



Exploring the Experiences of Indigenous Peoples’ Mandatory Representatives in the Barangay Level, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study aims to explore the experiences of six Indigenous Peoples’ Mandatory Representatives in Baguio City, Philippines. Using a semi-structured interview, this study found that the participants fulfil descriptive representation through the mirroring of their constituents’ ethnolinguistic identities and political practices. However, the participants are only able to attain a limited form of substantive representation by aligning their proposed ordinances with existing local and national legislation, and their insertion of Indigenous Peoples’ interests in the local legislative agenda. Institutional difficulties and lack of community engagement hinder the participants’ performance of their representation tasks. Overall, this paper discusses the difficulties of enacting responsive ordinances despite the presence of Indigenous Peoples’ Mandatory Representatives.

Keywords: Descriptive representation, Indigenous peoples, Legislative representation, Substantive representation

INTRODUCTION

The legislative representation of marginalized sectors is a means to address their concerns and advance their interests. As posited by ‘the politics of presence’ (Phillips, 1998), those claiming to represent a sector must themselves be members of such a sector to craft policies that are meaningful to those represented. Mirroring the descriptive features of those represented implies the possession of knowledge and experiences relevant to the enactment of responsive laws and policies.

For the Indigenous Peoples (IPs), legislative representation is important since it provides them with the opportunity to participate in mainstream politics. Their presence in the lawmaking process allows the inclusion of IPs’ concerns in the legislative agenda, and the consideration of their unique culture and traditions during legislative deliberations. This can result in the possible enactment of laws responding to their economic marginalization and consequently improving the indigenous communities’ quality of life (Protsky, 2010; Villanueva et al., 2017). Also, by seeing a fellow indigenous community member engaging in a political activity dominated by the mainstream population, the indigenous population is encouraged to participate in other political activities such as attending public consultations and voting during elections (Jayma-Porquis, 2017). Overall, legislative representation can lead to improved economic conditions, cultural preservation, and increased political participation of the IPs.

Given its significance, several countries have instituted constitutional mechanisms for IPs’ representation like reserved seats in the legislature as in the cases of New Zealand, Bolivia, Venezuela, and India (Hoffay & Rivas, 2016). In some countries such as Singapore, Ecuador, and Zimbabwe, they have constitutionally guaranteed indigenous representation in the executive and judicial branches (Morris, 2021). Nonetheless, studies show that despite their presence in the legislature and other decision-making bodies, the IPs remain underrepresented and marginalized (Murphy, 2008; Protsyk, 2010; Hoffay & Rivas, 2016; Templeman, 2018; Morris, 2021).

The Philippines is a Southeast Asian country with a unitary presidential form of government. Legislative representation is done through a bicameral legislative body representing national, district and sectoral concerns. The country has enacted a general policy recognizing and protecting the rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs) within the state’s development framework as provided in Art. II, sec. 22 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution. On October 29, 1997, the law fulfilling such constitutional intent was signed by former President Fidel V. Ramos. Republic Act 8371, otherwise known as “An Act to Recognize, Protect and

Promote the Rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities, Creating a National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, Establishing Implementing Mechanisms, Appropriating Funds Therefore, and for Other Purposes” was enacted to cater to the estimated 12.5-17.8 million IPs of the Philippines, occupying the mountains of Northern Luzon and the Southern islands of Mindanao, with smaller populations scattered in the Visayas and Luzon islands (Arquiza, 2005; UNDRIP, 2010). Better known as the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA), the law is celebrated as the first legislation in Asia to focus solely on IPs’ rights.

Numerous studies have focused on assessing the implementation of IPRA (Paredes, 2018; Bayot, 2019; McMurry, 2019; Theriault, 2019; Domingo & Manejar, 2020; Doyle, 2020; Andaya, 2021; Sy & Martinez, 2022). One of its most evaluated provisions is the implementation of the right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) against dams, logging, and mining activities inside IPs’ territory. Studies characterized the process as flawed, vague, and unclear resulting in its negotiated, varied, problematic interpretations, and defective implementation, with the need for IPs’ consent transformed into mere consultation (Daytec- Yangot, 2012; Magno & Gatmaytan, 2013; Voss & Greenspan, 2013; Ibabao et al., 2013; Peñalba, 2016; Bayot, 2019; Sy & Martinez, 2022).

