

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Analysis of community constituents' view on political will in governance in the Philippines

Sermahal T. Askali*

College of Humanities, Social Sciences and Communication, Basilan State College, Isabela, City, Basilan, 7300, Philippines

* Corresponding author: Sermahal T. Askali, askalisermahal@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Political will in governance significantly shapes public trust, civic engagement, and policy outcomes. This study explores the perspectives of community constituents in the Philippines regarding the demonstration and consistency of political will in addressing public concerns. The main objective is to understand how citizens perceive political commitment and integrity in governance practices, and what factors influence trust and expectations. Using an exploratory qualitative design, data were collected through in-depth interviews with 25 respondents representing diverse communities. Findings reveal that political will is often perceived as inconsistent, influenced by electoral cycles, media narratives, and bureaucratic constraints. The study also applies the Psychological Reactance Theory and the Spiral of Silence Theory to explain public responses to broken political commitments and dominant media discourses. These insights highlight the need for sustained leadership integrity and participatory governance.

Keywords: political will; governance, community constituents; public trust; civic engagement; media influence; spiral of silence; Philippines

1. Introduction

Political will plays a pivotal role in shaping governance outcomes and public trust, particularly in democratic contexts like the Philippines. This study aims to examine how Filipino community constituents perceive political will as demonstrated by local leaders. Specifically, it explores the consistency of governance actions, the influence of media and social interactions on perceptions, and the responsiveness of political leaders to community needs. Using an exploratory qualitative design, the study conducted in-depth interviews with 25 respondents from diverse regions. The research is anchored in two theoretical frameworks—Psychological Reactance Theory (PRT) and the Spiral of Silence Theory—which help explain how broken commitments and dominant narratives affect civic engagement and political perception. The study's findings aim to contribute to ongoing discussions about transparency, accountability, and participatory governance in local political systems. Effective leadership involves motivating people toward shared goals by conveying aspirational visions^[1,2]. Leaders who adhere to ethical standards and ensure integrity within organizations inspire followers to emulate such behavior, fostering a strong motivation to

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 17 February 2025 | Accepted: 29 April 2025 | Available online: 19 May 2025

CITATION

Askali ST. Analysis of community constituents' view on political will in governance in the Philippines. *Environment and Social Psychology* 2025; 10(5): 3453. doi:10.59429/esp.v10i5.3453

COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2025 by author(s). *Environment and Social Psychology* is published by Arts and Science Press Pte. Ltd. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

serve the public^[3].

This concept is linked to the *Psychological Reactance Theory (PRT)*, which states that individuals resist when they perceive broken promises or manipulative political behavior^[4,5]. The theory emphasizes that behavioral freedom is essential for fulfilling human needs, and when this freedom is threatened, individuals experience a motivational state prompting efforts to regain control. These situations diminish trust and hinder civic engagement^[6].

Both media and social interactions significantly impact public perception of political will. In the Philippines, media often amplifies either successes or failures of political figures, shaping public narratives. Social media played a crucial role in the 2022 Philippine national elections by facilitating information exchange and voter mobilization, while also contributing to political polarization^[7]. Disinformation and hyper-partisan narratives have led to competing interpretations of political issues, creating self-reinforcing information ecosystems that sustain political divisions^[8,9]. According to the *Spiral of Silence Theory*, media narratives can lead to conformity or dissent, as people are more likely to express opinions they believe are widely shared while remaining silent when fearing social rejection^[10,11]. However, conflicting media reports often blur the distinction between genuine governance and public relations efforts.

Community-level interactions also play a vital role in shaping political perceptions. The Philippines, recognized as a socially progressive country in Asia, values the dignity and security of its citizens^[12]. Conversations within social circles frequently validate or challenge media narratives, offering firsthand perspectives on governmental actions or inaction. When government initiatives align with community needs, trust is cultivated, whereas neglect reinforces public skepticism.

This complex interaction between political behavior, media influence, and community discussions underscores the evolving nature of how political will is perceived. Understanding these dynamics offers valuable insights into promoting transparent and inclusive governance that meets the public's expectations.

2. Literature

Political dynasties remain deeply entrenched in the Philippines, where nearly 80% of Congress and over half of all local government officials belong to political families^[13]. Public trust in political leadership is a recurring concern, often shaped by a leader's consistency and adherence to moral principles. Baquero^[14] highlights that genuine leaders foster trust by consistently acting in line with ethical values. The Philippine Constitution underscores that public office is rooted in public trust, demanding integrity, responsibility, and accountability from officials. When citizens trust their leaders, governance becomes more effective, enabling the implementation of innovative programs and encouraging public cooperation^[15]. Leadership qualities such as resilience under public scrutiny and personal integrity play a vital role in maintaining this trust^[16]. However, dissatisfaction arises when governance appears driven by electoral ambitions rather than genuine public service^[17]. *Political will* is essential for ensuring sustained and impactful actions by government leaders. It demonstrates their unwavering commitment to prioritizing public welfare over personal interests or political ambitions.

A significant source of frustration for Filipino communities is the inconsistency of government services. Infrastructure projects, such as road repairs, often coincide with election periods, fostering perceptions of political opportunism. Decentralization has theoretically encouraged competition among local governments to better align services with public demands^[18,19]. While this system should promote efficiency, constraints on public revenues and debts often hinder progress^[20]. *Psychological Reactance Theory* suggests that when

political promises go unmet, people naturally resist or withdraw their support. This behavioral response helps explain the erosion of trust in leaders who fail to prioritize sustainable community development.

