

Do Senior Public Managers Matter for Local Government Performance? Linkage with Policy Orientation and Networks of Planning and Development Coordinators in Local Governments in the Philippines

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Abstract This study investigates the performance of local governments and government management factors in the Philippines by focusing on planning and development coordinators (PDCs) as senior public managers in local governments. A questionnaire survey was conducted with city/municipal PDCs from 300 randomly selected local governments. The relationships among policy orientation, attributes, networks, and local government performance were quantitatively analyzed. Our findings revealed that networking with government officials at other levels, communication with the stakeholders, and individual policy preferences were found to have a substantial impact on local government performance. In contrast, training opportunities were not found to have any substantial impact. Results of the analysis generally imply that, in addition to the mechanics of local politics, the choice of local government management has become a factor of equal or greater importance in the state and development of local government performance in the Philippines.

Keywords: • local government performance • decentralization • senior public manager • capacity • Philippines

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1 Introduction

The past decades have witnessed a growing body of literature on reform in government decentralization, focusing primarily on local government relations in each country. A number of authors have discussed the significance of decentralization in overall governance reform, as well as the process, political constraints, consequences, and other factors related to decentralization (Grindle, 2009; Pollitt, 2005; Rondinelli et al., 1983; Turner, 2006). In Asia, both developed and developing countries were swept by decentralization as part of global public management reform in the late 20th century (Haque, 2007; Manor, 1999; Turner, 2006). Decentralization reform was expected to transform local governments into collections of more self-sufficient communities by giving them greater power, authority, and resources than previously available. Another aim was to achieve economic development at regional and local levels. In addition, regional and local government officials were expected to carry out more effective decision-making via the participatory governance of various stakeholders, including those from non-governmental organization (NGO) sectors, with the aim of transitioning from authoritarian regimes (Berenschot, 2016).

A number of studies have indicated the importance of citizen participation, and the crowding out of traditional local elites with increasing citizen participation (Brillantes, 2003; Cheema, 2013; McCoy, 2009; Pollitt, 2005). Regarding issues of local government capacity and reform, networking with non-government actors, and performance of the local government, such related topics as whether local officials are qualified, amounts of resources available, transparency, and policy performance have been well discussed (Berman, 2011; Dufhues et al., 2014; Edgardo & Hellman, 2005; Walker & Andrews, 2015). These research efforts have indicated that highly capable local bureaucracies and collaboration with the civic sector can result in an increase in the effectiveness of local governance. They may also suggest that improvement of performance and policy efficiency have been manifested by the quality of public managers in government, in addition to the engagement of the civic sector as well as resource networking among local leaders (Adriano, 2014; Schaeffer, 1985). However, most of the previous research projects, which have focused on decentralization and local governance in Asia, have adopted a qualitative approach with one or a small number of case studies, or at most a quantitative approach in a specialized area. There is still much leeway for improvement in settings for empirical research.

In view of the above-mentioned background, this paper attempts to contribute to scholarly discussions on the administrative capacity and performance of local governments in the Philippines. Similar to other Asian democracies, the Philippines witnessed trends in reform, and the Local Government Code of 1991 was enacted as a hallmark of decentralization reform (Brillantes & Sonco, 2010). With the passage of the code, most government responsibilities were delegated to local governments. However, the capacity of local governments to fulfill these responsibilities, as well as

their actual delivery of services and improvements in performance, remain to be clarified. To contribute to scholarly discussions on the relationship between administrative capacity and performance in local governments in the Philippines and other developing countries, this research uses data based on a survey questionnaire administered to city/municipal planning and development coordinators (PDCs), who are top-ranking government officials, from 300 randomly selected local governments in the Philippines. The survey data used in the analysis was collected in 2011 and 2012 and is now more than a decade old. It is because the COVID-19 and travel restrictions made it impossible to conduct the follow-up survey for the data renewal. Yet, this kind of nationwide survey to the senior public management to the local governments have not been conducted to date in the Philippines. Also, considering the fact that the local government performance management system (LGPMS) used in this research as a dependent variable is well established system and it is still used by the local governments in the Philippines, and the institutional context is stable and largely unchanged from a decade ago, the data used in the analysis has a certain value to explain the state of local government in the Philippines even to date.

From this perspective, the present study empirically analyzes local government capacities and their links with performance in the Philippines, which is a contested battleground for decentralization in developing countries (Rondinelli et al., 1983; Turner, 2006). This paper first discusses the theoretical aspects of local government management and performance. This discussion is followed by the research question and an exploratory analytical framework, in addition to related factors and measurements of the effects on local government performance. Our regression analysis revealed that factors such as the managerial orientation of senior public managers, networking with government officials at other levels of government, and communication with stakeholders have a substantial impact on local government performance. The goal of this paper is to provide a better understanding of the conditions and consequences of government decentralization in the Philippines, with the implications for other developing countries' experiences.

2 Literature overview

2.1 Capacity of Local Government Management and Performance

From the late 1990s to the present, many countries, especially in the Pacific region of Asia, have undergone decentralization reform, resulting in the delegation of power and resources to local governments (Kettl, 2005; Manor, 1999; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). With relatively sustainable economic growth over the last three decades, a dynamic change in both local institutions and governance has been observed, and numerous new challenges for capacity building have been introduced at the local level. Today, local governments are responsible for providing a wider range of basic public services, including public works, compulsory education,

medical and health care, social welfare, and solid waste collection and disposal, which may reflect more self-sustained local government (Brillantes, 2003; Rondinelli et al., 1983).

