

The Service Delivery of Local Government Officials in a Philippine Rural Community

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Abstract

This study assessed the service delivery of local government officials in the municipality of Marihatag, Surigao del Sur. Specifically, it aimed to determine the demographic profile of the respondents, the extent of basic services provided by the local government to the community, the service delivery skills training program, and the problems encountered by the local officials in the implementation of basic service delivery. A quantitative and qualitative research design was used in the 12 barangays of Marihatag, Surigao del Sur, utilizing a questionnaire and personal interviews to gather data from 73 local government officials and 319 residents as respondents to the study. Based on the findings of the study, the majority of the agricultural support services were implemented; the health and social services were fully implemented; the services and facilities related to environmental sanitation were implemented; the infrastructure facilities were fully implemented; and the information and reading center was partially implemented. As to the service delivery skills training programs, they are implemented by the local government unit. The topmost problem encountered by the local officials in the implementation of basic service delivery is the lack of community participation. A proposal for barangay empowerment, good governance, and development projects in the Municipality of Marihatag is hereby recommended as part of a community extension service.

Keywords: Service delivery; local government unit; implementation; local governance

Introduction

Local government units play a crucial role in supporting the country's development. This has to do with how the leader fulfills his obligations as a servant to his society. Due to their strategic role at the local level in providing effective and efficient service to the rural community, local government entities work together with the national government to respond to development concerns. The level of governance in a city or municipality is reflected in the coherence of service delivery through the sub-units or rural communities. In addition, the rural community, as the fundamental political unit, serves as the main planning and execution body for government initiatives, public facilities, projects, and events, as well as a venue where the citizens' collective viewpoints can be gathered and taken into account (Boysillo, 2017).

In the delivery of services, rural community authorities act as a bridge between the government and the populace. They are essential to the performance of state duties as well as democratic and deliberative governance and citizen participation. The rural community level is the finest place to implement citizen engagement in community initiatives and projects meant to expand democratic participation while also developing rural areas (Gaventa, 2004).

Marihatag is a coastal municipality in the Philippines' Surigao del Sur province. It represented 3.03% of the total population of Surigao del Sur province, or 0.69% of the overall population of the Caraga region. It has 12 communities with a poverty incidence of 45.64%. Among the twelve (12) communities, six (6) are considered remote communities. As a primary planning and implementing unit, it needs to have competent government leaders that can promote the general welfare of the public, especially at the grassroots level. Similarly, officials' indecisiveness and lack of capabili-

ties when taking on duties as officers-in-charge can jeopardize a community's good governance. Hence, to deliver satisfactory public services in their communities, they must have strengthened the competencies of community officials through development projects and intervention programs. This study is designed to assess the delivery of basic services by public officials in a certain rural community and determine the service needs in relation to public services.

Materials and Methods

The study used a quantitative and qualitative research design utilizing a questionnaire and interview guide to gather data on the service delivery of the local government unit from 12 communities comprising local government officials and residents, with a total of 392 respondents. The research was carried out in Marihatag, a coastal and low-income municipality in the Philippines' Surigao del Sur province. In this study, the researcher used an audio recording and field notes to gather information about the service delivery of the local government. To ensure the clarity of the recordings, transcription was done after audio recording. The responses of the participants were written down to provide clear information, and the results were then analyzed to determine the identified extent of implementation of the basic services, including the problems encountered by the respondents.

Results and Discussions

The data were presented in the order stipulated by the specific objectives of the study. These were presented in five (5) sections: Section 1 discusses the socio-demographic profile of the respondents as to age, sex, educational attainment, marital status, nature of work, and years of residency. Section 2 discusses the extent of the implementation of basic services in terms of agricultural support, health and social welfare, environmental sanitation, infrastructure facilities, information, and a reading center. Section 3 discusses the service delivery skills training program provided by the Local Government Unit to strengthen local governance. Lastly, Section 4 discusses the problems encountered by the local officials in the implementation of basic service delivery.

