



## Challenges to Governance Performance of the Barangay Local Officials in Southern Philippines

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### Abstract

Despite the unexpected spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government ensures that the optimum delivery of essential services that the community residents deserve will not be stopped. The study utilized a descriptive phenomenology designed for 30 Punong Barangay and Barangay Councilors, using purposeful sampling, in the five provinces, ten municipalities, and barangays considered non-Poblacion barangays second-class level municipalities in Southern Philippines. Experts utilized and validated a self-made questionnaire, and trustworthiness is achieved by credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Narrative analysis was employed, such as recording the interview transcripts and coding field notes. Findings revealed that challenges encountered by the local barangay officials in attaining governance performance were the lack or meager allocation of Internal Revenue Allotment, violations of laws and ordinances, the attitude of the constituents, the incapacity of the Barangay Peacekeeping Action Team (BPAT), the discontented constituents, issues on project implementation, and too much politics. Therefore, the Barangay local officials play a crucial role in sustaining essential services to achieve high governance performance.

**Keywords:** *Descriptive Phenomenology, Governance Performance, Narrative Analysis, Public Administration.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Barangay is a basic political unit stipulated in Section 384 of the Local Government Code of 1991 and the lowest political-administrative unit (Orum et al., 2019) in the Philippine governmental system. Maintaining a barangay requires an administrative capability, an indispensable reason that many things are to be considered Boysillo (2017) believes that barangay governance plays a vital role in the empowerment of the local government units in the country, while Aquino et al. (2017) suggest that a healthy, pleasant or even excellent governance must be ensured to attain the optimum services that the barangay residents deserve. Besides, barangay officials are service delivery intermediaries between the government and citizens (Gabriel, 2017).

From a global perspective, Antoniadis & Haan (2018, 2019) claim to be the first to examine the relationship between the capabilities and performance of elected politicians in the United States, which considers the degree of citizens' satisfaction and loyalty and a politician's reputation. In Indonesia, Munir et al. (2020) discovered that the competence of the village apparatus [comprising the village secretary, the hamlet head, the neighborhood association, and the community units or those involved in the village government

affairs (Syaifullah, 2017) plays the primary role in improving the performance of a village government.

In Negros Oriental, Philippines, Salindo (2018) recommends capacitating the local government unit's officials to maximize their capability in leading their local governments to the future. Naraga (2017) recommends carefully selecting leaders who can administer the proposed Bangsamoro government. Now, it is high time to revisit the BLGUs in consonance with the provisions of the Local Government Code of 1991 with the contention of bringing government services up to the far-flung areas as Walker & Andrews (2013) consider that local governments play a critical role in delivering services to the public. Hence, the researchers are motivated to study the challenges to the governance performance of the Barangay local officials in the Southern Philippines.

This study is anchored on a governance performance-based Local Government Performance Management System (LGMPS), which helps local government units assess performance, pointing out weak areas to improve (Fro'kre, 2011; Adriano & Estimada, 2014). The performance of the local government is an integral part of overall governance performance (Kikuchi, 2018). The congruency of



governing various barangays still needs some enrichment in performance areas, as per Frivaldo et al. (2019), but Diana (2014) realizes undeniable performance monitoring in the public sector. However, Ahenkan et al. (2018) reveal that performance was ineffective due to challenges, as Caldo (2015) justifies the need to assess competency measures. Hence, performance monitoring systems for local government units were introduced (Capuno et al., 2015).

## METHODS

The study utilized a descriptive phenomenology design for 30 Punong Barangay and Barangay Councilors, using purposeful sampling, in the five provinces, ten municipalities, and barangays considered non-Poblacion barangays second-class level municipalities in Southern Philippines. Experts utilized and validated a self-made questionnaire, and trustworthiness is achieved by credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Narrative analysis was employed, such as recording the interview transcripts and coding field notes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Presenting data based on the right type of research. Presentation of data can be in the form of a narrative, table, or an appropriate picture. Then the data is analyzed by comparing the concepts, theories, or results of previous research.

An investigation was conducted to analyze the participants' views on the Barangay officials' challenges in performing their duties and functions. When asked to describe their barangay, one participant mentioned, "matawhay pero may problema sa health crisis" (there is peace and order, but we have a health crisis problem). It is touching to emphasize that somebody acknowledged an effort by saying, "*Salamat sa among mga barangay officials & staff ng response panahon sa kalamidad*" (thank you to our barangay officials and staff who responded during the calamity).

However, it was sad to note the non-compliance on following rules as a participant found it a challenge, "*ang hindi pagsunod sa health protocols*" (non-compliance of health protocols), which affirmed "*kailangang sumunod ang mga mamamayan sa lahat ng health protocols upang malabanan ang kumakalat na sakit na COVID-19*" (there is a need for the citizens to follow health protocols to resist against COVID-19).

Similarly, residents expect the vaccine as another participant pleaded, "unta tanan tao sa barangay matagaan ug vaccine" (I hope all barangay residents shall be given vaccine).