The responsibility of local government in delivering key public services is increasing (Chandler, 2013; Walker & Andrews, 2015). Local governments must solve social problems and enhance the quality of life in each jurisdiction by providing services ranging from garbage collection and street cleaning to providing primary education as well as services for the elderly and disabled (Walker & Andrews, 2015). In addition to standing at the forefront of the delivery of public services, local governments serve as the representation of government to ordinary citizens as a street-level bureaucracy (Lipsky, 1980). The role and capacity of street-level bureaucrats are to deliver local public services and such bureaucrats play a vital role in shaping the image of government as seen by the average citizen (Hou et al., 2003). Therefore, the management and performance of the local government are of enduring importance to policy-makers, citizens, and researchers.

The role and performance of local government bureaucracy, which defines organizational capacity, are important factors in assessing the state of local governance (Schaeffer, 1985; Zhang & Feiock, 2009). Individual local politicians such as mayors and council members cannot fulfill community needs in a broad sense because of their limited economic and social resources, and therefore, the capacity of the local government as an organization is inevitably needed to improve the overall state of development (McCoy, 2009). In particular, in developing countries, local governments face many impediments, mainly as a result of a lack of resources or capacity. To deal with these challenges, systems of administration in local government can contribute to the overall scope of management capacity. This capacity can serve as the ability of a local government to develop, direct, and control its resources to implement its policies and program responsibilities (Kim, 2009).

2.2 Role of Senior Managers and Policy Orientation in Local Government

Senior public managers have served as the focal point of local government reform (Kearney et al., 2000). During both the Progressive Era (1896–1916) and the reinvention movement period (1990s) in the U.S., they were seen as “heroes of the story” (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). Although senior public managers are tasked with the politically neutral implementation of policies directed by elected officials, both elected officials and citizens call on their senior public managers to initiate policies and implement programs that contribute to the development of the community they serve (Nelson & Svara, 2015). Senior public managers are allowed to assume greater policy leadership than before, as their role in initiating policies and programs has expanded, and their expanded leadership role may lead to reputational gain as

professionals, thereby potentially providing more opportunities to move to a larger local government as well as leading to an increase in salary. The professional experience of a senior public manager can influence policy as well as managerial orientation (DeSantis 1992).

The managerial or policy orientation of senior public managers is closely associated with actual policy and innovation initiatives (Damanpour & Schneider, 2009; Moon & Norris, 2005). A human aspect of management in local governments often involves improving the capacity of staff. The quality of leaders and managers at the executive level, their communication with key stakeholders in the community, and their connections with citizens all constitute resources that must be effectively utilized to achieve a desired outcome (Capuno, 2010). Executive managers in the local government do not simply implement policies that mayors and other elected officials have mandated. The relationship between managers and elected officials goes beyond a simple dichotomy and can be described as intervenient and reciprocal (Zhang & Feiock, 2009). The duality of the role and the partnership with elected officials in the policy process are reflected in the policy leadership and policy orientation of the manager. Policy orientation is a proxy variable representing the culture of policy and managerial innovations, ultimately indicating the degree of the government's effort to move in a given direction (Moon & Norris, 2005).

While most research in identifying policy and/or managerial orientation of senior public managers in local government has been based on experiences in developed countries, previous research has not sufficiently covered corresponding experiences in developing countries, especially those in Asia (Berman et al., 2013; Rahman & Norling, 1991; Schaeffer, 1985). This paper tries to provide an empirical analysis of the Philippine case with a survey of the senior public managers of local governments. It aims to provide a better understanding of the role of senior public managers in the local government performance in the Philippines.

2.3 Senior Public Manager Network

Cooperation and collaboration with other levels of government, or with adjacent local governments, is horizontal, thus reflecting both the degree and strength in networking among local governments. Even after the national government delegated significant authority to local governments with the passage of the Local Government Code of 1991, many national government agencies continued to maintain a substantial institutional presence at the local level in the Philippines. In particular, since the decentralization reform, which facilitated the decoupling of different tiers of government, the sustainability of a collaborative network in both the vertical and horizontal directions has remained a key to cohesive and effective policy delivery beyond institutional fragmentation (Agranoff & McGuire, 2003; Green, 2005; Pollitt, 2003). The extent of networks with other governments can be

determined by inquiring about the frequency of contact with government officials at various other levels.

2.4 Communication with Stakeholders

Effective communication with stakeholders in the community is another key to improving local government performance. In addition to traditional community stakeholders such as barangay captains serving as community leaders and council members, NGOs and People's Organizations (POs), as well as businesspeople in the policymaking process, are achieving higher importance. These two interest groups are key players in the community as agents of policy implementation with their own resources. Communications with both new and traditional stakeholders enable local governments to increase policy efficiency with more input, and to mobilize more resources to implement policies (Berenschot, 2016; Ishii et al., 2007; Legaspi, 2010). Based on this assumption, in the Philippines, the Local Government Code of 1991 requires all local government units (LGUs) to establish local special bodies with the participation of various stakeholders, including NGOs and members of the business sector.

2.5 Capacity Training

Capacity usually refers to technical capacity. For an organization implementing a policy or plan that requires a particular skill set, personnel with that skill set are needed, or personnel must be trained to develop that skill set (Walker & Andrews, 2015). Providing training is the least flexible but most obvious means of increasing the capacity of personnel in the organization. For new responsibilities in particular, services and functions are delegated to local governments, and therefore, having and fostering specific knowledge and technical capacities to ensure the delivery of services is essential. As has been pointed out in section 2.3, senior public managers are expected to play a greater leadership than before in policy making process in local government. They now need to have more policy and managerial capacities in dealing with the new responsibilities. Thus, the frequency of training opportunities for local government staff, especially to the senior public managers would be one indicator of government performance; that is, local governments that provide more training opportunities may at least have a clearer vision for how to improve performance.

