

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE OF KATIPUNAN, ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE (1946–2006)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the political development of the local government of Katipunan, Zamboanga del Norte from 1946 to 2006, focusing on the leadership roles, achievements, and governance contributions of successive municipal mayors. Employing a historical-descriptive research design, the study utilizes documentary analysis, external and internal criticism, and a personal-intuitive approach to evaluate the administrations of seven mayors. Governance performance was assessed using key indicators, including infrastructure development, municipal income, peace and order, health services, educational provision, and livelihood opportunities.

The findings reveal that the mayoral administrations significantly contributed to the municipality's socio-economic growth and institutional development. Leadership transitions and governance outcomes observed during the period reflect patterns consistent with Vilfredo Pareto's theory of elite circulation and Michael Foley's theory of political leadership. By providing a systematic historical analysis of local leadership and development, this study contributes to the literature on local governance and political leadership in the Philippine municipal context.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Katipunan, formerly known as Lubungan, is a municipality in the province of Zamboanga del Norte whose local governance structures have undergone significant political and administrative transformations since the postwar period. As a local government unit operating within the broader framework of Philippine decentralization, Katipunan provides a valuable case for examining how municipal leadership, elite dominance, and governance practices interact to shape local development outcomes. Understanding these dynamics is particularly relevant in contexts where political power is concentrated among local elites and leadership continuity influences institutional stability and policy direction.

This study examines the evolution of local governance in Katipunan by analyzing key political milestones, leadership transitions, and governance initiatives implemented across successive mayoral administrations. Drawing on Vilfredo Pareto's theory of elite circulation and Michael Foley's theory of political leadership, the study situates municipal governance within a broader theoretical discussion of elite continuity, leadership agency, and institutional development. These frameworks enable an analysis of how leadership change and elite dominance influence governance performance, policy priorities, and administrative effectiveness at the local level.

Anchored in the JRMSU research agenda and aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16 on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, this research contributes to ongoing scholarly debates on accountability, institutional capacity, and inclusive governance. Despite the growing literature on decentralization and local governance in the Philippines, historically grounded municipal-level studies remain limited. This study addresses this gap by providing a systematic historical analysis of Katipunan's local governance from 1946 to 2006, highlighting how political leadership and elite dynamics shaped the municipality's political, administrative, and socio-economic landscape.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study contributes to the growing body of scholarship on local governance and political leadership by providing a historically grounded analysis of municipal governance in Katipunan, Zamboanga del Norte. By

situating local political developments within the broader context of Philippine political history, the study supplements national-level narratives with empirical evidence from the municipal level, where governance outcomes are directly experienced by citizens. As such, it addresses the persistent gap in Philippine political and administrative studies concerning systematically documented local governance histories.

Beyond its academic contribution, the study offers institutional value by enriching the university's repository of local history and governance research, thereby supporting future scholarly inquiry. The findings also hold practical relevance for local policymakers, development practitioners, and community leaders by illustrating how leadership decisions, elite dynamics, and policy initiatives have shaped development outcomes over time. By highlighting both achievements and governance challenges, the study informs contemporary discussions on community development, institutional capacity, and leadership accountability.

Finally, this research fosters a deeper understanding of local political heritage by documenting the governance experiences of Katipunan across multiple administrations. In doing so, it encourages both residents and non-residents to engage critically with the municipality's historical trajectory, promoting informed civic awareness rather than purely celebratory historical appreciation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this study is to analyze the evolution of local governance in the Municipality of Katipunan, Zamboanga del Norte from 1946 to 2006, with particular emphasis on political leadership, governance performance, and institutional development.

Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Examine the accomplishments and governance contributions of successive municipal mayors in Katipunan from 1946 to 2006 in terms of health services, education, peace and order, infrastructure development, municipal income generation, and employment opportunities.
2. Assess the significance of mayoral policies and initiatives in shaping the political, administrative, and socio-economic evolution of the municipality.
3. Identify key leadership patterns, governance milestones, and administrative priorities that characterized each mayoral administration during the period under study.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study of local governance in the Philippines is grounded in broader debates about decentralization, leadership performance, and the influence of political elites. Decentralization reforms, particularly after the enactment of the Local Government Code of 1991, remain central to understanding the expanded role of municipal governments and their leaders. Brillantes and Modino (2015) explain that although decentralization originated with earlier ideas in the 1970s and 1980s, it was through the 1991 Code that local government units gained substantive authority to manage administrative functions, fiscal resources, and decision-making processes. This shift enabled mayors and other local officials to directly influence development outcomes at the municipal level.

The Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) has documented the significant effects of decentralization on local governance, noting not only increased autonomy for local governments but also persistent challenges such as unequal revenue-raising capacity, limited bureaucratic capability, and uneven service delivery across municipalities. According to Diokno-Sicat and Maddawin (2018), decentralization has simultaneously empowered local political actors while reinforcing existing patron-client networks that sustain elite dominance in local politics.

A related line of scholarship addresses how decentralization interacts with political power structures. Agarie (2018) characterizes "local bossism" in the Philippines as a form of elite domination where local economic and political elites leverage decentralized authority to maintain political monopolies, often through patron-client relationships, vote-buying, and preferential resource allocation.

This literature provides an analytical context for understanding how local elites use institutional mechanisms to entrench their influence, affecting governance quality and equity at the municipal level.

The problem of elite dominance in local politics is closely linked to the phenomenon of political dynasties, which remain deeply embedded in the Philippine political system. Mendoza and Banaag (2017) document that decentralization has coincided with increasing prevalence of dynastic leverage, estimating that a majority of

local government leadership positions are held by members of political clans. This persistence of dynastic politics suggests that decentralization reforms alone have not disrupted entrenched power structures. Empirical evidence supports this: As observed in the *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, term limits intended to democratize political competition often result in relatives succeeding incumbents, reinforcing dynastic continuity at the municipal level.

Further research reveals that the influence of political dynasties varies across socioeconomic contexts. Mendoza et al. (2022) demonstrate that the relationship between political dynasty prevalence and socioeconomic outcomes is conditioned by local economic structures, wherein dynasties exacerbate poverty in resource-rich, non-Luzon regions more so than in competitive, diversified economies. These findings align with broader political science theories that highlight how elite networks adapt to and shape local development environments.

The literature also emphasizes the role of local leadership styles in shaping governance processes. Though less directly focused on municipal governance history, studies of grassroots governance, such as Mariano (2025), indicate that leadership styles and participatory approaches can influence performance outcomes in local political units, reinforcing the importance of mayoral agency in shaping development trajectories.

Despite the richness of these studies, municipal-level historical analyses that integrate political leadership, governance performance, and elite dynamics over extended periods – such as the evolution of Katipunan from 1946 to 2006 – remain limited. This gap highlights the need for the present study, which situates Katipunan's governance history within these broader theoretical and empirical debates, offering insights into how local leadership and elite structures have shaped governance evolution across time.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored on Vilfredo Pareto's Elite Circulation Theory (1963) and Michael Foley's Political Leadership Theory (2013) to analyze the evolution of local governance in Katipunan, Zamboanga del Norte from 1946 to 2006. Pareto's framework posits that political power is concentrated in a small group of elites who maintain influence through patronage networks and resource control, with social and political change occurring primarily through elite turnover. Applied to Katipunan, it helps examine how local political leadership has been maintained or transformed across successive mayoral administrations and how this affected governance priorities and development outcomes.

Foley's Political Leadership Theory complements this perspective by emphasizing the role of individual leaders and dominant families in shaping governance structures, policy decisions, and municipal development. In Katipunan, it provides insights into the succession of mayors, the role of political dynasties, and the impact of leadership on accountability, service delivery, and inclusive development.

Together, these frameworks allow the study to explore how elite dominance and leadership dynamics have shaped local governance, institutional performance, and socio-economic outcomes over six decades.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a historical-descriptive research design to examine the evolution of local governance in Katipunan, Zamboanga del Norte from 1946 to 2006. The historical-descriptive method enabled the systematic collection, evaluation, and interpretation of archival records, legal documents, and oral testimonies to reconstruct the political, administrative, and socio-economic development of the municipality.

