

## **Character Traits and Governance Practices of Local Chief Executives as Predictors of Performance of Local Government Units in Northern Samar: Inputs to a Design of Local Governace Model**

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### **Abstract**

This study determined the character traits and governance practices of local government officials in the Local Government Units (LGUs) of Northern Samar. The Big Five-character trait dimensions also known as Five Factor Model consists of the five traits, openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism were determined. The governance practices such as transparency, participation, accountability, leadership, general organization and governance, inter-governmental relations, rule of law continuity in the implementation of programs, predictability and sustainability, preference for the poor, and effective, responsive provision of basic services were correlated with character traits of the local executives. The study covered 12 municipalities randomly selected from the twenty-four (24) municipalities. These are Catarman, Bobon, Lavezares, San Isidro, San Antonio, Biri, San Roque, Laoang, Las Navas, Palapag, Mapanas and Pambujan. The respondents of the study are the current Local chief executives (LCEs) and selected employees with permanent status in the municipalities covered. Significant difference was found between local chief executives and employees' perception on the character traits of the LCEs. Significant difference on the agreeableness as character trait means that the degree to which the LCEs is able to get along with others by being good-natured, cooperative, forgiving, compassionate, understanding, and trusting is higher than the employees and stakeholders dis not differ significantly. The test of relationship between the chief executives' character traits and governance practices showed that openness is significantly correlated with transparency, participation and leadership.

**Keywords:** governance practice, character traits, five factor model, Northern Samar, LGUs

### **Introduction**

In a fast changing leadership in Local Government Units (LGUs), adopting governance into daily concerns can often lead to misunderstanding. Local chief executives are always in a quandary trying to fit their style of governance, not to mention differences in political affiliations among the employees. The continuing demand for transparency and accountability also raises issues of good governance and stakeholders are asking questions when there is lack of clarity. Furthermore, the national government's emphasis on outcomes and impacts drive the Local chief executives towards maintaining good governance, accountability and performance. As the local government sector plays an increasing role in delivering public services, the issue of governance practices has been brought into sharp focus over recent years.

The need to further reforms in local governance is outlined by issues and questions such as inadequate local finance, weakened local-national capacity and taxing powers (PreschleandOsmeña, 2005). These are the areas

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that need to be revisited in order for the community to fully benefit from a decentralized political environment. Local policies are still very much determined by the national government. It is important therefore that the Code is reviewed and revised accordingly.

LGUs have to play a vital role if poverty is to be alleviated in the Philippines. The sheer magnitude of governance and the fundamental problem of poverty should be seriously given attention. Especially in the Philippines where national leadership is dominated by a few groups, decision-making and thus government programs are seen to benefit everyone. Considering also that the country is an archipelago, limited representation prohibits people from the countryside from feeling the significant presence of government.

While upholding the principles of good governance, local chief executives should follow the organizational structures which are in the best interest of their constituents. All officials in the LGUs need to uphold public confidence and cope with the external changes happening in the community and political arena.

Good governance is important for the LGU and its employees. The local government can acquire great returns, better utilization of resources, better outcomes, improved work environment and above all better furniture for the constituents. On the other hand, employees could also reap more advantages if dealt with proper governance practice by the local chief executives. Local chief executives use various governance practices in handling issues surrounding LGUs. These practices however vary from individual to individual depending on one's character trait (Costa and McCrae, 1999).

The local chief executive's character traits have significant influence on the way they think, feel and relate with other people. Character traits tend to be pretty stable in adulthood and lead people to act in certain preferred ways. At work, the local chief executive's, character will sometimes help employees and constituents to carry out good governance and effectively uphold LGU performance.

Leading the LGU in serving the people is of utmost concern of the local chief executives. Thus, immediate attention needs to be considered to solve emerging problems and overcome the negative impact it may contribute into the community. It is from these issues that the researcher decided to conduct this study. Determining the character traits and governance practices of the local chief executives in Northern Samar could give way to determining the overall performance of the local government units.

Reports have been made that LGUs in the province of Northern Samar are not exempted in the intricacies that political rift brings within the government units. As observed in the local politics, local chief executives usually face issues concerning their functions as leaders to the respective people or constituents. They are sometimes construed to be indecisive and are not serving well the people in their community. Although this functionality of the local executives varies, it depends on the governance capability and character traits of the leader (Walstrom, 1997).

Character traits are among the most important factors that determine the success of governance practices (Moberg, 2001). The Big Five Factor Model is one of the most widely studied and discussed model by researchers. The character traits consist of extroversion, agreeableness, openness to experience, emotional stability, and conscientiousness (Robins *et al.*, 2008). Big Five factor model of character traits has direct impact on the preferences of governance practices, consciously or unconsciously (Moberg, 2001).

