

## POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN ILOILO CITY: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

*By Lea S. Zapanta, DPA and Irving Domingo L. Rio, MPA*

### ABSTRACT

---

*Citizen inputs are greatly needed by officials of our local government units for the formulation and implementation of significantly relevant and responsive development programs and projects. Thus, the participation of citizens in the political process should be of paramount importance to these public officials. The findings of this study may help fill up the need for the citizens' perspective in governance, specifically, in the Iloilo City government. The study examined the nature and extent of political participation of the residents of present day Iloilo City. Using the factors of political values, political attitudes and political behavior as components of political participation, efforts were made to relate these three factors to the socio-economic characteristics of the sample Ilonggo respondents in order to determine whether any significant relationship existed. Overall, the findings of the study revealed the following: The factor of number of family members was significantly related to either political values, attitudes, or behaviors, particularly in voicing issues that affected the respondents' families. The factor of age was as significantly related to their political behavior while education factor appeared to be the most dominant factor motivating the respondents' political participation. Relatedly, the higher the educational level of the respondents, the stronger was their declaration of concern on the political processes and their participation. What is very significant was their declaration of cynicism or their doubts about the relevance of the political process in meeting their articulated needs. Likewise, the integrity of some politicians and/or public officials was held suspect by respondents across all levels of the economic and educational classes, as well as, by age and sex. As their forbears have done, present-day Ilonggos are bound by the tradition of kabalaslan; their votes reflect gratitude for past favors given by politicians/candidates; this subjective political morality of the voter denied the public "good".*

---

## INTRODUCTION

### *Rationale and Design of the Study*

Development theorists have observed that most citizens in developing societies of the Third World are politically inept and immature in the context of the democratic perspective. Hence, political modernization is one prerequisite for the development of these societies. Accordingly, they must be enabled to engage in interest articulation, interest aggregation, political communication, political socialization and political recruitment (Muhi et al, 1993; Pye, 1965).

All these means that people must be able to communicate and express their felt needs and interests to government. They must be able to reconcile or unite their need-differences to facilitate prioritization by government decision-makers. Further still, they must be able to interact and participate in the political processes, principally, in voting, in consultative assemblies and by membership in political parties of their choice, among others. All these are relatively, sadly lacking in Philippine society, today. This lack of adequate and responsive political participation has led to a kind of governance that is relatively ineffectual in promoting the general welfare.

True, many Filipinos in this decade have engaged in protests rallies and demonstrations and in the ousters of their erring and corrupt presidents. Equally true is the fact that present day Filipinos have become more vigilant in protecting their "consumer interests" related to food and water supply, housing, drugs and medical supplies, energy rates and garbage disposal, among others. But these present-day socio-political and economic behaviors are inadequate to restore their right to self-governance nor ensure their physical survival. Over time, they have fully abdicated this right to their officials, unknowingly or knowingly. But the citizens alone, and only they, alone, fully know their needs *well* and thus can govern themselves *well*. For in our representative government, citizens have merely *entrusted* to their public officials their right and obligation to self-determination. Public officials, elective and appointive, have been chosen by the people *only* to assist the latter in managing their lives and solving their problems.

The running of government intends to solve social problems, solvable *only* and *provisionally*, by citizens and the public at-large, *along with* and *assisted* by their public officials (Wilson, 1984). Self-governance, implies that citizens **must** never allow others to take away this right and obligation **except with their consent**. And if individuals are to preserve this right, then they must be allowed to *substantively* participate in the running of the affairs of the state. **They must** participate in the making of policy and programs, **and in the running of these** programs projects. **But the highly appreciated political consensus among citizens**

is misleading since it presupposes the existence of sensible public policies. But the problem is the making of rational and practicable public policy. Although government has the relevant expertise for rational decisions, citizens and publics are as necessary in policy formulation and implementation, the peoples' needs and interests are the reasons for the making of public policy (Wilson, 1984).

### *The Problem*

Policy planners and implementors have great need for citizen inputs to enable them to formulate and implement sound and responsive development programs / projects. Thus, values, attitudes and behaviors of citizens in a political process become of paramount importance to public officials and those others concerned with the understanding and consequent use of socio-political phenomena. What abounds in the literature is Western-oriented.