Data Sources

Primary data were derived from official records of the Katipunan Local Government Unit (LGU), including the Mayor's Office, Municipal Planning and Development Office, Municipal Budget Office, Municipal Engineering Office, Accounting Office, Health Center, Sangguniang Bayan, Police Station, and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG). Additional documentary sources were obtained from the Provincial Library of Zamboanga del Norte and the Regional Trial Court library. Legal records, municipal resolutions, and archival documents were systematically reviewed, photocopied, or transcribed for analysis.

When written records were incomplete or unavailable, oral histories and eyewitness testimonies were solicited from long-time residents and individuals with direct experience in local governance. Respondents were identified through purposive sampling based on their involvement in municipal politics and community affairs. Semi-structured interviews and structured questionnaires, administered in the vernacular with English

translation, allowed for detailed recollections of events, policies, and leadership practices. Interviewees were provided with guide questions prior to the interview to facilitate reflection and richer data.

Additional Evidence

To supplement documentary and testimonial sources, physical landmarks and municipal infrastructures were examined as tangible indicators of mayoral priorities, leadership vision, and developmental initiatives. Photographs and field observations were used to authenticate and contextualize these evidences within the municipality's historical and governance narrative.

Data Analysis

Collected data were evaluated using external and internal criticism techniques to assess the authenticity, credibility, and reliability of sources. The personal-intuitive approach complemented this process by allowing the researcher to interpret nuanced leadership and governance patterns embedded in both written and oral sources. All documents, archival materials, and narratives were subjected to documentary analysis, and findings were synthesized through narrative-descriptive methods to construct a coherent account of Katipunan's political and administrative evolution.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical research principles by obtaining informed consent from all interview participants, ensuring confidentiality, and presenting historical data accurately and objectively.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study examined the contributions of seven municipal mayors of Katipunan, Zamboanga del Norte from 1946 to 2006 across six indicators: health services, education services, peace and order, infrastructure development, municipal income, and livelihood opportunities. Findings reveal both individual leadership patterns and broader trends in elite political dynamics, highlighting the interplay of political leadership and local development.

1. Mayor Salvador Eguia had a brief tenure, cut short due to an alleged corruption case. While his contributions were limited, he laid foundational groundwork for future developments, notably the opening of Katipunan Junior High School, addressing the community's demand for secondary education. Although minimal, his administration illustrates how leadership transitions influence the trajectory of municipal programs, consistent with Pareto's (1963) observation that elites establish initial footholds for subsequent governance.
2. Mayor Dioscoro Lagorra served for approximately 14 years, consolidating power through a combination of personal influence and control mechanisms, including a reportedly active police force. During his administration, Katipunan experienced territorial reduction when Manukan (1951) and Manuel A. Roxas (1997) separated from the municipality. While these events diminished Katipunan's land area, Lagorra's tenure exemplifies the persistence of elite control and strategic adaptation to structural changes, consistent with elite circulation theory.
3. Mayor Jose Gayapa Jr., serving nearly 16 years, oversaw key infrastructure projects such as the town's electric plant, water system in Laoy, and the construction of the Social Hall and dispensary. He also initiated access roads to interior barrios and the establishment of Fimagas as a barangay. Despite the length of his tenure, the magnitude of accomplishments relative to time in office was moderate, illustrating that elite longevity does not automatically translate into proportional developmental impact.
4. Mayor Rodolfo E. Kwan served two non-consecutive terms (1979–1986, 1995–1997). His administration prioritized farm-to-market roads, the establishment of market-primary school-health center packages in strategic barrios, and expansion of Katipunan National High School. Kwan's tenure also saw the creation of five new barangays, reflecting a participatory approach to governance and demonstrating how elite-driven leadership can mobilize institutional resources to achieve tangible socio-economic improvements.
5. Mayor Cesar Sagario, with a political career spanning councilor to mayor, achieved notable socio-economic progress, including road concreting in the poblacion, construction of a municipal gymnasium and health center, and the restoration of peace following rebel reintegration. His administration also initiated cultural programs, such as the celebration of "Araw ng Katipunan", indicating attention to both infrastructural and social dimensions of municipal development.

