

UNVEILING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF LGU-ELECTED OFFICIALS IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION CONFLICT

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Abstract

By capturing the voices and perspectives of those directly involved in the administration of local governance, the general public will be able to identify their experiences. The study aims to know the lived experiences of LGU elected officials in the administration of locale governance, to identify the context of the lived experiences of LGU elected officials in local Governance, and to determine the views of LGU elected officials in the administration of locale governance in the future.

This qualitative study employs the Transcendental Phenomenological Method to illuminate the lived experiences of the Local Government Unit (LGU)-elected officials in the administration of local governance, focusing on the Municipality of Esperanza in Sultan Kudarat, Philippines. The research unravels the intricacies and challenges inherent in LGU governance roles through purposive sampling and in-depth semi-structured interviews with four officials.

Guided by Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis framework, data analysis seeks to distill key themes from the participants' narratives. Themes such as Family Legacy and Community Service, Serving Others and Legacy, Inspiration and Challenges in Public Service, and Faith, Family, and Community Assistance emerge, providing rich insights into the motivations and obstacles LGU officials encounter. The findings underscore the multifaceted nature of LGU governance, highlighting the interplay between familial legacies, community service, and a commitment to public welfare. Economic progress, effective budgeting, and political engagement are identified as critical elements shaping the landscape of local governance in Esperanza. Despite challenges, LGU officials are steadfast in serving constituents and fostering community development.

In conclusion, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of LGU governance dynamics, offering practical insights for enhancing the efficacy and integrity of local governance practices. The study underscores the importance of addressing diverse challenges while navigating the complex terrain of public service, ultimately striving toward the growth and prosperity of communities like Esperanza.

Keywords: Lived Experiences, LGU-Elected Officials, Administration, Local Governance.

Introduction

Due to the changing nature of modern public administration, government functions and governance principles have recently assumed a prominent position in debates on public policy [18]. Local government has become a notable point in this developing debate, gaining more attention from academics and decision-makers alike [34]. Locally elected authorities charged with protecting the public interest face heavy obligations deeply influenced by various complex issues. These variables include their motivations, complex political environment, community needs, and hurdles they expect to confront [55][57]. This confluence of forces propels them on a unique trip across the complex landscape of local governance, a journey that holds significant implications for democratic governance and community well-being [48].

This journey through local governance and administration presents its unique challenges and opportunities. It navigates the delicate balance between serving the interests of the majority within democratic governments and the implementation of effective governance practices such as responsiveness, accountability, and transparency [6]. At its core, this journey reflects the government's commitment to act in the best interests of its citizens, address their needs, and uphold their fundamental rights. This commitment is central to trust in government, a complex, multifaceted, and often elusive concept hinges on the belief that the government can make effective decisions and prioritize the people's interests [29].

As we embark on this journey through local governance administration, we delve into the intricate web of government roles and governance principles, each contributing to the fabric of public trust [33]. We explore the impact of government responses to critical situations on public trust and governance outcomes. Additionally, we examine the evolving communication landscape in the digital age, with social media emerging as a powerful tool for governments to engage, inform, and interact with the public [35][60]. In this context,

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we witness the transformation of government-citizen relationships and the implications for trust and accountability.

This journey also takes us to the global stage, where economic clusters emerge in various sectors, including the cultural industries. These clusters represent geographic concentrations of interconnected entities, fostering innovation, productivity, and economic growth [28]. Within the cultural industries, characterized by commercializing products with high aesthetic and symbolic content, these clusters manifest as hubs of creativity and collaboration [53]. As we explore the agency and context of local governance administration, we consider the role of these clusters in shaping economic and cultural landscapes.

The text delves into the intricacies of local governance administration, examining its complexity from good governance to government responsiveness, accountability, and transparency. It recognizes the continuing journey driven by public interest and confidence in government while considering future possibilities and challenges.

The study has explored the roles, responsibilities, and challenges of LGU elected officials in local governance and has also examined the concepts of government roles, governance principles, and public trust. However, there is a noticeable gap in the literature regarding a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of LGU elected officials, the contextual factors that shape these experiences, and how these officials perceive their roles and responsibilities in the future. The study aims to know the lived experiences of LGU elected officials in the administration of locale governance, to identify the context of the lived experiences of LGU elected officials in local Governance, and to determine the views of LGU elected officials in the administration of locale governance in the future.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of LGU elected officials in the administration of locale governance?
2. What is the context of the lived experiences of LGU elected officials in local Governance?
3. How do LGU elected officials in the administration of locale governance view themselves in the future?

