

Beyond the Words: How the Citizens' Charter Lives in Practice A Policy Monograph

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ABSTRACT

This monograph examined the implementation of the Citizen's Charter in selected Local Government Units (LGUs) in the 4th District of Camarines Sur to determine their compliance with the standards set by Republic Act 11032, the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018. Using a descriptive-evaluative design, the study employed surveys, key informant interviews, and an observation checklist based on Civil Service Commission requirements. Survey results showed strong stakeholder agreement on the Charter's visibility, clarity, usefulness, and contribution to service efficiency. However, validation through document review and site observation revealed significant compliance gaps. None of the LGUs met the 70% CSC passing score for completeness of required information, with Lagonoy scoring highest and Tigaon lowest. Missing complaint mechanisms, incomplete procedures, and inconsistencies between posted standards and actual practice were evident. The study underscores the need for strengthened institutionalization, regular updating, and enhanced citizen awareness to ensure effective, transparent, and accountable local service delivery.

Keywords: Citizen's Charter, public service delivery, transparency, accountability, RA 11032

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Corruption has long been a persistent issue in the Philippine bureaucracy, weakening government efficiency and compromising political neutrality. As noted by Caren (2012, as cited in Romero et al., 2019), the culture of graft and corruption fosters a spoil system that hinders effective service delivery. Filipinos continue to experience bureaucratic red tape, with tedious requirements and prolonged processes in obtaining basic services (Local Government Academy, 2008, as cited in De Leon, 2009).

To address these inefficiencies, the government enacted Republic Act No. 9485 (Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007), later amended by Republic Act No. 11032 (Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018). A key provision of this law is the establishment of the Citizen's Charter, which outlines clear service standards, procedures, and timelines to promote transparency, accountability, and faster transactions in government offices.

Despite these measures, studies have shown varying levels of compliance among agencies and LGUs. While some report increased transparency and citizen awareness (Saguin, 2013), others reveal low implementation, limited awareness, and continued fixing activities (De Leon, 2009; Nayem, 2010). Hence, this study is significant as it examines the implementation of the Citizen's Charter among local government units in the 4th District of Camarines Sur, providing feedback on its visibility, clarity, usefulness, and compliance. The results aim to identify areas for improvement, strengthen accountability, and enhance the overall quality of public service delivery.

Objectives of the Study

General Objective

The research study evaluated the compliance of local government units in the 4th District, Camarines Sur, with the implementation of the Citizens' Charter.

Specific objectives

Specifically, the study obtained feedback from the stakeholders on the implementation of the implementation of Citizen's Charter in terms of:

- 1.1 Visibility
- 1.2 Clarity of content
- 1.3 Usefulness
- 1.4 Actual compliance

Significance of the Study

Both service providers and clients are the primary beneficiaries of this study. For government administrators—both at the local and national levels—the findings will serve as a valuable basis for evaluating and enhancing existing service delivery mechanisms. The results of the study can also guide the development of sustainable extension programs that create meaningful and lasting impacts on beneficiaries. Moreover, policymakers stand to benefit from the insights generated, as the findings provide empirical support for crafting sound policies and informed decisions aimed at further improving the efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness of public services.

Scope and Delimitation

This study focuses on assessing the implementation of the Citizens' Charter in local government offices, specifically examining four key dimensions: **visibility**, **clarity of content**, **usefulness**, and **actual compliance**. Visibility covers the placement, readability, and visual presentation of the Citizen's Charter in public offices. Clarity of content includes the language used, completeness of information such as procedures, requirements, fees, responsible personnel, processing time, and complaint mechanisms. Usefulness examines the extent to which the Citizen's Charter promotes efficiency, transparency, accountability, and responsiveness in public service delivery. Actual compliance evaluates whether real transactions adhere to the published procedures, documentary requirements, fees, processing time, and personnel responsibilities stated in the Citizen's Charter.

The study is limited to selected local government units and reflects the experiences and perceptions of service providers and clients during the period of data collection. It does not cover private institutions, non-LGU agencies, or service processes outside those explicitly posted in the Citizens' Charter. Additionally, the study does not assess digital or online service delivery unless specifically indicated in the posted charter. Results are therefore contextualized within the observed offices and the existing version of the Citizens' Charter during the conduct of the study.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Components, Standards, and Implementation of the Citizens' Charter in Public Service Delivery

The Citizen's Charter serves as a formal document that communicates an agency's service standards, procedures, and commitments to the public. Rooted in governance reforms promoting transparency and accountability, it was first introduced in the United Kingdom in 1991 as part of a public sector modernization

initiative (Major, 1991). The Charter was designed to improve public service delivery by informing citizens of what to expect from government agencies, emphasizing standards, openness, and responsiveness.