2.6 Size and Location as Environmental Characteristics of Local Governments

The size and location of local governments are also influential factors for determining the state of local government performance, and it should be controlled in the analysis, as the main focus of this research is senior public managements of local government (Boyne et al., 2005; Walker et al., 2010). Size is often presented as an organizational

characteristic in an environmental context. From the perspective of traditional economics, larger local governments might simply perform better and more effectively due to economies of scale (Fryer et al., 2009). From a managerial perspective, larger governments inherently have more resources to mobilize (Damanpour & Schneider, 2007). In contrast, smaller local governments may be capable of more effective communication with stakeholders and citizens, and smaller communities tend to have fewer heterogeneous policy preferences. In the Philippines, cities and municipalities are separately categorized administrative units that are distinguished according to population and financial capacity. Cities in the Philippines must have a population of higher than 150,000, whereas municipalities have a lower population. Cities can have higher revenue generation capacity as well. Typical career path of the city manager in the U.S. local government indicates that more experienced city managers tend to move to the larger local government as it needs more managerial capacity (Thurmond 2010). In the Philippines case as well, the Local Government Code of 1991 stipulates that in order to become a planning and development coordinators (PDC), which is a senior local government position, it requires at least three years related experiences for the PDC in the municipality, and at least five years experiences for the PDC in city or province. This differentiation of experience years indicates that location of local government have is related to the public manager's role, capacity and perception.

The location of local governments is another potential factor influencing local government performance. In economics, public choice theory suggests that in urban areas where many small local governments exist in a more fragmented form compared with rural areas, there is a market where local governments compete with one another. Greater pressure also exists in urban areas to utilize other non-government service providers (both for-profit and non-profit) as alternatives to existing in-house service delivery arrangements. Pressure for performance improvement tends to be lower for local governments in rural areas because of the lack of competition in the community (Moon & Norris, 2005; Musso & Weare, 2020).

Based on theoretical considerations from the literature, in this paper, the following four hypotheses will be empirically tested based on the data collected from PDCs, who are the top senior public managers in LGUs in the Philippines. First, senior public managers' policy orientations are associated with the local government performance (Hypothesis 1). Second, the intensity of senior public managers' relations with stakeholders as well as those with other levels of government improves the performance of local governments (Hypothesis 2). Third, capacity training opportunities for senior public managers improve the performance of local governments (Hypothesis 3). In the analysis, the size and location of local governments as environmental characteristics will be controlled with the control variables.

2.7 Planning and Development Coordinators: Senior Public Managers in Local Governments in the Philippines

Before introducing the methodology and data, it is worth mentioning the roles and functions of PDCs in local government as well as their context in the Philippines in more detail. The enactment of the Local Government Code of 1991 (Republic Act No. 7160) in the Philippines strengthened the role of local governments and promoted both democratization of the government and efficient and effective implementation of local public services (Legaspi, 2010). Additionally, those who drafted the act expected the LGUs to carry out more effective decision-making via participatory governance by requiring all LGUs to establish a local special governmental body composed of various stakeholders, including those from NGO sectors (Ishii et al., 2007). Each LGU is required to have a local development council and other local special bodies. Participatory governance was required, together with decentralization, to establish and promote democracy at the local level (Lowry et al., 2005; Rood, 1998). In line with this philosophy, delegated power and authority were passed onto the local government. For many years, local governance in the Philippines has been characterized as a highly politicized “boss machine,” in which personnel are politically appointed to positions in local government via pork barreling (McCoy, 2009; Sidel, 1994). In contrast to these strong individual politicians and families, the government as an institution has been regarded as weak (Legaspi, 2010). Nevertheless, the role and performance of local government bureaucracy, which defines organizational capacity, are important factors in assessing the state of local governance (Rhodes, 1997).

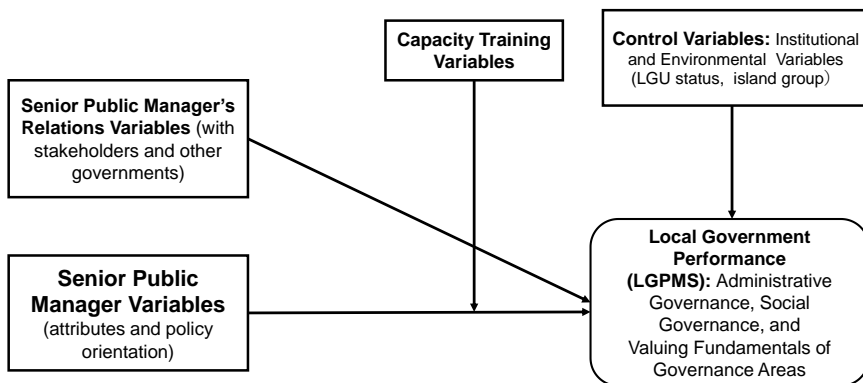
To investigate the factors that affect government capacity beyond its political aspects, this paper focuses on PDCs in each local government in the Philippines. The PDC role was a newly established position created with the passage of the Local Government Code of 1991; it delegated authority over development planning and budgetary formation. PDCs are appointed positions that are filled by mayors. PDCs are involved in the overall coordination of development planning and projects and are considered top-ranking (appointed) officials in municipalities. They function as secretaries general of local development councils, which comprise various stakeholders such as NGOs and barangays, the latter of which are community-level local governments. The functions and roles of the local development council are to formulate development plans and policies. Essentially, the local development council is the comprehensive decision-making body for planning and development. It defines the future shape of the community and is thus the most important special body of local government in the Philippines.

