

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploration of interpersonal relationship and job satisfaction towards the employees of the Sulu provincial government

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ABSTRACT

Interpersonal relationships form the foundation for effective communication, teamwork, and collaboration, which are critical for achieving organizational goals. When employees maintain healthy relationships with their colleagues and supervisors, they are more likely to experience a sense of belonging, mutual respect, and support, which enhances their job satisfaction and overall well-being. This paper analyzed the quality of interpersonal relationship and job satisfaction of the local government employees in Sulu, Philippines. Employees (n=200) were conveniently sampled from 10 local government units (LGUs) in the province. Likert-scale was used to describe the interpersonal relationship and job satisfaction of the employees, as well as the challenges they experienced relevant to these aspects. Descriptive analysis indicated that the LGUs were very satisfactory in maintaining positive working environment. The employees also had high level of job satisfaction following effective communication, cooperation and collaboration measures, salary, and administrative support. Despite these, they were still expressed concerns about difference of family culture and practices, unequal distribution of workload, lack of incentives/awards, having little participation in policy-making activities, among other subtle challenges in work dynamics. This paper opens an opportunity to have inclusive and equitable environment—where cultural differences are acknowledged, workload distribution is fair, and employees feel recognized and involved in decision-making processes—the quality of the work environment can be further developed. Implementing policies that offer incentives and encourage more employee engagement in governance can help deepen job satisfaction and organizational loyalty.

Keywords: interpersonal relationship; job satisfaction; local government; work environment

1. Introduction

Good human relations, characterized by cooperation and mutual support among individuals and groups, are essential for achieving work objectives and benefiting society. Harmonious interactions with peers and superiors foster unity, leading to greater public recognition and support^[1]. To enhance productivity and quality, it is crucial to develop organizational members, as people are the most valuable asset, bringing energy, skills, and knowledge essential for effective goods production and service delivery^[2].

When encountering challenges, the organization expects its employees to fulfill their duties regardless of the obstacles they face^[3]. In fact, the success of any organization, including government entities, is

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nothing more or less than the activities and success of the people who comprise the organization^[4]. Hence, there should be proper harnessing, mobilizing, and effective utilization of human assets—tasks that are not easy to accomplish. These thereby become an important responsibility of personnel management to look forward, perceive new opportunities in unsatisfied and unfulfilled needs, and then take action to make these potential opportunities for service to the people become concrete and real^[5].

In the Philippines, Filipinos valued the role of work environment in developing the character and improving performance of an employee. For example, Solimon^[6] conducted a study within a telecommuting company in the country established that the employees greatly appreciate the assistance and collaboration of their colleagues, which cultivates a cooperative atmosphere and markedly boosts motivation in executing their responsibilities. Similarly in food manufacturing industry, the work environment significantly influences the relationship among employee participation in decision-making, salary, job security, assessment of performance, and employee retention^[7].

Although work environment was widely studied in the country, limited papers were published within the context of LGUs. One good start for this analysis was the study about work stress among local government employees in Batac, Ilocos Norte, Philippines. Yapo^[8] discovered that the local government employees in Batac had low stress levels relative to organizational context, probably because LGU leaders effectively promote employee development, ensure involvement, and make holistic organizational decisions, contributing to employee satisfaction. For frontline employees in Tuguegarao City LGU, they exhibit ambivalence toward their employment, resulting in uncertainty about their level of satisfaction^[9]. Given the conceptual limitations regarding work environment and job satisfaction, this paper was expected to address the complexities of how organizational culture and employee engagement aspects descriptively influence job satisfaction.

Sulu, known for its beautiful white sand beaches and welcoming locals, stands at a historical crossroads as a prominent tourism destination. The community, driven by the legacy of its ancestors and a shared goal to improve the quality of life for Tausug residents, works towards making Sulu a model of progress within the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and the broader Philippines. Achieving this vision requires the collective effort of government officials, employees, and the community. The success of these public service goals depends significantly on the effectiveness of employee-superior relationships, which are crucial for a productive workforce^[10-11].

