

Difficulties Faced by Electoral Boards in the Barangay Elections

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Abstract:

Electoral Boards play a crucial role in the conduct of elections, yet they face significant challenges that can affect their performance and mental well-being. This study assessed the level of difficulties experienced by electoral boards during the 2023 barangay elections in a component city in Central Philippines, using a descriptive research design and data from 240 respondents across 19 barangays selected through stratified sampling. Findings showed that most electoral board members were older, college-educated, and experienced. Overall, the level of difficulty was moderate, but specific phases posed heightened challenges. During the pre-election phase, balancing duties with personal or professional responsibilities emerged as the most difficult task, reflecting workload and time management issues. On election day, enforcing voting rules amid crowding and managing watchers proved most challenging due to overcrowded polling places. In the post-election phase, preparing minutes and statistical reports was the most difficult, highlighting the strain caused by limited manpower. The study recommends limiting voters per precinct and adopting pre-printed ballots to reduce long queues. It also suggests allocating sufficient budget for additional support staff to ease the burden on electoral boards. Finally, transferring administrative tasks such as statistical reporting to COMELEC personnel could improve efficiency and public trust in the electoral process.

Keywords: Barangay, difficulties, electoral boards

Introduction:

Nature of the Problem

Elections are a vital element of democracy, allowing citizens to exercise their right to vote and choose their leaders (Indian Polity, 2023). In the United States, elections are determined by the Electoral College system, where each state is allotted electors based on its congressional representation, totaling 538 electors nationwide, with a minimum of 270 needed to win (Martinez, 2024). In the Philippines, the Commission on Elections oversees various types of elections—national, local, and barangay—which are all decided through a popular vote system, where the candidate with the most votes wins. The success of these elections heavily depends on dedicated individuals who help manage and ensure the electoral process runs smoothly (Clark et al., 2021).

During the 2023 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections, Electoral Boards played a crucial role in ensuring the success of the electoral process, guided by COMELEC Resolutions 10924 and 10727. They were trained on election procedures and were responsible for tasks before, during, and after the election, including managing voter lines, verifying identities, issuing ballots, maintaining order, counting votes, and submitting election results. Despite their essential function, Electoral Boards often encountered challenges such as ballot shortages, missing ballot boxes, voter list discrepancies, and incidents of voter fraud like flying voters, all of which undermined the integrity and smooth conduct of elections (Facts and Details, 2015).

The researcher's motivation to conduct this study stemmed from his extensive working experience in the Commission on Elections, where he was exposed to the difficulties faced by electoral boards during barangay elections. Through his working environment, he observed the electoral process gaps, including training, logistics, and security challenges. These experiences intensified his awareness of the importance of discovering the difficulties faced by electoral boards during barangay elections. The findings of this study aimed to formulate an action plan to enhance electoral policies and develop a post-assessment program that would contribute to an overall improvement of the electoral process.

Current State of Knowledge

Electoral Boards in the Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections face a range of challenges similar to those encountered by poll workers in the United States, such as low pay, long hours, safety threats, and health concerns (Leppert, 2024; Burden et al., 2024). Recruitment difficulties are often due to fears of violence, as highlighted in several U.S. states leading up to elections (Financial Times, 2024), and veteran poll workers, whose average age is

around 64, are increasingly opting out due to these issues (Burden et al., 2023). Research also shows that inadequate numbers of poll workers contribute to long voter queues and discourage participation (Stein et al., 2019). Enhanced security measures, such as those implemented in Maricopa County, Arizona, further illustrate the extent of safety concerns, with millions allocated to ensure worker protection (Ortega et al., 2024). Additionally, the institutionalization of training plays a crucial role in addressing these challenges, as proper training improves election quality and equips poll workers with essential skills (James et al., 2023). Finally, aligning policies and systems with current workplace demands is vital for addressing modern electoral difficulties (EAPA-SA, 2022).

