

STRESS AND COPING MECHANISMS OF PUNONG BARANGAYS: BASIS FOR AN INTERVENTION PLAN

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ABSTRACT

Stress and its management would be of special significance to an individual. This study determined the dominant sources of stress and coping mechanisms among the Punong Barangays from the City of Cagayan de Oro and the Province of Misamis Oriental using descriptive survey method. The study also made use of descriptive statistics; mean, standard deviation, frequency, percentage and percentage distribution on all variables, dependent and independent. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to test correlation between respondent's profile, coping mechanisms, and sources of stress. Regression analysis was used to measure the extent of stress influence. The study found out that respondents manifested some level of stress in fulfilling their roles, duties and responsibilities. The study concludes that dominant sources of stress among the respondents are work-related, family-related, and personal-related. It is recommended that Local Chief Executives - City and Municipal mayors - as well as Local Government Operations Officers of the Department of the Interior and Local Government assigned in each local government unit and exercising supervisory jurisdiction over Punong Barangays should develop an informed and conceptualized model of stress coping mechanisms. An intervention plan is designed based on the findings of the study.

Keywords: Stress Management, Stress Coping Mechanisms, Punong Barangays, Descriptive-survey design, Philippines, Asia

INTRODUCTION

Stress is a part of human life. Individuals in this modern world experience stress both in their personal lives and workplaces. This is because of the multiple roles people play in both scenarios. And these roles are becoming more complex. Republic Act 7160, also known as the Local Government Code of 1992, provides that "Punong Barangay shall enforce all laws and ordinances which are applicable within the barangay; negotiate, enter into, and sign contracts for and in behalf of the barangay; maintain public order in the barangay; call and preside over the sessions of the Sangguniang Barangay and the barangay assembly; appoint

or replace the barangay treasurer, the barangay secretary, and other appointive barangay officials; organize and lead an emergency group whenever the same may be necessary for the maintenance of peace and order; prepare the annual supplemental budgets of the barangay; approve vouchers relating to the disbursement of barangay funds; enforce laws and regulation relating to pollution control and protection of the environment; administer the operation of Katarungang Pambarangay; exercise general supervision over the activities of Sangguniang Kabataan; ensure the delivery of basic services; conduct an annual Palarong Pambarangay; promote the general welfare of the barangay; and exercise such other powers and perform such other

duties and functions as may be prescribed by law or ordinance.”

Even this list of roles alone is stressful to read. Thus, the researchers decided to conduct this study. Also, there is a dearth of materials and literatures directly dealing with stress and coping mechanisms of Punong Barangays. Punong barangays are receiving only honoraria, thus their services can be considered as “labor of love”. Yet they are called upon to serve their constituents.

This study is anchored on Cooley’s Symbolic Interaction Theory, which claims that individuals are capable of creating solutions to their own problems. It adheres that the “self” is influenced and shaped by social processes, in this instance “stress,” and the capacity to symbolize. Human action is caused by complex interaction between and within individuals. Dynamic social activities take place among persons and they act according to how they define this situation (Mazo, 2015).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to determine the sources of stress and coping mechanisms among Punong Barangays in the City of Cagayan de Oro and the Province of Misamis Oriental in the year 2017-2018. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following:

- 1) the profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, marital status, number of years in service, highest education attainment, family monthly income, number of children and attitude towards job; 2) the dominant sources of stress as perceived by the respondents based on work-related; family-related; and personal-related; 3.) the coping mechanisms do the respondents use considering the physical exercise; sports; religious/spiritual activities; socialization; sexual activity; hobbies/leisure activities; motivation; balanced-diet/supplement; and counseling; 4.) the results of the in-depth interview and focus group discussions with select group of respondents; and 5.) Intervention Plan that can be designed based on the findings of the study.

METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study was the descriptive survey method of research. Descriptive method is useful for investigating problems especially those concerning assessment of attitudes, opinions, preferences, practices, and procedures. According to Aggarwal (2008) as cited by Salaria (2012), descriptive research is devoted to the gathering of information about prevailing conditions or situations for the purpose of description and interpretation. This type of research method is not simply amassing and tabulating facts but includes proper analyses, interpretation, comparisons, identification of trends and relationships.

