

Women's Participation in Barangay Politics: A View from the Ground

Josephine T. Firmase, Alice Prieto-Carolino

Division of Social Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences, University of the Philippines Visayas, Miagao (5023), Iloilo

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the experiences of women in barangay politics from two (2) coastal municipalities-Guimbal and Tigbauan-in the Province of Iloilo, Philippines. Sixty-nine (69) women barangay officials from ten (10) barangays in the aforementioned municipalities were surveyed and ten (10) focus group discussions, which were participated by both men and women barangay officials, were held. The results of the study reveal that aside from structural barriers, there are normative frameworks that limit women's participation in barangay politics. Highlighted are the dominance of patriarchy, persistence of discriminatory social norms, gender stereotypes, beliefs, and attitudes, pervasiveness of the anomalous public and private divide, and intersections of gender, class, and ethnicity that compound the unequal power relations of men and women. Women barangay officials' pathways to local political participation are mainly through their family connections and current or previous community engagements. However, their political participation is affected by their multiple gender roles within and outside the home. Their greater social and family responsibilities, which are the source of their political influence, are ironically also the reason for their lack of time for political participation. Their increasing number in barangay politics alone is not enough to achieve gender-sensitive political structures and processes since they need to be further gender-sensitized to enable them to use their power and influence to pursue pro-women policies and programs. Continuous capacity-building of women is imperative to contest structural and social limitations to women's meaningful and transformative political participation.

Keywords: women officials; barangay politics; gender and development

The Continuing Challenge of Women's Political Participation

While half of the country's total population is composed of women, they occupy only one-fifth of elective positions in government (Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), 2020). They remain underrepresented in both elective and appointive positions in the legislative, judiciary, and executive branches (David et al., 2017). This is true not only at the national level but more so at the local level, where there are fewer women in local government. It is imperative to pursue the agenda of women's political participation and representation in decision-making bodies since it is critical to sustain development efforts in all spheres of society.

Based on the report of World Economic Forum (2021), the Philippines ranked 17th among 156

countries in the world and 2nd in the Asia Pacific in terms of closing the gender gap. In the area of political empowerment, 36.2 percent of the gender gap has been closed since only 28 percent of seats in Congress and 13 percent of cabinet posts are held by women (Crismundo, 2021). Nonetheless, women who assume leadership and decision-making roles in key government positions have proven themselves as effective as their male counterparts. Men who dominate the different branches of government have participated in the formulation of policies and programs for women but they fall short of truly representing women's interests due to their different needs, issues, socialization, and experiences (PCW, 2020).

Historically, only Filipino men, who are 21 years old and above and who can read and write, can vote as stipulated in the 1935 Philippine Constitution. The

condition that may allow women to vote was to have at least 300,000 of them favorably vote for it in a special plebiscite. With 447,725 votes, the National Assembly granted Filipino women the right to vote and run for public office on April 30, 1937. The country held its first general elections that same year and Carmen Planas, elected city councilor of Manila, was the first woman to hold an elected government position in the country (David et al., 2017).

Since then, the country has made considerable progress in promoting women's political participation and representation. Between 1986 and 2021, two women have served as President and two as Vice Presidents of the Republic of the Philippines. The 1998 election results revealed that 15 percent of all elective posts were occupied by women (Anonuevo, 2000). Between 1998 and 2016, around 16.1 percent to 21.44 percent of women were elected to public office, which peaked in the 2016 elections (PCW, 2020). Still, the proportion of women in public office is below the 30 percent recommended quota of the United Nations (UN, 1995), which is equivalent to a "critical mass" considered as a minimum for a minority group to substantially exert influence in decision-making (PCW, 2020).

In Southeast Asian countries, including the Philippines, political parties, formal political structures, and bureaucratic processes that enable the exercise of the right to participate in elections are not accommodating to women. Further, women's lack of capabilities and means for political participation, education, and access to information technology aggravate women's situations (Labani et al., 2009). In Thailand, socio-political factors such as the election system, incumbency, dispersion of power, closed male networks and homo-social reproduction explain the low turnout of women elective officials. These factors operate within political parties considered as gatekeepers for men's and women's political representation (Bjarnegård, 2010). While in Papua New Guinea, women's political participation is hindered by the perception that women have no or little influence in society and by the political culture characterized by poor conduct of elections, prevalence of corruption, economic crisis, increasing poverty, and general insecurity and instability (Sepoe, 2002).

The Philippine electoral system has always been predominantly elite-male, making women's access to resources that translates to decision-making powers

not as easy as men's access and control over the same (Hega, 2003). This machismo in Philippine politics has limited the exposure of women to political processes, training opportunities, and access to sufficient campaign resources, which consequently hampered their entry into electoral politics (PCW, 2020; Santos-Maranan et al., 2007). Political parties prioritize the "winnability" of men candidates over neophyte women candidates unless they belong to political families. Dynastic women enjoy the support of their male relatives who are in position or who have the political influence to ensure their victory in electoral politics. They are also elite women who have many privileges by virtue of their family connections (PCW, 2020; True et al., 2014; Hega, 2003).

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2006) has long recognized the increasing importance of women's impact in local government. Their contributions to development are more visible at the local level and this facilitates their eventual entry into formal institutions of political power such as the local government (Santos-Maranan et al., 2007). However, the increase in the number of women elective officials at the local level has been very modest (Balili-Gener & Urbiztondo, 2002). The trend in the election of female local officials is as follows: 17 percent in 2004, 18 percent in 2007, 20 percent in 2010, and a sharp drop to 11 percent in the 2013 elections. At the barangay level, women won 19 percent of all Punong Barangay position and 27 percent of councilperson posts (David et al., 2017). Areño (2009), however, asserts that the numbers have improved at the barangay level, particularly in the province of Iloilo.

It has been argued that the local government units (LGU) are an important venue for women in politics (Santos-Maranan et al., 2007; Hega 2003), therefore, research on the participation of women at the barangay level is a significant contribution to the literature that highlights their participation and representation. Looking at women's political participation from a gender perspective has the objective of identifying the roots of inequality within their context and coming up with sustainable ways of eliminating the hindrances that prevent them from participating and being represented in decision-making (Labani et al., 2009).

Much has been said about the structural factors that impinge on women's political participation. But alongside these are the cultural factors--norms,

beliefs, and attitudes--that are likewise important to fully grasp the complexity of women's and men's lives and their gender relations in local politics. This paper analyzes the experiences of women barangay officials in local political participation and representation from two coastal municipalities in the province of Iloilo and analyzes how the prevailing social norms shape women's participation in local decision-making.

Legal and Normative Frameworks that Influence Women's Participation in Governance

In the past decades, there have been international policies that recognized the importance of women's participation in politics. Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the right of everyone to take part in the government of their country. The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) also highlights the need to ensure women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in the political sphere. This was further reiterated during The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing encapsulated in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA). One of the recommendations states that:

women's equal participation in political life plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of women. Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as necessary condition for women's interest to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development, and peace cannot be achieved (UN, 1995, p.79).

UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls cutting across all other SDGs. It targets to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere and to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation (UN Women, n.d.). As a signatory to these international frameworks, the country is bound to work towards the achievement of these targets.

In the country, the 1987 Philippines Constitution upholds the principle of equality before the law of

men and women. It also guarantees equal access to opportunities for public service and recognizes the important role of women in nation-building.

The Local Government Code of 1991 provides for greater participation of the various sectors and representation of women in local legislative councils. Section 41(c) states that "...there shall be one (1) sectoral representative from the women..." (p. 24). Its implementation is still at a halt given that the enabling law for this constitutional and statutory policy on local sectoral representation is yet to be enacted.

Section 11 of The Magna Carta of Women (2009) stipulates the need to come up with "temporary special measures to accelerate the participation and equitable representation of women in all spheres of society particularly in the decision-making and policy-making processes in government and private entities to fully realize their role as agents and beneficiaries of development" (p. 11). This provision aims to facilitate the incremental increase of women in third-level positions in the civil service until a 50-50 gender balance is reached; sets a 40 percent quota for women in local development councils and planning bodies; and mandates the creation of an incentive system to encourage political parties to include women in their leadership positions and electoral nominating processes (PCW, 2020).

These landmark policies at the international and national levels recognize and uphold women's potential contribution to the political life of society but apparently, this is only one facet of a more complex phenomenon.

Dominance of Patriarchy

The dominance of patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes that discourage women to participate in politics explains the contradiction between the high status enjoyed by women in Southeast Asia and the low level of women's political participation (True et al., 2014). Patriarchal values likewise pervade Bangladesh and Australia and are identified as a major block to women's political participation in both countries (Ara, 2021). The existing patriarchal social system is one of the major reasons why women have not been able to maximize the opportunities for their representation (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), n.d., as cited in Santos-Maranan et al., 2007). Therefore, patriarchal norms and values and gender stereotypes result in a slow increase in the number of

women in politics (National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW), 1995).

A male-centered “macho” political culture (Sobritchea n.d., as cited in Santos-Maranan et al., 2007) more specifically, an elite-male-dominated political landscape are barriers for women to carve a niche in politics (Hega, 2003). Also, the way guns, goons, and gold are used in electoral politics is not palatable to women. Thus, the issue of patriarchy and its influence on government policies and programs should be tackled (Santos-Maranan et al., 2007).

Even at the smallest unit of government, the barangay level, males dominate politics. This is evidenced by a study in Zamboanga City where despite the increase in women’s representation in the 98 barangays based on the 2002 and 2013 barangay elections, still men dominate in both the positions of barangay captain and barangay councilor (Valente & Moreno, 2014).

On the other hand, patriarchy may be instrumental in the artificial increase of women’s political participation and representation. Labonne et al., (2019) link the increase in women’s political participation to the introduction of term limits which would account for at least two-thirds of the increase in the number of women mayors in the Philippines. Before binding term limits, dynastic women candidates constitute fifteen percent and this jumped to forty-five percent in forced open seat races. Term-limited incumbents are keen on nominating female relatives since they are more inclined to step down after one term to give way to their male relatives who seek reelection. This is attributed to existing social norms where women may readily comply with male relatives’ directives, especially in a context where men’s careers take precedence over those of women. Thus, they are simply referred to as “benchwarmers”.

Tiglao-Torres (2015) stated, “Production in the public domain is critical in the accumulation of wealth, achievement of social status, assumption of political authority, and other forms of power. The public domain is principally organized as a masculine system, including political structures and processes” (p. 11). As such, men enjoy a lot of privileges made possible by patriarchal values at the expense of women who ironically make all that possible by all the work that they do in social reproduction such as taking care of the children, the old, and the sick.

“Patriarchy defines the home as the realm for women’s governance but leaves the administration of the rest of society to men” (Tiglao-Torres, 2015, p.12). Obstacles to women’s political participation are rooted in the patriarchal culture of society.

Persistence of Discriminatory Social Norms, Gender Stereotypes, Beliefs, and Attitudes

The 2011 UN General Assembly resolution noted that political marginalization of women is often the result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes, and gender stereotypes. Women’s participation remains limited because of the societal belief of their subordinate position to men in the political arena and their conception of politics as men’s domain (Agbalajobi, 2010; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2010; Balili-Gener & Urbizondo, 2002). Women themselves put primacy on their domestic roles and that they are “not intelligent enough to participate in politics... [They] are generally encouraged to believe that politics is much too complicated for them to understand and so it is best left to men” (Ghimere, 2006, as cited in Tiglao-Torres, 2015, p. 88).

The report on women’s political participation in Asia and the Pacific reveals that “cultural, customary and religious discourses are frequently used to moralize that the ‘rightful’ place of women is not in politics” (True et al., 2014, p. 2). Cultural factors that impede women’s meaningful participation in politics are the “persistence of sexist beliefs and practices in the domestic and public spheres, a male-centered “macho” political culture, women’s lack of skills and motivation to assume leadership roles, and inadequate support to enable them to enter politics and effectively perform their work” (Sobritchea, n. d., as cited in Santos-Maranan et al., 2007, p. 45).

Family and child-care responsibilities (UNESCAP, n.d. as cited in Santos-Maranan et al., 2007) and the multiple burdens experienced by many women also discourage them from entering electoral politics (NCRFW, 1995). But should women decide to join politics, their political careers would come later as compared to men basically due to family and gender roles based on a survey of women legislators in the province of Bulacan (Zapata, 2018). Further, wives are expected to look after the next generations of the family and to support the “leader-husband” by entertaining constituents and engaging in charity work. Leadership is still associated with male strength (Hega, 2003).

Furthermore, select women leaders considered the lack of support for potential and incumbent women leaders, the lack of women's vote, and the issues among the different women's groups as major factors in women's low participation in electoral politics (Santos-Maranan et al., 2007). UNESCAP (n.d. as cited in Santos-Maranan et al., 2007), likewise, identified the lack of media support, lack of exposure to political processes, and the limited training opportunities for women.

Women also face difficulty in terms of finding sufficient resources to launch an electoral campaign thus they shy away from seeking public positions. Also, political parties or lobby groups have a bias toward male candidates, who are perceived to have a 'winnability' factor (PCW, 2020) and the high cost of seeking and holding office, is more favorable to men (Hega, 2003). The lack of economic power likewise impinges on the rights and opportunities of women.

