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REASONS FOR NON-ATTENDANCE IN BARANGAY DECISION-MAKING ASSEMBLIES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH CITIZENS' INFORMED PARTICIPATION: A CASE OF BARANGAY GAYAM, TAFT, EASTERN SAMAR

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the reasons for non-attendance in barangay decision-making assemblies and their relationship with citizens' informed participation. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational design, the researchers surveyed 140 adult residents of Barangay Gayam, Taft, Eastern Samar, who were not included in the barangay officials' list of identified attendees. The site was selected because it consistently ranked among the three barangays with the lowest attendance in Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) records. Data were gathered using a researcher-made four-point Likert questionnaire. The instrument was validated by experts and pilot-tested with 30 residents, with reliability analysis covering Parts II–IV. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Spearman rank-order correlation. Results showed a high overall level of barriers (M = 2.86, SD = 0.62), with personal barriers receiving the highest mean (M = 3.03), followed by institutional (M = 2.93), informational (M = 2.76), and logistical barriers (M = 2.71). Informed participation was also high (M = 2.95, SD = 0.51), with community engagement obtaining the highest mean. The overall relationship between barriers and informed participation was negligible and not statistically significant (rs = −.049, 95% CI [−.21, .12], p = .563). However, logistical barriers were negatively correlated with awareness, access to governance information, and engagement; only the relationships with awareness and access remained significant after Bonferroni adjustment. Respondents rated motivational, community-based, and assembly-related strategies favorably. Since the study used cross-sectional and self-reported data, the findings indicate associations rather than causation.

KEYWORDS: *Barangay Assemblies, Citizen Participation, Informed Participation, Local Governance, Non-Attendance*

1. INTRODUCTION

Barangay assemblies provide residents with opportunities to receive information, express concerns, discuss community issues, and communicate with local officials. These meetings support transparency and citizen participation in local governance. Under Section 397 of the Local Government Code of 1991 (Republic Act No. 7160), barangay assemblies must be conducted at least twice a year to hear and discuss the semestral report of the Sangguniang Barangay on its activities and finances. However, low attendance may limit residents' opportunities to question officials, raise concerns, and hold them accountable for their decisions (Bovens, 2007; Gaventa & Barrett, 2012).

Citizen participation is influenced by personal, social, economic, and institutional conditions (Dacombe & Parvin, 2021; Kakuhikire et al., 2021). Studies also show that non-participation has different causes and is not necessarily a sign of disinterest (Jacquet, 2017; Kübler & Rochat, 2025). Access to information is equally important for meaningful participation (Cucciniello et al., 2017). In the Philippine context, previous studies have examined citizens' participation and satisfaction in barangay assemblies (Arrabaca & Base, 2020), factors affecting participation in local governance (Caparas & Agrawal, 2016), and the role of barangay assemblies in civic engagement (Yusingco, 2022).

Despite these studies, further attention is needed to understand the barriers experienced by residents who are not included in identified attendance records and how these barriers relate to their informed participation. In Barangay Gayam, Taft, Eastern Samar, DILG records showed 45 attendees in the first semester of 2023, 42 in the first semester of 2024, and 44 in the second semester of 2024, indicating consistently low attendance. Guided by deliberative democracy theory, which emphasizes citizens' opportunities to share views, access information, discuss issues, and influence public decisions (Dryzek, 2000; Fung, 2015), this study examined the reasons for non-attendance and their relationship with citizens' informed participation in the barangay.

2. OBJECTIVES

This study aimed to determine the reasons for non-attendance in barangay decision-making assemblies and examine their relationship with citizens' informed participation in Barangay Gayam, Taft, Eastern Samar. Specifically, it seeks to: (1) describe the demographic profile of the respondents; (2) determine the reasons for non-attendance; (3) determine the

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level of citizens' informed participation; (4) test whether the two are significantly related; and (5) identify strategies that respondents perceive as effective in improving attendance. The null hypothesis (H_0) states that there is no statistically significant relationship between the respondents' overall reasons for non-attendance and their overall level of informed participation.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study used a quantitative, descriptive-correlational design. It was cross-sectional and non-experimental; therefore, the findings describe relationships rather than cause-and-effect relationships. Data were gathered on May 10–11, 2026, using a researcher-made questionnaire. Part II measured personal, institutional, informational, and logistical barriers to assembly attendance, with four items for each category. Part III measured informed participation through awareness, access to governance information, and engagement, also with four items each. Part IV asked respondents to rate twelve proposed improvement strategies. The questionnaire used a four-point Likert scale, with mean scores of 2.50 and above interpreted as high. Experts validated the instrument, which was pilot-tested with 30 adult residents of Poblacion 02, Taft. Reliability analysis covering Parts II–IV yielded an overall Cronbach's alpha of .81 for the 40 scale items. Ethical approval was obtained (Certificate No. ESSUC-REC-2026-038), and all respondents provided informed consent.