Electoral Boards in the Philippines face significant challenges during elections, including low honoraria, physical risks, and security threats, prompting the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) Philippines to call for increased compensation, legal protection, and safety measures for poll workers (Malipot, 2024). In BARMM, over 2,000 teachers expressed reluctance to serve in elections due to trauma, unresolved cases of violence, and persistent threats from armed groups (Cabrera, 2023). Physical and mental strain is further intensified by extreme working conditions, as seen in the October 2023 elections where poll workers suffered health emergencies and accidents while performing election duties (Fuentes, 2023). The Teachers' Dignity Coalition also emphasized the need for improved retrieval systems of election documents to ease post-election fatigue (Malipot, 2023). Additionally, overcrowded polling areas were cited as a concern that can compromise the efficiency and safety of poll workers and the transparency of the electoral process (Larrazabal, 2020). The performance of Electoral Boards, as highlighted by these studies, is crucial to ensuring safe, fair, and credible elections.

Training and manpower development are critical to the success of electoral processes, as emphasized by Asplund (2023), who argued that insufficient training negatively impacts poll workers' performance and election integrity. He noted that 30 countries have introduced mandatory training programs to build professionalism and reduce mistakes during elections. Similarly, Siregar et al. (2021) highlighted that frequent training increases motivation and job performance, findings supported by other scholars like Raharjo, Meidita, and Awal. Engetou (2017) also linked a lack of manpower to stress and fatigue in organizations, while Abdulaziz et al. (2022) and Saleem et al. (2021) identified that work overload and stress hinder employee commitment and productivity. These stressors, often experienced by poll workers during Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections, underscore the urgent need for structured training and workforce planning. In Togo, Amegnran (2017) found that poor training, bias, and infrastructure deficiencies disrupted elections, while Schur et al. (2017) and Mann et al. (2019) confirmed that accessibility and polling place quality directly affect voter turnout.

In Sweden, Hogstrom et al. (2023) noted that long queues persist due to poor election logistics, echoing findings from Alvarez and Bowler on its negative effects. Alshalawi (2019) stressed the importance of collaborative problem-solving in improving public service systems, which could benefit the Philippine electoral process. Clark et al. (2021) revealed that honorariums and financial incentives significantly influence willingness to serve, particularly among women, who are more vulnerable to stress and burnout during elections. Nur et al. (2024) found that mismanaged workloads in Indonesia eroded public trust, while James et al. (2017) reported that insufficient budgets in England strained election operations. These studies are highly relevant to the Philippine context, where stress, inadequate funding, and poor working conditions threaten the effectiveness of electoral boards. Ensuring proper training, fair compensation, and adequate resources will not only improve poll workers' welfare but also enhance public confidence in the electoral system.

Mendoza et al. (2022) found that while training and development programs in Philippine first-class LGUs positively influenced employee performance, only partial implementation was achieved, with "ensuring readiness for training" being the only fully met component. They emphasized the need for consistent and comprehensive training to enhance performance—an insight highly relevant to preparing Electoral Boards for election duties. Similarly, Belza et al. (2023) identified perceived stress as a strong predictor of burnout among college students during the pandemic, noting that a positive stress mindset can buffer its effects. This is critical for Electoral Boards, who face intense pressure during elections. Alonzo et al. (2023) further highlighted that a conducive work environment significantly boosts job performance and problem-solving, suggesting the value of humane conditions for poll workers. Sy et al. (2021) addressed service efficiency in a Laguna bank by analyzing queuing issues, proposing resource optimization—applicable to improving voter flow on election day. Lastly, Crost et al. (2019) exposed widespread electoral fraud in the 2007 barangay elections, citing "dagdag-bawas" practices and voter distrust stemming from outdated vote-counting methods and intimidation. These studies collectively underscore the need for well-trained, supported, and protected Electoral Boards to uphold credible, efficient, and safe elections.

Theoretical Underpinnings

This study is anchored on the Job Demand-Resources (JDR) Theory by Bakker and Demerouti (2001), which classifies work characteristics into job demands and job resources. Job demands refer to tasks that require significant effort, such as counting votes, handling voter queues, and managing election-related stressors, which may lead to burnout if not balanced with job resources like training, support, and capacity building. In the context of the 2023 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections, Electoral Boards experienced high job demands across all phases of the

election—preparation, execution, and post-election—which impacted their performance and well-being. Limited training, logistical support, and feedback further intensified these challenges, making it difficult for them to effectively carry out their responsibilities.