The study was conducted in City of Cagayan de Oro and the Province of Misamis Oriental in 2017-2018. The study made use of descriptive statistics; mean, standard deviation, frequency, percentage and percentage distribution on all variables. A master list of barangay officials was taken both from the Office of the Liga ng mga Barangay of the City of Cagayan de Oro and the Office of the Liga ng mga Barangay of the Province of Misamis Oriental.

The researchers distributed the survey questionnaires to the Punong Barangays after the requests for permission and approval to conduct the study from the presidents of Liga ng mga Barangay of Cagayan de Oro and Misamis Oriental was granted. To save time, the survey questionnaires were distributed to the respondent Punong Barangays in the City of Cagayan de Oro during their year-end assembly while the survey questionnaires for the Punong Barangays for the component cities and municipalities in the Province of Misamis Oriental were directly given to the respective Local Government Operations Officers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Profile of the respondents

There were 350 respondents in the study. They were all incumbent Punong Barangays

from the City of Cagayan de Oro and the Province of Misamis Oriental.

1.1 Age. The age bracket of 42-49 got the highest frequency with 99 respondents. This means that most of the respondents were in this age bracket. This also means that they were in their mid-life and matured enough to render public service to their constituents. However, there were six respondents who were in the age bracket of 18-25 years old. This implies that members of Generation Y were also actively participating in the local political activities. Makabenta (2015) opined that their sheer numbers make Generation Y a factor in the elections. They are the largest generation in Philippine history, bigger than any earlier generation”.

1.2 Marital status. There were 300 respondents who were married. This implies that married men and women were responsible enough in performing the tasks assigned to them. Married people were serious in handling their jobs as they have children who depended on them. They were usually service-oriented and dedicated to the position entrusted to them. Also, there are five respondents who were separated. This implies what while they were alone working and supporting their families, yet they still find time to join political exercises for the purpose of serving their constituents. However, not many separated people were joining politics probably because they were busy earning a living and raising their children.

1.3 Number of years in service. There were 97 respondents who have been serving their respective communities for 9-12 years, to which bracket also got the highest frequency. This implies that many of the respondents were seasoned, serving 9 to 12 years. This means that they have already gained enough experience in governance. Also, there were 81 respondents who were in the service from three to five years. This implies that they were new in barangay governance and still have to learn more about the nuances in running the affairs of the barangay. In spite of this, however, their knowledge and skills can be upgraded and leveled up by regularly attending seminars, trainings and workshops on management and

leadership development in public governance. The Local Government Academy had regularly been conducting trainings and seminars among barangay officials for the purpose of empowering them to become knowledgeable, accountable and transparent.

1.4 Educational qualifications. There were 118 respondents who were college graduates, which also obtained the highest frequency. This implies that most of the respondents have completed college degrees and were educated enough in handling the affairs of their offices. Their high educational attainment could be a big help in discharging their duties and responsibilities. There was one respondent who earned a doctorate degree, which obtained the lowest frequency. This respondent had an advanced education which could be an advantage in running the affairs of the barangay government. Van Vugt (2006) as cited by Leonen et al. (2017) argued that educated people can do certain task easily and efficiently compared to those who were less educated.

1.5 Family monthly income. There were 108 respondents whose earnings were between P10,000-P19,999 a month, which bracket also obtained the highest frequency. And there were eight respondents who were earning P40,000 to 49,999 a month, which also obtained the lowest frequency. This implies that most of the respondents were receiving honorarium that was considerably higher than what was provided in the Local Government Code to support their families. The Local Government Code of 1991 provides that barangay officials shall be compensated in the form of honorarium at an amount not less than P1,000 per month for the Punong Barangay. Executive Order No. 332 provides that the rates of honorarium prescribed in Section 393 (a) of RA 7160 may be increased/adjusted.

1.6 Number of children. There were 107 respondents who have two children, to which bracket obtained the highest frequency. This implies that majority of the respondents have small families to raise themselves and were probably responding to the call of the government for family planning and responsible

parenthood. However, there were 20 respondents who have six and more children, which bracket obtained the lowest frequency. This means that some Punong Barangays have large families to attend to. Based on the 2010 census, the Philippine Statistics Authority reported that the present average household size were 4.6 persons, which was lower compared to the average of 5.0 persons per household in 2000 and 5.3 persons per household in 1990 for the entire country.