Media narratives also play a critical role in shaping perceptions of governance. Traditional news outlets and digital platforms like Facebook and TikTok have become powerful spaces for political discourse and engagement^[21]. With Filipinos among the world's most active social media users, narratives circulating online frequently shape public opinions about political sincerity. Political participation broadly refers to actions individuals take to influence state decision-making^[22]. The *Public Opinion Spiral Theory* or Spiral of Silence Theory provides valuable insights into how media portrayals can reinforce public trust or dissent, particularly when reports of corruption or government failures go viral. Social media's ability to evoke strong social emotions, Murphy^[23] makes it a potent tool for mobilizing support, spreading disillusionment, or advancing political agendas^[24].

Beyond media influence, grassroots discussions within communities significantly shape views on political leadership. The prevalence of false information and biased narratives on social media has deepened divisions and mistrust in political discourse^[25]. Informal gatherings, such as barangay assemblies, church meetings, and neighborhood conversations, serve as avenues for constituents to exchange experiences and insights about governance^[26]. These interactions often highlight persistent concerns, such as project delays and unequal service distribution, offering firsthand accounts that influence constituents' evaluations of political sincerity.

The response of political leaders during natural disasters is a crucial factor affecting public trust. The Philippines, frequently battered by typhoons and floods, often witnesses how the swift or delayed actions of local officials impact perceptions of governance. Effective disaster management can strengthen public trust, while poor coordination erodes credibility. Leaders who prioritize community safety during crises foster positive perceptions, while failures result in diminished trust. Disaster preparedness is a shared responsibility involving individuals, communities, private and nonprofit sectors, and all levels of government^[27,28].

These interconnected factors—unfulfilled promises, media narratives, community discourse, and disaster management—shed light on the dynamics between political leadership and public trust. Examining how these elements influence community perspectives, this analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of what fosters or undermines trust in governance within Filipino communities.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research aim and hypotheses

This study aims to examine how Filipino community constituents perceive political will in governance, focusing on the consistency, sincerity, and responsiveness of local government officials. It also explores the roles of media and social interaction in shaping trust and political expectations. The hypotheses below were used to guide the interview framework and analytical lens, consistent with the study's exploratory qualitative design.

Based on these objectives and themes emerging from prior literature, the study is guided by the following hypotheses:

H1: Community constituents perceive political will as inconsistent and often driven by electoral cycles rather than long-term development goals.

H2: Experiences with broken political promises lead to diminished trust in leadership and reduced civic engagement.

H3: Media narratives and community discourse significantly influence how constituents evaluate the sincerity and effectiveness of political leadership.

3.2. Research design

This study adopted an exploratory research design to investigate the perceptions and experiences of community constituents regarding political will in governance. Through this approach, a comprehensive examination was conducted to understand how political behaviors and governance practices influence trust, expectations, and civic engagement within Filipino communities. Exploratory research is particularly useful for gathering preliminary insights, identifying emerging patterns, and generating ideas that may inform more detailed and structured future research endeavors^[29,30].

3.3. Sampling

The study’s participants comprised 25 community constituents from various regions across the Philippines. While this sample size may appear limited, it was appropriate for the study’s exploratory qualitative design, which prioritizes depth and richness of insights over generalizability. The participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct experiences with local governance, ensuring a diversity of socio-economic, geographic, and cultural perspectives. This approach enabled the identification of key themes grounded in lived realities. Nevertheless, future research is encouraged to expand the sample size and consider comparative analysis across different provinces or regions to enhance the representativeness and reliability of findings at a broader scale.

Purposive sampling was employed, which is especially effective in studies requiring participants with specific characteristics^[31]. This approach provides valuable insights applicable to certain demographic groups^[32].

3.4. Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide in **Table 1** served as the primary research instrument. Data collection centered on in-depth interviews, encouraging participants to express their experiences freely and delve into the nuances of their lived realities^[33]. The guide featured open-ended questions that explored key themes, including governance responsiveness, political trust, community development, and leadership behavior. This flexible format prompted participants to provide detailed and reflective responses.

Table 1. Interview questions.

Objectives	
To explore the perceptions and experiences of community constituents regarding the demonstration of political will in governance.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How would you describe the political will of local leaders in addressing key community issues? 2. Can you share any experiences where you felt the government demonstrated strong or weak political will? 3. In what ways do you think political will (or the lack of it) has impacted the progress of your community?
To analyze the factors that influence community constituents’ trust and expectations toward political will in governance.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What key qualities or actions make you trust a leader’s political will? 2. How do past governance decisions influence your expectations of political will in current leadership? 3. What external factors (e.g., media, public opinion, policies) shape your perception of political will in governance?

3.5. Data gathering

The data collection process involved conducting one-on-one interviews with the selected community constituents. This approach created a conversational environment where participants could discuss their experiences and perceptions openly, free from external biases. The interviews focused on significant issues such as governance consistency, political decision-making, and community trust. Prior to the interviews,

respondents were given comprehensive instructions, and researchers carefully scheduled the sessions^[34]. Thoughtful consideration was given to the wording and sequencing of the questions to ensure a logical conversational flow and comprehensive coverage of all relevant research aspects^[35].

3.6. Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. This method enabled the identification of key themes, patterns, and insights by systematically coding and categorizing the participants' responses. The iterative analysis process ensured the capture of nuanced perspectives, highlighting shared experiences and differences among respondents. Detailed narratives were developed to explain each theme, with direct quotations from the interview transcripts used to support the findings^[36,37].

4. Results

Research Objectives 1. To explore the perceptions and experiences of community constituents regarding the demonstration of political will in governance.

Question No. 1. How would you describe the political will of local leaders in addressing key community issues?

