

Linking Personal Ethics to Public Policy: A Study of Municipal Councils in Eastern Visayas

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ABSTRACT

The study generally aimed to determine the policymaking competence of legislators in the municipal councils in Eastern Visayas. A total of seventy-six (76) randomly sampled population served as respondents. The data were collected through survey questionnaire and treated it with the application of SPSS.

The study found out that the legislators were middle-aged with a mean of 44.55 and dominated by married males comprising 48 or 63.2 percent. Meanwhile, most legislators were Roman Catholics and Cebuano speaking with 70 or 92.1 and 48 % or 63.2 percent. Majority (37 or 48.7 %) were professionals with different disciplines. Their average annual family income was Php 319,033.92. In addition, their political orientations were toward the party in power with 55.2 percent and were new termers with 33 or 43.4 percent who were loyal to the party with a mean of 4.15.

The major findings revealed that only some policy system manifestations and values system variables had significant relationship with policymaking competence. The relationship was influenced by some moderator and intervening variables. However, both legislators registered a high rating in policymaking competency with a mean of 3.99 and 3.97 respectively. It means they are highly competent.

Therefore, the failure to address the poverty and unemployment problems in Eastern Visayas elucidated in the thesis of this study is not attributable to competency of municipal councils.

Keywords: personal values, public policy, Naval State University.

I. INTRODUCTION

In many countries of the world including India, Thailand and Canada experienced shortcomings in public policymaking in contrast to the Slovakian experience. The failure was attributed to the failure to anticipate needs, impacts or reaction of the people. Those countries place emphasis on loyalty of legislators to the party in power than expertise at the expense of national interests.

In addition, among the Third World countries that remained in a state of “developing”, Philippines is one of them. There are provinces in our country that have not graduated from the Club 19 status, a label for a very poor province. Eastern Visayas has three (3) provinces in the club. What has the municipal councils contribute in terms of a piece of legislation to help solve the perennial problem of poverty and unemployment in the region?

Conversely, the principal issue raised in this study is the competence of municipal councils of Eastern Visayas to address the social problems of the community in terms responsive legislations. The lower socio-economic indicators show the poverty incidence level at 37.2 % (Torres, www.PhilStar.com, 2013) in the region evidenced this bone of contention. Translated into efficacy of public policies, would lead us to believe that the people do not feel the impact of policy measures.

The above socio-political landscape necessitates the conduct of this study to bridge the gap between the social problems of the communities and public policies or legislations which are the product of competent municipal council. There is a need to assess the competency of local legislators in the municipal councils in Eastern Visayas. This is the central theme of the study.

The study seeks to determine public policymaking competence of municipal councils of Eastern Visayas in the context of policy environment, political system and the policy.

II. METHODOLOGY

The research was a descriptive-correlation study. The research designed used multiple cluster and random samplings alternatively to determine the sample districts, cluster class of municipalities and sample municipalities and respondents.

The research setting was Eastern Visayas composed of three [3] major islands of Samar, Leyte and Biliran with six [6] Provinces of Eastern Samar, Western Samar, Northern Samar, Leyte del Norte and Southern Leyte and Biliran.

The data were quantified and scored in the Likert Scale and the 4-Point Scale. Ranking was also used on multiple responses items. It were segregated, classified, tallied, tabulated and scored through the SPSS method. The descriptive statistics was used to generate frequency counts, percentages and the mean to establish the profile of the subjects and the levels of occurrence of the variables. The 2-tailed Chi-Square was used to determine the relationships of the variables while the Pearson's r was used to correlate the relations of variables in the study.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The socio-demographic variables account twenty-nine [2] or 38.2 percent of the municipal council members were middle-aged while 12 or 15.8 percent were relatively young between age 21 and below. The mean age was 44.55. Majority were males which comprised 48 or 63.2 percent of respondents. About 5 or 6.6 percent did not signify their gender. Moreover, majority [48] or 60.5 percent were married with 6 or 7.7 percent widow.