A key component of the Citizen's Charter is its accessibility and visibility. Studies emphasize that information must be displayed prominently in government offices, written in clear and understandable language, and presented in a format that is visually readable by the general public (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992; Singh, 2010). Public access to clearly posted service standards significantly improves citizen trust and perception of government efficiency (López, 2013). Readability factors such as font size, layout, and color contrast are also essential in ensuring public engagement with the document (Naser, 2015).

The content requirements of the Citizen's Charter include the agency's vision, mission, service descriptions, step-by-step procedures, documentary requirements, processing time, responsible personnel, fees, and complaint-handling mechanisms (Torres, 2016; Jain & Mishra, 2018). According to Torres (2016), charters that include a comprehensive list of requirements and clear procedural steps enable clients to complete transactions efficiently and reduce bureaucratic ambiguity. Similarly, Jain and Mishra (2018) argue that specifying accountable personnel and maximum processing time strengthens institutional responsibility and minimizes opportunities for red tape.

The language used in the charter plays a crucial role in public comprehension. Several studies recommend that charters be written in the dominant local language or bilingual format to accommodate diverse populations (Reyes, 2017; Bautista, 2020). In multilingual contexts such as the Philippines, presenting information in Filipino or local dialects enhances inclusivity and citizen understanding (Reyes, 2017).

Beyond information clarity, research underscores the usefulness of the Citizen's Charter as a tool for improving service delivery. It contributes to transparency, boosts public accountability, minimizes corruption, and increases overall administrative efficiency (De Leon, 2014; Pecson, 2019). Citizens are more likely to trust public institutions when service commitments are clearly stated and consistently implemented (Pecson, 2019). Furthermore, measurable service benchmarks allow government offices to monitor performance and identify areas for improvement (De Leon, 2014).

However, the actual implementation and compliance with posted information remain critical challenges. Several studies reveal a significant gap between written commitments and actual practice in public offices (Gonzales, 2021; Mercado, 2022). While documents may properly outline procedures and timelines, inconsistencies often arise in real transactions, such as additional undocumented requirements, unavailable personnel, longer processing times, and discrepancies in fee structures (Mercado, 2022). This compliance gap weakens the charter's intended purpose and highlights the need for continuous monitoring and institutional reforms (Gonzales, 2021).

In the Philippine setting, the Citizen's Charter is institutionalized under Republic Act 11032 or the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018, which mandates all government agencies to publish and strictly adhere to their service standards. The law reinforces transparency and penalizes non-compliance, further legitimizing the charter as a governance accountability mechanism (ARTA, 2019). Studies confirm that although agencies have complied in producing Citizen's Charters, effectiveness depends largely on consistent implementation, regular updating of information, and periodic monitoring of service delivery performance (Domingo & Manuel, 2022).

Overall, existing literature supports that the Citizen's Charter must be visible, readable, comprehensive, accessible, actionable, and accurately implemented to fulfill its mandate of promoting transparent and efficient public service. Despite its value as a governance tool, continuous evaluation is necessary to ensure alignment between documented service standards and actual practice in public institutions.

Performance Measurement and Compliance Challenges in Citizen's Charter Implementation

Compliance with ARTA or RA 11032 does not only mean adherence to the Citizen's Charter, but each agency

must undergo an evaluation of whether frontline services are properly delivered. The performance of frontline service providers is measured through the Report Card Survey or RCS. This is a tool used to rate the agencies with compliance with the CC, the anti-fixer campaign materials, the help desk, or the no noon break rules. The tool also measures client satisfaction based on the quality of service rendered, the time it took per transaction, the physical setup, and the availability of basic services. (Calina, 2015).

De Leon (2020) in Assessing the Citizen's Charter Formulation and Implementation at the Bureau of Customs port of Clark and the Clark Development Corporation has four recommendations. To serve the clients better; the staff of the CDC-RMO should: (1) prioritize the processing of inbound letters and documents over their photocopying service; (2) minimize small talk with their regular clients; (3) designate a staff to process letters and documents that are received in bulk; and (4) strictly observe the "no noon break policy."

Romero, et al., (2019) found that the Nueva Ecija DepEd Division "always observes" the implementation of the three components of RA 11032 (citizen's charter, access to government services through front-line services, and report card survey). Romero further purported, "When paired with a change in behavior on the part of both front-line service providers and public clients, policy implementation can be beneficial."

Conversely, Ua-O (2022) evaluated the implementation of the Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007 by the National Labor Relations Commission-Regional Arbitration Branch 10. The study aimed to assess the current situation of ARTA regarding its formulation, strengths and weaknesses of posting the Citizen's Charter, accessibility of the frontline service providers, accountability of public officials and employees, and the physical working condition. The study found that the formulation of the CC was not compliant with RA 9485. Re-engineering of agency's systems and procedures was not implemented. Problems were identified by customers regarding the improper posting of the Citizen's Charter, accessing Frontline services, and the physical working conditions of the office.