Additionally, the Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) by Sweller (1988) was used to examine the mental strain experienced by Electoral Boards due to information overload. During the pre-election phase, training sessions, logistical coordination, and voter list verification significantly increased their cognitive load. On election day, the complexity of tasks such as ballot distribution, voter identification, and maintaining order further overwhelmed their working memory. The post-election phase posed even higher cognitive demands due to prolonged hours of ballot counting, report preparation, and stress management. Without proper training and mental preparation, these tasks risk errors and decreased efficiency. Thus, reducing cognitive burden through effective planning and capacity building is essential to ensuring the success and accuracy of the electoral process.

Objectives

The study aimed to measure the level of difficulties faced by electoral boards in the 2023 Barangay Elections in a component city in Central Philippines as a basis for an action plan. More specifically, it aimed to determine: 1) the profile of the respondents in terms of age, number of elections served, and highest educational attainment; 2) the level of difficulties faced by electoral boards according to pre-election activities, election day, and post-election activities; and 3) significant difference in the level of difficulties faced by Electoral Boards when grouped and compared according to the variables.

Methodology

This section presents a discussion of the research methodology used, the subjects and respondents of the study, the research instruments used, the validity and reliability of the instruments, the procedure for data gathering, and the statistical tools and procedures for data analysis.

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design to measure the difficulties faced by Electoral Boards during the 2023 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections in a component city in central Philippines. Data was collected using Google Forms with a Likert scale, and the sample size was determined using Cochran's formula, ensuring representation from various barangays through stratified random sampling. This approach allowed for a systematic analysis of the relationship between dependent and independent variables. Singh (2023) emphasized that descriptive research is effective for measuring characteristics, behaviors, and perceptions, while Hassan (2024) noted its limitation in predicting outcomes or establishing causality, though it remains useful for generating hypotheses and identifying trends.

Study Respondents

The study focused on public school teachers who served on electoral boards during the 2023 barangay elections in a component city in Central Philippines, with each precinct consisting of a Chairman, a Poll Clerk, and a Third Member. These electoral boards faced challenges during pre-election, election-day, and post-election activities, which significantly impacted their performance. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure proper representation of subgroups, as described by Poojary (2024), and the sample size was determined using Cochran's formula, with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. A proportional allocation formula was applied to select 240 respondents from a population of 633.

Instruments

To assess the difficulties faced by electoral boards during the 2023 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections in a component city in Central Philippines, data was collected using a researcher-made survey questionnaire, which underwent validity and reliability testing. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: Part I gathered demographic information, such as age, educational attainment, and the number of elections served, while Part II focused on identifying challenges across pre-election, election-day, and post-election activities, with 10 items in each category, totaling 30 items. Respondents rated each item on a scale from 1 (Almost Never) to 5 (Always), to indicate the frequency of difficulties encountered. It was subjected to validity (4.78-excellent) and reliability (0.991-excellent). All of them were interpreted as worthy and good; respectively.

Data Gathering Procedure

After establishing the validity and reliability of the research instrument, the researcher writes a letter to the officer in charge asking permission to conduct the study. Upon approval, the researcher coordinates with the respondents,

explains the purpose of the study, and gives instructions on how the questionnaire can be completed objectively and honestly. Thereafter, the Google Form link was distributed to the respondents. As part of the protocol, they will be assured of the confidentiality of the data.

Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment

Objective No. 1, a descriptive-analytical scheme and Frequency Count and Percentage distribution was used to determine the profile of the respondents in terms of age, highest educational attainment, and the number of elections served.

Objective No. 2, a descriptive-analytical scheme and mean was used to determine the level of difficulties faced by electoral boards during the 2023 Barangay Elections in the areas of pre-election activities, election day, and post-election activities; a descriptive-analytical was used.

Objective No. 3, a comparative-analytical scheme and Mann-Whitney U Test was used to determine the significant difference in the level of difficulties faced by Electoral Boards when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables.

