

Client Service Satisfaction and Challenges Faced by the Seal of Good Local Governance Awardees

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Abstract. This study assessed the level of implementation of the Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG), the challenges encountered, and client satisfaction in the municipalities of Taraka and Madamba, Lanao del Sur, in 2019. A descriptive-correlational design was employed, involving 220 respondents. The Municipality of Taraka, an SGLG awardee, received a rating of "Qualified" with a mean score of 91.96. At the same time, Madamba, a non-awardee, was rated "Reconsidered/Not Qualified" with a mean score of 57.76 across seven SGLG criteria. The challenges encountered were rated "Moderate" with a mean score of 1.76, while client satisfaction was rated "Satisfied" with a mean value of 3.39. The most common challenges included monitoring public officials, resolving issues through dialogue and socioeconomic conditions, and promoting equal opportunities. Significant relationships were found between the SGLG implementation level, the challenges encountered, and client satisfaction. These findings suggest that client satisfaction and challenges significantly influence SGLG implementation.

Keywords: Client service satisfaction; Local Government Unit; Seal of Good Local Governance.

1.0 Introduction

The Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG) represents a critical benchmark for assessing the integrity and performance of local government units (LGUs) in the Philippines. This initiative underscores the importance of continuous improvement in governance, urging LGUs not only to meet but exceed service delivery standards and public accountability. Rooted in the principles established by its predecessor, the Seal of Good Housekeeping (SGH), the SGLG expands the scope of evaluation, integrating key performance areas such as financial transparency, social protection, disaster preparedness, and environmental management, among others.

Through the SGLG assessment, the municipalities successfully identified its strengths and weaknesses, enabling targeted interventions and continuous improvement in governance. However, the municipalities faced challenges during the SGLG participation. Limited financial resources and inadequate training and staffing hindered its ability to meet the SGLG requirements effectively. Additionally, the complex requirements and extensive documentation of the SGLG program demanded significant time and effort, often exceeding available timeframes and affecting the quality of submissions. Balancing regular duties with the additional workload of the SGLG assessment posed time constraints and challenges in managing priorities. To address these challenges, recommendations have been proposed. Enhancing financial resources, investing in capacity building programs, and improving data management systems are crucial to support the municipality's SGLG participation. Allocating

dedicated resources and time specifically for the SGLG assessment process is essential to ensure thorough self-assessment, data gathering, and documentation. Furthermore, fostering stakeholder engagement and promoting a culture of continuous improvement will enhance the municipality's governance practices and overall SGLG performance. Implementing these recommendations will strengthen the Municipality of Cardona's participation in the SGLG program, leading to sustainable development and improved services for its constituents.

As a progressive assessment tool, the SGLG aims to institutionalize governance reforms and drive LGUs to adopt a results-oriented approach in their administrative and operational functions. Since its inception in 2014, the SGLG has become a hallmark of effective governance, encouraging LGUs to demonstrate excellence across multiple dimensions of public administration.

Despite the SGLG's success in fostering a culture of good governance, there remains a need to explore its impact on citizen satisfaction with local government services. While the SGLG evaluates LGUs based on objective criteria, citizens' subjective experiences and perceptions, the primary beneficiaries of government services, are not systematically integrated into the assessment framework. Previous studies have shown that citizen satisfaction is closely linked to perceptions of government efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness (Wilson et al., 2020). However, the extent to which the SGLG influences these perceptions has not been fully examined. Existing literature on performance evaluation in local governments has generally focused on institutional outcomes rather than the lived experiences of citizens. This gap in the literature suggests a need for further research into the relationship between formal governance assessments, like the SGLG, and the public's perception of service quality.

This study aims to address this gap by examining the relationship between citizen satisfaction and the quality of local government services, with particular emphasis on the SGLG framework. It seeks to identify the key factors influencing citizen perceptions of service delivery and assess how these perceptions align with the performance metrics established by the SGLG. By focusing on a specific geographic area – Madamba and Taraka in Lanao del Sur – this research will provide localized insights into the broader dynamics of governance and public satisfaction. The study is particularly significant given the growing emphasis on citizen-centered governance and the need for local governments to meet technical performance standards and foster a sense of trust and satisfaction among their constituents.