Further, Ahsan & Huque (2016) presented an analysis on the implementation of charters in local councils of Bangladesh and revealed insightful feedback on the challenges faced by developing countries in such initiatives. The findings revealed that the introduction of the charter in Bangladesh had minimal impact due to a poor publicity campaign that resulted in low awareness among the citizens, a person-centered approach to service delivery in local councils, and apathy and lack of interest among stakeholders. A top-down approach adopted in formulating the charter further contributed to the ineffectiveness of the charter. The study also revealed that citizens found it difficult to access services and were dissatisfied with their quality. While some of the problems were attributed to the performance of public officials, implementation failures made the initiative ineffective.

Similarly, Pathirana (2022) explored the challenges in the implementation of the Citizen's Charter in Sri Lanka, Balangoda Council. The findings confirmed that the implementation of the charter was not successful because of many challenges, such as: lack of awareness of the CC with less publicity, rigid rules and regulations, loss of relationship between officers and citizens, and political capacity, and inadequacy of supervision and monitoring mechanisms.

While some agencies manifested success in the implementation of the Citizens' Charter, many agencies and institutions have pitfalls in the implementation of the same. Recommendations to revisit the implementing rules and regulations, and strict adherence to the information requirements in the CC must be sternly observed.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is anchored by Good Governance Theory. The concept was introduced by the World Bank in the 1992 Report entitled "Governance and Development." According to the document, good governance is an essential complement to sound economic policies and is central to creating and sustaining an environment that fosters strong and equitable development. For the World Bank, good governance consists of the following components: capacity and efficiency in public sector management, accountability, legal framework for development, and information and transparency.

Good governance is about how people are treated not merely as customers or consumers (as in the new public management approach) but as citizens, who have the right to hold their governments to account for the actions they take or fail to take (Ekundayo, 2017).

Likewise, the United Nations (UN) is playing an increasing role in good governance. According to former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, "Good governance is ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law; strengthening democracy; promoting transparency and capacity in public administration." To implement this, the UN follows eight principles namely: participation, rule of law, consensus-oriented, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, transparency, and responsiveness.

Apparently, the implementation of the Citizen's Charter ensures four of the principles of good governance as mentioned by the UN Secretary-General namely: Effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, transparency, and responsiveness. Effectiveness and Efficiency mean processes and institutions should be able to produce results that meet the needs of their community while making the best of their resources. Accountability also connotes that governmental institutions, the private sector, and civil society organizations should be held accountable to the public and institutional stakeholders. Transparency means information should be accessible to the public and monitored. More so, Responsiveness means institutions and processes should serve all stakeholders.

The principles of good governance, as mentioned above, are explicitly anchored to the current study because the ultimate goals of creating the Citizens' Charter are to ensure openness and accessibility of information to the clientele, to ensure fast and efficient delivery of goods and services, to hold public servants accountable for their responsibilities, and to reduce bureaucratic red tape in the government.

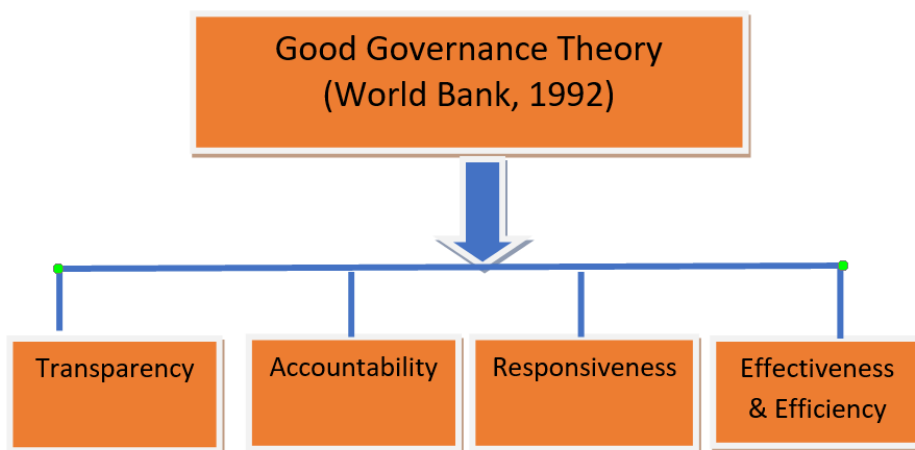


Figure 1. Good Governance Theory

INPUT

Citizen's Charter Components

Visibility

Clarity of Content

Usefulness

Actual Compliance

↓

PROCESS

Data gathering from stakeholders Surveys/feedback evaluation Compliance assessment Analysis based on RA 11032