3 Research

3.1 Research Framework

To test the three hypotheses stated above, this study explores the relationship between surveyed managerial factors and the performance of local governments. Figure 1 shows this study's exploratory framework, which associates internal government capacity demonstrated by the senior public manager, associated with situational characteristics of the capacity as control variable, with local government performance.

Figure 1: Government Factors in Local Government Performance



This research seeks to investigate the performance of local governments and government management factors in the Philippines by focusing on PDCs as senior public managers in local governments. The basic research question of this paper is whether senior public managers matter for local government performance. To address this research question, this paper tries to identify the relationship between administrative capacity and performance in local governments in the Philippines, based on data from a survey questionnaire administered to city/municipal PDCs, who are top-ranking government officials, from 300 randomly selected local governments in the Philippines.

3.2 Data

The survey questionnaire in our research was administered in 2011 and 2012 (Kobayashi et al., 2013). Social Weather Stations, a social research institution, was hired to administer the survey by conducting interviews. In the Philippines, local governments and the senior public managers have not been systematically investigated at the national level, and it was necessary to understand the overall

picture. It was the first kind of survey. The study population comprised members of 1515 cities and municipalities in February 2011, excluding the LGU in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The ARMM was excluded because of social unrest for conducting the field interview survey. Based on this population, a systematic random sampling was conducted. All the 1,515 governments were numbered from the north to the south. Then, 300 governments were selected at even intervals, based on their population sizes. The interval was 236,500 residents. To simplify sampling, we did not use information of land sizes and income levels of governments. The sample is consisted of local governments in 16 regions in 71 provinces, consisting of 93 cities and 203 municipalities (170 local governments in Luzon, 67 in Visayas, and 63 in Mindanao). All 300 participants responded (i.e., the response rate for PDCs was 100%). Checking the distribution between the whole population and the sample, which covers one fifth governments of the whole country, the sample mostly maintains proportions of governments and residents by island groups.

3.3 Independent Variable

The survey first gathered information on the basic profile of the PDCs, including their gender, age, and educational background, as well as the location of their local government. Of the 300 survey responses, 93 were from the cities and 207 were from municipalities, which reflects the overall ratio of the two types of local governments. The majority of respondents were men (66.3%). There was no substantial difference in gender balance between city and municipality staff. The average age was 50.6 years, which reflects a requirement of the Local Government Code of 1991 that PDCs have at least 3 years of prior experience in municipal planning and development. The youngest age, oldest age, and mode for PDCs in our survey were 30, 65, and 49 years, respectively. The survey gathered information on the educational background and college major of each PDC. All had at least a college degree, which is unsurprising given that the Local Government Code of 1991 states that PDCs should have a college degree or equivalent (the breakdown by degree was as follows: bachelor's degree: 75%, $n = 227$; master's degree: 23%, $n = 70$; and doctoral degree: 1%, $n = 3$). PDCs in cities were more likely to have attained a higher level of education compared with those in municipalities; a possible explanation for this is that additional professional skills and capacities are required to meet the higher and more diverse demands in places with larger populations. Responses to the question about when they started working as a PDCs varied. The majority of respondents said that they became a PDC in the 1990s (37.3%), followed by the 2000s (26.3%) and the 1980s (22%).

The duties and functions of a PDC include the coordination of various interests, including the values and interests of citizens, as well as the creation and implementation of effective and coherent plans. The PDC position functions as a nexus for political and administrative concerns, and assists in coordinating internal

organizational politics and the voices of citizens. The policy orientation of an individual PDC is an important factor (Moon & Norris, 2005; Zhang & Feiock, 2009). To this end, the survey asked respondents to choose an area of priority to receive a greater budget allocation. In response, 36.7% responded “social services,” 24% responded “economic services,” 23.7% responded “infrastructure,” and 11.7% responded “the environment.” These four budgetary categories can be grouped into two policy areas: social development (social, environmental, and other, including health and education) and economic development (economic, infrastructure, and other). The priority policy areas, as broadly grouped into the above two groups, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Priority policy area (%) of PDCs

Policy orientation	Budget category		
Social development policy	Social	36.7	48.4
	Environment	11.7	
Economic development policy	Economic	24.0	47.7
	Infrastructure	23.7	
-	Other (institutional and related other)	3.7	3.7*

Note: *Other policy orientations are grouped into two main categories based on the descriptions of the respondents in the analysis. Due to rounding, some totals may not correspond with the sum of the figures.

The extent of networks with other governments was determined by inquiring about the frequency of contact with other government officials at various levels. For the measurement of intensity of the network with other governmental officials and stakeholders, after having more than 20 local governments pretest nationwide for the refining of the survey questions, we have decided to ask the frequency of the meeting (physical one, not phone or online communication), as this item allows the participants to recall the number of times more accurately, and thus fairly represents the intensity of the network (Kobayashi et al., 2013). The information gathered included the frequency of contact in the past year with the following officials: secretary of the (central) departments, undersecretary of the departments, directors of the departments, regional officers of the departments, other provincial officers, provincial planning officers, and officers of other independent cities/municipalities (Table 2). The results revealed that the frequency with which the PDC met with other government officials was highest for officers of other independent cities/municipalities, followed by provincial planning officers. The PDC met with these officers more than once a month, usually because their meetings were regularly scheduled. Generally, contact was more frequent at the local and provincial levels, indicating the existence of an informal horizontal network among PDCs for information sharing.

