Leadership Competencies of Barangay Officials in Quezon City Towards a Better Grassroots Governance Framework

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Abstract

This study examined the leadership competencies of barangay officials in Quezon City and their relationship to grassroots governance outcomes. Using a descriptive–correlational design complemented by qualitative interviews, data were gathered from 300 respondents across 18 barangays representing diverse contexts. Leadership competencies were assessed in nine domains, while governance performance was evaluated across four areas. Results revealed that barangay officials demonstrated strengths in ethics, interpersonal skills, communication, emotional intelligence, and resilience. However, significant weaknesses emerged in visionary and strategic thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability, which directly constrained governance outcomes. Governance performance was rated high in community engagement and resource utilization but critically low in-service delivery, peace and order, and financial transparency. The findings partially align with Transformational Leadership Theory, as officials displayed idealized influence and individualized consideration but lacked inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation. A Grassroots Governance Framework was proposed to guide leadership development and institutional reforms. The study concludes that enhancing adaptive competencies, strategic foresight, and accountability mechanisms are vital for strengthening grassroots governance in Quezon City. Policy recommendations include targeted training programs, participatory budgeting, citizen feedback systems, and youth inclusion initiatives.

Keywords: leadership competencies, barangay governance, grassroots governance, transformational leadership, Quezon City

Introduction

Local governance constitutes the frontline of public administration, directly influencing the quality of life of citizens through the delivery of essential services, maintenance of peace and order, and the promotion of community participation (Kaufmann & Kraay, 2019). In the Philippines, the barangay is the smallest political unit and serves as the first point of contact between citizens and

Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Economics, Engineering, and Social Sciences (ICEESS)
27 – 28 September 2025, KK Sapa Hotel, Sapa, Vietnam
Vales, J.S. Jr., *Leadership Competencies of Barangay Officials in Quezon City Towards a Better Grassroots Governance Framework, pp. 54 - 66*

54

government institutions. It is within this localized governance structure that critical decisions about health, education, infrastructure, security, and social services are made. Consequently, the effectiveness of barangay leadership is not only a measure of individual capability but also a determinant of community development and resilience.

Barangay officials—consisting of the punong barangay (chairperson), sangguniang barangay members, and other appointed functionaries—are directly elected by the people, making them democratically accountable for their leadership actions. Their mandate is to represent community interests, uphold peace and order, and ensure that national and local policies are effectively implemented at the grassroots level (Awasthi & Walumbwa, 2022). Yet, despite their critical role, questions persist regarding whether barangay leaders possess the necessary leadership competencies to address complex and evolving governance challenges in urban environments such as Quezon City.

Leadership competencies refer to the combination of skills, behaviors, and attitudes that enable leaders to effectively perform their roles. Scholars highlight domains such as decision-making, communication, problem-solving, emotional intelligence, and strategic foresight as vital for effective local governance (Barkhuizen & Masale, 2022; Bryson, 2020). At the barangay level, these competencies ensure that leaders are able to balance limited resources, mediate disputes, engage diverse stakeholders, and sustain community trust. Conversely, the absence of these competencies often results in inefficiency, corruption, poor service delivery, and diminished citizen confidence in government institutions (Lameck, 2022).

Recent studies affirm the importance of transformational leadership theory in explaining how grassroots leaders can inspire, motivate, and sustain community development. Transformational leaders emphasize idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1990; Brown & Treviño, 2020). In barangay governance, these qualities translate into ethical leadership, clear vision-setting, participatory decision-making, and empathy toward community members—traits that are critical in sustaining democratic legitimacy and effective service delivery (Hourani et al., 2020).

Quezon City is the largest city in Metro Manila, comprising 142 barangays that vary widely in terms of population density, socioeconomic status, and urban development. Some barangays are highly urbanized commercial centers, while others remain residential or semi-rural. This diversity creates both opportunities and challenges for barangay officials. Leaders must address issues ranging from poverty and unemployment to crime prevention, environmental management, and community health services. Despite Quezon City's recognition for progressive governance initiatives—such as its environmental policies and inclusive urban development programs—local governance still faces persistent gaps, particularly in transparency, resource management, and citizen engagement (Geier, 2023).