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6. Mayor Renato Eguia had a brief term with limited accomplishments. Constrained by low Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) and minimal central government support, his administration primarily maintained existing municipal functions, underscoring how resource dependency constrains local leadership initiatives.
7. Mayor Patchito T. Eguia, serving three consecutive terms, achieved the most significant and widespread impact, particularly in infrastructure development. Projects under his leadership included farm-to-market roads, classrooms, water systems, multipurpose buildings, hanging bridges, and health stations across all barangays, as well as substantial improvements in the poblacion, including the municipal gymnasium, water system, and Veterans and Barangay Captains buildings. These achievements highlight the importance of sustained elite leadership and resource mobilization in driving municipal development.

Overall Trends and Theoretical Implications

Analysis reveals a clear pattern of elite continuity, with five of the seven mayors belonging to the same family lineage, illustrating the prevalence of a political dynasty. This aligns with Pareto's Elite Circulation Theory, which emphasizes the concentration and persistence of power within elite groups, and Foley's Political Leadership Theory, which underscores the influence of individual and familial leadership on policy and development outcomes.

The study also highlights the variable effectiveness of leadership: while tenure length provided some mayors with the opportunity to implement long-term projects, political will, resource access, and personal leadership style were critical determinants of actual socio-economic impact. For example, the administration of Mayor Patchito T. Eguia demonstrates how sustained leadership combined with strategic planning and resource mobilization can produce transformative outcomes, whereas shorter or resource-constrained tenures, such as those of Salvador and Renato Eguia, achieved limited impact.

These findings collectively underscore the interplay between elite dominance and local development: while elite continuity ensures governance stability, it also raises questions about political inclusivity, representativeness, and equitable access to municipal resources. The analysis suggests that fostering participatory governance and institutional accountability remains critical for enhancing the responsiveness and inclusiveness of municipal leadership in Katipunan.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The political history of Katipunan, Zamboanga del Norte from 1946 to 2006 demonstrates a clear pattern of elite dominance and political dynasty consolidation. Among the seven mayors who served during this period, five belonged to the Eguia family or were closely related to it, confirming the persistence of familial control over the mayoral office. This pattern illustrates Pareto's Elite Circulation Theory, whereby political power is concentrated within a limited number of influential families and is transmitted across generations through social networks, kinship ties, and control of local resources.

Despite the concentration of power, the administrations of the mayors collectively contributed to the socio-economic growth and institutional development of the municipality. Significant achievements included improvements in infrastructure, health and education services, peace and order, municipal income, and livelihood opportunities. For example, investments in farm-to-market roads, municipal health centers, water systems, and educational facilities under successive mayors enhanced access to services and fostered community development. This underscores the relevance of Foley's Political Leadership Theory, which highlights how individual leaders and dominant families shape local governance structures, policy priorities, and developmental outcomes.

Overall, the study affirms that while political dynasties have dominated local governance in Katipunan, their leadership has played a substantial role in advancing the municipality's development. These findings highlight the dual nature of elite politics in local governance: the concentration of power may limit political inclusivity, yet it can also provide the continuity and strategic leadership necessary for long-term socio-economic progress. The Katipunan case thus illustrates the complex interplay between elite persistence, leadership effectiveness, and community development in Philippine local governance.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Encourage Broader Political Participation.** To mitigate the concentration of power in the political elite networks, the municipality should support programs that mentor emerging leaders, strengthen local party structures, and facilitate youth and community engagement in governance. This aligns with Pareto's Elite

Circulation Theory, allowing gradual renewal of political elites while sustaining continuity in municipal leadership.

2. Institutionalize Priority Development Programs. Key initiatives such as road networks, water systems, and health and education services should be formalized through municipal ordinances and long-term plans to ensure continuity beyond individual administrations. This approach, informed by Foley's Political Leadership Theory, enables future leaders to build on prior accomplishments and promotes sustainable socio-economic growth.

3. Strengthen Accountability and Community Oversight. Katipunan should establish transparent project monitoring, participatory budgeting, and regular public consultations, particularly for infrastructure and social services. Such measures ensure that resources are equitably allocated, reduce the risks of elite favoritism, and reinforce the responsiveness and inclusivity of local governance.

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