1.1 Some leaders are proactive, but many act only when elections are near.

Nineteen (19) respondents expressed that some local officials only take action when elections are coming up. A true public servant works consistently, addressing issues regardless of whether an election is near or not. Political will should not be tied to winning votes, it should be about real commitment to improving people's lives. Many people get swayed by these last-minute efforts, thinking these officials genuinely care. In reality, they are just securing votes, and after elections, it's back to business as usual.

"I've noticed that some local officials only take action when elections are coming up. They start road repairs, distribute aid, and visit communities more frequently, but once they secure their position, the urgency fades. True political will should be consistent, not seasonal."

"Officials go door-to-door, personally talking to us residents before elections, promising solutions to community problems. But once they win, the same people who were approachable before suddenly become inaccessible."

1.2 There are efforts, but government slows things down

Thirteen (13) respondents emphasized that even when some local officials try to implement meaningful programs, they face resistance from rival politicians who don't want them to succeed. Some projects are deliberately delayed or canceled due to political conflicts rather than actual feasibility issues. There are also local leaders who genuinely want to help, but these leaders struggle to navigate the slow and corrupt system. Without strong political backing or public support, their efforts get buried under bureaucracy.

"I see local leaders trying to push for programs that could benefit the community, but the slow pace of government processes, paperwork, and sometimes corruption make progress frustratingly slow. Even those with good intentions struggle to make a real impact."

"Even when some local officials try to implement meaningful programs, they face resistance from rival politicians who don't want them to succeed. Some

projects are deliberately delayed or canceled due to political conflicts rather than actual feasibility issues.”

1.3 It depends on whether the issue benefits them politically

Ten (10) respondents noted that issues like education and healthcare receive less attention compared to infrastructure projects, which are more visible to voters. Some programs are only implemented in areas where the local leaders have strong political supporters. Barangays or districts that voted for the opposition get fewer projects or are completely neglected. Lasting improvements in education, health, or social services remain underfunded. Even when citizens propose meaningful projects, they are often sidelined unless they fit a politician’s agenda. Improving hospitals, hiring more teachers, or providing scholarships require long-term commitment, which doesn’t always translate to instant political gains.

"I know some politicians If a problem aligns with their political agenda, they act quickly. However, if it doesn’t directly boost their reputation or popularity, it often gets ignored. Issues like education and healthcare receive less attention compared to infrastructure projects, which are more visible to voters."

"Instead of creating sustainable social programs, they focus on one-time giveaways like cash assistance, rice distributions, or free concerts before elections. But real, lasting improvements in education, health, or social services remain underfunded.”

Question No. 2. Can you share any experiences where you felt the government demonstrated strong or weak political will?

2.1 Strong Political Will – Disaster Response

Twelve (12) respondents expressed that during a major typhoon, the local government acted quickly by mobilizing rescue teams, providing immediate relief, and ensuring that affected families received food and shelter. It showed that when leaders prioritize people's welfare, they can make things happen fast. Participants appreciated how the local government regularly updated them on where the relief funds and donations were going.

“I appreciated how the local government regularly updated us on where the relief funds and donations were going. They posted reports on social media and conducted town hall meetings, making sure we knew aid was being used properly.”

"After the typhoon, the government didn’t just leave us to rebuild alone. They initiated ‘bayanihan’ clean-up drives, offered financial assistance for rebuilding homes, and partnered with private organizations to speed up recovery efforts. It proved that rebuilding is faster when the government and the people work together."

2.2 Weak Political Will – Addressing Traffic and Public Transport Issues

Eleven (11) respondents expressed if the government truly cared, they would invest in reliable transport systems instead of letting people suffer in endless traffic. The government keeps implementing short-term fixes like rerouting and coding schemes, but they don’t solve the root causes of congestion. People need a real investments in modern, efficient public transport.

"For years, we’ve been stuck in the same traffic problems with no sustainable solutions. Proposals like better public transport systems or stricter traffic laws exist, but implementation is always slow or inconsistent."

"How many times have we heard about transport projects that never materialized? Some officials keep promising new roads, railways, and bus systems, but all we see are delayed constructions and budget issues."

2.3 Strong Political Will – COVID-19 Response

Ten (10) respondents highlighted that at the peak of the pandemic, some local leaders enforced strict health protocols, provided financial aid, and set up vaccination programs efficiently. It showed that urgent action is possible when the government takes the situation seriously. Their city implemented lockdowns early, restricted unnecessary movement, and enforced mask mandates strictly. It wasn't easy, but it helped slow down infections. Compared to places with poor enforcement, they saw fewer cases and faster recovery. With the right leadership, public and private sectors can work together in times of crisis. Leaders actively sought feedback through online surveys and community meetings. They adjusted policies based on public concerns, showing that they genuinely cared about what the people needed.

"Our city implemented lockdowns early, restricted unnecessary movement, and enforced mask mandates strictly. It wasn't easy, but it helped slow down infections. Compared to places with poor enforcement, we saw fewer cases and faster recovery."

"Our LGU partnered with businesses and NGOs to provide free transportation for frontliners, food packs for the needy, and financial aid for small businesses. It showed that with the right leadership, public and private sectors can work together in times of crisis."

Question No. 3. In what ways do you think political will (or the lack of it) has impacted the progress of your community?

3.1 Stagnation Due to Lack of Action

Ten (10) respondents expressed that their leaders make a lot of promises during elections, but once they're in office, there's little follow-through. The lack of political will means that problems remain unsolved, and they, the residents, continue to suffer. Respondents mentioned that it's frustrating to see how only certain areas benefit from projects while poorer communities are left behind. If there was real political will, development would be fair and inclusive, not just focused on areas where politicians have personal interests. Without strong political will, leaders fail to address long-standing issues, leaving communities to struggle with the same problems year after year. Constituents feel frustrated by unfulfilled promises, slow progress, and a lack of genuine concern for public welfare.