Another significant yet controversial provision of IPRA is the ICCs’ rights to ancestral domains. Existing studies described the recognition, processing, approval, and release of the certificates for the ancestral lands and domains as lengthy and bureaucratic (Clemente, 2019; Domingo & Manejar, 2020), hollow and illusory (Bayot, 2019), as well as contradictory to the IPs’ customary laws on ownership (Sy & Martinez, 2022). Additionally, the awarding of ancestral land and domain titles has created tension among the ethnic communities, and conflicts regarding territorial jurisdictions between the ICCs and the local government (Prill-Brett, 2007; Rutten, 2015; Abordo & Coronacion, 2019; Revilla, 2022).

Regarding IPs’ mandatory representation in policy making bodies and other local legislative councils, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) issued implementation guidelines through a series of Administrative Orders (AO). The initial guidelines were issued in 2009 and revised in 2018. Briefly, the current guidelines define the Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representatives (IPMRs) as those who stand for the collective aspirations, interests, and welfare of the ICCs they represent. He/she must be a certified member of the indigenous group he/she claims to represent and must be knowledgeable of the community’s culture. The process of selection is determined by the ICCs with the help of the NCIP.

Also, the guidelines require that IPs' representation shall be mandatory in the legislative council of Local Government Units (LGU) with ancestral domains.

In 2020, a resolution released by NCIP extended the IPMRs' maximum consecutive term of office. Hence, the appointed IPMR has a term of office consisting of three years and can be re-endorsed for another term but in no case shall be more than three consecutive terms. To date, there are currently 5,167 IPMRs, most of them found at the barangay level. These IPs' representatives are tasked to protect the interest of indigenous communities in local legislative bodies and to serve as advocates for inclusive and equitable local governance and sustainable development (NCIP, 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies focused on the performance of the mandatory IPs' representatives are crucial in determining whether the representation mechanism instituted by IPRA can address IPs' concerns and interests through the local legislative bodies. However, there are only a handful of studies focused on evaluating the performance of the IPMRs despite the significance of their mandated tasks. Results from the study of the IPMRs of the Bukidnon Tribe in Mindanao, Philippines, reveal that the communication and political relationship between the mainstream local government and the tribe was enhanced through the appointment of indigenous representatives. Through their representatives, the tribe participates in the formulation of projects and activities by the local government (Jayma-Porquis, 2017). As for the IPMRs of Palayan City and Gabaldon, Nueva Ecija, Philippines, statistical information on the number of ordinances and resolutions passed between 2013-2017 reveals that Palayan City had no authorized resolutions while Gabaldon had only three. This is a relatively insignificant contribution of the IPMRs to local legislation (Villanueva et al., 2017). These two studies offer complementary yet conflicting results. While the implementation of the IPMRs has provided indigenous communities with the opportunity to participate in local legislative bodies, their presence does not automatically translate into ordinances.

Although descriptive representation is a huge step for IPs' representation, the goal is to allow them to resolve their issues and concerns as they see fit through the enactment of policies and ordinances. However, the IPMRs are faced with several difficulties in their attempt to achieve substantive representation. The identified challenges include the non-acceptance by local politicians and other stakeholders of the appointed

IPMRs, a politicized IPMR selection process (OGP, 2019), the local executive officials' lack of enthusiasm and support for the appointed IPMRs, budget constraints (Villanueva et al., 2017), and the focus on the IPs' integration into the mainstream legislative bodies rather than allowing them to pursue culturally defined ordinances (Peñalba, 2011).

In response to these challenges, specific recommendations include the educating of the mainstream politicians regarding indigenous communities and cultural diversity on one hand, and the continued training of the indigenous representatives regarding the mainstream political processes on the other hand (Jayma-Porquis, 2017). Other suggestions include the NCIP's engagement with other civic organizations and government offices to ease bureaucratic hurdles for the IPMRs (OGP, 2019), and the LGU's strict compliance with the IPMRs provisions of the IPRA law (Villanueva et al., 2017).

Furthermore, all the studies (Peñalba, 2011; Jayma-Porquis, 2017; Villanueva et al., 2017; OGP, 2019) emphasized the need to conduct additional studies in specific indigenous communities to have a comprehensive understanding of the varied experiences, successes, and challenges of the IPMRs around the country. According to the OGP (2020), there are 30 cities, 32 provinces, 380 municipalities, and 3,852 barangays that have implemented the mandatory IPs' representation required by IPRA. So far, of these compliant LGUs, only the IPMRs of Malaybalay City, Bukidnon (Jayma-Porquis, 2017), and the municipality of Gabaldon and Palayan City, Nueva Ecija (Villanueva et al., 2017) were studied. Clearly, there is a scarcity of studies about the mandatory IPs' representation in local legislative councils.