The Pervasiveness of the Anomalous Public and Private Divide

"Both the private and public realms of women's realities are integral to their political participation" (Santos-Maranan et al., 2007, p. 43). To define politics in its broadest sense magnifies the reality that a big part of women's political engagement includes 'the everyday politics,' their negotiations, and assertions in decision-making processes within their families and communities. The power relations in intimate relationships are part of women's struggle for empowerment, which defines their struggle both as women and as political beings (Santos-Maranan et al., 2007).

The ideology of patriarchy has conditioned women to prioritize the private sphere in their roles as mothers and wives and they delegate to men the public sphere (Labani et al., 2009). Therefore, it is not surprising that the dichotomy between the reproductive and productive work, the private and public spheres of women, and men's lives are acknowledged as issues by women leaders themselves (Santos-Maranan et al., 2007).

Thus, various institutions' beliefs about women's and men's place in society reinforce the public and the private divide. While men's work matters a lot, women's domestic responsibilities (e.g., care work), which are important in the social reproduction of society, are perceived as less important. Such dichotomy in the valuation of men and women's

distinct contributions to the general wellbeing of society is unfair, especially to women who make possible the work of men in the public sphere. Thus, the public-private divide is artificial since what men and women do whether inside or outside the home are all important. The challenge lies in contesting these perceptions which consequently jeopardize the achievement of a gender-fair and inclusive society.

Intersections of Gender, Class, and Ethnicity

The examination of the historical context, socio-economic, legal, political, and cultural/religious conditions, and influences including gender values are imperative (Dahlerup, 2005, as cited in Tiglao-Torres, 2015) to fully understand the interrelated dynamic factors that weave through women's lives. Milazzo and Goldstein (2019) affirm the triple challenge faced by Afro descent women in Latin America. Being women, poor and indigenous, they are underrepresented in politics. As such social issues of racism and exclusion are less likely to be tackled and acted upon.

METHOD

Context

The areas of study were the municipalities of Guimbal and Tigbauan in Iloilo Province. These were the top two (2) coastal municipalities in the first congressional district of the province with the greatest number of women barangay elective officials based on the 2007 and 2010 barangay election results. In the 2007 and 2010 elections, Guimbal, a fourth-class municipality, had an average of 49.37 percent (44 percent in 2007 and 54.29 percent in 2010) while Tigbauan, a second-class municipality, had an average of 43.77 percent (38.67 percent in 2007 and 48.86 percent in 2010) female barangay elective officials. Five (5) barangays with the greatest number of women barangay elective officials were then identified from each municipality. These barangays were Baras, Cabubugan, Generosa Cristobal-Colon, Nanga, and Nalundan in Guimbal and Barroc, Buyuan, Namoccon, Parara Sur, and Poblacion 9 in Tigbauan.

Participants

Here, women political leaders referred to all the elective or appointive women leaders of the barangay. Elective leaders included the *Punong Barangay*, *Barangay Kagawad* and *SK Chairperson* while

appointive leaders were the *Barangay Secretary* and the *Barangay Treasurer*. A total of 69 women leaders from the ten (10) barangays were surveyed--38 (55.1 percent) from Guimbal and 31 (44.9 percent) from Tigbauan. Based on the survey results, the majority of the women barangay officials were within the 41-60 age bracket (60.8 percent), married (58 percent), and had more than ten (10) years of formal education (68.1 percent). The majority were Roman Catholics (98.5 percent) and residents of the barangay for 31-60 years (59.4 percent). In terms of income, 65.2 percent of the participants earn Php 2,000.00 to Php 3,000.00 in a month while 31.8 percent earn Php 3,001.00 to P4,000. Only one (1.4 percent) had an income of more than Php 5,000.00. Almost all (97.1 percent) women barangay officials considered local politics as their primary occupation. Some have businesses (11.6 percent) and backyard livestock productions (11.6 percent) as their primary source of income. Business usually referred to *sari-sari* store operation and ambulant vending of homemade delicacies.

Data Gathering Procedures

Survey

The survey questionnaire covered the women leaders' demographic characteristics, accomplishments, issues, and concerns that provided vital information on the respondents' experiences in local political participation such as the pathways to elected office, roles, positions in the barangay, women's involvement in decision-making processes and the policies and programs that they initiated. Social norms emerged from all these areas of life of women that impinged upon their political participation.

Focus Group Discussion and Storytelling

There were ten (10) focus group discussions (FGD) participated by both women and men appointive and elective leaders. Each FGD lasted more than two (2) hours. Inclusion criteria for the FGD were as follows: (1) male and female elected and appointed officials of the barangay and (2) willingness to participate in the study.

Table 1. Sex-disaggregated Number of FGD participants

Barangay	Type of Participants		
	Male	Female	Total
Baras	3	8	11
Cabubugan	2	7	9
Generosa Cristobal-Colon	4	6	10
Nanga	4	7	11
Nalundan	3	8	11
Barroc	5	2	7
Buyuan	4	5	9
Namocon	4	4	8
Parara Sur	3	5	8
Poblacion 9	4	6	10
Total	36 (38 percent)	58 (62 percent)	94 (100 percent)

The FGDs tackled issues and challenges experienced by women barangay leaders wherein social norms impinging upon their political participation emerged. It also made use of Participatory Research Appraisal (PRA) tools such as Community Activity Calendar and 24-hour Activity Recall of women barangay leaders to know the roles of the women leaders both inside and outside the household and the social norms that either facilitated or hindered their political participation.

FGDs create social spaces for “meaning-making,” (Wilkinson, 1999, p. 221) or “shared understandings of everyday life” (Gibbs, 1997) and facilitates interaction between participants (Kristiansen & GrønkJær, 2018; Morgan, 2012; Kitzinger 1994); thus, an ideal methodology for learning about their norms (Mishra, 2016), values and social relations. Kitzinger (1994) further posits that the interactions between FGD participants can reveal and highlight attitudes, priorities, and frameworks of understanding reality, as well as identifying group norms and values. Storytelling, on the other hand, allows the participants to communicate their values “not as abstract principles, but as lived experience” (Ganz, 2009, p. 2) showing a “world experienced by research participants” (Lee, 2015, p. e1) to gain more in-depth insight into an experience or to make the “confusing clear” (Wang & Geale, 2015, p. 196). The storytelling which commenced after the FGDs involved selected volunteer women and men leaders in spontaneous conversations, which usually took off from the points that have not been corroborated in the FGDs. The FGD and storytelling facilitated by the researchers utilized Hiligaynon language common to all participants and were made in community venues accessible and familiar to them on schedules that they determined. Qualitative research methods, FGD, and storytelling included, can complement, enhance, clarify, and validate or triangulate to promote accuracy, clarity, and quality of data (van Eeuwijk & Angehrn, 2017; Kabir, 2016; Boateng 2012) through a mix of techniques and tools and different sources of information.

