

Citizens' Awareness and Dissemination of Local Government Unit (LGU) Processes in General Santos City

Omairah M. Barangai

Mindanao State University - General Santos, General Santos City, Philippines

Author Email: omaibarangai@gmail.com

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Abstract. This study examined citizen awareness of Local Government Unit (LGU) processes and their dissemination in General Santos City. The primary objectives are to identify gaps in awareness, uncover dissemination challenges, and propose improvement recommendations. A descriptive correlational research design was used, with quantitative data gathered from 390 randomly selected respondents across 26 barangays. Structured questionnaires measured awareness on a 5-point Likert scale and dissemination on a 4-point Likert scale. Findings indicate high awareness of basic services and facilities, land management, and revenue generation. Dissemination effectiveness was rated moderately high. The study found significant positive correlations between dissemination extent and citizen awareness, with strong correlations for basic services and moderate correlations for land reclassification and revenue generation. These positive correlations suggest a promising potential for improvement. The study concludes that improving the dissemination of LGU processes is crucial for fostering informed, engaged communities. Recommendations include targeted, community-specific, and technology-driven communication strategies to enhance transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in local governance. These improvements are essential for more effective and responsive governance in General Santos City. The implications of this study suggest that enhancing dissemination practices can lead to better-informed citizens, promoting greater civic engagement and trust in local government.

Keywords: Citizen awareness; Local government unit (LGU); General Santos City; Governance.

1.0 Introduction

As global democratic norms evolve, citizen participation has become increasingly pivotal in promoting transparency, accountability, and effective decision-making within local government units (LGUs). In the Philippines, citizen participation gained significant momentum following the decentralization marked by the enactment of the Local Government Code of 1991. This legislation fundamentally restructured the relationship between the national government and local governments, a change of profound importance considering the Philippines' lengthy history of centralization under Spanish and American colonial rule.

Citizen awareness of LGU processes encompasses understanding the procedures, policies, and mechanisms that guide decision-making, resource allocation, and service delivery within local governments. This knowledge empowers citizens to make informed decisions, voice their concerns, and contribute meaningfully to the development of their barangays. Enhancing citizen participation is essential for effective public management, ensuring that governance remains true to democratic principles of openness and inclusivity.

The involvement of civil society, through non-governmental organizations and people's organizations, has redefined "governance" in the Philippines. Traditionally, governance was viewed as the government's responsibility to deliver basic services and oversee local development efforts. However, due to resource constraints, corruption, and over-centralization, local governments often fail to meet these expectations. Consequently, governance has expanded to include alternative service delivery mechanisms, with civil society playing a crucial role in complementing government efforts.

Existing literature highlights the importance of citizen participation in enhancing governance. Studies by scholars such as Putnam et al. (1993) and Fung (2006) emphasize that informed and engaged citizens are crucial for the accountability and effectiveness of local governments. However, there remains a gap in understanding the relationship between citizen awareness and the dissemination of information within specific local contexts, such as the barangays of General Santos City. This gap is particularly significant given these areas' unique political, social, and economic dynamics.

This study explored the significant relationship between citizens' awareness of LGU processes and the extent to which this information is disseminated in the barangays of General Santos City. By developing a strategic framework for program orientation and dissemination, the study sought to enhance citizen engagement and empower individuals with the necessary knowledge to participate actively in local governance. Ultimately, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on citizen participation and effective governance by examining the intricate interplay between citizen awareness, dissemination, and local government processes. Its findings and recommendations aim to foster a more inclusive, informed, and participatory governance system in General Santos City.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design. The correlational research method was employed to identify relationships between variables, while the descriptive research method was used to describe the data and characteristics of the study. This quantitative research design provided a comprehensive understanding of citizen awareness, dissemination practices, and factors contributing to gaps between them. It also measured citizens' awareness levels of LGU processes and how they were disseminated within the locality.

2.2 Research Participants

This study gathered information from 390 individuals living in General Santos City. Since the city comprises 26 barangays, samples were chosen randomly from each stratum to ensure all subgroups were represented, facilitating precise estimates and comparisons. Cluster sampling was used, where the population was divided into groups or clusters, and a random sample of these clusters was selected for analysis. This method ensured that relatively homogeneous groups were included in the study.

2.3 Research Instrument

The research instrument is a researcher-made questionnaire. The questionnaires comprised the following sections: Part 1: Respondents' demographic profile, Part 2: Assessment of respondents' level of awareness, and Part 3: Inquiry about the extent of LGU process dissemination channels used. A quantitative research design was employed to gather sufficient data to answer the study's problem.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure and Analysis

Although face-to-face data gathering was preferred, the researcher coordinated with citizens across different barangays to schedule appointments. This approach allowed for direct engagement and in-depth responses from key participants. The data were analyzed descriptively and inferentially.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines were strictly followed. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and anonymity was maintained. The dignity and well-being of respondents were protected, and data were kept confidential, used

only for this study, and not shared without consent. The collected information was handled responsibly to prevent any harm to participants.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Level of Awareness of Local Government Unit Process