Socio- Demographic Profile

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Profile: Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
15-20 years old	32	8.16%	6 th
21-30 years old	91	23.21%	1 st
31-40 years old	89	22.70%	2 nd
41-50 years old	87	22.19%	3 rd
51-60 years old	56	14.29%	4 th
61 years and above	37	9.44%	5 th

The data in Table 1 presents the age of the respondents. The majority of the respondents are 21–30 years old, with 23.21%. This implies that most of the respondents are young adults, during which there are key developmental tasks that allow for participation in self-exploration and identity formation. According to Majee et al. (2020), young people's decisions to engage or disengage in community activities can be attributed to their perceptions of community resources and opportunities. Perceptions of the future of their communities varied by age and were strongly related to how

youth and young adults perceive their worth. Local organizations can motivate at-risk youth and young adults to participate in community life.

Table 2: Socio-Demographic Profile: Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Female	228	58.16%	1 st
Male	164	41.84%	2 nd

The majority of the respondents are female, with 58.16%, while males have only 41.84%. According to research by the United Nations, rural women are essential to helping their families and communities achieve food and nutrition security. They also contribute to revenue generation, improved rural livelihoods, and general well-being. They support local and global economies and agricultural and rural businesses. Furthermore, according to the study of Darmi (2017), at a certain level of employment (particularly in the service sector), women strongly support the quality of work.

Table 3: Socio-Demographic Profile: Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Elementary level	32	8.16%	6 th
Elementary graduate	36	9.18%	5 th
High school level	93	23.72%	3 rd
High school graduate	98	25.00%	1 st
College level	96	24.49%	2 nd
College graduate	37	9.44%	4 th

The majority of the respondents are high school graduates with 25%, and the least weighted mean is the elementary level with 8.16%. This implies that the people in the rural communities have a lower educational background, driven by prior educational opportunity and economic status. Larger inequalities were reported in the study by Drescher et al. (2022) for particular socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, and geographic categories.

Table 4: Socio-Demographic Profile: Marital Status

Civil Status	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Single	105	26.79%	2 nd
Married	259	66.07%	1 st
Separated	10	2.55%	4 th
Widow/Widower	18	4.59%	3 rd

The data shows the marital status of the respondents. Based on the data, most of the respondents were married, with 66.07%, while the least were separated, with a mean of 2.55%. Apparently, Mustafa, J. et al. (2015) found that knowledge and use of any form of contraception were especially low in rural areas. Lack of access to high-quality services, bad impressions, and religious objections are some of the justifications for not using family planning. Involving men in the discussion of contemporary contraception's access, price, availability, and societal constraints would help to address the needs and ensure that women and couples achieve their reproductive and birthing goals.

Table 5: Socio-Demographic Profile: Nature of Work

Nature of Work	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Student	22	5.61%	4 th
Self-Employed	95	24.23%	3 rd
Employed	115	29.34%	2 nd
Unemployed	160	40.82%	1 st

Based on the data, the majority of the respondents were unemployed, with 160, or 40.82%. This implies that there is a high rate of unemployment in rural communities due to a lack of access to job opportunities and connections. Harris, et al. (2014) investigation revealed that working individuals had greater connections to people who had ties to community groups than unemployed participants. Participants who were unemployed had a lot of contacts, but they lacked connections to the proper people and organizations to support their job hunt. It will take work by job searchers and others to create new relationships, programs, and policies in order to increase employment opportunities.

Table 6: Number of Years of Residency

Years of Residency	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1-10 Years	38	9.69%	5 th
11-20 Years	150	38.27%	1 st
21-30 Years	66	16.84%	2 nd
31-40 Years	42	10.71%	4 th
41-50 Years	35	8.93%	6 th
51-Years and Above	61	15.56%	3 rd

Most of the respondents are 11–20 years old, with 38.27%, while those 41–50 years old have only 8.93%. This suggests that respondents have not been in residence for a long time. In the Kana-kis et al. (2019) study, the participants said that their connection to people and location was their main reason for wanting to stay in the community. A perceived lack of access to family, services, and work, as well as lifestyle factors, were the top reasons people expressed a desire to leave the community. As an illustration, raising awareness of the services and activities that residents can take part in can improve community attachment and satisfaction.