In addition, thirty-seven [37] or 48.7 percent were degree holders with various field of specialization while only 1 or 1.3 percent had an elementary education attainment. The engineering degreegraduates dominate the group with 10 or 13.2 percent. Moreover, only 19.7 percent received various awards during their employment/incumbency as legislators and only forty-six and 1/100 (46.1) percent undergone trainings and seminars while 16 or 21.1 percent had attended once and 3 or 3.9 percent only four (4) times.

Meanwhile, only 11 or 14.5 percent had 1-5 years of work experience while 3 or 3.9 percent had between 11-15 years. All the rest had a minimum of six (6) and maximum of 25 years respectively. Consequently, Roman Catholic dominated the council which comprised 70 or 92.1percent while 1 or 1.3 percent belongs to other religious affiliation and majority were Cebuano speaking which accounted for 48 or 63.2 percent with only 1 or 1.3 percent Boholano.

This means the council members are mostly professionals with different specialized field of knowledge, married, quite old, mature and responsible dominated by catholic cebuano speaking macho people who are more active in politics. The implication is that they can be cohesive to established unity of purpose in enacting varied policies.

Further, the average annual family income of the respondents range from Php150-451 thousand. Nineteen (19) or 25 percent were within the range of P151-250 thousand with 4 or 5.3 percent within the range of P150thousand and below. The mean is P 319,033.92. Moreover, their present and previous annual salaries while working in the government, private sector and even self-employment were within the range of Php 72 – 500 thousand including the present salary in the municipal council.

This means majority of local legislators are not wealthy. By any means they are considered poor local legislators. The implication is they will initiate legislation favorable to the poor.

Meanwhile, the party affiliations of respondents identified Lakas-NUCD /CMD which comprised the majority or 55.2 percent. Only 2 or 2.6percent were LP. Majority, were new termers with 33 or 43.4 percent while 1 or 1.3 percent comprised the 4th and 6th termers. Their party loyalty was to the party leadership which has the mean of 4.15 while adherence to decisions of party leaders got the lowest mean of 3.96. However the average weighted mean is still high at 4.10. The findings show the picture of Philippine politics with a new breed of politicians. This means the traditional politics is waning,

On the other hand, Eastern Visayas showed a higher unemployment rate with a mean of 3.10 while underdeveloped economy was low at 2.66. The average weighted mean is moderate at 2.91. In addition, social infrastructure, i.e. education was the most potent variable with a score of 54 and rank 1. The least in demand was tourism promotion with 30 and rank last.

Consequently, the demand for physical infrastructures, i.e. “farm to market roads and healthcare facilities” had almost identical scores of 52 and 51 ranks of 1 and 2 while the least was “fish port facilities” with 31 and rank last. Ergo: the region is poor. We can infer that the region is poverty stricken. Therefore, the people in the region see the importance of education to arrest poverty and uplift the family socio-economic status.

Policy System Manifestations of Municipal Council

The study shows an even perception of legislators on institutional values and culture with an identical weighted mean of 3.93 on policy system manifestations. The average weighted mean is high at 3.92. Meanwhile, the council institution advocated accountability which accounted the highest mean of 4.06 while least adhered policy values were representativeness with a mean of 3.85. The average weighted mean is 3.96.

Furthermore, the practiced organizational values are participatory and teamwork with a highest mean of 4.10. Least was efficacy with a lowest mean of 3.85. However, the average weighted mean is still quite high at 3.98. In addition, organizational culture of accommodation had a highest score of 39 and rank 1. Mediocrity had a score of 8 and rank last.

We can deduce that accommodation is already acculturated and deeply rooted in a Filipino way of life while at the same time adhering strongly to policy and institutional values. This simply means these values are prevalently observed with the interplay culture of accommodation exerted by the influential in their exercise as legislators.

Values System of Municipal Council Members

The municipal council members showed personal and ideological values preferences of values system with identical average weighted mean at 3.99. Consequently, the same average weighted mean. This high attributes of the council members implies that the higher the values system of a legislator the higher the tendency to enact relevant policies since attitude of a person is associated with his values system.

Policymaking Competency

The policymaking competence parameters average weighted mean was 3.99. The competence of the Vice-Mayors was measured along these parameters. The average weighted mean was 3.73. Similarly, the council members exhibited high rating of 3.86 on policymaking competency. It implies competence. However, the nature of policies they enact will determine its quality and relevance.