OUTPUT

Assessment of LGU Compliance with Citizen's Charter in the 4th District, Camarines Sur



OUTCOME

Enhanced transparency Improved service delivery Evidence-based recommendations Strengthened governance compliance

Figure 2. The Conceptual Framework of the Study

The framework of this study is anchored on Input–Process–Output (IPO) model. The input includes the key indicators for evaluating the Citizen's Charter implementation, specifically its visibility, clarity of content, usefulness, and actual compliance as experienced by stakeholders. The process involves gathering stakeholder feedback through surveys and assessments, analyzing responses, and evaluating the level of compliance of local government units based on the mandates of RA 11032. The output is the overall assessment of the LGUs' compliance with the Citizen's Charter in the 4th District of Camarines Sur. Finally, the expected outcome of the study is the formulation of evidence-based insights that contribute to improved transparency, strengthened accountability, enhanced service delivery, and policy recommendations for better governance practices.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research is descriptive-evaluative. Descriptive–evaluative research is a type of study that describes a current situation or condition and, at the same time, judges or evaluates its quality, effectiveness, or level of compliance based on standards or criteria. The current study described and evaluated the compliance of the municipal government of Tigaon, Goa, and Lagonoy as to the required size, language or dialect used, its usefulness, and whether the LGU complied with the information reflected on the Charter vis-à-vis its actual implementation.

Research Locale and Respondents

The study was conducted in three municipalities in the 4th District of Camarines Sur, Bicol Region, Philippines. Specifically, respondents were the service recipients or clients, service providers or frontliners, and key officials from the Local Treasury, Business Permit and Licensing Office, and Engineering Office.

Research Instruments

Mixed data gathering tools were used, namely, survey questionnaires, Key Informant Interview (KII) Guide, and observation checklist.

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data collection, permission to conduct the study was formally secured from the Local Chief Executives of the identified study areas. Data gathering was carried out for 15 days, during which hired enumerators administered survey questionnaires to the respondents. To validate and enrich the survey results, the enumerators also conducted follow-up interviews with selected participants.

All interviews were audio-recorded, supplemented by field notes, and were subsequently transcribed and analyzed by the researcher to ensure accuracy and depth of interpretation.

A structured Likert-scale survey questionnaire was used to gather stakeholder feedback on the implementation of the Citizen's Charter, specifically in terms of visibility, clarity of content, usefulness, and actual compliance. Meanwhile, the qualitative data derived from interviews were utilized to identify issues and challenges encountered during its implementation.

Both the interview guide and the survey questionnaire were personally developed and structured by the researcher.

Data Analysis

The study employed a weighted mean as the primary statistical tool to analyze the quantitative data gathered from the Likert-scale survey questionnaire. Weighted mean is a measure of central tendency that considers the varying degrees of importance or weight assigned to each response option. Unlike a simple average, the weighted mean gives emphasis to the frequency of each rating selected by the respondents, making it highly suitable for studies that use rating scales or attitudinal measures.

The responses from the Likert questionnaire were triangulated with the responses from the key informant interview and interviews with selected respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the implementation of the Citizens' Charter in the Local Government Units (LGUs) of the 4th District of Camarines Sur based on stakeholder feedback across four key indicators: Visibility, Clarity of Content, Usefulness, and Actual Compliance.

Table 1 presents the feedback of three respondent groups on the implementation of the Citizen's Charter across four key areas gathered through a survey questionnaire. The weighted means ranged from 1.1 to 1.8, interpreted as *agree* to *strongly agree*.

Table 1. Responses Obtained from the Service Recipients on the Implementation of the Citizens' Charter in Four Key Areas

Indicators	Weighted Mean
<i>Visibility of the Citizen's Charter</i>	
The Citizen's Charter is posted at the main entrance of the office or the most conspicuous place.	1.5
The font size and style are readable for viewing distance.	1.6
The texts and background are eye- friendly.	1.6
<i>Clarity of Content of the Citizen's Charter</i>	
The Citizen's Charter is posted in the form of published materials written either in the local language or Filipino.	1.7
The Citizen's Charter contains the vision, mission, objectives, and core values of the institution/agency.	1.7
The Citizen's Charter enumerates the comprehensive checklist of requirements needed for each type of request.	1.6
The Citizen's Charter enumerates the step-by-step procedure to obtain a particular service.	1.8
The Citizen's Charter determines the person responsible for each step.	1.8
The Citizen's Charter determines the maximum time to conclude the process.	1.8
The Citizen's Charter enumerates the documents to be presented by the requesting party if necessary.	1.7