Barangay officials often operate under resource constraints, political pressures, and the competing demands of diverse stakeholders. Studies suggest that while some barangay leaders excel in interpersonal and ethical leadership, they frequently lack the long-term strategic vision and problem-solving skills necessary for sustainable community development (Pilusa & Shipalana, 2020; Medina, 2023). These gaps have implications not only for the efficiency of barangay administration but also for public trust and democratic accountability.

Although a considerable body of literature has examined leadership styles in local governance across different countries, there remains limited empirical research focusing specifically on the

Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Economics, Engineering, and Social Sciences (ICEESS)
27 – 28 September 2025, KK Sapa Hotel, Sapa, Vietnam
Vales, J.S. Jr., *Leadership Competencies of Barangay Officials in Quezon City Towards a Better Grassroots Governance Framework, pp. 54 - 66*

55

leadership competencies of barangay officials in the Philippines. Existing studies either focus on municipal or provincial governance structures, or they examine leadership in non-governmental and corporate settings (Mickson & Anlesinya, 2019; Sudiantini, 2020). Few have investigated how barangay officials' competencies directly relate to perceived governance performance at the grassroots level. This gap is significant because barangays serve as the foundation of Philippine democracy; without competent leadership at this level, broader reforms in governance and service delivery will remain incomplete.

The findings of this study are expected to make both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it extends the application of transformational leadership theory to the Philippine grassroots governance context, providing empirical evidence of how specific competencies relate to governance outcomes. Practically, it informs policymakers, local government agencies, and training institutions about the strengths and weaknesses of barangay officials, thereby enabling the design of targeted interventions such as training modules, mentoring programs, and institutional reforms.

For the Quezon City government, the results can guide capacity-building initiatives aimed at improving transparency, accountability, and service responsiveness. For barangay leaders themselves, the study provides feedback on their competencies and areas needing improvement. For community members, the implications include more inclusive, participatory, and effective governance. Finally, for the academic community, the study enriches the literature on local governance, leadership development, and public administration in developing country contexts.

Research Objectives

This research aims to evaluate the leadership competencies of barangay officials in Quezon City and to develop a grassroots governance framework that addresses identified gaps. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Assess the demographic profile of barangay officials, including age, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status, to contextualize their leadership practices.
2. Determine the level of leadership competencies in nine domains: decision-making, visionary and strategic thinking, communication skills, emotional intelligence, problem-solving, ethical and integrity standards, interpersonal skills, adaptability, and resilience.
3. Examine the perceived level of governance performance in four areas: community engagement, service delivery, peace and order, and resource management.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive research design supplemented by qualitative insights to evaluate the leadership competencies of barangay officials in Quezon City and their perceived governance performance. The descriptive component was appropriate for documenting demographic profiles and competency levels, while the correlational aspect enabled an examination of potential relationships between leadership competencies and governance outcomes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In addition, qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were utilized to provide

Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Economics, Engineering, and Social Sciences (ICEESS)
27 – 28 September 2025, KK Sapa Hotel, Sapa, Vietnam
Vales, J.S. Jr., *Leadership Competencies of Barangay Officials in Quezon City Towards a Better Grassroots Governance Framework, pp. 54 - 66*

56

contextual depth to the survey results. By combining quantitative breadth and qualitative depth, the design offered a holistic understanding of grassroots governance dynamics.

The study was conducted in Quezon City, the largest city in Metro Manila, both in population and land area. Quezon City comprises 142 barangays spread across six political districts, representing diverse contexts in terms of population density, socioeconomic conditions, and urbanization levels. Barangays selected for this study included both highly urbanized and residential communities, ensuring that the sample reflected a cross-section of the city's governance realities.

