ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 12| Issue: 5| May 2026|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2026: 8.753 || ISI Value: 1.188

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' ENGAGEMENT IN BARANGAY GOVERNANCE BASED ON INDIGENOUS PEOPLES MANDATORY REPRESENTATIVE (IPMR) GUIDELINES

Dulnuan, Groovy M., Dupingay, Clarise A., Pabilin, Madelin V., Suguitan, Jonathan N.

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra27405
DOI No: 10.36713/epra27405

ABSTRACT

This study examined the comprehension and knowledge of Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs) to the Indigenous Peoples' Mandatory Representative (IPMR) Guidelines at the barangay-level governance in Bambang, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines. Also, it assessed their engagement in the implementation of the Guidelines. The IPMR Guidelines were critical for ensuring ICCs/IPs' participation and representation in local governance. Yet, the extent of awareness and understanding among ICCs/IPs remained underexplored, particularly in Bambang, so this study was undertaken. A quantitative method was used in the research, and a descriptive-correlational design was employed for the 40 selected representatives from ICCs/IPs respondents. It was focused on their understanding of the Guidelines and their engagement in barangay governance across political, cultural, and social dimensions. Data were gathered through a survey, and the mean was calculated to assess their comprehension and participation or engagement. Findings revealed a high level of understanding and knowledge of the IPMR Guidelines among the respondents and with active engagement in political, cultural, and social affairs. Further, a significant correlation was found between their knowledge of the Guidelines and their involvement in barangay governance. These results underscored the importance of enhancing awareness of the IPMR Guidelines through sustained or continuous education and advocacy initiatives to further empower Indigenous communities in local governance.

KEYWORDS: *Barangay Governance, Engagement, Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous People, Indigenous People Mandatory Representative*

INTRODUCTION

Studying Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs) and their role in local government highlights the importance of including Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in decision-making. Their involvement promotes respect for cultural diversity, strengthens social ties, and ensures policies address their needs. Indigenous voices help protect their cultural, political, and social well-being however, they face challenges navigating government systems. Representation at the barangay level, especially through Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representative (IPMR) Guidelines, gives marginalized communities a voice in governance. However, the success of these Guidelines varies, with some communities struggling to implement them effectively. This inconsistency shows the need to understand how well Indigenous communities are included in formal and practical local governance.

Global frameworks like the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) affirm the rights of IPs to maintain their traditions while participating in government decisions. In the Philippines, the barangay is the closest level of government to the people, making it essential for addressing the unique needs of Indigenous communities. However, varying levels of enforcement of the IPMR Guidelines point to barriers that need to be addressed for more meaningful participation. IPs can participate in decision-making while preserving their cultural identity, as outlined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007. In the Philippines, the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) 1997 strengthens these rights, including land ownership, self-governance, social justice, and cultural preservation.

The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) established guidelines mandating IPs' inclusion in local legislative councils to ensure representation. Representatives, chosen by elders through customary practices, advocate the welfare of IPs, and they make up about 15% of the Philippine population (NCIP, 2018). However, challenges remain, such as limited awareness, lack of resources, and inconsistent enforcement of these Guidelines (Mayo-Anda, 2016; Villanueva, 2020). Addressing these barriers is key to ensuring meaningful participation and protecting Indigenous rights.

Studies show that when IPs participate in governance, local policies often improve, especially in areas like environmental protection and cultural preservation. IP representatives prioritize issues rooted in their cultural values, leading to more sustainable and community-focused outcomes. However, situations may arise that challenge the effective implementation of the IPMR system. Theories like participatory governance (Cornwall & Gaventa, 2000) highlight that including marginalized groups leads to fairer and more responsive policies. Bourdieu's cultural

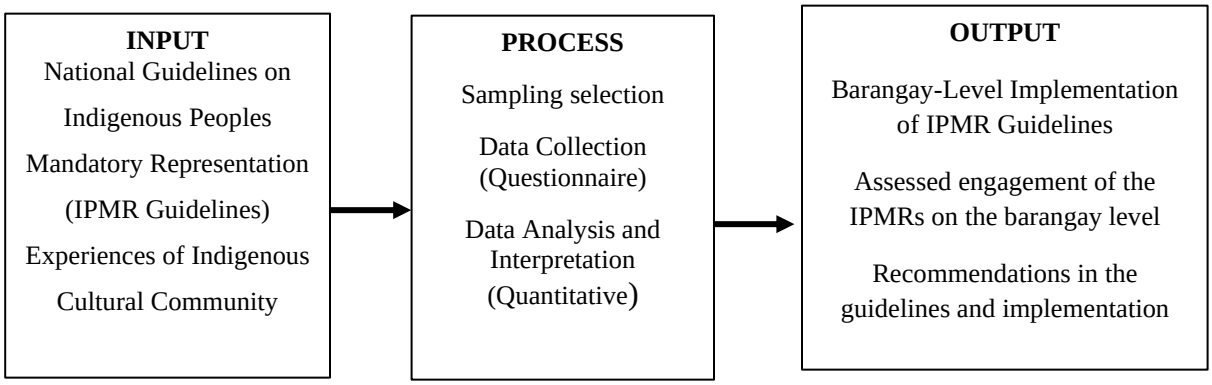
ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 12| Issue: 5| May 2026|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2026: 8.753 || ISI Value: 1.188

