institutionalized for all automated election processes.
Limited voter-centered accountability	Documents suggested that voter education and post-election accountability mechanisms remained uneven.	Electoral participation did not always lead to stronger monitoring of elected officials.	Voter education should be extended beyond election day and linked with citizen monitoring of governance performance.

Table 3 summarizes the main findings related to electoral integrity. It shows that the major issues were disinformation, vote-buying, weak trust, automated election transparency concerns, and limited voter-centered accountability. The table also explains how these issues affected democratic credibility and why reforms should focus on transparency, civic education, audit mechanisms, and stronger accountability.

### Research Question 2: How was 4PH addressing affordability, targeting, and delivery challenges?

The findings showed that the Pambansang Pabahay Para sa Pilipino (4PH) program represented a significant policy expansion but faced structural limitations in addressing affordability and inclusion. The issuance of Executive Order No. 34 positioned 4PH as a flagship program and established a coordinated approach to land mobilization and housing delivery. Budget allocations across regions indicated strong government commitment to scaling implementation.

However, affordability remained a central challenge. High amortization costs relative to household income limited access for the poorest sectors. Eligibility requirements and financing structures further constrained participation, particularly among informal workers and low-income households. As a result, the program risked serving middle-income groups more effectively than those in greatest need.

Targeting and land governance also emerged as critical issues. The availability of suitable land, coupled with transparency in allocation, influenced program reach and equity outcomes. Weak land governance structures and coordination challenges affected delivery efficiency.

Recent policy adjustments introduced a beneficiary-centric approach, allowing applicants to engage through multiple channels such as government agencies, financing institutions, and developers. While this improved procedural access, its effectiveness depended on transparent targeting mechanisms and safeguards against exclusion.

Key Issue	Evidence from Documents	Interpretation	Reform Implication
Expansion of 4PH as a national housing program	Executive Order No. 34 and DHSUD documents showed that 4PH was positioned as a major government housing initiative.	The program reflected strong policy commitment to address the national housing backlog.	Implementation should be continuously monitored to ensure that expansion leads to actual access for low-income households.
Affordability concerns	Policy reports showed that amortization costs and income requirements may limit access among the poorest households.	The program may benefit formally employed or middle-income groups more than the poorest families.	Deeper subsidies, flexible payment schemes, and social rental options should be considered.
Beneficiary targeting issues	Documents indicated the need for clear and transparent beneficiary selection processes.	Weak targeting may exclude those with the greatest housing need.	Transparent, needs-based, and verifiable beneficiary selection systems should be strengthened.

Key Issue	Evidence from Documents	Interpretation	Reform Implication
Land governance constraints	Housing implementation depended on land availability, land suitability, and coordination among agencies and local governments.	Weak land governance may delay delivery and affect equitable access.	Land identification, local planning, and inter-agency coordination should be improved.
Beneficiary-centered access mechanisms	Recent adjustments allowed applicants to access the program through government agencies, financing institutions, and developers.	Multiple access channels may improve procedural access but may not automatically solve affordability barriers.	Access mechanisms should be supported by safeguards against exclusion and unequal access.

Table 4 presents the main findings on the 4PH housing program. It shows that the program had strong policy support but continued to face challenges related to affordability, targeting, land governance, and equitable access. The table also explains why housing reform should not focus only on increasing housing supply. It should also ensure that poor and vulnerable households can realistically access and sustain housing support.

### Research Question 3: To what extent do SK/LYDC mechanisms translate into meaningful, sustained youth participation?

The findings revealed that youth participation in governance had expanded in terms of legal and institutional frameworks but remained inconsistent in practice. Legislative reforms strengthened the mandates of the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) and formalized planning tools such as the Local Youth Development Plan and Annual Youth Investment Program. These mechanisms provided a structured foundation for youth engagement in governance processes.

Despite these advancements, implementation outcomes varied significantly across local government units. Capacity limitations, uneven training, and weak institutional support affected the ability of youth organizations to sustain meaningful participation. In many cases, engagement was episodic and concentrated around electoral cycles rather than continuous governance involvement.

