

**Participatory governance in the local legislative process
of the Sangguniang Bayan of Kalayaan, Laguna**

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ABSTRACT

Participatory governance was studied in the local legislative procedure of the Sangguniang Bayan in Kalayaan, Laguna. It explored civic engagement, participation strategies, and the legislature's role in inclusive governance. This descriptive study used a researcher-made questionnaire to collect data from 140 Sangguniang Bayan members, department heads, barangay officials, civil society members, and ordinary citizens who participated in legislative activities. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data gathered. Results revealed that majority of the respondents are adults with only 10% that belongs to younger generation. Mostly were female (55%), with College Degree (66.4%) while 66% of the respondents have been in the service between 1-10 years. Noteworthy is the 60% of the respondents were from the civil society groups and non-government organizations. Moreover, results showed the level of awareness in terms of participatory governance, results showed a very high level. The test of difference in the level of participation among the five variables tested on affiliation had a statistical difference observed value at 95% confidence level. Meanwhile, the test for the level of participation versus effectiveness, a strong positive correlation was observed, which implies that higher participation of participants in legislative process connotes to effective governance and output. Thus, this study concludes that institutionalized participatory processes, information campaigns, and digital tools are needed for more inclusive and effective governance. The result recommends institutionalizing legislative forums for young people, barangay-level citizen committees, and targeted IEC programs to increase civic engagement.

Keywords: Participatory governance, local legislation, citizen participation, Sangguniang Bayan, public consultation, community engagement.

Date Submitted: May 1, 2026

Date Accepted: May 6, 2026

Date Published: May 13, 2026

INTRODUCTION

Participatory governance is a critical component of democratic governance, including citizens in the legislative process to ensure that laws represent their needs. Moreover, participatory governance in local legislative refers to processes and structure that allow citizens

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DOI: <http://doi.org/10.69651/PIJHSS05021172>

Recommended citation:

Acuno, R. C. (2026). Participatory governance in the local legislative process of the Sangguniang Bayan of Kalayaan, Laguna. *Pantao (International Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences)* 5 (2), 4585-4603.
<http://doi.org/10.69651/PIJHSS05021172>

to actively participate in decision-making and legislative processes, accountability, and inclusivity within local government units (Open Government Partnership, 2017).

It is a participatory political system in which people actively participate in decision-making and have a direct impact on public policies, initiatives, and programs. It placed a strong emphasis on citizens' active participation in all tiers of governance, from local to federal. By making sure that community members' opinions are heard and considered when creating, discussing, and enforcing local laws and policies, this approach sought to democratize governance. The Philippines has seen a rise in participatory governance as a means of enhancing transparency. (Jain, 2024).

Likewise, participatory refers the methods and processes used by the Sangguniang Bayan in Kalayaan, Laguna to determine how citizen engagement influences legislative decisions and community well-being, identify impediments to effective participatory governance, and provide solutions to increase citizen participation.

The study by De Guzman (2019) looked at how the Sangguniang Panlungsod in Batangas City involved the public in decision-making and found that structured public consultations make local laws much better and more acceptable. He said that when stakeholders are involved from the planning to the implementation stages, ordinances are more solid and flexible. Even though Batangas is a bigger city, the study gives useful information that could help smaller LGUs like Kalayaan set up ways for people to participate in their legislative process.

In the Philippines, however, the legislature was generally considered weak. Making laws reflects the interests of a select few rather than always reflecting the will of the populace. Considering this circumstance, the legislature decided that it was essential to make the law more accessible to the public by providing relevant information and encouraging citizen involvement in relevant procedures. This was seen as a progressive agenda that would enhance the legislative process and uphold Philippine democracy.

Local studies show how important it is for local laws to have participatory governance. Borja (2024) found that grassroots lobbying in Naga City gives poor people in cities the power to change laws. After the Mandanas-Garcia ruling, Brillantes (2024) stressed the need for changes in LGU legislative systems. The Development Academy of the Philippines (2024) also called for public participation in local budgeting and lawmaking to be made official. In Camarines Sur, the results showed that lawmakers didn't know enough about how parliament works. These ideas are useful for Kalayaan, Laguna, where it is still important to improve both citizen participation and the ability of the legislature to do its job.

The Local Government Code of 1991 institutionalized participatory governance in the Philippines, encouraging citizen involvement in local decision-making to promote transparency, accountability, and grassroots democracy. Local government units (LGUs) were mandated to engage constituents in governance processes through mechanisms such as barangay assemblies, public consultations, and local development councils.

The Legislative Branch, particularly at the municipal level, plays a vital role in enacting ordinances and resolutions that directly affect local communities. As the policymaking arm of the local government, the Sangguniang Bayan serves as a forum where elected representatives craft laws intended to respond to community needs and ensure effective service delivery (De Leon & De Leon, 2014).

In Kalayaan, Laguna, a 3rd class municipality, the Sangguniang Bayan passed 191 resolutions and 20 ordinances in 2023. These included accreditations, barangay ratifications, commendations, authorizations, solicitations, and various general ordinances (Sangguniang Bayan of Kalayaan, 2024). While citizen participation was recorded through public hearings, committee meetings, and ordinance postings, the actual number of participants remained minimal.

Participatory governance is integral to ensuring that the laws passed are appropriate, inclusive, and responsive to public concerns. During committee deliberations and public hearings, opportunities are provided for stakeholders to raise concerns or support legislative measures. These forums are essential in promoting transparency and social accountability (Malong, 2005; DILG Region XII, 2023).