Methodology

Research Design

The study applied the Transcendental Phenomenological Method (TPh) as its approach. Phenomenology, a qualitative research methodology, delves into an individual's lived

experiences, encompassing both the content of those experiences and how they are subjectively perceived [47]. This study primarily focuses on understanding the experiences and challenges faced by LGU-elected officials in their roles within the administration of local governance—the descriptive technique aimed to explain and grasp the sensations being lived through. The complete phenomenological psychological examination occurred after acquiring the raw data [44]. Researchers gathered the data through criterion sampling, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Using personal reports, the researchers sought to understand key themes and descriptions. The TPh has been employed in the studies of [12].

Research Locale and Participants

The research was conducted in the Municipality of Esperanza, Sultan Kudarat, focusing on this locale's unique local government units (LGUs). This specific geographic setting will serve as the primary backdrop for an in-depth exploration of LGU-elected officials' lived experiences in the administration of local governance. The study participants were four (4) LGU-elected Esperanza Sultan Kudarat officials.

Research Instrument

Purposive sampling was utilized to deliberately select elected LGU- officials from the Municipality of Esperanza who can provide diverse and comprehensive insights into their roles and experiences within local governance. The sample size will be determined based on data saturation, ensuring it adequately captures the depth and diversity of their experiences.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection process included organizing and conducting interviews with the selected LGU-elected officials. Before the commencement of interviews, explicit informed consent will be obtained from all participants, along with assurances of stringent confidentiality. The interviews were recorded in audio format with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed to facilitate in-depth analysis. Additionally, comprehensive field notes will be diligently taken during the interviews to capture non-verbal cues and contextual information.

Data Analysis Methods

The study employed Thematic Analysis following framework for data analysis [12]. The research team transcribed the collected verbal data and generated initial codes. These codes were manually assigned, encompassing as many potential codes and themes as possible. Subsequently, the researchers organized all the data, grouping information identified by the same code. Data associated with the same code was then organized into potential

themes. During this phase, researchers may utilize visual aids to facilitate the organization and categorization of codes.

Themes comprised subset codes, with some codes forming primary themes or sub-themes, while others were omitted or retained as outliers. The researcher gathered these themes and sub-themes, subsequently refining them. In some cases, themes were consolidated into others, while in other instances, themes were disaggregated into more specific components. During the refinement process, researchers utilized a thematic map to visualize the interrelationships between the themes. After this stage, the researchers generated a comprehensive thematic map of the data.

In the subsequent stage, researchers encapsulated the essence of each theme and the data elements it represented. Here, an overarching narrative will be crafted, incorporating all the data. Researchers meticulously analyzed each theme and its corresponding description. By the culmination of this phase, researchers had identified the core themes and what fell outside their scope. Researchers created a final thematic map after revising themes related to the data. Each theme will be briefly described in a couple of sentences. The last step entailed the final report's conclusive analysis and composition [48] [23].

Results and Discussion

Six (6) relevant themes were articulated through arduous procedural data analysis and interpretation. They were all synthesized from 190 formulated meanings, 115 initial themes, and 23 clustered themes. They are Civic Duty and Generational Legacy, Navigating Challenges in Public Service, Balancing Constituent Needs and Legal-Ethical Responsibilities, Ethical Decision-Making and Governance Principles, Economic Progress and Community Development, and Community Engagement and Priorities. These represent LGU-elected officials lived experiences in the administration of local governance.

Theme 1. Civic Duty and Generational Legacy

Participants express a deep-seated commitment to public service, often influenced by familial legacies and a sense of duty instilled by previous generations. This theme underscores the intergenerational continuity of public service and the importance of familial and community influences in shaping individuals' decisions to enter public office.

According to the role of family background in shaping individuals' decisions to pursue public service is often driven by a sense of duty and exposure to political environments [14]. The positive correlation between effective service

delivery, community relations, and the individual's decision to run for public office resonates with the research findings by [37] highlighting the importance of community engagement in successful public service careers.

"Since my mother and father have been LGU elected officials and public servants for 9 years each, and then continued... because the relationship with the people is good, and the service is also good. That is why I also adopted the idea of entering public service for the people, so I ran as an SB (Sangguniang Bayan) member in the town of Esperanza."

Theme 2. Navigating Challenges in Public Service

Officials reflect on the dual facets of inspiration and challenges in public service. Despite the inherent difficulties, they remain resolute in their commitment to serving their constituents, demonstrating perseverance amidst complexity and diverse expectations.

The statement aligns with contemporary literature on the challenges politicians face in meeting diverse public expectations. Scholars such as [36] have discussed the inherent difficulty in satisfying all constituents due to conflicting interests and preferences. Additionally, the observation that public attitudes toward politicians vary is consistent with findings in studies like [4], highlighting the dynamic nature of public expectations of political figures.