1.7 Attitude towards job. For attitude towards job, the indicator *"I love my vocation as Barangay Chairman"* obtained the highest mean score of 3.70 which was described and interpreted as strongly agree/very positive. This implies that majority of the respondents give high regards on their vocation to serve the community and their constituents. Susanty, et al. (2013) affirmed that the happier the individual, the higher is the level of job satisfaction. When a public servant is happy and the satisfaction level is high, their commitment to render their functions, duties and responsibilities to the constituents is similarly high.

2. Dominant sources of stress as perceived by the respondents

Elected public officials' responses to stressors at work, family and personal life may be positive or negative, depending on the number of factors. This study takes into consideration the dominant sources of stress among the respondents which were categorized as work-related, family-related, and personal-related sources of stress.

2.1 Work-related sources of stress. For work-related sources of stress, the indicator *"Lots of work responsibilities"* obtained the highest mean score of 3.25, which was described as "Distinctly Part". This implies that respondents considered attending to the concerns of their constituents as taxing their mental, emotional, physical and intellectual well-being, since their working hours do not permit them to spend quality time with their family. These results conformed to the findings of Dopkeen, et al. (2014) which concluded that

stress in the workplace continues to be a highly pervasive problem, having both direct and negative effects on individuals experiencing it

2.2 Family-related sources of stress.

For family-related sources of stress, the indicator *"Increase in financial obligations"* obtained the highest mean score of 2.77 which was described as "Distinctly Part". This implies that being a Punong Barangay and serving the constituents in the community is practically a demanding job in terms of financial obligation. This is because some of the constituents find it easy to approach the Punong Barangay whenever they need assistance, be it financial and otherwise to meet their needs and problems.

2.3 Personal-related sources of stress.

For personal-related sources of stress, the indicator *"Too many things to do at once"* obtained the highest mean score of 3.02, which was described as "distinctly part". This implies that evidently Punong Barangays were fully occupied in performing their responsibilities as mandated by law. Barangay officials play a significant role to the development of the nation. Section 384 of the Local Government Code of 1991 states that: "As the basic political unit, the barangay serves as the primary planning and implementing unit of government policies, plans, programs, projects and activities in the community, and as a forum wherein the collective views of the people may be expressed, crystallized and considered, and where disputes may be amicably settled."

3. Coping mechanisms of the respondents

Several coping mechanisms have been developed thus far to lower stress. In this study, the coping mechanisms for which the respondents can choose from included exercise, sports, religious/spiritual activities, socializing, sex, hobbies/leisure activities, motivation, balanced-diet and counseling. Each coping mechanism is provided with a list of several choices or indicators.

3.1 Exercise. For exercise, the indicator *"Walking"* obtained the highest mean score of 3.18 which was described as "Most of the time".

This implies that the basic physical exercise as coping mechanism that the respondents resorted to when they were in stressful situations was through walking. This is understandable as such activity do not incur expenses on their part. Kim, et al. (2014) posited that potential mechanisms between physical exercise and well-being in the context of leisure appears to be meaningful in suggesting a hint that leisure-time physical exercise contributes to effective problem-focused coping through elicitation of positive emotion.

3.2 Sports. For sports, the indicator “Basketball” obtained the highest mean score of 2.74 and described as “Most of the time”. This implies that respondents found basketball as the easiest sports activities to engage themselves with when they were stressed. It is understandable as Filipinos are fond of basketball games. In every barangay, there is a basketball court and in every corner of the village, there is a makeshift basketball court. This finding conformed to the claim of Dime Athletics (2015) that basketball, played alone or in a team setting, can reduce stress. Decreasing your stress will help an individual focus and have more energy to complete tasks on and off the court.

3.3 Religious/Spiritual Activities. For religious/spiritual activities, the indicator “Attending mass/worship service” obtained the highest mean score of 3.08 and described as “Most of the time”. This implies that respondents would resort to religious and spiritual activities in order to relieve their stress. Filipinos are very religious people. This is probably because the Philippines was once colonized by the Spaniards for 300 years. Religion has been attributed to improving mental health, setting precedence for physical health, functioning as a social support mechanism, and as an intrapersonal resource (Krause, 2011). These results conformed to the findings of Lucchetti, et al. (2012) when they posited that spiritual-religious coping reduces the emotional distress caused by stressful events of life, such as loss or change, which gives suffering meaning and makes it more bearable.

