

Semantic Clarity and Legal Accuracy: Evaluating Language Use in Barangay Ordinances and Resolutions

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Abstract

This study assessed the semantic clarity and legal accuracy of the ordinances and resolutions in the barangays of Baung, Gumarueng and Poblacion 1 in the Municipality of Piat, Cagayan based on Republic Act 7160 or the Local Government code of 1991. It utilized the descriptive-evaluative method of research employing mixed-method of data collection combining the quantitative aspects on the profile of the 27 barangay officials, including educational attainment, years in service, trainings attended, language use and English proficiency with and the qualitative content analysis of the latest ordinances and resolutions. The data on the respondents' profile were analyzed using frequency and percentage distribution and the documents were assessed through Legal Accuracy Matrix and Semantic Clarity matrix, substantiated by the reviews of legal and language experts. Results of the study revealed that majority of the officials only had high school education, with limited exposure to higher levels of trainings predominantly basic English proficiency. The primary drafting language is Filipino and the language of deliberation was the local dialects and mixed code-switching. The results also revealed that although resolutions generally complied with legal and procedural requirements, the deficiencies that recurred in ordinances remained such as unclear or overly broad provisions, penalties that are excessive and overreaching jurisdiction. Weak documentation of dissemination and publication recurred, which undermines the enforceability of the ordinances. It was concluded that although the barangay legislation was procedurally compliant, it is being prevented by linguistic and educational constraints that reduce clarity, public accessibility and precision. It is recommended that trainings along institutionalization of legislative drafting skills, plain language communication and functional English be conducted and complemented by digital literacy, community publication training and social media posting to increase citizen participation, transparency and enforceability of the barangay laws. Through the link between the profile of the local officials and their strengths and weaknesses in their legislative outputs, this study contributes to the enhancement of the quality, inclusivity and credibility of barangay legislation.

Keywords: *Barangay ordinances, Legal accuracy, Semantic clarity, Content analysis, Local governance, Plain language, Rule of law*

I. INTRODUCTION

Barangays in the Philippines are considered the most fundamental political unit, which acts as the frontline governance system that formulates resolutions and ordinances, directly affecting millions of citizens. With this impact in the society, the integrity and quality of documents involved in its processes are important in ensuring good governance. This study focuses on the legal accuracy and semantic clarity which are crucial because legislation is only as effective as the comprehensibility and soundness of its laws to the public.

This study is deemed necessary because it targets two important aspects of legislation, which are legal accuracy and semantic clarity. Prior studies highlight legal precision affirmed to be a need to be complied in aspects such as financial management and competence of professionals (Abrea et al, 2024; Gannaban, 2023). This ensures enforceability and prevents ultra vires policies. On the other hand, clarity is crucial in the participation of the public. Very complex language creates problems, demeans trust (Ruczkowski, 2022) and overly delimits access to justice for linguistically different and marginalized groups (Hurtado, 2024).

At the core of this study is the significance of establishing that legally compliant and clear legislations are essential in effective local justice and democracy. The barangay laws define the citizens' rights and regulate resources at the grassroots. Deficiencies in either accuracy and clarity lead to confusion, diminished trust and poor implementation of local institutions. Hence, the evaluation of these documents is important in making sure that these truly are responsive and are accessible to the community.

With this need, a gap remains in terms of how these aspects can be ensured. Previous research studied isolated elements, such as public sentiments and linguistic analysis (Toan, 2024; Cuevas et al, 2024). Others systematically integrated and evaluated both semantic clarity and legal accuracy in barangay law texts. The legislations cannot be effective until these satisfy both criteria.

This study directly responds to the gap by conducting a linguistic and content analysis of select documents. It aims to evaluate their compliance to statutory requirements while maintaining public accessibility. Ultimately, its purpose is to provide recommendations to strengthen governance at the local level to ensure that citizen' trust to the local legal system.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Generally, this study evaluated the semantic clarity, legal accuracy and contextual influences of barangay ordinances and resolutions in Piat, Cagayan.