Local government employees in Sulu Province face the challenge of maintaining strong work ethics amidst adversity^[12]. Consequently, the purpose of this study was to explore the work environment and job satisfaction of local government employees in Sulu, Philippines, and to identify factors that impacted their workplace experiences. The study sought to examine the level of satisfaction employees derived from key aspects of their work environment, such as communication, cooperation, administrative support, salary, and job safety, as well as to assess potential challenges that could hinder job satisfaction. As noted by Simorangkir^[13], nurturing public service ethics, promoting bureaucratic excellence, and empowering employees are key to improving morale and job satisfaction.

Investigating both positive elements, like strong employee-supervisor relationships, and issues like differences in family culture, workload distribution, and lack of incentives, this study aimed to provide a holistic view of the dynamics influencing employee motivation and overall job fulfillment.

2. Literature review

2.1. Interpersonal relationship in workplaces

The interpersonal relationships that exist inside a workplace are of the highest importance for the purpose of preserving an ethical atmosphere and achieving success within an organization^[14-16]. The work conduct of employees, including both prosocial and anti-social actions, have consistently attracted the attention of researchers and scholars worldwide. Prior research has indicated that the behaviors exhibited by employees in the workplace are significantly influenced by the nature of interactions and treatments they receive from different levels within their workgroups, including colleagues, managers, and subordinates^[17-19].

To attain shared objectives, the agency will be guided by a competent leader who will oversee all aspects of overall activity for their subordinates, covering both professional responsibilities and social interactions within the agency context^[20]. For example, in the study of Rahmadhanti and Gustomo^[21] among Regional Revenue Management Bureau (BAPPENDA) employees in Cimahi City, Indonesia, findings revealed that communication and the social work environment have a large aggregate impact on the level of interpersonal relationships of employees.

Meanwhile, Kholis and Astuti^[22] conducted qualitative study among government office employees in MoRA East Java. Findings indicated that leaders employed various essential strategies, including the motivation of employees, the promotion of clear communication, the establishment of strong work relationships, and the effective oversight of tasks. These strategies were associated with the cultivation of a positive work environment, which in turn facilitated goal achievement, enhanced collaboration among employees, promoted a close relation atmosphere in workplace, and promoted mutually beneficial connections between employees and management.

Limited studies about work environment were conducted in the context of Philippine LGUs, especially in Sulu, Philippines. Sulu is located in the southern tip of the country, infamous for its terrorism and piracy incidents^[23-24], which makes it ideal in conducting such small-scale analysis. Studying the context of Sulu governance would help in alleviating the external pressures from violent extremism through improving the quality of job set up in the province. Such insights could lead to strategies that not only improve the quality of governance but also have a secure and stable working environment. This, in turn, may promote greater employee engagement and productivity, which are essential for the efficient delivery of public services in a region facing significant security challenges.

2.2. Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction represents a positive emotional condition that arises from the evaluation of an individual's job or work experience^[25]. Individuals exhibiting high levels of job satisfaction tend to report favorable emotions regarding their responsibilities and engagement in task-related activities. They are also likely to attain enhanced productivity and exhibit constructive work behaviors^[26]. They are generally more engaged in their work, exhibit higher performance metrics, and demonstrate a greater likelihood of remaining with the organization^[27].

In the study conducted by Ahmad & Raja^[28], it was demonstrated that enhancing employee job satisfaction within public sector organizations is crucial, as it significantly influences favorable organizational outcomes. It is imperative for leaders of public sector organizations to focus on the job satisfaction of their employees, as these individuals represent the forefront of service delivery to the community^[29].

Putra et al.^[30] conducted a review on the determinants of job satisfaction of public organization employees. Their finding revealed that leadership styles, organizational communication, rewards, organizational commitment, prosocial behavior, organizational justice, emotional intelligence, and empowerment have the potential to influence employee job satisfaction within public sector organizations. Conversely, job stress has the potential to diminish employee job satisfaction due to a decline in focus and the emergence of mental health issues related to job responsibilities.