Ethical Consideration

The ethical conduct of research primarily lies in the responsibility of the researcher. There were fundamental principles in ethical research. The researcher should be responsible for acting ethically continuously, motivating research stakeholders to adopt good ethical behavior, and reporting to authorities concerning ethical issues. The researcher's general responsibility is to ensure that the participants' overall well-being is protected by the research (University of Gloucestershire, 2020).

The University of Gloucestershire added that the "Do no Harm" rule should be applied to ensure integrity, dignity, and data privacy are followed. The researcher shall explain the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants and provide them with options to opt out of the use of any recording devices.

As to the confidentiality of the results, the participants were assured of the confidentiality of their personal information, which would not be distributed to anyone. In terms of anonymity, no names shall be collected in this study; all participants will be anonymous.

Results and Discussion

This section presents, analyzes, and interprets the data that were gathered consistent with its predetermined objectives.

Table 1

Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Younger (below 41 years old)	111	46.20
	Older (41 years old and above)	129	53.80
	Total	240	100
Highest Educational Attainment	Lower (Bachelors Degree)	143	59.60
	Higher (Masters and Doctoral)	97	40.40
	Total	240	100
Number of Barangay Elections Served	Few (below 4 elections)	117	48.80
	Many (4 elections and above)	123	51.20
	Total	240	100

Table 1 presents data on the profile of respondents according to variables such as age, sex, civil status, number of elections served, and highest education attainment. Two Hundred Forty electoral boards in nineteen barangays of a highly urbanized city in Central Philippines were surveyed.

The table shows that of 240 respondents, the majority, or 53.80 percent, aged forty-one years old and above, were the 129 electoral boards under the older category. The remaining 111 respondents were 41 years old or below and fell under the younger category, comprising 46.20 percent of the population. This implies that older election workers are more likely to engage in the democratic process compared to younger ones, which conforms with the discovery of Burden et al. (2024) that the average age of poll workers in the United States was around 64 years old, serving for decades. In the the Pew Research Center Survey data, 58 percent of poll workers over 61 years old served during the 2018 elections.

Most of the electoral boards that were respondents to this study were college graduates. One hundred Forty-three (143) or 59.60 percent are bachelor's degree holders while 97 or 40.40 percent were holders of a Master's or Doctorate degree, which implies that electoral boards have an academic capacity to fulfill their duties and responsibilities efficiently during barangay elections, which conforms to Abun et al. (2021), were they discover that there was a connection between education level and self-efficacy. The researchers found that the higher the educational background of an individual, the greater the sense of competence.

In terms of the number of elections served, 123, or 51.20 percent of the respondents have more experience in barangay elections compared to 117, or 48.20 percent, who served four elections and more. This implies that electoral boards in a component city in the central Philippines have a deeper understanding and enough experience to perform their duties and responsibilities during barangay elections, which conforms with the study of Burden et al. (2024) that poll workers during the 2022 election in the United States were 85 percent of poll workers were veterans poll workers while only 15 percent are newcomers.

Table 2

Level of Difficulties Faced by Electoral Boards in the Barangay Elections in the Area Pre-Election Activities

Items	Mean	Interpretation
<i>As an Electoral Board, I have difficulty in...</i>		
1. coordinating and communicating with COMELEC regarding election-related developments, concerns, and needs	2.58	Moderate Level
2. answering election-related questions before, during, and after the polls from voters and concerned citizens by applying learnings from training attended	2.62	Moderate Level
3. presenting, explaining, and executing the process of appreciating ballots as explained by COMELEC during the training	2.73	Moderate Level
4. applying learnings from pre-election training on election day	2.58	Moderate Level
5. doing glitch-free verification of election-related forms, documents, and supplies at the Municipal / City Treasurer's Office	2.66	Moderate Level
6. setting up a polling place in accordance with the recommended layout	2.48	Low Level
7. balancing pre-election duties with personal and professional responsibilities	2.79	Moderate Level
8. verifying and processing the certification of (Posted Computerized Voter's List (PCVL) and Election Day Computerized Voter's List (EDCVL) with zero to minimal issues or delays	2.67	Moderate Level
9. the delivery of election-related documents and paraphernalia to assigned polling precincts without security issues and delays	2.62	Moderate Level
10. equipping myself with skills, knowledge, and expertise through COMELEC's efficient planning and organizing activities	2.55	Moderate Level
Overall Mean	2.63	Moderate Level

