



GREASING THE WHEELS: POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT OF FEMALE BARANGAY KAGAWADS IN TAGUDIN, ILOCOS SUR

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Abstract

Women face challenges in their political engagement around the world, which has long been a source of worry and curiosity. This paper analyzed the political engagement of female barangay kagawads in terms of their experiences and problems, as there are fewer female barangay kagawads than males. This research aimed to propose a leadership development program that can improve the political engagement of female barangay kagawads. A descriptive-qualitative approach was utilized, and interviews were conducted among nine female barangay kagawads in the Municipality of Tagudin, Ilocos Sur. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The study revealed that the participants experienced willingness, community engagement, political party involvement, the role of legislators, and gender dynamics. Meanwhile, the problems encountered were impediments to political progress and political disparity.

Keywords: female barangay kagawad, political engagement, gender equality, greasing the wheels, Tagudin, women representation

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Introduction

The Greek philosopher Aristotle argued that humans were “political animals” in the sense that humans could attain their full potential by acting in politics. Considered one of the most impactful expressions of patriotism, running for political office is one means of engaging in politics. To further elaborate, political participation specifically refers to individuals' actions to influence the political process or express their views and preferences within the political system. Halder and Campbell-Phillips (2020) defined participation in politics as including leadership in national affairs, local leadership, acting as an organization member, and informal “opinion leadership” among one's associates; thus, voting is the most important single type of citizen participation in government and politics. Political engagement, on the other hand, refers to emotional and cognitive involvement in political matters, such as political knowledge, interest, opinions, or attitudes; and encompasses citizens' actions to influence decisions of public officials, such as voting, protesting, or political membership (Le & Nguyen, 2019).

Women's full and effective political engagement is relatively low, with women holding only 23% of all seats in parliaments and senates globally, despite comprising almost half of the world's population (OECD, 2018; Chalaby & Radu, 2018). According to a new study by Pew Research, two-thirds of people believe it is easier for men to be elected for high political office than women (5%), with a little over a quarter saying there's no difference. Men are more likely than women to perceive no difference in the difficulty of being elected. The most common reason cited for the under-representation of women in high political offices is that “women who run for office have to do more to prove themselves than men,” with 61% of people overall, 72% of women, and 48% of men agreeing. Consequently, women are under-represented in parliament and are far removed from decision-making levels at every socio-political level (Sparks, 2018; Kumar, 2018).

In the Philippines context, the status of Filipino women has significantly improved in terms of development indicators and their participation as active voters. More than the half of the country's population is female. However, the past few elections in the last two decades showed a significant gap between the number of men and women as elected leaders of the country. Currently, seven of the 24 Senate seats, or 29 percent, are held by women, while 85 of the 311 House of Representatives seats, or 27 percent, are held by women (IPU Parline, 2023). Although the Philippines has 29.5% of women in the parliament, they are still not represented equally, in number and quality, as men in politics. This problem also means that women's interests and issues are not priorities as much as men's (Lundgren & Petrosiute, 2017).



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With this in mind, Tagudin, Ilocos Sur has a few women who participated in politics in the local governments as implicated during the elections. This was illustrated during the 2016 local elections, wherein only seven women were running for the municipal councilor position, compared to the 24 men running for the same position (COMELEC, 2016). In the 2019 elections, four out of 20 or 20 percent of the aspiring municipal councilors are women, luckily, four of them acquired a seat (COMELEC, 2019). At present, of the 43 barangays, eight have a woman barangay chairperson, implying that only 19% of the barangays are led by women, while there are 98 women out of 301 barangay kagawads in the municipality, or 33 percent of female barangay kagawads represented in the barangay council of the municipality (DILG, 2023).

One best theory for this study is the Feminist Theory which emphasizes that all feminists subscribe to the idea that depending on what sex you are born as, distinct social privileges and burdens follow. The idea that women and their circumstances should be at the center of political analysis is a key component of feminist political theory. It also explains that differences when it comes to the experience of male and female barangay kagawads in the local political arena, focusing on the political engagement of female in male dominated world of politics.

This study aimed to determine the political engagement of female barangay kagawads in the selected barangays in the Municipality of Tagudin. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions; 1) What are the experiences of female barangay kagawads in political engagement? 2) What are the problems encountered by female barangay kagawads engaging in politics? 3) What leadership development program can be proposed to improve the political engagement of female barangay kagawads?

