

# Performance of the Barangay Officials during the Pandemic

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## ABSTRACT

*This study applied the descriptive-correlation research design to assess the performance of barangay officials in terms of their delivery of devolved basic services and facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study's respondents were the 108 barangay officials and the 360 constituents of a certain municipality in Negros Oriental, Philippines. In this study, the barangay officials' performance was correlated with the problems they encountered while performing their duties. The data revealed the following: (1) Health and Medical Services and Environmental Management System and Services: the barangay officials' performance is "very satisfactory" as perceived by both the constituents and the barangay officials themselves; (2) Public Works and Services and Agricultural Support Services: the barangay officials' performance is "very satisfactory" as perceived by the barangay officials themselves and "satisfactory" as perceived by the constituents; (3) Social Welfare Services: the barangay officials' performance is "very satisfactory" as perceived by both the barangay officials and constituents; (4) Agricultural Support Services: the barangay officials' performance is "very satisfactory" as perceived by the barangay officials themselves and "satisfactory" as perceived by the constituents; and (5) Environmental Management System and Services: the barangay officials' performance is "very satisfactory" as perceived by both respondents. The findings further revealed that there is a significant, inverse, and moderate to strong relationship between the problems encountered by the barangay officials and their performance in delivering the five devolved basic services during the pandemic.*

**Keywords:** *Barangay officials; Barangay officials' performance; Devolved basic services and facilities; COVID-19 Pandemic; Constituents*

## Introduction

It is widely assumed that the public goods funded by taxpayers must be provided with better effectiveness, efficiency, and responsiveness to the needs of the general public while maintaining the lowest possible costs. Every member of the community must benefit from the charter given to public servants to improve public services (Beerli, Uster, & Vigoda-Gadot, 2019). Nonetheless, it is quite inevitable that citizens feel unhappy with the services provided by the local governments. In the case of the Israeli Local Government, for example, there exists public discontent with politicians and city administrators' meager accomplishments, pushing citizens to develop new procedures to raise the bar for government performance and demand greater accountability and improved responsiveness (Beerli, mentioned by Beerli, Uster, & Vigoda-Gadot, 2019). Petrovsky, Mok, and León-Cázares (2016) theorized that if performance meets or surpasses expectations, satisfaction is expected; if performance falls short, dissatisfaction is probably felt.

In the Philippine setting, the Local Government Code of 1991 authorizes the devolution of government duties from the national government to local government units (LGUs). This form of decentralization puts the government closer to the populace and seeks to deliver basic services efficiently and effectively (Recomono, n.d.). The barangay, which is the fundamental political unit in the Philippines, is responsible for organizing and implementing the majority of local government initiatives, plans, programs, and policies. The barangay government is also given a great deal of discretion to run its own affairs and to look into any options for increasing its financial resources and using them any way it sees fit, provided that doing so will increase the constituents' welfare. However, for the barangays to carry out their duties under the Local Government Code, they must have the requisite administrative and financial resources, as well as the essential

competencies, which are required for the supply of fundamental technical and physical facilities (Panadero, cited by Alicar-Cadorna, 2008).

Nevertheless, despite the municipal government's offerings of various services, people in charge of the local administration are still worried about how adequately these services are offered. Feedback on the proper implementation of these services is therefore required to provide a foundation for improvement (Alicar-Cadorna, 2008). Although several local researches—such as the study of Ablong (1999), Sunga (2001), Tolin (2003), and Cornelia (2014)—have already investigated the performance of LGUs, barangay officials, and the delivery of devolved basic services and facilities, their findings could only be construed as true to the localities where the studies were conducted. Also, these studies were carried out way before the COVID-19 pandemic. So far, no study has yet been done specifically in the municipalities of Negros Oriental during the period of the pandemic, making the current study unique and a first of its kind.

Thus, the researcher, being a local citizen and a government employee under the DPWH, pursued this undertaking to make a significant contribution to the improvement of his locality. The researcher also considered the possibility of an increase in the constituents' expectations knowing that the target municipality (where this study was conducted) is now slowly emerging and attracting tourists and investors. With this in mind, the researcher conducted this investigation not merely to assess the performance of the municipality's barangay officials but also to examine and recommend solutions to the issues they might have been facing while serving the public.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study made use of the descriptive-correlational research design because it attempts to describe the performance of the barangay officials and correlate the performance to the problems that the barangay officials face while serving the community.

