



INTEGRATING THE MANAGERIAL SKILLS AND STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP COMPETENCE OF LOCAL CHIEF EXECUTIVES TO ENHANCE SERVICE DELIVERY AND PUBLIC TRUST IN ZAMBOANGA SIBUGAY PROVINCE: BASIS FOR A GOVERNANCE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the integration of managerial skills and strategic leadership competence among Local Chief Executives (LCEs) in Zamboanga Sibugay Province to establish a robust governance development framework aimed at enhancing public service delivery and restoring citizen trust. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational research design, the investigation assesses the LCEs' core managerial capacities, spanning resource allocation, operational oversight, and crisis management, alongside strategic leadership traits such as visionary planning, stakeholder engagement, and policy innovation. Quantitative data gathered from local government officials, department heads, and community stakeholders evaluate the tangible impacts of these leadership attributes on administrative efficiency, transparency, and municipal performance metrics. The findings reveal a significant positive correlation between high LCE leadership competence and elevated levels of public trust, underscoring that technical management alone is insufficient without strategic foresight and participatory governance. Challenges such as resource constraints, political dynamics, and institutional bureaucratic delays were identified as key impediments to optimal service execution. Based on these insights, a comprehensive Governance Development Framework is proposed, emphasizing continuous capacity-building programs, structured performance management systems, and transparent civic engagement mechanisms to institutionalize good governance practices across the local government units of Zamboanga Sibugay.

KEYWORDS: Local Chief Executives, Strategic Leadership, Managerial Skills, Public Trust, Governance Development Framework.

1. INTRODUCTION

Effective local governance relies heavily on the administrative agility and administrative capabilities of Local Chief Executives (LCEs), whose managerial proficiency directly dictates the operational success of public service delivery. In decentralized governance systems, such as those established in the Philippines, local leaders shoulder the primary responsibility of translating national mandates into responsive, community-level programs while managing fiscal and human resources efficiently. Recent public administration research demonstrates that sound managerial skills spanning operational oversight, structured performance management, and resource allocation are vital prerequisites for optimizing LCE performance and mitigating institutional bottlenecks within municipal administrative structures (Machida & Suzuki, 2023). Furthermore, strong executive capacity enables local government units (LGUs) to respond proactively to local socio-economic demands, ensuring that essential public services reach marginalized constituencies with speed, consistency, and technical competence (Bernardo et al., 2023).

Beyond operational management, the modern public sector increasingly demands strategic leadership competence to navigate complex socio-political dynamics and build

sustainable public trust. Strategic leadership encompasses visionary planning, crisis adaptability, ethical governance, and stakeholder engagement qualities that transform basic administrative compliance into proactive civic partnerships. Contemporary scholarship highlights that while technical managerial skills ensure institutional efficiency, it is strategic leadership, participatory governance, and visible ethical behavior that foster public trust and cultivate political legitimacy among citizens (Valerio & Arocha, 2025; Dewi et al., 2022). In provinces characterized by diverse geographic and socio-economic challenges, such as Zamboanga Sibugay, integrating these dual competencies provides a vital foundation for institutional reform. Synthesizing these dimensions serves as the basis for a localized Governance Development Framework designed to institutionalize transparent practices, elevate public service standards, and reinforce trust between citizens and local government leadership.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

2.1. To evaluate the level of managerial skills among Local Chief Executives in Zamboanga Sibugay Province in terms of human and fiscal resource management, operational oversight, and crisis response.



2.2. To assess the level of strategic leadership competence among Local Chief Executives in Zamboanga Sibugay Province in terms of visionary planning, stakeholder engagement, and ethical leadership.

2.3. To measure the level of public service delivery and citizen trust across select Local Government Units in Zamboanga Sibugay Province.

2.4. To examine the relationship between the managerial skills and strategic leadership competence of Local Chief Executives and the resulting levels of service delivery and public trust in Zamboanga Sibugay Province.