The success of the LGUs depends largely on the governance practices of the local chief executives. They are responsible for policy directions, policy and program implementation, developmental planning of taxes and other impositions, budget, personnel and general administration (RA 7160). The future therefore of the local government units depends on the local executives because under the local government code of 1991, local government units were vested so much power and it's up to the local executives on how to harness and use it for the improvement of its LGU.

An important response that must be cited here is the acknowledgement of the participants of the non-convergence of indicator system and lack of harmonization, possibly of indicator measures or determinants. Some participants also cited the absence of government benchmarks. Governance and governance practices have become among the more compelling agenda of the local chief executives in both urban and rural areas. The

conduct of governance and its processes during the past two decades have become significant and important denominators of efficiency in the dynamics of local governments and in the governance of public affairs. Overnight, governance principles have evolved as defining standards by which relationships between governments and their citizens, between rulers and ruled, between the mayors and the constituents, are measured and understood. For the most part, governance practices have emerged today as determinants of a municipality's adherence to established democratic principles and ideals and, consequently, its respect for basic freedoms and human rights. But what is governance and how is it distinguished from the more familiar term of "government?" In recent years, there has been a proliferation of definitions and literature as to what governance is and how it is supposed to work or be observed (UNDP, 2004). The literature can be somewhat confusing, as governance, on one hand may mean the empirical manifestations of state adaptation to its external environment as it emerges in the late twentieth century. On the other hand, it is also denoted as a conceptual or theoretical representation of co-ordination of social systems and, for the most part, the role of the state in that process (Pierre, 2000).

Conceivably, there may be variations and varying interpretations by which governance is to be understood in different societies and cultures. Historical backgrounds and experiences, traditions, patterns of norms, conducts and behavior, as well as varying political and social practices may result in differing appreciation of the term. As some scholars on the subject would point out, 'governance' as applied to British government may mean something different to 'governance' in France (Beviret *al.*, 2003).

The word has been used, in many instances, as a blanket term to signify a change in the meaning of government, which alternatively, focuses on the degree and extent of public intervention and the use of markets, quasi-markets and non-government institutions and resources to deliver public services (Rhodes, 2000). Governance has to work or be observed (UNDP, 2004). The literature can be somewhat confusing, as governance, on one hand may mean the empirical manifestations of state adaptation to its external environment as it emerges in the late twentieth century. On the other hand, it is also denoted as a conceptual or theoretical representation of co-ordination of social systems and, for the most part, the role of the state in that process (Pierre, 2000).

As commonly reported, challenges underlying many of the serious problems in LGU are the official's inability to deal effectively with political issues among employees, and between representatives of the LGUs and the external constituents with whom they have to deal with. To effectively manage problematic situations, LGU officials must be sensitive to the potential causes of issues and must be competent in handling and resolving disagreements because once it started, misunderstanding could continue every after the first issue had been resolved.

## **Methodology**

### ***Population and sampling***

A total of 50% or 12 local chief executives participated in the study. However, a random sample was used to determine the employees of the municipalities identified. In addition, two stakeholders in each municipality were identified to assess the local chief executive's governance practices. Accidental sampling was used.

### ***The respondents***

The respondents of the study were 12 local chief executives, 245 employees, and 24 stakeholders from the 12 municipalities selected. Office employees and stakeholders from each municipality assessed the local chief executive's governance practices.

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**Table 1.** Distribution of Respondents by Municipalities

<b>MUNICIPALITY</b>	<b>Mayor</b>	<b>Employees</b>	<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Bobon	1	20	2	21
Catarman	1	29	2	30
Pambujan	1	17	2	18
San Roque	1	23	2	24
Lavezares	1	25	2	26
San Isidro	1	17	2	18
San Antonio	1	15	2	16
Biri	1	14	2	15
Laoang	1	25	2	26
Las Navas	1	21	2	22
Palapag	1	25	2	26
Mapanas	1	17	2	18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>284</b>

**Scoring and Interpretation**

To facilitate presentation and further statistical analysis, the following variables were scored, coded or interpreted using the following:

Character Traits. This pertains to the extent of manifestation of the respondents on each trait. It was scored and interpreted as follows:

<b>Response</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Strongly agree	5	4.20-5.00	Very high extent
Agree	4	3.40-4.19	High extent
Moderately agree	3	2.60-3.39	Moderate extent
Disagree	2	1.80-2.59	Less extent
Strongly disagree	1	1.00-1.79	Least extent

Governance Practices.This pertains to the extent of manifestations of the respondents on governance practice. It was scored and interpreted as follows:

<b>Response</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Very Much applied	5	4.20-5.00	Very high extent
Much applied	4	3.40-4.19	High extent
Applied	3	2.60-3.39	Moderate extent
Less applied	2	1.80-2.59	Less extent
Least applied	1	1.00-1.79	Least extent

LGU Performance.The performance of the LGUs was taken from the provincial office of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG). It was categorized using the DILG performance categories, i.e. met criteria, reconsidered LGU condition, and did not meet the criteria.