### **Research Locale**

The study was conducted in the 12 barangays of a 4<sup>th</sup> class municipality in the province of Negros Oriental. Some of the barangays are situated in the coastal zones, while others are in the Poblacion areas as well as in mountainous parts of the municipality.

### **Research Participants**

The respondents of this study were the barangay officials and constituents of the twelve (12) barangays in the target municipality. The constituents pertain to the registered voters of their respective barangays and the current residents in the barangay. Each barangay has nine (9) barangay officials. Therefore, a total of one hundred eight (108) barangay officials were chosen as respondents. In addition to this number, the researcher also randomly selected thirty (30) constituents from each of the barangays or three hundred sixty (360) constituents in total. Thus, the overall total number of research respondents is four hundred sixty-eight (468).

### **Research Instrument**

The research adopted and upgraded the questionnaire used by Cornelia (2014) in his study "Problems Encountered by the Barangay Officials in the Delivery of Devolved Basic Services about their Performance." The researcher customized some items in the questionnaire because two variables under the "Devolved Basic Services and Facilities" section were replaced and additional problems were also listed under the portion "Problems Encountered." The researcher has already sought the approval of the questionnaire's original author. For content validity, the research questionnaire was handed over to research and statistics experts. Their recommendations were considered for the refinement of the questionnaire's items. For item reliability, the researcher conducted a dry run in a barangay outside of the municipality. Moreover, the items were tested for its reliability using the Cronbach's alpha test. The test revealed the following Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients: (1) health and medical services (0.902); (2) public works and services (0.917); (3) social welfare services (0.839); (4) agricultural support services (0.923); and (5) environmental management system and services (0.894). The values are all > 0.70, indicating that all items are reliable.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

After the design hearing, the researcher incorporated into his paper the suggestions and corrections given by the panel members. Next, a letter of request to conduct the study was sent to each of the barangay offices. Once the request was signed and approved by the proper authorities, the researcher started floating the questionnaires to the respondents. It must be noted that before the distribution of the questionnaire, the researcher thoroughly explained to the respondents the significance and purpose of the research. The retrieval was then done right after the respondents had finished answering the survey.

## Ethical Considerations

The participants in the research were thoroughly briefed on the study's purpose. They were also given the freedom to choose whether they wished to take part in the study. Stringent measures were implemented to safeguard the confidentiality of data, including the personal information of the participants. If a participant wished to withdraw from the study, they were allowed to do so without any repercussions. Following this period, all data were kept confidential and anonymous. The researcher guaranteed that the participants would not face any harm throughout the study duration.

## Results and Discussion

### Barangay Officials' Performance in Delivering Devolved Basic Services

Table 1 shows the perceptions of the barangay officials and constituents regarding the former's performance in delivering health and medical services/facilities during the pandemic. The data clearly show that both groups of respondents rated all the indicators as "very satisfactory," which led to the overall composite mean of 3.94 (barangay officials) and 3.61 (constituents). It is obvious in the results that the barangay officials and the constituents share similar perceptions and high regard for the performance of the former in terms of delivering health and medical services during times of crisis.

**Table 1.** Performance of the barangay officials in delivering health and medical services and facilities at the height of the pandemic as perceived by the barangay officials themselves and constituents

| Indicators                                                                       | Brgy. Officials<br>(n = 108) |           | Constituents<br>(n = 360) |           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|-----------|
|                                                                                  | w $\bar{x}$                  | VD        | w $\bar{x}$               | VD        |
| 1. Maintenance of Brgy. Health and Day-Care Centers                              | 4.17                         | VS        | 3.80                      | VS        |
| 2. Provision of Covid-19 Vaccinations & Booster Shots                            | 4.12                         | VS        | 3.70                      | VS        |
| 3. Provision of Services and Facilities Related to General Hygiene and Nutrition | 4.02                         | VS        | 3.58                      | VS        |
| 4. Free Medical Check-Ups and Medicine                                           | 3.89                         | VS        | 3.59                      | VS        |
| 5. Seminar for Health Awareness                                                  | 3.73                         | VS        | 3.50                      | VS        |
| 6. Solid Waste Disposal                                                          | 3.68                         | VS        | 3.51                      | VS        |
| <b>Composite</b>                                                                 | <b>3.94</b>                  | <b>VS</b> | <b>3.61</b>               | <b>VS</b> |

The results imply that there is a successful implementation of the indicators relevant to the devolved health and medical services. It must be noted, however, that the respondents particularly favored the performance of the barangay officials in terms of maintenance of Barangay Health and Day-Care Centers.