In terms of Basic Services Facilities

Table 1 presents the data on citizen's level of awareness regarding various basic services and facilities provided by the Local Government Unit (LGU) in General Santos City.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the citizen's level of awareness of the LGU process in terms of basic services facilities

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. The citizens know that the LGU offers low housing, residential lots, and decent house and lot plans in the municipality.	3.70	High
2. Scholarships are also offered to poor but deserving students in the barangay. The same is true in the city municipality and the province.	3.98	High
3. Citizens are aware that health care services are free. In barangay health centers and public hospitals, indigent patients are given "point of care" privileges for their medication and treatment.	4.01	High
4. Citizens know social services, such as single-parent privileges, PWD, senior citizens, medical missions, feeding programs, and many more.	4.17	High
5. Citizens are aware of the water services in the barangay, municipalities, and cities.	3.94	High
6. Citizens know the regular conduct of barangay consultation and assembly to share their problems.	3.61	High
7. Citizens know the sanitation activities spearheaded by the barangay officials.	3.77	High
8. Citizens are aware of waste management and removal in the barangay.	3.92	High
Overall assessment	3.89	High

The overall mean score for awareness of basic services and facilities was high ($M=3.89$). Most indicators show consistent ratings, reinforcing the overall positive results. The literature on citizen participation aligns with the study's findings, showing that higher awareness and understanding of governmental processes increased citizen satisfaction and compliance (Thomas, 2012). The Theory of Citizen Participation suggests that well-informed citizens are more likely to participate in decision-making processes and support public policies. This participatory approach is essential in modern governance, where transparency, responsiveness, and accountability are key indicators of good governance (Michels & De Graaf, 2010). Additionally, the literature indicates that transparency and open communication can significantly enhance citizens' trust and cooperation with local authorities (Welch et al., 2005). A comparative analysis of Uganda's Local Councils (LCs) illustrates a similar trend. Research by Francis & James (2003) and Kiyaga Nsubuga and Olum (2004) shows that LCs in Uganda encourage community participation through self-help initiatives in areas such as education, water supply, health care, and road construction. LCs leverage local resources and employment opportunities to enhance community mobilization and decision-making.

In terms of the Reclassification of Lands

Table 2 presents data on citizens' awareness of the reclassification of lands within their barangay in General Santos City.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the citizen's level of awareness of the LGU process in terms of reclassification of lands

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. Citizens are aware of the status of their lands and which authority they will seek help when problems arise.	3.74	High
2. Citizens know how to reclassify their lands and which government agency they will seek help.	3.71	High
3. Citizens are aware of the limitations of their privileges and rights in the barangay.	3.81	High
Overall assessment	3.89	High

The overall mean score of 3.76 indicates a high level of citizen awareness regarding land management and rights within the barangay. The consistently high scores across all indicators suggest that the barangay's educational efforts about land-related matters and citizen rights have been effective. This level of awareness is crucial for promoting responsible land management practices and ensuring that citizens can access the necessary support and resources.

Guce and Galindes (2017) identify challenges related to citizen participation and regulatory clarity within Local Development Councils (LDCs). They highlight that current regulations often need more clarity on the roles and capacities required of community-based civil society groups to engage effectively in local development processes. Despite initiatives by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), such as the Assistance to Disadvantaged Municipalities (ADM) and the Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG), the implementation of these measures still needs to be completed. While citizen awareness in General Santos City regarding land reclassification is notably high, this comparative analysis underscores broader challenges in enhancing citizen participation and clarity in local development processes, like those faced by LDCs. Addressing these issues involves strengthening the role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and improving regulatory clarity, which could significantly enhance citizen engagement and governance outcomes across various local government functions, including land management and development planning.

In terms of Revenue Generation

Table 3 presents data on the citizens' level of awareness regarding revenue generation within their barangay in General Santos City.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the citizen's level of awareness of the LGU process in terms of revenue generation

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. Citizens know the property taxes and the tax payment obligation.	3.74	High
2. Citizens in the barangay engaging in business are aware of the business tax.	3.79	High
3. Citizens know other locally imposed taxes, non-tax revenues from operation, and miscellaneous income and capital revenues.	3.64	High
Overall assessment	3.72	High

The overall mean score of (M=3.72) indicates a high level of citizen awareness regarding taxes and non-tax revenues in the barangay. Generally, the consistently high scores across all indicators suggest that the barangay's efforts in educating its citizens about tax obligations and non-tax revenues have been successful. This level of awareness is important for ensuring compliance, enhancing revenue collection, and fostering transparency in local governance. The data reveals that citizens in General Santos City are highly aware of their tax obligations and various sources of non-tax revenues. This awareness is crucial for ensuring compliance with local fiscal regulations, promoting responsible financial behavior among residents, and enhancing transparency in local governance. The high levels of citizen awareness regarding revenue generation contrast with broader challenges in local governance, like those faced by Local Development Councils (LDCs) in clarifying roles and improving participation. Strengthening efforts to educate citizens about fiscal responsibilities and enhancing regulatory clarity could improve governance outcomes across various local government functions, including revenue management and fiscal planning.