capital theory (1986) emphasizes that Indigenous knowledge enriches governance, strengthening community resilience and promoting inclusive development. These insights help explain how IP cultural values influence policymaking.

In the Philippines, around 17 million people, or 15% of the population, belong to 112 ethnolinguistic groups. In Nueva Vizcaya, the municipality of Bambang has one of the highest Indigenous populations, with ICCs/IPs making up about 29% of its residents. These groups, including Kalanguya, Tuwali, Kankanaey, Isinay, Bugkalot, and Ayangan, continue to practice their traditional knowledge and customs. Under Section 16 of RA 8371, ICCs/IPs have the right to representation in policy-making bodies. As a result, 24 of Bambang's 25 barangays have Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representatives (IPMRs).

This aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). These goals also stress the need to include marginalized groups like ICCs/IPs in decision-making for sustainable governance. Studying the IPMR system in Bambang provides valuable insights into the challenges and successes of empowering Indigenous communities through local governance.

The conceptual framework for this study examined the implementation of the IPMR Guidelines within barangay governance, focusing on three components: awareness, participation, and recommendations. These components were assessed to determine how well ICCs/IPs were represented and how the IPMR Guidelines influenced their empowerment and inclusion in governance.



The primary objective of this study was to evaluate the understanding and awareness of Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples in Bambang, Nueva Vizcaya, on barangay governance relative to the IPMR Guidelines. It also assessed their level of engagement, identified challenges encountered, and gathered recommendations for improving the IPMR Guidelines and their implementation to benefit the ICCs/IPs.

Specifically, this study aimed to determine the following:

1. The respondents' awareness of the IPMR Guidelines in local governance.
2. The level of respondents' engagement in implementing IPMR Guidelines in cultural, political, and social aspects.
3. The relationship between the respondents' awareness and their engagement in implementing the IPMR Guidelines in the local governance.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

The importance of Indigenous representation in governance for achieving social justice, equity, and self-determination has gained global attention. The UN's 2009 State of the World's Indigenous Peoples Report highlighted the need for inclusive systems that empower Indigenous communities to shape laws affecting their lives. It also underscored frameworks supporting local governance and Indigenous participation, aligned with the Philippines' Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representative (IPMR) guidelines.

Daes (2008) emphasized that self-determination and representation are crucial for addressing past injustices, encouraging nations to involve Indigenous representatives in governance. In 1998, Kingsbury explored challenges Indigenous communities faced within national frameworks, providing insights into how representation policies like the IPMR Guidelines influence social and political recognition. In Native American communities, Cornell and Kalt (2007) found that governance systems respecting Indigenous self-determination drive social and economic progress. Similarly, the Philippines' IPMR system aims to achieve sustainable development through Indigenous representation. Dowie (2009) said the harm of top-down conservation policies that marginalize Indigenous voices, stressing the importance of their inclusion in decision-making. This aligns with the IPMR Guidelines' goal of empowering Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs) by ensuring representation at the barangay level. Brett and Moran (2011) highlighted the impact of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) 1997, which established the IPMR Guidelines to ensure Indigenous representation in local governance. While these policies promote inclusion, challenges like low awareness and political resistance hinder their full implementation.

ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 12| Issue: 5| May 2026|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2026: 8.753 || ISI Value: 1.188

The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) codified the IPMR Guidelines in 2018 to strengthen Indigenous participation in local councils, empower communities, and advocate for their rights. This underscores the importance of raising awareness and fostering involvement in barangay governance to advance Indigenous inclusion. Indigenous rights in the Philippines were studied by Cariño (2005), who stressed that despite frameworks like IPRA, challenges such as limited government support and low local awareness of IPMR Guidelines persist. Similarly, Prill-Brett (1994) analyzed Indigenous land rights in the Cordillera region, revealing how legal pluralism can aid and hinder representation. Both studies stressed the need for clear governance policies and increased awareness to ensure Indigenous rights are upheld in local governance. According to Molintas (2004), the struggles of Indigenous communities in navigating conflicting legal frameworks for land and governance rights in the Philippines. His study revealed how systems like IPMR can empower or limit Indigenous participation. In the same way, Castillo (2018) examined IPMR implementation, focusing on challenges and opportunities for Indigenous involvement in local governance. Both studies emphasized the need for further research on how effectively the IPMR Guidelines ensure genuine representation in barangay government.