The findings of Cadorna and Velasco (2008) correspond to the current findings. In their study, Cadorna and Velasco found that each barangay has a daycare center that is maintained and equipped with facilities, tools, and educational materials. This shows how much the barangays care about children's overall development, which lays a good basis for academic work.

Moreover, the current result coincides with the findings of Matildo (2022), who explored the service delivery of local government officials in a Philippine rural community. Matildo's findings also indicate a successful implementation of all indicators with the Childhood Care and Development project having the highest weighted mean of 4.60. Likewise, Tomas and Reario (2020), in their study divulged that the highest rating of high importance went to Health Services (74.90), as perceived by the citizens, while the findings of Gabinete, Tanan, Tutor, and Escantilla-Lebuna (2022) suggest that the residents were highly aware of and were highly satisfied with the health services delivered by the local government units.

The alignment between Cadorna and Velasco's (2008) findings and the current research shows that the barangays have consistent dedication to children's welfare, laying a crucial foundation for academic success. This continuity further strengthens when considering Matildo's (2022) results, indicating successful implementation across various indicators, particularly exemplified by the commendable performance of the Childhood Care and Development project. Similarly, the emphasis on health services highlighted by Tomas and Reario (2020) resonates with the high awareness and satisfaction levels reported by the residents in Gabinete et al.'s (2022) study, emphasizing the importance of robust public service delivery in enhancing community well-being.

Table 2 reveals that the barangay officials perceive themselves to have an overall "very satisfactory" performance, with a weighted mean value of 3.42, in delivering public works and services during the pandemic. However, the constituents perceive the barangay officials as having an overall "satisfactory" performance, as indicated by the weighted mean value of 3.36. Still, both the barangay officials and the constituents agree that the former has a "very satisfactory" performance particularly in terms of "Construction and Maintenance of a Multi-Purpose Barangay Hall, Pavement, Plaza, Sports Center, and other Similar Infrastructure Facilities" and "Maintenance of Barangay Roads and Bridges," which means that these particular functions are well accomplished by the barangay officials. This is probably because, in the target municipality, such infrastructure facilities are much more visibly in demand and utilized; hence, these services are given

more priority. The Plaza Sports Center and the gymnasium, in particular, are most often busy as they are used frequently by the constituents, particularly sports enthusiasts. The municipality is quite active in terms of sports. Various sports teams not just from the municipality but also from other nearby towns would visit the municipality to participate in its regular sports competitions (i.e. volleyball, basketball, and soccer). Although there had been restrictions on mobility during the pandemic, the people saw that these infrastructures were still properly maintained.

**Table 2.** Performance of the barangay officials in delivering public works and services at the height of the pandemic as perceived by the barangay officials themselves and constituents

| Indicators                                                                                                                                    | Brgy. Officials<br>(n = 108) |           | Constituents<br>(n = 360) |          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|----------|
|                                                                                                                                               | w $\bar{x}$                  | VD        | w $\bar{x}$               | VD       |
| 1. Construction and Maintenance of a Multi-Purpose Barangay Hall, Pavement, Plaza, Sports Center, and other Similar Infrastructure Facilities | 3.74                         | VS        | 3.55                      | VS       |
| 2. Maintenance of Barangay Roads and Bridges                                                                                                  | 3.67                         | VS        | 3.45                      | VS       |
| 3. Provision of Potable Drinking Water & Sewage System                                                                                        | 3.50                         | VS        | 3.34                      | S        |
| 4. Putting Up and Maintenance of Street Lights                                                                                                | 3.45                         | VS        | 3.31                      | S        |
| 5. Construction and Maintenance of Dikes along Rivers for Flood Protection and Control                                                        | 3.18                         | S         | 3.22                      | S        |
| 6. Putting Up and Maintenance of Satellite Public Markets                                                                                     | 3.01                         | S         | 3.29                      | S        |
| <b>Composite</b>                                                                                                                              | <b>3.42</b>                  | <b>VS</b> | <b>3.36</b>               | <b>S</b> |