Review of Secondary Data

Secondary data such as barangay plans, ordinances, and budget were also examined to support findings from primary sources of data. Results of barangay elections of 2007 and 2010 were used as benchmarks to establish the trends in the increase of the number of women elective officials in

the study areas.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the data gathered from the survey. Content analysis, on the other hand, was used in analyzing qualitative data. Content analysis is defined as “any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages” (Holski, 1968, as cited in Prasad, 2008). A feminist lens was further used to categorize and interpret data based on the objectives of the study. As feminist research, this study “seeks to unearth and understand better the sources and forces of gender inequality and women disempowerment” (Portus et al., 2018.p.140).

Ethical Considerations

Formal communication has been made with the municipal mayors and the 10 Punong Barangays about the study. Consent of the participants to voluntarily participate in the study was secured and confidentiality of personal information has been assured. A meeting was also held to validate the results of the study. The validation meeting, participated in by a select number of women participants from the ten (10) barangays, verified the results of the study.

RESULTS

Guimbal and Tigbauan LGUs were long-established political institutions with a male-dominated political leadership. Guimbal had only four female Local Chief Executives (LCE) since its foundation in 1703 while Tigbauan had three female LCEs since 1779. The first congressional district of Iloilo, where the two LGUs belong, has been represented by only two women representatives, both preceded by a male family member. The same can be said of the first and only woman party list representative in the First District of Iloilo. This traditionally male-dominated leadership history of the district pointed to the strong patriarchal culture of the local polity.

The two towns were predominantly Roman Catholic. Catholic Christianization in Tigbauan began in 1575 while the Guimbal Roman Catholic Church was constructed in 1769. Religious activities were annual celebrations participated in by all the barangays to honor the patron saint. Roman Catholic

organizations abound in the two localities. The 10 barangays were both fishing and farming communities that have been traditionally male-dominated.

Pathways to Elected Office

Most of the women barangay officials' political socialization started in their own immediate families. Most of them had a cousin, uncle, father, husband, grandparents, or son who was a public official for some length of time. Twenty (28.9 percent) of them had experience in local governance. Eight (11.6 percent) had served in elective positions as a member of the Sangguniang Bayan and the barangay council while 12 (17.3 percent) were either a Barangay Health Worker (BHW), Barangay Secretary, Barangay Treasurer, or Barangay Tanod.

Women entered politics for various reasons. The majority (57.9 percent) of them wanted to be public servants and some (17.4 percent) saw politics as an opportunity to help others. Almost one-fourth (24.6 percent) were motivated by the material gains that they could receive in the form of honoraria, benefits, and incentives. Three (4.3 percent) revealed that representing their sector was their reason for getting into local politics.

The majority (56.7 percent) of the women had training in Gender and Development (GAD) including GAD planning and budgeting since 2011. They also had training on Barangay Newly Elected Officers (BNEO) (97 percent), Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) (68.75 percent), local legislation (62.7 percent), accounting (20.9 percent), and budgeting (6 percent). These trainings were regular inputs for the barangay officials by the LGU and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG). But despite their training in BNEO, many still erroneously thought that the budgeting process was based on their Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) and not on their plans (e.g., AIP).

Roles, Positions, and Jobs Assigned to Women

There was a strong tendency for women to be assigned committee work that was stereotyped as feminine based on the survey results. Their top four (4) committee involvements were the areas of health and nutrition (33.3 percent), women and family (31.3 percent), appropriations/finance/ways and means (20.8 percent), and education (20.8 percent). They were also members (71.7 percent) or chair/president (28.3 percent) of barangay organizations such

as Women and Family, BHW, Barangay Nutrition Scholar (BNS), Kalipunan ng Liping Pilipina, Parish Council, Senior Citizens Organization, and Rural Improvement Club. Some were affiliated with municipal-level organizations as chairperson or president (19 percent) and as members (66.7 percent).

Women barangay officials worked as community managers and community politicians. As community managers, they concurrently served as BHWs and BNS while serving as Barangay Kagawad (58 percent), Barangay Secretary (14.5 percent), or Barangay Treasurer (11.6 percent). Only 4 (5.8 percent) occupied the top position in the barangay.

If the issue was related to peace and order, however, they cannot respond to physical fights that usually involved drunk men. Understandably, they had to call the help of the Barangay Tanod or the police officers from the town to settle the problem.

Women's Involvement in Decision-making Processes

The FGD results reveal that majority of the women leaders who were members of the Barangay Council valued their active participation in policy-making. They described themselves as very active, industrious, approachable, and helpful. They respect and support suggestions that would be beneficial to all.

Most of the PPAs that women leaders initiated were infrastructure projects such as barangay halls, barangay roads, foot walks, streetlights, Tanod outposts, waiting sheds, and Day Care Centers. Health comes second through the procurement of health apparatus (e.g., nebulizers, sphygmomanometer); conduct of feeding programs, clean-up drives, construction of deep well/water pump, toilet bowls distribution, PhilHealth membership facilitation, medicines for the Botika sa Barangay (i.e., pharmacy in the barangay) and campaign for proper waste management.

These efforts resulted in positive gains for the community such as a decrease in the number of malnourished children, cleaner community surroundings, better access to potable water supply and roads, increased health and sanitation awareness, increased attendance during assembly meetings, higher compliance with ordinances, and frequent visits to the library among the youth.

The majority (85.5 percent) of the women barangay officials were involved in barangay planning. This meant providing suggestions on what projects to implement (43.5 percent), formulating plans which were then consulted with the Council (11.3 percent), approving projects and the budget (8.1 percent), checking of availability of funds (6.5 percent), recording/ note taking (4.8 percent), needs identification (1.6 percent), project prioritization (1.6 percent) and other related planning tasks. Although some reported that budgeting was a monopoly of the Committee on Appropriations (8.7 percent), the Treasurer (5.8 percent), and the Punong Barangay (2.9 percent), still a majority (89.8 percent) participated in barangay budgeting.

Women barangay officials likewise faced challenges in the performance of their political duties particularly in planning, budgeting, and policymaking. In planning, 23 (33.3 percent) of them were disappointed in the way the barangay identified and prioritized projects and the fact that some of the planned projects have not been implemented at all. The limited time in planning was also a bottleneck in the process. They also had to contend with negative feedback from the people who did not attend the assembly, numerous documentary requirements, budget allocations, and the passive attitude of some members of the council.

Nineteen (27.5 percent) respondents expressed concerns about how to budget the meager IRA allocation of their barangay which limits the implementation of projects for the community. The seeming lack of transparency in the budgeting process, delay in the release of barangay IRA funds, and not knowing what to do with unspent barangay funds at the end of the year were also the concerns that have to be resolved. In policymaking, only nine (13 percent) women barangay officials expressed some problems. There were complaints about the way the ordinance was formulated and the lack of technical know-how in the formulation of an ordinance.

Women barangay officials expressed the need to enhance their knowledge and skills in GAD, particularly in participatory, gender-sensitive planning, budgeting, and policy formulation. They also need trainings on DRRM, Katarungang Pambarangay, financial recording, documentation and filing, computer literacy, and barangay leadership and governance.