**Data Gathering Procedures**

Foremost, the researcher asked permission from the local chief executives in 12 municipalities for the conduct of the study. Upon approval, the researcher distributed the questionnaires to the respondents with the aid of research assistants. The researcher and assistants were responsible in the distribution and retrieval of questionnaire in the 12 municipalities. Full explanation of the purpose and importance of the study and how the instrument should be accomplished were explained to the respondents in order to elicit their cooperation and enthusiasm to answer the instrument. Accomplished questionnaires were retrieved, consolidated, processed and tabulated. The performance of the LGU was taken from the latest performance rating of each municipality available at the Department of Interior and Local Government Provincial Office.

## Results And Discussion

The demographic profile of the local chief executives (LCE) in terms of age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, length of service, and number of relevant trainings attended shows that most of the respondents (11 or 91.67%) are male. In terms of civil status, nine (9) or 75% were already married. Most of them had two to three children. The educational attainment of the LCE shows that 11 or 91.67% were college graduates. Two of the LCE college graduates were lawyers while others graduated from different degree programs. The two lawyer-LCEs have the advantage in terms of management as they have the knowledge of the law in as far as local governance is concerned. As to length of service, most of them (7 or 58.33%) have been in public service for less than five years. These LCEs were only elected in the latest national election. In terms of relevant trainings attended, 50% of the respondents have not attended any training related to their position. Only six (6) LCEs attended training such as local governance and fiscal management, usually conducted by the Department of Interior and Local Government. These trainings are significant for LCEs considering that most of the elected officials did not have training or education in good governance.

### *Character traits of the Local Chief Executives*

The character traits of the LCEs are presented in Table 2. It shows that openness and extraversion got the highest means of 3.93 and 3.66, respectively. Both the LCE and employees rated the former to manifest the character traits at “high extent”. The LCE also rated their agreeableness character trait as “high extent” different from the employees’ rating interpreted as “moderate extent”. The high extent manifestation of the LCE’s on extraversion means that the local leaders manifested traits such as being talkative, energetic, and assertive. These traits usually are characteristics of dominant personality. LCE who have high manifestation on these traits are often self-confident. They seek out positions of authority, and are competitive and assertive. They like to be in charge of others or have responsibility for others. Local leaders with this type of character appear to have a high degree of both dominance and extroversion. They enjoy being “on stage” speaking before a crowd, meeting new people from different places. However, there are also leaders with manifestations that are opposite of extraversion dimension. These types of leaders have a low degree of both dominant and extroversion. They are very much reserved in many situations. In addition, these types of leaders not appear to have a great desire to influence others, preferring to focus on details and strategy rather than the brightness of interpersonal relationships.

On the other hand, the high manifestation on openness character traits of the LCE’s means that the local leaders had wide interests, imaginative and insightful. This character trait is a dimension in which a leader has a broad range of interests and is imaginative, creative, and willing to consider new ideas. These leaders are intellectually curious and often seek out new experience through travel, the arts, movies, reading widely, or other activities. Local leaders lower in this dimension tend to have narrower interests and stick to the tried-and-true ways of doing things. For example, Daft (2005) found that early travel experience were critical elements in developing governance skills and qualities in leaders.

The high manifestations of the LCE’s on agreeableness mean that the leaders were sympathetic, kind and affectionate. Agreeableness is the degree to which a leader is able to get along with others by being good-natured, cooperative, forgiving, compassionate, understanding, and trusting. A local government leader who scores high on agreeableness seems warm and approachable, whereas one who is low on this dimension may seem cold, distant, and insensitive. LCE who were high on agreeableness tend to make friends easily and often have a large number of friends, whereas those low on agreeableness generally established fewer close relationships. However, employees and other stakeholders evaluated their leader to manifest “moderate extent” on this character traits. It means that these employees and stakeholders observed their leaders differently from what the latter see themselves. This is, however, common as manifestation of character traits not observable most of the time. Most of the time, it is the person himself/herself manifesting the traits who can really judge his or her character traits.

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**Table 2.** Charactertraits of the local chief executives according to the respondents

Character Traits	Chief Executives		Employees		Stakeholders		Overall	
	WM	INT	WM	INT	WM	INT	WM	INT
Extraversion	3.66	High extent	3.40	High extent	3.34	High extent	2.04	Less extent
Agreeableness	3.41	High extent	3.01	Moderate extent	3.25	Moderate extent	4.27	Very high extent
Conscientiousness	3.38	Moderate extent	3.28	Moderate extent	3.32	moderate extent	2.26	Less extent
Neuroticism	3.08	Moderate extent	3.00	Moderate extent	3.30	Moderate extent	4.17	High extent
Openness	3.93	High extent	3.93	High extent	3.86	High extent	2.28	Less extent

WM = Weighted Mean; INT = Interpretation

*Governance Practices of the Local Chief Executives*

The governance practices of the local chief executives were evaluated by themselves, the employees and stakeholders. Table 3 shows that participants topped the list of governance practiced by the LCE in Northern Samar. The mean of 4.65 means that local government leaders practicing to a very high extent governance such as public consultations, involving private sectors, non-government organizations, and civil society in programs and activities of the LGU. Leadership governance practice comes next with a mean of 4.6 as rated by them, this means that the local leaders understood well the LGU's vision for the future. They were active in the activities of the leagues of municipalities of the Philippines and have attained planned targets in spite of challenges.