The results also connote that although the barangay officials think highly of their performance, the constituents do not have the same level of regard. In other words, there exists a discrepancy between the perception of barangay officials and the constituents, indicating a need for improved communication and responsiveness to community needs. Generally, the current results affirmed the findings of Matildo (2022) whose study also revealed that almost all indicators under infrastructures, except one, were fully implemented by the local officials. Matildo's findings showed that the waiting shed has the highest weighted mean (4.72) for fully implemented infrastructure. The evacuation center, with 4.17 in place, is the least implemented. This suggests that to better prepare for disasters, there is a need for infrastructural facilities in the construction of evacuation centers.

Based on the data, the discrepancy between the perception of the officials and the constituents is particularly evident in the disparity between high ratings for infrastructure implementation by officials, such as the waiting shed, and lower satisfaction levels among residents, pointing to areas like evacuation centers and public works projects where further attention is warranted to address concerns such as infrastructure quality and disaster preparedness.

Meanwhile, the research of Gabinete, Tanan, Tutor, and Escantilla-Lebuna (2022) divulged that the majority of the respondents (84%; high rating) availed of public works and infrastructure services. The public works and highway projects, however, were also the ones with which people were least satisfied. The reasons for dissatisfaction include the poor quality of the infrastructure, the market getting flooded during the wet season, and the lack of street lights. Nearly all of the respondents in their study (95%) demanded more initiatives, mostly for infrastructure and public works. Gabinete et al.'s findings somewhat support the current results, wherein the construction and maintenance related to street lights and flood protection received the least ratings from the constituents.

Table 3 shows proof that the barangay officials' performance in delivering social welfare services during the pandemic is "very satisfactory," with weighted mean values of 3.83 and 3.47 as perceived by the officials themselves and the constituents, respectively. It is also noteworthy that all indicators received a "very satisfactory" rating from both groups of respondents. With this, it can be deduced that the constituents are very satisfied with the barangay officials' performance in this area.

It is also interesting to note that maintenance of day-care centers once again received the highest favor from the respondents. During the pandemic, even prior to and following the pandemic, the services devolved to the barangays under this area were successfully implemented and not neglected. Based on an interview with a few constituents, the daycare centers, sports centers, and waiting sheds remained properly maintained during the pandemic. The police authorities were also observed to be doing their job in ensuring security during the pandemic through their roaming and monitoring systems.

Correspondingly, in the study of Tomas and Reario (2020), the respondents gave social welfare programs and services a high priority rating among the other services with a score of 70.57 on the importance index. However, with 62.88 out of 100, it only came in fourth place for customer satisfaction. On the other hand, the findings of Crucillo (2019) exposed that the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office received the greatest frequency of 65 and was ranked #1 for the quality of services it provided, but it was also revealed that the services were insufficient to meet the requirements of the community.

**Table 3.** Performance of the barangay officials in delivering social welfare services and facilities at the height of the pandemic as perceived by the barangay officials themselves and constituents

| Indicators                                                                                    | Brgy. Officials<br>(n = 108) |           | Constituents<br>(n = 360) |           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|-----------|
|                                                                                               | w $\bar{x}$                  | VD        | w $\bar{x}$               | VD        |
| 1. Maintenance of Day-Care Centers                                                            | 4.05                         | VS        | 3.59                      | VS        |
| 2. Putting Up and Maintenance of a Sports Center                                              | 3.75                         | VS        | 3.43                      | VS        |
| 3. Building and Maintenance of Every Waiting Shed for the People                              | 3.64                         | VS        | 3.45                      | VS        |
| 4. Formation of Barangay Police in Every Street that will Initiate Roaming System Every Night | 3.89                         | VS        | 3.42                      | VS        |
| <b>Composite</b>                                                                              | <b>3.83</b>                  | <b>VS</b> | <b>3.47</b>               | <b>VS</b> |

Meanwhile, the result on the maintenance of day-care centers is in support of the findings of Matildo (2022), as well as Cadorna and Velasco (2008), wherein the LGU places great importance on childcare and the maintenance of day-care centers. The consistent high favor and successful maintenance of day-care centers throughout various studies suggest a commendable dedication by local government units to prioritize childcare services, highlighting their resilience and sustained effectiveness, especially evident during challenging periods like the pandemic.