Even with these systems in place, participation is still low. Consultations frequently engage only selected groups, leaving ordinary individuals uninformed or excluded from the legislative process. This indicates a disparity between policy and implementation, where established participatory frameworks are underutilized due to inadequate information transmission, insufficient feedback mechanisms, and feeble civil society involvement. Civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations, which ought to play a pivotal role in amplifying public voices, are frequently absent from legislative deliberations.

This circumstance emphasizes the urgent necessity of evaluating the current state of participatory governance in the local legislative process of Kalayaan. There have been a lot of studies on participatory governance in areas like budgeting, planning, and executive decision-making (Velasco, Medina-Guce, & Rey, 2025; Santos, 2017), but not many have looked at how communities work with local legislative bodies to make laws and set public policy (Moldez, 2015). Also, a lot of the writing focusses on big cities, which means that smaller towns like Kalayaan don't get as much attention.

In addition, there is scant empirical evidence on the role and scope of civil society participation in legislative policymaking in the Philippines. Most studies that look at participation only look at development councils or executive bodies and don't look at the Sangguniang Bayan's job of producing laws (Jain, 2024; Civicus, 2025). Because of this, the local experience of Kalayaan is a good example of how participatory governance works when there aren't enough resources, political will, or public awareness.

Kalayaan's legislative process faces challenges such as the submission of draft ordinances at inconvenient times, limited alignment with community demands, and committee delays. Because of these problems, the legislature is stuck, and many ideas are still waiting (Sangguniang Bayan of Kalayaan, 2024). These kinds of problems make it harder for governments to do their jobs and make people less likely to trust local organizations.

The purpose of this study is to assess if low citizen participation is due to deliberate exclusion by Sangguniang Bayan members or to the absence, apathy, or unawareness of invited individuals. To suggest practical ways to improve participatory governance and get more people involved in local laws, you need to know what the core problems are.

Finally, this research intends to bridge the gap between policy frameworks and real practice by identifying strategies to promote participatory governance in the local legislative process of Kalayaan, Laguna.

Statement of the problem

The purpose of this study was to assess participatory governance in the local legislative processes of the Sangguniang Bayan of Kalayaan, Laguna.

More specifically, it intended to answer the following:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, highest educational attainment, length of service, and affiliation or group (CSO/NGO)?
2. What is the level of awareness and participation of the legislative process of the respondents in terms of awareness of the legislative, participation opportunities, transparency and access to information, and responsiveness and feedback?

3. What is the level of effectiveness in encouraging citizen participation in the legislative process in terms of efficiency, strength, and challenges?
4. Is there a significant difference in the level of awareness and participation, and perceived effectiveness of respondents when grouped according to their demographic profile?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the level of participation and the perceived effectiveness in encouraging citizen participation?
6. Based on the results, what policy recommendations and IEC Campaigns could be suggested to enhance participatory governance?

METHODOLOGY

This chapter described the research methodology employed in the study, outlining how the research problems were established, data gathered, and conclusions and recommendations drafted.

The study utilized a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design focused on the legislative process of the Sangguniang Bayan of Kalayaan, Laguna. The descriptive component sought to determine the respondents' demographic makeup and gauge their degree of involvement in different facets of governance. The correlational component aimed to ascertain whether the demographic characteristics of the respondents and their degree of participation were significantly correlated. Data were collected through a survey method.

The respondents of the study consisted of 140 individuals residing in Kalayaan, Laguna, each of whom had attended at least one public hearing, committee meeting, or similar event held in connection with the local legislative process. The respondent pool included 11 Sangguniang Bayan members, 21 department heads, 24 Sangguniang Barangay officials, and 84 community leaders, members of civil society organizations (CSOs), and ordinary citizens. These groups were selected because of their direct involvement in and experience with local government. Sangguniang Bayan members and department heads were included because of their roles in drafting and enforcing local laws. Sangguniang Barangay officials were included as key representatives of the community and facilitators of citizen engagement. Community leaders, CSO members, and ordinary citizens contributed important perspectives on participation, transparency, and inclusivity in the legislative process. This wide range of respondents provided the study with a comprehensive and balanced picture of participatory governance in Kalayaan, Laguna.

A stratified sampling technique was employed to categorize respondents based on age, sex, educational attainment, length of service, and affiliation or group, ensuring that all key sectors involved in the local legislative process were represented. Participants from each stratum were randomly selected to ensure fair representation across all demographic groups. This strategy ensured that each group's perspective was fully captured, yielding a more accurate and balanced picture of how informed, involved, and effective respondents perceived participatory governance to be within the local legislative process.

The primary data collection instrument was a researcher-made questionnaire developed based on the research problems, related literature, and similar existing surveys. The questionnaire was divided into three parts: the first addressed the demographic profile of the respondents, the second measured their level of awareness and participation, and the third assessed the effectiveness of efforts in encouraging citizen participation in legislative decision-making. The instrument was submitted to a panel of subject matter experts for content validation, and their recommendations led to revisions in the phrasing and organization of several items to improve clarity and relevance. A pilot test was subsequently conducted among respondents from a neighboring municipality with a similar legislative structure, who were not

involved in the actual study. The pilot test was designed to identify any ambiguous or problematic items and to assess the reliability of the instrument. Internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, and the resulting coefficient indicated a high level of internal consistency and reliability.