Specifically, it answered the following questions:

1. What is the professional, educational and language profiles of the barangay officials in terms of:

- 1.1. highest educational attainment
- 1.2. years in service
- 1.3. trainings attended
- 1.4. primary language use
- 1.5. English proficiency

2. What is the extent of the legal accuracy of the ordinances and resolutions based on the provisions of Republic Act 7160 (Local Government Code of 1991) using the Legal Accuracy Matrix?

3. What is the level of semantic clarity of the selected ordinances and resolutions in terms of:

- 3.1. clarity of purpose
- 3.2. precision of terms
- 3.3. consistency of wording
- 3.4. specificity of provisions
- 3.5. readability
- 3.6. avoidance of ambiguity

4. What are the recurring strengths and weaknesses in the drafting and enactment of barangay ordinances and resolutions across the three barangays?

III. METHODOLOGY

This study used Descriptive-Evaluative Design utilizing mixed-method of data collection to examine the barangay ordinances and resolutions. The quantitative data involved the profile of the officials, particularly their educational attainment, years in service, trainings attended, language use and English proficiency. The qualitative aspect involved content analysis of the legislative documents focused on wording, structures and legal accuracy. The evaluation was guided by two frameworks: legal Accuracy Matrix, which is anchored on RA 7160 and the Semantic Clarity Matrix, which is based on plain language, coherence and reliability, following the approach of Vega-Cocha et al (2024). The qualitative results are presented in tabular themes to ensure clear comparisons across barangays.

The study was conducted in the barangays of Baung, Guamrueng and Poblacion 1 in the Municipality of Piat, Cagayan, which are active partners of the College of Criminal Justice Education (CCJE) of Cagayan State University – Piat Campus in its extension programs, which makes them a relevant context. The respondents of the study were seven council members, three barangay secretaries and three barangay captains selected through purposive sampling.

The data gathering instruments included a survey questionnaire that elicited the profile of the council members, barangay secretaries, and barangay captains such as their educational attainment, years in service, trainings attended and language use. The study also used a short English proficiency test focused on vocabulary, sentence construction and comprehension questions to measure their ability to use English in governance-related contexts. The study also used copies of latest barangay ordinances and resolutions as corpus of the study. These were evaluated through content analysis using the Legal Accuracy Matrix and the Semantic Clarity Matrix, focusing on scope, compliance with RA 7160, clarity, consistency and readability.

To analyze the qualitative data, the collected ordinances and resolutions were subjected to content analysis using systematic categorization and coding guided by the Legal Accuracy and Semantic Clarity Matrices. For the quantitative data, frequency and percentage distribution were used to describe trends and highlight dominant characteristics of the respondents' profiles such as their educational attainment, years in service, trainings attended, language use and English Proficiency gathered through structured questionnaire. To ensure reliability, the qualitative evaluation was independently conducted by legal experts for accuracy and by language experts for clarity and the results were cross-checked for consistency.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following are the main results of the study presented thematically. The data were primarily taken from the corpus of the study, subsequently evaluated by experts ensuring accuracy, consistency and credibility of the findings.

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Profile

Table 1.1. Professional and Educational Profile

Highest Educational Attainment			Years in Service			Trainings Attended		
Level	f	%	Years	f	%	Level	f	%
Elementary	3	11.11%	1-3	10	37.04	Local	21	77.78%
High School	14	51.85%	3-6	14	51.85%	Provincial	6	22.22%
College	10	37.04%	6-9	3	11.11%	National	0	0
Total	27	100.00%	Total	27	100.00%	Total	27	100.00%

Majority of the respondents only attained high school education comprising 51.58 percent and few reaching college comprising 37.04 percent. A small portion comprising 11.11 percent completed elementary. These results imply that there is educational gap among the barangay officials and this

may affect their ability to comprehend technical and legal aspects of resolutions and ordinances while drafting these. This is supported by Gannaban (2023) who explains that although some barangay secretaries are tertiary graduates, with at least three years of experience, their educational attainments still differ across positions and this explains the reliance on imprecise and verbose language in some resolutions noted in the semantic clarity analysis.

Considering the length of service, most of the respondents have served from three to six years comprising 51.85 percent of the respondents. Others are relatively new or more experienced with six to nine years of experience at 37.04 percent and 11.11 percent, respectively. This suggests that the respondents compose a moderately experienced group of officials who are still developing their skills in governance. Salazar in 2022 points out that the newly appointed barangay secretaries' office competencies were generally satisfactory, but not in computer operations which remained weak. This is supported by the present findings wherein the years of service may support procedural compliance, but weak technical and digital competencies continually limit the accessibility and precision of barangay documents.