This study on political participation may be useful in the decision-making of public officials and citizen alike. Also, this work might shed light on the motives citizens hold while engaged in any political process. Earnestly, it is hoped that citizens and public officials, alike, might turn out to be better motivated in the discharge of their political rights and obligations in the light of the findings of this work

### *Objectives of the Study*

This study attempts to examine the nature of citizen participation in certain political processes in Iloilo City. It focused on Ilonggo values, attitudes and behaviors in relation to their participation in the political process. What must be underscored is the fact that previous and future events have and will have impact on their political behaviors during elections and beyond elections. The study examined citizens' thinking, feelings and doings related to political processes, during the last May 14, 2001 elections for the national and local officials, namely senators, congressmen and provincial, as well as municipal and city officials. Specifically, the study aims:

- 1) to describe the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and the Ilonggo underlying personal traits;
- 2) to determine whether the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents are associated with their political values, attitudes and behaviors; and
- 2) to examine the nature of political participation manifested by Iloilo City residents.

*Hypothesis*

There is no significant relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of the *Ilongo* voters and their political values, attitudes and behaviors.

*Theoretical Framework*

The study categorized Political Participation into three dimensions, namely: political values, political attitudes and political behavior. Then using several modified scales adapted from the work, "Measures of Political Attitudes", the three variables were examined as to whether each singly or inter-actively were working on the respondents, especially, as they voted during the last 14 May 2001 elections. Independent variables include respondents' characteristics such as their being Household head, age, sex, education, profession, livelihood, type of employment and ownership of communication facilities. Intervening variables are respondents' political values such as adherence to the democratic tenet, sense of civic competency and sense of citizen duty; and political attitudes such as political efficacy, political involvement, among others.

Dependent variables are respondents' political behavior such as voting, political discussions, political rallies / demonstrations, political partisanship, political communication, opinion leadership, among others. The diagram below illustrates the perspective of the study that presupposes the impact of the socio-economic characteristics on the three variables.

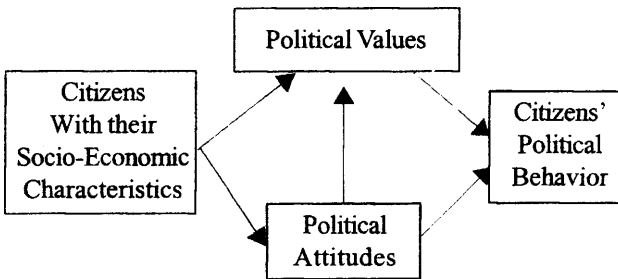


Figure 1. Political Participation Framework

### *Definition of Terms Used*

*Context of the Definitions.* People have been said to be political animals. In civilized societies, individual citizens and their public officials constantly engage in a struggle for power to force or influence others so that their needs can be met and satisfied. This is more so among public officials, who struggle for that power in order to gain positions in government so that they can dictate or formulate public policy. The term “political” always holds the connotation of “struggle for power”.

*Political Values* - are norms of conduct in thinking, feeling and acting, held in high regard by individuals in the belief that these norms can help them realize their individual needs as citizens; and both the individual and community needs as officials. Because of individual differences, citizens and officials may hold different and even opposing political values and cause them to interact with one another motivated by their desire to make their individual political values prevail.

*Political Attitudes* -are pre-dispositions or tendencies to think, feel, and act in the field of policy making and implementing of government programs and projects regarding individual and community needs held by citizens and officials alike. Again these pre-dispositions and tendencies may vary. Hence, these diverging attitudes may cause disharmony in the political process.

*Political Behavior* - are activities, overt or covert, undertaken by citizens and officials alike, as they are motivated by their differing political values and attitudes. These activities are responses to their values and attitudes triggered by environmental and individual factors. The end-activities are intended to change or maintain the individuals' environment or their individual selves. Again, activities may vary and hence cause the struggle among political actors in making their wills and behavior dominate a political situation.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Respondents*

Political participation in this study has been made actor, location, and time specific, focusing on citizens and their availability. Respondents chosen were city residents who voted during the last 14 May 2001 elections, residing in the barangays of the seven (7) districts of Iloilo City, namely, Iloilo City Proper, La Paz, Lapuz, Jaro, Mandurriao, Molo, and Arevalo. The number of respondents were randomly chosen on the basis of their availability and guided by the Iloilo City COMELEC VI List of Voters. The respondents were further categorized by sex, age, family size, Household

Head role, educational attainment, livelihood, profession, type of employment, distance of residence to the respective polling place and ownership of communication / entertainment facilities. The sample size of 259 was determined by the figures given in the *Table on Sample Sizes for Random Selection of Infinite and Finite Population*, (de Jesus, Philippine Association of Graduate Education, 1984) with their respective Confidence Levels and Standard Deviations.