The data in Table 4 indicate that the barangay officials' performance in delivering agricultural support services is "very satisfactory" as perceived by themselves and "satisfactory" as perceived by the constituents. The barangay officials themselves believe that they deliver their functions very satisfactorily as far as the "planting materials distribution system" and "water and soil resource utilization and conservation project" are concerned. One may assume that the barangay officials have high regard for their performance.

**Table 4.** Performance of the barangay officials in delivering agricultural support and services at the height of the pandemic as perceived by the barangay officials themselves and constituents

| Indicators                                                                      | Brgy. Officials<br>(n = 108) |           | Constituents<br>(n = 360) |          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|----------|
|                                                                                 | w $\bar{x}$                  | VD        | w $\bar{x}$               | VD       |
| 1. Planting materials distribution system                                       | 3.72                         | VS        | 3.33                      | S        |
| 2. Water and soil resource utilization and conservation project                 | 3.52                         | VS        | 3.22                      | S        |
| 3. Enforcement of fishery laws in municipal waters                              | 3.34                         | S         | 3.24                      | S        |
| 4. Adequate communication and transportation of agricultural produce facilities | 3.26                         | S         | 3.16                      | S        |
| 5. Operation of farm produce collection and buying stations                     | 3.23                         | S         | 3.23                      | S        |
| <b>Composite</b>                                                                | <b>3.41</b>                  | <b>VS</b> | <b>3.24</b>               | <b>S</b> |

The data suggests positive self-perceptions among community members regarding their competency, particularly in a coastal town reliant on fishing and farming. Despite pandemic restrictions, agricultural support services were effectively delivered to barangays. In contrast to Villanueva, Villantes, Grace, and Calago (2019), who found significant unawareness of agricultural assistance services in three cities, the current study reveals better awareness, with planting materials distribution receiving the highest rating. Satisfaction with utilized services indicates successful LGU performance in one city.

Meanwhile, Cadorna (2008) observed less emphasis on agricultural support at the barangay level due to significant assistance from the city government. While over half of rural barangays offer agricultural assistance, agriculture remains the primary livelihood in the city. Cardona (2008) noted efforts in barangays for waste management, with most having Solid Waste Management Committees. However, only a portion received regular garbage collection, and some faced issues like street dumping. Cadorna and Velasco (2008) reported over half of the barangays have sanitation programs, leading to improved compliance with environmental regulations and increased access to clean water and sanitary toilets.

These findings stress the vital role of LGUs in sustaining community livelihoods and environmental management. Additionally, the contrast with previous research highlights improvements in awareness and satisfaction regarding agricultural assistance services, showcasing LGU performance, while insights into waste management initiatives reflect ongoing efforts to address environmental concerns and enhance public health standards.

Table 5 shows that the overall performance of the barangay officials in delivering environmental management systems and services is “very satisfactory,” as perceived by both the constituents ( $w\bar{x} = 3.57$ ) and themselves ( $w\bar{x} = 3.57$ ). This result suggests that this aspect of delivering devolved basic services is well executed by the barangay officials. The emphasis of the officials’ performance is on the implementation of programs and projects on primary hygiene care, which obtained “very satisfactory” ratings from the two groups of respondents. It is also important to note that the barangay officials see their performance in all indicators as “very satisfactory.”

**Table 5.** Performance of the barangay officials in delivering environmental management system and services at the height of the pandemic as perceived by the barangay officials themselves and constituents

| Indicators                                                         | Brgy. Officials<br>(n = 108) |           | Constituents<br>(n = 360) |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|-----------|
|                                                                    | $w\bar{x}$                   | VD        | $w\bar{x}$                | VD        |
| 1. Implementation of Programs and Projects on Primary Hygiene Care | 3.80                         | VS        | 3.43                      | VS        |
| 2. Treatment of Water Disposed from Establishments & Households    | 3.51                         | VS        | 3.33                      | S         |
| 3. Proper Waste and Garbage Segregation, Collection and Disposal   | 3.50                         | VS        | 3.37                      | S         |
| 4. Provision and Maintenance of Portable or Mounted Public Toilets | 3.45                         | VS        | 3.36                      | S         |
| <b>Composite</b>                                                   | <b>3.57</b>                  | <b>VS</b> | <b>3.57</b>               | <b>VS</b> |