METHODOLOGY

This study applied the quantitative design employing descriptive-correlational method. It was conducted in the four (4) barangays of the Municipality of Bambang, Nueva Vizcaya. A total of 40 representatives from the different ICCs/IPs were chosen as respondents through the purposive sampling technique. They were the Council of Elders/Leaders in their respective Barangay Indigenous Cultural Communities. A pilot test was conducted before the structured questionnaire was subjected to reliability testing which gave a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.80 and was used as the data-gathering tool to obtain the information needed. The ethical consideration of respondents' confidentiality was strictly observed. The data were gathered on November 12-16, 2024, at Barangays Abinganan, Banggot, Buag, and Homestead. To analyze statistically the study, mean computation and correlational procedure were used at a 0.05 significance level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To illustrate the respondents' perception of the IPMR Guidelines, the mean was computed and reflected in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1. Respondents' level of awareness of the IPMR Guidelines.

Range	Frequency	Qualitative Description
4.50-5.00	7	Very High
3.50-4.49	18	High
2.50-3.49	15	Average
1.50-2.49	0	Low
1.0-1.49	0	Very Low
Total	40	
Mean	3.78	High

Table 1 above shows that the respondents have high awareness of the IPMR Guidelines. This means that the Guidelines were well elucidated and implemented in their communities and aligned with their customary practices like consensus-building through dialogue when selecting IPMRs, however, it also implied that sometimes they sporadically attended discussions likely due to prioritizing income-generating and farming activities. Parallel to the study of Jayman and Porquiz (2017), which underscored the significance of awareness of the ICCs/IPs in providing more opportunities to discuss certain relevant issues with the local government and propose programs suited for the tribe, among other things.

The following calculated means displayed in Table 2 show the respondents' engagement in implementing the IPMR Guidelines concerning the three dimensions.

Table 2. Respondents' level of engagement in implementing the IPMR Guidelines in political, cultural, and social aspects.

Dimensions	Mean	Level
Cultural	3.88	High
Political	3.50	High
Social	3.90	High
Overall Mean	3.76	High

As shown in Table 2, the respondents' engagement in all three dimensions was high. The social aspect scored the highest mean, reflecting satisfaction with how IPMRs connected with the community. Jayman and Porquiz (2017) noted that IPMRs enhanced public consultation participation, and gave ICCs/IPs a stronger voice in assemblies and opportunities to discuss issues and propose relevant programs with local government. However, the area that needed the utmost improvement with the lowest mean value was political. One of which was to revisit IPMRs' terms of office. Nonetheless, ICCs/IPs' participation in local governance remains strong and falls within the high threshold. This aligned with Jayman and Porquiz (2017), who observed increased participation in IPMR selections, with both selectors and nominees motivated by the opportunity to represent their IP

ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 12| Issue: 5| May 2026|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2026: 8.753 || ISI Value: 1.188

group and non-members alike. In general, it could be gleaned from the Table that respondents showed strong involvement in carrying out the IPMR Guidelines.

Table 3 presents the association or relationship between the ICCs/IPs' knowledge and involvement in implementing the Guidelines.

Table 3. Correlation of respondents' awareness to their engagement in implementing the IPMR Guidelines.

Variable	Correlation Coefficient	P-Value	Remark
Level of Awareness and Level of Engagement	0.46	0.003	Significant

*p-value 0.05 level of significance

The respondents' levels of awareness and engagement related significantly as indicated in Table 3. This could mean that greater awareness and understanding of the Guidelines encouraged more active participation and highlighted the need for community education to boost engagement and support effective implementation. The same was true with the study conducted by Jayman (2017) which stated that the presence of the IPMRs assured representation of the ICCs/IPs' concerns and endeavors because through such representation, the communication between the mainstream local government and the indigenous community has been closer because they already participated in the formulation of projects and activities by the local government.

CONCLUSIONS

The data collected from the respondents were carefully examined, and the following findings were drawn:

1. The respondents' awareness of the IPMR Guidelines in local governance was high. This would mean that in the future, there might be a more inclusive government, improved representation of Indigenous interests, and the possibility for stronger community development initiatives aligned with their cultural values and needs.
2. The level of engagement among respondents in implementing the IPMR Guidelines across cultural, political, and social dimensions was high highlighting their active participation in local governance. This might promote better cultural preservation, influence political decisions, and address social concerns tailored to culturally sensitive local policies.
3. There was a significant relationship between respondents' awareness of the IPMR Guidelines in local governance and their participation in implementing them. Thus, the study emphasized the importance of sustained and continuous education and advocacy initiatives to empower Indigenous Peoples.