3.4 Socialization. For socialization, the indicator “Videoke singing” obtained the highest

mean score of 2.96 described as “Most of the time”. This implies that majority of the respondents found videoke singing as the most effective coping mechanism in terms of socialization. This further implies that respondents found videoke singing as the community’s most accepted way of socializing with others by showcasing their talents in singing. This finding supported Rabin (2015) who claimed that videoke singing melts away stress and leaves you feeling relaxed and happy.

3.5 Sexual activity. For sexual activity, the indicator “sexual intercourse” obtained the highest mean score of 2.29 described as “Sometimes”. This means that majority of the respondents engaged in sexual intercourse to relieve their stress. This implies that respondents found sexual intercourse as a great way to relieve stress. This also implies that respondents found sexual activity as an effective coping mechanism whenever they experience stressful situations. Sex can be a great stress reliever. It makes people feel relaxed and temporarily takes away their worries. It may seem like an addiction, but it is not. But Goliszek (2014) warned that stress can also keep us from getting in the mood and, worse, not being able to perform sexually.

3.6 Hobbies and leisure. For hobbies and leisure, the indicator “Watching TV” obtained the highest mean score of 3.52 described as “All the time”. It implies that watching TV shows was the most effective coping mechanism of Punong Barangays in terms of leisure and hobby. Almost all households have television sets. Thus, watching TV is the most common activity the respondents would engage themselves to drive their stress away. This result conformed to the findings of the study of Rabago-Mingoa (2017) who concluded that watching television is an effective way of relieving stress. Leisure is one of the ways of coping or as an attempt to make better lifestyle decisions – healthier decisions.

3.7 Motivation. For motivation, the indicator “Feeling my job is important” obtained the highest mean score of 3.54 described as “All the time”. It implies that majority of the respondents felt that their job/work as leaders in the community is significantly important. This

also implies that respondents have a strong self-motivation to showcase to the community their best efforts in performing their roles and responsibilities. Patience is the key to handling with people. They should work in terms together with the council members for the good of the barangay. These findings is supported by Dawes, et al. (2011) who said that highly motivated individuals can easily perform the tasks assigned to them.

3.8 Balanced-diet. For balanced-diet, the indicator *"I eat fruits and vegetables"* obtained the highest mean score of 3.35 described as "All the time". This implies that among the indicators in coping mechanism in terms of Balanced-Diet/Supplement, majority of the respondents considered eating fruits and vegetables as a habit to maintain good health, fight diseases and to relieve stress. A well-balanced diet is important in maintaining the health and getting stress under control. The findings supported the results of the study by Nguyen of the University of Sydney as cited by Fletcher (2017) which concluded that eating more fruits and veggies may help ease depression, stress and anxiety.

3.9 Counseling. For counseling, the indicator *"I seek advice from the DILG officer"* obtained the highest mean score of 3.00 described as "Most of the time". This implies respondents sought guidance on how to operate the local governance in the barangay from the DILG's Local Government Operations Officers assigned in their respective places. They have to deal with this as a form of respect to the person who exercises supervision over their affairs and serves as their conduits to the higher authorities. The findings were consistent with the mandate of the local DILG Officer which is to enhance LGU capabilities to improve their performance and enable them to effectively and efficiently deliver services to their constituents.

4. In-depth interview and focus group discussions with select group of respondents

The respondent-interviewees agreed that there was always stress involved in the performance of their duties, especially when the constituents did not or opted not to cooperate with the programs of the government. They said that their motivation when they ran for public office was to serve their constituents. They also said that they extend a little financial assistance to their constituents taken from their own pockets. They all agreed that the people should be re-oriented as to the role and functions of the Punong Barangays based on the Local Government Code.

The respondents said that that occurrences of calamity in their communities also caused them stress as they have to look after the welfare of their constituents. They said that they cope for their stress by watching shows on TV and by spending quality time with their families. They said that walking or hiking and jogging were effective relievers of their stress.