In contrast, Thant^[31] analyzed the determinants of Myanmar government employees' job satisfaction conducted in Department of Education and Training (DET). Among the seven identified motivators, only four—specifically the nature of the work, prospects for advancement, public service motivation, and religiosity—were determined to have a significant impact on job satisfaction. The presence of these four motivators at higher levels correlates with increased employee satisfaction, underscoring their significant influence on overall job satisfaction.

There is a noticeable scarcity of research focused on the job satisfaction of LGU employees in the Philippines, particularly in the province of Sulu. Wallace and Asiri^[32] established and elaborate study about the job satisfaction among Bangsamoro Port Management Authority employees. The findings reveal that employees express high levels of satisfaction regarding their work environment, work discipline, and compensation. Employees agree on the effectiveness of communication, collaboration, and fair evaluation processes within the organization, although there is potential for improvement in perceptions of the workplace compared to others. In terms of work discipline, while employees feel a strong sense of personal responsibility, they express some dissatisfaction with the clarity of performance expectations, and regarding compensation, they are generally satisfied but less content with the alignment of additional benefits with their needs. This paper opened a new opportunity on understanding the job satisfaction of the local government employees in Sulu, Philippines.

2.3. Research questions

The limited research on work environments in Philippine LGUs, particularly in Sulu, underscored a significant gap in understanding how local contexts influence employee experiences. Given Sulu's challenging environment, marked by terrorism and piracy, there was an urgent need to analyze the work dynamics within its LGUs to promote a stable and secure workplace that fosters employee engagement and productivity.

This research paves the way for further exploration into how interpersonal relationships and job satisfaction in Sulu's LGUs can be enhanced, providing a foundation for addressing critical issues affecting workplace dynamics and public service delivery. Below are the specific questions answered in this paper.

- (a) How positive is the interpersonal relationship in the LGUs in Sulu, Philippines?
- (b) How satisfied are local government employees with their jobs?
- (c) How serious are the problems that employees encounter affecting interpersonal relationships and job satisfaction in the workplace?

3. Methods

3.1. Research design

This paper was a quantitative research that analyzed the interaction between interpersonal relationship and metrics of job satisfaction. This paper was conducted among local government employees in the Province of Sulu, Philippines. Quantitative research is the numerical representation and manipulation of

observations for the purpose of describing and explaining the phenomena that those observations reflect. Correlational analysis of nominal variables was conducted to analyze the association between interpersonal relation and job satisfaction.

3.2. Participants and sampling

The primary participants of this study were local government employees in Sulu, Philippines. The participants were purposively sampled from ten identified LGUs in the province, particularly the Jolo, Patikul, Panamao, Omar, Maimbung, Parang, Indanan, Talipao, Panglima Tahil and Tongkil. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where participants are selected based on their accessibility and proximity to the researcher^[33]. While convenience sampling is practical and time-efficient, it has limitations in terms of generalizability, as the sample may not accurately represent the broader population^[34]. In this study, participants were selected through a on-field survey, which allowed the researcher to reach individuals who were readily available and willing to participate. To ensure equal representation across the data, 20 participants were selected from each LGU, resulting in a total of 200 participants. **Table 1** presents the summary of the demographics of the local government employees participated in the survey.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the selected employees.

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Age</i>		
21-25 years old	22	14.01
26-30 years old	16	10.19
31-35 years old	20	12.74
36-40 years old	24	15.29
41-45 years old	24	15.29
46-50 years old	20	12.74
51-55 years old	11	7.00
56-60 years old	13	8.28
61 years old and above	7	4.46
<i>Sex</i>		
Male	48	30.57
Female	109	69.43
<i>Civil Status</i>		
Single	45	28.66
Married	100	63.69
Widow/Widower	12	7.64
<i>Educational Attainment</i>		
With Ph/D/Doctorate Degree	2	1.27
With Doctoral Units	7	4.46
With Master's Degree	19	12.10
With Masteral Units	12	7.64
With Baccalaureate Degree	111	74.52
<i>Length of Service</i>		
1-10 years	61	38.85
11-20 years	55	35.03
21-30 years	41	26.11

3.3. Research instrument

This paper developed a Likert-scale that gathered the responses from the participants using scale numerical descriptions. Likert-scale is a widely used for scaling the responses from a survey^[35] which earns its reputation as an effective tool for measuring and gauging the extent of respondent perceptions about a construct^[36]. This study identified 21 characteristics that represent the *quality of interpersonal relationship* in the workplace, 20 for *job satisfaction*, 15 each for *interpersonal relationship challenges* and *job satisfaction challenges*. The Likert-scale can be answered using the descriptors in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Five-point descriptors used in the likert-scale.