Policies that Matter and are Closer to Pro-women Agenda

An examination of the barangay documents affirmed the priorities of the women barangay officials. They initiated resolutions for infrastructure improvement, health promotion, environmental protection, youth and sports, education, and livelihood promotion. Resolutions on health covered the creation of compost pit, construction of a water system, implementation of supplemental feeding, waste management, and distribution of sanitary toilets, Garantisadong Pambata, medical aid, and the creation of a Community Health Team.

Resolutions related to sports and youth development were passed for the purchase of sports equipment, improvement of facilities, and promotion of sports activities. Support for education came in the form of school supplies for Day Care centers, free miscellaneous fees for the Bantayan Festival (i.e., local festival of Guimbal) performers, and a barangay information/feedback system. Resolutions for livelihood promotion called for the provision of space for vendors, and Bantay Dagat and farmers' registration with the Department of Labor and Employment.

Positive results such as increased visibility of projects, a more transparent and accountable barangay governance, and an improved health and nutrition status of children were observed. Changes in community behavior were also evident in people's proper disposal of garbage, regular monitoring of the nutritional status of children and barangay projects, and lesser complaints from the people.

Key sponsored ordinances of the women barangay officials reflected their concern for women and family, environmental protection, peace and order, livelihood/income generation, and maternal health. There was, however, no legislative measure on agriculture and fisheries and gender and development. The 2013 plans/projects/activities for GAD of the barangays did not respond to strategic gender issues being confronted by the community. Wife battering, abuse, and teenage pregnancy were not provided interventions despite their numerous GAD trainings.

The 2013 budget of the barangays revealed that GAD was not a priority. In the barangays of Guimbal for example, the GAD budget was not earmarked in the 2013 ordinance approving their

annual budget. GAD was, instead lumped under the Social Development component of the 20 percent Development Fund. The barangays of Tigbauan, on the other hand, earmarked GAD together with Other Services under the MOOE's *Non-office Expenditures of the Barangay Budget Preparation Form 3* annually submitted to the LGU. Only one of the 10 barangays in the two municipalities had a GAD budget of at least five percent of the total budget of the barangay for the year 2013. Four barangays in Guimbal provided minimal allocation for GAD while one barangay had zero allocation in 2013.

Social Norms that Impinge upon Women's Political Participation

Women barangay officials were being put down, maligned with comments such as "stupid barangay official," "good for nothing barangay official", or "did nothing for the barangay" that put their integrity in question. Two of them shared:

Ginahimo mo na gid ang tanan, ang kakapoy mo pero may mga negative ka pa nga mabatian nga estorya. Negative amo ra nga sagad gid ikaw ka palak nga daw ikaw ang amo ka dya, daw sakit man sa buot mo bala nga ang imo daad gina ubra mo man imo obligasyon nga ang mga tawo malipay man, pero may mga feedback ka pa nga mabatian... (You are giving all that you can, without minding all the tiredness that you feel, but despite that, you still hear negative comments. Negative comments regarding why I am over-enthusiastic about doing what I do. I felt bad when I hear those words because for me, it is part of my responsibility for the community to be happy, too...but you still hear those kind of feedback...).

Daw kun mabatian mo nga amo run ra paghimakas mo nga para sa karaydan kang barangay indi ka bala ka please sang mga tawo, kag tapos, daw ginatamay ka bala karay-a... (You still could not please people because you hear all sorts of stories. It is also sad that at times, they even bully us...).

They were criticized if they could not provide for the needs of their constituents and people expected them to do all the work since they receive a monthly honorarium and they were blamed even for people's lack of cooperation in barangay activities. One woman barangay official exclaimed:

Daw indi pa sanda kuntento sa imo kang imo bala nga performance. Kay man-an mo ang mga tawo tana rigya sa amon, gusto tana nanda karay-a, pag-ah, may kinanlan sanda, ara

dayon. (People here seemed unsatisfied with our performance. Our people here want that you immediately provide for what they asked for).

There were even stories insinuating illicit relationships between a woman and her fellow male barangay official especially when they were assigned to go on duty during the night.

Women barangay officials recognized the difficulty to balance their time between their family and their official obligations. For example, they related:

Daku nga challenge ang, syempre, obligasyon mo sa balay, sa kabataan mo, daw gamay na lang nga tyempo ang matao mo sa imo pamilya. Nagareklamo gid ang mga kabataan ko. Ay mama, didto ka na lang bala sa barangay hall maistar. Kay sang primero, daw most gid sang akon time, dira sa barangay. Ready-made na lang gani ang pagkaon sa udto. Kon gab-i, amo lang ang tyempo ko nga makaluto kay amo nan ga time nga tingob kami. Nagdugang pa gid akon responsibilidad kay ginhimo pa gid nila ako nga PTA treasurer sa high school. Amo na gid dya ang pattern e (A great challenge is, of course, your obligations at home, to your children, you spend less time with them. My children really complained. They even told me, "Mama, you go, live in the barangay hall". Since at first, most of my time was really in the barangay. Our food for lunch was even readymade. I only cook at night because it is the only time that the family is together. I now have more responsibilities because they made me PTA Treasurer in the high school. This is really the pattern).

Kung time mag-obra sang development plan ti saku-saku gid ko wala ka na tyempo, ti puli na ta eh, ti hambal ya ang bata mo indi mo na maatipan mayo, kung busy ko kung sin-o BHW na on duty, sanda gauyat bata ko, ti mahambal ra nga maskin sin-o lang ginapa-uyat ko, ano ra raku ron ti hambal pero at least gina manage ko e explain ka na, ti wara man nanda gina pabay-an, na uyatan ray-a, mura ang sugtanay namon sang nagabusong pa ko ah, kung sino ang ga duty, tanan ang mabantay, once busy ako...sanda ka ra mabantay, ti okey, may mutual understanding kami... (We are really very busy during the development planning period. You tend to neglect even your own child. If I am busy, it is the BHW on duty who is minding my baby. I then heard talks about it, that I am neglecting my baby, letting other people take care of my baby. I explained to them that the BHWs and I have agreed to help one another. If I am for example... the BHWs will help me out by watching over my child. We have mutually agreed on that...).

A woman barangay official also related that:

Bilang isa ka asawa, obrahon mo gid ya ang imo obligasyon as a mother and as a wife. Ti before ka

na mag duty sa morning, early morning, matig-ang ka gid ya sa aga, pagkabugtaw, prayer, tig-ang, tapos pamahaw, then kung pagbugtaw ang baby patiti-on mo, gina pa nap ko anay sang kadali antes kay kung kis-a gapanglaba pa ko, nagapaninlo pa sa balay before maglakat... ti Tanod man si banahon. Kung duty niya diri man ko at least eh dala ko man aboy-aboy ni baby, ginapatulog ko lang siya diri... (As a wife and mother, you must fulfill your responsibilities. So, before going to the barangay hall, I must wake up early in the morning, cook rice, pray, take breakfast. You also must take care of your baby, breastfeed, then do the laundry while the baby is asleep and clean the house before leaving ... my husband is also a Tanod. If it is his duty, I bring our baby with us, bring the hammock and allow the baby to sleep here [barangay hall]).