This research aims to evaluate the influence of the SGLG on citizen satisfaction with local government services and identify gaps between institutional performance and public perception. By doing so, the study hopes to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how governance reforms impact the operational efficiency of LGUs and citizens' quality of life. The findings will be of value to policymakers, local government officials, and researchers interested in the intersections between governance, performance evaluation, and public satisfaction, ultimately informing efforts to enhance public service delivery and strengthen local governance in the Philippines.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design, aiming to identify and evaluate the level of implementation of the Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG), the challenges encountered, and the level of client satisfaction in the municipalities of Taraka and Madamba, Lanao del Sur. The descriptive aspect of the study aimed to characterize the implementation of the SGLG across the following components: Financial Administration, Disaster Preparedness, Social Protection, Peace and Order, Business Friendliness and Competitiveness, Environmental Protection, Tourism, Culture, and the Arts. Meanwhile, the correlational aspect sought to establish relationships between these variables and client satisfaction, employing a triangulation research method for a more comprehensive analysis.

2.2 Research Participants

The research was conducted in Madamba and Taraka, Lanao del Sur, which were selected as the research settings. Madamba is one of the 32 municipalities of Lanao del Sur, known for its picturesque landscapes, cool climate, and rich natural resources. The municipalities of Madalum, Bayang, Ganassi, and Lake Dapao, a site of cultural significance, border it. The municipality of Taraka, on the other hand, is historically notable for its role in the

spread of Islam in the region, having hosted the construction of the first mosque in Lanao del Sur. It also plays a significant cultural role in confirming the royal title "Sultan sa Masiu." The study examined these municipalities' unique socio-cultural context, governance, and service delivery efforts.

The study targeted two groups of participants: the local government units (LGUs) and the general citizens of the two municipalities. The first group included 55 representatives from the LGUs of Taraka and 55 from Madamba, totaling 110 LGU participants. These participants were key stakeholders in the implementation of the SGLG. They included representatives from the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Budget and Management (DBM), Department of Finance (DOF), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and other relevant agencies. The second group comprised 55 randomly selected citizens from each municipality, providing a representative general population sample. A total population sampling technique was employed for LGUs and citizens, yielding 220 respondents across the two municipalities.

2.3 Research Instruments

The primary data collection instrument was a standardized and modified survey questionnaire. The first section focused on measuring client satisfaction. It included 26 questions, while the second section explored the challenges faced in implementing the SGLG, emphasizing transparency, accountability, and social responsibility. The second section consisted of 20 questions adapted from instruments developed by the World Bank and other reliable sources (e.g., samplequest.com). Respondents were asked to rate each item using a Likert-type scale to quantify their perceptions and experiences.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection process began with submitting a formal letter of request, duly noted by the Dean of the Graduate School of IMCC, to the Taraka and Madamba municipal offices. Upon approval, the researcher administered the surveys to the identified LGU participants and random citizens. Data collection occurred over five consecutive days, after which the researcher retrieved the completed questionnaires. In addition to the survey, interviews with key municipal officials were conducted to gain further insight into the municipalities' governance strategies. After gathering the data, the researcher classified the responses and used descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to examine the information.

2.5 Data Analysis

The following statistical tools were employed for data analysis:

Frequency and Percentage Distribution

This tool was used to analyze the distribution of responses, particularly regarding the level of implementation of the SGLG across the two municipalities.

Weighted Mean

This was used to compute the average responses from the participants regarding the level of client satisfaction and the challenges met during the implementation of the SGLG.

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation

This statistical technique was used to assess the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the variables under study, particularly the correlation between the level of SGLG implementation and client satisfaction.

The data were processed and analyzed using SPSS software, with the assistance of a statistician, to ensure accuracy and reliability in interpreting the results.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality and Anonymity

To protect the privacy of the respondents, all collected data, including personal information, academic records, and responses, are only for the researchers to see, and no third party shall see or read the data.

analysis. The recorded data should be treated with strict confidentiality and only accessible to authorized researchers. The data analysis should be conducted in a way that ensures the anonymity of the respondents.

Health and Safety Protocols:

This research study was sensitive to the health and safety of anyone involved. The mental, emotional, and physical health of those involved was considered. Concepts in this study and statements in the questionnaire were ensured to have no negative effect on those associated with them.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Implementation of Seal of Good Local Governance

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the implementation of the Seal of Good Local Governance

Areas	Mean	Interpretation
1. Financial Administration;	92.02	Qualified or met the criteria
2. Social protection	95.07	Qualified or met the criteria
3. Peace and Order	96.00	Qualified or met the criteria
4. Business Friendliness and Competitiveness	74.02	Reconsidered LGU condition
5. Environmental Protection	86.20	Qualified or met the criteria
6. Tourism, Culture and arts	93.00	Qualified or met the criteria
7. Disaster Preparedness	89.05	Qualified or met the criteria

Note: 75.01 to 100% - Qualified or meet the criteria (Rank 1), 50.01 to 75% - Reconsidered LGU condition (Rank 2), 25.01 to 50% - Not qualified (Rank 3), and 0 to 25% - Not Applicable (Rank 4)