Methodology

Research Design

[This study adopted a descriptive-qualitative approach. A descriptive-qualitative approach is a research method that presents a full, in-depth account or description of a phenomenon rather than testing specific hypotheses or quantifying variables. Moreover, in a descriptive qualitative approach, the type of research questions is best suited to the consequences and useful applications of an issue or problem (Prosen, 2022). This method is deemed appropriate given that the study requires qualifiable data from female barangay kagawads to provide an in-depth

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analysis of political engagement in Tagudin, Ilocos Sur. Particularly, the descriptive qualitative method was used to treat the general problem of exploring the experiences and problems encountered by the participants with regards to political engagement.

Participants/Subjects

The researchers have utilized purposive sampling to determine the number of participants. The participants of this study were from selected barangays in the Municipality of Tagudin, Ilocos Sur: Quirino, Jardin, Rizal, Del Pilar, Bimmanga, Tampugo, Pudoc West, and Becques. The criteria set for the participants were: (1) willingness to participate from the barangays of the Municipality of Tagudin, (2) currently serving as a female barangay kagawad in their respective barangay, and (3) being an incumbent female barangay kagawad who has served at least three terms.

Instruments/Materials

The researchers utilized semi-structured interviews as their primary method for data collection. This approach allowed for qualitative validation and support of the study's results. The researchers adapted and modified the semi-structured interview guide from "Political Participation of Women in Mountain Province: A Phenomenological Study" (Pasong, 2020). The interview guide's validity was confirmed by experts in qualitative research and an English critic with a weighted mean of 4.67. Prior to conducting the interviews, the researchers obtained Ethical Clearance from the DMMMSU Research Ethics Committee. After receiving approval, data collection commenced, and formal communication was sent to the local government unit of Tagudin, specifically to the barangay captains of the respective barangays, to support the study's administration.

Data Collection Procedures

Before the conduct of the study, the research proposal underwent an expedited review by the Oral Examination Committee (OREC) during the title defense and was approved by the DMMMSU Research Committee, with ethical clearance. A request to conduct a study was also sought from the department chairperson and dean of the college before the distribution of a validated and pilot tested questionnaires.

Data Analysis

The collected data were treated, analyzed, described, and interpreted through thematic analysis. The semi-structured interview guide describes and assesses the relative experiences and problems encountered by the female barangay kagawads in terms of political engagement.

Ethical Considerations

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Findings

[Experiences of Female Barangay Kagawads in Political Engagement]

Willingness to serve. Several female barangay kagawads shared that their motivation to run for office stemmed from a strong desire to serve their community. R3, upon turning sixty, felt it was the right time to give back, viewing public service as the next chapter in her life. Similarly, R5 and R7 were inspired by the opportunity to help their constituents, with R5 highlighting the courage it took to pursue the role.

R2 emphasized the importance of women's representation in local politics. Her decision to run was driven by the need to advocate for women's rights and to serve as a voice for female constituents within the barangay leadership.

R8 also expressed a sincere wish to serve the public despite concerns about age-related limitations. She acknowledged the challenges but remained committed to fulfilling her role with honesty and integrity if elected.