During the pandemic, the barangay officials ensured effective delivery of hygiene and sanitation services, earning them “very satisfactory” ratings. Residents were encouraged to maintain cleanliness, with garbage collection continuing as usual. Health representatives visited homes to reinforce hygiene practices. In contrast, Lubos (2022) found that municipalities in a certain region in the Philippines struggle with low capacity for ecological waste management, citing resource deficiencies and outdated regulations. The municipalities show limited capacity (20–39%) in fulfilling devolution requirements. Conversely, cities excel in waste management but lag in overall devolution implementation (Lubos, 2022).

The current study indicates satisfactory ratings for environmental management, showcasing effective barangay services in this regard. These findings emphasize the critical role of barangay officials in ensuring effective delivery of essential services, particularly hygiene, sanitation, and environmental management, during challenging times such as the pandemic. They also underline the difference between municipal and city capacities in waste management and devolution implementation, emphasizing the importance of localized efforts in addressing community needs and enhancing overall public health and environmental standards.

Table 6 presents the data signifying that all thirteen problems are considered “a little problem” by the barangay officials. This should be thought of as a desirable result because it implies that these problems are less felt or experienced within the barangay. It is also an indication that the LGUs have been doing a good job at delivering devolved basic services and facilities because the enumerated problems are not viewed as alarming.

**Table 6.** Problems encountered by the barangay officials in the delivery of devolved basic services and facilities (n = 108)

|                                                            | $w\bar{x}$  | Verbal Description      |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Insufficient Budget                                     | 2.46        | A Little Problem        |
| 2. Lack of Technical Capability                            | 2.40        | A Little Problem        |
| 3. Partisanship                                            | 2.27        | A Little Problem        |
| 4. Lack of Training                                        | 2.24        | A Little Problem        |
| 5. Lack of Manpower                                        | 2.24        | A Little Problem        |
| 6. Weak Political Will                                     | 2.24        | A Little Problem        |
| 7. Lack of Tools & Eqpt. Necessary in the Daily Operations | 2.15        | A Little Problem        |
| 8. Lack of Cooperation from the Constituents               | 2.11        | A Little Problem        |
| 9. Poor Decision-Making Process                            | 2.09        | A Little Problem        |
| 10. Lack of Cooperation among Brgy. Officials              | 2.07        | A Little Problem        |
| 11. Lack of Logistical Means                               | 2.01        | A Little Problem        |
| 12. Red Tape                                               | 1.86        | A Little Problem        |
| 13. Lack of Telecommunication                              | 1.81        | A Little Problem        |
| <b>Composite</b>                                           | <b>2.15</b> | <b>A Little Problem</b> |

During informal interviews, the constituents shared their appreciation for the efforts of barangay officials during the challenging times of the pandemic, highlighting how these officials strived to meet the needs of the community despite widespread economic difficulties. This positive perception stands in contrast to the findings of Matildo (2022) wherein local officials faced various obstacles in delivering basic services, including issues like limited community involvement and insufficient budgets for projects. Additionally, Floranza (2021) identified specific challenges within barangays, including concerns about the competence of barangay captains and issues with cooperation among residents and Barangay Kagawad. These insights highlight the complexities and varied experiences within local governance structures.

In alignment with these findings, Bilchitz and Heleba (2017) emphasized the critical role of public participation in governmental decision-making processes, particularly in rural communities. They argued that active involvement from community members is essential for driving socioeconomic development and addressing local needs effectively.

The above statements are noteworthy as they reveal the intricate dynamics within local governance structures, particularly in rural communities. They highlight the resilience and dedication of barangay officials in addressing community needs during challenging times, despite facing obstacles. Overall, the insights presented herein shed light on the complexities inherent in local governance and emphasize the need for proactive approaches to address community needs and foster inclusive decision-making processes.