Table 2: Frequency of contact with other government officials (%)

	More than once/month	Once a month	Several times/ year	Once or twice a year	Never
Officers of other cities/municipalities	19.3	39.0	27.0	12.7	2.0
Provincial planning officers	14.3	41.7	24.3	12.3	2.3
Other provincial officers	10.3	22.3	37.0	23.3	2.7
Regional department officers	8.7	14.0	37.0	36.0	4.3
Department directors	6.7	13.3	27.0	36.0	16.7
Department undersecretaries	1.7	2.3	9.0	34.0	52.7
Department secretaries	1.3	1.7	10.7	31.0	55.0

Note: N.A. or no answer data is excluded. Due to rounding, some totals may not correspond with the sum of the figures.

To identify relationships with major local government stakeholders, the survey inquired about the frequency of contact with local council members and barangay captains as well as contact with representatives from NGOs/POs and businesspeople. The average frequency of contact with council members was found to be higher than that with barangay captains because PDC and council members often work in the same building. On average, PDC contact occurred less frequently with NGOs/POs and members of the business community than with council members and barangay captains. The results of the survey also showed that PDCs communicated more frequently with NGOs/POs than with members of the business community (Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3: Frequency of meetings with NGO/PO and businesspeople (%)

	Once a week or more	Two to three times a Month	Once a month	Never
NGO/PO	24.1	29.6	37.4	8.8
Businesspeople	19.6	20.0	53.7	6.7

Note: N.A. or no answer data is excluded. Due to rounding, some totals may not correspond with the sum of the figures.

Table 4: Frequency of meeting with barangay captain and council member (%)

	Every day	Several times a week	Once a week	Two to three times a month	Once a month	Less than once a month
Barangay captain	17.0	25.7	11.7	17.3	21.3	6.7
Council member	16.3	22.0	24.0	16.7	12.3	7.4

Note: N.A., no answer, or others data is excluded.

Performance of local government is largely based on the policy and managerial capacity within the government, aside from the environmental factors. It is important to know to what extent the PDCs is given the opportunity to develop their capacity. In this survey, the frequency of attending seminars/workshops for capacity development purposes within the past year was identified. About 12% of the respondents did not attend any seminars/workshops in the past year while 11% attended one, 15% attended two, and 62% attended more than two. In total, more than 90% of the respondents attended at least one seminar or workshop in the past year (Table 5). Many of the seminars/workshops were organized and hosted by central agencies, the League of Local Planning and Development Coordinators of the Philippines (LLPDCPI), or donor agencies. Capacity development cannot be characterized based on seminar/workshop attendance alone; it is closely connected with the networks of each PDC, as well as his/her career and academic background, as identified above. Nonetheless, providing training to the government staff is one of the common ways to develop capacity within the government in the LGUs in the Philippines.

Table 5: Frequency of Seminars/Workshops attended within the past year for PDCs (%)

More than 2	2 times	Once	None
61.7	15.3	10.7	11.7

Note: N.A. or no answer data is excluded.

The size of a local government can be classified in accordance with the status of that government. About 31% of the surveyed local governments were cities, while 69% were municipalities, reflecting the proportions of people in the general population. Geographical locations can be determined by island groups where sample local governments are located, given that population, population density, and state of development differ greatly among island groups. Significant economic disparity existed among different islands (Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao), and a dummy variable was used to control the size and location of LGUs in our analysis.

3.4 Dependent Variable

The primary objective of this paper is to explore the relationship between surveyed managerial factors and the performance of a local government. While most of the existing research on the performance of local government in the Philippines rely on self-appraisal of performance data collected through the participants or outcome indicators, in limited case of local government or in specific policy area (Azfar, 2000; Brillantes & Sonco II, 2003; Capuno, 2005). Single case study of certain local government can provide rich and in-depth contextual factors of local government performance, yet it has certain limitations of generalizability (Capuno, 2005). Using outcome indicators such as economic conditions in analyzing local government performance needs to clarify other factors impact the dependent variable as well. Similarly, collecting both independent and dependent variables from the same information source, especially from the questionnaire survey may occur common method bias. In order to overcome these limitations, in this analysis, we used data from the local government performance management system (LGPMS), which is a performance indicator developed by the Department of the Interior and Local Government in 2009, as dependent variables (Domingo & Reyes, 2010). Following several previous initiatives, the LGPMS is becoming a first comprehensive local government management tools applying all local government units in the Philippines. The LGPMS is a self-assessment, management and development tool that enables local governments to determine their capabilities and limitations in the delivery of essential public services. The LGPMS is based on self-appraisal by LGUs according to a five-point scale (where 5 represents the highest performance, whereas 1 represents the lowest performance) and comprises five areas: administrative governance, social governance, economic governance, environmental governance, and valuing fundamentals of governance. Each indicator of governance consists of a number of different aspects. The LGPMS is widely used not only among practitioners, but also in the local government performance studies (Adriano, 2014; Capuno, 2010; Nishimura, 2022). While the LGPMS covers five areas of local government performance, both economic governance and environmental governance indicators do not cover the all-local government units in its nature. For instance, in the environmental governance, forest ecosystem management is assessed, but the data in urban area located LGU is missing. Similarly, in the economic governance, support fishery sector data is only available among the oceanside or riverside LGUs. In our analysis, sample LGUs is collected from the random sampling, regardless of its location or local industry characteristics, these two areas (economic governance and environmental governance) are excluded in the following analysis. Therefore, our analysis uses administrative governance, social governance, valuing fundamentals of governance, and the mean score of these three areas in the data from 2011, which coincides with the year of the survey (Table 6).