"Our leaders make a lot of promises during elections, but once they're in office, there's little follow-through. We still have the same flooding problems, poor healthcare services, and unreliable public transportation. The lack of political will means that problems remain unsolved, and we, the residents, continue to suffer."

"It's frustrating to see how only certain areas benefit from projects while poorer communities are left behind. If there was real political will, development would be fair and inclusive, not just focused on areas where politicians have personal interests.""

3.2 Selective Political Will

Eleven (11) respondents noted that they've observed that politicians act quickly when an issue affects their image or benefits their allies. If political will was applied fairly to all sectors, progress would be more

balanced. It's always the main roads and city centers that get developed first because they're the most visible. Some officials delay or block projects in barangays that didn't support them during elections. Political will is often exercised based on visibility, political alliances, or personal interests rather than the actual needs of the people. Constituents believe that fair and balanced governance should focus on uplifting all sectors, especially underserved communities, rather than prioritizing projects that serve political or business agendas.

"I've observed that politicians act quickly when an issue affects their image or benefits their allies. For example, roads leading to commercial areas get fixed fast, but inner barangay roads are ignored. If political will was applied fairly to all sectors, progress would be more balanced."

"Some officials delay or block projects in barangays that didn't support them during elections. We've seen important programs, like water system improvements and livelihood assistance, put on hold just because of political differences. This kind of bias keeps our community from progressing."

3.3 Corruption and Political Will Misused

Eighteen (18) respondents emphasized that sometimes, political will exists, but it's used for personal gain. Corrupt officials push for projects that benefit their businesses instead of what the community truly needs. Instead of funding education and healthcare, resources go into unnecessary infrastructure with inflated costs. Political will should be about serving everyone fairly, not just benefiting one's inner circle. Some politicians do act with political will, it is often driven by personal profit, corruption, or favoritism. Many believe that real progress will only happen when public funds are used transparently and for the genuine benefit of all citizens, rather than for enriching a select few.

"We've seen roads get 'repaired' multiple times even though they were still in good condition. It's obvious that these projects are just ways for officials to get commissions from contractors. Meanwhile, more urgent needs like drainage systems and flood control remain ignored."

"When aid is distributed, those close to politicians get priority. We've seen relief goods, scholarships, and financial assistance go to supporters of local officials, while others who truly need help are left out. Political will should be about serving everyone fairly, not just benefiting one's inner circle."

Research Objectives 2. To analyze the factors that influence community constituents' trust and expectations toward political will in governance.

Question No. 1. What key qualities or actions make you trust a leader's political will?

Consistency in Actions

Twenty five (25) respondents discussed that a leader earns their trust when they follow through on their promises, even when no one is watching. If they only act during election season, that's not political will, that's campaigning. Real leadership is about continuously working for the people, not just when they need votes. They trust leaders who push for projects and reforms even when there's no media coverage or personal gain involved. Respondents trust leaders who invest in real change, not just projects designed to win votes. A true leader listens and acts on people's concerns all the time, not just when it benefits their political career. Overall, Leaders with genuine political will don't need to remind people of their accomplishments every time. If they truly work for the people, the results will speak for themselves.

"A leader earns my trust when they follow through on their promises, even when no one is watching. If they only act during election season, that's not political will—that's campaigning."

"It's easy to make quick, temporary projects for publicity, but real leadership is about long-term solutions. I trust leaders who invest in real change, not just projects designed to win votes."

1.2 Courage to Make Tough Decisions

Sixteen (16) respondents noted that they respect leaders who stand firm on their principles, even if it means making unpopular decisions. If they push for long-term solutions rather than just quick fixes for popularity, that shows real commitment. They make decisions that will benefit the community in the long run, even if it means facing criticism or resistance. Respondents admire those leaders who don't bow down to political pressure or wealthy influencers. Over time, their choices prove to be right when people see lasting improvements in their community. Leaders with real political will think beyond their term. They focus on education, livelihood programs, and infrastructure that will benefit future generations, not just short-lived projects that boost their re-election chances.

"I respect leaders who stand firm on their principles, even if it means making unpopular decisions. If they push for long-term solutions rather than just quick fixes for popularity, that shows real commitment."

"I respect leaders who remain firm in their decisions, even when people initially disagree. Over time, their choices prove to be right when we see lasting improvements in our community."

1.3 No Tolerance for Corruption

Twenty two (22) respondents highlighted that a leader with political will doesn't turn a blind eye to corruption. If they take concrete steps to hold corrupt officials accountable—regardless of political alliances—it shows integrity and commitment. Corruption is deeply rooted in many government institutions, so they respect leaders who take real action to expose and dismantle these practices, even if it means making enemies in politics. A leader with true political will doesn't just go after small-time corruption cases for publicity. They implement structural reforms like showing government transactions and strengthening anti-corruption laws so that corruption becomes harder, even after they leave office. They don't accept under-the-table deals from business tycoons, contractors, or fellow politicians in exchange for favors. If they reject bribery, even when it could benefit their career, it proves they value integrity over power. A true leader refuses to accept these excuses and actively works to change the system rather than becoming part of it.

"Corruption is deeply rooted in many government institutions, so I respect leaders who take real action to expose and dismantle these practices, even if it means making enemies in politics."

"A leader with true political will doesn't just go after small-time corruption cases for publicity. They implement structural reforms—like showing government transactions and strengthening anti-corruption laws—so that corruption becomes harder, even after they leave office."

Question No. 2. How do past governance decisions influence your expectations of political will in current leadership?