Population and Sampling. The study targeted barangay officials and residents who could credibly evaluate leadership competencies and governance practices. Using stratified random sampling, 300 respondents were drawn from 18 barangays across six districts. These barangays were chosen based on population size and administrative relevance, thereby ensuring coverage of both large and smaller barangay contexts.

To address representativeness, a quota system was applied to balance responses across districts. Each barangay contributed approximately 16–17 respondents, producing a diversified dataset that minimized bias from over-represented areas. Inclusion criteria required that respondents:
1. Be at least 21 years old;
2. Have resided in the barangay for a minimum of three years (for residents); and
3. Hold a formal role as elected or appointed officials (for barangay leaders).

This ensured that participants had sufficient familiarity with local governance practices.

Respondents of the Study. Two groups of respondents were included:
1. Barangay officials such as barangay captains, councilors, treasurers, and secretaries, whose leadership competencies were directly assessed; and
2. Barangay residents and city government representatives, who provided perceptions of governance performance.

By triangulating perspectives from leaders and constituents, the study generated a more balanced view of grassroots leadership.

Research Instruments. Three sets of instruments were employed:

Profile Questionnaire. Collected demographic data such as age, gender, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status. A correction was made to ensure clarity—while earlier drafts mislabeled income brackets as "civil status," the final instrument explicitly measured monthly household income to reflect respondents' socioeconomic profiles.

Leadership Competency Survey. Assessed nine domains of leadership using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The competencies included decision-making, visionary and strategic thinking, communication, emotional intelligence, problem-solving, ethical and integrity standards, interpersonal skills, adaptability, and resilience. Each domain consisted of four items adapted from established leadership scales (e.g., Goleman, 2020; Bryson, 2020; Brown & Treviño, 2020).

Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Economics, Engineering, and Social Sciences (ICEESS)
27 – 28 September 2025, KK Sapa Hotel, Sapa, Vietnam
Vales, J.S. Jr., *Leadership Competencies of Barangay Officials in Quezon City Towards a Better Grassroots Governance Framework, pp. 54 - 66*

57

Perceived Governance Survey. Evaluated respondents' perceptions of barangay governance in four areas: community engagement, service delivery, peace and order, and resource management. This instrument also employed a 5-point Likert scale.

Validity and Reliability. The instruments underwent a two-step validation process:
 Five subject matter experts (SMEs) in public administration and leadership reviewed the items for relevance, clarity, and comprehensiveness. Suggestions regarding wording and redundancy were incorporated to improve construct coverage.

The revised instruments were pre-tested with 30 respondents from non-sample barangays in Quezon City. Reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha, with all domains surpassing the .70 threshold (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), indicating acceptable internal consistency. For example, emotional intelligence (.82), communication (.80), and decision-making (.78) demonstrated strong reliability.

Data Gathering Procedure. The researcher coordinated with barangay offices to secure permission to conduct the survey. Participants were approached during scheduled meetings, assemblies, and through house-to-house visits where necessary. To accommodate varying levels of digital literacy, surveys were distributed in both paper-based and online formats (via Google Forms. Each data collection session began with informed consent procedures, where the purpose, voluntary nature, and confidentiality of the study were explained. Respondents were assured that no identifying information would be disclosed and that participation would not affect their standing within the barangay.

Data Analysis. Frequencies and percentages were used for demographic data, while means and standard deviations summarized competency and governance scores. Interpretation followed established mean ranges (Very High = 4.00–3.21; High = 3.20–2.61; Low = 2.60–1.81; Very Low = 1.80–1.00).

Ethical consideration. Ethical protocols were strictly observed. Prior approval was obtained from the University of Perpetual Help System Dalta Research Ethics Committee. Barangay officials and residents were fully briefed on the study's aims, and written informed consent was secured before participation. The study ensured that data were anonymized and stored securely. Participants were informed that they could withdraw at any point without penalty. Given the political nature of barangay leadership, care was taken to phrase survey items neutrally and to protect respondents from potential political repercussions.