### *Data Collection*

Though random quota sampling, data were collected by face-to-face interviews using structured interview schedules. This activity was closely supervised by the Assistant Study Leader.

### *Data Processing and Analysis*

Data collected were processed using the SPSS PC + Version 10 software. The data were assessed by means of cumulative frequency and percentage distributions. Certain variables were treated by means of cross tabulations and their chi-square ( $X^2$ ) values were derived to determine the relationships, if any existed.

## **MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

To understand political participation in Iloilo City, one has to consider Ilonggo as an individual interacting with other Ilonggos in the political process. As stated, political participation is the sum total of all political behaviors manifested by citizens and officials alike as they are motivated by their political values and attitudes. More basic is the fact that the respondents' socio-economic characteristics affect their political behaviors.

### *The Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents and the Ilonggo Underlying Personal Traits*

Shown in Table 1 are the socio-economic characteristics of the survey respondents. Result of the study shows that majority of the respondents are female (51.7 percent) and are between 15 to 25 years old (58.7 percent). When it comes to highest educational attainment, almost half (49.0 percent) of the respondents are

college level and one-fifth (20.5 percent) are bachelor's degree holders. There are four respondents (1.5 percent) with doctorate degree. Six in every ten respondents (63.3 percent) indicated that there are 3 to 6 members in their family and almost one-fourth have more than six family members. The highest proportion of the respondents (18.9 percent) is not gainfully employed but there are 40 (15.4 percent) who are government employees.

The Ilonggo characteristics of *mabu-ot*, *mabinuligon*, *matinahuron*, *maluy-lu-on*, *matinu-manon sang iya kabangda-nan* and other traits for which they are well known can explain the respondents' political involvement as they are causally related to their values, attitudes and behavior.

His basic traits as an individual Ilonggo underlie his nature as a socio-political actor. His easy-going nature and softness of speech makes him sound less of a belligerent political actor but one who is convivial and willing to listen to others' views on political issues that concern him. Both citizens and officials, because of these traits and the belief in *gaba'* tend to make them socially bound to one another in the Ilonggo sense of mutual reciprocation. But the study findings show that the Ilonggos perceive that most of their officials do not really care about their opinions. The Ilonggos are convinced that their officials should really care and solicit public opinion in their decision-making or any deliberation they make on public issues. Being household heads of their respective families, the opinions of the Ilonggos mattered much and should be solicited by public officials.

Table 1. The Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Survey Respondents

Categories	f	%
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	125	48.3
Female	134	51.7
Total	259	100.0
<b>Age</b>		
15-25	152	58.7
26-36	23	8.9
37-47	35	13.5
48-58	40	15.4
59 and above	9	3.5
Total	259	100.0
<b>Highest Educational Attainment</b>		
Elementary	8	3.1
Intermediate	13	5.0
High School	37	14.3
College Level	127	49.0
Bachelor's Degree	53	20.5
Master's Degree	16	6.2
Doctorate Degree	4	1.5
Others	1	0.4
Total	259	100.0
<b>No. of Family Members</b>		
1-2 members	31	12.0
3-6 members	164	63.3
more than 6 members	64	24.7
Total	259	100.0
<b>Source of Livelihood</b>		
farming	22	8.5
fishing	9	3.5
business	21	8.1
laborer	24	9.3
practice of profession	23	8.9
private organization employee	18	6.9
government employee	40	15.4
not gainfully employed	49	18.9
others	20	7.7
student	18	6.9
self employed	15	5.8
Total	259	100.0



*The Ilonggo Underlying Socio-Economic Characteristics and its Relationship to Political Values, Attitude and Behavior*

The relationship between the *Ilongo's* socio-economic characteristics and political values is shown in Table 2. Among the different socio-economic characteristics considered, number of family members ( $p=0.050$ ), age ( $p=0.015$ ), sex ( $p=0.027$ ), and educational attainment ( $p=0.016$ ) were found to be significantly related to the democratic belief that "every citizen should have equal chance to influence political policy." Number of family members was also found to be significantly related to values on nationalist political adherence ( $p=0.032$ ), political processes ( $p=0.004$ ), and sense of civic competence ( $p=0.006$ ). Moreover, educational attainment ( $p>0.012$ ) and source of livelihood ( $p>0.015$ ) were also found to be significantly related to values on political functions.

