

LOCAL GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVE AMIDST THE PANDEMIC: “A SOCIAL DIMENSION OF TRUST”

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Abstract

*The local governance perspective amidst the pandemic: a social dimension of trust are among the many considerable factors that require provision to constituent such as, 1) **Food assistance** viewed by the society that it will happen again due to the severe effect of this pandemic, hence, it is suggested that for everyone to avail on it, local government should review the list of beneficiaries. 2) **Health care support** is likely increasing hence, it is suggested to local government units (LGU's) to find some remedial interventions to intensify the use of isolation facility and increase its number to answer the need of innocent victims. 3) **Financial support** garnered conflicting views on its provision, some are in favor while others are not. This suggests that instead of giving financial support to people during the pandemic, it could be better enough to convert it into a commodity in a way, problem-related to abuse of its intent and malpractices can be avoided. Further, it suggested that for the sake of fairness, no one is exempted to benefit the government aid, 4) **Control measures** viewed by the society in general that they lost their patience on the implemented limitations imposed by the local government units, while the government insists with their stand that all will adhere to the government marching orders. This finding suggests that a program educating people will be disseminated for them to evaluate the cause versus the benefit of having this control measures part of the new normal and as a way of life. Further, it is best if they can fast track the vaccination process so activity is back to normal as people ought to be, 5) **Educational support** viewed by students under the local government unit finds no difficulty regarding their study since the financial requirements are shouldered by the government, however, due to the pandemic, the compliance and meeting deadlines are somewhat pressing them because of poor connectivity issues. This suggests that the LGU should invest more in connectivity to facilitate the students need for digital learning during these trying times, 6) **Transportation services** sounds appealing on the part of the stakeholders since taking commercial rides seem chaotic to each one of them; the spread of this virus can be more potentially acquired by mingling people whom you don't know. This finding suggests that the local government units must sustain the provision of the free ride, although, it is public knowledge that the economy is facing a tremendous test of time, prevention is better than cure.*

Keyword: *Local Governance Perspective amidst the Pandemic: A Social Dimension of Trust*

Overview

The institution of governance as the umbrella of hope, whatever eventualities may come, people always seek an avenue of assistance. In these pandemic times, life changes in misery up to the point where people in the society becomes sightless in determining directions in aspiring to have a normal living which in no case, far beyond its reality for the moment. As it hit the country, the government responds by providing some basic services such as 1) Food assistance, 2) Health care support, 3) Financial supports, 4) Control measures, 5) Educational supports, and 6) Transportation services. These are the basic areas affected among others if the environment is tested and challenged by the occurrence of uncertainties. At the start of the pandemic, people were not ready enough to embrace the new norm as it seems, they are uneasy and find it difficult to adjust with. Drastically, the environment was severely affected as no one predicted this

pandemic to happen. Different initiatives were done by the government in extending support to society as a whole. The increasing number of cases brought about by this pandemic cordons the movement of people in the society thereby affecting their day-to-day subsistence. A new coronavirus emerged, medical experts struggle to limit its spread. However, the ramifications of COVID-19 will be visible beyond the sphere of public health. The unstable economic activity brings chaos during the spread of this virus which people experience unfathomed difficulty in all aspects, as reported, there are about 10.9 million Filipino workers who lost their jobs and had a lower income and working hours as this pandemic strikes. The economy, on the other hand, drops its Gross Domestic Products (GDP). The Philippine government is recalibrating its COVID-19 response to better manage and fast-track solutions on contact tracing activity. With this evidence, the agony of the people in the economy at large is draining since the pandemic is still showing its unstoppable spread, and find themselves very uncomfortable resulting in an economic imbalance. The government expresses concern to the Filipino people on the situation while they are designing a roadmap to economic recovery and managing COVID-19 risks, intended to empower individuals and firms to thrive in the new normal as revealed by, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA). Despite the strong commitment of the government to protect and advance the gains of this pandemic crisis, needs a program of action to ensure human development and food security across levels of society.