Generally, the local chief executives practiced to a very high extent the indicators of good governance. These findings are important because these indicators serve as yardstick in evaluating the performance of the LGUs in particular, as they pursue the goals of sustainable human development framework for charting the progress of the local government's human development efforts at the local level, taking into consideration the limitations facing LGUs as well as the opportunities available to them. Through these indicators, LGU performance can be reviewed and compared with one another in any given time period to identify both problem areas and best practices. The governance practice measures may also compare with performance targets or standards. At the same time, the performance of a specific LGU or group of LGUs may likewise be compared from period to period to track progress and, possibly, establish trends. Implicit in this statement is the need to have periodic measurement of progress towards the attainment of explicit objectives and goals.

The indicators of governance practices in Table 3 can be used in a variety of ways. In very broad terms, indicators of good governance may be used to clarify LGU goals and objectives. The measurement of these indicators may focus greater attention in specifying the critical components of good governance as mentioned by Cook, et al. (1993). They can be used to guide the local budget process, to improve service delivery, to enhance accountability by easing to information on the part of local communities, to introduce the discipline of relevant benchmarking, and to improve the morale of the LGU officials and personnel.

Local governance practices indicators will be helpful to LGU officials themselves to the extent that the indicators can be used to call attention to potential implementation problems as well as the need for new policy directions. On the other hand, these indicators will be valuable to the national government agencies in providing information that will enable them to better target their technical assistance activities in terms of both content and target clientele. More importantly, performance indicators will be useful to civil society by providing information that may better guide collective choice and action.

It is interesting to note that in all areas of governance practices, the ratings of employees and stakeholders were lower compared to the ratings of the LCE's. Does it mean that the LCEs have overestimated their ratings compared to their actual performance? This finding considering that governance does not only involve observable practices. There are instances when governance is beyond what other people see. This could be the reason why the employees' and stakeholders' evaluations differed from the LCEs. Another reason for the difference is the fact that personal evaluations tend to be higher than external evaluations. Local chief executives

naturally will not underestimate their roles as leaders. They are going to rate themselves either the same as their performance or beyond their actual performance.

**Table 3.** Government Practices of the local chief executives according to the respondents

Governance Practices	Chief Executives		Employees		Stakeholders		Overall	
	MW	INT	MW	INT	MW	INT	MW	INT
Transparency	4.11	Much practiced	3.74	Much practiced	3.68	Much practiced	3.84	Much practiced
Participation	4.65	Very much practiced	3.93	Much practiced	3.86	Much practiced	4.15	Much practiced
Accountability	4.34	Very much practiced	3.95	Much practiced	3.88	Much practiced	4.06	Much practiced
Leadership	4.60	Very much practiced	4.03	Much practiced	3.96	Much practiced	4.25	Much practiced
General Organization and Governance	4.49	Very much practiced	3.92	Much practiced	3.85	Much practiced	4.09	Much practiced
Inter-governmental Relations	4.25	Very much practiced	3.88	Much practiced	3.81	Much practiced	3.98	Much practiced
Rule of Law	4.08	Much practiced	3.76	Much practiced	3.70	Much practiced	3.85	Much practiced
Continuity in the implementation of programs, predictability and sustainability	4.42	Very much practiced	3.82	Much practiced	3.75	Much practiced	4.00	Much practiced
Preference for the Poor	4.52	Very much practiced	3.88	Much practiced	3.81	Much practiced	4.07	Much practiced
Effective, responsive, provision of basic services	4.42	Very much practiced	3.84	Much practiced	3.77	Much practiced	4.01	Much practiced
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>4.36</b>	<b>Very much practiced</b>	<b>3.87</b>	<b>Much practiced</b>	<b>3.80</b>	<b>Much practiced</b>	<b>4.01</b>	<b>Much practiced</b>

WM = Weighted Mean; INT = Interpretation

#### *Performance of the Local Government Units*

Generally, the performance of the Local Government Units in Table 4 derived from the Department of Interior and Local Government registered lower compared to the overall governance practices as this study found. This is shown on the general average of 2.28 among the municipalities covered in this study. Most especially, most LGUs did not meet the criteria on disaster preparedness, social protection, business-friendliness and competitiveness. Most of the LGUs did not have local disaster reduction management plan, contingency plan, and climate change action plan. There was also no presence of a mechanism on violence against women and children in most of the LGUs covered and did not comply with Accessibility Law. When it comes to business-friendliness and competitiveness, most of the LGUs did not meet the criteria on PCCI's Most Business Friendly Award and did not make it on the competitiveness index of national competitiveness council.