The data gathering procedure followed a systematic approach to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. Prior to data collection, a formal request letter was submitted to the Municipal Mayor, the Sangguniang Bayan of Kalayaan, Laguna, and the Sangguniang Barangay to obtain permission to conduct the study. Following approval, the researcher coordinated with the Municipal Secretary, Sangguniang Bayan Secretary, Sangguniang Barangay Secretary, and Civil Society Organizations to ensure the effective distribution of research instruments. The finalized questionnaires were distributed to the target respondents, which included members of the Sangguniang Bayan, municipal department heads, Sangguniang Barangay members, and representatives of civil society groups who had participated in local legislative activities. The researcher personally administered and collected the questionnaires to ensure a high response rate and to address any questions from respondents during the process.

The study was conducted in strict adherence to ethical research standards to ensure the integrity of the research and the protection of all participants. Informed consent was secured after clearly explaining the purpose, scope, and voluntary nature of participation, and respondents were informed that they could withdraw at any time without consequence. Privacy and anonymity were maintained by excluding personal identifying information from the data collection and reporting processes. All respondents were treated with dignity and respect, particularly with regard to their political and personal views. Every effort was made to prevent physical, emotional, or social harm, and sensitive information was handled with care and confidentiality. Honesty and integrity were upheld throughout the study by ensuring accurate data collection, proper citation of all sources to avoid plagiarism, and truthful reporting of findings. The study likewise complied with all relevant institutional ethical guidelines, including securing clearance from an ethics review board where necessary, and maintained transparency in all interactions with government officials and community stakeholders.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the collected data. Frequency and percentage distributions were employed to describe the demographic profile of the respondents, providing a concise overview of the distribution of responses across all categories. The mean and standard deviation were used to assess the respondents' level of awareness and participation in the legislative process, as well as their perceptions of the effectiveness of efforts to encourage citizen engagement. The mean was employed to determine the average response for each indicator, while the standard deviation was used to highlight the extent of variation among responses. The Kruskal-Wallis test was applied to determine whether significant differences existed in awareness, involvement, and perceived efficacy among respondents grouped according to their demographic characteristics. This non-parametric test was deemed appropriate given that the data were ordinal and may not conform to a normal distribution. The Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient was used to examine whether a significant relationship existed between the level of participation and the perceived effectiveness of participatory governance efforts, a method selected for its suitability with ordinal data and its freedom from the assumption of normal distribution. The results of these analyses were interpreted and synthesized to generate relevant policy recommendations and Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaigns intended to enhance participatory governance in the local legislative process of the Sangguniang Bayan of Kalayaan, Laguna.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data gathered from a descriptive study investigating the current condition of participatory governance within the local legislative process of the Sangguniang Bayan of Kalayaan, Laguna. A total of 140 respondents participated in the study, representing a diverse cross-section of stakeholders including members of the Sangguniang Bayan, municipal department heads, Sangguniang Barangay officials, and other affiliated groups from civil society. Data were collected through a structured survey instrument covering respondents' demographic profile, levels of awareness and participation in the legislative process, and perceived effectiveness of participation mechanisms. The Kruskal-Wallis H test was employed to determine whether significant differences exist in participation levels and perceived effectiveness across respondent profiles, while Spearman's rank correlation was used to assess the relationship between participation and perceived effectiveness. The results are discussed and interpreted in direct relation to the objectives of the study and are grounded entirely in the data gathered through these instruments.

Demographic profile of the respondents

In terms of age, the distribution of respondents reveals a diverse range of age groups engaged in or knowledgeable about the local legislative process. The largest group of respondents, comprising 23.8%, were 56 years old or older, followed closely by those between 36 and 45 years of age at 23.2%. Respondents between the ages of 46 and 55 accounted for 16.6%, while those between 26 and 35 comprised 18.5%. The smallest age group was composed of respondents between 18 and 25 years of age, who made up only 10.6% of the total. The predominance of respondents aged 36 and above suggests that older individuals are more likely to be involved in civic activities, particularly in relation to local legislation. This pattern may reflect greater familiarity with governance structures, stronger occupational or community affiliations, and a more developed sense of civic responsibility among older age cohorts. The notably low representation of the youngest age group, however, indicates that young respondents may have limited awareness of or interest in the Sangguniang Bayan and its functions, possibly due to insufficient exposure, perceived irrelevance of local government activities to their immediate concerns, or systemic gaps in youth-oriented civic engagement programs.

These findings underscore the importance of designing participation campaigns, capacity-building programs, and accessible platforms specifically aimed at encouraging young people to engage in the legislative process. Institutionalizing youth participation may not only help bridge the generational gap in governance involvement but may also contribute to the continuity and sustainability of participatory practices in the local government of Kalayaan, Laguna. Cruz (2022) highlights the need for sustained civic education and political will to increase youth engagement, while Vivier and Sanchez-Betancourt (2023) emphasize that effective participation depends on political support, institutional readiness, and citizen competence. Both studies affirm the need for programs specifically directed at younger respondents in order to close the generational gap in participatory governance in Kalayaan, Laguna.

In terms of sex, the data show that 55.0% of respondents were female, 41.4% were male, and 3.6% identified as LGBTQIA+. The slight majority of female respondents suggests active involvement of women in governance-related activities and awareness, which may reflect ongoing efforts toward gender equality and women's empowerment in public life at the local level. The inclusion of LGBTQIA+ respondents, while representing a small proportion, demonstrates an effort to capture a broader range of gender identities, which is significant for

assessing the inclusiveness of participatory governance. Their presence in the data provides insights into whether gender-diverse groups are recognized and accommodated within the legislative process. The data suggest that gender mainstreaming in participatory processes is both feasible and necessary, and that the Sangguniang Bayan should ensure that policies and participation mechanisms are gender-sensitive so that all voices are heard and considered equitably. Cruz (2022) stresses the need for civic education and inclusive participation, particularly among underrepresented and marginalized groups, supporting the importance of increasing women's and LGBTQIA+ participation in governance. Naaikuur, Diedong, and Dzisah (2022) further argue that community media and accessible platforms can ensure that a wide range of voices are heard at the grassroots level, highlighting the importance of gender-sensitive and inclusive strategies for equitable representation in the legislative process.