Scale Values	Descriptors
<i>Interpersonal Relationship</i>	
5	Excellent
4	Very satisfactory
3	Satisfactory
2	Poor
1	Fair
<i>Job Satisfaction</i>	
5	Very Highly Satisfied
4	Highly Satisfied
3	Satisfied
2	Somehow Satisfied
1	Least Satisfied
<i>Challenges (Seriousness)</i>	
5	Very Serious
4	Serious
3	Moderately Serious
2	Less Serious
1	Least Serious

The Likert-scale was validated by three public administration professionals with a mean work experience of 14 years. Validation ensure that the instrument accurately measures what it is intended to measure and produces reliable, consistent results^[37]. Having experienced professionals assess the scale, potential issues such as ambiguity in questions or misinterpretation of items can be addressed, improving the instrument’s overall validity. Meanwhile, Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to analyze the internal consistency of the scale. Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to analyze the internal consistency of the scale, which is a measure of how well the items on the scale are correlated and work together to assess the underlying construct^[38]. Consequently, this analysis yielded Cronbach’s alpha values of 0.767 (interpersonal relationship), 0.793 (job satisfaction), 0.799 (challenges in relation to interpersonal relationship), and 0.774 (challenges in relation to job satisfaction). These values are all above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70^[39], indicating acceptable to good internal consistency for each scale. The values suggest that the items within each category reliably measure their respective constructs.

3.4. Data analysis

Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program (JASP) version 0.18.2 was used to analyze the quantitative data collected in this study. This software is known for its user-friendly interface and robust statistical capabilities, making it an appropriate choice for conducting various statistical analyses.

The primary statistical measure in this study was *weighted mean* (denoted as \bar{x}) to analyze the interpersonal relationship, job satisfaction, and challenges in workplace. The weighted mean, also known as the weighted average, is a statistical measure that considers the relative importance or frequency of each value in a dataset. Unlike the simple mean, where all values are treated equally, the weighted mean assigns different weights to each value based on its significance or contribution to the overall average. Below is the weighted mean formula used in this study.

$$\text{Weighted mean } (\bar{x}) = \frac{\sum w_i x_i}{\sum w_i}$$

Where:

x_i represents the weight associated with the i -th observation

w_i represents the weight of data values

Weighted mean was interpreted using mean descriptors in **Table 3**. These descriptors were organized into equal intervals, which allowed for a consistent and systematic evaluation of the data. Each descriptor corresponds to a specific range of weighted mean values, providing clarity in interpreting the level of interpersonal relationship, job satisfaction, and perceived challenges.

Table 3. Scale values for weighted mean.

Scale Values	Descriptors
<i>Interpersonal Relationship</i>	
4.21 – 5.00	Excellent
3.41 – 4.20	Very satisfactory
2.61 – 3.40	Satisfactory
1.81 – 2.60	Poor
1.00 – 1.80	Fair
<i>Job Satisfaction</i>	
4.21 – 5.00	Very Highly Satisfied
3.41 – 4.20	Highly Satisfied
2.61 – 3.40	Satisfied
1.81 – 2.60	Somehow Satisfied
1.00 – 1.80	Least Satisfied
<i>Challenges (Seriousness)</i>	
4.21 – 5.00	Very Serious
3.41 – 4.20	Serious
2.61 – 3.40	Moderately Serious
1.81 – 2.60	Less Serious
1.00 – 1.80	Least Serious

4. Results

Question 1: How positive is the interpersonal relationship in the LGUs in Sulu, Philippines?