When the participants were asked about the challenges they encountered, most responses given by the participants were, "Having no IRA is the biggest challenge," "No IRA," "budget until now is not yet, but it is not a hindrance with us as barangay officials," "the main problem sa among barangay walay IRA (Internal Revenue Allotment), *nagadepende lang sa mother barangay, municipal ug sa probinsya*" (the main problem in our barangay is having no Internal Revenue Allotment that depends on mother barangay, municipal, and the province]. The researchers corroborated these assertions in personal meetings with the barangay leaders. The awareness was not privy to respondents affirming, "our barangay needs IRA" and "*gwapo unta among barangay kaso kulang ang budget kay wala IRA*" (our barangay is admirable but lacks budget due to having no Internal Revenue Allotment). That is why operating a barangay government with scarce resources is difficult, prompting them to increase their efforts in outsourcing finances to meet constituent demands. The observation correlates with Cabaluna's (2017) assessment of barangay officials to devise strategies for revenue generation to augment the barangay funds.

There were constituents who broke rules concerning curfew hours, public disturbances, drunkenness, solid waste management disposal, and astray animals. Related responses with regards to curfew were revealed, "kakulangan sa curfew" (lack of curfew), "walang tamang curfew" (no reasonable curfew), "walang curfew sa barangay" (no curfew in the barangay), "wala sang curfew" (no curfew) and, "curfew". Some responses were in the form of recommendations expressed as "magkaroon ng curfew" (to have a curfew), and "ibalik ang curfew" (restore the curfew).

In addition, minors violated orders evidenced by statements, "isa sa mga problema dito ay ang matitigas na kabataan na lumalabas kahit na curfew hours" (one of the problems here is the violent youths that go out even during curfew hours), and, "*problema ay mga kabataan na tumatambay disoras ng gabi*" (problems on youth hanging out late at night).

Responses on public disturbances included reactions by the participants "*ang mga maiingay na*



*sasakyan ng mga kabataan ay kinakainis ng mga apektado*” (the blaring sound of youth’s vehicles abominable to the affected), “*mga kabataan na nagpapaburotot ng mga motor at nagdudulot ng ingay*” (the youth on over-speeding motorcycle causing annoying noise), and, “*mga sasakyan na nagpapatakbo ng mabilis sa kalsada*” (over speeding vehicles on streets). Besides, recommendations were conveyed as “*sana maging mahina ang pagpatakbo ng mga motor*” (hope for a vulnerable speed of motorcycles), and “*dapat lagyan ng speed limit ang mga motor*” (there is a need to impose speed limit to motorcycles).

On the other hand, issues on drunkenness included responses “*problema ang mga lasing sa umaga*” (problems of drunkards in the morning), “*ok lang ang barangay kaso damo...maoy*” (it is okay in the barangay, but there are many tantrums, “*mga lasinggero*” (drunkards), and, “*damo...palainom*” (many...drunkards).

Challenges related to solid waste management encompassed the reply of participants on “*problema ang walang disiplinang mamamayan sa pagtapon ng basura*” (problem on undisciplined citizens in disposing of garbage), “*problema ay pagtatapon ng basura kahit saan*” (problem on throwing of rubbish anywhere), “*...ang pagtapon ng mga tao sa tamang lalagyan ng basura ay hindi pa almost perfect*” (proper waste disposal of the residents is not almost perfect), “*di pagtatapon sa tamang lalagyan ang basura*” (the improper waste disposal), and, “*ang di paglilinis ng assigned area sa gilid ng kalsada*” (for not cleaning assigned road area).

Further, the blocking of canals was evident by the statements, “*kalat ang basura sa kanal*” (waste spreads on canals), and “*canals are stocked of plastics*”. Justification included, “*ang mga constituents ay di sumusunod sa proper waste segregation*” (constituents do not follow proper waste segregation). Lastly, challenges on a stray animals comprised reactions of participants, “*wala pang maraming problema, aso lang*” (there is yet no many problems, only on dogs), and “*pagkalat ng aso sa kalsada ay mapanganib lalo na sa mga bata*” (stray dogs on the road is dangerous to children). This finding may settle with Labastida-Martinez & Fernandez (2020) that poor execution of barangay ordinances requires tremendous political resolve on the part of implementers.

Barangay leaders murmured about non-cooperative constituents who lack the interest to participate in the planning and implementation of barangay activities. A participant reacted, “As a public servant (government employee), challenge-attitude of the people”. This attitude might hinder the willingness of the barangay officials to serve. Another respondent professed, “*mahirap makisama sa mga constituents na matitigas ang ulo*” (tough to associate with hard-headed constituents). In contrast, a sentiment was emphasized, “*ang alam ko po ay sapat ang aking pagserbisyo, nasa tao po ang problema dahil di talaga maiwasan at maipagkaila na may mga matitigas ang ulo*” (all I know my service is enough, the problem is with the people for it is unavoidable and undeniable that there are stubborn individuals) while another respondent substantiated it for, “not cooperating in some barangay responsibilities”. This finding collaborates with Amoroso et al. (2020), having confidence that the Punong Barangay and Sangguniang Barangay members are competent in performing their duties and functions.