Table 2. The Relationship of *Ilongo's* Socio-Economic Characteristics and Political Values.

Political Values	Socio-Economic Characteristics	Chi-Square Value	df	Sig. Level
Democratic Belief	No. of Family Members	15.527	8	0.050*
	Age	30.534	16	0.015*
	Sex	10.986	4	0.027*
	Educational Attainment	46.395	28	0.016*
Nationalist Political Adherence	No. of Family Members	16.829	8	0.032*
Political Processes	No. of Family Members	22.298	8	0.004*
Political Functions	Educational Attainment	47.537	28	0.012*
	Source of Livelihood	61.783	40	0.015*
Sense of Civic Competence	No. of Family Members	21.448	8	0.006*

\* significant at the 0.05 level

Shown in Table 3 is the relationship between the *Ilongo's* socio-economic characteristics and political attitude. Age and educational attainment are significantly related to sense of political effectiveness ( $p=0.030$  and  $p=0.010$ , respectively), readiness for voting participation ( $p=0.029$  and  $p=0.003$ , respectively) and political cynicism ( $p=0.017$  and  $p=0.048$ , respectively). Source of livelihood was also found to be significantly related to readiness for voting participation ( $p=0.050$ ) while number of family members is related to political cynicism ( $p=0.003$ ). When it comes to issue orientation that "the majority party will do more than the opposition," only age was found to have significant relationship ( $p=0.000$ ). Educational attainment and number of family members were both found to have significant relationship with issue familiarity ( $p=0.007$  and  $p=0.042$ , respectively).

Table 3. The Relationship of *Ilongo's* Socio-Economic Characteristics and Political Attitude.

Political Attitude	Socio-Economic Characteristics	Chi-Square Value	df	Sig. Level
Political Effectiveness	Age	28.181	16	0.030*
	Educational Attainment	48.216	28	0.010*
Political Involvement	Educational Attainment	54.711	28	0.002*
Issue Orientation	Age	49.795	16	0.000*
Voting Participation	Age	28.333	16	0.029*
	Educational Attainment	53.115	28	0.003*
	Source of Livelihood	55.611	40	0.050*
Political Cynicism	Age	30.216	16	0.017*
	Educational Attainment	41.544	28	0.048*
	No. of Family Members	23.677	8	0.003*
Issue Familiarity	Educational Attainment	49.856	28	0.007*
	No. of Family Members	15.992	8	0.042*

\* significant at the 0.05 level

As to the relationship between political behavior and the different socio-economic characteristics of *Ilongos*, sex ( $p=0.049$ ), age ( $p=0.019$ ), educational attainment ( $p=0.000$ ) and source of livelihood ( $p=0.008$ ) were all significantly related to behavior towards political discussion. Except for sex, these socio-economic characteristics were also found to have significant relationship to frequency of voting (Table 3). Political campaign participation is also related to age ( $p=0.008$ ) and educational attainment ( $p=0.007$ ) while only educational attainment was found to have significant relationship to political party membership ( $p=0.000$ ) and opinion leadership ( $p=0.040$ ). Furthermore, age, educational attainment and source of livelihood were all significantly related to frequency of joining political rallies/demonstration and awareness on political information (see Table 4).

Table 4. The Relationship of *Ilongo's* Socio-Economic Characteristics and Political Behavior

Political Behavior	Socio-Economic Characteristics	Chi-Square Value	df	Sig. Level
Political Discussion	Sex	9.533	4	0.049*
	Age	29.846	16	0.019*
	Educational Attainment	59.527	28	0.000*
	Source of Livelihood	64.807	40	0.008*
Frequency of Voting	Age	52.432	16	0.000*
	Educational Attainment	63.599	28	0.000*
	Source of Livelihood	62.048	40	0.014*
Political Campaign Participation	Age	32.541	16	0.008*
	Educational Attainment	49.870	28	0.007*
Political Party Membership	Educational Attainment	40.910	14	0.000*
Joining Political Rallies and Demonstrations	Age	66.719	16	0.000*
	Educational Attainment	53.842	28	0.002*
	Source of Livelihood	61.858	40	0.015*
Opinion Leadership	Educational Attainment	42.368	28	0.040*
Political Information	Age	41.426	12	0.000*
	Educational Attainment	62.599	21	0.000*
	Source of Livelihood	59.010	30	0.001*

\* significant at the 0.05 level

## *The Ilonggo Political Participation*

The Ilonggo political participation is affected by the following factors:

### *Political Values*

The Ilonggo's socio-cultural values of *kabalaslan*, *gaba'*, *gahum*, *kag iban pa*, underlie their political participation and interactions. The Ilonggo is strongly nationalistic and is aware that American democratic institutions are not the best in the world. The awareness of American economic interests in the Philippines makes him prefer the country's relating more with Southeast Asian countries. He is a firm believer of the democratic tenet of every individual having a right to decide on policy. But he is realistic enough to accept the fact that his views are not always listened to by government officials.