Table 6: Descriptive statistics of LGPMS 2011

	Mean score	
Administrative governance (mean score: 4.20, Cronbach's α : 0.58)	Local legislation	3.86
	Development planning	4.57
	Revenue generation	3.78
	Resource allocation and utilization	3.54
	Customer service	4.68
Social governance (mean score: 4.41, Cronbach's α : 0.69)	Human resource management	4.75
	Health service	4.71
	Support education service	4.48
	Support housing and basic utilities	4.05
Valuing fundamentals of governance (mean score: 4.51, Cronbach's α : 0.56)	Peace security disaster risk management	4.39
	Participation	4.33
	Transparency	4.58
	Financial accountability	4.63

Source: LGPMS 2011 Data.

3.5 Analysis

To examine the effects of managerial factors on local government performance, our research used multiple regression analysis; Table 7 shows the results of this analysis, with question items as independent variables including control variables, and LGPMS data from 2011 as dependent variables (administrative governance, social governance, and valuing fundamentals of governance, respectively). Although the sample examined 300 local governments, certain values were missing from a number of question items in the survey, and therefore, the final valid sample subset varied between 300 and 262. To test the robustness of the results, six models were tested, with model 7 being the full model. To test for multicollinearity among independent variables, variance inflation factors for all independent variables were calculated; no severe multicollinearity was found among the variables.

Table 7: Results of multivariate regression analysis

	AG Model 1	AG Model 2	AG Model 3	AG Model 4	AG Model5	AG Model6	SG Model1	SG Model2	SG Model3
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
City (dummy) *Control variable	.350***	.317***	.312***	.354***	.303***	.341***	.235***	.194***	.197***
Luzon Island (dummy) *Control variable	.248***	.225***	.212**	.189**	.235**	.216**	.120*	.077	.084
Visayas Island (dummy) *Control variable	.056	.059	.081	.053	.092	.053	-.086	-.090	-.055
Gender (dummy for male)		.014	.049	.046	.077	.087		-.097	-.088
Education (dummy for master's degree or higher)		.035	.021	.008	.026	.006		.010	-.005
Years of experience as PDC		.063	.062	.065	.053	.050		.053	.053
Social development policy orientation (dummy)		.121**	.155**	.184**	.181**	.201***		.185**	.212**
Frequency of training			.052	.051	.068	.084			.044
Meeting with officers of other independent cities/municipalities				-.020		-.054			
Meeting with provincial planning officers				.076		.047			
Meeting with other provincial officers				-.025		-.059			
Meeting with regional department officers				.116		.119			
Meeting with department directors				-.185**		-.244**			
Meeting with department undersecretaries				.240**		.238**			
Meeting with department secretaries				-.102		-.071			
Meeting with barangay captains					.061	.084			
Meeting with council members					.057	.044			
Meeting with NGOs/POs					.096	.154*			
Meeting with businesspeople					-.001	.009			
Frequency of local development council general assemblies					.042	.001			
Participation of NPOs in executive committee of local development council (dummy)					.068	.068			
<i>Number of observations</i>	300	299	288	271	279	262	300	299	288
<i>Adjusted R2</i>	.162	.170	.171	.214	.206	.264	.078	.113	.116
<i>F(p-value)</i>	20.335 (.000)	9.724 (.000)	8.404 (.000)	5.913 (.000)	6.161 (.000)	5.455 (.000)	9.380 (.000)	6.406 (.000)	5.727 (.000)

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

AG: Administrative governance (Cronbach's α =.576)

SG: Social governance (Cronbach's α =.692)

VFG: Valuing fundamentals of governance (Cronbach's α =.564)

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	SG Model4	SG Model 5	SG Model 6	VFG Model 1	VFG Model 2	VFG Model 3	VFG Model 4	VFG Model 5	VFG Model 6
	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta	Beta
City (dummy) *Control variable	.217***	.179**	.194**	.260***	.212***	.211***	.219***	.194**	.216***
Luzon Island (dummy) *Control variable	.075	.103	.086	.102	.076	.076	.039	.119	.068
Visayas Island (dummy) *Control variable	-.060	-.048	-.060	-.058	-.060	-.038	-.041	.002	-.019
Gender (dummy for male)	-.085	-.094	-.087		-.068	-.058	-.062	-.049	-.041
Education (dummy for master's degree or higher)	.002	.013	.017		.093	.093	.095	.093	.089
Years of experience as PDC	.063	.061	.073		.007	.008	.008	.009	.005
Social development policy orientation (dummy)	.224***	.211***	.215***		.137*	.145*	.161*	.137*	.154*
Frequency of training	.063	.031	.054			-.032	-.034	-.024	-.017
Meeting with officers of other independent cities/municipalities	-.049		-.082				.104		.074
Meeting with provincial planning officers	.023		.018				.000		-.010
Meeting with other provincial officers	.097		.073				.039		.026
Meeting with regional department officers	.060		.067				-.068		-.083
Meeting with department directors	-.086		-.111				-.016		-.084
Meeting with department undersecretaries	.122		.151				.149		.173
Meeting with department secretaries	-.116		-.115				-.073		-.065
Meeting with barangay captains		.089	.108					.097	.086
Meeting with council members		-.024	-.031					-.001	.020
Meeting with NGOs/POs		.058	.084					.199**	.213**
Meeting with businesspeople		-.024	-.023					-.073	-.065
Frequency of local development council general assemblies		.033	.008					-.076	-.100
Participation of NPOs in executive committee of local development council (dummy)		.024	.002					.093	.072
<i>Number of observations</i>	271	279	262	300	299	289	271	279	262
<i>Adjusted R2</i>	.109	.106	.110	.077	.098	.089	.078	.140	.132
<i>F(p-value)</i>	3.205 (.000)	3.614 (.000)	2.531 (.000)	9.307 (.000)	5.648 (.000)	4.489 (.000)	2.531 (.00)	4.231 (.000)	2.886 (.000)