Table 7 presents the data that identify the difference between the perceptions of the barangay officials and those of the constituents as regards the barangay officials' performance in delivering devolved basic services and facilities. The results, which were derived using the Mann-Whitney U Test, indicate that a significant difference exists between the perceptions of the groups of respondents particularly in the following areas: health and medical services and facilities ( $p = 0.003 < \alpha = 0.05$ ), social welfare services and facilities ( $p = 0.000 < \alpha = 0.05$ ), and environment management system and services ( $p = 0.027 < \alpha = 0.05$ ). The barangay officials were perceived higher than the constituents in the enumerated areas. The higher ratings the barangays gave themselves in these areas could be attributed to their positive self-concepts, making them rather biased in measuring their capacities in delivering these three basic services which were most crucial during the pandemic when the health and well-being of the public were at greater risk.

**Table 7.** Difference in the perceptions of the barangay officials and constituents as regards the barangay officials' performance in delivering the devolved services and facilities

| Variables                                  | n   | Mean Rank | Median | U     | p-value | Decision/Remark         |
|--------------------------------------------|-----|-----------|--------|-------|---------|-------------------------|
| Health and Medical Services and Facilities |     |           |        |       |         |                         |
| • Barangay Officials                       | 108 | 265.4     | 4.00   | 14800 | 0.003   | Reject $H_{01}$         |
| • Constituents                             | 360 | 221.2     | 3.67   |       |         | (significant)           |
| Public Works and Services                  |     |           |        |       |         |                         |
| • Barangay Officials                       | 108 | 241.4     | 3.50   | 17244 | 0.368   | Fail to reject $H_{01}$ |
| • Constituents                             | 360 | 228.0     | 3.33   |       |         | (Not significant)       |
| Social Welfare Services and Facilities     |     |           |        |       |         |                         |
| • Barangay Officials                       | 108 | 271.9     | 4.00   | 14133 | 0.000   | Reject $H_{01}$         |
| • Constituents                             | 360 | 219.4     | 3.50   |       |         | (significant)           |
| Agricultural Support Services              |     |           |        |       |         |                         |
| • Barangay Officials                       | 108 | 240.0     | 3.10   | 17393 | 0.441   | Fail to reject $H_{01}$ |
| • Constituents                             | 360 | 228.4     | 3.20   |       |         | (Not significant)       |
| Environment Management System and Services |     |           |        |       |         |                         |
| • Barangay Officials                       | 108 | 256.7     | 4.00   | 15690 | 0.027   | Reject $H_{01}$         |
| • Constituents                             | 360 | 223.7     | 3.25   |       |         | (significant)           |

Mann Whitney U Test at 0.05 level of significance

The highlighted services, as emphasized by scholars like Matildo (2022), Cadorna (2008), and Tomas and Reario (2020), are notably prioritized among devolved basic services. Similarly, Gabinete et al. (2022) found high awareness and satisfaction among residents regarding local government-delivered health services, suggesting their critical importance to constituents. Consequently, these services likely receive primary focus from the LGU in terms of implementation.

Furthermore, differing perceptions between the barangay officials and constituents are expected due to their distinct roles and circumstances within the community. Barangay officials may exhibit more positive self-concepts, potentially influenced by political considerations. Admitting shortcomings could jeopardize their public image, affecting

their standing among voters. Some officials even declined survey participation, citing "political" reasons, indicating a cautious approach to protect their reputation. This cautiousness may explain their tendency to rate their performance more favorably, aware that their responses reflect their perceived competence.

Conversely, the constituents typically offer more candid perspectives as they directly experience government programs and services, empowering them to voice concerns for improvement. For instance, Carpio, Cruz, Saquing, and Tindowen (2023) conducted a study involving 250 residents and 50 barangay officials. Their questionnaire aimed to gauge perceptions of Barangay Responsiveness and Issues and Challenges, particularly regarding IATF protocol implementation during the pandemic. While some agreements emerged, discrepancies arose, notably in evaluating isolation facilities and contact tracing.

Interestingly, no significant differences were observed in perceptions regarding public works and agricultural support services. This suggests shared views between officials and constituents, possibly because these areas receive less emphasis at the barangay level or lack awareness among constituents. Villanueva et al. (2019) noted similar findings, highlighting significant gaps in public knowledge of agricultural assistance services. Similarly, Cadorna and Velasco (2008) suggested a limited focus on agricultural support at the barangay level due to extensive city government assistance, resulting in a minimal emphasis on economic businesses and service delivery in barangays.

