

Participatory Governance and Public Service Delivery

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between participatory governance mechanisms and public service delivery in selected barangays of Iloilo City, Philippines. Anchored on the Community-Driven Development (CDD) framework, the research employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design involving 93 barangay officials. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire measuring participatory governance and public service delivery across multiple dimensions. Descriptive statistics and nonparametric inferential tests were utilized, including the Mann–Whitney U test, Kruskal–Wallis H test, and Spearman’s rho. Results revealed that both participatory governance and public service delivery were perceived at very high levels. No significant differences were found when variables were classified according to age, sex, educational attainment, length of service, and location. However, a very strong and statistically significant relationship was established between participatory governance and public service delivery ($r = 0.901$, $p < .001$). The findings affirm that inclusive and participatory governance mechanisms are critical drivers of effective public service delivery at the grassroots level. The study contributes empirical evidence to governance scholarship and offers policy-relevant insights for strengthening democratic local governance.

Keywords: Participatory Governance; Public Service Delivery; Barangays; Community-Driven Development; Local Governance; Iloilo City

INTRODUCTION

Barangays, as the smallest political and administrative units in the Philippines, occupy a pivotal position in translating democratic ideals into everyday governance practices. As frontline institutions, barangays are tasked with delivering essential public services while simultaneously fostering citizen participation in decision-making processes. In recent decades, participatory governance has been increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of democratic legitimacy, accountability, and service effectiveness in local government units.

Despite policy mandates promoting citizen engagement, questions remain regarding the actual effectiveness of participatory governance mechanisms at the barangay level and their tangible impact on public service delivery. While formal structures such as barangay assemblies and consultations exist, the extent to which these mechanisms meaningfully empower citizens and enhance service outcomes has not been sufficiently examined. This study addresses this gap by empirically investigating the relationship between participatory governance mechanisms and public service delivery in Iloilo City barangays.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the **Community-Driven Development (CDD) framework**, which emphasizes community participation as a central driver of sustainable and effective development outcomes. CDD posits that communities are best positioned to identify their needs, prioritize interventions, and ensure accountability in governance processes. By decentralizing decision-making and empowering local actors, CDD strengthens ownership, transparency, and responsiveness in public service provision.

Within this framework, participatory governance is viewed not merely as a procedural requirement but as a transformative mechanism that enhances institutional legitimacy and service effectiveness. Citizen involvement

in planning, monitoring, and evaluation is expected to improve alignment between public services and community needs.

Applying the CDD framework, this study conceptualizes participatory governance as a mediating mechanism through which the demographic characteristics of barangay officials influence public service delivery outcomes. Community engagement, accountability, and transparency function as pathways linking governance practices to service effectiveness. The framework assumes that when participatory mechanisms are institutionalized and practiced consistently, they strengthen service delivery regardless of officials' demographic profiles, while structural inequalities may still shape access and outcomes.

Objectives of the Study

General Objective

To determine the relationship between participatory governance mechanisms and public service delivery in selected barangays of Iloilo City.

Specific Objectives

Specifically, this study seeks to:

1. Describe the profile of barangay officials in terms of age, sex, educational attainment, length of service, and location.
2. Determine the level of participatory governance in barangays when taken as a whole and when classified according to profile variables.
3. Determine the level of public service delivery in barangays when taken as a whole and when classified according to profile variables.
4. Test for significant differences in participatory governance when classified according to profile variables.
5. Test for significant differences in public service delivery when classified according to profile variables.
6. Determine the relationship between participatory governance mechanisms and public service delivery in barangays.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a **quantitative research design** using a **cross-sectional survey methodology**, appropriate for examining relationships among variables at a single point in time.

Participants and Locale

The respondents consisted of **93 barangay officials** from selected barangays in **Iloilo City**, Philippines, during Fiscal Year 2024. Participants included barangay captains, councilors, secretaries, treasurers, and other key functionaries. A **purposive sampling technique** was utilized to ensure that respondents possessed direct involvement in governance and service delivery.

Research Instruments

Data were collected using a **structured questionnaire** composed of three parts:

1. Respondent profile

2. Participatory governance mechanisms (≈15 items)

3. Public service delivery (≈15 items)

All items were measured using a **five-point Likert scale**. The instrument underwent expert validation and pilot testing to ensure validity and reliability.