2.5. To propose a governance development framework based on the findings of the study to enhance local government operations and public trust.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study will employ a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationship between the

managerial skills and strategic leadership competence of Local Chief Executives (LCEs) and their impact on service delivery and public trust in Zamboanga Sibugay Province. Data will be gathered using a structured, validated 5-point Likert scale questionnaire administered via stratified random sampling to key respondents, including municipal department heads, local government employees, and community leaders across the province's municipalities. Descriptive statistics, including weighted means and standard deviations, will be used to determine the perceived levels of executive competencies, service delivery quality, and citizen trust, while Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) and multiple regression analysis will be conducted to evaluate significant relationships and predictors among the variables. The empirical findings derived from these quantitative analyses will directly inform the design and structure of the proposed Governance Development Framework.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Level of Managerial Skills of Local Chief Executives

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
A. Human and Fiscal Resource Management			
1. Allocates municipal funds efficiently to priority community projects.	4.25	0.62	Highly Competent
2. Promotes merit-based hiring and continuous staff capacity development.	4.10	0.68	Competent
3. Ensures proper auditing and fiscal discipline in LGU expenditures.	4.32	0.55	Highly Competent
Sub-Mean	4.22	0.62	Highly Competent
B. Operational Oversight			
1. Monitors department outputs against established annual targets.	4.18	0.60	Competent
2. Streamlines administrative workflows to minimize operational delays.	4.05	0.71	Competent
3. Utilizes performance management tools to evaluate municipal staff.	4.12	0.64	Competent
Sub-Mean	4.12	0.65	Competent
C. Crisis Response			
1. Executes rapid disaster risk reduction and emergency response protocols.	4.38	0.52	Highly Competent
2. Mobilizes relief and aid resources effectively during localized crises.	4.30	0.58	Highly Competent
3. Maintains clear communication channels during public emergencies.	4.21	0.61	Highly Competent
Sub-Mean	4.30	0.57	Highly Competent
Overall Grand Mean	4.21	0.61	Highly Competent

Legend: 4.21–5.00 (Highly Competent); 3.41–4.20 (Competent); 2.61–3.40 (Moderately Competent); 1.81–2.60 (Slightly Competent); 1.00–1.80 (Not Competent)

The data presented in Table 1 illustrate the overall assessment of the managerial skills of Local Chief Executives (LCEs) in Zamboanga Sibugay Province, yielding an overall grand mean of 4.21 (SD = 0.61), which corresponds to a verbal interpretation of Highly Competent. Among the three assessed domains, Crisis Response obtained the highest sub-mean of 4.30 (SD = 0.57, Highly Competent), anchored by the LCEs' ability to execute rapid disaster risk reduction protocols (M = 4.38) and mobilize relief aid effectively (M = 4.30). Human and

Fiscal Resource Management followed with a sub-mean of 4.22 (SD = 0.62, Highly Competent), highlighting strong fiscal discipline and proper auditing of municipal expenditures (M = 4.32). Operational Oversight received a sub-mean of 4.12 (SD = 0.65, Competent), indicating that while LCEs effectively monitor annual targets (M = 4.18), administrative workflows (M = 4.05) still offer opportunities for further streamlining.

The high competence demonstrated in crisis response aligns with recent studies on Philippine public leadership and



institutional capacity, which emphasize that executive mobilization and structural support are vital for safeguarding vulnerable populations during crises (Aroz et al., 2026; Machida & Suzuki, 2023; Valerio & Arocha, 2025). Furthermore, sound fiscal discipline and resource allocation serve as critical foundations for administrative capability, ensuring public resources directly support administrative goals rather than succumbing to structural inefficiencies (Alipoyo,

2022; Bernardo et al., 2023; Dagohoy, 2021). The slightly lower rating in operational workflows reflects common institutional bottlenecks in local government units (LGUs), where bureaucratic procedures often delay operational execution despite competent executive management (DILG, 2023; World Bank, 2023). Overall, these results demonstrate that LCEs in Zamboanga Sibugay exhibit solid foundational management capabilities across fiscal, operational, and emergency domains.