Table 8 contains the data showing the relationship between the perceived performance of the barangay officials and the problems they have encountered. The Spearman's Rank Order Correlation was applied to calculate the data, which then revealed that there is a significant, inverse, and moderate to strong relationship between the problems encountered by the barangay officials and their performance in the following areas: health and medical services and facilities ( $p = 0.000 < \alpha = 0.05$ ), public works and services ( $p = 0.000 < \alpha = 0.05$ ), social welfare services and facilities ( $p = 0.000 < \alpha = 0.05$ ), agricultural support services ( $p = 0.000 < \alpha = 0.05$ ) and environment management system and services ( $p = 0.000 < \alpha = 0.05$ ). The negative sign in  $r_s$ -values means that the higher the problems encountered by the barangay officials in the delivery of devolved basic services and facilities are, the lower is their performance. In the current study, the problems encountered by the barangay officials are only perceived or described as "A Little Problem," which would reflect why the barangay officials' performance in the delivery of devolved basic services is not adversely affected and remains in the Satisfactory and Very Satisfactory levels.

Table 8. Relationship between the perceived performance of the barangay officials and the problems encountered (n = 108)

| Variables Correlated to Problems Encountered | $r_s$  | p-value | Decision        | Remark      |
|----------------------------------------------|--------|---------|-----------------|-------------|
| 1. Health & Medical Services and Facilities  | -0.546 | 0.000   | Reject $H_{o1}$ | Significant |
| 2. Public Works and Services                 | -0.667 | 0.000   | Reject $H_{o1}$ | Significant |
| 3. Social Welfare Services and Facilities    | -0.450 | 0.000   | Reject $H_{o1}$ | Significant |
| 4. Agricultural Support Services             | -0.465 | 0.000   | Reject $H_{o1}$ | Significant |
| 5. Environment Mgt. System and Services      | -0.561 | 0.000   | Reject $H_{o1}$ | Significant |

Level of significance = 0.05

The study reveals a strong correlation between the challenges faced by the barangay officials and their performance in delivering health and medical services, public works and services, and environmental management systems. This suggests that the severity of these issues significantly impacts the officials' effectiveness in these areas. Conversely, the effect on the officials' performance in providing social welfare and agricultural support services is moderate. This difference implies that problems have a more pronounced impact on services requiring logistical resources, budget, manpower, and technical expertise, such as health and environmental services.

Furthermore, previous research underlines the link between barangay officials' performance and existing challenges. Medina-Guce, Galindes, Salanga, and Sanders (2018) highlighted low budget allotments and suggested creating extra funds to enhance governance. Noble-Nur (2018) found satisfactory performance in various aspects of governance but noted community members' lack of planning and decision-making as a significant hindrance. Boysillo (2017) reported excellent public service provision by barangay chairpersons. However, Flores (2019) stressed the importance of self-reflection among local authorities to sustain governance and improve service delivery. Similarly, Floranza (2021) concluded that issues such as incompetence among barangay captains and lack of cooperation from residents and barangay officials significantly affect overall efficiency and effectiveness in barangay governance.

With these findings, it could be inferred that barangay governance is indeed multifaceted and is highly significant to the welfare of the community. The relationship between the performance of barangay officials and existing problems highlights how important effective governance is in meeting local demands. All things considered, these observations underline the importance of tackling issues on governance, as well as cultivating strong leadership and community involvement to improve barangay governance and advance community development.

## Conclusions

Irrespective of their political affiliations, the barangay officials maintain positive self-perceptions and pride in their administration of devolved basic services, especially during the pandemic. While the constituents generally hold the officials in high esteem, their perceptions of performance might not always match the officials' self-assessments. Nonetheless, the officials strive to cultivate a positive public image and are committed to maintaining exemplary performance in governance, aiming for sustained excellence beyond the pandemic era. Still, despite their confidence and recognition, the barangay officials acknowledge the need for continuous improvement, viewing their performance as very satisfactory but not yet outstanding. Therefore, ongoing capacity-building efforts are deemed essential to further enhance their effectiveness.

## Contributions of Authors

The authors confirm their equal contribution to every part of this research. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of this paper.

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## Conflict of Interests

All authors declared that they have no conflicts of interest as far as this study is concerned.

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