It is good to note, however, that the LGUs under study were able to meet the criteria for peace and order. They have established anti-criminality action plan, logistics support provided to local police station, convened the local peace and order council, and supported the organization of the barangay peacekeeping action teams of its equivalent.

In financial administration, the LGUs concerned have met the criteria set by the national government. The LGUs have met the criteria for qualified or unqualified Commission on Audit Opinion, compliance with full disclosure Policy, updated employee's premiums contributions, and have submitted local revenue collection growth for the last three years.

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The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), and the Commission on Audit (COA) are the responsible institutions for the measurement of the LGU performance. However, the LGUs may not take kindly to having any national government agency rate their performance since such arrangement may be perceived as running counter to the spirit of greater local autonomy. Moreover, these national government agencies may be seen by some of the stakeholders as either being too rules-oriented at the national level to be credible in undertaking such an evaluation activity.

The grand mean of 2.28 which has an interpretation of “reconsidered LGU condition” means that the DILG looked into the clarification of the municipalities, the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) and other intervening factors such as typhoon and other natural calamities that occurred in the municipalities evaluated. This further indicates that to reconsider is to give them chances in the next evaluation.

**Table 4.** Performance of the Local Government Units

<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>WM</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Financial administration	2.08	Reconsidered LGU condition
Disaster Preparedness	2.17	Reconsidered LGU condition
Social Protection	2.71	Met criteria
Business-friendliness and Competitiveness	1.69	Reconsidered LGU condition
Peace and Order	2.66	Met criteria
Environmental Management	2.11	Met criteria
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>2.28</b>	<b>Reconsidered LGU condition</b>

### *Test of Difference on the Character Traits of the Local Chief Executives as Perceived by Themselves and the Employees*

To test the hypothesis on the difference between the local chief executives’ and employees’ perception on the character traits of the former, the t-test for independent samples was used. The result of the analyses presented in Table 5 showed a significant difference on Agreeableness character trait ( $t = 1.34, p < 0.05$ ). The mean score of the LCE ( $\mu = 3.41$ ) is significantly higher than the mean score of the employees and stakeholders ( $\mu = 3.01$ ). This means that the degree to which the LCEs is able to get along with others by being good-natured, cooperative, forgiving, compassionate, understanding, and trusting is higher than employees and stakeholders see it. When local government leaders seemed warm and approachable, employees and stakeholders did not see it and instead saw the LCEs as cold, distant, an insensitive. The significant difference further indicated that employees and stakeholders believed that the LCEs did not get friends easily, has a little number of friends, and generally established fewer close relationships. Indeed, there are thousands of ways in which people differ from each other. One reason in which people’s character differs from what other people see is the character itself of the one observing. Different people see differently. This is also the explanation of Schein (2001) why in studying organizational behavior, character traits are a very important factor to consider.

In other character traits, perceptions between the Local Chief Executives, employees and stakeholders did not differ significantly. These finding mean that the character trait of the government official had a significant impact on the behavior of the employees and stakeholders. Character trait has a significant influence on the way people think, feel and relate to other people. Observing the behavior of the LGU leaders, employees could have seen the character traits of the leaders manifesting extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness. What the leaders considered right or wrong might have also been the same to the employees and stakeholders.



**Table 5.** Test of Difference on the Character Traits of the Local Chief Executives as Perceived by Themselves and the Employees

Character Traits	Chief Executives	Employees	Mean Diff.	t-stat	Sig.	Interpretation
	Mean	Mean				
Extraversion	3.66	3.40	0.26	1.3420	0.073	Not significant
Agreeableness	3.41	3.01	0.40	4.0324	0.032	Significant
Conscientiousness	3.38	3.28	0.10	0.0723	0.488	Not significant
Neuroticism	3.08	3.00	0.08	0.1077	0.222	Not significant
Openness	3.93	3.93	0.00	0.0109	0.593	Not significant

Sig. = Significance

*Relationship between Local Chief Executive's Character Traits and Governance Practice*

The Pearson correlation was used to test the relationship between the chief executive's character traits and governance practice in Table 6. Openness was found to be significantly correlated with transparency ( $r = 0.409$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), participation ( $r = 0.294$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and leadership ( $r = 0.398$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). These findings show how government leaders having wide interests, and being imaginative and insightful can affect their governance practices on transparency, participation and leadership. This finding confirms Daft (2005) who described that government leaders with this character trait are intellectually curious and often seek out new experiences through travel, the arts, movies, reading widely, or other activities. On the other hand, leaders who are lower in this dimension tend to have narrower interests and stick to the tried-and-true ways of doing things. Daft (2005) further explained that the openness trait of a leader allows them to be transparent by opening opportunities to the constituents and letting them participate in government programs and activities.