"One of the inspirations for me as a Local Government Unit (LGU) elected official was when I worked as a staff member for one Congressman. Based on my experience, the challenges I observed varied, and the behaviors and expectations of the people toward a politician were diverse. It is difficult to fully satisfy everyone."

Theme 3. Balancing Constituent Needs and Legal-Ethical Responsibilities

Participants prioritize equitable distribution of resources and adherence to legal and ethical principles in their roles as LGU officials. Despite budget constraints and bureaucratic challenges, they remain steadfast in their dedication to serving constituents, embodying compassion and integrity.

The statement underscores the importance of prioritizing the community's welfare and emphasizes the role of government assistance, particularly during challenging times like the pandemic. Scholars such as [22] have discussed the crucial role of government in addressing citizens' needs and fostering social cohesion. Moreover, government preparedness aligns with discussions in works like study [41] of emphasizing effective

governance in responding to unforeseen events and crises.

"The first is God; the second is my family. Based on my experience, the primary concern is the people who seek assistance. I have helped them, especially in terms of hospitalization, especially during the time of the pandemic and others. Because most people here in Esperanza are really poor. Many rely heavily on what the government provides. It is where I realized that the government should be well-prepared because you never know what will happen in the future."

Theme 4. Decision-Making and Governance Principles

Elected officials emphasize the importance of ethical decision-making, transparency, and accountability in governance. They anchor their decisions on principles of fairness and balance, striving to uphold integrity and foster public trust through consensus-building and adherence to legal frameworks.

The statement reflects the importance of ethical principles and legal frameworks in guiding the decision-making of Local Government Unit (LGU) officials to ensure integrity and accountability. Scholars like [23] emphasize the significance of ethical leadership in public administration, highlighting its role in maintaining trust and legitimacy. Additionally, works such as "Handbook of Public Administration" [43] discuss the necessity of legal frameworks to provide a foundation for moral and accountable governance.

"Based on my principle, if there is a principle that we need to balance everything... By anchoring decisions in ethical principles and legal frameworks, they strive to uphold integrity and accountability as Local Government Unit (LGU) officials."

Theme 5. Economic Progress and Community Development

Officials highlight the rapid economic growth of their respective LGUs and the importance of economic development initiatives. They discuss strategies to address financial challenges and prioritize projects to improve constituents' well-being, especially amidst setbacks like the COVID-19 pandemic.

The statement resonates with the broader literature on the impact of elected officials on local economic development and the challenges posed by global events like the pandemic. Studies such as research on the role of local governments in economic development emphasize the influence of elected officials in shaping local economies [5]. Additionally, analyses of the financial

consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on localities, such as those further contextualize the challenges LGUs face in maintaining economic progress during unprecedented global crises [45].

"The overview of the LGU of Esperanza, since I became an elected official almost seven years ago.... Our LGU has been experiencing rapid economic growth... However, during the pandemic, our economy suffered significantly, not just here in Esperanza but across the entire Philippines and the world. However, now, the LGU is very progressive regarding economic development."

Theme 6. Community Engagement and Priorities

Elected officials underscore the significance of community engagement and consultation in policymaking and project implementation. They prioritize initiatives based on constituents' concerns and needs, striving to deliver impactful solutions to address pressing issues such as healthcare access, agricultural concerns, and employment opportunities.

The statements resonate with literature on the stability of political culture in local governance, emphasizing its role in maintaining normalcy and addressing key issues. Works such as [18] "Democracy in Decline?" discuss the significance of a stable political culture in sustaining democratic processes. Additionally, studies explore the impact of political culture on post-election periods, shedding light on how a well-established political culture contributes to peaceful transitions and continued governance stability [20].

"Number 1 is political culture, although there are occasional issues, it quite normal... Because the significant issues for the people are food, medical assistance, and education, especially as we are just recovering after the pandemic."

"Number 1 is political culture, although there may be issues occasionally, but that is just normal... Even after the recent barangay elections, everything has been peaceful and okay."

Conclusion

There are multifaceted dimensions in LGU governance, where familial legacies, community service, and a commitment to others converge in shaping the motivations of elected officials. Economic progress, effective budgeting, political culture, and addressing constituents' concerns emerge as pivotal elements in the dynamic landscape of Esperanza's local governance.

LGU elected officials to navigate a landscape where decision-making requires a delicate balance of considerations, from economic resilience to political engagement. The commitment to serving

constituents and addressing their evolving needs reflects a conscientious approach, even when facing challenges.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest in conducting this research.

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