Table 2: Level of Strategic Leadership Competence of Local Chief Executives

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
A. Visionary Planning			
1. Formulates long-term socio-economic development strategies for the LGU.	4.35	0.54	Highly Competent
2. Aligns local plans with regional and national development goals.	4.40	0.51	Highly Competent
3. Introduces innovative policy solutions to address community issues.	4.15	0.66	Competent
Sub-Mean	4.30	0.57	Highly Competent
B. Stakeholder Engagement			
1. Involves civil society organizations and citizens in local planning.	4.12	0.70	Competent
2. Conducts regular participatory town hall consultations across barangays.	4.08	0.73	Competent
3. Fosters public-private partnerships to support local development.	4.19	0.62	Competent
Sub-Mean	4.13	0.68	Competent
C. Ethical Leadership			
1. Demonstrates high integrity and adheres to ethical standards.	4.31	0.59	Highly Competent
2. Enforces zero tolerance for corruption within municipal offices.	4.20	0.65	Competent
3. Promotes equal treatment and fairness in local public delivery.	4.26	0.61	Highly Competent
Sub-Mean	4.26	0.62	Highly Competent
Overall Grand Mean	4.23	0.62	Highly Competent

Legend: 4.21–5.00 (Highly Competent); 3.41–4.20 (Competent); 2.61–3.40 (Moderately Competent); 1.81–2.60 (Slightly Competent); 1.00–1.80 (Not Competent)

Table 2 highlights the strategic leadership competence of Local Chief Executives, recording an overall grand mean of 4.23 (SD = 0.62), interpreted as Highly Competent. Visionary Planning scored the highest sub-mean at 4.30 (SD = 0.57, Highly Competent), driven by the LCEs' strong ability to align local development plans with regional and national goals (M = 4.40) and formulate long-term socio-economic strategies (M = 4.35). Ethical Leadership achieved a sub-mean of 4.26 (SD = 0.62, Highly Competent), supported by high ratings in personal integrity (M = 4.31) and equal treatment in public service delivery (M = 4.26). Stakeholder Engagement obtained a sub-mean of 4.13 (SD = 0.68, Competent), reflecting solid efforts in public-private partnerships (M = 4.19) and town hall consultations (M = 4.08). These empirical findings support

contemporary governance literature asserting that effective local leaders must transcend routine administration by exercising forward-looking strategic vision, rights-based governance, and social inclusion (Cruz, 2024; Hernando-Devibar & Pera, 2023). Scholars argue that strategic foresight allows municipal leaders to align local development agendas with national policy frameworks, optimizing both external funding and internal policy implementation (Garcia-Glova, 2024; Jacinto et al., 2023). Additionally, the emphasis on ethical leadership and citizen consultation reinforces the role of moral authority and participatory governance in modern public management, transforming traditional top-down leadership into collaborative public administration (Dewi et al., 2022; Valerio & Arocha, 2025).



Table 3: Level of Public Service Delivery in Zamboanga Sibugay LGUs

Service Delivery Areas	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
1. Healthcare Services (e.g., medical access, rural health unit support)	4.15	0.65	High
2. Infrastructure Development (e.g., local roads, public facilities)	4.02	0.72	High
3. Administrative Efficiency (e.g., prompt processing of permits/licenses)	4.10	0.63	High
4. Social Welfare and Assistance (e.g., aid to vulnerable sectors)	4.28	0.58	Very High
Overall Grand Mean	4.14	0.65	High

Legend: 4.21–5.00 (Very High); 3.41–4.20 (High); 2.61–3.40 (Moderate); 1.81–2.60 (Low); 1.00–1.80 (Very Low)

Table 3 displays the evaluation of public service delivery across Local Government Units in Zamboanga Sibugay, registering an overall grand mean of 4.14 (SD = 0.65), verbally interpreted as High. Social Welfare and Assistance earned the highest rating among all service areas with a mean of 4.28 (SD = 0.58, Very High), indicating that aid programs for vulnerable sectors are perceived as accessible and well-implemented. Healthcare Services (M = 4.15, SD = 0.65, High) and Administrative Efficiency (M = 4.10, SD = 0.63, High) also scored favorably. Infrastructure Development received a mean rating of 4.02 (SD = 0.72, High), showing positive performance while identifying local road and facility construction as key areas for ongoing development.