In terms of educational attainment, the majority of respondents, comprising 66.4%, had attained college-level education, suggesting that the participants were generally well-educated and likely more informed about local governance and legislative processes. Graduate-level respondents, holding either a PhD or a master's degree, accounted for 10.7%, while 17.1% had reached high school level and only 5.7% had elementary-level education. The high proportion of college-educated respondents may reflect the type of stakeholders more likely to engage in governance-related activities, such as civil society representatives, barangay officials, or community leaders. The presence of graduate-level respondents further suggests that expert perspectives may be contributing to participatory processes. At the same time, the limited representation of respondents with only elementary or high school education indicates potential access and inclusion challenges, underscoring the need for the local government to intensify efforts in civic education and to simplify legislative information so that all citizens, regardless of educational attainment, can engage meaningfully in the legislative process. Rico Motos et al. (2021) stress the importance of balancing expert knowledge with grassroots participation, which aligns with the finding that highly educated respondents tend to contribute more confidently to local governance, while Cruz (2022) emphasizes the ongoing need for civic education particularly among those with lower formal education. These studies collectively support the need for inclusive strategies such as simplified communication and capacity-building programs to ensure that respondents of all educational levels can participate in the legislative process in Kalayaan.

In terms of length of service, the largest group of respondents, comprising 40.7%, had been in their roles for 0 to 5 years, indicating a substantial proportion of relatively new participants in public or civic roles. Those with 6 to 10 years of service accounted for 25.7%, while 12.1% had served for 11 to 15 years, and 21.4% had accumulated 16 years or more of service. This distribution reflects a coexistence of new and experienced stakeholders within participatory governance, which can create a dynamic legislative environment where fresh perspectives and institutional memory operate in complementary ways. The relatively smaller proportion of long-tenured respondents may reflect natural attrition or the limited retention of individuals in community or government roles over extended periods. The prevalence of shorter-tenured respondents may also indicate growing civic engagement, possibly driven by new programs or increasing public interest in local government. This, however, reinforces the need for orientation and capacity-building programs to equip newer participants with sufficient knowledge of the legislative process and effective policymaking. Concurrently, the sustained presence of experienced respondents is valuable for continuity, mentoring, and institutional consistency. Jäntti et al. (2023) stress the importance of continued participation to build legitimacy and collaborative policymaking, while Vivier and Sanchez-Betancourt (2023) highlight that effective participation depends on institutional readiness and citizen competence,

particularly the need to develop skills among newer participants and to maintain the engagement of experienced ones. These studies affirm the importance of developing tailored engagement strategies in Kalayaan that address the distinct needs and contributions of participants at different stages of civic involvement.

In terms of affiliation, the data reveal that the majority of respondents, comprising 60.0%, belong to the "Others" category, which likely includes civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, community leaders, and other stakeholders not formally part of government bodies. Members of the Sangguniang Barangay accounted for 17.1%, while municipal department heads comprised 15.0%, and only 7.9% of respondents were members of the Sangguniang Bayan itself. This distribution indicates that the study captured perspectives not only from internal policymakers but also from a broad range of external stakeholders affected by or engaged with local legislation, which is essential for a comprehensive assessment of participatory governance. The predominance of the "Others" group reflects active civic interest and growing participation from outside formal institutions, which is a positive indicator for participatory governance. However, the limited representation of Sangguniang Bayan members may suggest that the voices of policymakers are less well represented in this dataset, highlighting the importance of supplementing survey data with qualitative instruments such as interviews or focus group discussions with legislators. Pasamonte (2024) emphasizes the critical role of civil society organizations in promoting inclusive governance, consistent with the strong external stakeholder representation found in this study, while Velasco, Medina-Guce, and Rey (2025) highlight the importance of structured and well-supported mechanisms for diverse stakeholder involvement in local development councils. These findings collectively affirm the need to formalize and strengthen multi-stakeholder participation platforms to enhance the openness and inclusiveness of local legislative processes in Kalayaan, Laguna.

Level of awareness and participation

With respect to the legislative process, data indicate that respondents demonstrated a very high level of awareness across all five indicators, with an overall mean of 3.85 and a standard deviation of 0.59. The highest mean score of 3.66 pertained to familiarity with the role of the Sangguniang Bayan in local governance, suggesting that citizens and stakeholders are generally well-informed about the fundamental function of the legislative body. Awareness regarding the process of creating ordinances and resolutions yielded a mean of 3.57, while understanding of how public input is incorporated into legislation produced a mean of 3.54, both interpreted as very high. Knowledge of the legislative agenda of the Sangguniang Bayan earned a mean of 3.53, also interpreted as very high. The relatively lower, though still very high, awareness of the scheduling of public consultations and hearings at a mean of 3.44 may signal a minor gap in communication between the Sangguniang Bayan and the public regarding the logistics and timing of public involvement activities. The consistently low standard deviation of 0.59 reflects widespread and uniform awareness among the population studied, affirming that citizens are not merely observers but possess meaningful knowledge of how their local government functions legislatively. This provides a strong foundation for deepening public participation, as understanding the process is often the first step toward active engagement. Tejedo-Romero et al. (2022) stress how digital tools and effective communication can enhance public understanding of and access to government, supporting the value of improving information flow related to public hearing schedules and legislative activities. Medina-Guce et al. (2025) further underscore how civic education and institutionalized participation mechanisms contribute to heightened awareness and engagement, affirming that leveraging informed communities can advance participatory governance in local legislation.