A critical gap was identified between participation inputs and measurable outcomes. While activities such as consultations and planning sessions were conducted, their influence on actual policy decisions, budgeting, and program implementation remained limited. This indicated that participation was often procedural rather than outcome-oriented.

The findings suggested that meaningful youth participation required structured capacity-building systems, integration into governance cycles, and performance-based monitoring. Without these, youth participation risked remaining symbolic rather than transformative.

**Table 5. Summary of Findings on Youth Participation through SK and LYDC Mechanisms**

Key Issue	Evidence from Documents	Interpretation	Reform Implication
Expanded legal basis for youth participation	SK reforms and LYDC-related documents showed that youth participation had been formalized through local youth development structures.	Youth participation was institutionally recognized in local governance.	Youth governance mechanisms should be fully integrated into local planning and budgeting systems.
Local Youth Development Plan and Annual Youth	Documents showed that youth councils were expected to contribute to planning and	Youth participation had formal planning tools, but their use depended on local	LGUs should provide technical support for preparing realistic youth development plans and

Key Issue	Evidence from Documents	Interpretation	Reform Implication
Investment Program	investment programming.	capacity.	investment programs.
Uneven local implementation	Evidence showed that implementation differed across local government units.	Youth governance was stronger in some areas but weak or symbolic in others.	Standardized monitoring tools should be used to assess SK and LYDC performance across LGUs.
Capacity and training gaps	Documents indicated that some youth leaders lacked sufficient training in planning, budgeting, monitoring, and policy engagement.	Limited capacity reduced the ability of youth leaders to influence governance outcomes.	Continuous training should be provided on leadership, budgeting, project management, and local policy monitoring.
Episodic participation	Youth engagement often became active during elections or consultations but was not always sustained.	Participation was sometimes procedural rather than transformative.	Youth participation should be linked to continuous governance cycles, not only to election periods or one-time consultations.
Weak outcome tracking	Documents suggested that youth activities were often reported, but their actual policy impact was not always measured.	The value of youth participation remained unclear when outputs were not connected to measurable outcomes.	Outcome-based indicators should be used to assess youth contribution to local governance, accountability, and community development.

Table 5 summarizes the findings on youth participation through SK and LYDC mechanisms. It shows that youth participation had a strong legal foundation, but implementation remained uneven. The table also indicates that capacity gaps, weak continuity, and limited outcome tracking reduced the transformative value of youth governance. These findings suggest that youth participation should move beyond formal representation and should be linked to planning, budgeting, monitoring, and measurable local governance outcomes.

#### **Research Question 4: What integrated reform bundle can advance inclusive outcomes, particularly for vulnerable families and youth?**

The findings supported the development of an integrated reform framework based on three interconnected mechanisms: trust, vulnerability, and accountability.

The trust pathway highlighted that electoral credibility strengthens institutional legitimacy. Transparent and auditable election processes increase public confidence, which extends to other government programs such as housing. Weak trust, on the other hand, reduces citizen cooperation and undermines policy effectiveness.

The vulnerability pathway emphasized that housing insecurity increases susceptibility to transactional politics. Economic precarity creates conditions where short-term incentives influence political behavior, reinforcing governance capture and weakening pro-poor targeting. Addressing housing affordability was therefore identified as both a social and political reform priority.

The accountability pathway demonstrated that effective youth participation enhances monitoring and feedback mechanisms. When youth institutions are functional, they contribute to transparency in program implementation and help identify exclusion or inefficiencies. This strengthens governance across sectors, including elections and housing.

Based on these mechanisms, the study proposed a three-pillar reform bundle. The first pillar focused on technology-neutral electoral transparency and audit standards. The second emphasized pro-poor and beneficiary-centric housing finance with transparent targeting systems. The third promoted outcomes-oriented capacity development for SK and LYDC, linked to local governance processes.

The findings also highlighted the importance of regional equity, particularly for underserved areas such as Caraga, where institutional and geographic constraints require targeted policy support.