Table 1 presents the ratings of the Seal of Good Local Governance 2019 for the Municipality of Taraka, Lanao del Sur, which qualified the municipality in the national search for good practices in good governance. It shows that (6%) or 85.81 percent of the criteria were rated as “qualified or met the criteria.” While (1%) or 14.28 percent of the criteria was rated “reconsidered of LGU condition.” The criteria on peace and order were rated the highest (96) points, while the business friendliness and competitiveness were rated relatively lower. It implies that the seal of good local governance generally works for the Taraka, Lanao del Sur municipality. The continuing efforts from all LGU stakeholders must be pursued, and more improvements must be made to the business's friendliness and competitiveness.

The Seal of Good Local Governance in Digos City: Challenges and Opportunities. It was found that the areas of financial administration, business friendliness, and competitiveness have garnered very high levels of perception. Based on these findings, it was inferred that the challenges for Digos City for better implementation of the SGLG law in the future are risk management and increasing spaces for participation, while the opportunities are implementation of e-governance and increasing capacity for decentralization (Cagas et al., 2022).

3.2 Challenges Met

In terms of Transparency

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the challenges met in terms of transparency

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. Having public meetings/ dialogue as a venue for resolving issues;	1.82	Moderate as a Challenge
2. Established monitoring system for public officials;	1.83	Moderate as a Challenge
3. Open to media/broadcast system for information to the public;	1.54	Moderate as a Challenge
4. Adopted a public feedback/participation	1.77	Moderate as a Challenge
5. Checking mechanisms for unethical practices	1.77	Moderate as a Challenge
Overall Mean	1.75	Moderate as a Challenge

Note: 3.50 – 4.00 (Very Much of a Challenge), 2.50 – 3.49 (Much of a Challenge), 1.50 – 2.49 (Moderate as a Challenge), 1.00 – 1.49 (Not a Challenge)

Table 2 shows a mean percentage (1.75 or Moderate as a Challenge) of respondents' general transparency ratings. However, it shows a moderate rating of (1.54) under the media broadcast system for information to the public. The Checking mechanism on unethical practices and adopted public feedback/participation shows a moderate challenge rating of (1.77). This implies that the Municipality of Taraka and Madamba Lanao del Sur encountered a “Moderate Challenge” regarding Transparency.

Seal of Good Housekeeping (SGH) to measure financial transparency and institute public reporting of budget and expenditures of local governments. The SGH evolved into the Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG) in 2014. It was launched as part of the Philippine Open Government Partnership Commitment. It raised the bar by upscaling the performance measurements of LGUs to include financial transparency and citizen engagement. Becoming the guide to improve local governance, the SGLG became the most sought-after recognition of local government units nationally.

In terms of Accountability

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the challenges met in terms of accountability

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. Having a citizen council to monitor and check on public officials;	1.79	Moderate as a Challenge
2. Adopted local legislation to check public accountability;	1.66	Moderate as a Challenge
3. Having a citizen charter for every office in the LGUs	1.67	Moderate as a Challenge
4. Allowing open discussion on certain issues.	1.77	Moderate as a Challenge
5. Legislative provisions with sanctions to erring officials	1.76	Moderate as a Challenge
Overall Mean	1.72	Moderate as a Challenge

Table 3 depicts a mean percentage (1.73 or Moderate as a Challenge) of respondents rating under Accountability. On Legislative provisions with sanctions to erring officials, Having a citizen charter for every office in the LGUs, Adopting local legislation to check public accountability, and having a citizen council to monitor and check on public officials, it is rated (1.67 to 1.76) or moderate as a challenge. This implies that the client of the Municipality of Taraka and Madamba Lanao del Sur is Moderate as a Challenge in terms of Accountability in Challenges Met in their Local Government Units.

The Performance Challenge Fund (PCF), established by the DILG in 2010, is a performance-based incentive program that gives financial subsidies to local government units (LGUs) that are awarded the Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG) (DILG MC No. 2017-160). In addition, some LGUs were either consistently or not consistent recipients of the PCF. Policymakers must consider these results, especially with the recent passage of the Seal of Good Local Governance (Diokno-Sicat et al., 2020).