The high evaluation of social welfare and public assistance services mirrors broader trends in Philippine

governance, where local institutions are expected to safeguard rights, support rehabilitation, and address systemic socio-economic hardships (Bernardo et al., 2023). The strong performance in administrative efficiency underscores the positive impact of national mandates like the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act (RA 11032), which obligates local units to streamline processing standards via Citizen's Charters (Mata et al., 2022; Yang & Park, 2022). Meanwhile, the relative gap in infrastructure development reflects ongoing local resource constraints and facility limitations, reinforcing research that highlights the need for sustained capital investments and upgraded institutional infrastructure in regional provinces (Alipoyo, 2022; DPWH, 2025; World Bank, 2023).

Table 4: Level of Public Trust in Local Chief Executives / LGU Administration

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
1. Transparency: Public disclosure of municipal financial documents and budgets.	4.18	0.64	High Trust
2. Integrity: Public confidence in the honesty of executive leadership.	4.25	0.59	Very High Trust
3. Civic Responsiveness: Prompt attention to citizen complaints and feedback.	4.08	0.71	High Trust
4. Citizen Confidence: Belief in the leadership's capacity to drive progress.	4.22	0.60	Very High Trust
Overall Grand Mean	4.18	0.64	High Trust

Legend: 4.21–5.00 (Very High Trust); 3.41–4.20 (High Trust); 2.61–3.40 (Moderate Trust); 1.81–2.60 (Low Trust); 1.00–1.80 (Very Low Trust)

Table 4 outlines the level of public trust in Local Chief Executives and LGU administration, yielding an overall grand mean of 4.18 (SD = 0.64), which corresponds to High Trust. Integrity earned the highest rating among trust indicators with a mean of 4.25 (SD = 0.59, Very High Trust), followed closely by Citizen Confidence (M = 4.22, SD = 0.60, Very High Trust). Transparency in disclosing municipal financial documents recorded a mean of 4.18 (SD = 0.64, High Trust), while Civic Responsiveness in addressing citizen complaints achieved a mean of 4.08 (SD = 0.71, High Trust).

Public trust is widely documented as the foundational currency of democratic governance, social cohesion, and

institutional legitimacy (Aranjuez, 2025; Fukuyama, 2022; Yuen et al., 2021). High ratings in leader integrity and citizen confidence demonstrate that constituents evaluate governance not only by physical outputs, but through the empathetic, ethical conduct, and systemic responsiveness of executive figures (Aroz et al., 2026; Cruz, 2024; Valerio & Arocha, 2025). Furthermore, researchers highlight that financial transparency and responsive feedback mechanisms foster a strong social contract between citizens and local authorities, mitigating public skepticism and reinforcing civic participation (Dewi et al., 2022; Mata et al., 2022).



Table 5: Relationship Between LCE Managerial Skills and Public Service Delivery / Public Trust

Variables Correlated	Pearson	-value	Decision on	Verbal Interpretation
Managerial Skills vs. Public Service Delivery	0.684	< .001	Reject	Strong Positive Correlation
Managerial Skills vs. Public Trust	0.612	< .001	Reject	Strong Positive Correlation

Table 5 presents the bivariate correlation analysis testing the relationships between LCE managerial skills, public service delivery, and public trust. The results reveal a strong, positive, and statistically significant correlation between LCE Managerial Skills and Public Service Delivery ($r = 0.684$, $p < .001$). Likewise, a strong, positive, and statistically significant correlation exists between LCE Managerial Skills and Public Trust ($r = 0.612$, $p < .001$). Consequently, the null hypotheses (H_0) stating no significant relationship among these variables are rejected at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level.

These statistically significant correlations demonstrate that administrative proficiency directly translates into superior

service delivery and heightened citizen trust. Public administration literature consistently affirms that managerial competencies, such as efficient resource allocation, facility management, performance tracking, and prompt crisis management, form the structural backbone of institutional performance (Alipoyo, 2022; Dagohoy, 2021; Machida & Suzuki, 2023). When executive leaders manage human and fiscal capital effectively, administrative bottlenecks are minimized, leading directly to higher public service standards, protected civic rights, and increased citizen confidence in municipal institutions (Bernardo et al., 2023; Cruz, 2024).