With respect to participation opportunities, the overall mean score of 3.25 with a standard deviation of 0.73, interpreted as high, indicates that citizens generally acknowledge the availability of avenues to engage in the legislative process, though room for improvement remains. Two indicators received very high ratings: the perception that there are opportunities for citizens to express their opinions in the legislative process, with a mean of 3.35, and the belief that the Sangguniang Bayan encourages public involvement in policymaking, also with a mean of 3.35. In contrast, more action-oriented indicators such as being invited to participate in public consultations and hearings at a mean of 3.16 and actually participating in public forums and consultations at a mean of 3.15 scored lower and were interpreted as high only. Community representation during legislative discussions yielded a mean of 3.25, likewise interpreted as high. This contrast reveals a gap between available opportunities and actual engagement or outreach, suggesting that while participation is encouraged in principle, not all citizens are consistently reached or empowered to engage. Mapuva (2019) underscores the danger of tokenistic participation, emphasizing that genuine engagement requires more than formal opportunities and necessitates active and meaningful citizen inclusion. Wardana, Sukardi, and Salman (2023) similarly observe that inconsistent communication and poor awareness frequently hinder real engagement even when legal participation pathways exist. These findings collectively indicate that the Sangguniang Bayan must intensify proactive outreach, personalize invitations to participate, and develop inclusive mobilization strategies to close the gap between perceived opportunity and actual involvement.

With respect to transparency and access to information, respondents perceived a very high overall level of transparency, with an overall mean of 3.46 and a standard deviation of 0.63. The highest mean score of 3.55 pertained to the availability of proposed ordinances to the public before approval, indicating proactive disclosure and a commitment to informing the public prior to decision-making. Regular updates on legislative activities yielded a mean of 3.51, while clarity in explaining the legislative process to the public produced a mean of 3.50, both interpreted as very high. Slightly lower ratings were observed for accessibility of passed ordinances at a mean of 3.41 and knowledge of where to access local legislation documents at a mean of 3.33, both interpreted as high rather than very high. These relatively lower scores suggest room for improvement in archiving, publication, and promotion of official legislative records. The overall very high transparency rating reflects positively on the Sangguniang Bayan's communication practices and its commitment to informing the public, which is foundational to building trust and enabling meaningful participation. Tejedo-Romero et al. (2022) affirm the importance of easily locatable and up-to-date information in improving participatory governance, supporting the value of proactive updates and clear communication in building public trust. Medina-Guce et al. (2025) further emphasize the need for consistent information dissemination and institutional openness to foster meaningful civic participation, indicating that Kalayaan should improve accessibility to legislative documents and broaden its public outreach to further strengthen participatory governance.

With respect to responsiveness and feedback, the overall mean of 3.51 with a standard deviation of 0.55, interpreted as very high, indicates that the Sangguniang Bayan of Kalayaan, Laguna is highly responsive to citizen concerns and feedback. The highest-rated indicator was the perception that the Sangguniang Bayan listens to community concerns, with a mean of 3.63, reflecting strong attentiveness and openness to public voices. The belief that respondents' feedback is valued yielded a mean of 3.51, and the perception that public suggestions are acknowledged produced a mean of 3.50, both interpreted as very high. The indicator addressing whether community feedback actually influences local legislation received the lowest score among the five at a mean of 3.43, interpreted as high, suggesting that while respondents feel

their voices are heard, they are less certain that their input translates into tangible legislative change. Jäntti et al. (2023) underline the significance of ongoing, two-way communication in building trust and ensuring that public input genuinely affects policy decisions, a challenge directly reflected in the lower score for feedback's influence on legislation. Cruz (2022) further stresses the importance of civic engagement grounded in responsiveness and representation, affirming the need to strengthen feedback systems in Kalayaan so that citizens' opinions are not only heard but are demonstrably reflected in legislative outcomes.

Effectiveness of participation mechanisms

With respect to efficiency, the overall mean score of 3.43 with a standard deviation of 0.62, interpreted as very high, indicates that respondents perceive the Sangguniang Bayan of Kalayaan, Laguna as highly efficient in encouraging citizen participation in the legislative process. The highest-rated indicator was the use of effective channels to inform the public, with a mean of 3.47, suggesting that information dissemination mechanisms are successfully reaching citizens and enabling them to stay informed and engaged. Timely and clear communication regarding legislative matters and the conduct of public hearings at convenient locations and schedules both yielded means of 3.43, interpreted as very high. The simplicity and understandability of public participation processes produced a mean of 3.42, also very high. The lowest, though still strong, score was attributed to the indicator addressing whether the Sangguniang Bayan efficiently gathers public opinions, with a mean of 3.39, which may suggest some room for improvement in feedback collection processes and in how public opinions are recorded and applied to policy formulation. Tejedo-Romero et al. (2022) stress the need for digital tools and efficient communication to increase governmental participation by making it more accessible and responsive, consistent with Kalayaan's high ratings across these efficiency indicators. Kurkela et al. (2023) similarly highlight the importance of organizational readiness, including effective feedback systems and timely communication, further affirming the need to maintain efficient procedures while enhancing feedback collection and integration into legislative processes.