Data from research are valuable sources for determining whether the appointment of IPMRs leads to the enactment of ordinances responsive to the concerns of indigenous communities. Narratives from the IPMRs provide reliable firsthand information about the dynamics and challenges of representing IPs' interests in the mainstream political arena. However, the lack of studies on IPMRs in other territories creates a research gap by providing a limited understanding of the implementation of the mandatory IPs' representation and the IPMRs' experiences. Given the varying cultural practices, economic development, and political integration of the numerous indigenous communities in the country, findings from a few studies focused on a specific indigenous group in a particular city or municipality cannot represent the indigenous population in other territories. This may lead to sweeping generalizations regarding the IPMRs without taking into consideration contextual and cultural differences.

Thus, this study aims to add to the limited research on IPMRs, and to enjoin others to explore the rich and varied experiences of the indigenous representatives. It aims to provide relevant baseline data about the implementation of the IPs' representation mechanism in the different LGUs in the country. These data might help in understanding the dynamics and challenges of mandatory IPs' representation. Specifically, this study answered the following research questions: 1) What are the descriptive features reflected by the barangay IPMRs of Baguio City, Philippines? 2) How is substantive representation fulfilled by the barangay IPMRs of Baguio City, Philippines? And lastly 3) What are the challenges faced by the barangay IPMRs of Baguio City, Philippines?

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study used the phenomenological design to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences as indigenous community representatives. The qualitative approach facilitates the understanding of a social context where multiple realities can be discovered, while the phenomenological design allows the researchers to focus on the common lived experiences within a particular group (Creswell, 2014). A phenomenological design is appropriate since the objective of the study is to gain an understanding of an experience peculiar to individuals who have gained the responsibility of representing their community in the mainstream political arena while preserving their community's unique ways of life.

Figure 1

Location of Baguio City



Source: <https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/11730148>

This study was conducted in Baguio City, located in the Northern part of the Philippines. It is particularly located in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), Province of Benguet. Figure 1 shows the location of Baguio City in the Philippines (Tallo, et al.,2014).

Data collection and analysis

Following research protocols on IPs, the researchers requested permission from the NCIP-CAR to interview the incumbent barangay IPMRs. At the time the study was conducted, there were only six out of the 129 barangays in the city of Baguio with IPMRs. All the IPs' representatives of the six barangays, namely; Happy Hallow, Camp 7, Lucnab, Loakan-Apugan, Loakan-Proper, and Loakan-Liwanag agreed to participate in the study.

The study used a semi-structured interview protocol, which allowed the researchers to follow a particular set of questions while giving the interviewees enough room to share their stories about being an IPs' representative. After informing them of the purpose of the study and getting their consent, the interview sessions were recorded. Data collection spanned from the middle of February 2023 until late March 2023, while the interview sessions lasted from 30 to 45 minutes. The interviews were mostly conducted in a mixture of Ilocano, informal English, and Tagalog since the participants are familiar with these languages. These were then translated and quoted in this study's findings verbatim.

Data analysis was guided by the concepts of representation provided by Phillips (1998). The data gathered were categorized as either descriptive or substantive representation. Descriptive representation happens when the representative mirrors the same features of those represented. In this case, an IPs' representative is a member of the indigenous community, sharing the same cultural practices and experiences as those represented. In terms of substantive representation, this refers to the filing of proposals and enactment of ordinances responsive to the IPs' concerns. It emphasizes the notion that a representative's responsibility lies in their ability to enact ordinances that cater to the needs and interests of those they represent. The category of the challenges encountered by the participants was added based on the study's research question.

FINDINGS

The findings of this research are categorized as IPs' descriptive representation, IPs' substantive representation, and challenges faced by the IPMRs.

IPs' Descriptive Representation

Descriptive representation is attained when the representative claiming to 'stand for' the IPs shares similar characteristics with the members of the indigenous community such as ethnolinguistic identity and cultural practice.

All the participants mirror several features of the Cordillera IPs. First, their ethnolinguistic profile reveals their representation of Cordillera indigenous identities. Two out of the six participants considered themselves as Ibaloi. One participant identified with the Tuwali group, while another considered himself as a member of the Balangaw group. Lastly, the two remaining participants ascribed to multiple ethnolinguistic groups namely; Ibaloi, Kankana-ey, and Kalanguya.