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

4 Discussion

To assess the quality of PDCs as leaders and their performance, attributes and policy orientations of the PDCs and local government performance were evaluated. No significant relationships were observed among PDC attributes such as gender, education level, years of experience, and local government performance. For policy orientation and performance, our results indicated that PDCs who were oriented toward a social development policy exhibited higher performance than those who were oriented toward an economic development policy. Our survey defined policy orientation as the policy area that an individual PDC tended to focus on more, including the desire for greater resource allocation in that area. That is to say, policy orientation indicated the most sensitive policy area in which a PDC believed that the community was lacking. Also, PDCs who were oriented toward a social development policy tended to need more skills to coordinate and implement the policy. A welfare policy necessitated a capacity to coordinate the redistribution of limited resources in the community. An environmental policy required a capacity for effective enforcement and implementation (Adriano, 2014).

The relationship between the intensity of a governmental network (i.e., frequency of meeting with other government officials) and local government performance was also assessed. Our results revealed interesting patterns. Meeting with undersecretaries of departments was found to have a substantially positive impact on local government performance. In contrast, meeting with directors or secretaries of the departments had a slightly negative impact on local government performance. In general, meeting frequently with officials at the national government level had both positive and negative impacts on local government performance; this was especially true with administrative governance performance. As mentioned above, pork barreling has been known to occur among members of congress in the Philippines (McCoy, 2009; Sidel, 1999). Thus, for local governments seeking allocation of a higher budget for development and frequent meetings with local members of congress, political relations have been important. Results of the present analysis imply the importance of not only politics-based local relations occurring as a result of contact with local members of congress, but also of an administrative vertical network for local government development and performance. Slightly negative relations with the frequency of meeting with directors or secretaries of the departments may indicate that lower performance local government strategically tries to intensify the administrative vertical network by meeting with the senior government officials in the national departments.

For development planning in particular, it would be advisable to provide such opportunities in coordination as inclusion and integration of development planning in lower tiers (at the level of independent cities/municipalities) for development planning in upper tiers (at the provincial, regional, or national level). It is critical to

prioritize the inclusion of local government projects over development planning in upper tiers of government. The results of the present analysis imply that there exist established relations between PDCs and the upper level of development planning, as well as a process of negotiation across different levels of government, in addition to traditional political routes via local members of congress (Green, 2005).

The relationship between PDCs and stakeholders (NGOs/POs and businesspeople) and its association with local government performance were also assessed. Our results revealed that, in general, increased communication with new stakeholders such as NGOs/POs resulted in better local government performance, though no significant relationship found in the area of social governance performance. In many cases, NGOs and POs tended to be involved in social service delivery, but there was no significant relation with the area of social governance performance. Nevertheless, meeting with NGOs/POs had a positive impact in both the area of administrative governance performance and are of valuing fundamentals of governance performance. Local governments in the Philippines have long been controlled by “boss machine” politics. In many cases, this type of politics has been closely connected with political dynasties comprising business elites in each locality (Sidel, 1999). The provisions of the Local Government Code of 1991 require the participation of NGOs/POs in various policy areas, with the aim of improving the efficiency and accountability of the local government policy process (Adriano, 2014; Ishii et al., 2007; Legaspi, 2010). The results of the present analysis exhibited a certain degree of improvement accompanying the participation of NGOs/POs (Bryant, 2005; Capuno & Gracia, 2010).

We hypothesized that a higher frequency of training experiences would increase local government performance. However, the results of our regression analysis revealed no significant relationship between the two values. To further analyze the relationship, a dummy variable was constructed by categorizing the frequency of training opportunities; however, the effect of this dummy variable was also not significant. Over 30 years have passed since the enactment of the Local Government Code of 1991, and the focus of decentralization efforts has also shifted from institutional building to capacity improvement (Co & Cordero, 2012). As mentioned above, one of the most frequently cited reasons for not implementing policies via local government is that the local governments lacked a sufficient capacity to carry out required tasks (Lowry, 2005). The Department of the Interior and Local Government and other departments have therefore promoted increasing the capacity of LGU officials by providing training at the Local Government Academy and other universities. Aid from developed countries has also shifted to investing in human capital at a local level. Nevertheless, as indicated by the profile and former career of the PDCs, human resource development in LGUs has tended to rely on recruiting officials who were already established in specialty or capacity, rather than on developing human capital itself by training. This would be one reason that training

intensity as a proxy indicator of capacity building has not directly correlated with local government performance.