On the other hand, the Ilonggos with their general passivity and their non-belligerence have not really caused officials much anxiety on the possible consequences that their decisions might engender. This has given way to the people's cynicism about officials' motives. The Ilonggo has a high sense of citizen duty believing that one should vote, even if his party candidates do not win in the elections. The Ilonggo's pragmatic sense of civic competence makes him help others as the situation dictates. But when it came to problems concerning his family members, he is decidedly for resolving these problems, motivated by his high sense of familism.

The Ilonggo does not fully understand the nature of the political process when he denies that government cannot operate without politicians, for public policy is formulated by politicians, whether non-partisan or partisan. nor does he fully understand that political functions is a means toward temporary conflict-resolution by settling social disagreements based on agreed-upon rules.

### *Political Attitudes*

Many Ilonggos do not know and understand the local issues affecting the City and much more so were the national issues affecting every Filipino. Many Ilonggos perceive that some public officials tended to protect criminal interests and that people were often manipulated by politicians, This perception was bolstered by their awareness that many political candidates made many promises and commitments that were not fulfilled if only to get elected .

Although the Ilonggo does not believe strongly that his vote would really count, yet he voted for it was the only way he could have a say on how the

government runs things. This feeling of being politically ineffective is demonstrated by his perception that even if he approached political leaders or public officials on issues or regulations needing their attention, he would not succeed. Neither would he succeed in attempting to change City rules/regulations perceived to be unfavorable to the people's interests.

Paradoxically, despite the above-stated apprehensions, the Ilonggo derives feelings of satisfaction when he votes. This is an indication of his psychological predisposition to participate in the political process. Problems which are national in scope- social, economic, welfare and politico-administrative in nature, were perceived to be the sole responsibility of the national government and while local government officials contributed to the problems' solution, most Ilonggos feel impotent to be involved, being inexperienced in citizen participation.

Although not many Ilonggos perceived much difference on the stands of the political parties, still there were some who believed that the Majority Party in power will do more for government than the Opposition Party.

The Ilonggo perceives that the national government has not done much regarding problems of unemployment, health, education, housing and other concerns, whether it was the present Majority party in power or when other political parties came into power, since there was no difference in their political platforms.

The imperatives of providing affordable health / hospital services and medical supplies as well as more school houses were the demands of Ilonggo citizens. Surprisingly, the issue that the national government should help find jobs for people who want to work was lower in priority than the first given two. This is a realistic demand of the Ilonggos, knowing that the social overhead costs of health and education infrastructures cannot be possibly be borne by individuals and communities while the task of finding employment can be done by individuals but with the assistance of government,

### *Political Behavior*

The Ilonggo voters claim they always voted but they had the perception that although their candidates possessed competence, integrity and performance, these candidates did not always win. The reason given was that these candidates' party voted for did not have any money to be doled out. In support of this statement, many claimed they had supported candidates. although it was not monetary. Thus, the Ilonggo voters closely followed election outcomes.

As their forbears have done, present-day Ilonggos are bound by the tradition of *kabalaslan*; their votes reflect gratitude for past favors given by politicians/candidates; this subjective political morality of the voter denied the public “good”,

The Ilonggo is a militant voter, claiming that he cared whether he voted or not, knowing that his vote is only one of the countless others especially in the national elections. This is corroborated by the fairly high rate of voter turnout during the last 14 May 2001 election, which was about 76.12 per cent of the City’s registered voters. [This may be explained by the fact that Ilonggos, like other Filipinos had turned out to vote to register their reactions to the involved Senators’ behaviors during the Estrada Senate impeachment proceedings]

The Ilonggos are pragmatic voters, as shown by their voting priorities in selecting their Senator, Mayor and Sanggunian officials and followed by their voting less for the Provincial officials and their congressman. They are aware of the powers of the higher national officials and functional proximity of their local officials and their consequences.