Lastly, the training attendance of the respondents reveal that most of them or 77.78 percent only participated in local level trainings. Very few of only 22.22 percent were exposed to provincial training and no one had national level training. This reflects that high-level trainings remain to be scarce among the barangay officials. This is a big concern because according to Tabano et al, (2025), capacity building improves self-reported knowledge and skills. This implies that there is a need to expand access to national and provincial trainings that are necessary in strengthening not only the officials' technical precision but also may enhance their semantic clarity and enforceability of barangay ordinances and resolutions.

Table 1.2. Language and Communication Profile

Primary Language Used in Drafting Resolutions/Ordinances			Primary Language Used in Deliberation			English Language Proficiency Level		
Language	f	%	Language	f	%	Level	f	%
English	8	29.63%	English	0	0	Basic	23	85.19%
Filipino	13	48.15%	Filipino	8	29.63%	Intermediate	4	14.81%
Local Dialect	6	22.22%	Local Dialect	10	37.04%	Advanced	0	0
Mixed	0	0	Mixed	9	33.33%			
Total	27	100.00%	Total	27	100.00%	Total	27	100.00%

In terms of the respondents' language and communication profile, the primary language being used in drafting barangay ordinances and resolutions is Filipino (48.15%). This is followed by English (29.63%) and local dialects (22.22%). This shows that barangay officials tend to use Filipino as a more convenient medium in drafting their resolutions and ordinances, which can be attributed to their basic level of English proficiency. Santos et al (2022) found that there has been a decline on English proficiency in the country and it is influenced by socio-economic factors, motivation of learners and inconsistent teaching strategies. This broad national scenario explains why many barangay officials still struggle to use English as the main drafting language, resulting in documents that often contain shifting of Filipino and English terminologies. This of course, undermines semantic clarity.

In terms of deliberations, the barangay officials mostly use dialects (37.04%) and mixed language (33.33%), while Filipino is used 29.63% of the time. English is absent as a way to deliberate. This means that although English and Filipino are the main drafting languages, the actual discussions are done in local or mixed languages to ensure inclusivity and understanding. Nonetheless, this practice poses challenges in translating oral discussions into formal writing. This was also discovered by Legarde (2023), who found out that language barriers in frontline government services limit effective communication with the public, particularly when English is poorly utilized and integrated. In a

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similar manner, the barangay officials would also find it difficult to ensure accuracy when translating results of deliberations into actual writing of the document to report the results.

This is actually true based on proficiency profile wherein 85.19 percent of the barangay officials are at the basic English level, 14.81% are at the intermediate level and no one at the advance level. This limitation hinders the ability to write precise and legal language in resolutions and ordinances. Nonetheless, research also suggests interventions such as workplace trainings for barangay secretaries that may increase confidence and efficiency in drafting resolutions (Vale et al (2020) and use of bilingual patterns in e-barangay systems that allows flexibility.

Generally, although these results imply that English remains the official language for administrative documents, actual practice should accommodate the realities of real situations such as the use of local languages. Trainings are deemed necessary to enhance English proficiency without undermining the usefulness of local or national languages.

Table 2. Legal Accuracy of the Barangay Resolutions

Theme	Sample Resolutions	Criteria Used	Evaluation / Highlights
Youth and Education	SK Educational Assistance Program (Brgy. 1) Commendation of sports achievers (Brgy. 1) Recognition of board exam passers and athletes (Brgy. 3)	Scope of Authority RA 10742 empowers SK to create education-related programs. Consistency with Higher Laws Anchored on RA 10742 and Constitution Art. XIV Sec. 19. Review & Approval Requires Sangguniang Bayan review.	Resolutions are legally grounded under the SK Reform Act and constitutional provisions. Improvement is needed in ensuring documentation of review by the Sangguniang Bayan, which is not always stated.
Community Development and Welfare	Accreditation of Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Cooperative (Brgy. 2) Approval of 2025 Annual Investment Plan (Brgy. 3) Support for 4Ps program (Brgy. 3)	Scope of Authority Barangays authorized to accredit CSOs and approve AIPs. Consistency with Higher Laws Anchored on RA 7160, DILG MCs, RA 11310. Procedure of Enactment Motion, second, approval by chair present.	Resolutions are within barangay legislative powers and consistent with national programs. However, posting and dissemination are not explicitly indicated, which weakens compliance with RA 7160 requirements.