Implementation of Basic Services in the Community

Table 7: Agricultural Support Services

INDICATORS	MEAN	DESCRIPTION
Farmers training and seminar	3.87	Implemented
Animal dispersal program	3.60	Implemented
Vaccination of animals	3.75	Implemented
Fertilizers subsidy distribution	3.68	Implemented
Crop insurance	3.31	Partially Implemented
Farmers' health and insurance	3.26	Partially Implemented
Seeds and planting materials	3.88	Implemented
Monitoring of crops planted and harvested	3.58	Implemented
Total Mean	3.62	Implemented

The table 7 shows that the majority of the agricultural support services were implemented. As to seeds and planting materials, they have the highest weighted mean (3.88), while farmers' health and insurance got only a 3.26, which indicates that they are partially implemented. This implies that local government units lack an awareness program on insurance because of sociocultural factors. Hyg's (2015) research found that although there was low awareness of the health insurance scheme, attitudes toward it were positive. Based on the responses gathered, it appeared that the populace would be open to signing up for the program if given the chance. Lack of trust in the social policies of the government, religious conviction, and poverty were some of the obstacles that would prevent the health insurance scheme from being implemented and expanded.

Table 8: Health and Social Welfare Services

INDICATORS	MEAN	DESCRIPTION
Childhood care and development	4.60	Fully Implemented
Livelihood and pro-poor projects	4.34	Fully Implemented
Nutrition Service/ supplemental feeding	4.57	Fully Implemented
Women and development program	4.47	Fully Implemented
Family and community welfare	4.40	Fully Implemented
Free vaccination, vitamins, and medical kits	4.50	Fully Implemented
Health sanitation	4.38	Fully Implemented
Youth welfare/ senior citizen services	4.46	Fully Implemented
Total Mean	4.47	Fully Implemented

The data in Table 8 presents the health and social welfare services. Based on the data, all indicators are fully implemented. The indicator with the highest mean is the Childhood Care and Development project, with a 4.60 weighted mean, while the Livelihoods and Poor People project has a 4.34 mean only. As mandated in Section 17 of the Local Government Code of 1991, or RA 7160, services and facilities such as health and social welfare services should be implemented in every rural community.

Table 9: Services and Facilities Related to Environmental Sanitation

INDICATORS	MEAN	DESCRIPTION
Garbage collection	3.22	Partially Implemented
Drainage system	3.39	Partially Implemented
Wastewater disposal	3.44	Implemented
Healthcare waste management	3.55	Partially Implemented
Infectious waste disposal	3.35	Partially Implemented
Ecological sanitation	3.44	Implemented
Hazardous waste management	3.24	Partially Implemented
Composting site	3.64	Implemented
Total Mean	3.41	Implemented

The data shows that the composting site has a weighted mean of 3.64, which indicates that it is implemented. On the other hand, the least implemented is the garbage collection, with a weighted mean of 3.22 and only partially implemented. This implies that garbage collection is not a priority

concern when it comes to environmental sanitation in rural communities, while the use of composting sites is more prevalent. Composting is widely used for the treatment of municipal solid waste. Analysis by Wang, H. et al. (2014) showed that, as to solid waste services, the poorest households are not willing to pay a higher percentage of their income than the wealthiest households.

Table 10: Infrastructure Facilities

INDICATORS	MEAN	DESCRIPTION
Multipurpose hall	4.54	Fully Implemented
Community health center	4.69	Fully Implemented
Schools daycare center	4.68	Fully Implemented
Street lights	4.33	Fully Implemented
Sports center	4.57	Fully Implemented
Community outpost	4.41	Fully Implemented
Evacuation center	4.17	Implemented
Waiting shed	4.72	Fully Implemented
Total Mean	4.51	Fully Implemented

The table above shows that the highest weighted mean is the waiting shed, with 4.72 as fully implemented infrastructure. The least is the evacuation center, with 4.17 as implemented. This implies that the establishment of evacuation centers is an area needing more improvement in terms of infrastructure facilities as part of preparedness measures during calamities. According to Sorensen and Sorensen (2007), evacuation is the principal protective measure used in major catastrophes, including storms, floods, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, releases of hazardous or nuclear materials, and fires and explosions in high-rise buildings. Although frequently preventative, one of the most important disaster management techniques is to evacuate populations at times of peril.