Data Gathering Procedure

Approval was secured from appropriate academic authorities. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Questionnaires were administered through face-to-face distribution and retrieval. Data confidentiality and ethical research standards were strictly observed.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency counts, percentages, and means were used for descriptive analysis. The **Mann–Whitney U test** and **Kruskal–Wallis H test** examined group differences, while **Spearman’s rho** measured the relationship between participatory governance and public service delivery.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3. Status of Participatory Governance When Classified According to Profile Variables

Profile	Category	Mean	Description
Age	Young	4.47	Very High
	Old	4.50	Very High
Sex	Male	4.49	Very High
	Female	4.50	Very High
Length of Service	0–5 years	4.46	Very High
	6–10 years	4.50	Very High
	11–15 years	4.54	Very High
	16+ years	4.53	Very High
Education	Bachelor’s	4.49	Very High
	Master’s	4.50	Very High
	Doctorate	4.47	Very High
Location	Rural	4.46	Very High
	Suburban	4.41	Very High
	Urban	4.51	Very High
Overall Mean		4.49	Very High

Across demographic classifications, participatory governance remains consistently very high. This uniformity suggests that participatory norms have been institutionalized within barangay governance culture. Nonetheless, slight non-significant variations—such as higher ratings among mid-tenure and urban officials—hint at underlying structural advantages linked to experience and resource access. The absence of significant variation should therefore be interpreted cautiously, as standardized governance scripts can obscure differential power relations.

Table 4. Level of Public Service Delivery in the Barangays When Taken as a Whole

Indicator	Mean	Description
Timely, efficient & courteous service	4.59	Very High
Empathy & responsiveness	4.52	Very High
Shared responsibility	4.52	Very High
Accountability & transparency	4.51	Very High
Resource stewardship	4.49	Very High
Continuous improvement	4.44	Very High
Feedback mechanisms	4.41	Very High
Grand Mean	4.48	Very High

Public service delivery is likewise perceived at a very high level, reflecting a strong service-oriented ethos among barangay officials. High ratings for professionalism and empathy underscore the relational nature of local governance, where service delivery is embedded in daily community interaction. However, global governance studies caution that perceived service quality may not always align with objective service equity, particularly across geographic contexts.

Results

Table 5. Level of Public Service Delivery When Classified According to Profile Variables

Profile	Category	Mean	Description
Age	Young	4.46	Very High
	Old	4.49	Very High
Sex	Male	4.47	Very High
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Length of Service	0–5 years	4.44	Very High
	6–10 years	4.51	Very High
	11–15 years	4.50	Very High
	16+ years	4.51	Very High

Education	Bachelor's	4.47	Very High
	Master's	4.50	Very High
	Doctorate	4.47	Very High
Location	Rural	4.45	Very High
	Suburban	4.41	Very High
	Urban	4.49	Very High
Overall Mean		4.48	Very High

DISCUSSION

Similar to participatory governance, public service delivery ratings remain consistently very high across classifications. Slight advantages among urban and mid-tenure officials suggest structural benefits linked to institutional networks and accumulated experience. Suburban barangays consistently record the lowest means, reinforcing the notion that liminal administrative spaces often face compounded governance challenges despite strong normative commitment.

Table 6. Relationship Between Participatory Governance and Public Service Delivery

Variable	Mean	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Participatory Governance	4.49	0.901	0.000	Significant
Public Service Delivery	4.48			

The analysis reveals a **very strong and statistically significant positive relationship** between participatory governance and public service delivery. This finding empirically confirms that participatory governance is not merely symbolic but functionally linked to service effectiveness. As participatory mechanisms strengthen—through dialogue, inclusivity, and accountability—service delivery becomes more responsive and efficient. This supports deliberative democracy and institutional performance theories, emphasizing that governance quality and service outcomes are structurally intertwined rather than independent domains.

CONCLUSION

Participatory governance and public service delivery in Iloilo City barangays are mutually reinforcing systems. While demographic variables do not significantly differentiate governance practices or service outcomes, participatory mechanisms play a decisive role in enhancing service effectiveness. The findings confirm that inclusive, transparent governance is a critical determinant of responsive public service delivery at the grassroots level.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that participatory governance mechanisms be further institutionalized and linked explicitly to service delivery performance indicators. Policymakers should address structural inequities—particularly in suburban and rural barangays—through targeted training, equitable resource allocation, and inclusive leadership development. Future research may adopt longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to capture the qualitative dimensions of empowerment and social cohesion.