Table 6: Relationship Between LCE Strategic Leadership Competence and Public Service Delivery / Public Trust

Variables Correlated	Pearson	-value	Decision on	Verbal Interpretation
Strategic Leadership Competence vs. Public Service Delivery	0.642	< .001	Reject	Strong Positive Correlation
Strategic Leadership Competence vs. Public Trust	0.725	< .001	Reject	Strong Positive Correlation

Table 6 illustrates the correlation between LCE strategic leadership competence and the outcomes of service delivery and public trust. Strategic Leadership Competence demonstrates a strong positive correlation with Public Service Delivery ($r = 0.642$, $p < .001$) and an even stronger positive correlation with Public Trust ($r = 0.725$, $p < .001$). Both relationships are statistically significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypotheses (H_0) at the $\alpha = 0.05$ significance level.

The particularly high correlation between strategic leadership and public trust ($r = 0.725$) underscores that long-

term strategic vision, ethical integrity, and participatory stakeholder engagement are paramount in building citizen faith in local government. While technical management ensures operational output, strategic leadership inspires institutional confidence and supports individuals navigating complex socio-economic challenges (Aranjuez, 2025; Aroz et al., 2026; Hernando-Devibar & Pera, 2023; Valerio & Arocha, 2025). Studies confirm that when citizens perceive local executives as forward-looking, inclusive, and ethically sound, their overall trust in local governance deepens significantly (Dewi et al., 2022; Fukuyama, 2022).

Table 7: Multiple Regression Analysis on Predictors of Public Service Delivery and Citizen Trust

Dependent Variable	Predictor Variables		-value	-value	Model Summary
Public Service Delivery	Managerial Skills	0.482	6.251	< .001	Adjusted
	Strategic Leadership Competence	0.315	4.088	< .001	
Public Trust	Managerial Skills	0.285	3.820	< .001	Adjusted
	Strategic Leadership Competence	0.542	7.264	< .001	

Table 7 displays the multiple linear regression models evaluating Managerial Skills and Strategic Leadership Competence as joint predictors of Public Service Delivery and Public Trust. For Public Service Delivery, the model accounts for 54.8% of the variance ($R^2 = .548$, $F(2, 197) = 119.42$, $p < .001$), with Managerial Skills exerting a stronger predictive influence ($\beta = 0.482$, $t = 6.251$, $p < .001$) compared to Strategic Leadership Competence ($\beta = 0.315$, $t = 4.088$, $p < .001$). For Public Trust, the combined model explains 58.1% of the total variance ($R^2 = .581$, $F(2, 197) = 136.55$, $p < .001$), but Strategic Leadership Competence emerges as the primary predictor ($\beta = 0.542$, $t = 7.264$, $p < .001$), outweighing Managerial Skills ($\beta = 0.285$, $t = 3.820$, $p < .001$).

These regression outcomes provide empirical validation for integrating both competency domains within local executive leadership. The dominant weight of managerial skills in driving service delivery confirms that technical efficiency, operational monitoring, and resource management are the primary drivers of tangible administrative outputs and facility operations (Alipoyo, 2022; Bernardo et al., 2023; Machida & Suzuki, 2023). Conversely, the stronger predictive power of strategic leadership on public trust reinforces the theory that moral integrity, rights-based vision, and civic engagement shape constituent attitudes and trust more profoundly than technical management alone (Aranjuez et al., 2022; Cruz, 2024; Valerio & Arocha, 2025; Yang & Park, 2022).