Relatedly, the lack of communication/entertainment facilities which keep him posted on national or local events nor the distance from his polling place did not deter the Ilonggo from voting,

The Ilonggo electorate relatively tend to engage less in discussions about political issues affecting them and would rather listen. Likewise, there was less concern for political rallies and demonstrations on significant issues. But they were keen in attending political campaigns of candidates as well as campaign for his personal candidates.

Although majority of the respondents did not belong to. Nor was an official of any political party nor held any government job, many identified themselves with their chosen political candidates’ party.

Not many Ilonggos, especially those in the lower socio-economic levels, belong to any civic organization that sometimes took a stand on local issues like garbage disposal, housing, school problems, better governance or any other problems that concerned them. For one, the Ilonggos are not “joiners”, and would rather be one with their family clans.

Not many Ilonggos are politically well-informed having not much information on the functions of public office and functionaries at the local or national levels. Those with higher education as well as those with their elementary primary and intermediate schooling were not very knowledgeable about their national and local

officials and their functions. Across, livelihood sectors, this condition holds at the higher and lower economic levels.

Overall, the finding is that the strength of the Ilonggo political participation is in his upholding of the democratic tenet and political equality and his sense of citizen duty as a voter with the regularity and endurance of voting behavior on elections time, regardless of the motivation on his choice of candidates.

The Ilonggo, generally, feels politically ineffective and not so competent when it comes to influencing the making of or changing public policy. This has been brought about by his perception that public officials' indifference to their opinions and his skepticism of the motives of public officials as well as the complexity of the political structures and processes which many do not really understand. There appears to be no strong political party involvement, nor a strong issue orientation, and a lack of political information. All these limit the quality and extent of his political participation. For the act of voting alone is not the end-all and be-all of political participation. And when faced with adverse political situations, the Ilonggo will tend generally, tend to make pragmatic decisions, which will benefit him and his family.

### *Observations*

The assessment of the nature of political participation manifested by the Iloilo City residents revealed that their socio-economic characteristics are associated with their political values, attitudes and behaviors. Despite many positive findings, these were studied with caution realizing that the respondents' perceptions may differ from the reality about themselves and their political environment. However, some of the findings are confirmations of the findings of other writers on Philippine politics and government.

The complexity of the political structures and processes, the nature of political functions and processes prevented the Ilonggos from being involved in areas which needed their inputs. This practice of relatively being uninvolved in public affairs / issues has become an accepted attitude and behavior. This has consequently created a climate and feelings of political ineffectiveness and competence among citizens. Consequently, although militant about their political rights, their behaviors do not reflect this and has generally resulted in a quality of political participation that did not always promote their best interests.

*Political Values*

*Limitations of City Governance.* There appears to be so much lacking in the practice of our present so-called “representative” government in the City. Firstly, although, the citizens believed in the democratic practice of giving the citizens an equal chance of influencing government policy, yet this is perceived as being denied by officials’ not caring much about their opinions. Secondly, the individual’s participation is denied when the type of political participation stresses the technical aspects of the practice of governance and neglects what is “fair and just” in the planning and implementing of public policies and programs. This is supported by the study findings that the respondents considered politics so complicated that they could not discern what was going on and that because of the complexity of political issues and organizations, there was little that could be done by them to effectively change the system. However, our respondents were uncertain whether the major function of politics is to settle disputes and other social disagreements (?) They affirmed that in the making of policy, their opinions did not matter much since they perceived that their political leaders first made the political decisions and afterwards sought the majority’s agreement to their opinions. There is a possible implication here, that citizens desire to be a part of the policy process from the inception of the process up to the implementation.

A further implication is on the Sanggunian’s obligation for holding regular consultations with their constituents, for they only “represent” and must therefore, continually seek confirmation and approval of their interpretations of the wishes of their constituents.

*Individual Participation.* The urgent need for public participation of individuals and the full use of established government and political mechanisms and processes should not be mere gestures of and commitments of officials when it can be generally, actually done. But the importance of individual participation and contribution is not given much attention when collective action is stressed because of the “need” for consensus. It has been observed that the individual’s experience can teach the process of governance to citizens when its nature is understood and applied. This experience of the practice of governance must be one with ethical considerations ingrained in political activity. But the warning has been made that *individuation* only has meaning in a collective setting, not only because experience is collectively produced and sustained but because it requires the impact of others through their occupations, careers and livelihood activities to make itself known. (cf. Wilson, 1984). This observation is supported by the perception of the respondents that differences of race, social class, and income are important factors in the political process.