The information in Table 2 shows the Level of Difficulties Faced by Electoral Boards in the Barangay Elections in the Area Pre-Election Activities. The overall mean score is 2.63, interpreted as Moderate Level. Item number 6, "setting up polling place in accordance with the recommended layout," got the lowest mean score of 2.48, interpreted as a "Low Level" of difficulty, while item number 7, "balancing pre-election duties with personal and professional responsibilities," obtained the highest mean score of 2.79, interpreted as "Moderate Level."

This implies that as public-school teachers, electoral boards experiencing work-life balance difficulties during barangay elections may cause too much stress and hardships. They may have a problem with time management as election responsibilities may overlap with their duties and personal obligations, which may affect their social life. Additionally, there may be inefficient planning among local officials, causing work overload to the electoral boards.

The inefficiency of electoral boards may result in voters' frustration and tension, which, leading to low voter turnout and low public trust.

In a study in Pakistan, Saleem et al. (2021) supported the research results as it discovered that work overload, unclear role responsibilities, and conflicts are the main sources of stress that led to disrupted work processes and poor performance. The researcher highlighted that those employees experiencing high levels of stress have decreased their job satisfaction and commitment. Stress at work causes employees' mental and physical health to be at risk. Additionally, ninety percent of Americans express their confidence in poll workers rather than state officials, with an 81 percent level of confidence (Leppert, 2024). The researcher added that limited public understanding of the job, long working hours, low salary and benefits, health issues, and safety concerns are the common challenges in poll worker recruitment.

Furthermore, the Teacher's Dignity Coalition (TDC) urged Election officials to focus more on the welfare of the poll workers during elections. They argued that the work of the poll workers was not yet done once the candidates had already been proclaimed. Poll workers need to endure stress, hardships, and fatigue in returning election documents and paraphernalia to local COMELEC offices, urging them to have a systematic plan in the retrieval process (Malipot, 2023). This was supported by the study of Fuentes (2023), where eight poll workers rushed to the hospital in Central Visayas during the October 30, 2023 Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections. Several symptoms were observed in these poll workers, such as high blood pressure, severe body and chest pains, headache, vomiting, and even symptoms of a heart attack. This was caused by extreme heat and high temperatures during the elections.

Similar to the Electoral Boards, work overload can cause mental and health issues, resulting in poor performance during barangay elections. As a result of the study, balancing personal and professional responsibilities was the most difficult to handle during the barangay elections.

Table 3

Level of Difficulties Faced by Electoral Boards in the Barangay Elections in the Area Election-Day Activities

Items	Mean	Interpretation
<i>As an Electoral Board, I have difficulty in...</i>		
1. obtaining forms, documents, and supplies at the Municipal / City Treasurer's office on the day of the election	2.59	Moderate Level
2. managing long voting hours from 7:00 am to 3:00 pm as scheduled by COMELEC.	2.66	Moderate Level
3. applying rules that are being observed during voting hours, like long queuing of lines, managing watchers, and crowding of voters	2.90	Moderate Level
4. applying the prohibitions on voting to ensure fair, honest, and credible elections	2.59	Moderate Level
5. managing persons allowed inside the polling place as identified by COMELEC	2.55	Moderate Level
6. managing the holding area and express lane for PWDs, Senior Citizens, and heavily pregnant women in compliance with COMELEC guidelines	2.60	Moderate Level
7. managing the order of voting inside the precinct and maintaining physical space for orderly voting	2.60	Moderate Level
8. applying the manner of obtaining the ballots, such as identification of voter's identity, authentication, and distribution of ballots	2.65	Moderate Level
9. handling emergencies and incidents such as medical issues, threats, or violence that can occur during election	2.76	Moderate Level
10. communicating to law enforcement or security personnel during the election to address election-related concerns	2.53	Moderate Level
Overall Mean	2.64	Moderate Level

Table 3 discusses the Level of Difficulties Faced by Electoral Boards in the Barangay Elections in the Area of Election-Day Activities. The overall mean score is 2.64, interpreted as Moderate Level. Item 10, "communicating to law enforcement or security personnel during the election to address election-related concerns," obtained the lowest mean score of 2.53, interpreted as a Moderate Level of difficulty. Meanwhile, item number 3, "applying rules that are being observed during voting hours like long queuing of lines, managing watchers, and crowding of voters," got the highest mean score of 2.90, interpreted as a Moderate Level.