Recognition and Commendation of Citizens	Recognition of BLEPP Topnotcher (Brgy. 1) Commendation of 2LT Vince Jemir Dahay Bernil (Brgy. 2) Recognition of athletes and professionals (Brgy. 3)	Scope of Authority Barangays authorized to issue commendatory resolutions. Consistency with Higher Laws Supports constitutional promotion of education, sports, and civic duty. Procedure of Enactment Regular sessions, proper attestation.	Commendatory resolutions are legally accurate and within barangay powers. Nonetheless, many omit the requirement of posting for effectivity, which should still be observed even for non-penal resolutions.
Governance and Legal Compliance	All barangay resolutions show quorum, motion, second, approval (Brgy. 1–3) Anchors on RA 7160, RA 10742, RA 11310, DILG MCs	Procedure of Enactment Motions, certifications, and approvals consistently followed. Consistency with Higher Laws No ultra vires resolutions found. Publication & Dissemination Often not mentioned despite RA 7160 requirements.	Resolutions generally comply with procedural and legal standards, showing proper motions and approvals. However, lack of explicit mention of posting and review procedures is a recurring issue that needs attention for full legal compliance.

The study found that barangay resolutions generally complied with their scope of authority, higher laws, and the procedural requirements of RA 7160. Observance of legislative processes such as quorum validation, motions, and proper approvals reflects functional governance structures, similar to the high compliance rates seen in well-managed members (Anavesa, 2024). Resolutions also demonstrated alignment with the general welfare clause and constitutional mandates, showing that barangay officials possess a commendable level of training and awareness in legislative functions. This consistency supports effective governance and mirrors the successful implementation of the Katarungang Pambarangay Law, which builds community trust and demonstrates strong local governance capacity (Barcellano, 2025).

Despite these strengths, several gaps were noted across the resolutions. Issues such as the lack of explicit provisions for publication and dissemination, incomplete documentation of review by higher sanggunians, and minor lapses in legal phrasing were observed. These recurring deficiencies highlight the need for stronger administrative support and technical reinforcement. The findings support the urgent call for enhanced capacity-building programs (Abellera, 2025) and align with the study's recommendations of strengthening drafting skills, adopting checklist-based systems, and improving monitoring. Research further emphasizes that barangay officials highly value technical and legal support from municipal and provincial governments to address these compliance challenges (Bayag, 2024).

The study also acknowledges its limitations. While it systematically assessed the legal and procedural soundness of barangay resolutions, it did not evaluate their actual implementation, enforcement, or impact within communities. Future research should address these aspects by incorporating case studies, longitudinal monitoring, and comparative analyses across different barangays. Such efforts

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would bridge the gap between de jure (legal) compliance and de facto (real-world) effectiveness, thereby providing a fuller understanding of how legal accuracy and procedural adherence translate into socially meaningful and responsive governance (Barcellano, 2025).