With respect to strength, the overall mean of 3.44 with a standard deviation of 0.59, interpreted as very high, reflects a strong consensus among respondents that the Sangguniang Bayan demonstrates solid institutional strength in promoting participatory governance. The highest indicator pertained to the existence of strong mechanisms to involve citizens, with a mean of 3.45, suggesting that existing systems such as consultation schedules, policy forums, and feedback platforms are perceived as well-established and functional. Strong collaboration between the local council and the community, the legislative body's commitment to participatory governance, and the recognition of the Sangguniang Bayan for empowering citizens all yielded means of 3.43, while the consistent prioritization of community participation in policymaking produced a mean of 3.44, all interpreted as very high. The high degree of consistency across all five indicators suggests a balanced institutional strength encompassing organizational capacity, leadership commitment, collaborative culture, and civic recognition. Vivier and Sanchez-Betancourt (2023) observe that participatory strength is grounded in political will, institutional preparation, and civic competency, which aligns with Kalayaan's perceived strength across these dimensions. Winsvold and Vabo (2024) further stress that participatory procedures must be embedded within formal political structures to achieve legitimacy and sustained effectiveness, affirming the importance of Kalayaan's robust institutional framework in maintaining inclusive and empowered local governance.

With respect to challenges, the overall mean score of 3.29 with a standard deviation of 0.72, interpreted as high, indicates that respondents perceive a notable presence of challenges that continue to hinder citizen participation in the legislative process. The highest-rated

challenge was the lack of public awareness limiting participation, with a mean of 3.45, interpreted as very high, emphasizing that information gaps remain a primary obstacle. Inadequate communication tools and limited resources both yielded means of 3.37, also interpreted as very high, pointing to organizational and logistical constraints that hamper outreach and the delivery of timely and accessible information to all citizens. Barriers in reaching marginalized groups for consultations produced a mean of 3.14, while citizen hesitation due to lack of trust yielded a mean of 3.10, both interpreted as high, reflecting deeper systemic and social issues including feelings of alienation, previous negative experiences, and cultural and economic barriers that reduce willingness to engage. Medina-Guce et al. (2025) raise concerns about systemic challenges such as resource inadequacy, unequal access to participatory mechanisms, and insufficient public awareness, all of which are directly reflected in this table's findings. Mapuva (2019) further discusses the effects of tokenistic engagement and the structural barriers that must be overcome to foster genuine and trust-based participation. These studies affirm the need for improved communication technologies, broader outreach to underserved communities, and sustained civic education as essential measures for addressing the persistent challenges to participatory governance in Kalayaan, Laguna.

Tests of difference

Table 4.1 presents the results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test examining whether the level of participation in the local legislative process differs significantly across respondent profile variables. Among the five variables examined, only affiliation or group yielded a statistically significant difference, with an H-value of 19.497 and a p-value of 0.001, which falls below the 0.05 significance threshold, leading to a determination that a significant difference exists. This implies that the extent of participation varied meaningfully depending on the sector or group the respondent represents, such as members of the Sangguniang Bayan, municipal department heads, Sangguniang Barangay officials, or civil society groups. In contrast, age produced an H-value of 5.772 and a p-value of 0.217, sex yielded an H-value of 0.867 and a p-value of 0.648, highest educational attainment produced an H-value of 1.970 and a p-value of 0.741, and length of service yielded an H-value of 0.139 and a p-value of 0.987, none of which reached statistical significance. These results suggest that demographic characteristics such as age, sex, educational background, and tenure do not play a critical role in determining how actively individuals engage in legislative activities, whereas institutional or organizational role does.

The significant difference in participation based on group affiliation indicates that access to participatory mechanisms in the legislative process is likely shaped by one's institutional role and the degree of proximity to formal governance structures. Respondents directly connected to official government bodies or leadership positions may have more exposure, responsibility, and opportunity to participate than those from the general public or less institutionally affiliated groups. Pasamonte (2024) highlights the critical importance of civil society organizations in democratizing legislative engagement, affirming that participation is significantly influenced by institutional affiliation. Velasco, Medina-Guce, and Rey (2025) further note that different organizational roles carry different levels of access to participatory processes and advocate for structured systems that incorporate both formal and informal groups. These findings affirm the need for the Sangguniang Bayan to develop more inclusive strategies that extend meaningful participation beyond traditional or official stakeholders, including training, outreach, and institutional partnerships designed to empower underrepresented groups in the legislative process.

Table 4.2 presents the results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test examining whether the perceived effectiveness of encouraging citizen participation differs significantly across respondent profiles. The results reveal no statistically significant difference for any of the five profile variables examined. Age produced an H-value of 5.715 and a p-value of 0.222, sex yielded an H-value of 3.311 and a p-value of 0.191, highest educational attainment produced an H-value of 3.694 and a p-value of 0.449, length of service yielded an H-value of 4.455 and a p-value of 0.216, and affiliation or group produced an H-value of 7.412 and a p-value of 0.116. All p-values exceed the 0.05 significance threshold, indicating a statistically uniform perception of effectiveness across all demographic and professional groupings.