*Political Morality.* Another observation is that for both public officials and citizens alike, there is a conflict between the modern and the traditional view of political morality. The voters' unwillingness to condone anomalies not only conflicts with the familial obligations of citizens and officials but also the latter's obligations to repay debts of gratitude to their political allies and their supporters/voters- two obligations arising out of the traditional values. Yet the study findings reveal that for the voters, the majority of them avowed that the bases of their choice of candidates are merit, integrity, performance, personal traits, among others. (cf. David, N.D.; Lande, 1968)

### *Political Attitudes*

*Identity of Political Parties' Programs.* The political party system of Iloilo City is reflective of our own country's shortcoming which is the lack of a competitive party system which offers voters a choice between two or more "distinct and doctrinal" set of policies which imposes one of these as a provisional solution to the country's major conflicts and problems. This is corroborated by the study findings that the majority of the respondents perceived no real difference on certain issues between the two parties. Furthermore, conflicts over substantive matters are fought out within the party in power rather than between major parties. The resolution usually takes the form of compromises designed to appease the various contending groups. This has been perceived by the majority of the respondents when they agreed strongly that political decisions are made by some political leaders who try to secure the agreement of the majority to the decision. The political factions are multiple but the majority party and the various opposition parties do not differ in ideology. (cf. Lande, 1968)

### *Political Behavior*

*Voting.* The Ilonggos' relatively high literacy rate is not a sufficient and logical guarantee that his choice for selection of a candidate for public office would be one that is rational. His economic needs, his value of "*kabalas-lan*" or "*utang na loob*" coupled with his lack of sufficient political information are countervailing forces that tend to offset the workings of reason in the making political decisions, voting among many others.

*Party Membership.* Study findings reveal that the respondents did not consider themselves as members of a political party nor held any position in any political party. This can be explained by the fact that in the Philippines, it is difficult to identify membership in a political party, if that term is taken to mean persons who

have assumed strong and exclusive commitments to a party or another including clear cut rights and obligations. Those who can be said to be members in this sense are mostly full or part-time politicians, and more specifically, past, present, and prospective job seekers. An ordinary voter may have a continuing preference for one or another national party or more, for one or another local leader and thus for the party that the local leader happens to support. No one will seek to enroll him formally as a party member, nor will he be asked to declare publicly his party preference. For the Filipino politician, one is a "Lakas", for instance, by simply declaring himself as such and who has not been expelled from the party. Most politicians who regard themselves as members of a particular party never went through any formal procedure of affiliation. One of the reasons for this lack of lay party membership is the ideological similarity of Philippine parties which gives citizens little reason to develop a strong political attachment. (cf. Lande, 1968 )

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study findings, especially, on the quality of citizen political behavior in voting, political discussions, consultative assemblies, political rallies / demonstrations, issue orientation, and political information reflect a kind of political involvement and advocacy that leave so much room for strengthening. The alternative which can be offered must be one which is more realistic and which may contribute meaningfully to Iloilo City's governance. The quality of political participation that should be manifested by all sectors of Iloilo City must be of a kind reflecting civic values and attitudes prevailing over self-interest.

An imperative should be the creation of new or strengthening of existing mechanisms for articulation and communication between citizens and political leaders on the running of public affairs, This means truly attending to citizens' needs in the making of relevant public policies. Because of their expert technical knowledge and skills, public officials are still needed by citizens. Once these citizens are harnessed into full political participation, these "representatives" can collectively carry out full time work in governance. But citizens are no less necessary as an ongoing part of policy formulation, implementation and evaluation than their public officials and political leaders to ensure that all the efforts and resources expended will be successful. In the absence of this component, public policies will be less sensitive and relevant. Citizens have not been included traditionally for the sake of speedy and good consensus. But official decision making requires continuing citizen inputs. And no public policy can be rational, from the standpoint of democratic values, if there is a gap between government decisions and citizen support. (cf. Wilson, 1984) Thus, it is only by heeding citizen articulation and allowing their inputs for the

genuine participation can there be political leadership which is responsible and sensible in the City. In this regard, mechanisms and structures that have to be considered are:

### *Strengthening of the Office of the City Administrator*

This existing office should be strengthened to initiate this political innovation and implement a professionalized City Administration with ample powers and authority to perform the required activities. Tasked with conducting a “continuing” organizational development to bring about effective administrative reform of the LGUs (RA 7160, Art. 10, Sec. 480, 2 iii), the City Administrator, should effectively liaison with city residents on their immediate concerns and mediate among different city political parties and other pressure groups. For effective citizens’ needs-aggregation and communicating these needs to the City Executive and Legislative bodies, his office should issue a regular newsletter for Ilonggos to keep them posted on critical political and administrative matters and goings-on in City Hall that affect them.