**Table 6. Integrated Reform Framework for Inclusive Societal Transformation**

Governance Mechanism	Linked Domain	Main Problem Identified	Recommended Reform	Expected Outcome	Inclusive
Trust	Electoral integrity	Disinformation, vote-buying, weak public confidence, and transparency concerns affected electoral credibility.	Institutionalize technology-neutral transparency standards, independent audits, clear procurement processes, and stronger civic education.	Improved electoral credibility and stronger public trust in democratic institutions.	
Vulnerability	Affordable housing	Housing insecurity, affordability barriers, weak targeting, and land governance issues limited access for vulnerable families.	Strengthen pro-poor housing finance, deepen subsidies, expand social rental options, and apply transparent beneficiary targeting.	Improved housing access among low-income households and reduced susceptibility to clientelist politics.	
Accountability	Youth participation	SK and LYDC mechanisms were legally established but weakened by capacity gaps, uneven implementation, and weak outcome tracking.	Provide standardized capacity-building, integrate youth participation into planning and budgeting, and use outcome-based monitoring tools.	Stronger youth participation in governance and improved local monitoring of public programs.	
Systems coordination	Cross-domain governance	Electoral, housing, and youth governance reforms were often implemented separately.	Create inter-agency coordination mechanisms linking COMELEC, DHSUD, DILG, NYC, and LGUs.	More coherent governance reform and reduced fragmentation in policy implementation.	
Regional equity	Underserved regions	Regions such as Caraga may experience geographic, institutional, and resource constraints.	Provide targeted technical assistance, resource support, and regional monitoring systems.	More equitable implementation of national reforms across diverse local contexts.	

Table 6 presents the integrated reform framework of the study. It connects the three major governance mechanisms—trust, vulnerability, and accountability—with the study’s domains of electoral integrity, affordable housing, and youth participation. It also shows that inclusive societal transformation requires coordinated reforms rather than isolated interventions. The table strengthens the paper because it converts the findings into clear policy directions and expected outcomes.

**Overall Synthesis of Findings**

The findings showed that electoral integrity, affordable housing, and youth participation were interconnected governance domains. Each domain had its own policy concerns, but the analysis showed that these concerns also influenced one another. Electoral integrity was affected by disinformation, vote-buying, weak public trust, and transparency concerns. Affordable housing was affected by affordability barriers, targeting issues, land governance constraints, and uneven access under the 4PH program. Youth participation was strengthened by SK and LYDC reforms, but it remained limited by capacity gaps, weak continuity, and poor outcome tracking.

The cross-domain analysis showed three major mechanisms: trust, vulnerability, and accountability. Trust was mainly connected to electoral integrity. When elections were perceived as credible and transparent, public confidence in government institutions was strengthened. However, when disinformation, vote-buying, and weak transparency were present, institutional legitimacy was weakened. This loss of trust could also affect how citizens viewed other public programs, including housing and youth development initiatives.

Vulnerability was mainly connected to housing insecurity. The findings suggested that families facing housing difficulty, poverty, and unstable income were more exposed to political inducements and clientelist practices. This means that housing policy was not only a social welfare issue. It was also connected to democratic participation. When people remained economically insecure, they became more vulnerable to short-term political offers during elections.

Accountability was mainly connected to youth participation. SK and LYDC mechanisms created formal spaces for youth involvement in governance. However, participation became meaningful only when youth leaders were trained, supported, and included in planning, budgeting, implementation, and monitoring. Without capacity-building and outcome tracking, youth participation risked becoming symbolic rather than transformative.

The study found that inclusive societal transformation could not be achieved through isolated reforms. Electoral reform alone would not be enough without addressing socio-economic vulnerability. Housing reform alone would not be enough without transparent targeting and accountable implementation. Youth participation alone would not be enough without institutional support and measurable governance outcomes. A systems-based approach was therefore needed. This approach should strengthen electoral trust, reduce housing-related vulnerability, and improve youth-led accountability in local governance.

#### 4. Conclusion

The study demonstrated that electoral integrity, affordable housing, and youth participation functioned as interconnected governance domains that collectively shaped inclusive societal transformation in the Philippines. Electoral processes were found to remain vulnerable to disinformation and transactional practices, which weakened institutional legitimacy and public trust. At the same time, the 4PH housing program reflected strong policy ambition and expansion capacity, yet its effectiveness in reaching the poorest sectors was constrained by affordability, targeting, and land governance challenges. Youth participation mechanisms, particularly through SK and LYDC structures, showed expanded legal and institutional space but were limited by uneven capacity, weak continuity, and insufficient integration into local governance outcomes.