Descriptive analysis in **Table 4** indicated that the quality of interpersonal relationship in the LGUs workplace in Sulu, Philippines was **very satisfactory** ($\bar{x} = 4.109$) and none of the items rated below very satisfactory. Among the highest rated, the employees rated *self-discipline and control* ($\bar{x} = 4.80$), *employee-supervisor relationship* ($\bar{x} = 4.22$), and *manners and conduct* ($\bar{x} = 4.22$) **excellent**. They rated **very satisfactory** on *cooperation and coordination* ($\bar{x} = 4.20$), *relationship with co-employee* ($\bar{x} = 4.20$), *respect for authority and co-employee* ($\bar{x} = 4.18$), *attitude towards work* ($\bar{x} = 4.13$), and *social behavior* ($\bar{x} = 4.13$). The findings suggested that interpersonal relationships in the local government unit workplace in Sulu, Philippines are overall highly positive, with employees consistently rating aspects such as self-discipline, conduct, and cooperation as very satisfactory or excellent.

Table 4. Descriptive analysis on interpersonal relationship.

Interpersonal Relationship	\bar{x}	Description
1. Relationship with co-employee	4.20	Very Satisfactory
2. Employee – supervisor relationship	4.22	Excellent
3. Employee – clientele relationship	4.12	Very Satisfactory
4. Attitude of employee toward his or her work	4.13	Very Satisfactory
5. Self-discipline and control	4.80	Excellent
6. Manners and conduct of employees	4.22	Very Satisfactory
7. Cooperation and coordination	4.20	Excellent
8. Work values of employees	4.09	Very Satisfactory
9. Respect for authority and co-employee	4.18	Very Satisfactory
10. Social behavior among employees	4.13	Very Satisfactory
11. Fair and just treatment of employees	4.04	Very Satisfactory
12. Understanding of one’s personal values and beliefs	4.10	Very Satisfactory

Interpersonal Relationship	\bar{x}	Description
13. Having good communication skills		
14. Using motivational technique toward development	4.11	Very Satisfactory
15. Implementing effective management skills	3.91	Very Satisfactory
16. Willingness of the employee in achieving agency's goals and objectives	3.97	Very Satisfactory
17. Ethically and morally responsible	4.06	Very Satisfactory
18. Persuasiveness, tact, and diplomacy	4.04	Very Satisfactory
19. Human relations competencies of employee	3.88	Very Satisfactory
20. Aid the employee in time of need	3.88	Very Satisfactory
21. Acceptable grooming	4.02	Very Satisfactory
	3.99	Very Satisfactory
Composite Mean	4.109	Very Satisfactory

Legend: 4.21-5.00 (Excellent); 3.41-4.20 (Very Satisfactory); 2.61-3.40 (Satisfactory); 1.81-2.60 (Fair); 1.00-1.80 (Poor)

Table 4. (Continued)

Question 2: How satisfied the local government employees are about their job?

Descriptive analysis in **Table 5** summarizes the job satisfaction of the local government employees in Sulu, Philippines. Findings indicated that employees were **highly satisfied** about *fair and timely payment of salaries* ($\bar{x} = 4.22$), *administrative support to employees* ($\bar{x} = 4.17$), *safety and security of workplace* ($\bar{x} = 4.12$), *administrative support for service to clientele* ($\bar{x} = 4.11$), *healthy and comfortable working environment* ($\bar{x} = 4.11$), and *interaction and relationships with clientele* ($\bar{x} = 4.08$). However, employees were only satisfied on the *prestige and authority of the job* ($\bar{x} = 3.39$), probably because positions may not always carry the same level of social prestige or recognition compared to jobs in higher government position. These findings suggest a well-rounded job satisfaction profile among local government employees in Sulu, with strengths in compensation, support, and working conditions contributing to a positive work experience.

Table 5. Descriptive analysis on employee job satisfaction.