Another challenge was the Barangay Peacekeeping Action Team (BPAT) or Barangay Tanod to fulfill their functions. These are volunteers who assist the authorities in enforcing laws or ordinances which could not fully carry out their duties for the reasons cited by respondents that “*indi makahulag ang BPAT/TANOD kay wala kami armas*” (our inability as BPAT/TANOD to move for we do not have firearms, “*walang armas na gamitin sa pagbabantay*” (no firearms to be utilized during surveillance). In terms of curfew implementation, a respondent justified that “*wala sang curfew nga mayad kay wala mga armas ang mga BPAT*” (no imposition of heightened curfew for the BPATs do not have firearms). Hence, the lack of firearms hinders BPAT's performance. This may agree with the findings of Cruz et al. (2021) that Barangay Tanod (or BPAT) reflected on their experiences to further improve as public servants and to be prepared for future crises.

Although a participant believed that “our barangay is in good governance”, it can be manifested from the reaction of another participant that “leadership by example is the great challenge”. An emotional statement by a participant-barangay official was, “*bilang isang official ng barangay masasabi ko na di naman ako nagkulang sa serbisyo*” (as a barangay



official, all I can say is that I do not have a shortcoming in providing services), which was substantiated with a respondent's statement, "*matabang ka sa indi may storya gyapon*" (there is criticism whether you will help or not). Moreover, the discontentment of constituents with every barangay official's action to cater to public service is evidenced by a participant's opinion by expressing, "*kulang ang pag atiman para sa kaayuhan sang tanan*" (there is inadequacy in keeping common welfare). At the same time, another reacts as "*hina ang patakaran*" (the policy is weak).

In addition, a participant suggested, "Barangay officials must do their job properly or if they are on duty. They have to be efficient and effective." Further, a participant advised, "dapat ang barangay official ang unang sumunod sa mga alituntunin ng barangay upang sila'y susundin ng mamamayan" (barangay officials should be the first to obey principles so constituents will follow). This advice is related to the observation of a respondent exposing, "*respect begins at brgy council and wag lang puro atik during sa election time and bago unta kita mag correct sa ibang tao it begins unta sa council*" (respect begins at the barangay council and not deceit during election time, and before correcting others it should begin from the council).

Another point might level up by these issues on "*tamang pagtrato sa bawat isa*" (fair treatment with each other) and the belief that, "*dapat magkaisa sila sa lahat ng gawain sa barangay para mas maigi ang mga planu na darating*" (everyone should be united in all barangay tasks for good plans to follow). As a result, residents have stated that barangay officials should double their efforts to improve governance performance. This result corroborates with Irfan et al. (2020), citing Napitupulu (2012), that the principle of community satisfaction in the service processed by the government as a service provider is very important because only by satisfactorily satisfying the needs of the community is the existence of that government recognized and has the legitimacy and trust of its people.

When participants were asked about the implementation of projects, most of the participants' responses were related to infrastructures. Among others, it could be inferred that challenges were encountered in the implementation of projects. A participant believed that "some projects are delayed and not done due to the crisis we face". It was

affirmed by a respondent that, "very slow ang pag implement sang project kakulangan sang pondo" (project implementation is very slow due to lack of funds) while another revealed, "*pag-paimplement sa mga proyekto dugay matuman*" (project implementation lasts long). It was evident from the replies that there was a delay in project implementation. Besides, projects cannot be implemented without proper programs and funds. This is substantiated by Samimpey & Saghatforoush (2020), that success in infrastructure projects requires success in all project phases, including design, construction, and operation, while a very slow or delayed project's implementation creates a hypothetical assumption that a mess has been happening.

Another challenge encountered was too much politicking despite the situation. Political inclinations, political issues, and concerns in the past elections lead barangay officials to a paucity of planning down to the implementation stage of public services. The constituents want to have united barangay officials. Besides, non-political allies can hardly ask for financial support to fund programs and infrastructures. A participant said, "Political issues and concerns of past elections ... sometimes political aspirations negatively impact the objective of development of the barangay." This agreed with the point of another participant emphasizing "political issues affecting their duties" and the consciousness that "the relationship of the barangay officials are not in good terms because of politics and pride". These challenges have relevance to Lewis (2015) on what methods to be used to allocate funds to the village (barangay) are particularly problematic, as they severely constrain achieving official objectives. At the same time, for Jacoby et al. (2019), political affiliation weakens the association between financial distress and small positive earnings management.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the researchers concluded they were optimistic about providing basic services to their communities despite their challenges. Although few community residents criticized them because of some delays in basic services especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, they still managed to implement projects relevant to economic enterprise, health programs, solid waste management, and revenue. Given these findings, the performance of the local



government is an integral part of overall governance performance (Kikuchi, 2018). The congruency of governing various barangays still needs some enrichment in performance areas, as per Frivaldo et al. (2019), but Diana (2014) realizes undeniable performance monitoring in the public sector. Further, it deviates from the study of Ahenkan et al. (2018) on ineffective performance because of the challenges the local leaders face. However, suppose the Barangay is governed by Barangay officials who are transparent, have strong accountability, and are responsive to the needs of the community residents as evidence of their high participation. In that case, services will be effectively and efficiently delivered. Therefore, the Barangay local officials play a crucial role in sustaining essential services to achieve high governance performance.

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