The multiple roles of the women as mothers, wives, and barangay officials negatively impacted their well-being which also affected their performance as public servants. Emergency meetings in the barangay, for example, could not be attended to because of multiple tasks.

The FGD revealed that married women barangay officials also helped their husbands in fishing and farming activities. In fishing, women engaged in gleaning, fish vending, fish drying, and fish paste making. At the farm, they usually helped in preparing meals for the farm workers, weeding the field, and harvesting. Reproductive work was not recognized as real work by women barangay officials because it is not remunerated. One of them said:

Wala namon ginakabig ang trabaho sa balay nga trabaho kay wala sweldo, wala kwarta. Kon wala sweldo, indi trabaho (We do not consider work at home as work because it is not compensated; it does not earn money. If there is no compensation, then that is not work).

Domestic work of the women barangay officials involved the daily work of house cleaning (68.1 percent), cooking (66.7 percent), washing clothes (66.7 percent), caring for children (46.4 percent), and gardening (8.7 percent). Despite their busy schedule, however, some who were in dire straits wished to engage in any project that could augment their income. Others also experienced food inadequacies and battering.

DISCUSSION

Paragraph 185 of the BPA states that:

Inequality in the public arena can often start with discriminatory attitudes and practices and unequal power relations between women and men within the family... The unequal division of labor and responsibilities within households based on unequal power relations also limits women's potential to find the time and develop the skills required for participation in decision-making in wider public forums (pp. 120-121).

For many of the women barangay officials, their pathway to local politics was through their family connections, which was echoed in the studies of Abubakar (2006), Zapata (2018), and Labonne et al., (2019). But for others, their own experience as politicians and community leaders and volunteers opened the doors to their current appointive or elective positions. These prior engagements have enhanced their knowledge and capacities that better prepared them for their political functions, albeit still inadequate. There were potential alternative pathways to electoral politics for women such as political parties, civil society, religious organizations (True et al., 2014), and the vibrant women's movement (Santos-Maranan et al., 2007).

The intersections of gender, class, and educational attainment impinged on women's political participation. The women in the study areas were generally poor and had a low level of educational attainment; thus, the training that they have undergone so far seemed to be inadequate to enable them to participate more fully and meaningfully in decision-making and push for a more gender-responsive legislative agenda and programs. In the same vein, Indian women legislators' social position heavily influenced their policy advocacies. Health, early education, and amendments to the Hindu Succession Act, which aims to give women and men the same inheritance rights, were lobbied by women legislators who occupy reserved seats for lower castes and the disadvantaged. On the other hand, women legislators who belong to higher castes were not in favor of redistributive policies such as land reform and increased allocation for social expenditure (Clots-Figuera, 2011).

Women's participation in local politics was affected by their multiple works both at home as wives, mothers, and grandmothers and by other volunteer work in the community. Cruz and Tolentino (2019) affirmed these cultural and social barriers to women's political participation since they are "often expected to be more engaged and embedded in their communities with greater social and familial responsibilities" (p.1). These are the same factors that corresponded to political influence for women as opposed to men's political influence, which largely drew from their political engagement and political network. Ironically, women's greater social and family responsibilities were also alluded to as the reason for their having less time for political participation (Cruz & Tolentino, 2019).

The conversation among women leaders affirmed that there were more women in the local government units which had made their participation in local politics more accessible. But such engagements do not guarantee their meaningful participation (Santos-Maranan et al., 2007) as seen in the experiences of women barangay officials in Tigbauan and Guimbal. They may have filled up almost half of the elective and appointive positions, but numbers alone were not enough to achieve gender-sensitive political

structures and processes. Valente and Moreno's study (2014) showed the increase in women's representation in the 98 barangays in Zamboanga City and concluded that women's participation in barangay politics was still directly and inversely proportional to the number of men in the same positions. Naz (2002) affirmed that the increase of women legislators has not automatically translated into a greater number of legislative measures advancing women's development. Neither does their assumption into institutional leadership translate to a certain level of political influence that will make a dent in women's agenda (Hega 2003). Sobritchea (n.d., as cited in Santos-Maranan et al., 2007) further said that beyond female representation is the issue of making politics respond to the needs and interests of women. They have to be gender-sensitized so that they can use their power and influence to put forward policies and programs that are pro-women.

Franceschet and Piscopio (2008, as cited in Labonne et al., 2019) argued that women who are elected through gender quotas may have the mandate to pursue the issues and needs of women, unlike dynastic women who may not truly be representing the majority of women. But heavily influenced still by the prevailing patriarchal culture the women barangay officials tend to retain a male perspective as they enter public life. Meanwhile, gender quotas are not yet being practiced in the country.

The projects initiated by women were infrastructure projects and health, which are promotive of the general welfare. The ordinances they passed were not far from different. These resonate with the experience of Muslim women barangay councilors in Sulu and Tawi-Tawi who prioritized the construction of footbridges, artesian wells, water tanks, school buildings, health centers, markets, and masjid and the concreting of barangay roads (Abubakar, 2006). Similarly, in the executive branch, David et al. (2017) observed that cabinet secretaries have remained largely male-dominated. The women among them have likewise been given tasks in the traditionally female-associated areas of health (28.6 percent), tourism (33.3 percent), and social welfare (100 percent). Milazzo and Goldstein (2019) shared the same observation at the global level wherein women are assigned less strategic policy areas, which are perceived as more "feminine" (e.g., social welfare, culture, and women's and family affairs).

On the other hand, Domingo-Tapales and Santiago (1999), in their study of women local chief executives in the country, revealed that women push for health and nutrition and infrastructure projects such as water supply, power, roads, and bridges as a response to the practical needs of their constituents. The women leaders are "not gender-tracked into women-oriented projects" (p. 186) since their positions had a greater influence on their initiatives than their gender.

The GAD agenda continued to be sidetracked due to inadequacies in GAD planning, budgeting, and policymaking, and gendered governance as a whole. There were no initiatives that could directly respond to critical gender issues such as multiple burdens, wife battering, teenage pregnancy, and early marriage. March et al. (1999) argued that at the core of GAD is the achievement of equality between men and women. Key to this is the inclusion of women's issues that they identified in the agenda of decision-making institutions that directly impact men and women's lives. Thus, the political arena at the barangay level is a strategic place to strengthen women's voices to transform unequal gender relations both at home and in the community.