### *Citizen Empowerment (CE)*

This refers to the enabling of citizens to develop their capacity to participate in the decision-making / implementing of public policy that affects them. This should help eliminate the Ilonggos’ opinion that only the government can solve their problems, as well as eliminate their attitude of dependency even as it enhances their creativity and ingenuity in resolving community problems. This can be achieved by a program that will improve the extent and quality of political participation. Following the Sosmena model, Citizen Empowerment may be achieved by means of a two-pronged integrated program comprised of educational and economic measures:

### *Educational Adequacy*

The citizens’ level of learning ensures their economic survival as it helps to strengthen their political culture. Our study reveals that 14.3 per cent of the respondents reached the educational level of high school and a combined 8.31 per cent reached the elementary level and intermediate grades. Also, their political information level was low. This may explain why they are not very knowledgeable about the political process in which they should actively participate. With the presence of many educational institutions in the City, vocational-technical education along entrepreneurial knowledge that guarantees employment and or self-employment, strengthened with civic consciousness and political know-how might

be considered with the subsidy of the City and the national government. This may help enhance the attainment of the second component of the proposed program.

### *Economic Security*

This may be engendered by promoting the selected barangay entrepreneurial activities partly subsidized by city and national funding assistance. This is in line with the present national administration's project of economic uplift for communities that are persistently materially inadequate and where people can barely eke out a living. These cannot be expected to empower themselves and their own communities without initial assistance. In addition to the implementation of economic projects, some basic courses in public management should be introduced through *barangay* teach-ins with volunteer lecturers, to instill in them the needed civic know-how needed for a militant involvement in the running of the city's affairs.

### *Implementation and Management of Citizen Empowerment (CE)*

A general approach to the strategy will involve the following components:

There should be guarantee of funding support for this project for a pre-determined period, for a medium term one, from three to five (3-5) years to allow for the fruition of project efforts.

An information base on the skills and capabilities of the poor and unempowered, as well as the physical and natural resources in the environs of the City as materials for this sector's possible crafts and projects. This is a critical requirement, hence the data should be reliable and adequate.

There should be involvement and the participation of the poor themselves in the planning and decision - making on programs and projects based on the information source acquired. The sectoral representatives in the *Sanggunian*, the youth, women, workers, the urban poor, and other groups should be involved by making them responsible for the planning and implementing of this CE Program in their respective sectors.

The City's Executive and Legislative body are needed as the enabling and authoritative structures of Citizen Empowerment. The operations of these two bodies must be more transparent to the public in reflecting the efficiency and relevance of their performance. Although the sessions of the *Sanggunian* are open to the public, the probable alternative to extend this to a wider audience is to have their more important sessions televised..

A multi-sectoral Committee created by the Office of the City Mayor, composed of church, civic clubs, education, business groups and the urban poor to support this Project and made responsible to this Office, with members nominated by the respective sectors, to come up with a plan of action on Citizen Empowerment. The Committee' work shall be supervised by the Office of the City Administrator.

## REFERENCES

- Abueva, J., & de Guzman, R. (1969). *Dynamics and foundations of Filipino government and politics*. Manila: Bookmark.
- City Planning and Development Office. (2000). *The City of Iloilo socio-economic profile*. Iloilo City, Philippines: Author.
- Dahl, R. E. (1984). *Modern political analysis*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc.
- David, F. P. (19\_\_). *Voters' behavior in Iloilo City: an exploratory study*. Unpublished research, Social Science Research Institute, Central Philippine University, Iloilo City, Philippines.
- Franco, Q. B. and Regalado, F. B. (1973). *History of Panay*. Iloilo City, Philippines: Central Philippine University.
- Muhi, E.T., Panopio, I.S., Salcedo L. (1993). *Dynamics of development the Philippine perspective*. Metro Manila: National Bookstore, Inc.
- Pye, L. W. & Verba, S. (Eds.). (1972). *Political culture and political development*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Sosmena. G. (1991). *Decentralization and empowerment*. Makati, Metro Manila: Local Government Development Foundation, Inc.
- Wilson, H.T. (1984). *Political management: Redefining the public sphere*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.