2.1 Hope for Change

Twenty three (23) respondents expressed that even if past governance lacked political will, they believe every new leader has a chance to do better. Participants try to stay hopeful, but they also watch closely for signs that they are just repeating the same empty promises. They want to believe that every new leader has good intentions, but they've learned to be cautious. Respondents support leaders based on their early actions, not just their campaign words. Hope is important, but it's not enough. A good leader is someone who listens and learns from past mistakes. If people see them open to feedback and adjusting their policies based on real community needs, people give them their trust. Every leader starts with a clean slate for people, but they have to earn their trust. People judge them based on what they do, not what they say they will do.

“Even if past governance lacked political will, I believe every new leader has a chance to do better. I try to stay hopeful, but I also watch closely for signs that they are just repeating the same empty promises.”

“I remain hopeful, but I also ask questions. I listen to leaders, but I also check their records, their actions, and how they respond when challenged.”

2.2 Track Record Matters

Twenty one (21) respondents discussed if past leaders have shown strong political will like pushing for infrastructure, fighting corruption, or standing by their promises. People expect the current leadership to continue that momentum. But if past governance was full of broken promises, they become more skeptical. They've seen how some leaders inherit well-planned programs but either abandon them or use them for personal gain. People usually don't easily trust new officials. They wait to see if they build on what works or just make excuses. People try to give new leaders a chance, but if they start making the same excuses as the old ones—blaming the past instead of finding solutions—people know they're in for another cycle of disappointment.

"If past leaders have shown strong political will—like pushing for infrastructure, fighting corruption, or standing by their promises—I expect the current leadership to continue that momentum. But if past governance was full of broken promises, I become more skeptical."

“I don't want leaders who just maintain the status quo. If past governance was good, the new leadership should push for even bigger improvements. If it was bad, they should correct the mistakes instead of making excuses.”

2.3 Skepticism Over Grand Promises

Thirteen (13) respondents noted that after experiencing leaders who started strong but later compromised for political survival, they now focus more on consistency rather than grand declarations. Real political will is tested over time, not just in speeches. Constituents no longer get impressed by big speeches or flashy campaigns. They watch how leaders handle real challenges whether they stay firm on their principles or bend under pressure. Many leaders do what's popular rather than what's right. They prefer those who stick to their commitments, even if it means losing public favor, because that's what real leadership is about. Political survival shouldn't come at the expense of public welfare. A true leader is willing to risk their position for the sake of lasting change, not just to stay in power.

"After experiencing leaders who started strong but later compromised for political survival, I now focus more on consistency rather than grand declarations. Real political will is tested over time, not just in speeches."

"It's easy to start strong, but real leadership is about sustaining efforts even when the spotlight fades. I respect leaders who keep working even when the cameras are gone."

Question No. 3. What external factors (e.g., media, public opinion, policies) shape your perception of political will in governance?

3.1 Government Policies and Implementation

Twenty (20) respondents mentioned that actions speak louder than words. If policies being enforced consistently like stricter laws against corruption or real support for public welfare programs it shows the government has strong political will. If policies exist but are never implemented properly, then they see it as a lack of commitment. Participants emphasized that political will is proven when the government is willing to hold its own officials accountable. Political will means fighting for those who need it most.

"For me, actions speak louder than words. If I see policies being enforced consistently—like stricter laws against corruption or real support for public welfare programs—I believe the government has strong political will. If policies exist but are never implemented properly, then I see it as a lack of commitment."

"For me, political will is proven when the government is willing to hold its own officials accountable. If corruption cases are investigated properly and corrupt leaders are actually punished, then I believe they are serious about governance. But if cases drag on for years with no real consequences, then it's all just for show."

3.2 Media Influence

Twelve (12) respondents emphasized that the news and social media play a big role in shaping their view of political will. When they see leaders taking decisive action, it's often highlighted in the media, but at the same time, failures and corruption scandals are also exposed. It makes them skeptical because they don't know if they're seeing the full picture or just what the media wants to show. They've noticed that different media outlets portray the same issue differently. Participants mentioned that people tend to follow news sources or influencers who share their beliefs. Respondents faced difficulties to form an unbiased opinion when everything online is so polarized. Positive initiatives by the government gaining traction, but at the same time, fake news and misleading narratives spread just as fast.

"The news and social media play a big role in shaping my view of political will. When I see leaders taking decisive action, it's often highlighted in the media, but at the same time, failures and corruption scandals are also exposed. It makes me skeptical because I don't know if I'm seeing the full picture or just what the media wants to show."

"People tend to follow news sources or influencers who share their beliefs. This creates echo chambers where we only see perspectives that confirm what we already think about a leader's political will. It's difficult to form an unbiased opinion when everything online is so polarized."

3.3 Public Opinion and Discussions

Seventeen (17) respondents expressed that discussions influences their perception. Participants noticed that older and younger generations in their family sometimes have different views on political will. Discussions shape how they assess whether a leader is truly committed to change or just making excuses. A single bad experience shared within a community can ruin a leader's reputation. If everyone around them complains about the same unresolved issues, they start doubting their political will. Political will is not just about big national policies but about what actually reaches people's community.

"What I hear from friends, family, and community discussions influences my perception. If people around me believe a leader is working hard, I tend to see them more favorably. But if there's a strong public outcry about unfulfilled promises, I start questioning their political will."

"Sometimes, I trust what my neighbors and co-workers say more than what I see in the news. If they personally experience the benefits of a government program—like financial aid or infrastructure projects—it makes me more inclined to believe that the leader is really working. But if everyone around me complains about the same unresolved issues, I start doubting their political will."