This uniformity suggests that the efforts of the Sangguniang Bayan to foster citizen participation are perceived similarly regardless of personal or professional background. Whether the respondent is young or older, male, female, or LGBTQIA+, a college graduate or otherwise, a long-tenured official or a newcomer, or affiliated with a formal government body or a civil society organization, their assessment of the effectiveness of participatory mechanisms is largely consistent. This consistency is commendable, as it implies that the Sangguniang Bayan's engagement strategies are perceived as equitable and broadly inclusive across different groups. Nevertheless, the absence of statistically significant differences should not preclude continued review and refinement of participatory programs, as qualitative feedback or more granular analysis may reveal subtle gaps or barriers not captured by statistical significance alone. Jäntti et al. (2023) affirm the importance of consistent and inclusive participatory processes that build legitimacy across all sectors, while Vivier and Sanchez-Betancourt (2023) call for system-wide institutional readiness and equity in participation, together supporting the conclusion that while Kalayaan's approaches are broadly inclusive, continuous improvement is necessary to address more nuanced impediments to participation.

Test of relationship

Table 5 presents the results of the Spearman's rank correlation test assessing the relationship between respondents' level of participation and their perception of the effectiveness of the Sangguniang Bayan in encouraging citizen participation. The correlation coefficient of $\rho = 0.673$ indicates a strong positive correlation, while the p-value of 7.00×10^{-15} confirms that the relationship is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This means that respondents who participate more actively in the legislative process, through attending consultations, expressing opinions, and engaging in policymaking, also tend to perceive the participatory mechanisms as more effective. Conversely, those who perceive the system as effective are likely more engaged, reflecting a mutually reinforcing relationship between active engagement and favorable perception of the mechanisms designed to facilitate it.

The strong and significant correlation between participation and perceived effectiveness suggests that the quality and visibility of participatory mechanisms directly influence citizen engagement. When individuals feel heard and observe tangible outcomes from their involvement, they are more inclined to continue participating, thereby fostering a self-sustaining cycle of trust, involvement, and institutional responsiveness. For the Sangguniang Bayan of Kalayaan, this finding underscores the strategic importance of continuously strengthening participatory platforms so that consultations are substantive and citizen input is demonstrably reflected in legislation. Schugurensky and Mook (2024) observe that active public participation enhances transparency, builds trust, and sustains long-term civic engagement, which closely parallels the reciprocal reinforcement illustrated by this correlation. Jäntti et al. (2023) further stress the importance of responsive and consistent participatory procedures in building democratic legitimacy and deepening citizen involvement. Both studies

affirm that clearly structured and functionally effective mechanisms for citizen engagement are essential for advancing participatory governance in Kalayaan's local legislative process.

Proposed output

Based on the findings of this study on participatory governance in the local legislative process of the Sangguniang Bayan of Kalayaan, Laguna, the following outputs are proposed to improve civic engagement, transparency, and responsiveness in local government.

The first proposed output is the institutionalization of participatory mechanisms to ensure sustainable and inclusive citizen involvement through the formal integration of participatory structures within the legislative process. This includes the establishment of barangay-level citizen panels to consult on proposed ordinances and policies, youth legislative forums to encourage youth representation and leadership in governance, and regular public hearings and consultations facilitated by the Sangguniang Bayan with accessible schedules and inclusive language to accommodate various community groups.

The second proposed output involves Information, Education, and Communication campaigns to raise awareness and foster inclusive participation. Strategies proposed under this component include youth-targeted civic education drives in schools and communities to promote early engagement in governance, campaigns for marginalized sectors such as low-income communities and indigenous groups using localized materials and accessible media including radio and community posters, and gender- and LGBTQIA+-inclusive messaging to ensure visibility and representation in governance-related events, materials, and dialogues.

The third proposed output calls for the enhancement of digital platforms to improve access to information and increase public feedback. Recommended actions include upgrading the municipality's official website and social media pages to include updated legislative schedules, ordinances, public consultations, and feedback portals; developing a mobile-friendly legislative tracker for citizens to monitor ongoing discussions, proposals, and passed ordinances; and utilizing digital surveys and polls to gather community sentiments on proposed legislation.

The fourth proposed output focuses on capacity-building programs to strengthen participatory practices and institutional capacity. This includes conducting training and workshops for civil society organizations and community leaders on civic engagement, public policy, and governance monitoring; providing legislative process orientation seminars for local government unit staff and council members with emphasis on participatory tools, inclusivity, and feedback integration; and facilitating peer learning sessions between government agencies and active civil society organizations to share best practices and lessons learned.

These outputs are collectively intended to empower citizens, strengthen trust in local institutions, and embed participatory governance as a routine and substantive dimension of public life in Kalayaan, Laguna. By implementing these recommendations, the Sangguniang Bayan and the broader local government may fulfill their legislative responsibilities in a manner that is more transparent, democratic, and genuinely responsive to the full range of voices within their community.

The findings of this study collectively affirm that participatory governance within the local legislative process of the Sangguniang Bayan of Kalayaan, Laguna is characterized by high levels of citizen awareness, a generally positive perception of participation opportunities, strong institutional transparency and responsiveness, and effective mechanisms for encouraging civic engagement. Awareness of the legislative process was rated very high across all indicators, with an overall mean of 3.85. Participation opportunities yielded a high overall

mean of 3.25, revealing a gap between institutionally available avenues and the actual reach of outreach efforts. Transparency and access to information produced a very high overall mean of 3.46, while responsiveness and feedback earned a very high overall mean of 3.51. In terms of effectiveness, efficiency yielded a very high overall mean of 3.43, institutional strength produced a very high overall mean of 3.44, and perceived challenges obtained a high overall mean of 3.29, indicating that notable barriers including limited public awareness, inadequate communication tools, and difficulties in reaching marginalized groups continue to constrain full and inclusive participation. Tests of difference revealed that only group affiliation produced a statistically significant difference in participation levels, with an H-value of 19.497 and a p-value of 0.001, while no significant differences were found in the perceived effectiveness of participation mechanisms across any profile variable. The Spearman's rank correlation test further established a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between participation and perceived effectiveness, with $\rho = 0.673$ and a p-value of 7.00×10^{-15} , affirming that active engagement and favorable perception of participatory mechanisms mutually reinforce each other. Together, these findings establish that while the Sangguniang Bayan of Kalayaan has built a functional and broadly inclusive participatory framework, sustained and targeted improvements in outreach, digital infrastructure, feedback integration, and civic education are essential to deepening the quality and equity of citizen participation in local legislation. The proposed outputs presented in this chapter are directly informed by these results and are intended to provide practical, implementable strategies for advancing participatory governance in the municipality. The succeeding chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations drawn from the entirety of these findings.