This finding further implies that LCEs with this trait are natural leaders. They have the ability to attain target by harnessing support from the society, business sector, and other stakeholders in the community.

The character trait Conscientiousness significantly predicted accountability ( $r = 0.391$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) only. No other practices turned out to be significantly correlated with this trait. The significant relationship of the conscientiousness with transparency means that government leaders who are organized, thorough, and plan every action practice presence of a governance information system. The skills and knowledge needed to create municipal information office and publishing information about current issues requires a character that is conscientious. This is consistent with the findings of De Leon (2014) that a conscientious government leader is focused on a few goals, which he or she pursue in a purposeful way, whereas a less conscientious person tends to be easily distracted and impulsive. This dimension of character according to Daft (2005) related to the work itself rather than to relationships with other people. Indeed, many LCEs shows a high level of conscientiousness.

Extraversion significantly correlated with transparency ( $r = 0.444$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), participation ( $r = 0.481$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and inter-government organizations ( $r = 0.293$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). These findings show that LCEs with extravert traits found it easier to lead meetings, confront presentation and lead change. By contrast, government leaders with low scores on the extraversion scale may take time to acquire skills on their own because they are very self-sufficient and self-absorbed (Browne, 2002). It is a fact that the character trait of a government official has a significant impact on their behavior. In this finding, extravert character had a significant influence on the way these government leaders think, feel and relate to people. The extravert leader represents key character traits that affect how they form and manage relationships with others and how they communicate – both at work and in their personal lives. Chief executives who are high on extraversion like being surrounded by people at work and in their personal lives. They also lead an active existence and they will seek excitement and stimulation which are present in doing governance practice of organizing participation of stakeholders and utilizing inter-government organizations. These government leaders are likely to be perceived as cheerful and optimistic (Doe, 2004).

The significant relationship between agreeableness and inter-governmental relations ( $r = 0.491$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) shows that the LCEs who were sympathetic, kind and affectionate, and able to get along with others were most

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likely to practice the governance practice of coordinating mechanisms such as local development councils, networking with officers and among personnel officers, and tapping non-government organizations and associations. This finding confirms the finding of De Leon (2014) added that LCEs who are high on agreeableness tend to make friends easily and often have a large number of friends, whereas those low on agreeableness generally establish fewer close relationships with employees or the constituents.

**Table 6.** Relationship between Local Chief Executive’s Character Traits and Governance *Practice*

Governance Practices	Parameters	Openness to experience	Conscientiousness	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Neuroticism
Transparency	Pearson r	<b>0.409</b>	0.11	<b>0.444</b>	0.049	0.019
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<b>0.023</b>	0.2354	<b>0.041</b>	0.234	0.523
	Interpretation	<b>Significant</b>	Not Significant	<b>Significant</b>	Not Significant	Not Significant
Participation	Pearson r	<b>0.294</b>	0.083	<b>0.481</b>	0.105	0.111
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<b>0.009</b>	0.209	<b>0.031</b>	0.211	0.323
	Interpretation	<b>Significant</b>	Not Significant	<b>Significant</b>	Not Significant	Not Significant
Accountability	Pearson r	0.109	<b>0.391</b>	0.077	0.124	0.1011
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.323	<b>0.003</b>	0.398	0.082	0.0831
	Interpretation	Not Significant	<b>Significant</b>	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant
Leadership	Pearson r	<b>0.398</b>	0.0888	0.119	0.114	0.1009
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<b>0.019</b>	0.872	0.434	0.092	0.412
	Interpretation	<b>Significant</b>	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant
General	Pearson r	-0.1928	0.109	0.107	-0.099	0.107
Organization and Governance	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.325	0.0823	0.333	0.723	0.0634
	Interpretation	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant
Inter-governmental Relations	Pearson r	0.0835	0.093	<b>0.293</b>	<b>0.491</b>	0.0923
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.559	0.245	<b>0.011</b>	<b>0.0431</b>	0.434
	Interpretation	Not Significant	Not Significant	<b>Significant</b>	<b>Significant</b>	Not Significant
Rule of Law	Pearson r	0.1029	0.111	0.104	-0.109	0.114
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.398	0.453	0.423	0.481	0.091
	Interpretation	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant
Continuity in the implementation of programs, predictability and sustainability	Pearson r	0.0981	0.0892	0.088	0.0591	0.038
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.381	0.231	0.51	0.332	0.382
	Interpretation	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant
Preference for the Poor	Pearson r	0.119	-0.118	0.11	0.0923	0.11
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.4853	0.0888	0.0942	0.087	0.135
	Interpretation	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant
Effective, responsive, provision of basic services	Pearson r	0.0888	<b>0.391</b>	0.0881	0.0888	0.089
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.98	<b>0.013</b>	0.42	0.523	0.583
	Interpretation	Not Significant	<b>Significant</b>	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not Significant