5. Discussion

The results of this study provide a comprehensive and layered understanding of political will as perceived by community constituents. Respondents consistently highlighted a pattern in which governmental actions appear to be strategically aligned with election cycles, fostering the perception that certain initiatives are more about political campaigning than genuine public service^[38]. More generally, these basic findings are consistent with research showing that political campaigns, particularly negative ones, can significantly shape voter perceptions and influence electoral decisions^[39]. Additionally, the overall tone and messaging of political campaigns shows significance in determining voter behavior, reinforcing the notion that governance activities fluctuate in intensity depending on political priorities. This inconsistency fosters public disillusionment, as constituents observe increased governmental engagement during election periods followed by phases of neglect, ultimately undermining trust in leadership^[40].

The Psychological Reactance Theory (PRT) and Spiral of Silence Theory offer insights into public responses to political will. PRT suggests that unfulfilled promises or manipulative governance provoke resistance, leading to distrust and civic disengagement. Meanwhile, the Spiral of Silence Theory explains how dominant narratives shape public discourse, as individuals may suppress dissenting opinions to avoid isolation. These theories highlight how perceived insincerity and media influence can either fuel skepticism or silence criticism, ultimately affecting trust in leadership.

Furthermore, participants acknowledged instances where political will was demonstrated effectively, particularly in crisis scenarios such as disaster response and pandemic management. The COVID-19 pandemic served as a pivotal test of political leadership worldwide, compelling leaders to navigate unprecedented challenges and make critical decisions under extreme pressure^[41,42]. Swift mobilization of resources and transparent communication emerged as defining attributes of effective governance, highlighting the potential for strong leadership when public welfare is prioritized. In addition, these findings provide additional information about the significance of clear and consistent messaging in crisis communications. For instance, Moreland et al.^[43] emphasized that leaders who convey simple yet actionable messages enhance public understanding and compliance, reinforcing the importance of direct communication.

These insights underscore the community's ability to distinguish between superficial gestures and genuine efforts to address societal challenges.

On the other hand, bureaucratic inefficiencies, political rivalries, and selective prioritization were frequently identified as significant barriers to meaningful progress. Debate continues on whether bureaucracy is sufficiently adaptable to accommodate dynamic and unpredictable changes^[44]. Respondents expressed concerns that bureaucratic red tape and political conflicts often delayed or obstructed beneficial projects, irrespective of leaders' intentions. The first step to better governance is recognizing the underlying political causes that hinder policy implementation^[45]. Nevertheless, the findings indicate that even in the presence of political will, systemic constraints can stifle innovation and responsiveness, limiting the effectiveness of governance. These findings align with broader discussions on the structural limitations of political institutions and their impact on public administration^[46]. Despite the limitations, these insights remain valuable in light of the broader implications for governance strategies aimed at balancing immediate political gains with sustainable development goals.

The data suggest that political will is often perceived as inconsistent and, at times, opportunistic, with infrastructure projects receiving greater prioritization over long-term social initiatives such as education and healthcare. The lack of political action can be attributed to a deficiency in political will, as progress toward achieving health equity depends on policymakers' willingness to enact necessary reforms, regardless of strong supporting evidence^[47,48]. The results on governance priorities are broadly consistent with existing research that highlights the preference for high-visibility projects, which are more likely to yield immediate political recognition. This tendency reinforces public skepticism regarding the sincerity of governance efforts and raises concerns about the long-term sustainability of policy decisions. The broad implication of the present research is that strengthening political accountability and enhancing community engagement are vital components in promoting sustainable and equitable development^[49].

Despite these criticisms, respondents expressed hope for reform and identified key leadership qualities such as consistency, integrity, and transparency as essential for building public trust. The study illustrates a strong demand for leaders who demonstrate resilience in decision-making, uphold transparency, and prioritize inclusive development. Overall, the findings demonstrate a strong effect of governance approaches that align with community needs, fostering trust and improving perceptions of political will^[50]. Community engagement and trust are fundamental to improving overall societal well-being, increasing access to essential resources, and fostering an informed and connected citizenry.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that political will, while vital to effective governance, is often perceived by community constituents in the Philippines as inconsistent, reactive, and influenced by political expediency. Respondents consistently noted that governance activities intensify during election periods and diminish afterward, reinforcing skepticism about leaders' long-term commitment to public welfare. While certain instances, such as disaster response and pandemic management, showcased strong political will through swift action and transparency, many respondents highlighted concerns about selective prioritization, bureaucratic delays, and politicized program implementation. These patterns contribute to public disillusionment and erode trust in political leadership.

The study underscores that genuine political will must be demonstrated through consistent, inclusive, and sustained efforts that address both immediate and structural community needs. Political actions should be driven by public interest rather than visibility or short-term electoral gains. Strengthening institutional

transparency, promoting accountability, and fostering participatory governance are critical strategies for enhancing public trust.

Additionally, the influence of media narratives and social discourse on the perception of political will reinforces the importance of responsible communication and civic education. Public engagement, when paired with clear government responsiveness, can play a crucial role in improving governance outcomes.