The economic arena nowadays, since they are dramatically disturbed with the occurrence of this pandemic, also experiences some chaos in terms of providing social services to people since no one is exempted in terms of virus infections. The "COVID-19" chooses nothing when it comes to its spread regardless of your standing in society. Just recently, a high-ranking official and so with his wife was reportedly on isolation status due to COVID infections. This manifests how dangerous this virus to people's health which results in different trauma for every individual striving in its search for a living. A question once raised, how long will this pandemic ruin the life of the people? Uncertainty of response can vividly be disclosed as no parameter can measure the savage in terms of damages it brings. To date, the Philippines alone logged 7,204 new COVID cases a day after the country's total went past the 1 million marks, source, "Department of Health" DOH. The cumulative data based on the daily tally of 1,013,618 with 71,675 as active infections the lowest since March 18 according to ABC-CBN data analytics is no joke. The widespread of this virus lambasted the universal scope and certainly creates a unified feeling to people of being hopeless. The mental and emotional aspects of every individual seem idle since the solution in the face of this pandemic is unpredictable beyond the test of time. In some other advanced countries, this appears trajectory towards the level of infection similar to that of another advanced country. The economy as a means of survival, resort to borrowing funds making businesses evolve even if an abnormality is evident, tries doing business in a normal way.

On the other hand, the political effects of the coronavirus in advanced economies could be as substantial as economic effects. The balancing element on the spread of the virus reopen the economy as it has been in particularly high profile, challenge the policymakers in recent months. On the contrary, in the Philippines, the political impact brought by this pandemic seems crucial in terms of extending assistance to people under his/her immediate concern. The different version comes and the unified solution is not achievable due to some conflicting agenda that most of the times, budget allocations intended for social requirements is affected due to the urgent needs that require higher preference during this pandemic.

Methods

Since pandemic is evident and researchers are both "*Frontliner*" conduct this study using different multimedia platforms as a means of data generation. A total of 200 respondents were randomly selected comprising political personalities and beneficiaries of social services. They were required to answer the questionnaires provided. Their mode of answering the questions is through Google meet, Skype, calls, and text. Data gathered were carefully tallied and tabulated using the different statistical tools to ensure its veracity and validity. Critical analysis and triangulation of test validation for twelve months (12) from March of 2020 to February 2021. Reinforced records from other sources like the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and information from different local government units (LGU). The

Department of Labor (DOLE) for its impact on employment and retrenchment process were analyzed as supplementary evidence of the study.

Some important information is drawn from the limited face-to-face interview with the permission of the higher authority like the inter-agency task force (IATF) protocol were strictly observed. The information gathered covers only selected areas in Northern Mindanao, Philippines. Thus their executive reports received descriptively were triangulated to the ethnographic notes of the field researchers on the period specified. Since the study deals with the local government perspective amidst the pandemic: a social dimension of trust, the element of “truth” on the qualitative and quantitative data, exchange of ideas, and other methods of generating prepondering shreds of evidence were carefully recorded.

Findings and Discussions

The local governance perspective amidst the pandemic: a social dimension of trust are among the considerable factors that need to be reviewed such as the provision of 1) Food assistance, 2) Health care support, 3) Financial support, 4) Control measures, 5) Educational support, and 6) Transportation services believe to be a factor contributory to economic distress brought by pandemic, thus the findings below are:

Food assistance

This is a government initiative provided to people during the pandemic. As the global hemisphere is badly hit by this unfavorable event, the usual movement of people changes which affects their day-to-day activity. Some government restriction such as the general community quarantine (GCQ) hinders people to go out for non-essential activity, thereby, cordons them to move, hence, the government rescued them by providing some sort of food packs to residents to aid their daily needs. The food assistance initiative comes in two levels; one from the local government and the other from a national source. These are directly provided to households by the local government officials of the said area. It was done once in some areas, and repeatedly in some areas where budget allocation is still available. The process of the food pack distribution is based on the list of registered residents living in the place. After the said distribution of food assistance, nothing follows while the pandemic crisis continues to create damage to people and the economy.