The Citizen's Charter determines the number of fees needed.	1.8
The Citizen's Charter determines the procedure for filing a complaint.	1.1
<i>The Usefulness of the Citizen's Charter</i>	
The clear procedures of the Citizen's Charter brought a smooth flow of transactions in the LGU.	1.6
Boosts accountability and transparency in the delivery of public services.	1.6
Responsive and fast delivery of public services.	1.6
Improves the effectiveness of the LGU by having measurable standards.	1.6
<i>Actual Compliance of the Information on the Citizen's Charter</i>	
The checklist of requirements in the Citizen's Charter is followed during actual transactions.	1.6
The step-by-step procedures in the Citizen's Charter are the same with the actual transactions.	1.6
The officer responsible for each step as mentioned in the Citizen Charter is always available and promptly performs the task.	1.5
The actual processing time of a document/request or transaction is consistent with the Citizen's Charter.	1.7
There are other documents needed not mentioned in the Citizen's Charter.	1.8
The number of fees is consistent with the Citizen's Charter.	1.6
Procedures of filing a complaint are consistent with the Citizen's Charter.	1.7
General Weighted Mean	1.6 (SA)

Legend: (1) Strongly Agree-1:00-1.75;(2) Agree-1.76-2:50; (3) Disagree-2.51-3.26; (4) Strongly Disagree 3.26-4:0

Specifically, the three groups of respondents professed that the Citizen's Charter enumerates the step-by-step procedures, persons responsible for each request/transaction, the concluding time of processing documents, and other requirements are also reflected in the Citizen's Charter. These indicators obtained a weighted mean of 1.8. Similarly, as to the visibility of the Citizen's Charter, they strongly agree that the Citizen's Charter is visible or eye-friendly. As to clarity, it is written in a form of published materials and in the Local language or Filipino, posted at the main entrance or conspicuous places reflecting the vision, mission, objectives, and core values of the institution/agency. It has a comprehensive checklist of documents and the amount of fees needed for each request or transaction. The same number strongly agree that the Citizen's Charter resulted in a smooth flow of transactions, transparency, responsiveness, and efficiency of service. It has also improved the effectiveness of LGUs by having measurable standards. Moreover, the respondents also professed that the Citizen's Charter is followed during actual transactions.

Overall, the respondents professed that the Citizen's Charter is implemented with a weighted mean of 1.6, interpreted as *strongly agree*. These were the results from the survey questionnaire administered by the research enumerators in tabular presentation.

The findings of the study also conform with Santos & Gawad (2020) in their study, "Compliance of Local Government Units to Citizens' Charter Standards."

They examined 15 LGUs in Luzon and found that visibility of the Citizens' Charter significantly influences client awareness and service satisfaction. Offices with charters posted at main entrances had higher transparency ratings. These findings parallel the study's indicators on readability, visibility, and placement. The placement of the Citizen's Charter is significant for clients to understand its purpose. It must be placed in three conspicuous places. The font should be large enough for billboard-level visibility, and the language used may be in English, Filipino, or the local dialect for clearer public understanding.

Asian Development Bank (ADB) (2017), in the study, "Improving Accountability Through Citizen's Charters: A Case Analysis in Southeast Asia,"revealed that well-designed charters enhanced measurable standards and client satisfaction. Four key recommendations of the study are the following: 1) using local language, 2) ensuring readability, 3) updating processing times, and 4) specifying responsible person.

This was reaffirmed by Dela Cruz & Balang (2019), in “Assessing the Clarity and Content of Citizen’s Charters in Municipal Offices.” They evaluated content clarity—including steps, responsible officers, processing time, and fees. Results show that charters with step-by-step procedures and complete checklists reduce processing errors by 23%.

Arreza (2018) also revealed that clients perceive Citizen’s Charters as useful when procedures are simplified and accessible. High usefulness ratings were associated with improved workflow, accountability, and transparency.

Moreover, the reviewed international studies collectively underscore the crucial role of Citizen’s Charters and similar transparency tools in strengthening public accountability, enhancing service delivery, and empowering citizens across diverse government contexts. Rowland and Lyons (2018) highlighted that in the United Kingdom, the clarity and visibility of service charters significantly improved compliance among civil servants, particularly when performance metrics were explicitly stated. Their findings emphasize that when expectations are clearly communicated, public personnel are more likely to adhere to service standards, resulting in more consistent and accountable governance. In Germany, Kunz and Weber (2021) demonstrated that well-designed service charters enhance citizen empowerment by providing essential information on procedures, processing times, and associated fees. This transparency enables citizens to make informed decisions and reduces uncertainty when accessing government services.