The diverse issues and challenges facing women as individuals and as local political leaders reflect the gender insensitivity of local institutions and political and social processes. As individuals, the need to balance their private and public lives to respond to their family's needs and to be effective leaders was something difficult to do given the familial and social expectations. Greater expectations also make women leaders' conditions even more difficult given the limited LGU resources and institutional support. Their verbalization of the issues such as bullying and the lack of time and resources was an appeal for support for their multifarious needs as women and as barangay leaders to be effective and responsive to the needs of their community.

The experiences of women barangay officials also called for the implementation of The Magna Carta of Women at the barangay level. The localization prescribes the institutionalization of five mechanisms in mainstreaming gender in local governance. These are (1) GAD Focal Point System, (2) GAD database establishment, (3) GAD planning and budgeting, (4) GAD Code, and, (5) mainstreaming gender in local development plans to ensure gender equality (Guidelines on the Localization of the Magna Carta of Women, 2013). At a broader societal level, respect for diversity between men and women and recognition of their unique capacities to contribute to development can be part of the conscious and sustained efforts of leaders and institutions to promote the partnership of men and women in nation-building.

The Women's Priority Legislative Agenda for the 18th Congress of the PCW (2020) emphasized the need to ensure women's representation:

The challenge is to form a critical mass of women in elective positions so that their voices will be heard.... measures should focus on building the capacity and enhancing leadership and decision-making skills of women to be able to effect change and influence policy discussions (p.2).

This suggestion resonates well with the experiences of the women barangay leaders who specifically need skills in participatory, gender-sensitive planning, budgeting, and

policy formulation. The municipal LGU must ensure that trainings provided to women officials at the barangay level should be programmatic and attuned to their needs.

CONCLUSIONS

The legal frameworks from the international and national levels may have directly or indirectly increased the number of women in elective and appointive positions at the barangay level. But social norms, prevailing perceptions and attitudes about gendered roles, and the power relations of men and women exert much influence on women's participation and representation in local politics. The structural limitations to women's political participation and the social norms that dictate gendered power relations are mutually reinforcing, thus making gender equality in the realm of local politics still a work in progress.

There is a need to remove the artificial divide between the public and private in the lives of women barangay officials. Both spheres are important to women and choosing between the two is out of the question since they both make women's lives meaningful. The traditional gender division of labor at home and in the community must be continuously contested. Perceptions of masculinity and femininity should facilitate women's increased participation in local politics to achieve genuine empowerment.

The goal of enhancing women's participation in local politics through an improved local governance capacity-building program is likewise an urgent concern given the experiences of women officials in the ten barangays of Guimbal and Tigbauan. The inclusion of gender mainstreaming in the regular training programs for barangay officials such as the BNEO Program of the DILG, for example, can be institutionalized to ensure local integration of gender concerns and active participation of both men and women in local development processes, especially at the barangay level which serves as the frontline of development activities in the country.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank the University of the Philippines Visayas, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Extension for the In-house research grant. They would also like to thank all the men and women barangay officials from Guimbal and Tigbauan, Iloilo who participated in this research.

REFERENCES

- Abubakar, C. A. (2006). Muslim women barangay councilors and the political culture of Sulu and Tawi-Tawi in the southern Philippines [Special issue]. *Asian Cultural Studies*, 15, 111-119.
- Agbalajobi, D. T. (2010) Women's participation and the political process in Nigeria: Problems and prospects. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 4(2), 75-82. <http://www.academicjournals.org/ajpsir>
- Anonuevo, C. A. Q. (2000). *An overview of the gender situation of the Philippines*. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Philippine. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/philippinen/50069.pdf>
- Ara, F. (2021). Political participation of women in local government: A comparative study. *Academia Letters*, Article 2255. <https://doi.org/10.20935/AL2255>
- Areño, E. C. (2009). Beyond lip service: Using social contracts to achieve participatory and accountable governance in the Philippines. In C. Malena (Ed.), *From political won't to political will: Building support for participatory local governance* (pp.135-154). Kumarian Press.
- Balili-Gener, M. K., & Urbiztondo, C. (2002). The participation of women in Philippine elections. *Review of Women's Studies*, 12(1&2), 1-12.
- Bjarnegård, E. (2010). Gendered parties: Making the male norm visible in Thai politics. In H. Rydström (Ed.), *Gendered inequalities in Asia: Configuring, contesting and recognizing women and men* (pp. 223-251). NIAS Press. <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:843647/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Boateng, W. (2012). Evaluating the efficacy of focus group discussion in qualitative social research. *International Journal of Business and Social Science* 3(7), 54-57. https://ijbssnet.com/journals/Vol_3_No_7_April_2012/6.pdf
- Clots-Figueras, I. (2011). Women in politics. Evidence from the Indian states. *Journal of Public Economics*, 95(7&8), 664-690. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2010.11.017>
- Crismundo, K. (2021, March 31). PH ranks 17th in the global gender gap report, 2nd in APAC. *Philippine News Agency*. <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1135541>
- Cruz, C., & Tolentino, C. (2019). *Gender, social recognition, and political influence*. https://econ2017.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2019/11/cruz_tolentino_gender_influence.pdf