Results and Discussions

This section presents the demographic profile of respondents, the assessed leadership competencies of barangay officials across nine domains, and the perceived governance outcomes in Quezon City barangays. Data are drawn from 300 survey participants, complemented by interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). Narrative interpretations highlight both strengths and gaps, with reference to relevant literature to contextualize the findings.

Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Economics, Engineering, and Social Sciences (ICEESS)
27 – 28 September 2025, KK Sapa Hotel, Sapa, Vietnam
Vales, J.S. Jr., *Leadership Competencies of Barangay Officials in Quezon City Towards a Better Grassroots Governance Framework, pp. 54 - 66*

58

1. Profile of the Respondents

Table 1
Profile of the respondents
(N = 300)

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
30 years old and below	10	3.33
31 years old – 35 years old	30	10
36 years old – 40 years old	20	6.67
41 years old – 45 years old	85	28.33
46 years old – 50 years old	75	25
51 years old – 55 years old	50	16.67
56 years old and above	30	10
Educational Attainment		
High School Graduate	100	33.33
College Level	90	30
College Graduate	100	33.33
Post Graduate	10	3.33
Socioeconomic		
P20,001 to P40,000	100	33.33
P40,001 to P60,000	150	50
P60,001 to P80,000	50	16.67

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents (N = 300). The majority of barangay officials were aged 41–45 years old (28.33%) and 46–50 years old (25%), indicating that leadership is predominantly concentrated among middle-aged individuals. A smaller proportion were 30 years old and below (3.33%), suggesting limited youth representation in barangay governance.

In terms of educational attainment, respondents were evenly split between high school graduates (33.33%) and college graduates (33.33%), with 30% having attended but not completed college. Only 3.33% had postgraduate qualifications, highlighting the limited presence of advanced academic training among barangay leaders.

Socioeconomic data reveal that half of the respondents (50%) reported a monthly income between ₱40,001–₱60,000, followed by 33.33% earning ₱20,001–₱40,000. A smaller group (16.67%) earned ₱60,001–₱80,000, reflecting a predominantly middle-income leadership base.

Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Economics, Engineering, and Social Sciences (ICEESS)
27 – 28 September 2025, KK Sapa Hotel, Sapa, Vietnam
Vales, J.S. Jr., *Leadership Competencies of Barangay Officials in Quezon City Towards a Better Grassroots Governance Framework, pp. 54 - 66*

59

Overall, the table indicates that barangay leadership in Quezon City is largely composed of middle-aged, moderately educated, and middle-income individuals, which has implications for leadership development and governance capacity.

2. Level of competency of barangay leaders

The assessment of the leadership competencies of barangay officials in Quezon City revealed varying levels of strengths and weaknesses across nine domains. Decision-making was rated high, as officials reported relying on evidence and evaluating outcomes to improve governance, although they tended to struggle when required to make sound decisions under pressure. This supports the findings of Zhang et al. (2020), who emphasized the importance of evidence-based decision-making in strengthening responsiveness, but also reflects Li and Xu's (2020) observation that leaders often face challenges in making quick, effective decisions under stress. Visionary and strategic thinking, on the other hand, was rated low, indicating difficulty in articulating a compelling vision and anticipating future challenges, which mirrors Geier's (2023) argument that local leaders often focus on immediate tasks rather than long-term development. Communication competency was generally strong, with leaders demonstrating clarity in expressing ideas and effectiveness in resolving conflicts respectfully, though they were less capable of adapting their communication styles to diverse audiences. This aligns with Brewster et al. (2020), who stressed the role of communication in building trust, and Lyons et al. (2022), who found that inclusivity in communication remains a leadership gap.