4. SAMPLING DESIGN

Barangay Gayam was purposively selected based on attendance records from 24 barangays provided by the DILG–Local Government Unit of Taft. It was the only barangay consistently ranked among the three lowest in attendance across the three available periods. The barangay had 228 adult residents. Of these, 88 were identified as attendees based on the officials' list and excluded, leaving 140 residents who were not included in the list of identified attendees. All 140 eligible residents were included through total enumeration, and all returned completed questionnaires, resulting in a 100% response rate.

5. STATISTICAL DESIGN

Data were analyzed using SPSS. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize the respondents' profiles, reported barriers, informed participation, and strategy ratings. Spearman's rank-order correlation was used to examine the relationship between the overall barrier score and overall informed participation score, as the data were based on ordinal Likert-scale responses and normality was not assumed. The significance level was set at $\alpha = .05$. For the 12 dimension-level correlation tests, a Bonferroni-adjusted significance level of $\alpha = .00417$ was applied to control for multiple comparisons.

6. GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

The study was conducted in Barangay Gayam, Municipality of Taft, Eastern Samar, Philippines.

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

7.1 Respondent profile

Most respondents were of working age. Those aged 31–50 (45.0%) and 18–30 (42.9%) accounted for nearly nine out of ten respondents. Women comprised the majority (56.4%). More than half had reached high school (55.7%), while 33.6% were homemakers and 20.7% were farmers or fishermen. In addition, 63.6% had lived in the barangay for more than 10 years, and 66.4% reported having attended at least one barangay assembly before.

7.2 Reasons for non-attendance

Table 1. Level of reasons for non-attendance and informed participation (N = 140)

Dimension	M	SD	Interpretation
Reasons for non-attendance			
Personal barriers	3.03	0.80	Agree / High
Institutional barriers	2.93	0.67	Agree / High
Informational barriers	2.76	0.78	Agree / High
Logistical barriers	2.71	0.78	Agree / High
Overall barriers	2.86	0.62	Agree / High
Informed participation			
Engagement in community governance	3.06	0.56	Agree / High
Awareness of programs and policies	2.94	0.61	Agree / High
Access to governance information	2.85	0.59	Agree / High
Overall informed participation	2.95	0.51	Agree / High

Note. Four-point scale; mean ≥ 2.50 is interpreted as agreement.

The overall barrier score was high (M = 2.86, SD = 0.62). Personal barriers had the highest mean (M = 3.03), followed by institutional (M = 2.93), informational (M = 2.76), and logistical barriers (M = 2.71). The highest-rated items were work or school schedules (M = 3.12, SD = 0.84) and family responsibilities (M = 3.05, SD = 0.91), indicating that respondents most commonly identified time constraints and family duties as barriers to attendance. However, the differences among the four barrier means were not statistically tested; therefore, their ranking is descriptive only. These findings are consistent with Dacombe and Parvin (2021), who discussed how everyday responsibilities can limit citizens' participation. Respondents also indicated concerns about officials' follow-up on assembly outcomes and consideration of residents' opinions, reflecting Bovens' (2007) emphasis on accountability and responsiveness in public governance.

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7.3 Informed participation

Respondents reported a high overall level of informed participation (M = 2.95, SD = 0.51). Engagement had the highest subscale mean (M = 3.06), followed by awareness (M = 2.94) and access to governance information (M = 2.85). The highest-rated item was willingness to attend assemblies when properly informed and encouraged (M = 3.36). In contrast, regularly receiving information about barangay programs and activities (M = 2.59) and knowing how the annual barangay budget was used (M = 2.66) received the lowest ratings. These findings suggest that limited attendance does not necessarily indicate a lack of interest in community affairs. However, the results should be interpreted cautiously because responses were self-reported, and willingness to attend reflects intention rather than actual participation.