Similarly, Singh and Prasad’s (2019) research in India revealed that Citizens’ Charters help reduce bureaucratic discretion and promote uniformity in municipal service delivery. By obligating agencies to comply with posted timelines, charters significantly influence client satisfaction and minimize variations in how services are rendered. This reinforces the principle that clarity and predictability are central to effective public administration. On a broader global scale, UNESCO’s 2020 evaluation found that the accessibility of public information—including service charters—directly shapes governance quality and institutional trust. When citizens can easily understand their rights, responsibilities, and service processes, their confidence in public institutions increases, leading to more constructive citizen–government relations.

Taken together, these studies confirm that Citizens’ Charters are not merely administrative documents; they are strategic governance tools that promote transparency, accountability, and citizen-centered service delivery across different administrative systems worldwide.

The collective findings across local, regional, and international studies highlight powerful implications for the practice and evolution of public administration. First, the consistent emphasis on visibility, readability, and strategic placement of the Citizen’s Charter—echoed in Santos and Gawad (2020)—demonstrates that public information must be both *accessible* and *highly visible* to effectively guide citizen interactions. When charters are posted prominently, use clear and culturally appropriate language, and are designed for easy comprehension, they significantly enhance client awareness and satisfaction. This underscores a central mandate in public administration: government agencies must proactively communicate service standards to ensure transparency and foster trust.

The recommendations of the Asian Development Bank (2017) further indicate that Citizens’ Charters serve as critical instruments for institutionalizing measurable standards. Updating processing times, specifying responsible personnel, and maintaining clarity in content strengthens accountability mechanisms within local bureaucracies. These practices align with modern governance principles that demand evidence-based performance monitoring and clear delineation of administrative responsibilities. For administrators, this translates into the need for regular review and revision of charters to keep pace with organizational changes and evolving citizen needs.

Moreover, the findings of Dela Cruz and Balang (2019), which show a 23% reduction in processing errors when charters contain complete step-by-step procedures, highlight the operational value of well-structured information. This implies that Citizen’s Charters are not only tools for public transparency but also internal management resources that streamline workflow, reduce bureaucratic discretion, and standardize service

delivery. Simplified processes—supported by clear instructions and defined officers-in-charge—enhance efficiency and minimize ambiguity for both clients and frontline personnel.

Arreza's (2018) observations on usefulness emphasize that citizens perceive government as more credible and responsive when processes are simplified. In public administration, this means that service accessibility and user-friendly procedures should be institutional priorities. Simplification reduces administrative burden, shortens turnaround times, and improves public perception of government competence.

International literature provides further insight into the global relevance of Citizens' Charters as governance tools. Studies by Rowland and Lyons (2018), Kunz and Weber (2021), and Singh and Prasad (2019) collectively affirm that clarity, visibility, and defined performance metrics enhance compliance among civil servants and empower citizens through a better understanding of their rights and available services. These findings reinforce a foundational principle of public administration: transparency and predictability reduce opportunities for discretionary abuse and promote uniformity in service delivery.

UNESCO (2020) expands this perspective by linking access to public information with broader governance outcomes, showing that transparent service standards elevate institutional trust and strengthen democratic participation. For public administrators, this highlights the role of Citizens' Charters in supporting good governance, not merely as procedural guides but as instruments of civic empowerment.

Overall, the implications point to a clear conclusion: Citizen's Charters are strategic governance mechanisms that bridge administrative intent and public expectation. Their proper design, implementation, and continuous refinement contribute significantly to increased transparency, heightened citizen satisfaction, reduced bureaucratic arbitrariness, and stronger institutional accountability. For public administration as a discipline and practice, the collective evidence underscores the necessity of integrating Citizen's Charters into broader quality assurance frameworks, performance management systems, and citizen engagement strategies.

Conversely, aside from the survey tool used by the researcher, the researcher observed how each municipality implements the Citizens' Charter. The researcher used an observation checklist. The scoring guide used by the researcher during the site visits was spelled out in the laws implementing guidelines of RA 2008, which was repealed by RA 11032 in 2018. The required pieces of information as reflected in **Table 2** were rated as follows: a full point of (1) to an office for every required piece of information that it has included in the Citizen's Charter. A half point (0.5) for every required piece of information that it has only partially included in its Citizen's Charter, while No Point (0) for every required piece of information that it has failed to include in its Citizens Charter. The maximum total number of points that each agency could gather was 12. Out of this total, each of the three LGUs must get at least 8.4 points to pass the assessment. This minimum passing score was based on the CSC's 70% passing mark in the Report Card Survey (RCS).