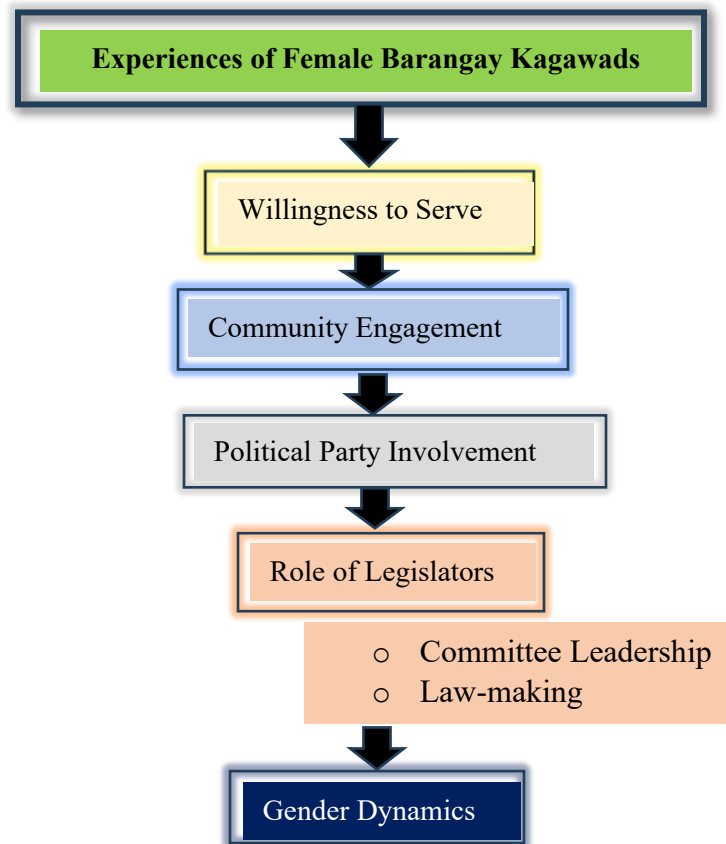
Community Engagement. R1 revealed, "The barangay captain invited me to be part of the barangay council as a barangay treasurer. I thought about it and tried, I became a treasurer for 5 years. Then I tried to run as a kagawad, I eventually won and became number one" Likewise, R5 also confirmed that she also served as a barangay treasurer before aspiring to be a barangay kagawaad.

Several kagawads drew motivation from their professional backgrounds and advocacy work. R2, beyond her personal will to serve, took on the role of spokesperson for Violence Against Women and their Children (VAWC), aiming to educate women on their legal rights and ensure they felt empowered despite social limitations.

R3 shared that her work in various government offices—such as the Assessor's, DILG, and Treasurer's—provided her with insight into public service, which inspired her to pursue a role as a barangay kagawad to better serve her community. Similarly, R6 and R7 reflected on

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Fig. 1. Experiences of Female Barangay Kagawads in Political Engagement



their time as Barangay Health Workers, which shaped their commitment and readiness to enter local politics.

R4 having served as an SK Chairman during her grandfather's term as barangay captain, was encouraged by elders to run as a kagawad. Her early involvement in youth leadership influenced her decision to take on broader responsibilities within the barangay.

Political Party Involvement. Many female barangay kagawads were encouraged by others to join local governance. R1 was invited by the barangay captain to become part of the council, serving as a treasurer. R9 initially had no political aspirations but decided to run as kagawad to support her sister, who was running for barangay captain with limited support.



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R6 shared a similar experience, noting that she was approached and asked to help with an administration, which led her to accept the role. Her story highlights the role of local parties and networks in engaging women in politics through direct encouragement.

For others like R4 and R5, inspiration came from family members and community figures. R4 was influenced by her grandfather, a former barangay captain, and past kagawads, while R5 was motivated by multiple people who urged her to run for office, reflecting the strong impact of external support on women's political participation.

Role of Legislators.

Committee Leadership. R2, R4, R5, and R6 have led the Committee on Environment and Tourism, while, R4 and R9 have served as the spokesperson for the Committee on Information and Education. On the other hand, R1, R3, R6, R7, and R8 have been assigned to the Committee on Health and Social Services. R3 has spearheaded the Committee on Appropriations and Committee on Peace and Order, and R9 has led the Committee on Infrastructure.

Moreover, the female barangay kagawads have also recounted their contributions and accomplishments as the head of the committee, as well as the contributions of their committees to the community. R1, R2, R3, and R5 said that they have guided their committees in the three terms they have served.

R1 supported senior citizens, 4Ps, and PWD groups by overseeing budgets and organizing officers, including financial aid for bereaved PWD families. R3 ensured transparency and accountability in the Committee on Appropriation through diligent review of expenditures. R2 improved environmental compliance by enforcing waste segregation and anti-dumping rules, with residents now following collection schedules and reporting violations. Their collective leadership highlights sustained efforts in health, finance, and environmental governance.

Female barangay kagawads have led impactful initiatives promoting health and environmental awareness. R5 and R2 fostered community discipline through clean-up drives and environmental programs. R1 turned her barangay into a recognized blood bank. R2 also enforced waste segregation, banned open burning, and curbed illegal dumping. Their leadership reflects strong commitment to public welfare and sustainability.