Table 3. Legal Accuracy of the Barangay Ordinances

Criteria	Key Themes Across Barangays	Highlights & Constructive Evaluations
Scope of Authority (Sec. 16; Sec. 48–50)	Local autonomy is exercised (naming of roads/bridges in Barangay 1, cemetery regulation in Barangay 2, and curfew ordinance in Barangay 3).	Generally, the ordinances are valid within the Local Government Unit (LGU) powers. However, Barangay 1 overreached its authority by issuing a directive to the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), a national agency. Ordinances must strictly limit their scope to matters within the barangay or municipal jurisdiction.
Consistency with Higher Laws (Sec. 56–59)	Frequent conflicts with national laws (Civil Registry Law for Barangay 2, RA 9344 for Barangay 3, and DPWH authority for Barangay 1).	Although generally within local powers, certain ordinances exceed legal limits. Barangay 1 cannot compel the DPWH (a national agency) to recognize road names. More critically, Barangay 2 illegally authorizes non-medical officials to issue death certificates, violating national civil registry law. Similarly, Barangay 3 risks invalidation by penalizing minors without adhering to the safeguards mandated by RA 9344. Ordinances urgently require review for conformity with existing national statutes to prevent legal nullification.
Proper Legal Terms (Sec. 50; Sec. 54–55)	Use of vague or overly broad terms weakens enforceability.	Barangay 1 uses overly broad terms <i>"orders, memoranda, rules"</i> that lack clear legal reference, while Barangay 2 risks abuse of power through undefined terms <i>"policies and guidelines"</i> and vague delegation to "the Committee." Furthermore, Barangay 3 employs ambiguous penal terms like <i>"loiter, saunter, ramble,"</i> making them highly susceptible to court challenges. All legislative drafting must prioritize precise legal terminology and cite specific laws to ensure enforceability.
Procedure of Enactment (Sec. 50–54)	All ordinances show proper signatures, attestation, and approval.	Procedural compliance is consistent. No major legal weakness here.
Publication & Dissemination (Sec. 59)	Weakness in effectivity clauses, except in Barangay 3.	Barangay ordinances need to explicitly state their publication and effectivity requirements to comply with RA 7160 (Local Government Code). Barangay 1 and 2 both lack an explicit requirement

		for posting or publication, which violates the law. In contrast, Barangay 3 correctly mandates effectivity only after the ordinance has been posted for 10 days. All ordinances must clearly state their publication/posting provisions for legal validity.
Penal Provisions (Sec. 391)	Inconsistent or excessive penalties across ordinances.	Ordinance penalties require careful review for legality and fairness. Barangay 1 is compliant as it imposes no penalties. However, Barangay 2's fine and imprisonment provision is valid, but its added 2% monthly surcharge (up to 72% total) is excessive, oppressive, and usurious. Meanwhile, Barangay 3's ₱500 fine combined with tree planting/community service is creative, yet the penalty risks conflict with RA 9344 (the Juvenile Justice Act) regarding minors, and the enforcement mechanism itself is unclear. Penalties must be reasonable, child-sensitive (if relevant), and judicially enforceable.
Purpose and General Welfare (Sec. 16)	All ordinances justify intent based on welfare (farmer access, dignified burials, youth protection).	The purpose is clear and aligned with general welfare. No major weakness here.
Review and Approval (Sec. 57)	Missing clauses on transmittal to Sangguniang Panlalawigan in all three.	None of the ordinances explicitly include the mandatory safeguard requiring review by the Provincial Board within 10 days, as mandated by RA 7160. Provisions on Provincial Board review must be inserted to ensure legal compliance.

The study reveals that barangay ordinances generally adhere to the procedures and mandates of RA 7160, particularly in terms of enactment requirements such as proper signatures, attestation, and approval. This compliance underscores the role of barangays in exercising local autonomy to address community concerns like road access, cemetery regulation, and curfew enforcement, reflecting their contribution to grassroots governance (Nur et al., 2024). These initiatives show that barangay officials recognize their responsibility in shaping policies aligned with the general welfare, ensuring that enacted measures remain responsive to local needs. Moreover, when ordinances integrate effectivity clauses, such as mandatory posting and dissemination, they provide a stronger legal basis for enforceability and community awareness (Anavesa, 2024).

Despite these strengths, the study highlights several legal and technical gaps that undermine the effectiveness of some ordinances. Vague provisions, such as undefined “policies and guidelines” or ambiguous penal terms like “loiter” or “ramble,” weaken clarity and open room for abuse (Sepyah & Hamdi, 2023). Conflicts with higher statutes, such as ordinances contradicting RA 9344 on juvenile protection, or allowing non-medical officials to issue death certificates against the Civil Registry Law,

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illustrate risks of invalidation (Milanti et al., 2023). Similarly, excessive or unreasonable penal provisions, including usurious surcharges or curfew penalties affecting minors, highlight the need for ordinances to remain proportionate, child-sensitive, and consistent with national standards. These issues reveal the importance of improving local legislative drafting skills and ensuring ordinances are subjected to careful legal review.