### Local Governance Model

Governance has been defined and interpreted in various ways even if the spirit or substance of various interpretations of the term remains the same. The UNDP defines governance as “the system of values, policies and institutions by which a society manages its economic, political and social affairs through interactions within and among the state, civil society and private sector” (UNDP, 2004). Governance is thus viewed as the means by which “society organizes itself to make implement decisions” within a climate of “mutual understanding, agreement and action.” In this sense, governance comprises the mechanism and processes by which citizens express their interests, mediate differences and assume and exercise legal rights and obligations (UNDP, 2004).

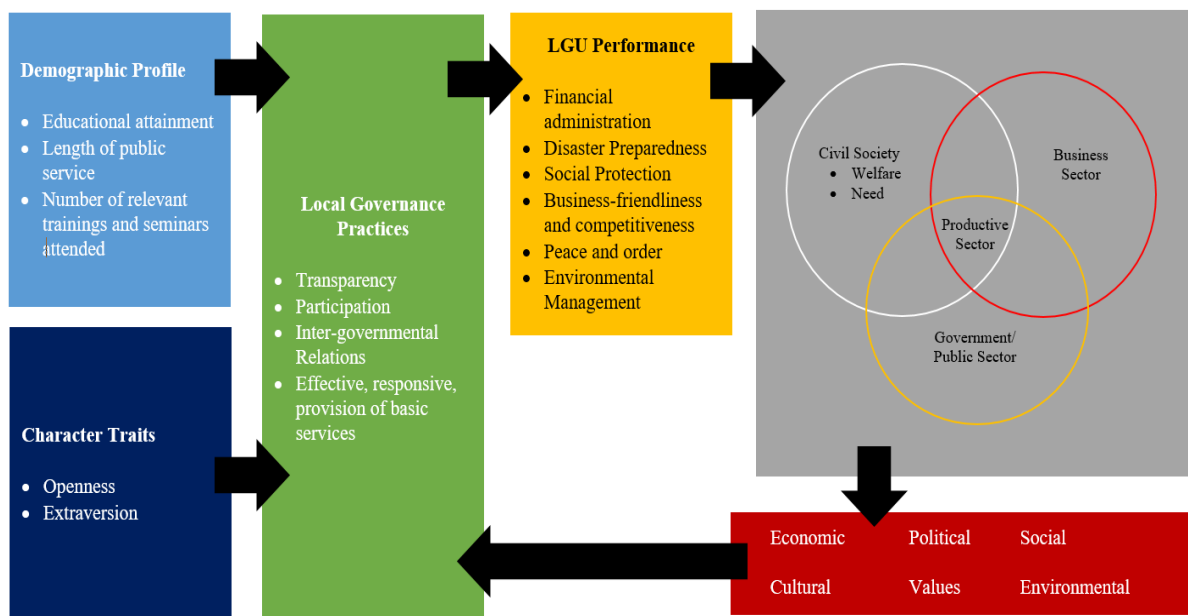
Governance has also been described as “the process of policy making through active and cohesive discussion among policy makers who are interconnected through a broad range of networks” (Kooiman, 2003). However, it is emphasized that the aspiration is not just governance but the requisites for good governance. The process must anchor on the ideals and principles of multiple stakeholders where government is only of the actors involved because it is marked by dialogues and consensus in the management of common and societal affairs (Kim, et al., 2005). From this description, therefore, is carved the prescription for good and sound governance where, again, as the UNDP suggests, would bring an environment where public resources are managed effectively, problems resolved efficiently, and issues are threshed out within a climate of public participation, accountability and transparency (UNDP, 2004).

Character traits and governance practices are complementary. Character trait or governance alone does not guarantee political effectiveness. A weak character and a governance system quite beholden to local authorities only transform to just leadership. To gauge whether the combination of character traits and governance practices

acts as efficient model, the extent of its influence over LGU affairs must be taken into consideration. Specifically, Openness-Extraversion traits and governance would adequately portray the effectiveness of leadership redefined. These two sets of indicators provide crucial feedback to guide government response to the demand and complaints of its clients. In this sense, Openness-Extraversion traits and governance help to hold LGUs fully accountable to the public they serve.

Based on these findings, the author conceptualizes the model of local governance in Northern Samar as shown in figure 1. It is hoped that the model will serve as a principle for an efficient and successful governance practices in Northern Samar.