Moreover, R4, who leads the same committee as R2, also mentioned that her accomplishments as the head of the committee included implementing the programs through which the community could benefit. R4 narrated, "In the Committee of Environment before, when they come of Cash for Scrap. I am always there to help Cash for Scrap, the project of the municipal

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government. Especially the children, so that they can have additional allowance from the money they will get for the scraps, they collect wrappers and plastic bottles”.

R5 also added, in waste collection, they collaborate and prioritize their respective committees while working for the community's benefit. As the head of the committee, she educates individuals who dump waste along highways. Essentially, R5 admits that being the head of Committee on Environment and Tourism, their “Gulayan sa Barangay” has been one of the most competitive in the municipality and the province, as far as being chosen to represent the Province of Ilocos Sur for the Region I Search for the Best Gulayan sa Barangay.

R6, a former Barangay Health Worker (BHW), used her experience to support health workers while leading the Committee on Health and Social Services by providing essential items like logbooks, masks, and rescue tools. Now overseeing the Committee on Environment and Tourism, she has initiated key projects including four Materials Recovery Facilities and the Bantay Kalikasan program with MENRO funding. Her background shaped her advocacy and responsiveness to grassroots needs. On the other hand, R7 highlighted, “With the mercy of God, the number of malnourished children have lessened, in the last years, there are 16 malnourished children, but now only 6 have remained malnourished, the others have already recovered”. She featured she has lessened the number of malnourished children in their barangay as the head of the Committee on Health and Social Services.

Also, as a head of the same committee, R8 added that “When it comes to health, accompanying patients to the regional hospital and in the VAWC, the quarrel of married people, I always oversee, I ask their children”.

R9, who led the Committee on Education, Information, and Infrastructure, progressed from focusing solely on information in her first term to handling broader responsibilities as a kagawad. Despite initial challenges and hesitation toward infrastructure—often seen as a male-led role—she gained valuable experience and contributed significantly to barangay projects. In her final term, she prioritized fast and effective information dissemination while continuing to support education and infrastructure development.

Law-making. R1 emphasized, “Yes, most of our ordinances are adopted from the municipal local government unit, but the actual author will be the barangay captain with the consent of the council”. Likewise, R8 mentioned that, “We just draft ordinances, like clean-up drives and those that will benefit every family”.



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Similarly, R2 stated, "We just adopted it, because everything is already there. We adopted the No Littering Ordinance and will be fined". Likewise, with R2's statement, R5 also added, "We just adopted the ordinances that are under our committees, ordinances concerned with environment from the LGU". The participants have illustrated experiences in adopting ordinances from the municipality's local government into barangay ordinances.

Parallel to their statements, R9 shared that she hasn't authored ordinances, relying instead on municipal policies already in effect. She finds them effective but admits a hesitation to create her own due to the need to defend them before the Sangguniang Bayan, which she finds intimidating.

Conversely, R3, R4, R6, and R7 have authored ordinances themselves. R3 narrated, "More on peace and order as we are after the peace and order in the barangay as we are at the center point of Tagudin". R3 reveals that she has authored ordinances and specifically mentioned ordinances in peace and order when she was still designated with the said committee, as they wanted to maintain peace and order in the center of the municipality.

Moreover, R6 authored a barangay-specific ordinance protecting children's rights, emphasizing its importance despite existing national and international laws. She also defends related ordinances, such as curfews and banning cigarette sales to minors, during municipal sessions. While previously heading the Committee on Environment, she adopted relevant municipal ordinances to address local needs.

Gender Dynamics. In her statement, R1 said that " We are treated the same, because we are designated with committees that are aligned with our abilities. That's why they treat us equally". R1 believed that gender equality and awareness of gender roles have been important in achieving true democratic representation and harnessing the different viewpoints necessary for effective governance.

On the other hand, R3 stated, " Women are better to lead, because men possess power, however with women, we are more moderate when it comes to dealing with issues. Men get easily agitated during conflict". R3 suggests that women are considered suitable for leadership roles in politics because of their adeptness in handling barangay disputes. While men are often viewed as physically stronger, women are recognized for their calm demeanor and tendency to avoid aggressive reactions. Additionally, one of R3's motivations to become a barangay kagawad was to represent women and advocate for their rights, given her background as a VAWC officer.