Job Satisfaction	\bar{x}	Description
Prestige and authority of the job	3.39	Satisfied
Chance to make employee's own ability	3.89	Highly Satisfied
Chances in attending trainings and seminars	3.99	Highly Satisfied
Opportunities for professional advancement	3.84	Highly Satisfied
Opportunities for promotion	3.76	Highly Satisfied
Giving recognition and rewards for a job well done	3.80	Highly Satisfied
Safety and security of workplace	4.12	Highly Satisfied
Participation of subordinates in making decisions	3.89	Highly Satisfied
Competence of department head/supervisor in making decisions	4.01	Highly Satisfied
Fairness in carrying out office policies and regulations	3.93	Highly Satisfied
Quality leadership and management skills	4.03	Highly Satisfied
Administrative support to employees	4.17	Highly Satisfied
Administrative support for service to clientele	4.11	Highly Satisfied
Interaction and relationships among employees	4.04	Highly Satisfied
Interaction and relationships with clientele	4.08	Highly Satisfied
Fair and timely payment of salaries	4.22	Highly Satisfied
Granting of welfare benefits	3.96	Highly Satisfied
Healthy and comfortable working environment	4.11	Highly Satisfied

Job Satisfaction	\bar{x}	Description
Mobility in the workplace	4.00	Highly Satisfied
Provisions of materials needed to carry the job	3.90	Highly Satisfied
Composite Mean	3.962	Highly Satisfied

Legend: 4.21-5.00 (Very Highly Satisfied); 3.41-4.20 (Highly Satisfied); 2.61-3.40 (Satisfied); 1.81-2.60 (Somehow Satisfied); 1.00-1.80 (Least Satisfied)

Table 5. (Continued)

Question 3: How serious are the problems that employees encounter affecting workplace the interpersonal relationships and job satisfaction?

Descriptive analysis in **Table 6** summarizes the degree of seriousness of problems that affect the workplace interpersonal relationships. Findings discovered that local government employees experienced **moderately serious** problems in *difference of family culture and practices* ($\bar{x} = 2.82$), *weak internalization of personal values* ($\bar{x} = 2.66$), and *negative attitude towards assigned additional work* ($\bar{x} = 2.62$). They also experienced **less serious** problems in terms of *lack of understanding and communication* ($\bar{x} = 2.50$), *unequal distribution of workload* ($\bar{x} = 2.48$), and *lack of cooperation and coordination* ($\bar{x} = 2.46$). While the challenges are deemed **less serious** ($\bar{x} = 2.439$), addressing them proactively through better communication, equitable workload distribution, and having a culture of cooperation could improve workplace relationships and enhance the job satisfaction and organizational performance.

Table 6. Descriptive analysis on challenges affecting interpersonal relationship.

Challenges affecting Interpersonal Relationships	\bar{x}	Description
1. Difference of family culture and practices	2.82	Moderately Serious
2. Weak internalization of personal values	2.66	Moderately Serious
3. Unequal distribution of workload	2.48	Less Serious
4. Negative attitude toward assigned additional work	2.62	Moderately Serious
5. Unsupportive department head/supervisor	2.40	Less Serious
6. Scolding the subordinates/staff in public places	2.36	Less Serious
7. Irregularity of holding important municipal activities	2.45	Less Serious
8. Unfair and unjust treatment of employees	2.45	Less Serious
9. Practicing graft and corruption	2.38	Less Serious
10. Being dishonest in dealing with co-employee	2.34	Less Serious
11. Lack of cooperation and coordination	2.46	Less Serious
12. Lack of understanding and communication	2.50	Less Serious
13. Threatening and harassing	2.21	Less Serious
14. Quarreling or bickering	2.20	Less Serious
15. Gossiping	2.25	Less Serious
Composite Mean	2.439	Less Serious

Legend: 4.21-5.00 (Very Serious); 3.41-4.20 (Serious); 2.61-3.40 (Moderately Serious); 1.81-2.60 (Less Serious); 1.00-1.80 (Least Serious)