To address these gaps, the study recommends practical measures such as ordinance review checklists, consistent cross-referencing with relevant Republic Acts, and mandatory inclusion of transmittal and posting provisions for validity. These mechanisms will strengthen both the accuracy and enforceability of barangay legislation, while promoting transparency and accountability (Nur et al., 2024). While the study's strength lies in its comprehensive textual evaluation of barangay ordinances, its limitation is the absence of an assessment of implementation and community impact. Future research should therefore examine the enforcement of these ordinances, testing whether procedural and legal compliance indeed translates into more effective, participatory, and empowering local governance.

Table 4. Semantic Clarity of the Barangay Resolutions

Criteria	Significant Data Across Barangays	Highlights & Comprehensive Discussion
Clarity of Purpose / Intent	Barangay 1: Purpose present but vague (esp. Educational Assistance resolution). Barangay 2: Purpose clear and direct, though often approval-based without broader impact stated. Barangay 3: Strong purpose (AIP approval, recognition), but lacking execution details.	A recurring theme is that while intent is usually visible, the depth of purpose varies. Barangay 1 struggles with vagueness, particularly on defining eligibility. Barangay 2 excels in clarity but does not articulate long-term community benefits. Barangay 3 demonstrates strong intent but weakens when practical execution is left unspecified. This suggests that clarity of purpose improves with specificity and community-centered framing.
Consistency of Wording	Barangay 1: Titles correct but WHEREAS clauses overly narrative and inconsistent. Barangay 2: Very consistent; legal phrasing is formulaic yet professional. Barangay 3: Consistent and professional, but too formal and generic.	Consistency is stronger in Barangays 2 and 3, showing adherence to legal templates. However, Barangay 1 exhibits lapses with verbose clauses. The challenge is balancing formality with accessibility: overly formulaic language (Brgy. 2 and 3) maintains legality but risks disengagement, while overly narrative language (Brgy. 1) undermines professionalism.
Specificity of Provisions	Barangay 1: Very vague (eligibility and guidelines missing). Barangay 2: Generally specific (names, circulars), but lacks conditions for compliance. Barangay 2: Specific in	Across all barangays, specificity is the weakest area. Barangay 1 is overly general, Barangay 2 misses conditionality, and Barangay 3 omits operational details. This shows a pattern where resolutions focus more on approval or

	recognitions, but AIP lacks timelines and implementing officers.	recognition than on enforceable mechanisms, creating risks of non-implementation or disputes.
Readability & Understandability	Barangay 1: Less accessible due to jargon and long WHEREAS clauses. Barangay 2: Clearer, but still technical in accreditation-related resolutions. Barangay 3: Readable overall, but legal references may overwhelm ordinary citizens.	Readability is a cross-cutting concern. Recognition resolutions are clear and inspiring across barangays, but programmatic and accreditation resolutions tend to alienate lay readers. This reveals a need for plain-language summaries alongside formal texts to ensure community understanding and participation.
Avoidance of Ambiguity	Barangay 1: Ambiguity high in educational assistance (undefined “eligibility”). Barangay 2: Intent clear, but ambiguity in follow-up (who monitors compliance). Barangay 3: Recognition clear, but AIP ambiguous in implementation details.	Ambiguity remains a recurring weakness. Even when intent is clear, execution steps are left unspecified, creating room for misinterpretation or weak accountability. This highlights the importance of embedding criteria, responsibilities, and timelines directly in resolutions.

The analysis of semantic clarity in barangay resolutions shows varied levels of effectiveness, confirming the importance of clear legislative communication in local governance. While most resolutions presented a clear purpose, ambiguity persisted in the form of vague eligibility requirements, undefined responsibilities, and unspecified timelines, all of which hinder enforceability and accountability. In contrast, the success of the Katarungang Pambarangay system, where clear communication supported the resolution of 68 out of 72 cases, demonstrates how clarity directly improves governance outcomes (Guia & Mangubat, 2021).

The study also found that specificity of provisions was the weakest aspect, especially regarding eligibility, compliance, and accountability measures. This gap reflects a broader governance issue, where unclear guidelines : such as in procurement processes, limit effective resource management at the barangay level (Yumang & Mantillas, 2024). Similarly, programmatic and accreditation-related resolutions were often less accessible because of technical or legal jargon, highlighting the need for simplicity in drafting.