R6 and R9 observed a growing recognition of women's power and influence in politics and society. R6 noted that gender equality is more visible today, with women becoming stronger and more prominent in leadership roles. R9 added that women's engagement in political and social spheres has become increasingly evident, especially considering their historical exclusion from public participation.

R3 underscored the unique contributions women bring to governance, portraying them as adaptable leaders, nurturers, and advocates for empowerment. She emphasized that when women connect effectively with their communities, they can lead with strength and positively shape political landscapes.

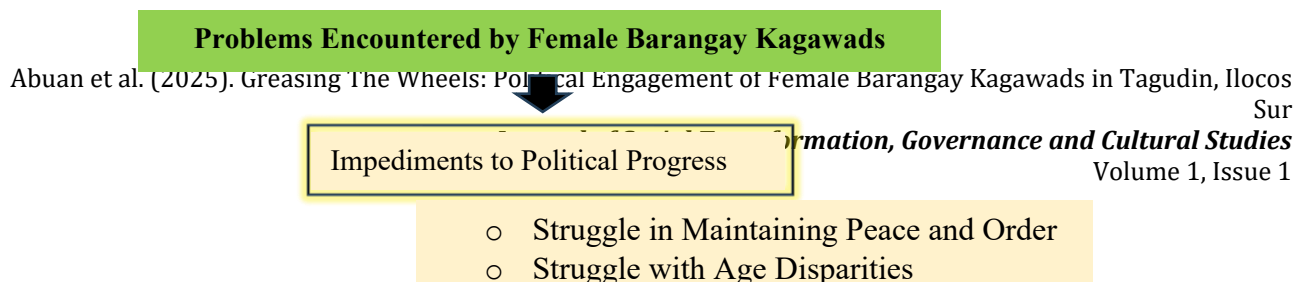
R1, R3, and R6 emphasize that they apply their motherly roles in their duties as barangay kagawads, acting as "the light of the home" and guiding their constituents. They also play a crucial role in representing and upholding the rights of women. In their statement, they said that "Of course, as they have said, "women are the light of the home" so that someone can also lead your fellow women. Women empowerment, so that the rights of women can be upheld. That's why you should also fight". (R1)

"In politics, women are the heart, they provide love and understanding. Women are made to guide and have a big role in the barangay. If you are given a big responsibility, they know what to do]".(R6)

Problems Encountered by Female Barangay Kagawads in Political Engagement

Impediments to Political Progress. Struggle in Maintaining Peace and Order. Several women barangay officials noted that they are often expected to mediate community disputes regardless of gender or committee assignment. R1 shared that mediation responsibilities are assigned by zone and must be fulfilled even by women, while R2 admitted feeling nervous at times but emphasized that being a woman does not exempt anyone from this duty.

Fig. 2. Problems Encountered by Female Barangay Kagawads in Political Engagement





R5 highlighted the difficulty of resolving domestic conflicts, especially between married couples. R7 expressed concern over handling cases involving children, believing such issues require proper evidence and legal expertise that may be beyond her role or experience.

Despite fear or discomfort, women officials like R8 and P2 stressed the importance of fulfilling their duties. R8 recalled intervening in a situation with an intimidating male resident, demonstrating that maintaining peace remains a key responsibility, even in challenging circumstances.

Struggle with Age Disparities. R1 and R6 similarly said “When I became a barangay councilor, I was obligated to accompany patients, particularly at night, even when it was raining, and even during pandemic. That is the hardest”. and “I attend night duties, even if I am a girl. We need to change, boys should be assigned for night duties, especially during COVID”. Both R1 and R6 admits that accompanying patients at night, especially during the height of pandemic was tough.

Likewise, R7 states that “There is night duty required, especially during storms. I’m not attending since I’m weak at nighttime tasks”. R7 explains that her age limits her capacity to undertake night duties, particularly during typhoons.

Comparably, R4 adopts a slightly different weakness being a kagawad, saying that “, leadership. Since I am the only young person in the council, everyone in the council is a senior citizen. Then our thinking styles differ”. This highlighted that R4 being young among her co-kagawads creates generational gap as most of them are older, creating a difference in perspectives as older people tend to stick with tradition and conservative ideas. Consequently, she had to adjust herself to correspond with their level of understanding.