There are many complaints about the process since not all were able to receive it. The government is eyeing to give those below the poverty line people or the so-called poorest of the poor. As the survey was conducted, the distribution did not saturate the ultimate target recipient for they are only banking on the list at hand. There are many classifications of people in society namely: homeowners and renters. What was on their list are those homeowners only and not to include the renters who are among the affected in the area. Added to that are those who belong to the average level not included in the provision of that assistance. A survey reveals that much dissatisfaction experienced on the process since accordingly, every one of the same level of standing in the society should be equally provided since they are also affected by the situation. The point of view of the local government unit is concentrated only on the poorest of the poor since they have no enough capacity at hand to sustain the pandemic challenges. On one side, the government is on the right track however, the taxpayers who were not able to receive assistance find it unfair for them. The different views by the beneficiaries as respondents are conflicting, since, while it is true that those who belong to the average level, as taxpayers, want to feel the government concern for them, and hence, they need also assistance. For everyone to reap the benefit provided, it is suggested to the local government frontline, that there should be an equitable distribution of whatever provision accorded by the government in time of crisis. As it sustained to even more complex than it was at the beginning, suggest that the local government should review the list of beneficiaries and not relying upon the record at hand to fairly and squarely distribute all (AYUDA) assistance from the government.

Financial support

The Cable News Network (CNN) the Philippines reported that local government units (LGU) are expected to receive the cash assistance for the most financially hit sectors within a day or two as the country

is facing a crisis due to the coronavirus disease pandemic. This financial support came from the “Bayanihan to Heal as One Act” which is an initiative as emergency power granted to the President of the country. There were mandatory instructions to different field offices to distribute the social amelioration funds through the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). Under this program, the Local government unit will have to distribute an amount ranging from P 5,000 to 8,000 to the target beneficiaries which include senior citizens, a person with disabilities, and homeless among others. From the above-cited amount, the actual received by those identified recipients was P 6,000 only.

The effort of the government in assisting was a very noble initiative in subsidizing the temporary gap of people's needs. It cannot be denied that during the pandemic, the presence of financial crisis is evident especially those dependent on their daily exploration of labor for a fee. It stretched the tie of a household need more so, to those who have many members in the family. There are considerable and applauding percentage of this effort done by the government, however, in the dark side, yielded some negative notion to other in the process of providing this financial assistance. The barangay Frontliner and those beneficiaries when interviewed draws conflicting observations and opinion. The barangay level viewed it as a positive approach while the beneficiaries have divided opinions. A triangulation test was applied to countercheck those conflicting views between them reveal that the provision of financial aid is somewhat good for others, and on the contrary, the majority found it as a temporary solution to the problem. Besides, noted that some were abusing the proceeds of the government. Instead of using it for (PANTAWID GUTOM), many used the proceeds for their vices in life. They capitalized that assistance extended to them by the government with no purpose. On top of it, there is no clear and concrete policy on the distribution process thereby, anomalous practices were noted in a way, triggers them to do some deep intelligence counter checking to determine the presence of corruption around. Respondents garnered a conflicting view on the provision of financial support, this suggests that although the government intentions are good enough to help the needy, conversion of this financial support into different mechanisms can be an advantage so that problems related to abuse of its intent and malpractices can be avoided.