In terms of Responsibility

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of the challenges met in terms of responsibility

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. Promotion of equal opportunities to all citizens	1.78	Moderate as a Challenge
2. Giving the citizen council to initiate social welfare	1.94	Moderate as a Challenge
3. Integration of volunteerism for social programs	1.78	Moderate as a Challenge
4. Low-income income choose to purchase inexpensive services.	1.80	Moderate as a Challenge
5. Occupation and the economic situation.	1.81	Moderate as a Challenge
Overall Mean	1.82	Moderate as a Challenge

Table 4 presents that there was a mean percentage (1.82 or Moderate as a Challenge) of respondents who belonged to the Social Responsibility under the Occupation and the economic situation, low income chooses to purchase inexpensive services, Integration of volunteerism for social programs, Giving the citizen council to initiate social welfare and Promotion of equal opportunities to all citizens. This implies that the client of the Municipality of Taraka and Madamba Lanao del Sur is Moderate as a Challenge in terms of Social Responsibility in Challenges Met in their Local Government Units.

Studying the Seal of Good Local Governance is imperative because of two important policies: Republic Act 11292, or the SGLG Law of 2019, and Executive Order No 138, the Mandanas-Garcia ruling. Based on these national mandates, the SGLG is no longer a voluntary assessment for municipal, city, and provincial governments but for compulsory implementation. The recent Mandanas-Garcia ruling devolves most of the national government functions to the local government units, increasing their autonomy and responsibility. Another compelling directive is the Participatory Governance Cluster Resolution, which is a flagship program of the DILG that reinforces the achievement of the SGLG by identifying pathways for local participatory governance (Capuno, 2005).

3.3 Clients' Service Satisfaction

In terms of Quality Services

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of client service satisfaction in terms of quality services

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. Personnel give immediate attention to clients.	3.15	Agree/Satisfied
2. Provide a faster process of getting problems solved.	3.02	Agree/Satisfied
3. Personnel show a positive attitude in dealing with clients.	3.43	Agree/Satisfied
4. Show sincerity in listening to customers.	3.41	Agree/Satisfied
5. Personnel are courteous and cheerful.	3.42	Agree/Satisfied
6. Offer friendly and pertinent advice to clients.	3.37	Agree/Satisfied
Overall Mean	3.30	Agree/Satisfied

Note: 3.50 – 4.00 Strongly Agree/Highly Satisfied, 2.50 – 3.49 Agree/Satisfied, 1.50 – 2.49 Somewhat Disagree/Satisfied, 1.00 – 1.49 Strongly Disagree/Not Satisfied

Table 5 above shows that generally, there was satisfaction with the quality of services that the personnel provided, with a mean average rating of (3.30) or Agreed/Satisfied. On participants' responses on the personnel giving immediate attention to clients, the rating was (3.15) or agreed/satisfied. It also showed that the personnel provided a faster process of getting problems solved; they showed a positive attitude in dealing with clients. Personnel also showed sincerity in listening to customers; they are courteous and cheerful and offer friendly and pertinent advice to clients. This implies that the client of Municipalities Lanao del Sur is Agree or Satisfied in terms of Quality service in their Local Government Units Services.

In terms of Knowledge

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of client service satisfaction in terms of knowledge

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. The Personnel: shows mastery in their area of work	3.40	Agree/Satisfied
2. Offers a wide range of services needed	3.33	Agree/Satisfied
3. Gives clear instructions with details	3.45	Agree/Satisfied
4. Discusses and give suggestions to clients	3.51	Strongly Agree/ Highly Satisfied
5. Explain clearly the information being sought for	3.48	Agree/Satisfied
6. Makes proper advice and suggestions	3.46	Agree/Satisfied
Overall Mean	3.44	Agree/Satisfied

Note: 3.50 – 4.00 Strongly Agree/Highly Satisfied, 2.50 – 3.49 Agree/Satisfied, 1.50 – 2.49 Somewhat Disagree/Satisfied, 1.00 – 1.49 Strongly Disagree/Not Satisfied

Table 6 above shows that the clients were generally satisfied with implementing the seal of local good governance, with a mean rating (of 3.44) or Average/Satisfied. Respondents gave proper advice and suggestions and explained the information being sought clearly, giving clear instructions with details and offering a wide range of services needed. The rating was (3.43. to 3.45) within the rate of Agree/Satisfied. In order words, the personnel showed mastery in their work area. This implies that the Municipalities of Lanao del Sur clients agreed or were satisfied with their knowledge of their Local Government Unit's functions and responsibilities in their work.