3.2 Level of Dissemination of LGU Processes to the Citizens

Table 4 presents data on how much LGU processes were disseminated to citizens in barangays within General Santos City.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of the level of dissemination of LGU processes to the citizens

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. Information drive. House to house	3.04	Moderately High
2. During barangay assembly	3.12	Moderately High
3. Special gathering/special meeting	2.94	Moderately High
4. Information drive. House to house	3.07	Moderately High
5. During barangay assembly	3.00	Moderately High
6. Special gathering/special meeting	2.89	Moderately High
7. Seminar on taxation in the barangay	2.80	Moderately High
8. The barangay constantly conducts orientation on taxation	2.78	Moderately High
9. The barangay smoothly disseminated all the LGU processes to the people	2.92	Moderately High
10. The barangays hold to the motto "ligtas ang may alam!"	3.04	Moderately High
Overall assessment	2.96	Moderately High

Table 4 describes the overall mean score as (M=2.96), indicating a moderately high level of awareness and effectiveness in the methods used to disseminate information. The data shows that the various methods the barangay employs to disseminate information, particularly about taxation, are moderately effective. This suggests

that while citizens are aware of tax-related information and other LGU processes, there is significant room for improvement.

This supports the development of a theoretical framework that incorporates the diversity of communities within a city. It suggests that the LGU should adopt a flexible and adaptive dissemination strategy that considers the unique characteristics of each barangay. Invest in diverse communication channels (social media, community meetings, local radio, etc.) to reach a broader audience. Use clear, accessible language and culturally relevant materials to ensure understanding across different community segments. Develop targeted campaigns for specific LGU processes to address the varying levels of correlation strength. For example, more intensive campaigns might be needed for land reclassification to achieve higher levels of awareness.

The findings imply that policymakers should focus on strengthening dissemination mechanisms to boost public awareness, which can lead to improved civic engagement and participation. The Theory of Citizen Participation underscores the importance of a feedback loop, where citizen input is continuously used to enhance governance processes (Fung, 2015). This is supported by literature that suggests that interactive and participatory communication methods lead to better policy outcomes and increased citizen trust in government (Roberts, 2004).

3.3 Relationship Between Citizen's Level of Awareness and the Level of Dissemination of LGU Processes to the Citizens

Table 5 presents the correlation between citizens' level of awareness and the extent to which information is disseminated on various LGU processes in different barangays of General Santos City.

Table 5. Relationship between citizen's level of awareness and the extent of dissemination on LGU processes

Variables	r	P-Value	Remarks
Basic Services and Facilities	0.663	0.0001	Significant
Reclassification of Lands	0.059	0.001	Significant
Revenue Generation	0.566	0.001	Significant

The spearman rho was used to determine whether there is a relationship between the Citizen's level of awareness and the extent of dissemination of these LGU processes in the different barangays of General Santos City. The result shows that when taken individually, Basic Services and Facilities and Reclassification of Lands (spearman rho=.00001) were significantly related to Revenue Generation. There is a strong positive correlation between Basic Services and Facilities and the variable it is being compared. This correlation is highly significant since the p-value is extremely low (0.0001). This suggests that as the value of Basic Services and Facilities increases, the related variable also tends to increase substantially.

Reclassification of Land shows a moderate positive correlation with its corresponding variable. The p-value indicates that this correlation is also highly significant. This suggests a moderate tendency for the related variable to increase as the reclassification of land increases. Similarly, revenue generation exhibits a moderate positive correlation. The significant p-value again confirms that this relationship is not due to random chance. As revenue generation increases, the related variable tends to increase as well.

The varying strengths of correlations (strong for basic services and facilities, moderate for land reclassification and revenue generation) suggest that the impact of dissemination efforts differs based on the type of information being shared. The Theory of Citizen Participation emphasizes that different participatory processes and activities require distinct communication approaches to effectively engage citizens (Quick & Bryson, 2016). The literature also highlights the importance of context-specific communication strategies, noting that different types of information and target audiences require tailored dissemination methods to be effective (Rowe & Frewer, 2005). Therefore, a theoretical model can be developed where LGU processes necessitate tailored dissemination strategies – broad-based communication for basic services and specialized channels for technical information like land reclassification.

4.0 Conclusion

The study's findings highlight a significant impact of dissemination efforts on citizen awareness of Local Government Unit (LGU) processes in General Santos City. The data indicates that citizens possess a relatively high

level of awareness regarding Basic Services and Facilities, land management, and revenue generation, reflecting a solid understanding of the LGU's functions and services. However, the study also reveals that the effectiveness of these dissemination efforts is moderate, suggesting considerable potential for improvement. The analysis underscores the robust positive correlations between information dissemination and citizen awareness across all evaluated domains. This correlation demonstrates that effective communication strategies enhance public knowledge and understanding. The study finds that improved dissemination practices notably boost awareness concerning Basic Services and Facilities. This relationship emphasizes that more targeted and efficient dissemination efforts could significantly elevate citizen awareness and engagement. Future research could explore the specific methods and technologies that most effectively enhance dissemination efforts and assess the long-term impacts of improved communication on citizen engagement and governance outcomes.

5.0 Contribution of Authors

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7.0 Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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