5. Focus Group Discussions

The respondents said their basic function and role as Punong Barangay is to steer the affairs of the barangay government which include overseeing the enforcement of applicable ordinances and implementation of various projects, maintaining peace and order, as well as planning for the economic development of the barangay. They said they also make representation with officials at the higher level to seek funding support and assistance for the development of the barangay, especially in developing areas that have potentials in boosting the local tourism industry. The respondents agreed that they feel as certain degree of stress in performing their roles and functions but not at the level that would lead them to decide to quit from their posts. They said that the main stressor in their career was the act of their constituents seeking financial assistance from them. They said they can feel the situation and sympathize with their poor constituents yet they have no resources to meet all their needs. Another stressor they shared was when their place was hit by calamities like flooding, fire and other tragedies wherein they have to look after



the welfare of the affected residents and calamity victims. The respondents said that the most common activity they resorted to in order to relieve their stress was to spend quality time with their family like outings during weekend. Watching TV shows and walking within their barangay were also the most common activity they engaged in coping their stress.

The respondents said they cannot fault their residents from asking help, but just the same the government must innovate programs to help the less fortunate constituents like expanding the implementation of the Pantawid ng Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps).

The respondents suggested that there should be conducted regular orientations among the residents about the roles and functions of the barangay officials, especially Punong Barangays, saying the people should be oriented that Punong Barangays are not social welfare agency wherein they can seek assistance for their financial needs.

5. Intervention Plan

Based on the results of the study, an intervention plan was designed. It contains two training designs. The first was the training design for the conduct of a Stress Management Seminar to be participated by Punong Barangays and the second was the training design for the conduct of an Orientation and Awareness Seminar to be participated by the residents of the Barangay. The purpose of the Stress Management Workshop for the Punong Barangays is to help participants develop and implement effective strategies to prevent and manage stress at work. Meanwhile, the purpose of the holding of the Orientation and Awareness Seminar among the constituents of the barangays is to orient them about the role of the barangay officials. The residents need to be aware as to the role of their elected community leaders.

CONCLUSIONS

In light of the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The study succeeded in identifying the relationship between stress and coping mechanisms among the Punong Barangays. The respondents manifested higher level of stress in fulfilling their roles, duties and responsibilities as mandated by the Constitution and the Local Government Code.
2. Majority of the respondents agreed that stress is distinctly part of their duties and responsibilities. The stress was caused by lot of work responsibilities, increase in financial obligations and too many things to do at once. This result finds support from Daft (2013) who said that almost all jobs have some level of stress associated with task demands.
3. While majority of the respondents agreed that they feel a certain degree of stress in performing their roles and functions, however, it is not at the level that would lead them to decide to quit from their posts. The respondents would drive their stress away by engaging themselves in physical exercise, playing basketball, attending religious activities, videoke singing, watching TV shows, taking balanced-diet foods and supplements and seeking advices and guidance from government authorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the foregoing findings and conclusions of the study, the following are recommended:

1. The Liga ng mga Barangay may conduct a Stress Management Seminar among the Punong Barangays for them to discover the effective ways of managing stress. The seminar will introduce to the participants various approaches in handling stressful situations at work that affect productivity in the organization.
2. The Liga ng mga Barangay may initiate activities featuring stress relieving activities such as basketball, videoke singing, physical exercises and calisthenics to be participated

- by Punong Barangays as a way to cope their stress.
3. Residents of the barangays may be oriented about the roles of Barangay Officials, particularly the roles of Punong Barangays so that they will not rely on them for support and assistance whenever they have encountered personal problems.
 4. Local Chief Executives—city and municipal mayors—as well as Local Government Operations Officers of the Department of the Interior and Local Government assigned in each local government unit and exercising supervisory jurisdiction over Punong Barangays—may develop an informed and conceptualized model of stress coping mechanisms. The data obtained from this undertaking could be used by them as basis in developing a sustained stress coping mechanism for the Punong Barangays under their watch.
 5. Human Resource Management practitioners may design programs and activities aimed at enhancing potentials and leadership skills of Punong Barangays.
 6. Future researchers may conduct similar studies as there is a dearth of literatures dealing with stress and its coping mechanisms among public officials, particularly Punong Barangays.

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