7.4 Relationship between barriers and informed participation

Table 2. Spearman correlations between barrier types and informed participation (N = 140)

Participation Dimension	Personal	Institutional	Informational	Logistical
Awareness	−.105	−.046	−.143	−.289**
Access to information	.008	.182*	.079	−.279**
Engagement	−.024	.137	.017	−.223**

*Note. *p < .05, **p < .01 (unadjusted). After Bonferroni adjustment (α = .00417), only the logistical-barrier correlations with awareness and with access remained significant.*

At the composite level, total barriers were not significantly associated with total informed participation (rs = −.049, 95% CI [−.21, .12], p = .563). Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. The confidence interval includes small negative and positive associations, meaning that a weak relationship cannot be ruled out. Overall, the findings showed no clear association between higher barriers and lower informed participation. This may suggest that barriers do not necessarily prevent residents from remaining informed or interested in community affairs, consistent with studies showing that non-participation has multiple causes rather than simply reflecting apathy (Jacquet, 2017; Kübler & Rochat, 2025). The composite result may also conceal differences in how individual barrier dimensions relate to participation.

At the dimension level, logistical barriers were negatively associated with awareness (rs = −.289, p < .001), access to governance information (rs = −.279, p < .001), and engagement (rs = −.223, p = .008). Institutional barriers had a small positive association with access to governance information (rs = .182, p = .031). However, after applying the Bonferroni-adjusted significance level, only the negative relationships between logistical barriers and awareness and between logistical barriers and access remained significant. The other associations did not meet the adjusted threshold and should be interpreted cautiously. These findings are consistent with Kakuhikire et al. (2021), who identified practical concerns, including distance, as factors affecting participation in rural Uganda. Since the data came from a single self-report survey, the correlations do not establish cause and effect.

7.5 Perceived effectiveness of improvement strategies

Motivational and community-based strategies received the highest overall rating (M = 3.33). These results reflect respondents' perceptions of the strategies' potential effectiveness and do not establish that they would increase actual attendance. The highest-rated strategies were small non-monetary priority incentives (M = 3.40), partnerships with schools, churches, and local organizations (M = 3.36), making residents' inputs visible in barangay decisions (M = 3.34), and posting schedules and agendas early on bulletin boards (M = 3.32). Kübler and Rochat (2025) found that individual gifts reduced attendance intentions, while post-assembly refreshments increased them, suggesting that incentives should be tested in the local context. In the open-ended responses, the most common recommendation was to hold meetings on Sundays or early evenings to avoid conflicts with work schedules (46.4%), followed by distributing printed flyers or summaries of assembly results (30.0%).

8. SUGGESTIONS

Because work schedules and family responsibilities were major barriers, the Barangay Captain and Council should consider Sunday or early-evening assemblies. Announcements should be made in advance, and attendance should be compared across schedules before any permanent change.

The Barangay Secretary and Information Team should regularly post simple summaries of assembly decisions, projects, action points, and budget information. The Sangguniang Kabataan, schools, churches, and community organizations may help by reminding households and sharing announcements.

The Barangay Council should also choose convenient times and accessible venues, keep assemblies brief, and prepare for bad weather. These proposed actions require local implementation and evaluation; their effectiveness was not established by this study.

9. CONCLUSION

In Barangay Gayam, personal barriers—especially work or school schedules and family responsibilities—were most commonly reported. Respondents nevertheless reported high informed participation, with engagement receiving the highest rating. Their absence from the officials' identified-attendees list did not necessarily mean disengagement. The overall relationship between barriers and informed participation was very small and not significant; thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Logistical barriers were negatively associated with awareness, access, and engagement, but only the relationships with awareness and access remained significant after Bonferroni adjustment. Respondents rated proposed strategies favorably, but their actual effectiveness was not tested. These findings describe associations, not cause and effect, within one barangay.

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10. AREA FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study covered one barangay and used cross-sectional, self-reported data. Because respondents were not included in the officials' identified-attendees list, no comparison group was available. The sample of 140 may also have limited detection of weak associations. Future studies should include more barangays, define the periods covered by non-attendance and past attendance, combine attendance records with self-reports, and establish dimension-level hypotheses in advance or adjust for multiple comparisons.

DECLARATIONS

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.
Use of AI and AI-Assisted Tools: Consensus AI and Perplexity were used to locate relevant literature. Anthropic's Claude was used to check citations, cross-check data tables, and condense the manuscript to meet the journal format. QuillBot was used for language refinement. The authors reviewed the outputs and take full responsibility for the accuracy and content of the manuscript.
Data Availability: The survey dataset is not publicly available. The questionnaire and attendance records may be requested from the corresponding author.

11. FIGURES, TABLES AND REFERENCES

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