6. Recommendations

Based on the outcomes of the study, to strengthen the IPs' participation in barangay governance, the following recommendations were:

1. The NCIP may work closely with the ICCs/IPs in the community to provide mandatorily capacity building programs such as para-legal training to enhance their legislative knowledge and skills which could help IPMRs to facilitate easier dialogues between their communities and the government.
2. To effectively perform the IPMRs' duties and functions, the national and local governments in collaboration with the NCIP, may create legislation and be fully institutionalized ensuring that IPMRs have an adequate budget share from the National Tax Allotment (NTA).
3. For broader insights, future studies may explore comparisons in evaluating municipal-based IPMR Guidelines implementation throughout the province of Nueva Vizcaya.

REFERENCES

1. *Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education (pp. 241–258). Greenwood.*
2. *Brett, R., & Moran, A. (2011). The rights of Indigenous peoples in the Philippines: Exploring the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997. International Journal of Human Rights, 15(5), 744–759. https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2011.585881*
3. *Cariño, J. K. (2005). Indigenous peoples' right to ancestral lands: Overcoming legal and policy challenges in the Philippines. Cultural Survival Quarterly, 29(3), 37-40.*
4. *Castillo, R. F. (2018). Implementation of the Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representative (IPMR) guidelines: Challenges and opportunities. Philippine Journal of Public Administration, 62(2), 150-165.*
5. *Cornwall, A., & Gaventa, J. (2000). From users and choosers to makers and shapers: Repositioning participation in social policy. IDS Bulletin, 31(4), 50-62.*
6. *Cornell, S., & Kalt, J. P. (2007). Two approaches to the development of Native nations: One works, the other doesn't. Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, John F. Kennedy School of Government. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1090833*
7. *Daes, E.-I. (2008). An overview of the history and challenges of Indigenous peoples' rights. Cambridge Review of International Affairs, 21(1), 5–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/09557570701828386*
8. *Dowie, M. (2009). Conservation Refugees. In The MIT Press eBooks. The MIT Press. https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/7532.001.0001*
9. *Flores, K. (2024). View of Indigenization in the Local Legislature: Probing the Indigenous People's Mandatory Representation in Ilocos Region. (2024). E-Palli.com. https://journals.e-palli.com/home/index.php/hci/article/view/3318/1627*
10. *Jayma, J.M. L, et. al. (2017). Indigenous Peoples Engagement to Mainstream Local Politics: a Southern Philippines*

ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 12| Issue: 5| May 2026|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2026: 8.753 || ISI Value: 1.188

Narrative. Jurnal Ilmiah Administrasi Pemerintahan Daerah Volume IX, Edisi 2 Desember 2017

11. *Kingsbury, B. (1998). Indigenous peoples in international law: A constructivist approach to cultural recognition. The American Journal of International Law, 92(3), 414–457. https://doi.org/10.2307/2997918*
12. *Mayo-Anda, G. (2016). Indigenous peoples' engagement in local governance in the Philippines: Challenges and pathways for representation. Philippine Journal of Public Administration, 60(2), 165-186.*
13. *Melyn, J. (2017). Indigenous Peoples Engagement to Mainstream Local Politics: a Southern Philippines Narrative. Jurnal Ilmiah Administrasi Pemerintahan Daerah, 9(2). https://ejournal.ipdn.ac.id/JAPD/article/view/105*
14. *Molintas, J. M. (2004). The Philippine Indigenous Peoples' struggle for land and life: Challenging legal texts. Arizona Journal of International and Comparative Law, 21(1), 269-306.*
15. *National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). (2018). Revised National Guidelines for the Mandatory Representation of Indigenous Peoples in Local Legislative Councils and Policy-Making Bodies. Administrative Order No. 3, Series of 2018.*
16. *Prill-Brett, J. (1994). Indigenous land rights and legal pluralism among Philippine highlanders. Law and Society Review, 28(3), 687-697.*
17. *Republic of the Philippines. (1997). The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) of 1997 (Republic Act No. 8371). Retrieved from https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph*
18. *United Nations. (2007). United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Retrieved from https://www.un.org*
19. *United Nations. (2015). Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.*
20. *Villanueva, P. M., et al. (2017). Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representation in the Local Legislative Councils: Status, Challenges, and Trajectories. Open Access Library Journal, 4, 1-10. https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1104168*