CONCLUSION

This study evaluated the state of participatory governance in the legislative processes of the Sangguniang Bayan of Kalayaan, Laguna, examining respondents' demographic profiles, their awareness of and involvement in legislative processes, the effectiveness of citizen engagement mechanisms, the influence of demographic factors on participation, and the relationship between participation and perceptions of government effectiveness.

The demographic profile of the 140 respondents reflected a predominantly older population, with 23.8% aged 56 and above and 23.2% aged 36 to 45. Females comprised the majority at 55.0%, followed by males at 41.4% and LGBTQIA+ individuals at 3.6%. In terms of educational attainment, 66.4% had reached college level, 17.1% completed high school, and 10.7% held postgraduate degrees. Regarding length of service, 40.7% had served for zero to five years, while 21.4% had over 16 years of experience. Organizational affiliation showed that 60% were from civil society or non-governmental organizations, 17.1% from the Sangguniang Barangay, 15.0% were municipal department heads, and 7.9% were from the Sangguniang Bayan.

The level of awareness and participation in the legislative process was generally high to very high. Awareness was rated very high ($M = 3.85$), particularly regarding the role of the Sangguniang Bayan, ordinance crafting, and public hearing schedules. Participation was rated high ($M = 3.25$), though actual invitations and representation were noted to be limited. Transparency and access to information were likewise rated very high ($M = 3.46$), despite some identified gaps in clarity and dissemination. Responsiveness and feedback were also rated very high ($M = 3.51$), indicating that the Sangguniang Bayan values and responds to community input.

The effectiveness of mechanisms encouraging citizen participation was rated very effective in both efficiency ($M = 3.43$) and strength ($M = 3.44$). Respondents acknowledged clear communication, accessible hearings, and strong commitment from the Sangguniang

Bayan. However, significant challenges were also noted ($M = 3.29$), including low awareness, weak communication tools, difficulty reaching marginalized groups, limited resources, and occasional public distrust, indicating that while participation mechanisms function well, structural and perceptual barriers remain.

Analysis of demographic variables revealed no significant differences in participation or perceived effectiveness based on age, sex, education, or length of service. However, participation levels varied significantly by organizational affiliation ($p = 0.001$), indicating differing experiences across sectors, while perceptions of effectiveness remained consistent across all groups. A strong, statistically significant correlation was established between participation and perceived effectiveness (Spearman's $\rho = 0.673$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that higher participation was associated with higher perceived effectiveness, and that meaningful engagement enhances citizens' views of government performance and responsiveness.

The foregoing findings lead to the conclusion that high awareness of legislative processes does not necessarily translate into active participation. While the Sangguniang Bayan of Kalayaan demonstrates efficiency and commitment to participatory governance, real engagement remains uneven, pointing to deeper issues of access, inclusivity, and trust. The significant difference in participation based on organizational affiliation suggests that institutional position shapes how individuals experience and access participatory spaces, as those outside formal structures may feel excluded or underrepresented, reflecting a systemic imbalance in governance inclusion. The strong positive correlation between participation and perceived effectiveness affirms that meaningful civic engagement is central to how citizens judge government performance, as individuals who are more engaged are more inclined to perceive governance as responsive and effective. The null hypothesis positing no significant difference in participation and efficacy depending on demographic profiles was only partially accepted, given that only organizational affiliation indicated a significant difference in involvement. The null hypothesis asserting no significant relationship between involvement and effectiveness was rejected, as a strong positive correlation between the two variables was established. Taken together, these findings emphasize that the enhancement of participatory governance is not solely about providing opportunities, but also about removing structural barriers, fostering trust, and actively facilitating engagement for all sectors, particularly the marginalized, without which involvement risks becoming more about appearances than substance.

In light of these conclusions, several recommendations are advanced. Community members are encouraged to take a more active role in local legislative processes by participating in public hearings, consultations, and related civic activities, as the gap between high awareness and only moderately high participation underscores the need for greater citizen engagement to ensure that policies genuinely reflect community needs and priorities. The Local Government Unit should enhance its communication and outreach strategies, particularly toward marginalized groups, by developing tailored information campaigns and inclusive engagement platforms that address the inadequate information flow and weak engagement channels identified in the findings. The Chief Executive is encouraged to use this study to better understand constituent concerns and to allocate resources and enact policies that support participatory governance mechanisms, prioritizing inclusive decision-making and fostering active collaboration between local officials and the community in order to address structural barriers such as limited access, insufficient trust, and resource constraints. Future researchers are encouraged to explore how different sectors, including non-governmental organizations, barangay officials, and community members, experience and access participatory governance, and to further investigate how different types and depths of engagement influence governance

outcomes. Expanding this research to other municipalities can help validate these patterns and contribute to the refinement of participatory governance models suited to diverse local contexts.

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