Ibaloi is an ethnolinguistic identity native to the city of Baguio and its neighboring municipalities such as La Trinidad, Itogon, and Tuba (Bagamaspad & Hamada-Pawid, 1985; Fong, 2017). It is commonly acknowledged that the name Baguio was derived from the Ibaloi word *bagiw* which means moss, a slimy watery plant (Fong, 2017). As for the other ethnolinguistic identities of the participants, these are associated with the different provinces of the Cordillera region. For instance, the Tuwali and Kalanguya groups are both generally associated with the province of Ifugao. While the Tuwali is considered one of Ifugao's major ethnolinguistic categories known for their Alim and Hudhud chant (Uy-Jocson, 2018), the Kalanguya is described as a "silent", lesser-known group with several communities in the provinces of Benguet, Nueva Ecija, Pangasinan, and Aurora (Balangcod, T. & Balangcod, A., 2011; De Leon et al., 2016; Guinsiman, 2016). Meanwhile, the Balangao and Kankana-ey ethnolinguistic groups are generally associated with the territories of Mountain Province and Benguet.

The participants' varying ethnolinguistic ascription demonstrate the fact that Baguio City is a melting pot of different ethnolinguistic identities. Among the city's population of 366,358, almost half ascribe to non-Cordilleran identities, mostly Ilokano (27 %), and Tagalog (17 %) (PSA, 2023; Rng Luzon, 2023). Also, almost half of the population identifies with the various Cordilleran ethnolinguistic groups such as Kankana-ey (12%), Ibaloi (7%), Applai (6%), Bontok (5%), Ifugao (4%), and Kalinga (2%) (Domerez, 2021; Rng Luzon, 2023). The remaining percentages consist of other Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao identities.

Noticeably, all the participants use the term IPs to refer to themselves and those they represent rather than using their specific ethnolinguistic label. As highlighted by IPMR 3,

I am not a representative of Balangao, I represent all the ethnic groups in the Cordillera. Nobody will be known as from Ifugao, from Abra or Kalinga or Mt. Province. Everybody will be known as IPs of Barangay Lucnab.

This statement implies that from the participant's perspective, the Cordillera IPs can represent and be represented by any other Cordillera ethnolinguistic group.

The peaceful co-existence of the different ethnolinguistic groups is an acknowledged characteristic of Baguio City. Emphasizing the cooperation among the different Cordillera IPs despite a few disagreements, IPMR 2 points out that "there are some disagreements, but we always strive to work together as IPs in our barangay. We need to be united so that we can provide better services to our fellow IPs." The ascription to an ethnolinguistic group different from some of those represented is not a concern for the IPMRs. One participant even considers himself "lucky" to serve ethnolinguistic groups different from his own.

The second feature reflected by the mechanism for instituting IPs' representatives is the political practice of the Cordillera indigenous communities, particularly the involvement of the Council of Elders. The Council of Elders is a group of respected individuals within an indigenous community chosen for their wisdom, experience, and knowledge of traditional customs and practices. They are often referred to as the "Wise ones" and are seen as the keepers of traditional knowledge and values. Generally, the Council of Elders are the decision makers among the Ibalois, Kankana-eyes, Tinguians, and Bontoks (Pagandian & Eduardo, 2019; Prill-Brett, 1987).

The involvement of the Council of Elders is mainly seen in the choosing of an IPs' representative. All the participants described the selection of an IPMR as a collaborative effort between the Council of Elders and the NCIP. IPMR 5 mentioned that the Council of Elders and the NCIP are "the ones who give permission" as to who is qualified to be appointed as a barangay IPMR. IPMR 2 narrates the process in detail.

If there are IPs in a barangay, the NCIP will be informed and they will conduct an information campaign in each barangay to inform the people about the importance of selecting an IPMR. Then, the Council of Elders will be the ones to select the IPMR. This is the latest process we did here in Baguio City. We requested the Council of Elders to select us.

In addition, IPMR 6 pointed out the involvement of the constituents themselves in choosing their representative, although the final decision still rests with the council of elders.

Well, it is up to the council of the elders to decide but we also have the constituents of the IPs to decide if they still have the trust and confidence in me. But it is really up to the elders because we usually do it in the customary way. If there is somebody that they feel or know that is better and can do the job of IPMR better, then it is up to the elders' decision.

Aside from the Council of Elders' significant involvement in the selection process, the participants also mentioned their role in the local legislative duties of the IPMR. As pointed out by IPMR 5,

We need to discuss with the Council of Elders of the community so we can come up with a legislation like the resolutions regarding our culture and tradition and practices. By doing so, with the advice of the elders, we are able to come up with these resolutions.