Emotional intelligence was also found to be high, with barangay leaders showing empathy and the ability to build trust, but they were weaker in maintaining composure in stressful situations. These findings resonate with Goleman's (2020) framework on emotional intelligence and Waglay et al. (2020), who noted that leaders in local governance often lack emotional regulation. Problem-solving emerged as the weakest competency, with officials struggling to identify problems accurately, explore alternative solutions, and monitor outcomes. This supports Medina's (2023) conclusion that barangay leaders often misdiagnose community issues and Zhu et al.'s (2021) emphasis on systematic problem-solving as essential for innovation.

Ethics and integrity received the highest ratings, as leaders valued honesty and ethical practices, although they showed less consistency when pressured by political or resource constraints. This is consistent with Brown and Treviño (2020), who found that ethical leadership strengthens legitimacy, but vulnerabilities emerge under external pressures.

Interpersonal skills were likewise rated high, with officials showing respect for differing opinions and competence in resolving disputes, though relationship-building varied across individuals. These results are in line with DeVito (2019), who highlighted that interpersonal competence fosters collaboration in governance. Adaptability was rated low, indicating difficulty in adjusting to new information or unexpected disruptions, which undermines responsiveness in changing environments. This finding is consistent with Smith (2020), who argued that adaptive leadership is vital in volatile governance contexts. Finally, resilience was rated high, as barangay leaders showed perseverance and positivity in their roles, although they were less effective in encouraging resilience among their colleagues and constituents, echoing Caza and Milton's (2020) observation that resilience must extend beyond individuals to create collective capacity.

Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Economics, Engineering, and Social Sciences (ICEESS)
27 – 28 September 2025, KK Sapa Hotel, Sapa, Vietnam
Vales, J.S. Jr., *Leadership Competencies of Barangay Officials in Quezon City Towards a Better Grassroots Governance Framework, pp. 54 - 66*

60

Overall, the results indicate that barangay officials possess strong interpersonal, ethical, and relational competencies that support trust and collaboration, but they lack essential forward-looking and adaptive skills such as strategic vision, problem-solving, and flexibility, which are critical for effective grassroots governance.
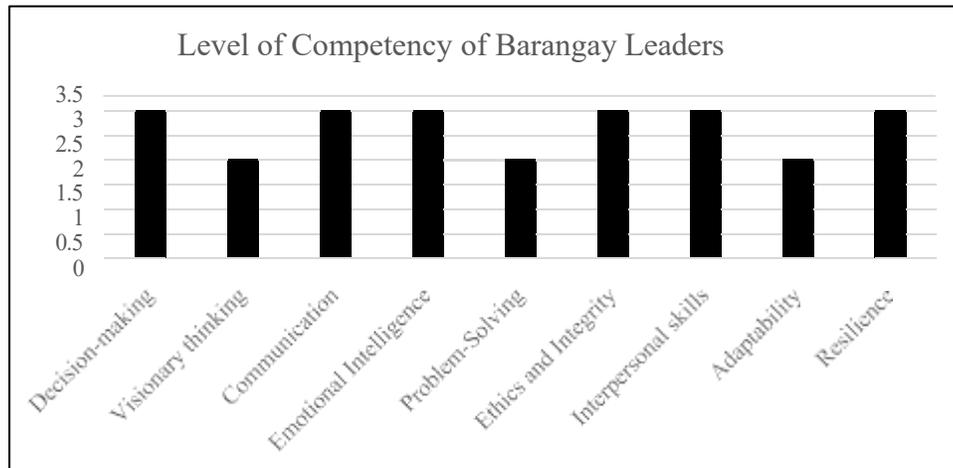

Figure 1. Level of Competency pf Barangay Leaders

The figure illustrates the mean scores of barangay leaders across nine leadership competency domains using a 1–4 Likert scale. Results show high levels in ethics and integrity (M = 3.17), communication (M = 3.16), emotional intelligence (M = 3.11), interpersonal skills (M = 3.10), resilience (M = 3.05), and decision-making (M = 3.06). However, competencies in problem-solving (M = 1.99), visionary thinking (M = 2.06), and adaptability (M = 2.08) were rated low, indicating key areas for improvement in barangay leadership development.