The findings confirmed that governance outcomes were not isolated but influenced by cross-domain mechanisms. Trust in electoral systems affected confidence in public programs. Housing insecurity increased vulnerability to political inducements. Youth participation influenced accountability and monitoring capacity. These interdependencies explained why sector-specific reforms often produced limited impact when implemented independently.

The study concluded that inclusive societal transformation required coordinated reforms across governance domains. Without integration, institutional weaknesses may persist and reinforce one another. A systems-oriented



approach that addresses trust, vulnerability, and accountability simultaneously was therefore necessary to achieve sustainable and equitable development outcomes.

## 5. Recommendations

Electoral integrity should be strengthened through the institutionalization of transparent and auditable systems. Electoral management bodies should adopt technology-neutral transparency standards that ensure public access to audit trails, independent system reviews, and clear procurement processes. Greater emphasis should be placed on civic education programs that address disinformation and promote informed voter participation. These measures can help rebuild public trust and reinforce the legitimacy of electoral outcomes, which is essential for broader governance effectiveness.

Housing policy should be reoriented toward a more inclusive and pro-poor framework. Financing mechanisms under the 4PH program should be adjusted to reflect the income realities of low-income households, particularly through the introduction of deeper subsidies and flexible payment schemes. Social rental options should be expanded to accommodate households that are unable to meet long-term amortization requirements. Transparent targeting systems must be implemented to ensure that beneficiaries are selected based on equitable and verifiable criteria. Strengthening land governance processes is also necessary to improve project delivery and ensure that housing programs reach underserved populations.

Youth participation mechanisms should be strengthened by focusing on capacity development and outcome-oriented engagement. Standardized training programs and monitoring tools should be provided to SK and LYDC members to enhance their ability to participate effectively in governance processes. Youth participation should be integrated into local planning, budgeting, and monitoring systems to ensure continuity and relevance. Performance-based support, including funding and technical assistance, should be introduced to sustain engagement and ensure that youth contributions translate into measurable governance outcomes.

A systems-based approach to governance reform should be adopted to address the interdependencies among electoral integrity, housing policy, and youth participation. Government agencies should enhance coordination to ensure that reforms are aligned and mutually reinforcing. Cross-sector monitoring frameworks should be developed to track the combined impact of governance interventions. Such an approach can help prevent fragmented policy implementation and improve overall effectiveness.

Regional disparities should be addressed through targeted policy interventions. Underserved regions such as Caraga require increased resource allocation, institutional support, and capacity-building initiatives. Geographic and structural constraints should be considered in program design to ensure equitable access to services. Strengthening regional monitoring systems can further ensure that national programs are implemented effectively across diverse local contexts.

Future research should extend the present findings through empirical validation. Primary data collection, including interviews and case studies, should be conducted to capture lived experiences and contextual variations. Mixed-method approaches should be used to examine the relationships between housing insecurity, electoral behavior, and youth participation. Continuous evaluation of policy interventions is necessary to assess their long-term effectiveness and inform evidence-based decision-making.

## Declarations

Based on the manuscript, the following declarations are aligned with journal requirements and academic standards.

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### Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

The author was solely responsible for conceptualization, methodology, data collection, analysis, writing of the original draft, validation, and review and editing of the manuscript.

### Ethical Statement

This study utilized publicly available documents and secondary data sources. No human participants were involved, and no personal or sensitive data were collected. Ethical standards were observed throughout the research process. All data were handled in compliance with applicable data protection principles, including the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173) and aligned with ISO 27001 information security standards.

### Declaration of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interest related to this study. The research was conducted independently, and no financial or personal relationships influenced the findings or interpretation of results.

### Data Availability Statement

All data used in this study were obtained from publicly accessible sources, including government documents, institutional reports, and peer-reviewed publications. These sources are properly cited in the reference list. No additional datasets were generated.

### AI Usage Disclosure

Artificial intelligence tools were used solely for language refinement and editing support. No AI tools were used in data analysis, interpretation of findings, or generation of results. The author maintained full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the content.

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