These findings underscore the urgent need for capacity-building initiatives that train barangay councils to balance legal formality with clarity and accessibility. Institutionalizing plain-language summaries, standardizing templates with clear prompts, and ensuring provisions specify eligibility requirements and responsible officers can reduce ambiguity and strengthen accountability. Such measures would improve legal compliance while making resolutions more practical and meaningful for communities.

Table 5. Semantic Clarity of the Barangay Ordinances

Criteria	Evaluation	Highlights & Comprehensive Discussion
Clarity of Title	<i>Bypass Road</i> : Title is informative but too wordy; shortening will make it more accessible. <i>Cemetery</i> : Title is clear, comprehensive, and reflective of content. <i>Curfew</i> : Title is concise and	Cemetery and Curfew titles work well; Bypass needs brevity (ex. “Ordinance Naming Baung By-Pass Road as ‘Our Lady of Piat By-Pass

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	effective.	Road"). Shorter titles help in indexing and public recall.
Precision of Terms	<i>Bypass Road</i> : Needs refinement; phrases like "order, memorandum, rules" are too vague. <i>Cemetery</i> : Erroneously allows non-medical officials to issue death certificates; this undermines legal accuracy. <i>Curfew</i> : Uses subjective verbs ("loiter, saunter, ramble") which could be misinterpreted.	Precision is critical in ordinances. Suggested fix: use statutory terms only, ex. "burial permit" for Cemetery; "remain in public without lawful purpose" for Curfew; narrow Bypass repealing clause to cite specific laws or ordinances.
Logical Structure	All three follow a logical sequence from preamble/WHEREAS to substantive provisions and effectivity. <i>Bypass</i> : Explanatory note could better link policy to purpose. <i>Cemetery</i> : Flow is strong but technical details could overwhelm. <i>Curfew</i> : Custody procedure is long; should be broken into subsections.	Strong structure overall. Refining explanatory notes and dividing complex sections into smaller numbered provisions will improve comprehension without changing substance.
Completeness of Information	<i>Bypass</i> : Lacks details on who installs, funds, and maintains the marker. <i>Cemetery</i> : Covers committee, procedures, and responsibilities well. <i>Curfew</i> : Exemptions too broad (ex. "special family occasions"), leading to possible uneven enforcement.	Completeness requires clarity on "who does what." Bypass should assign duties to specific offices. Cemetery is detailed but could streamline. Curfew exemptions should be narrowed to avoid loopholes.
Conciseness	<i>Bypass</i> : Some sentences in policy statement are long and could be split. <i>Cemetery</i> : Several definitions are repetitive; condensing would help. <i>Curfew</i> : Custody procedures (Sec. 9) are long and difficult to digest.	All three ordinances would benefit from plain-language editing: break down run-on sentences, cut redundancy, and present procedures in bullet or numbered lists.
Consistency of Language	<i>Bypass</i> : Good consistency ("ordinance" used properly). <i>Cemetery</i> : Switches between informal and formal terms ("heroes," "interment spaces"). <i>Curfew</i> : Alternates "minor," "minor children," "youth," creating confusion.	Consistency helps avoid confusion. Fix by choosing one term and using it throughout ("minor" as legally defined in RA 9344; "burial lot" instead of multiple variants).
Readability	<i>Bypass</i> : Legalistic sections may confuse average readers. <i>Cemetery</i> : Technical dimensions and fees difficult for lay readers. <i>Curfew</i> : RA 9344 procedures are too technical for parents and minors.	Suggest adding simplified guides or annexes (FAQs, posters in local dialect) so residents clearly understand rights and obligations. This strengthens legitimacy and compliance.
Definiteness of Action	<i>Bypass</i> : Weak; Section 4 directs DPWH, which is outside LGU jurisdiction. <i>Cemetery</i> : Strong, clear action verbs (impose, issue, collect).	Ordinances must stay within LGU authority. Bypass should reframe DPWH clause as "coordinate with DPWH