In the case of IPMR 2, the Council of Elders "has helped me in making very important decisions as they are there to give insights and guide me on how I will plan out every legislation that I have in mind for our indigenous community." Similarly, IPMR 3 expressed that "I am not alone. I also have a companion which is the elders. We work together and they assist me."

However, three of the participants had a few complaints about the Council of Elders. In the case of IPMR 6, he raised the concern of not having a registered Council of Elders for their barangay.

Based on the provision of IPRA, there should be one. Because I believe that the elders are the right person to act on the other concerns of the city in the City Charter. Because in reality, there is no Council of Elders registered with the NCIP. . . there should be a Council of Elders because they are the right person to file an issue, to file a complaint or reaction especially when that is already a law and more so if many IPs don't have representatives. But lately, we are trying to adjust and do what we can do.

For his part, IPMR 5 called attention to the availability of the Council of Elders.

I think sometimes we need the group, sometimes the group is not available for us. The elders, they are already at the old age so we need to go to their place. We make our self available for them, not for them to come to the barangay. We go to their residence for consultation about any resolutions.

IPs' Substantive Representation

Representation is not just about mirroring the characteristics of those represented, it is also a means to advance Indigenous interests through their involvement in policy making. The interviewed IPMRs mentioned several issues that they have tried to resolve as members of the Sangguniang Barangay (Barangay Legislative Council).

Ancestral lands

IPRA, through the NCIP, recognizes the need to resolve issues regarding ancestral land claims. As such, it defines ancestral lands as those lands occupied, possessed, and utilized by individuals, families, and clans who are members of the ICCs/IPs since time immemorial. They or through their predecessors in interest, under claims of individual or traditional group ownership, must have continuously occupied, possessed, and utilized these lands until the present except when interrupted by war, force majeure, or displacement by force, deceit, stealth, or as a consequence of government projects and other voluntary dealings entered into by government and private individuals/corporations. These lands include but are not limited to residential lots, rice terraces or paddies, private forests, swidden farms, and tree lots (RA 8371, Chapter II, sec. 3.b, 1997). These ancestral lands comprise the ancestral domain of ICCs. This definition serves as the primary basis for claims filed by members of the ICCs.

Four of the participants narrated their efforts requesting for the recognition of their barangay's ancestral lands. Their experiences reveal contrasting results. IPMR 1 takes pride in the granting of an ancestral domain certificate to their barangay and highlights the collaborative efforts between the barangay and city officials when narrating about their plans.

Now, we are facing the amendment of the general master plan of Happy Hollow ancestral domain together with the city planning officers. With that, they are currently viewing it, the on-going harmonization with Baguio City's comprehensive use plan to merge Barangay Happy Hollow land use plan so that after that, the city council will adopt it and then convert it into city ordinance.

In contrast, IPMR 3 recounts how their barangay's application for ancestral domain was disapproved by the NCIP. He explained that "it was not me who processed the application, the individual claimants did it. Actually, they are originally from this place. If they were Ibalois, then it would have been approved, like the case of Happy Hollow." This is in

accordance with the NCIP rule that for ancestral domain claims to prosper, one must prove the authenticity of the community's ethnic identity.

Moreover, ancestral lands are reserved for the members of the indigenous community native to the territory, thus, the entry of non-IPs is regulated. IPMR 1 stated that "because there is already a lot of outsiders entering the ancestral domain, and sometimes the leaders cannot control them, we have to make a policy about the entry of migrants." For his part, IPMR 2 complained that "our problem is the squatters, since sometimes the government supports them. How about us, the legitimate ancestral land claimants. If we are driven out, where do we go?"

Furthermore, IPMR 6 highlighted how the IPRA law itself became a barrier to the ancestral land claims of the IPs of Baguio City. Particularly, section 78 of the IPRA law identifies the townsites of Baguio City as governed by the city's charter and can only be re-classified through appropriate legislation. The provision essentially provides that the town site reservations in Baguio cannot be covered by Certificates of Ancestral Land Title (CALT) and Certificates of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) unless legislation is enacted for such. He asserts:

We find that (section 78) is unconstitutional because it waives the existence of the Matthew Cariño doctrine which was done here in Baguio and now, we find it hard to find ownership in our lands because that is the law. This doctrine is the Native Title Doctrine, which recognizes indigenous peoples' rights over their lands has been overturned.

As of this time, issues regarding the ancestral domain and land claims remain to be unresolved. IPMR 1 expressed his frustration regarding the inability of the Philippine government to resolve the issue.