3. Perceived level of Governance

The governance performance of barangay leaders in Quezon City revealed both strengths and weaknesses across different areas. Community engagement was rated high, indicating that officials were effective in maintaining communication and encouraging participation. This finding is consistent with Taylor and Kent's (2020) argument that dialogic engagement strengthens participatory governance. However, barangay leaders were less effective in directly involving citizens in decision-making, suggesting that participatory mechanisms such as assemblies and participatory budgeting are not yet fully institutionalized. As Uddin (2019) emphasizes, true empowerment goes beyond consultation and requires active citizen involvement in decision-making.

Service delivery, on the other hand, was rated low and emerged as the most critical governance gap. Officials encountered challenges in addressing community concerns promptly, ensuring efficiency, and

Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Economics, Engineering, and Social Sciences (ICEESS)
27 – 28 September 2025, KK Sapa Hotel, Sapa, Vietnam
Vales, J.S. Jr., *Leadership Competencies of Barangay Officials in Quezon City Towards a Better Grassroots Governance Framework, pp. 54 - 66*

61

managing resources effectively. These weaknesses reflect Dodd et al.'s (2021) observation that resource scarcity and bureaucratic inefficiency limit responsiveness, and support Tribble's (2023) claim that poor service delivery erodes citizen trust. This gap undermines the responsiveness principle of good governance and contradicts the strengths barangay leaders showed in decision-making and communication, indicating that informed policies do not always translate into effective operations.

Peace and order were also rated low despite very high collaboration with law enforcement. This outcome points to a reliance on external agencies rather than the development of grassroots systems for conflict resolution and prevention. Scholars such as Ayeo-eo et al. (2022) and EPRA (2024) stress the importance of mechanisms like the Barangay Justice System for sustaining local peace, while Sampson (2019) argues that preventive, community-based approaches are more sustainable than reactive policing. The reliance on external institutions highlights a paradox: leaders are effective in building partnerships but weak in developing localized systems.

Resource management was rated high, particularly in terms of resource utilization and innovation. However, financial transparency was rated low, exposing a governance gap. Kaufmann and Kraay (2019) highlight that accountability requires transparency, and without it, even effective use of resources can foster mistrust. This reflects Lameck's (2022) observation that the absence of transparency undermines legitimacy, even where service delivery appears effective.

Taken together, these findings reveal that while barangay officials in Quezon City excel in ethical conduct and interpersonal relations, weaknesses in strategic thinking, adaptability, and problem-solving limit their capacity to improve service delivery, peace and order, and accountability. This supports Enwereuzor et al. (2020), who argue that leadership competencies directly shape governance effectiveness. The results extend Transformational Leadership Theory by showing that idealized influence and individualized consideration are present, but inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation remain underdeveloped.
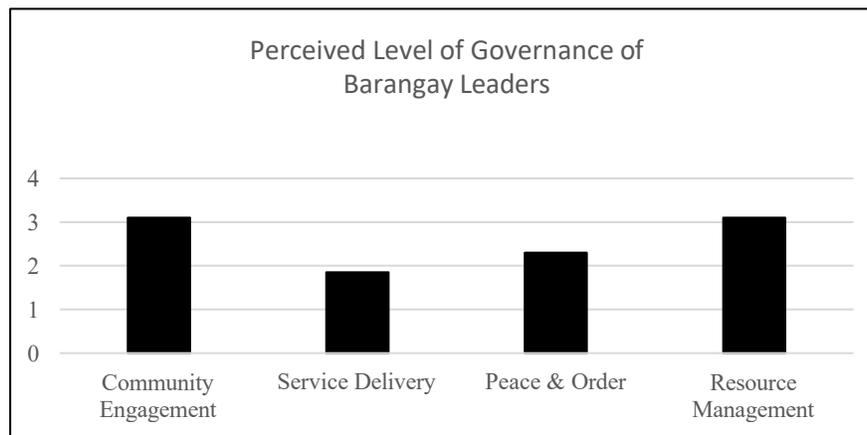