In the model, good governance encompasses the process and structures of society that guide political and economic relationship to protect social, cultural, and values to create and maintain an environment of health, freedom, security and with opportunity to exercise personal capabilities that lead to a better life for all people. It is emphasized in the model that the outcome of good governance is not just better performance for the LGU but must anchor on the ideals and principles of multiple stakeholdership where government is only one of the actors involved because it is marked by dialogues and consensus in the management of common and societal affairs (Kim, et al. 2005). From this description, therefore, is carved the prescription for good and sound governance that would bring an environment of civil society, business sector, and the public sector are managed effectively to produce a productive sector of society.



**Figure 1.** Local Governance Model in Northern Samar

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusion are drawn:

Most local government leaders have wide interests and are imaginative and insightful. These leaders have broad range of interests and willing to consider new ideas. In addition, local leaders are talkative, energetic, and often self-confident. the leaders are sympathetic, kind and affectionate. It can be concluded that the most local leaders are able to get along with others by being good-matured, cooperative, forgiving, compassionate, and trusting. The government leaders are pursuing the goals of sustainable human development. they are following the development framework for chartering the progress of the government's human development efforts at the local level.

Most LGU's did not meet the criteria on disaster preparedness, social protection and business friendliness and competitiveness. these manifests loose implementation of the required programs set by the government, if not, they are not prioritized.

## Character Traits and Governance Practices of Local Chief Executives as Predictors of Performance of Local Government Units in Northern Samar: Inputs to a Design of Local Governance Model

The non-existing mechanism on violence against women and children in most of the LGU's means that they do not comply with accessibility law that victims are deprived of their rights to be heard. The LGU's give more priority to the establishment of anti-criminality action plan and consider peace and order as the most important function of the LGU's. There is no problem on peace and order in the covered LGUs.

The degree to which the LCEs is able to get along with others by is higher than employees and stakeholders see it. It implies that employees and stakeholders see the local leaders as not friendly and generally establish fewer close relationships.

Education is important in the functions of the LCE such as conducting consultations, creating local development council, monitoring of institutionalized technical NGO members, and other public services. Similarly, experience in public service is an important consideration in good governance.

The provision of relevant and reliable information to all is facilitated by the quantity and quality of relevant trainings by the LCE. A well-trained LCE complements and reinforces accountability by enhancing efficient use of resources and promoting participation as well as predictability by lowering uncertainty and transactions costs.

Government leaders with wide interest and imaginative affect are intellectually curious and often seek out new experiences through travel, the arts, movies, reading widely, or other activities. The openness trait of local leaders allows them to be transparent by opening opportunities to the constituents and letting them participate in governance programs and activities.

Local chief executives manifesting extraversion traits find it easier to lead meetings, confront presentations and lead change. By contrast, government leaders with low scores the extraversion scale may take time to acquire skills on their own because they are very self-sufficient and self-absorbed.

Local leaders who are sympathetic, kind and affectionate, and able to get along with others are most likely to practice the governance of coordinating mechanism such as local development councils, networking with officers and among personal officers, and tapping non-government organizations and associations.

Local government units who promote transparency among their employees and stakeholders perform better compared to other municipalities. It implies that the prescription for good and sound governance would bring an environment where public resources are managed effectively, problems resolved efficiently, and issues are threshed out within a climate of public participation, accountability and transparency. Good governance can be seen as occurring when there exists an effective political framework that is conducive to private economic action, the efficiency of stable regimes, the triumph of the rule of law, and presence of an efficient administration.

The performance of LGU does not lie alone on governance. Poverty persists as unemployment and declining livelihood opportunities remain formidable challenges. Besides, peace and order problems continue to challenge local government authorities, as incidents of ambushes and killings, robbery, kidnapping and similar criminal acts persist. These issues become remarkable in the province where problems of poverty, resource mobilization, conflict, graft and corruption, and other political, economic and social instabilities, appear to affect the practice of good and sound governance. In such an environment, good governance, as a compelling agenda, has been increasingly advocated, but the problem remains: when is there good governance and when is there none?

Accountability, leadership, general organization and governance, inter-governmental relations, rule of law, continuity of the implementation of programs, and preference for the poor do not dictate the success of governance. Local government leaders have to work with employees to bring about change. The performance and success of local governments involve the interaction between leaders and subordinates where the leader attempts to influence the behavior of his or her subordinates to accomplish organizational goals.

Finally, character traits and governance practices are complimentary. Character trait or governance alone does not guarantee political effectiveness. A weak character and a governance system quite beholden to local authorities only transform governance to just leadership. To gauge whether the combination of character traits and governance practices acts as efficient model, the extents of its influence over LGU affairs must be taken into

consideration. Specifically, Openness-Extraversion Traits and governance would adequately portray the effectiveness of leadership redefined. These two sets of indicators provide crucial feedback to guide government response to the demand and complaints of its clients. In this sense, Openness-Extraversion traits and governance to the public they serve.

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