Future research may benefit from a broader and more diverse respondent base, including comparative studies across multiple regions, to capture variations in perception and further validate the findings. Continued exploration of the links between leadership behavior, media influence, and citizen engagement is recommended to inform evidence-based policy reform aimed at strengthening democratic governance.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

1. Chavez JV, Garil BA, Padirque CB, et al. Assessing innovative and responsive young leaders in public service: lens from community clientele. *Environment and Social Psychology* 2024; 9(9): 2876. Doi: 10.59429/esp.v9i9.2876
2. [Steinmann B, Klug HJP, Maier GW. The Path Is the Goal: How Transformational Leaders Enhance Followers' Job Attitudes and Proactive Behavior. *Front Psychol.* 2018 Nov 29;9:2338. Doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02338. PMID: 30555375; PMCID: PMC6281759.
3. Brown, M. E., Treviño, L. K., & Harrison, D. A. (2005). Ethical leadership: A social learning perspective for construct development and testing. *Organizational behavior and human decision processes*, 97(2), 117-134.
4. Brehm, J. W., & Cole, A. H. (1966). Effect of a favor which reduces freedom. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 3, 420-426.
5. Brehm, S. S., & Brehm, J. W. (1981). *Psychological reactance: A theory of freedom and control*. London: Academic Press.
6. Rosenberg, Benjamin and Siegel, Jason T., "Threatening uncertainty and psychological reactance: are freedom threats always noxious?" (2021). *Psychology | Faculty Scholarship*. 7.
7. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-01640-8>
8. Justin Keith A. Baquisal (2022). Mobilized and Polarized: Social Media and Disinformation Narratives in the 2022 Philippine Elections. DOI: 10.5509/2022953549
9. JASON VINCENT A. CABAÑES (2023) Influence Operations" in the Philippines: New Frontiers of Online Manipulation. Retrieved from <https://fulcrum.sg/influence-operations-in-the-philippines-new-frontiers-of-online-manipulation/>
10. Ausat, Abu. (2023). The Role of Social Media in Shaping Public Opinion and Its Influence on Economic Decisions. *Technology and Society Perspectives (TACIT)*. 1. 35-44. 10.61100/tacit.v1i1.37.
11. Glynn, Ostman, McDonald. Opinions, perception and social reality. *Public opinion and the communication of consent* (1995). Pp. 249-277.
12. Taylor, D. Garth (1982). "Pluralistic Ignorance and the Spiral of Silence: A Formal Analysis". *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 46 (3): 311. Doi:10.1086/268729. ISSN 0033-362X.
13. Benjamin Carbonetti, Robert Pomeroy, David L. Richards, Overcoming the lack of political will in small scale fisheries, *Marine Policy*, Volume 44, 2014, Pages 295-301, ISSN 0308-597X, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2013.09.020>.
14. Ronald U. Mendoza, Jurel K. Yap, Gabrielle Ann S. Mendoza, et al. Political dynasties, business, and poverty in the Philippines, *Journal of Government and Economics*, Volume 7, 2022, 100051, ISSN 2667-3193, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jge.2022.100051>.
15. Baquero A. Authentic Leadership, Employee Work Engagement, Trust in the Leader, and Workplace Well-Being: A Moderated Mediation Model. *Psychol Res Behav Manag.* 2023 Apr 24;16:1403-1424. Doi: 10.2147/PRBM.S407672. PMID: 37124078; PMCID: PMC10143705.
16. Alex Brillantes & Maricel Fernandez (2011) RESTORING TRUST AND BUILDING INTEGRITY IN GOVERNMENT: ISSUES AND CONCERNS IN THE PHILIPPINES AND AREAS FOR REFORM. *International Public Management Review* Vol. 12, Iss. 2, 2011 www.ipmr.net