In terms of Friendliness

Table 7. Descriptive statistics of client service satisfaction in terms of friendliness

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. The clients are treated with utmost courtesy	3.51	Strongly Agree/ Highly Satisfied
2. Being informed of new office development	3.53	Strongly Agree/ Highly Satisfied
3. Feel comfortable and ease	3.45	Agree/Satisfied
4. The personnel show a positive attitude	3.48	Agree/Satisfied
5. Are responsive in dealing with their clients	3.46	Agree/Satisfied
6. Are sincere in listening to clients' concerns	3.45	Agree/Satisfied
Overall Mean	3.48	Agree/Satisfied

Note: 3.50 – 4.00 Strongly Agree/Highly Satisfied, 2.50 – 3.49 Agree/Satisfied, 1.50 – 2.49 Somewhat Disagree/Satisfied, 1.00 – 1.49 Strongly Disagree/Not Satisfied

Table 7 above shows that generally, there was a satisfactory rating on the indicator of friendliness with a mean rating of (3.48) or Agree/Satisfied) of respondents. On being informed of new office development, it was rated (3.53) strongly agreed/Highly satisfied. Also, treating customers courteously was rated Highly Satisfactory (3.51). They are also responsive when dealing with their clients. The personnel showed a positive attitude and felt

comfortable and at ease. Being informed of new office developments and the clients being treated with utmost courtesy is strongly Agree/Highly Satisfied with the mean percentage of (3.51-2.53) or Agreed/Satisfied. This implies that the Municipalities of Lanao del Sur client is Agree or Satisfied in terms of Friendliness in serving the clients in their Local Government Units.

In terms of Timeliness

Table 8. Descriptive statistics of client service satisfaction in terms of timeliness

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. The personnel show a sense of urgency in their work	3.00	Agree/Satisfied
2. Observe on time in reporting to their station	3.40	Agree/Satisfied
3. Give prompt feedback to customers	3.52	Strongly Agree/ Highly Satisfied
4. Ensure that clients do not wait so long	3.38	Agree/Satisfied
5. Make availability of needed forms to avoid delays	3.45	Agree/Satisfied
6. The client feels that waiting is reasonable	3.40	Agree/Satisfied
Overall Mean	3.36	Agree/Satisfied

Note: 3.50 – 4.00 Strongly Agree/ Highly Satisfied, 2.50 – 3.49 Agree/Satisfied, 1.50 – 2.49 Somewhat Disagree/Satisfied, 1.00 – 1.49 Strongly Disagree/Not Satisfied

Table 8 shows that there was a mean percentage (3.45-3.00 or Agree/Satisfied) of respondents who belonged to the Timeliness under the Client feel that waiting is reasonable, make availability of needed forms to avoid delays, ensures that clients do not wait so long, observe on time in reporting to their station and The Personnel: show sense of urgency in their work. While giving prompt feedback to customers is much more strongly agreed upon/highly satisfied, with a mean percentage of 3.52, this implies that the clients of Municipalities of Lanao del Sur Agree or are Satisfied in terms of Timeliness in serving the clients in their Local Government Units.

3.4 Relationship Between Variables

Table 9. Relationship between variables

	R	p-value	Decision
Clients' Service Satisfaction and Implementation of SGLG	0.800	0.000	Reject H ₀
Clients' Service Satisfaction and Challenges Met	-0.774	0.000	Reject H ₀

Table 9 reflects the relationship between the level of client satisfaction and the implementation of the Seal of Good Local Governance and the challenges met. The correlation between the two variables was computed using Pearson Product Moment Coefficient Correlation. As manifested in Table 8, the variable level of clients' satisfaction with Local Government Services obtained an r of (0.800) and a p-value of (0.000). In contrast, the met variable challenges obtained an r of (-0.774) and p-value of (0.000), which showed a significant relationship. Hence, the hypothesis is rejected. This implies that the level of client satisfaction and the challenges that are met have a bearing on the implementation.

4.0 Conclusion

The study's findings reveal a balanced representation of respondents across different Local Government Units (LGUs), all actively involved in their respective municipalities. Clients expressed moderate satisfaction with the services provided by local governments, particularly regarding implementing the Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG) in 2019. Many respondents strongly agreed that LGUs effectively utilized the SGLG program to enhance local governance. The study also identified a significant relationship between client satisfaction and challenges, particularly in knowledge, timeliness, and transparency. These challenges directly influence satisfaction levels, with notable variations across different LGUs. This highlights the importance of addressing these issues to improve service delivery and client satisfaction across municipalities.

5.0 Contribution of Authors

The authors divided the work and completed the writing, editing, encoding, data analysis, and supervision. They also evaluated and approved the completed manuscript as a group. Both authors conceived and designed the study, formulated the research questions, and designed the study protocol. Author 1 collected and encoded the data. Author 2 helped with the analysis and interpretation of the data. Author 1 wrote the first draft, while Author 2 helped revise the manuscript. Both authors gave final permission for publishing.

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7.0 Conflict of Interest

Concerning publishing this paper, the authors state that they have no conflicts of interest.

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