- David, C. C., Albert, J. R. G., & Vizmanos, J. F. V. (2017). *Filipino women in leadership: Government and industry* (Policy Notes No. 2017-22). Philippine Institute for Development Studies. <https://pidswebs.pids.gov.ph/CDN/PUBLICATIONS/pidspn1722.pdf>
- Domingo-Tapales, P., & Santiago, E. V. (1999). Elite women as public servants: A study of female local chief executives in the Philippines. *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, 43(3&4), 175-207. https://www.pssc.org.ph/wp-content/pssc-archives/Philippine%20Journal%20of%20Public%20Administration/1999/Num%203-4/07_Elite%20Women%20as%20Public%20Servants.pdf
- Ganz, M. (2009). *What is public narrative: Self, ss & now* [Public narrative worksheet]. Digital Access to Scholarship at Harvard. <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:30760283>
- Gibbs, A. (1997). Focus groups. *Social Research Update*, 19. <https://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU19.html>
- Hega, M. (2003). *Participation of women in Philippine politics and society: A situationer*. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Philippine. <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/philippen/50067.pdf>
- Kabir, S. M. S. (2016). *Basic guidelines for research: An introductory approach for all disciplines*. Book Zone Publication.
- Kitzinger, J. (1994). The methodology of focus groups: The importance of interaction between research participants. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 16(1), 103-121. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/1467-9566.ep11347023>
- Kristiansen, T. M., & Grønkvær, M. (2018). Focus groups as social arenas for the negotiation of normativity. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 17, 1-11. SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917747393>
- Labani, S., Zabaleta Kaehler, C., & De Dios Ruiz, P. (2009). *Gender analysis of women's political participation in 7 South-East Asian countries: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, East Timor and Vietnam 2008-2009*. Association for Women's Rights in Development. http://www.bantaba.ehu.es/obs/files/view/Gender_analysis_of_women's_political_participation.pdf?revision_id=79226&package_id=79202
- Labonne, J., Parsa, S., & Querubin, P. (2019). *Political dynasties, term limits, and female political empowerment: Evidence from the Philippines* (NBER Working Paper No. 26431). Cato Institute. <https://www.nber.org/papers/w26431>
- Lee, B. (2015). Storytelling to enhance the value of research. *American Journal of Public Health*, 105(4): e1. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2014.302548>
- Local Government Code of 1991. (1991). Official Gazette. <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/downloads/1991/10oct/19911010-RA-7160-CCA.pdf>
- March, C., Smyth, I., & Mukhopadhyay, M. (1999). *A guide to gender analysis frameworks*. Oxfam GB. <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/115397/bk-gender-analysis-frameworks-010199-en.pdf?sequence=8>
- Milazzo, A., & Goldstein, M. (2019). Governance and women's economic and political participation: Power inequalities, formal constraints and norms, *The World Bank Research Observer* 34(1), 34-64. <https://doi.org/10.1093/wbro/lky006>
- Mishra, L. (2016). Focus group discussion in qualitative research. *TechnoLEARN*, 6(1), 1-15. <https://ndpublisher.in/admin/issues/tlV6N1a.pdf>
- Morgan, D. L. (2012). Focus groups and social interaction. In J. F. Gubrium, J. A. Holstein, A. B. Marvasti, & K. D., McKinney (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook for interview research: The complexity of the craft* (pp. 161-176). <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781452218403.n11>
- National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women. (1995). *Philippine plan for gender-responsive development 1995-2025*.
- Naz, A. C. (2002). The political participation of women legislators in congress. *Review of Women's Studies*, 12(1&2), 13-48.
- Ofei-Aboagye, E. (2000, June 14-15). *Promoting the participation of women in local governance and development: The case of Ghana* [Seminar presentation]. Seminar on European Support for Democratic Decentralisation and Municipal Development - A Contribution to Local Development and Poverty Reduction, Maastricht, Netherlands. <https://ecdpm.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/DP-18-Promoting-Participation-Women-Local-Governance-Ghana-2000.pdf>
- Philippine Commission on Women. (2020, March 18). *Women's political participation and representation law* (Policy Brief No. 7). Philippine Commission on Women. <https://pcw.gov.ph/womens-political-participation-and-representation/>
- Guidelines on the Localization of the Magna Carta of Women (PCW-DILG-DBM-NEDA Joint Memorandum Circular No. 2013-01). (2013, January 17). <https://pcw.gov.ph/assets/files/2020/03/pcw-dilg-dilg-neda-jmc-2013-01.pdf?x79151>

- Portus, L.M, E.B. Barrios, M.C. Conaco & Go, S.P. (2018). Doing social science research: a guidebook. Quezon City. Philippine Social Science Council.
- Prasad, B.D. (2008). Content analysis, a method in social science research. In D. K. Lal Das, & V. Bhaskaran (Eds.), *Research methods for social work* (pp.173-193). Rawat Publications.
- Samson-Gaddi, R. (2013). Gendered work relations systems in agriculture: Implications to women's participation, good governance and sustainable development. *Philippine Journal of Social Development*, 5, 1-27. <https://www.journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/pjsd/article/view/4065/3691>
- Santos-Maranan, A. F., Parreño, N. E., & Fabros, A. (2007). Reflections and insights on the status and directions of women's political participation: Re-imagining women's movements and struggles in conversations with women. *Women's Education, Development, Productivity & Research Organization & Institute for Popular Democracy*.
- Sepoe, O. (2002). To make a difference: Realities of women's participation in Papua New Guinea politics. *Development Bulletin*, 59, 39-42. <https://crawford.anu.edu.au/rmap/devnet/devnet/db-59.pdf>
- Tadeo, J. T. (2002). Moving to gender mainstreaming: The case of San Juan, Metro Manila. *Review of Women's Studies*, 12(1&2), 125-141. <https://www.journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/rws/article/view/2957/2730>
- The Magna Carta of Women. (2009). Official Gazette. <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/downloads/2009/08aug/20090814-RA-9710-GMA.pdf>
- Tiglao-Torres, A. (2015). Claiming spaces for political participation: Crossing the gender divide (Asia-Pacific Human Development Report Background Papers Series 2010/12). United Nations Development Programme. <https://www.undp.org/asia-pacific/publications/aphdr-technical-background-paper-2010/12>
- True, J., Niner, S., Parashar, S., & George, N. (2014). Women's political participation in Asia and the Pacific (CPPF Working Papers on Women in Politics No. 3). Social Science Research Center. <https://www.ssrc.org/publications/women-s-political-participation-in-asia-and-the-pacific/>
- UN Women. (n.d.). SDG 5: *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality>
- United Nations. (1995). *Beijing declaration and platform for action*. <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf>
- United Nations Children's Fund. (2006). *The state of the world's children 2007*. <https://www.unicef.org/media/84811/file/SOWC-2007.pdf>
- United Nations Development Programme. (2010). *Power, voice and rights: A turning point for gender equality in Asia and the Pacific*. Macmillan Publishers India Ltd. <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/APHumanDevelopmentReport2010-en.pdf>
- Valente, J., & Moreno, F. (2014). *Women's representation in local politics: Evidence from the Philippines* (MPRA Paper No. 57903). Munich Personal RePEc Archive. https://mpa.ub.uni-muenchen.de/57903/1/MPRA_paper_57903.pdf
- van Eeuwijk, P., & Angehrn, Z. (2017). *How to...conduct a focus group discussion. Methodological manual*. University of Basel. <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-150640>
- Wang, C. C., & Geale, S. K. (2015). The power of story: Narrative inquiry as a methodology in nursing research. *International Journal of Nursing Sciences* 2(2), 195-198. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnss.2015.04.014>
- Wilkinson, S. (1999). Focus groups: A feminist method. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 23(2) 221-244. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1999.tb00355.x>
- World Economic Forum. (2021). *Global gender gap report 2021: Insight report*. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf
- Zapata, A. D. G. (2018). Women's leadership and political participation: Fair access to political spheres in the province of Bulacan, Philippines. *African Educational Research Journal* 6(4), 334-341. <https://doig.org/10.30918/AERJ.64.1.8.102>

Date Received: July 13, 2021

Date Accepted: June 23, 2022

Authors:

Josephine T. Firmase, Division of Social Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences,
University of the Philippines Visayas, Miagao (5023), Iloilo; jtfirmase1@up.edu.ph

Alice Prieto-Carolino, Division of Social Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences,
University of the Philippines Visayas, Miagao (5023), Iloilo; acprietocarolino@up.edu.ph