Relationships of Variables

Relationship of Socio-demographic Profiles and Policy System Manifestations of the Municipal Council. The socio-demographic factors were tested against the policy system manifestations. The variables were paired against the institutional values and culture variables using 2-tailed chi-square test. The result revealed that education variable had shown significant relation with the organizational values computed at .028 asymptotic levels of significance with chi square value of 82.577 at 60 degrees of freedom. Thus, it is valid to deduce that it has influenced the organizational values of the council. This means the higher the education of the municipal council members the higher it will affect the values of the municipal council.

Relationship of socio-demographic factors and values system of municipal council members. The test conducted on socio-demographic factors and values system variables showed religion had high significant relations with personal values variable at .010 asymptotic levels of significance with chi-square value of 62.609 at 39 degrees of freedom. Their association is highly significant.

We can infer religion is highly associated with the values system of municipal council members. The implication is that religiosity has the effect on the well-being municipal council members. Therefore, there is a great tendency that their policies are relevant attuned to the needs of their constituents.

Relationship of socio-demographic factors and policymaking competence of municipal council members. The socio-demographic factors were paired with the policymaking competence. The results of the 2-tailed chi-square test indicate higher asymptotic levels of significance of all variables paired. Education and policymaking competence had a highest asymptotic significance of .943 with chi-square value of 48.875 at 66 degrees of freedom. The language and policymaking competence variables had the lowest asymptotic significance of 19.727 with chi-square value of .39 at 14 degrees of freedom. The rest had higher asymptotic significance. The relation of paired variable existed but negligible. Thus, non-significant.

This means that the socio-demographic factors had no bearing over the policymaking competence of the municipal council members. It has a negligible influence either.

Relationship of external environmental factors and policy system manifestations of municipal council. The environmental factors were tested against the policy system manifestation variables using 2-tailed test Pearson's r correlation. The findings showed socio-economic problem, social and physical infrastructures had

relationship with organizational culture at .435**, .354**, and .451** respectively at .01 level of significance. The relationships were significant but slight. All other variables have lower computed values of r .

This means that those considered serious problems in the community are associated with the mindset of the municipal council members. The most disturbing were poverty and high unemployment. This needs immediate support of a piece of relevant legislation from the council. The implication is that the policy system manifestations are slightly affected by the environmental factors. Those problems are not serious do not create any ripple effect.

Relationship of external environmental factors and values system of municipal council members. The external environmental factors variables were tested against values system using the Pearson's r correlation at .01 and .05 level of significance. The findings show some variables are inversely associated. Socio-economic condition and ideological values had a computed value of .180 while social infrastructure and personal values had an inverse association at -.001 levels of significance. The results show a slight or inverse relation of the variables.

It implies that the higher the value of external environmental factors, the lesser the association. Thus, we can conclude that their relations are not significant. This means the influence on value system is moderate.

Relationship of external environmental factors and policymaking competence of municipal council members. The variables were again tested using the Pearson's r correlation. The paired variables were tested with a 2-tailed test at .05 levels of significance. The results revealed that majority of the variables had inverse association. All other variables have lesser computed values of r at 0.05 level of significance. This means that these variables had no bearings over the policymaking competence of the municipal council members.

Accordingly only socio-economic condition and policymaking competence of Vice-Mayor were having relation with the computed value of r at .341*. The relation was significant. It is safe to state that the relationships of some variables are present but slight and inverse.

Relationship of Independent Variables and Dependent Variables. The policy system manifestations and values system variables were paired against the policy-making competence variables. Majority were having relationships. Five (5) were related with a computed value of r at .758**, .785**, .805**, .840** and .713** respectively. Their relations were tested at .05 levels of significance. The results show a very high relationship. In addition, three (3) variables were tested with a substantial relationship with a computed value of r at .611**, .538** and .551**. Moreover, another two (2) were having slight light relations which were computed at .490** and .390**. Further, two (2) more variables were having slight and inverse relations computed at -.317 and -.180. We can infer proportionate relations exist between the variables. It implies that these variables have a positive and direct relation.