Table 11: Information and Reading Center

INDICATORS	MEAN	DESCRIPTION
Sign-language center	2.08	Partially Implemented
Social media/website	2.65	Partially Implemented
Tarpaulin signage	3.26	Partially Implemented
Radios	3.83	Implemented
Information chart/ bulletin	3.86	Implemented
Newspaper/ magazines	2.01	Less Implemented
Book club center	2.32	Less Implemented
Database	3.54	Partially Implemented
Total Mean	2.94	Partially Implemented

The table above shows that the highest mean is the information chart or bulletin with a 3.86, which indicates that it has been implemented. The newspapers and magazines got only 2.01, which is less than what was implemented. This implies that the newspaper is the least implementable service nowadays as part of an information dissemination tool, mainly because of the presence of digital technology that offers a higher reach than printed technology. However, the community still uses

bulletin boards as public display spaces to comply with the requirement of public transparency and internet connectivity issues.

Services provided by the local government unit of Marihatag to strengthen local governance

Table 12: Service Delivery Skills Training Program

INDICATORS	MEAN	DESCRIPTION
Leadership services	3.63	Implemented
Human development training program	3.49	Implemented
Community mobilization training program	3.41	Implemented
Promoting peace and development	3.53	Implemented
Community based training program	3.57	Implemented
Orientation training	3.65	Implemented
Technical skills training	3.50	Implemented
Skills enhancement training	3.30	Partially Implemented
Total Mean	3.51	Implemented

The orientation training has the highest mean in the table above, indicating that it has been implemented. The skill enhancement training got only a 3.30 weighted mean, which is partially implemented. This implies that the conduct of orientation training in rural areas is easily implementable, while skills enhancement training is not easily implementable, maybe because it needs the preparation and resources of the local government unit. According to Meng (2010), skills enhancement training for leaders is important because leaders make strategic decisions. Leaders are literally and symbolically the role models for internal and external stakeholders, and it is believed that the same is true for public relations leaders.

Problems Encountered by the Local Officials in the Implementation of Basic Service Delivery

Table 13: Problems Encountered

INDICATORS	MEAN	Rank
Lack of community participation	2.81	1 st
Lack of leadership training	2.55	4 th
Lack of equipment and supplies in the community	2.70	3 rd
Absenteeism of community officials	2.35	6 th
Insufficient budget to implement projects and programs in the community	2.80	2 nd
Lack of coordination between local authorities	2.30	8 th
Incompetent leaders	2.34	7 th
Low skills and capability	2.39	5 th
Total Mean	2.53	

Based on the data, the main problem for the respondents is the lack of community participation (2.81 weighted mean). On the other hand, the least is the lack of coordination between local authorities, which only have a 2.30 weighted mean. The research by Irvin and Stansbury (2004) outlined the circumstances in which community involvement may be expensive and ineffective, as well as those in which it might flourish and result in the greatest improvements in effective citizen governance. It developed a better-educated strategy to assist policymakers in selecting a decision-making process that is appropriate for a community's specific needs from the remnants of an unsuccessful citizen engagement initiative. In addition, the study by Heleba (2010) found that a significant issue is the absence of public participation in the legislative and decision-making processes of the government. The participation of rural communities in socioeconomic development is very important.

Conclusion

The implementation of basic community services in rural areas by local government officials needs enhancement, particularly in the areas of agricultural support, environmental sanitation, information and reading centers, and the delivery of skills training programs. The need for community participation is encouraged, as it is identified as the top problem encountered by the local officials. A proposal for a rural community empowerment and good governance development project is recommended as part of the intervention.

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