Figure 2. Perceived Level of Governance of Barangay Leaders

The bar chart presents the perceived governance performance of barangay leaders across four domains. Community Engagement (M = 3.10) and Resource Management (M = 3.10) were rated high, reflecting strengths in communication and resource utilization. In contrast, Service Delivery (M = 1.85) and

Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Economics, Engineering, and Social Sciences (ICEESS)
27 – 28 September 2025, KK Sapa Hotel, Sapa, Vietnam
Vales, J.S. Jr., *Leadership Competencies of Barangay Officials in Quezon City Towards a Better Grassroots Governance Framework, pp. 54 - 66*

62

Peace & Order (M = 2.30) were rated low, indicating inefficiencies in addressing community needs and heavy reliance on external law enforcement. The results highlight that while barangay leaders perform well in participatory engagement and resource use, they require improvement in delivering timely services and maintaining local peace and order.

Practical implications highlight the need for targeted leadership development programs focusing on foresight, adaptive leadership, and systematic problem-solving, such as simulation-based training and case-based workshops (Zhu et al., 2021). Institutional reforms are also necessary, particularly the institutionalization of barangay assemblies, citizen charters, community audits, and digital feedback platforms to strengthen participation and accountability (Qian & Cheng, 2022). Policy directions for the Quezon City government and the DILG include aligning training programs with the Grassroots Governance Framework to ensure evidence-based and responsive interventions. Moreover, community empowerment requires leaders to foster a culture where citizens are active participants rather than mere recipients of services, thereby building trust and accountability.

Theoretically, this study affirms the relevance of Transformational Leadership Theory in grassroots governance but also highlights its limitations in resource-constrained contexts. While barangay leaders display interpersonal and ethical strengths, their lack of visionary and problem-solving skills underscores the need to expand transformational theory to incorporate adaptive and operational competencies. Additionally, the results emphasize the role of institutional theory in governance, as effectiveness depends not only on individual leadership competencies but also on the institutional systems that support or constrain performance (Peters, 2020).

Conclusions

The study concluded that barangay officials in Quezon City possess strong interpersonal, ethical, and relational competencies that support trust, communication, and community collaboration, but they lack critical forward-looking and adaptive skills such as strategic thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability. These gaps directly affect governance outcomes, resulting in relatively high performance in community engagement and resource utilization but persistent weaknesses in service delivery, peace and order, and financial transparency.

Recommendations

This study recommended that targeted leadership development programs focusing on strategic foresight, adaptive governance, and systematic problem-solving be implemented to strengthen barangay officials' capacities. Furthermore, institutionalizing participatory mechanisms and enhancing transparency measures will ensure more accountable, inclusive, and effective grassroots governance.

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27 – 28 September 2025, KK Sapa Hotel, Sapa, Vietnam
Vales, J.S. Jr., *Leadership Competencies of Barangay Officials in Quezon City Towards a Better Grassroots Governance Framework, pp. 54 - 66*

63

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27 – 28 September 2025, KK Sapa Hotel, Sapa, Vietnam
Vales, J.S. Jr., *Leadership Competencies of Barangay Officials in Quezon City Towards a Better Grassroots Governance Framework, pp. 54 - 66*

64

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27 – 28 September 2025, KK Sapa Hotel, Sapa, Vietnam
Vales, J.S. Jr., *Leadership Competencies of Barangay Officials in Quezon City Towards a Better Grassroots Governance Framework, pp. 54 - 66*

65

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Vales, J.S. Jr., *Leadership Competencies of Barangay Officials in Quezon City Towards a Better Grassroots Governance Framework, pp. 54 - 66*

66