Relationships of Variables to Test the Hypotheses

Correlation matrix of socio-demographic factors and policy system manifestations of municipal council members. The study revealed the following correlation of variables using the 2-tailed Pearson's r test. Age and policy values were computed with the value of r at .230* and organizational values computed value of r at .285*. Both computed values of $r > 0.05$ levels of significance. Similarly, the award and training variables were tested against organizational values variables. The computed values of r were at .519* and .340* which were > 0.05 levels of significance. Both correlations were significant. **Ho1 is rejected.**

Thus, we can deduce that those variables have established substantial significant relationships. This means that the older the person the maturity level also comes to an age and the more he can adopt the values of the organization.

Correlation matrix of socio-demographic factors and values system of municipal council members. The correlation of socio-demographic factors and values system using 2-tailed Pearson's r test revealed only two pairs were tested with correlation. The correlation of age with personal and ideological values were computed at values of r .262* and .267* respectively while training was computed at values of r .337*. Both relations are > 0.05 level of significant. The correlations were significant. **Ho2 is rejected**

The implication is that some socio-demographic variables are significantly affecting the values system of municipal council members. The older the person the more deeply rooted his personal and ideological values.

Correlation matrix of socio-demographic factors and policymaking competence of municipal council. The results showed only one pair of variables was correlated. The correlation was measured using 2-tailed Pearson's test at 0.05 levels of significance. The correlation of work experience and policymaking competence of Vice-Mayor had a computed value of $r = .440 > 0.05$ level of significance. The correlation was significant. **Ho3 is rejected.**

We can infer substantial relations exist. It implies that work experience had bearings on the policymaking competence of Presiding Officers. The truth is "experience is the best teacher".

Correlation matrix of external environmental factors' variables and policy system manifestation. The variables were tested using 2-tailed Pearson's r test at 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance. The test showed the correlation of socio-ecological problem and community needs, i.e. social and physical infrastructures against policy system manifestations, i.e. organizational culture both with r value at .435**, .354** and .451** respectively which are >

0.01 levels of significance. The relations are significant. **Ho4 is rejected.**

It implies a slight relationship of the variables. This means the external environmental factors are affecting the policy system manifestations of the municipal council.

Correlation matrix of external environmental factors and values system of municipal council members. The correlation test of socio-ecological problem, socio-economic problems against values system was conducted using the Pearson's r correlation test. Both tested no correlations. Their computed r values were < 0.01 and $.05$ levels of significant. Some variables had inverse correlations. **Ho5 is accepted.**

Correlation matrix of external environmental variables and policymaking competence of municipal council members. The correlation test of intervening variables and policymaking competence shows socio-economic condition was positively correlated with policymaking competence of Vice-Mayors with r values at .341 > 0.05 levels of significance. Thus, it shows significant correlation. However, the rest of intervening variables exhibited no correlations. Still **Ho6 is rejected.**

Correlation of independent variables and dependent variables. The correlation of policy system manifestations variables, i.e. political policy and organizational values with the municipal council members at .758; .785; .805 respectively with r values > 0.05 level of significance. The same with the Vice-Mayor at .390; .538, .490 with the values $r > 0.05$ level of significance. The correlation of values system variables and the legislative competence of municipal council members show positive correlation with Pearson's r values at .840 and .713 for municipal council members and .611 and .551 for the Vice-Mayor respectively. Both values of r are > 0.01 levels of significance. **Ho7 is rejected.**

The above variables are significantly correlated. Such correlations show that some values both played crucial role in the competency level of the municipal councils.

IV. CONCLUSION

The council members of Eastern Visayas are highly competent in policymaking but they succumbed to the culture of accommodation. On the other hand, poverty and higher unemployment rate are the most pressing socio-economic problem while the most needed social and physical infrastructures are education and farm to market roads and healthcare facilities. This reinforces the report on high poverty incidence in the region.

Some variables to some extent are slightly related. Some shows high relationships. Other has inverse relations. The results six[6] out seven [7] null hypotheses are rejected. The failure to address the poverty and unemployment problems in Eastern Visayas as elucidated in the thesis of this study is not attributable to the competence of municipal councils.

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