	<i>Curfew</i> : Defines enforcement roles for PNP, barangay, and parents.	Regional Office.” Other ordinances already show good practice with clear operative verbs.
Avoidance of Ambiguity	<i>Bypass</i> : Section 6 repealing clause is broad. <i>Cemetery</i> : Section 18 mentions “policies/guidelines” without defining them. <i>Curfew</i> : Exemptions are vague and open to abuse.	Ambiguity undermines enforceability. Specific references (ex. cite annexed policies, list exemptions) prevent differing interpretations.
Purpose Statement	<i>Bypass</i> : Strong. Section 1 links policy to farmer access. <i>Cemetery</i> : Clear purpose in ensuring burial sites for residents. <i>Curfew</i> : WHEREAS clauses emphasize youth protection.	Purpose statements are strengths across all three. Improvement: directly cite RA 7160 general welfare clause or related laws (RA 9344 for Curfew; Civil Registry Law for Cemetery) to reinforce legal foundation.

The analysis showed that weaknesses in the semantic clarity of barangay ordinances, such as overly wordy titles, vague wording like “loiter,” and inconsistent use of terms, significantly reduce their effectiveness. This supports the argument that clear and precise language is critical for public understanding and compliance, as emphasized in governance studies (Gonzalez & Lopez, 2023). Ordinances that include legally inaccurate provisions (ex. non-medical officials issuing death certificates) or overstep jurisdictional boundaries (ex. mandating actions of national agencies) carry a high risk of misinterpretation and failed implementation, reflecting the challenges posed by complex or imprecise legal drafting (Gonzalez & Lopez, 2023).

Similarly, the presence of dense explanatory notes, broad exemptions prone to uneven enforcement, and the inconsistent use of categories such as “minor” and “youth” highlights how vagueness and technical barriers undermine both enforcement and fairness. This finding resonates with evidence that clear articulation of ordinances strengthens public trust and participation, as demonstrated by the positive effects of well-drafted compliance laws on governance outcomes (Agapito, 2024). Urgent adoption of standardized drafting protocols is required, focusing on clarity and precision. Citizen-friendly versions are necessary to bridge the gap between legal intent and public understanding. This improvement enhances compliance, trust, and public participation (Agapito, 2024).

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The main objective was to examine the legal accuracy, semantic clarity, and governance compliance of barangay legislation against RA 7160 and national laws. The study analyzed officials' profiles, language practices, and the substantive soundness of their legislative outputs. By using thematic and expert analysis, the goal was to identify strengths and gaps to offer insights for improving local governance and community participation.

The findings reveal that most officials had a high school education and limited training, possessing only basic English skills. While Filipino was the main drafting language, local dialects were used in deliberations, reflecting accessibility but complicating legal translation. Resolutions generally complied with scope and procedural requirements. However, recurring weaknesses were found in publication, dissemination, and specificity. Semantic issues included vague wording, overly broad penal provisions, and jurisdictional overreach, all risking invalidation. These findings underscore the critical role of training and capacity-building for enhancing local legislation's precision and enforceability.

While barangay officials exhibit functional governance and procedural compliance, their effectiveness is constrained by educational and linguistic limitations. This highlights the high relevance of capacity-building theories at the grassroots. The evidence underscores the need for structured, higher-level training in legislative drafting, legal English, and plain-language communication to improve clarity and accuracy. Enhancing training access, institutionalizing templates, and creating citizen-friendly ordinance versions will bridge the gap between legality and community understanding, making legislation more robust and reinforcing public trust and accountability.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, it is recommended that extension initiatives prioritize structured training programs that enhance barangay officials' competencies in legislative drafting, legal compliance, and effective communication. These should include modules on RA 7160 procedures, checklist-based ordinance and resolution drafting, functional English and plain-language writing, as well as digital literacy and computer operations to address identified gaps. In addition, trainings on social media posting and preparing community-oriented paper publications should be integrated to improve transparency, dissemination, and citizen engagement. Partnering with universities, LGUs, and national agencies for these capacity-building activities will provide officials with broader opportunities, ultimately strengthening the semantic clarity, legal accuracy, and public accessibility of barangay legislation.

VI. APPENDICES

<i>(Open</i>	<i>Attached</i>	<i>Link)</i>
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1YpyfeULtmQ94dlPOQnQSI_o1KA9AtnX?usp=drive_link		

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