This implies that the allocation of voters in every precinct exceeded the capacity of the polling place. This may cause overcrowding and chaos, and electoral boards may find it difficult to maintain order at the precinct level, which may result in voters' frustration. Lack of personnel and crowd control may lead to low voter confidence and participation. There may be a budget constraint that the Commission on Elections cannot deploy additional manpower during the barangay elections. Furthermore, electoral boards may find it difficult to adopt what they learn on election day. The venue may be overcrowded, or poor training facilities are affecting the learning of the electoral boards.

The findings conform with Larrazabal (2020), who discovered that during barangay elections, precincts are overcrowded compared to the scenario of a national fiesta, especially during the counting and announcing of results. The researcher argued that overcrowded precincts will greatly affect the efficiency of the electoral boards and will affect the credibility of the election as it erodes the public trust.

Table 4

Level of Difficulties Faced by Electoral Boards in the Barangay Elections in the Area Post-Election Activities

Items	Mean	Interpretation
<i>As an Electoral Board, I have difficulty in...</i>		
1. applying the manner of counting votes by piling the ballots in 100 per bundle	2.68	Moderate Level
2. applying the rules on Ballot appreciation by taking the ballots one by one and reading the names of candidates voted as stipulated in the rules for the appreciation of ballots provided in Section 211 of BP Blg. 881, such as Stray ballots, Invalid ballots, and the rule of the incumbent	3.15	Moderate Level
3. tallying votes and preparing Election Returns with zero to minimal errors	3.17	Moderate Level
4. preparing Election Minutes and Statistical Reports of male and female voters who actually voted	3.33	Moderate Level
5. the delivery of Election Returns to the Canvassing venue	3.04	Moderate Level
6. managing the queuing and waiting time in the receiving of Election Returns by the Board of Canvassers	3.15	Moderate Level
7. claiming my honorarium at the COMELEC office.	2.58	Moderate Level
8. getting the support of COMELEC in post-election stress, fatigue, and hardships	2.72	Moderate Level
9. accessing medical and emergency assistance provided by COMELEC after the election	2.80	Moderate Level
10. serving again as Electoral Board based on my experience	2.40	Low Level
Overall Mean	2.90	Moderate Level

Table 4 reflects the information on the Level of Difficulties Faced by Electoral Boards in the Barangay Elections in the Area Post-Election Activities. The overall mean score is 2.90, interpreted as Moderate Level. Item number 10, "serving again as Electoral Boards based on my experience," got the lowest mean score of 2.40, interpreted as Low Level. On the other hand, item number 4, "Preparing Election Minutes and Statistical Reports of Male and Female voters who actually voted," obtained the highest mean score of 3.33, interpreted as a Moderate Level.

This implies that electoral boards cannot handle additional workload and paperwork during barangay elections, which may cause them mental stress and health issues. There may be a lack of budget to hire additional manpower to help the electoral boards with other activities. The low-budget elections result in inadequate personnel and can affect the implementation of electoral processes and procedures, which may contribute to low public trust and a bad voting experience. Electoral boards may suffer difficulties and challenges due to a lack of budget, resulting in mental stress and emotional burdens.

A study in Tongo by Amegnran (2017) supports the research results as it discovered that a large number of voters and excessive paperwork requirements related to the voters are causing more burden to poll workers. It requires more time and energy from poll workers, giving opportunities to make mistakes. Similar to the results above, additional workload and paperwork gave more difficulties to the electoral boards, which may greatly affect their performance during elections. On the other hand, a low budget during an election can negatively affect the whole electoral process cited in the study by Ortega et al. (2024) that Maricopa County spent a total of 3,864,000 million dollars to fund the election security and safety of the poll workers in the past four years to implement a peaceful and successful election.