Descriptive analysis in **Table 7** presents the seriousness of workplace problems that employees believed affected their job satisfaction. Findings indicated that employees experienced **moderately serious** problems that affected their job satisfaction in terms of *lack of incentives/awards given to deserving employee* ($\bar{x} = 2.64$) and *having little participation in policy-making activities* ($\bar{x} = 2.60$). Meanwhile, they experienced **less serious** problems in *political back-up and intervention* ($\bar{x} = 2.52$), *basing promotion on whom one knows and not on what the employee knows* ($\bar{x} = 2.52$), *payment of salaries* ($\bar{x} = 2.52$), *lack of funds to be used in attending trainings/seminars toward professional growth* ($\bar{x} = 2.52$) and *limited resources needed in*

carrying the job ($\bar{x} = 2.51$). These findings highlighted that while certain systemic issues, such as limited recognition and employee participation in governance, moderately affect satisfaction, more pressing operational concerns, like political intervention and resource limitations, are not viewed as significant barriers at present. Addressing these issues could improve employee engagement and job satisfaction in local government workplaces.

Table 7. Descriptive analysis on challenges affecting job satisfaction.

Challenges affecting Job Satisfaction	\bar{x}	Description
1. Assigning employee to a certain office not fitted to his/her qualifications	2.44	Less Serious
2. Political back-up and intervention	2.52	Less Serious
3. Lack of opportunities for promotion	2.43	Less Serious
4. Basing promotion on whom one knows and not on what the employee knows	2.52	Less Serious
5. Untimely payment of salaries	2.52	Less Serious
6. Delayed in the released of welfare benefits	2.50	Less Serious
7. Lack of funds to be used in attending trainings/seminars toward professional growth	2.52	Less Serious
8. Lack of incentives/awards given to deserving employee	2.64	Moderately Serious
9. Unhealthy and uncomfortable working environment	2.47	Less Serious
10. Presence of some insecure employee	2.47	Less Serious
11. Unclear and unprofessional explanation and instruction of subordinate's tasks	2.38	Less Serious
12. Practicing favoritism and partiality in favor of the influential and the rich	2.43	Less Serious
13. Lack of initiative and inconsistency in decision-making	2.49	Less Serious
14. Having little participation in policy-making activities	2.60	Less Serious
15. Limited resources needed in carrying the job	2.51	Less Serious
Composite Mean	2.596	Moderately Serious

Legend: 4.21-5.00 (Very Serious); 3.41-4.20 (Serious); 2.61-3.40 (Moderately Serious); 1.81-2.60 (Less Serious); 1.00-1.80 (Least Serious)

5. Discussion

A positive work environment is crucial for employees as it significantly influences their job satisfaction, productivity, and overall well-being. A study conducted by Smith^[40] suggests ensuring a well-maintained work environment has the potential to enhance efficiency and mitigate employee stress levels. The presence of social support within the workplace has the potential to mitigate stress levels and enhance the overall well-being of employees. The findings indicate that the support of colleagues and management contributes a major part in enhancing employees' sense of value and motivation^[17]. This paper determined that the LGUs in Sulu, Philippines upheld positive working environment for their employees. For example, strong ratings for employee-supervisor relationships ($\bar{x} = 4.22$) and manners and conduct ($\bar{x} = 4.22$) highlighted the significance of positive communication and mutual respect between staff and management. Early studies^[41-42] in these aspects established that leadership and clear expectations contribute to a harmonious work atmosphere, which can enhance employee engagement and retention.

Because the work environment was deemed positive, it is expected that employees would have high job satisfaction. Jessica et al.^[43] described job satisfaction as an emotional reaction to several aspects of employment. It is a connection of psychological, physiological, and environmental factors that leads an individual to express satisfaction with their employment^[44]. Among the local government employees, they manifested high level of job satisfaction in their current job with emphasis on administrative support, salary, work safety and security, and the positiveness of work environment. Similar findings were observed from the study of Meliz, Menguito and Sudaria^[45] among the municipality employees of Maramag, Bukidnon. In their study, receiving support from supervisors and colleagues were generally relevant in having high level of job satisfaction among employees. However, unlike their study, which identified communication as the lowest-

rated aspect of job satisfaction, this study of local government employees in Sulu, Philippines found that the prestige and authority associated with their jobs were less appealing to them—yielding the lowest rating out of the 20 job satisfaction constructs.