Table 8: Proposed Governance Development Framework Components

Key Result Area (KRA)	Strategic Intervention	Target Competencies	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Timeframe
1. Resource Allocation & Fiscal Management	Capacity-building workshops on zero-based budgeting and digital revenue tracking systems.	Fiscal Discipline, Resource Management	• 100% submission of audit reports. • 15% improvement in local revenue generation.	Year 1 (Short-term)
2. Participatory Governance & Civic Engagement	Institutionalization of quarterly municipal town halls and CSO representation in local councils.	Stakeholder Engagement, Transparency	• Active membership of accredited CSOs. • 80%+ citizen satisfaction rate in consultations.	Year 1–2 (Medium-term)
3. Administrative Operations & Service Delivery	Streamlining municipal permit systems through digital service portals and ISO-standardized procedures.	Operational Oversight, Efficiency	• Processing times reduced by 30%. • Zero backlog in essential service requests.	Year 2 (Medium-term)
4. Ethical Leadership & Public Accountability	Regular ethics refresher courses, anti-corruption compliance audits, and open data portals.	Ethical Leadership, Integrity	• Full compliance with national disclosure mandates. • Increased public trust index score.	Year 1–3 (Continuous)

Table 8 presents the proposed Governance Development Framework designed to institutionalize the findings of this study across LGUs in Zamboanga Sibugay Province. The framework prioritizes four Key Result Areas (KRAs): (1) Resource Allocation & Fiscal Management, targeting fiscal discipline and zero-based budgeting in Year 1; (2) Participatory Governance & Civic Engagement, institutionalizing quarterly town halls and civil society organization (CSO) council seats across Years 1–2; (3) Administrative Operations & Service Delivery, focusing on digital service portals and ISO-aligned processes in Year 2; and (4) Ethical Leadership & Public Accountability, embedding continuous ethics audits and financial disclosures continuously across Years 1–3.

This framework aligns directly with modern governance standards that advocate for structured, evidence-based interventions to improve local public administration and social welfare interventions (Aranjuez, 2025; DILG, 2023; World Bank, 2023). Institutionalizing continuous capacity-building and performance tracking addresses documented administrative skill gaps in municipal workforces (Bernardo et al., 2023; Dagohoy, 2021). Furthermore, embedding participatory mechanisms, open-data disclosures, and protective gender and social inclusion mandates ensures that institutional efficiency is balanced with transparency and democratic accountability, establishing a sustainable blueprint for local executive leadership (Aranjuez et al., 2022; Dewi et al., 2022; Mata et al., 2022).

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The empirical findings of this study provide actionable insights for local governance, executive development, and public administration reform across local government units (LGUs). First, the strong predictive impact of managerial skills on public service delivery underscores the urgent need to institutionalize competency-based capacity-building programs for Local Chief Executives (LCEs) and department heads.

Local administrative offices should transition beyond basic political management toward structured training in zero-based fiscal allocation, digital performance monitoring, and streamlined workflow optimization. Implementing standardized administrative systems and automating municipal permit operations can eliminate operational bottlenecks, directly elevating service delivery standards in critical public domains such as health, social welfare, and infrastructure development.

Second, the significant influence of strategic leadership on public trust highlights the necessity of embedding participatory and ethical frameworks into daily LGU operations. Local executives must actively operationalize citizen-centric leadership by institutionalizing inclusive governance mechanisms, such as structured civil society organization (CSO) seats in local councils, mandatory town hall consultations, and transparent public disclosures of fiscal reports. Furthermore, integrating protective, rights-based policies and gender-responsive development frameworks ensures that vulnerable sectors are prioritized within local strategic plans. By balancing operational oversight with ethical vision and civic engagement, LCEs can transform routine administrative delivery into long-term institutional trust and political legitimacy.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that optimizing service delivery and cultivating public trust in Zamboanga Sibugay Province requires a balanced integration of both managerial skills and strategic leadership competence among Local Chief Executives. While technical managerial efficiency serves as the operational engine for executing public services and managing municipal resources, strategic leadership acts as the primary driver in earning citizen trust and driving visionary community development. Neither competency domain is sufficient in isolation; executive proficiency in crisis response



and fiscal management must be coupled with ethical integrity, transparency, and inclusive stakeholder engagement. The proposed Governance Development Framework provides a strategic roadmap for LGUs to institutionalize these dual competencies, ultimately establishing a resilient, highly accountable, and responsive local government system.

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