Table 5

Difference in the Level of Difficulties Faced by Electoral Boards in the Barangay Elections in the Area Pre-Election Activities According to Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	111	118.03	6885.00	0.608		Not Significant
	Older	129	122.63				
Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	143	120.71	6905.50	0.955	0.05	Not Significant
	Higher	97	120.19				
Number of Barangay Elections Served	Few	117	118.63	6977.00	0.684		Not Significant
	Many	123	122.28				

Table 5 reveals data on the difference in the level of difficulties faced by electoral boards in the barangay elections in the area of pre-election activities according to variables such as age, highest educational attainment, and number of barangay elections served. *P*-values 0.608, 0.955, and 0.684 of all the variables got higher values than the 0.05 significance level. These values show that there is no significant difference in the level of difficulties faced by electoral boards in the Barangay Elections in the area in election-day activities according to the said variables. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Even though all variables were interpreted as insignificant, there were activities in the pre-election phase that got the high mean score, specifically the "balancing pre-election duties with personal and professional responsibilities," which needs to be addressed to enhance work-life balance among electoral boards.

This implies that demographic variables, age, and the highest educational background do not greatly affect the level of difficulties faced by electoral boards in a component city in the central Philippines during the pre-election phase. The amendments to policies and regulations that may address the difficulties shall not be designed to target any of these factors. Another implication was that there may be a lack of planning in the implementation of pre-election activities by the COMELEC officials. Effective planning includes time management and scheduling of activities that will address the difficulties of stakeholders in the preparation before election day.

EAPA-SA (2022) highlighted that policies and procedures should be aligned with the current processes, systems, and structures. As work and the workplace rapidly change, it is a significant challenge for organizations to adopt these changes. Like election policies and procedures, there should be an amendment to the policies, as revealed in this study that, electoral boards found it most difficult to manage their election duties and professional obligations during the pre-election phase.

Table 6

Difference in the Level of Difficulties Faced by Electoral Boards in the Barangay Elections in the Area Election-Day Activities According to Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	111	116.39	6703.50	0.395		Not Significant
	Older	129	124.03				
Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	143	122.97	6582.50	0.503	0.05	Not Significant
	Higher	97	116.86				
Number of Barangay Elections Served	Few	117	120.24	7165.50	0.955		Not Significant
	Many	123	120.74				

Table 6 indicates data on the difference in the level of difficulties faced by electoral boards in the Barangay Elections in the area of Election Day activities according to variables such as age, highest educational attainment, and number of barangay elections served. *P*-values 0.395, 0.503, and 0.955 of all the variables got higher values than the 0.05 significance level. These values show that there is no significant difference in the level of difficulties faced by electoral boards in the Barangay Elections in the area in election-day activities according to the said variables. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Even though all variables were interpreted as not significant, there were activities on election day that got the high mean score, specifically in the activity "applying rules that are being observed during voting hours like long queuing of lines, managing watchers, and crowding of voters" which need to be addressed to have a conducive and humane electoral process.

This implies that variables such as age, highest educational attainment, and number of elections served may not be key contributors to the difficulties faced by electoral boards in a component city in central Philippines during election day. As revealed in the study, one of the factors that greatly contributed to the difficulties of the electoral boards was organizing and managing long queues and overcrowding caused by low-quality polling places. There may also be problems in the condition of polling places where public schools serve as polling places, which have inhumane conditions such as small classrooms, a humid environment, and a lack of facilities that may cater to a large number of voters during barangay elections. This may cause public disfranchisement, where voters may opt to vote due to long queues and long waiting lines.

The abovementioned findings conform with those of Mann et al. (2019); the researchers discovered that there was a 4 percentage point increase in voters' turnout when associated with better visibility of the polling place, like visible address, names, signs, and flags. Additionally, there was a 2.5 percentage point increase in voter' turnout when the polling place had a high-quality interior, which the respondents rated as excellent. Similar to the barangay elections, there should be a quality polling place for the voters to cast their votes for better turnout and voting experience.