Table 2. Compliance of LGUs on the Required Information of the Citizen's Charter

Required Information	Tigaon	Goa	Lagonoy
Vision and mission of the office/agency	1	1	1
Frontline service offered	0	0.83	1
Clients	0	0.83	1
Step-by-step procedure to obtain a service	0	0.83	0.67
Officer/employee responsible for each step	0	0	0.67
Maximum time to conduct the process	0	0.33	0.67
Documents to be presented by the clients and why they are needed	0.67	1	0.67
Amount of the fees	0	0.33	0.67
Procedure for filing complaints	0	0	0.33
Names and contact details of the officials to whom the clients can file a complaint	0	0	0.33
The allowable period for an extension due to unusual circumstances	0	0	0
Contact numbers to call for recommendations, inquiries, suggestions, and	1	0	0.33

complaints			
Total Points	2.67	4.15	7.34

Data revealed that not one LGU obtained the maximum point of 8.4 or 70% of the CSC's Report Survey Card passing mark. The Local Government of Lagonoy was a step closer to the passing rate of 8.4 points. It was noted that the Municipal Treasurer and Business Permit and Licensing Offices of LGU Lagonoy obtained an average point of 10 and 9, but because of the low rating obtained by the Municipal Engineering Office, the average arrived at 7.43 only. Conversely, LGUs Tigaon and Goa obtained 2.67 and 4.15, respectively. This means that the required pieces of information on their citizen's charters are not fully reflected in three municipalities.

Notably, LGU-Tigaon Municipal Treasurer's Office (MTO) and Business Permit and Licensing Office (BPLO) do not post the services offered in the Citizen's Charter, only the Philsys procedures are posted on the wall. Contact numbers to call for recommendations, complaints, and inquiries are not also posted but, the hotline numbers of the MDRRMO, mayor, and vice mayor are posted instead. Likewise, at the Engineering Office, a workflow chart is only posted in lieu of the step-by-step procedure to obtain a service. It was likewise noted at LGU-Goa Treasurer's Office. The officer or employee responsible for each step was not reflected in the Citizen's Charter.

Apparently, LGU-Lagonoy obtained a higher rate (7.43) compared to Tigaon and Lagonoy. MTO and BPLO, respectively were rated 1 in every required piece of information in the Citizen's Charter. Conversely, procedures for filing complaints were not evident at the Engineering Office. The contact details to file a complaint were not reflected in the charter, only the names. This was found in Saguin (2013) in "the Critical Challenges in Implementing the Citizens' Charter Initiative: Insights from Selected Local Government Units," Saguin concluded that there is non-compliance regarding the maximum allowable period of extension and the principle of providing feedback for any deviations from the published standards. The charter describes the relevant "windows" or places to go to for specific steps in the application process, but the accountable frontliners were not readily identified. Not all information about the law can be found in the charters. There were inconsistencies in the information in the charters.

Similar findings were noted in De Leon (2009). Two case agencies, the Bureau of Customs (BOC) Port of Clark and the Clark Development Corporation (CDC), did not comply with the required information on the procedure for filing complaints and the allowable extension period for unusual circumstances, and the contact numbers for giving feedback. According to Parreño and Ramilo (2023), implementing complaint mechanisms and proper posting strengthens feedback participation. Similarly, Mendoza (2020) on "Enhancing Service Efficiency Using Citizen's Charters in Local Bureaucracies" found that LGUs utilizing the Charter as a performance monitoring tool achieved faster turnaround times and reduced client dissatisfaction.

Both the tabular data and findings from previous studies were confirmed during the validation of data from the survey questionnaire. The interview results show that clients are not aware of the Citizens' Charter. They do not even know what the Citizens' Charter is. They have been transacting the same business for many years, including paying real property/business taxes, securing business permits, and obtaining community tax certificates, among others. They directly go to the concerned office during actual transactions without noticing the Citizen's Charter. These findings contradict De Guzman & Simbulan's (2021) study, where transparency mechanisms, including Citizens' Charters, help reduce transaction time and prevent informal practices. LGUs with complete and updated charters achieved higher "fast delivery of services" scores.

Interviewees also mentioned that some of the posted names on the Citizens' Charter do not match the actual employee attending the transaction. This affirms the study of Torres & Valdez (2022) on the "Actual Compliance of LGUs to Their Posted Citizen's Charters." Focusing on implementation, the study found discrepancies between posted procedures and actual practice. Common issues include missing personnel, additional undocumented requirements, and delays beyond the stated processing time.