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Local Legislation Struggle. According to R1, “We barely carry out the ordinances that we adopted from the LGU”. R1 admits their barangay council are poor in enforcing the enacted ordinances. Just as R2 narrates “I’ll simply adopt ordinances that are in line with my Environment Committee because that’s all I know”. R2 concedes that adopting ordinances is the only thing she knows given that she has no experience legislating ordinances.

Similarly, R8 is wary that her inability to execute ordinances was due to her unfinished academic degree, therefore she delegated the duty to their Barangay Treasurer and only told him about the necessary resources. She also stated that she is keen to learn more about paperwork, “That’s quite difficult. Because I am only a high school graduate, so I delegate the work to our treasurer. Though I understand a little, I chose to only convey what is required to our health center. But I also want to learn how to do paper works”.

R6 pointed out that differences in educational background among barangay council members have posed challenges in lawmaking. She believes that the limited education of some colleagues has hindered effective legislation and placed greater burden on those more formally educated. R9 acknowledged a lack of confidence in drafting ordinances due to the pressure of defending them in Sanggunian Bayan. To avoid potential scrutiny, she chose to enact measures only within the scope of her assigned committee, reflecting hesitation in broader legislative participation.

Political Disparity. Both R6 and R7 statement disclosed the lack of support or resources they experienced within their co-kagawads for their political functioning, preventing them from garnering efficient projects or outcomes within their barangay. This is evident from the response of R6, which she said “My colleagues do not give me funds for my projects. I have several projects planned actually”. R6 admits that political affiliation remains active in their barangay and that her co-kagawads limits the funding she needed to carry out intended projects.

Similarly, R7 adds that “When we talk about men, they don’t want me to help. For example, in bloodletting, I begged them to donate blood, and that was my problem.”. R7’s efforts to effectively disseminate her projects within the barangay are hindered by the lack of support and necessary apparatus. She explains that their constituents are not educated about bloodletting due to the lack of cooperation from her male co-kagawads. Moreover, the barangay lacks the necessary apparatus to provide inclusive services to constituents, forcing her to borrow resources from the health center. As a result, the impact of her activities is limited.



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On the other hand, R6 experienced a slightly different political inequality. This is importantly evident in the statement of R6, which she clearly elaborated “They are always bullying me because they cannot do what I can. I am an outspoken person so they perceived me as a girl who is arrogant. So, what? The Sanggunian likes me. Because they know what I am capable of and what I can do”. Despite the lack of funding, R6 remained dedicated to her political vision, often financing barangay projects herself. She faced criticism from her co-kagawads, who labeled her as “just a woman” and “boastful” due to her active involvement in seminars, events, projects, and activities, which increased her popularity at Sanggunian Bayan.

Furthermore, R8 and R9 faced men derogation in associating relationships with their constituents. R8 states that “They said “she can do it,” but they were not going to follow me. They also claimed that men’s works are just for men, and hence for women”. R8 admits that despite the encouraging words are back handed discrimination and that her male co-kagawads believes that men can only recognize men, whilst women can only understand women.

R9, adds that “And also, when I interact, people doubt whether they will follow me just because I am a woman”. R9 reveals that due to her gender, others often question her abilities, and constituents are uncertain whether to trust or obey her. Furthermore, R8 and R9 shoulder the responsibility alone as their male co-kagawads do not recognize their feminine authority style, leading to disparities in their political engagement.

Women Onward “Abante, Babae”.

A leadership development program will greatly improve the leadership skills and prepare the female barangay *kagawads* to the duties and responsibilities of their position, particularly in law-making. This output will not only prepare the female barangay *kagawads* for their work as a public servant, but also strengthen women representation, as they will be empowered through the leadership development program allowing them to be more confident as a barangay *kagawads*.

Discussion

This study underscores the growing political engagement of women in local governance, particularly as barangay *kagawads*. The participants’ willingness to serve highlights a significant shift from traditional barriers to more agency-driven participation, aligning with Firmase and Prieto-Carolino’s (2021) assertion that women enter politics to serve and uplift communities. Contrary to Shames (2017), who argued that millennials especially women view politics as

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ineffective, this research reveals a cohort of women driven by intrinsic motivation, civic responsibility and a desire to create change from within.