Health care support

This endeavor is normal to support given by the government to their constituents as part of their long-term program for sustainable development. Health Secretary Francisco Duque III assured local government officials that the government through the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Disease (IATF-EID), the National Task Force (NTF), and the Department of Health (DOH) is ramping up the covid-19 response. One of the many health support during the pandemic time is providing virus victims whether he or she classified as symptomatic or asymptomatic is the isolation facilities. This is designed to give time and space to those infected with this virus to stay away from the influx of people while observations were being made. Anyone who is suspected, probable or confirmed carrier of COVID -19 virus was brought to the quarantine facilities for fourteen (14) days with a provisioning package allotted within the time frame. Victims have nothing to worry considering that all expenses are covered by the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PHILHEALTH). With a growing number of cases and infections of this virus, urge the local government units to provide their share of quarantine facilities. The active response of the ground level Frontliner, without hesitations, built their facility to help caters to the need of the growing number of victims. The local government initiative paves the way by unclogging other facilities brought about by this pandemic. It was further recognized by “Aquilon” that the quick response of the local government is a big help not only in providing the facility needed, more so with the benefits package in terms of funding the operational expenditures of the quarantine and isolation facilities. This combined effort of the local government units brings more enthusiastic mode as PhilHealth extends their support by issuing a circular number 2020-0018, the action is in response to their commitment to developing a benefits package in providing health services to all Filipinos affected by COVID-19. Based on the circular, the coverage of the benefits package applies to all claims for services provided by both private and public-run facilities as community isolation units in response to COVID-19.

Meanwhile, it was praised by many as it is a noble act done by the local government units and it pleases the needy who are innocent but victimized by this unseen virus. Unnumbered availed the local initiative especially those Overseas Filipino Workers returning to its location to undergo the process of isolation. Credit to the (Frontliner), the barangay chair, and other helping hands for this untiring effort facilitating the urgency brought about by the pandemic. As this continues, such facilities are no longer enough (the number of isolation infrastructure) versus the infected recorded daily. At present, the expanded isolation facilities go beyond the hinterlands since the existing ones were already saturated. It comes to the point where one of the victims was interviewed and reveal that the accommodation provided now is no longer conducive for isolation purposes. The ambiance is somewhat lacking in terms of support facilities resulting to slow down body energy. With these manifestations, since the provision of health support is intended for someone to be stabilized, it is suggested that local government units should find a remedy to intensify the use of isolation facilities and provide basic requirements to increase the number of recoveries.

Control measures

Is a mechanism imposed by the government purposely to control people's movement amidst the pandemic? Typically, the washing of hands, wearing of facemask and face shield, disinfecting using alcohol, stay at home, curfew hours, eating right and healthy foods, sleeping habits are among the control measures the government strictly implement. The introduction of the requirement having the quick response code (QR) reinforced the existing control measures to prohibit people from going out of their respective residences. It was then believed that the enumerated elements are the effective measure to control the spread of the virus. This initiative momentarily reduced the infections of the virus, however, people seem are fortified with all of these things, eventually, abide by this requirement for the sake of compliance. Despite the presence of the wider spread such as what is happening in India, these control measures for many Filipinos nowadays are considered part of the new normal. This gives unfavorable effect to the majority of businesses resulting to experience an economic imbalance as closures of the industry began to appear. Many people lost their job, which means a lot of sufferings are evident with this cause. The intentions are good however, the normal way is becoming abnormal wherein, its occurrence is inevitable and it comes to no choice but to embrace it.

Meanwhile, it has been noted that the increasing number of cases, death, versus that of recovery are uncontrollable which tantamount to prolonged use of these measures. People claim that this health safety mechanism gives them in any way the discomforts. Complaining that one cannot perform effectively due to the protective gear they wear made them uneasy. Respondents were asked about their opinion about the possible strict implementation of this order that makes them uncomfortable. The government cannot just simply loosen its implementation due to the increasing number of COVID-19 victims in which, protecting people are the government's primordial concern. It can be observed that this time, since people feel the laxity as evident in the surroundings, as if the pandemic is part of their life and has the feeling of "may the best man win", their concern about pandemic seem not that dangerous. The frontline local government strongly imposes the said policy while on the other side the (society), has a feeling of a little or less in terms of its adherence to the call of the government. The observations and finding between the societies versus the implementing body found out that people lost their patience with the implemented control measures that prolong and no indication of getting into normal, suggest that government should maximize the vaccination process in a way, the infections lessen and gradually back to its normal as people ought to be with.