Findings reveal significant gaps in the implementation of Citizens' Charters across LGUs, highlighting a disconnect between prescribed procedures and actual practice. None of the municipalities achieved the CSC passing mark, with offices often failing to post complete information, assign responsible personnel, or provide accessible contact details for complaints and feedback. As a result, citizens remain largely unaware of the charters, relying instead on informal knowledge of transactional processes. These findings underscore critical implications for public administration: first, accountability is weakened when service standards are unclear or inconsistently applied; second, transparency and citizen empowerment are compromised, limiting feedback mechanisms and reducing public trust; and third, operational efficiency is hindered, as incomplete or inaccurate charters contribute to delays, errors, and inconsistent service delivery. The evidence emphasizes the need for LGUs to institutionalize charters through regular monitoring, updating, and capacity-building for frontline personnel, ensuring that posted procedures align with actual practices. Properly implemented, Citizen's Charters serve not only as compliance tools but as strategic instruments to enhance service quality, strengthen accountability, and promote citizen-centered governance.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

The study revealed that the implementation of Citizen's Charters in the LGUs of the 4th District of Camarines Sur demonstrates both strengths and significant gaps. Survey results across four key indicators—Visibility, Clarity of Content, Usefulness, and Actual Compliance—yielded an overall weighted mean of 1.6, interpreted as *strongly agree*, indicating that stakeholders recognize the charters' role in promoting transparency, accountability, and service efficiency. Respondents affirmed that the charters generally enumerate step-by-step procedures, responsible personnel, processing times, required documents, and fees, contributing to smoother transactions and measurable service standards.

However, observations and site validations revealed that none of the LGUs achieved the CSC passing mark of 8.4 points for completeness of required information. LGU-Lagonoy scored highest (7.43), while Tigaon and Goa scored significantly lower (2.67 and 4.15, respectively). Key deficiencies included incomplete posting of services offered, absence of responsible personnel in charters, missing contact details for complaints, inconsistent procedures, and discrepancies between posted charters and actual practices. Interviews further indicated that many clients were unaware of the existence or purpose of Citizens' Charters and relied on informal knowledge to access services.

These findings confirm that while Citizens' Charters are perceived as useful and effective in theory, their practical implementation remains inconsistent. Gaps in visibility, clarity, and actual compliance undermine accountability, reduce citizen empowerment, and hinder operational efficiency. The study underscores the need for LGUs to institutionalize Citizens' Charters through proper posting, regular updating, alignment with actual procedures, and capacity-building for frontline personnel, ensuring that these charters function as strategic tools for citizen-centered governance and improved public service delivery.

Conclusions

The implementation of Citizens' Charters in the LGUs of the 4th District of Camarines Sur is generally recognized as promoting transparency, accountability, and service efficiency, as evidenced by high stakeholder ratings across visibility, clarity, usefulness, and actual compliance.

Despite positive perceptions, none of the LGUs fully complied with the CSC passing mark for completeness of required information, with LGU-Lagonoy performing highest but still falling short, and Tigaon and Goa scoring significantly lower.

Key deficiencies in implementation include incomplete posting of services, absence of responsible personnel in the charters, missing contact details for complaints, inconsistent procedures, and discrepancies between posted charters and actual practices.

Many clients remain unaware of the existence or purpose of the Citizens' Charter, indicating a gap between formal policy and public knowledge, which limits citizen empowerment and participation.

Overall, while Citizens' Charters have theoretical value as tools for improving service delivery, accountability, and transparency, practical implementation remains inconsistent, underscoring the need for systematic institutionalization, regular updating, proper posting, and capacity-building for frontline personnel to ensure that charters effectively serve as instruments of citizen-centered governance.

Recommendations

In light of the findings, the following are recommended:

Complete and Accurate Posting of Citizen's Charters: LGUs should ensure that all required information—such as services offered, step-by-step procedures, responsible personnel, processing times, required documents, fees, and complaint mechanisms—is fully reflected in the Citizen's Charter and visibly posted in at least three conspicuous locations.

Regular Updating and Alignment: Citizen's Charters should be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect current procedures, personnel assignments, and processing standards to ensure consistency between the posted information and actual service practices.

Capacity-Building for Frontline Personnel: LGUs should conduct training and orientation programs for all personnel responsible for delivering frontline services to enhance compliance with the charter, ensure accurate information dissemination, and improve overall service efficiency.

Enhancing Public Awareness: LGUs should implement information campaigns to educate citizens on the existence, purpose, and content of the Citizen's Charter, using local languages and accessible formats to promote understanding and encourage utilization.

Establishment of Feedback and Complaint Mechanisms: Contact details, hotlines, and clear procedures for complaints and suggestions should be included in the charter, with a system in place to monitor, respond, and track citizen feedback to improve accountability.

Institutionalization of Citizen's Charters as Performance Tools: LGUs should integrate the charters into internal performance monitoring systems to measure compliance, service efficiency, and citizen satisfaction, ensuring that the charter becomes a strategic governance instrument rather than a purely administrative requirement.

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