Finally, we assessed the relationship of the size and location of local governments with their performance. The results of our regression analysis showed that both city/municipality status and location had a significant effect on local government performance. The status of an independent city as an LGU for the Luzon island group was found to associate with higher local government performance. Basic criteria for an upgrade from the status of a municipality to that of an independent city include population and fiscal capacity (i.e., the degree to which the municipality can generate its own revenue). These two factors may have a substantial impact on local government performance. With regard to geographical location, local governments in Luzon, which is a main island of the Philippines and home to the capital region, tend to exhibit higher performance than local governments in other island groups (the Visayas and Mindanao). Capuno (2005) showed that to improve the quality of local governance, a certain initial level of economic conditions was needed to break the vicious circle of penury and misgovernance. The results of the present analysis essentially supported Capuno's findings. Nonetheless, our analysis showed that location and economic conditions were not necessarily unique determining factors for local government performance.

Reforms in decentralization swept across both Eastern and Western countries during the 1990s. The Philippine history of both Spanish and American colonization has meant that local government systems have evolved to include influences and overtones of both countries, such as landlord capital economy and "boss machine" politics (Sidel, 1999). Thus, the results of the Philippine decentralization reform, by their very nature, seem to have hybrid features and characteristics combining Eastern and Western experiences. Our findings on the importance of NGOs/POs and the policy orientation of individual PDCs show that, to some degree, this importance is similar to that of a city manager in a local government in the United States, which was created from a reflection of "boss machine" politics in local government. In contrast, the growing importance of hierarchical administrative relations among government officials across levels of government appears to fit well with the strong state of the Asian economic growth model, which emphasizes the capacity of the state to mobilize resources for overall development (as opposed to partial or locally confined development).

5 Conclusions

Local government in the Philippines has been transforming management and service delivery more efficiently and democratically since the passage of the Local Government Code of 1991. Various efforts for efficiency and democracy have been observed in local government by a combination of both strong mayoral community political leadership and wide-ranging participation of people in communities. Local governments have traditionally been dominated by local politics with patronage. Nevertheless, after the decentralization reform, local governments' capacity as an organization has become more important than ever (Co & Cordero, 2012).

Our survey analysis revealed both anticipated and unanticipated results. Networking with government officials at other levels, communication with the stakeholders, and individual policy preferences were found to have a substantial impact on local government performance (Azfar et al., 2000). In contrast, training opportunities were not found to have any substantial impact, likely reflecting the manner in which PDCs and other government officials were hired on the basis of established capacity, as opposed to the local government developing human resources via training. This is partially verified by the aspect that half of the surveyed PDCs were previously employed in the private sector. Professional positions in an LGU are based on an open system rather than closed career development within the government. Results of the analysis generally imply that local government management has become a more important factor for the state and development of local government performance and the quality of governance, perhaps adding to the contribution of local politics instead of supplanting it. A large number of developing countries experienced the decentralization reforms, yet the developing country governments have faced myriad problems in designing and implementing programs for the decentralization (Rondinelli et al., 1983). The results of the reform have been mixed as well. The experiences of the Philippines and the findings of the research indicate that, in addition to the mechanics of local politics, the choice of local government management has become a factor of equal or greater importance in the state and development of local government performance, especially in the developing countries.

This study is exploratory in nature and has certain limitations. First, the dataset used as the dependent variables does not necessarily reflect the actual state and performance of local governments in the Philippines. The use of LGPMS data has certain limitations because the data are indicators based on self-appraisal (Domingo & Reyes, 2010; Rood, 1998). The LGPMS data are used as surrogates for conceptual variables. For further analysis, outcome-oriented performance indicators such as collection efficiency of local taxes, rate of facility-based delivery, and rate of fully immunized children may be more appropriate. Second, our survey on PDCs was administered in 2011 and 2012 and is now more than a decade old. Only high-ranking

officials in business (mayors and PDCs) were surveyed. A follow-up survey to update the data had been planned for 2020; however, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic hampered updating of the data. Yet, this kind of nationwide survey to the senior public management to the local governments have not been conducted to date, and considering the fact that the LGPMS used as dependent variables in this analysis is well established system and it is still used by the local governments in the Philippines, and the institutional context is stable and unchanged from a decade ago, the data collected in the analysis still has a certain value for the analysis. Updated data conducted by the authors are expected to become available in late 2023. Our data and findings need to be understood in the context in 2011 and 2012, and do not necessarily reflect the current political context.

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Appendix:**Appendix 1: Survey Questions and Coding of Variables**

Variable	Scale	Survey Questions and Measurement
Size and location of local government as environmental characteristics (control variables)	Binary	Local government status (dummy for independent city level)
	Binary	Island group (dummy for Luzon Island)
	Binary	Island group (dummy for Visayas Island)
Capacity training	5-point scale	Frequency of training
Senior public manager attribute and policy orientation	Binary	PDC gender (dummy for male)
	Binary	Education (dummy for master's degree or higher)
	Continuous	Years of experience as PDC
	Binary	Social development policy orientation (dummy) See Table 2
Senior public manager network	5-point scale	Frequency of meetings with officers of other independent cities/municipalities, provincial planning officers, other provincial officers, regional department officers, department directors, department undersecretaries, department secretaries
	5-point scale	Frequency of meetings with barangay captains, council members, NGOs/POs, businesspeople
	5-point scale	Frequency of local development council general assemblies
	Binary	Participation of NPOs in executive committee of local development council
Local government performance (dependent variable)	5-point scale	Local government performance management system (LGPMS) 2011 score