We have not seen a concrete plan or remedy from the justice system to address all of our needs. Actually, on our side, it's like we feel like we are being bullied up until the Supreme Court. In our analogy, maybe the Supreme Court doesn't want to release its decision because they know to themselves that all of the process and filing of the NCIP for our own title was right.

Preservation of culture

In addition, four participants focused on enacting ordinances in line with the protection and preservation of the IPs culture, traditions, and institutions. As IPMR 3 reasons out, "because my barangay does not have any ancestral domain and land claims, what I focus on is the promotion of the different cultures and traditions of the Cordillera region." Meanwhile,

IPMR 2 rationalizes their barangay's establishment of a School of Living Traditions (STL).

I cannot turn a blind eye to the future of my tribe, the young people in my area, as my gratitude to them and also for the celebration of a bright future, I, together with my colleagues, have passed the ratification of the creation of Cultural School of Living Traditions for our young people so that they shall never forget the roots of their own heritage and Indigenous Identity.

In addition, IPMR 5 shares that the community is pleased with the establishment of an SLT, saying that “the community likes the way we represent our culture” and that “they are satisfied with what we are doing.” In the case of IPMR 4, the preservation of culture is accomplished in his barangay through the enactment of an ordinance celebrating IPs' Day. According to him, it provides a platform for different ethnic groups to establish their bond in a healthy and entertaining manner while simultaneously giving them a chance to cultivate their camaraderie with one another.

The observation of culture is why there was an IP day because here, we have many ethnic groups, not just one. There are many, so we made the IP day for this. There is a competition, or there are games—sports fest. They had a closer relationship with everyone in each district. There was camaraderie.

Other services

Lastly, two of the six participants mentioned other services that they have performed apart from proposing and enacting ordinances. IPMR 1 mentioned the “settling of disputes arising within the ICCs” saying that these are resolved “within the bounds of the council of elders.” Similarly, IPMR 2 explains that “as for the conflicts among members of the same tribe, we mediate and try to come up with peaceful resolutions following the customary law.” For IPMR 3, it is the rehabilitation of their barangay hall.

Challenges to IPs Barangay Representation

While going over their proposed and enacted barangay ordinances, the participants also identified several difficulties that hindered their performance as IPs' representatives. This section divides these difficulties into institutional and community engagement challenges.

Institutional challenges

In line with being an official in the lowest political unit of the country, four participants recognized the need to align their proposals with existing national and other local policies. As stated by IPMR 1, “Our proposals will not be granted if it is in conflict with the national or local laws, so we need to study our proposals well. The leaders in the local government understand our proposals, they appreciate our proposals.”

However, their interaction with the higher government offices is not always harmonious. For instance, ancestral land claims are a highly contested issue between the IPMRs and several government offices. IPMR 2 described the situation, “we feel like we have two enemies, the government and the squatters (entering the ancestral land), because sometimes they are the ones supported by the government”, while IPMR 1 complained that sometimes it feels like the “people in the government played with or fooled us.”

Furthermore, another difficulty mentioned by four of the participants is their lack of funding. IPMR 2 explained:

The lack of funding generally roots from the lack of support from the government as we are an independent governing body of our tribesmen. We would always need to go to the city and argue with people in the hall only to be granted a few bits of funding only for one project, so I think that is the most challenging part of being an IPMR in our community.

Expressing the same sentiment, IPMR 5 stated:

As an IPMR, there’s a lot of work, you don’t have a budget with this one. You will not be able to implement activities due to the lack of budget. You need to appeal to the council in order to have a budget. There’s no single penny that was provided to us from the NCIP Baguio.

Recognizing that they need money to accomplish plans and projects for the IPs, IPMR 2 mentioned that they resort to donations. “Thanks to our generous donors back in my community, and with some fundraising projects, we were able to fund all of our projects sufficiently and with transparency.” With the insufficiency of funds, IPMR 1 considers his services as “voluntary acts”, stating that he sometimes tries to address the issue with “his own pocket.”

Community Engagement challenges

Furthermore, three of the participants pointed out that they were also confronted with difficulties coming from the side of their constituents. IPMR 6 described the challenge.

Our constituents are very active when problems arise but during the consultation only a few will be attending and then like what I said it has always been like that. When it comes to raising their problems, that is the time they have been very active but during the consultation they are not very much participative. Maybe 25 percent only of the population participates during the consultations.

Additionally, IPMR 1 focused on the younger generation's lack of appreciation regarding their proposals and that the youth are mostly "not fully aware of the benefits that they can get from them."