Although the local government employees expressed positive perceptions about the workplace and their job satisfaction, there were still factors that could affect their overall perception levels. This phenomenon can be link on how people make meaning about their experiences. Similar to the financial hardships reported in studies of nursing students, those students facing financial difficulties, which shaped their overall experiences, despite their dedication to their studies^[46-47]. This financial burden affected their overall well-being and academic experiences, like how workplace factors can influence job satisfaction. In a similar way, local government employees may experience external factors, such as financial stress or other life challenges, that could influence their perceptions of job satisfaction, even in a generally positive work environment. How people balance their personal and professional responsibilities can affect their overall sense of fulfillment, much like the nursing students who struggled with multiple jobs while managing their studies. Although it seems counterintuitive to feel positive and negative at the same time^[48], this is still a reflection of how humans interact with their surroundings. For example, employees believed that their workplace has *excellent* cooperation and coordination ($\bar{x} = 4.22$), but they also feel that *their workplace lacks these aspects* ($\bar{x} = 2.46$). These mixed feelings could indicate inconsistencies in how cooperation and coordination are implemented across different teams or projects. For organizational leaders, it highlighted the need for understanding of employee experiences. While overall cooperation may be perceived as strong, targeted efforts are needed to address gaps where employees feel a lack of coordination. Addressing these inconsistencies can help enhance overall job satisfaction and create a more cohesive work environment in LGUs.

Descriptive analysis revealed several moderately serious and less serious problems affecting interpersonal relationships and job satisfaction among local government employees in Sulu, Philippines. While the challenges may not seem overly critical, their long-term impact can still negatively affect the quality of the work environment if left unaddressed.

The issues, such as differences in family culture and practices ($\bar{x} = 2.82$), weak internalization of personal values ($\bar{x} = 2.66$), and negative attitudes towards additional work ($\bar{x} = 2.62$), suggest that personal factors and resistance to extra responsibilities can create friction in workplace dynamics. To improve the work environment, efforts should be made to encourage greater cultural sensitivity^[49], promote shared organizational values^[50], and encourage employees to view additional responsibilities as opportunities for growth^[51]. The findings also point to moderately serious issues affecting job satisfaction, such as lack of incentives/awards ($\bar{x} = 2.64$) and limited employee participation in policymaking ($\bar{x} = 2.60$). These suggested that employees may feel undervalued and disconnected from decision-making processes. Implementing formal recognition programs and enhancing employee participation in governance may elevate engagement and cultivate a sense of ownership in their positions^[52-53].

6. Conclusion

The study revealed that local government employees in Sulu, Philippines generally experienced a positive work environment, with high levels of job satisfaction linked to factors such as strong employee-supervisor relationships, mutual respect, and administrative support. However, some challenges, including differences in personal values, lack of participation in decision-making, and insufficient incentives, were identified as moderately serious problems that may affect job satisfaction in the long term. While the work environment was overall supportive and conducive to positive employee perceptions, the findings

underscored the importance of addressing both interpersonal dynamics and systemic issues to maintain high levels of satisfaction.

The results emphasized the importance of a supportive workplace in improving worker satisfaction, especially within local government contexts. Organizational leaders must persist in cultivating healthy interpersonal interactions and guaranteeing that employees perceive themselves as respected and supported by their supervisors and coworkers. To improve the quality of the work environment, it is imperative to address the difficulties mentioned in the study, including the implementation of formal recognition programs for deserving employees, promoting engagement in policymaking, and advancing cultural sensitivity. Proactively addressing these concerns may augment employee engagement, promote collaboration and coordination, and build a more cohesive environment with motivated staff.

This study was limited in scope, as it focused solely on local government employees in Sulu, Philippines, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or industries. The methods, with its descriptive nature, were not robust enough to capture the extent of the effect of work environment to the job satisfaction of the employees. The use of self-reported data introduced the possibility of bias, as employees may have provided socially desirable responses. Future research could expand the sample to other localities and sectors, use a broader set of indicators, and incorporate qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups to gain understanding of the challenges and strengths in workplace dynamics.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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