Furthermore, in a study on the impact of the work environment on the performance of employees in selected government agencies in Metro Manila, Philippines, Alonzo et al. (2023) emphasize that working conditions of government employees in terms of workspace, leadership, culture, and well-being are all relatively very high. The level of performance of government employees in terms of their technical skills, punctuality, and professionalism is very satisfactory because of the effect of their conducive working environment.

Table 7

Difference in the Level of Difficulties Faced by Electoral Boards in the Barangay Elections in the Area Post-Election Activities According to Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	<i>p</i> -value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	111	112.35	6254.50	0.091	0.05	Not Significant
	Older	129	127.52				
Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	143	119.23	6754.50	0.731	0.05	Not Significant
	Higher	97	122.37				
Number of Barangay Elections Served	Few	117	114.94	6545.50	0.226	0.05	Not Significant
	Many	123	125.78				

Table 7 reveals data on the difference in the level of difficulties faced by electoral boards in the barangay elections in the area post-election activities according to variables such as age, highest educational attainment, and number of barangay elections served. *P*-values 0.091, 0.731, and 0.226 of all the variables got higher values than the 0.05 significance level. These values show that there is no significant difference in the level of difficulties faced by electoral boards in the Barangay Elections in the area post-election activities according to the said variables. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Even though all variables were interpreted as not significant, there were activities in the post-election phase that got the high mean score, specifically in the activity "preparing Election Minutes and Statistical Reports of male and female

voters who actually voted," which need to be addressed to enhanced the electoral process that may cause higher voters' participation and public trust.

This implies that the difficulties faced by the electoral boards during the post-election phase have no connection to the said variables. There may be a financial problem in the COMELEC during barangay elections, where they cannot afford to add personnel to augment the electoral boards. There were only 3 individuals in each precinct who would conduct the whole electoral process, namely the Chairman, Poll Clerk and Third Member, who would conduct the whole electoral process from pre-election to post-election phase. Another implication is that there may be a lack of manpower to carry out other obligations assigned to the electoral boards to reduce the workload and inefficiency. Finally, there may be an excessive administrative procedure that the COMELEC may remove to lessen the burden and stress of the electoral boards.

The findings conform with a study on the effects of stress at Central Luzon State University, where 830 undergraduate college students participated in the study. Belza et al. (2023) concluded that during the pandemic, there was a surge in mental health research on the pandemic's impact on people's lives. Belza found that one of the strong predictors of burnout is perceived stress. Students who have high levels of perceived stress are more likely to experience burnout. Although there is a connection between perceived stress and burnout, a stress mindset plays a crucial role in controlling the level of perceived stress that leads to burnout.

Meanwhile, James et al. (2017) concluded that election administrators should have enough resources and capacities for an election to run smoothly. However, in Britain and elsewhere, there were concerns about the budget. Researchers argued that there were cuts in the election budget, but local authorities were overspending. Insufficient budget and resources put pressure on election activities. This is similar to the Philippines, where barangay elections had a very low budget, resulting in cuts in election manpower. As revealed in this study, difficulties in administrative reporting greatly affect the electoral boards due to a lack of personnel during barangay elections.

Conclusions

The study found that electoral boards in a component city in Central Philippines experienced a "Moderate Level" of difficulties during pre-election, election day, and post-election activities, regardless of age, educational attainment, or election experience. Older respondents faced higher difficulties than younger ones, and college graduates experienced more difficulties than those with advanced degrees, especially during pre-election and election day. Less experienced electoral boards had more difficulties on election day, while experienced boards struggled more with pre-election and post-election tasks. Despite these challenges, the majority expressed willingness to serve again in future elections. The study revealed no significant difference in difficulty levels based on age, education, or experience, supporting the null hypothesis. Recommendations include deploying support staff to assist electoral boards, removing the task of preparing statistical reports, improving ballot preparation, and adjusting election schedules to reduce voter congestion and waiting times. The study also suggests enhancing voter education to minimize conflicts and improve election processes.

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