Nonetheless, all the participants in this study have expressed satisfaction with their task of representing the IPs sector in their barangay. According to IPMR 2,

It feels great. Before, there was no IPMR to take care of the concerns of our fellow IPs, so I feel fulfilled that I am able to serve them now. I represent their issues as an IPMR and I am content with my position.

In the case of IPMR 1, his satisfaction with the job comes from the fact that he is "able to bring the issues and concerns of the ancestral domain of our Indigenous Cultural Community to the local even the national government."

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that all the participants descriptively represent the IPs of Baguio City. Similar to the findings of Jayma-Porquis (2017) and Villanueva et al (2017), the IPMRs guidelines issued by the NCIP guarantee the descriptive representation of ICCs in the local legislative bodies. In this study, the various Cordillera ethnolinguistic identities and the traditional authority of the Council of Elders emerged as the IPs' features mirrored by the IPMRs.

However, one peculiar feature of demographically representing Baguio City's IPs is the presence of various ethnolinguistic groups. Although the Ibalois are the recognized inhabitants native to the city of Baguio, some of its barangay IPMRs come from various ethnolinguistic groups in the Cordillera region. While all the participants did not consider this as a concern, it brings forth the situation of advocacy representation among the different ethnolinguistic groups. This is a relevant issue

considering that in the Philippines, there are at least 110 ethnolinguistic groups within the collective term IPs, each with its unique cultural traditions and practices.

Moreover, similar to the findings of Villanueva et al. (2017), this study highlights the supervision and influence of the Council of Elders as a significant part of the IPMR selection process. This is also similar to how the Bukidnon tribe in Jayma-Porquis' (2017) study strives to protect their traditional political institutions despite their entry into the local legislative bodies. Clearly, the provision of the IPMRs guidelines requiring the use of IPs' customary processes and patterns of authority and decision-making guarantees the preservation of their traditional political structures while ensuring their representation in local mainstream politics.

In terms of substantive representation, the findings of this study reveal that, on one hand, only four of the six incumbent Baguio City IPMRs have successfully passed barangay ordinances concerning the protection and preservation of the IPs' ways of life. These are the establishment of a School of Living Traditions (SLT) and the declaration of an IPs' day. Notably, the establishment of an SLT is aligned with the previously enacted ordinance by the Baguio City Council signed on February 22, 2022. The ordinance is part of the indigenous cultural heritage revitalization efforts for students in the different schools in the city which aims to impart Cordillera IPs cultural heritage, such as history, songs, chants, dances, and lifeways, among others (Habbiling, 2022; See, 2022). Likewise, the IPs Day ordinance is a barangay version of Proclamation No. 1906, signed on October 5, 2009, by then President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, declaring October as National IPs' Month. The proclamation aims to enhance the people's participation in the celebration and preservation of ICCs as part of the Filipino nation. Evidently, the enacted barangay ordinances line up with existing local and national policies.

On the other hand, four of the interviewed IPMRs highlighted their frustration in acquiring ancestral land titles. They emphasized the misalignment between the IPs' interests and the Philippine government regarding land ownership. While the ICCs see themselves as the vanguards of the land due to the central role it plays in their survival, the national government considers the land as an instrument for national economic development. Nonetheless, the four participants promised to consistently represent the matter in the local legislative bodies and other relevant government offices. The issue of ancestral land and domain claims demonstrates the difficulty in enacting ordinances that challenge existing national laws.

Unlike the previous studies on IPMRs (Jayma-Porquis, 2017; Villanueva, et al, 2017), this study highlights the government's unitary structure as a limitation in fulfilling the IPMRs' ordinance making power. Such limitation is demonstrated in the need to make sure that the IPMRs' proposals are in agreement with the legislative agenda of the national government and other higher LGUs. Also, as mentioned by four participants, the funding of their programs and projects is dependent upon the budget allocation determined by higher LGUs and government offices. Although these limitations ensure the consistency of legislation from national to local government and the proper use of government funds, it restrict the IPMRs from attaining substantive representation. IPs' representation is premised on the fact that the ICCs are in a different situation compared to the mainstream population, hence the need to have representatives who will cater to their distinct concerns. If the IPMRs are to enact ordinances following the mainstream-influenced legislation, this could mean the integration of the IPs' issues with the mainstream interest rather than encouraging them to legislate according to their unique circumstances.