Anchored in liberal feminist theory, which emphasizes equal opportunity and access in public spheres, the findings reinforce the importance of community engagement as a pipeline to political leadership. Many participants had served in grassroots roles, such as Barangay Health Workers and local government staff, prior to entering office, reflecting Kirkham's (2023) view that meaningful community involvement lays a foundation for future leadership. This supports the concept of political socialization, where civic roles at the local level shape political ambition and competence.

Political parties emerge as a critical structural mechanism in women's political journeys. While they offer logistical and social support, their role also reflects broader institutional barriers. Holman and Schneider (2018) emphasize that party gatekeeping remains a major factor in the underrepresentation of women. Thus, the support women receive from parties is not merely facilitative but corrective of a historically exclusionary practice.

In their roles as legislators, female *kagawads* are predominantly assigned to committees traditionally associated with gendered expectations, such as health, social services, and education, echoing Firmase and Prieto-Carolino (2021) and Salindo (2021). Yet, their leadership in more male-dominated committees, such as Infrastructure or Peace and Order, signals a disruption of essentialist gender roles. The role congruity theory is useful here, as it posits that women may face prejudice when performing in roles that contradict traditional gender expectations (Heilman, 2018). However, the success of these women in varied committees challenges this narrative and suggests a redefinition of leadership roles at the local level.

Despite their accomplishments, structural and individual-level barriers persist. Law-making remains a weak area, with most women adopting rather than authoring ordinances, underscoring Ababa's (2015) argument for equal power in legislative decision-making. The findings also highlight intersectional challenges, particularly age-related limitations and sociocultural expectations. The struggle with night duties and intergenerational differences reflects the Generation Gap Theory, which complicates leadership efficacy and adaptability.

Moreover, peacekeeping challenges in male-dominated conflict scenarios expose a gendered dimension of leadership vulnerability. Christensen and Kyed (2022) suggest that women in governance often adopt emotional and conciliatory strategies, differing from men's authoritative approaches, which can be both a strength and a limitation in volatile contexts (Reuell, 2018).

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Finally, political disparity remains a prominent theme. The unequal access to campaign resources, patriarchal perceptions, and workplace harassment underscore persistent systemic biases. Gomez (2023) and Heilman (2018) both note that resource constraints and gender stereotyping continue to hinder women's full participation and recognition in political leadership.

Women's engagement in politics is crucial for the holistic development of communities. With many works, interest and roles in life, these women barangay leaders give, as much as possible, equal priority to responsibilities as mother, worker, wife, friend, caregivers, citizen, and volunteer – which deserve commendation (Santos & Batino, 2018). However, based from the findings of the study, the female barangay *kagawads* only named a few obligations of their position, this implies that the participants lack prior knowledge regarding the duties and responsibilities of a barangay *kagawad*.

The study concludes that female barangay *kagawads* demonstrate a commitment to public service and have contributed to enhancing women's political involvement over multiple terms, although their effectiveness as local legislators could be enhanced further. Despite facing internal and external obstacles, they create an inclusive environment for their constituents and aspire towards better representation for women. Political disparities hinder women's engagement, yet these *kagawads* serve as role models, inspiring future generations of women to pursue leadership roles in politics. To address their shortcomings and boost their capabilities, integrating a leadership development program tailored to female barangay *kagawads* is recommended to refine their skills and competencies as public servants.

The study recommends several actions: Firstly, enhancing women's political engagement through active participation in politics and community contributions is crucial to solidify their presence in politics and reduce gender disparities. Secondly, improving the performance of female barangay *kagawads* by enhancing their leadership skills and competence is essential for demonstrating effectiveness in their roles despite challenges. Thirdly, implementing a tailored leadership development program to strengthen the political engagement of female barangay *kagawads* is advised. Additionally, future research should explore strategies employed by female *kagawads* to overcome barriers to political participation, identify best practices for replication, and examine variations in political engagement between genders and across different locales. Finally, evaluating the effectiveness of existing laws and policies promoting women's representation in decision-making bodies is recommended, with suggestions for potential improvements or reforms.



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