17. Kleynhans DJ, Heyns MM, Stander MW, de Beer LT. Authentic Leadership, Trust (in the Leader), and Flourishing: Does Precariousness Matter? *Front Psychol.* 2022 Apr 1;13:798759. Doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.798759. PMID: 35432051; PMCID: PMC9012166.
18. Borja, A. L. A., Torneo, A. R., & Hecita, I. J. R. (2024). Challenges to Democratization from the Perspective of Political Inaction: Insights into Political Disempowerment and Citizenship in the Philippines. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/18681034241239060>
19. Besley, T.; Case, A. Does electoral accountability affect economic policy choices? Evidence from gubernatorial term limits. *Q. J. Econ.* 1995, 110, 769–798.
20. Balaguer-Coll, M.T.; Prior, D.; Tortosa-Ausina, E. Decentralization and efficiency of local government. *Ann. Reg. Sci.* 2010, 45, 571–601.
21. Distor, C. B., & Khaltar, O. (2022). What Motivates Local Governments to Be Efficient? Evidence from Philippine Cities. *Sustainability*, 14(15), 9426. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14159426>
22. Zhang, W. (2016). Social media and elections in Singapore: Comparing 2011 and 2015. *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 9(4), 367–384
23. Norris, P. (2000). *A virtuous circle: Political communications in post-industrial societies*. New York, NY:Cambridge University Press.
24. Murphy, J. P. (2017). *Yearning to labor: Youth, unemployment, and social destiny in urban France*. University of Nebraska Press.
25. Talamayan, F., & Candelaria, J. L. (2024). Populist desires, nostalgic narratives: the Marcos golden age myth and manipulation of collective memories on YouTube. *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02185377.2024.2416116>
26. Saaïda, Mohammed. (2023). The Role of Social Media in Shaping Political Discourse and Propaganda. 3. 1-8. 10.5281/zenodo.10841870.
27. Yusingco, M.H. (2022). Barangay assembly: A citizen-led reinvigoration of political discourse and civic engagement in the Philippines. *Constitutional Studies*, 8, 177-202.
28. Cong, Zhen, Guanggang Feng, and Zhirui Chen. 2023. Disaster exposure and patterns of disaster preparedness: A multilevel social vulnerability and engagement perspective. *Journal of Environmental Management* 339: 117798.
29. Kyne, D. (2023). An Exploratory Study on the Association between Community Resilience and Disaster Preparedness in the Rio Grande Valley. *Social Sciences*, 12(9), 496. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci1209049>
30. Magno, J.M., Indal, R.S., Chavez, J.V., et al., 2024. Alternative Teaching Strategies in Learning Filipino Language among Dominant English Speakers. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*. 6(4):404-419. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v6i4.6742>
31. Chavez, J.V., Adalia, H.G., Alberto, J.P., 2023. Parental support strategies and motivation in aiding their children learn the English language. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*. 5(2), 1541.
32. Murro RA, Lobo JG, Inso ARC, Chavez JV. (2023). Difficulties of parents with low educational attainment in assisting their children in modular distance learning during pandemic. *Environment and Social Psychology* 2023; 9(1): 1957. Doi: 10.54517/esp.v9i1.1957
33. Inoferio HV, Espartero MM, Asiri MS, et al. Coping with math anxiety and lack of confidence through AI-assisted learning. *Environment and Social Psychology* 2024; 9(5): 2228. Doi: 10.54517/esp.v9i5.2228
34. Castro FLT, Ventura BLO, Estajal, RS, et al. 2024. Teachers handling multiple subject areas: difficulties and adaptive attributes in the delivery of instructions. *Environment and Social Psychology* 2024; 9(9): 2520. Doi: 10.59429/esp.v9i9.2520
35. Cuilan JT., Chavez JV., Soliva KJG., et.al. 2024. Verbal and non-verbal communication patterns of persuasive selling among live online sellers. *Environment and Social Psychology* 2024; 9(8): 2519. Doi: 10.59429/esp.v9i8.2519
36. Comeros, N.A., Cuilan, J.T., Chavez, J.V., 2024. Parental Discretionary Influence on Their Children’s Manner of Learning English Language *Forum for Linguistic Studies*. 6(4): 284-299. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v6i4.6656>
37. Savellon KIS, Asiri MS, Chavez JV. 2024. Public speaking woes of academic leaders: resources and alternative ways to improve speaking with Audience. *Environment and Social Psychology* 2024; 9(9): 2871. Doi: 10.59429/esp.v9i9.2871
38. Bucoy RK, Enumerabellon KM, Amilhamja AJ, et al. 2024. Knowledge deficits and analysis on comprehension of teachers on their common legal rights as teachers. *Environment and Social Psychology* 2024; 9(9): 2559. Doi: 10.59429/esp.v9i9.2559
39. Kulachai, W., Lerdtomornsakul, U., & Homyamyen, P. (2023). Factors Influencing Voting Decision: A Comprehensive Literature Review. *Social Sciences*, 12(9), 469. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12090469>
40. Goldstein, Ken, and Paul Freedman. 2002. Campaign advertising and voter turnout: New evidence for a stimulation effect. *Journal of Politics* 64: 721–40

42. Lansing AE, Romero NJ, Siantz E, Silva V, Center K, Casteel D, Gilmer T. Building trust: Leadership reflections on community empowerment and engagement in a large urban initiative. *BMC Public Health*. 2023 Jun 28;23(1):1252. Doi: 10.1186/s12889-023-15860-z. PMID: 37380973; PMCID: PMC10304359.
43. Mohamed Nour M, Kisa A. Political Leaders' Communication Strategies during COVID-19 in Highly Infected Countries: A Scoping Review. *Healthcare (Basel)*. 2024 Mar 7;12(6):607. Doi: 10.3390/healthcare12060607. PMID: 38540571; PMCID: PMC10970693.
44. Mizrahi S, Vigoda-Gadot E, Cohen N. How Well Do They Manage a Crisis? The Government's Effectiveness During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Public Adm Rev*. 2021 Nov-Dec;81(6):1120-1130. Doi: 10.1111/puar.13370. Epub 2021 Apr 7. PMID: 33821042; PMCID: PMC8014634.
45. Moreland A., Herlihy C., Tynan M.A., Sunshine G., McCord R.F., Hilton C., Poovey J., Werner A.K., Jones C.D., Fulmer E.B., et al. Timing of state and territorial COVID-19 stay-at-home orders and changes in population movement—United States, March 1–May 31, 2020. *Morb. Mortal. Wkly. Rep*. 2020;69:1198. Doi: 10.15585/mmwr.mm6935a2
46. Monteiro, Pedro & Adler, Paul. (2021). Bureaucracy for the 21st Century: Clarifying and Expanding Our View of Bureaucratic Organization. *The Academy of Management Annals*. 10.5465/annals.2019.0059.
47. Meier, Kenneth & Compton, Mallory E. & Polga-Hecimovich, John & Song, Miyeon & Wimpy, Cameron. (2019). Bureaucracy and the Failure of Politics: Challenges to Democratic Governance. *Administration & Society*. 51. 1576-1605. 10.1177/0095399719874759.
48. Sofik Handoyo, Public governance and national environmental performance nexus: Evidence from cross-country studies, *Heliyon*, Volume 10, Issue 23, 2024, e40637, ISSN 2405-8440, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e40637>
49. Chancel L. Main Barrier to Tackling Inequalities is Lack of Political Will. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/social/main-barrier-to-tackling-inequalities-is-lack-of-political-will.html>
50. Wilkinson R. Politics and health inequalities. *Lancet*. 2006;368(9543):1229–1230
51. Shogo Kubota, Elizabeth M Elliott, Phonepaseuth Ounaphom, et al. (2024) Community engagement and local governance for health equity through trust: lessons from developing the CONNECT Initiative in the Lao People's Democratic Republic: *BMJ Global Health* 2024;9:e015409.
52. Sánchez-Soriano M, Arango-Ramírez PM, Pérez-López EI and García-Montalvo IA (2024) Inclusive governance: empowering communities and promoting social justice. *Front. Polit. Sci*. 6:1478126. Doi: 10.3389/fpos.2024.1478126