The findings demonstrate that while the IPMRs reflect the various Cordillera ethnolinguistic identities and the traditional authority of the Council of Elders, they are still unable to substantially enact independent ordinances. It casts doubt on the 'politics of presence' argument (Phillips, 1998), which posits that descriptive representation leads to substantive representation. Similarly, it also puts into question one of the aims of mandatory IPs' representation, that by having IPMRs in the local legislative councils and policy making bodies, the enactment of ordinances catering directly to the IPs' concerns is expected.

While having a representative in the local legislative body is a significant achievement for the indigenous population who were historically marginalized and underrepresented for years, realistic expectations should be in place when talking about IPs' substantive representation. For one, the IPs' representatives can inform the mainstream local leaders of their community's concerns while keeping their fellow indigenous members updated about the ordinances affecting them. The presence of open communication lines and a feedback system can encourage the indigenous population to participate in local decision making activities (Jayma-Porquis, 2017). Consequently, the increased political involvement of the indigenous population and the presence of IPMRs in the local legislative council can lead to the inclusion of IPs' interests in the local legislative agenda. This could eventually lead to the enactment of ordinances responsive to IPs' concerns. The point is that ordinances responding to IPs' concerns cannot

miraculously appear simply because IPMRs are present in the local legislative councils. In reality, IPs' representation still needs to deal with existing mainstream political structures and institutional arrangements.

Another challenge faced by three participants in the performance of their function as IPMRs is their constituents' lack of engagement. While it is hoped that seeing somebody 'like them' in the local legislative body can inspire members of the indigenous community to engage in local mainstream politics, this is not the case for some IPs. Their indifference can be attributed to their previous experiences of political marginalization. It could also imply their belief that the IPs' representation mechanism will not make a difference. Regardless, the IPs' lack of participation in community discussions can result in the representative not knowing their sentiments and concerns, leading to misrepresentation and/or underrepresentation.

In particular, one participant mentioned the failure of the younger generation of IPs to recognize the benefits of having a mandatory IPs' representative. Accordingly, the youths are unable to appreciate the IPMRs' efforts to enact ordinances regarding the preservation of indigenous cultures, and the protection of IPs' rights. This is unfortunate since the disengagement of the IPs' youth threatens the efforts of the IPMRs to preserve indigenous culture and identity. While the current efforts of the IPs' representatives are laudable, it is through the younger generation of IPs' participation in mainstream political activities that the continued existence and protection of indigenous rights, culture, and traditions can be secured.

Overall, while some of the findings of this study are consistent with previous IPMR research, it also presents a different context for understanding how the IPs' representation mechanism is experienced and applied. Specifically, this study highlights the difficulty of translating IPs' descriptive representation into IPs' substantive representation due to limitations brought about by the existing Philippine government structure and the lack of engagement of the indigenous community members.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The ethnolinguistic identities of their constituents and the inclusion of the Council of Elders in their selection process and decision-making activities are the IPs' descriptive features fulfilled by the participants in this research. In addition, their enactment of ordinances aligned with existing local and national legislation, as well as their insertion of IPs' interests in the local legislative agenda, comprises their limited form of IPs' substantive representation. Lastly, institutional difficulties and lack of community

engagement were identified as challenges to the fulfillment of their tasks as IPs' mandatory representatives.

The findings of this study align with previous research on IPMRs (Jayma-Porquis, 2017; Villanueva et al, 2017). It reinforces the importance of the IPMRs guidelines in ensuring the IPs' descriptive representation in local legislative bodies. However, this study cautions that in terms of IPs' substantive representation, expectations must be tempered. Set within the existing Philippine government structure, responsive ordinances and legislation cannot automatically materialize by simply making IPs' representatives present in the local legislative bodies.

In line with this, additional studies need to be conducted to explore the experiences of other ICCs in achieving local legislative representation. Given the 110 IPs groups in the country with their own distinct culture and indigenous political practices (NCIP, 2023), a handful of studies on IPs' representatives will not sufficiently provide a better understanding of the limitations and opportunities brought about by the appointment of IPMRs. Also, studies on how the mandatory IPs' representatives can function within the local mainstream political institution while maintaining their indigenous political practices can help solve the institutional challenges mentioned in this study.

Finally, to help resolve the issue of lack of participation among the younger generation of IPs, this study suggests that Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaigns about the importance of having a mandatory representative in local legislative bodies be carried out by the NCIP office. With the younger generation of IPs having an important role in ensuring the continuity of indigenous culture and practices, studies aimed at understanding their attitudes towards their culture, as well as their interest in politics, are suggested. Information from these studies can help the NCIP office cater their IEC campaigns to the indigenous youths.

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