Educational support

In the advent of this pandemic, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is very much concerned about education during this time of the pandemic. It urges colleges and universities to be more lenient as classes shift to online as precautionary measures against the spread of the new coronavirus. In the case of the local government-run educational institution comes very privilege since assistance is provided that helps the student to combat and challenge face by them during the pandemic. Numerous aid

coming from the national level was released to the local government units with the help of the "frontliners" as facilitators. Among the many educational support provided by the local government is the scholarship program. Student concentrates only their effort studying without the worry of any school fees. Another educational support is the provision of Tertiary Educational Support (TES), which is a form of cash given to selected students as an additional aid for their study. Students from the local government units have strong support for education despite the pandemic. However, their location hinders them from being active in the class due to accessibility problems on the digital platform used as the modern educational landscape. Most of the students under the LGU are situated in different far-flung areas where internet access is very poor. These are the major considerations that in today's learning paradigm, learners are tested with the test of time. The traditional class interface or classroom interaction is waved due to this pandemic affect the learners and even deprive them to have deep learning and understanding of the things they ought to know. There is no other source of learning considering that they cannot enjoy the digital learning method, relied largely on modules provided. They just make reading on the modules provide; if something not clear to them, they just leave it since it is very difficult to connect with the teachers due to its location. So to speak that those stakeholders situated far beyond the reach of connectivity defined to be learners of their own or making a self-study. The hardships and difficulties they experience are not in any way subject to anyone to be blamed but it was this COVID-19 pandemic that makes their learning desire half-cooked considering that, when they need something for further verification or clarifications, they keep it by themselves.

Transportation support

In the advent of this pandemic, the transportation sector demand reducing the number in terms of their carrying capacity up fifty (50) percent which in turn, declines its income. This policy applies to the government and private sectors. In the case of the local government, and consideration of the continuing effect brought by this pandemic, transportation support is evident. The resources of the LGU was maximized to provide the ease of people or employee to come to their respective workplace safe. The Land Transportation Office on the other hand, in support of the pandemic crises, wave all penalties for all late renewals in a way, giving space to people amidst the pandemic.

However, as the pandemic prolonged, it gradually drains the resources of the government and in the process, the provision of free transport of workers was curtailed to its minimum use to save the operational expenses of the local government. The desire is there to help their constituents but they need to balance and consider the incoming pros and cons faced by the environment. People clamor to sustain the said provision is no longer possible due to the draining government resources. COVID-19 nowadays strikes back and it seems unstoppable in its transmission which endangered many human creatures not only in the country but to the whole universe as well. With this evidence, it is safe to suggest that although it is a given fact that the country is in a chaotic situation, to reduce the spread of this virus, strengthening the work from home program is needed.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The local governance perspective amidst the pandemic: a social dimension of trust are among the many considerable factors that require provision to constituent such as, 1) **Food assistance** viewed by the society that it will happen again due to the severe effect of this pandemic, hence, it is suggested that for everyone to avail on it, local government should review the list of beneficiaries. 2) **Health care support** is likely increasing hence, it is suggested to local government units (LGU's) to find some remedial interventions to intensify the use of isolation facility and increase its number to answer the need of innocent victims, 3) **Financial support** garnered conflicting views on its provision, some are in favor while others are not. This suggests that instead of giving financial support to people during the pandemic, it could be better enough to convert it into a commodity in a way, problem-related to abuse of its intent and malpractices can be avoided. Further, it suggested that for the sake of fairness, no one is exempted to benefit the government aid, 4) **Control measures** viewed by the society in general that they lost their patience on the implemented limitations imposed by the local government units, while the government insists with their stand that all will adhere to the government marching orders. This finding suggests that a program educating

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