

The Politics of Pandemic: Covid-Mitigating Response among 1st Time Mayors from Dynastic and Non-dynastic Families in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed the implementation of different mitigation programs imposed by the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) thru their guidelines and the initiatives spearheaded by first-time mayors with dynastic or non-dynastic backgrounds during the surge of the pandemic. Similarly, variance analysis was conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference between the total number of COVID-19-positive cases, deaths, and recovery rates in their localities. Secondary data were collected from online news articles, government websites, and through the social media platforms of municipalities/cities, as well as the personal accounts of the mayors themselves. The following conclusions were made: There is no substantial causal relationship between the familial background of the mayor and the increase or decrease of COVID-19 cases in their respective localities; there is no significant difference in the implementation of programs imposed by the national government to the mayors with dynastic/non-dynastic backgrounds; and in terms of pandemic governance and leadership, it is crucial to think beyond the stereotypical beliefs related to political dynasties.

Keywords: *Local Government Units, pandemic politics, political dynasty*

INTRODUCTION

On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona-virus 2, also known as COVID-19, as a “*Global Public Health Emergency of International Concern* (CNN Philippines, 2020).” Former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte then imposed travel bans, lockdowns, and prohibitions (Presidential Communications Operations Office, 2021). Reports, however, showed that the number of cases in the country still surged despite such strict measures (Toole, 2021). Hence, the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) was created to take on the lead in addressing the health crisis. On the part of the legislators, the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act (R.A. 11469) and the Bayanihan to Recover as One (R.A.11494) were approved in an attempt to minimize the effects of the pandemic on the lives of the citizens.

One of the government's primary goals is to improve people's quality of life by meeting their demands. Effective and efficient public service delivery is a significant obligation for those in the economic and social spheres (Kiba-Janiak & Witkowski, 2014). In a study by Chadran and Vimal (2020), Local Government Units (LGUs) were found to be on the front lines of the pandemic response and are responsible for serving the people's basic needs. Deslatte et al. (2020) concluded that LGUs are the most capable unit of government to respond during a crisis. Pandemic preparedness and response have traditionally been a state responsibility (Schwartz & Yen, 2017). Talabis et al. (2021) revealed some regions that discharged exemplary performance in adopting, coordinating, and implementing the COVID-19 measures released by the IATF. The practices identified were used as indicators in the present study to determine the effectiveness of the first-time mayors in mitigating the effects of the pandemic in their respective localities.

Political Dynasty: Philippine Setting

Various literature on the history of political dynasties in the Philippines showed that the ruling elite has continuously maintained its power in the government resulting in the widened gap between the poor and the wealthy. Tadem & Tadem (2016) in an article entitled "Political Dynasties in the Philippines: Persistent Patterns, Perennial Problems" revealed that political dynasties would continue to exist indefinitely as long as individuals in power owe their positions to the authority of their families or predecessors who began their careers in local or national government. Similarly, the article concluded that new dynasties have established themselves in politics, restricting electoral competition, stifling economic growth, and exacerbating inequality.

Academic discourses and debates concerning the nature of the political dynasty have existed for so long. Scholars of political science and other related fields were engaged in arguments justifying or negating the notion that a political dynasty is "evil" by nature. It has now been 34 years since the ratification of the 1987 Philippine Constitution which enshrined the principle of equality of acquiring governmental positions and offices and the prohibition against political dynasties. Likewise, 40 bills on regulation and the end of political dynasties have been submitted to Congress in recent years. Nevertheless, not even a single one was enacted. In the recent 2019 midterm elections, it was reported that at least 163 dynastic families won seats in LGUs and Congress (Bueza & Castro, 2019). As reported in the study by Dulay (2021), 15% of dynastic municipal mayors were elected in the recent Philippine election.

A study by Sutisna (2017) concluded that political dynasties hamper the process of consolidation and institutionalization of democracy, and at the same time, adversely affect the prospects of its development in the future. Similarly, Mendoza et al.'s (2012)

study shows that provinces in the Philippines, particularly in Luzon, find a worsening effect on poverty under the governance of political dynasties. It was revealed that political dynasties negatively affected their respective constituents due to the poor public goods provision of political clans, especially in infrastructure development, the prevalence of criminality, and full employment. The work of Setyaningrum & Saragih (2019) which also supports this finding, states that within the realm of local government, the political dynasty also negatively impacts the government's regulatory and economic performance.

Mendoza et al. (2012) further explained that dynasties at a provincial level hurt the socioeconomic context by increasing poverty. The same study also discussed that because there is a lack of reform-oriented policies from dynasties, implementing policies and programs may not improve the political, health, and educational sectors.

The study of George and Ponattu (2019) similarly showed that political dynasties negatively impact local economic development as these worsen public good provision. Setyaningrum and Saragih (2019), on the other hand, concerning the phenomena of political dynasties in Indonesia and their effect on local government performance also supported the same observation. The duo discovered that political dynasties negatively impact local government performance. In line with this, the study of Dulay (2021) shows that dynastic mayors in the Philippines, whose family members hold multiple political positions, have higher government spending without necessarily translating to higher levels of development.

On the other hand, Tuselem & Pe-Aguirre (2013) focused on investigating the effects of the prevalence of political dynasties in terms of the distribution of goods and services to the people. As political dominance remains within the grasp of elite families with economic and intellectual supremacy, the denial of public office to other aspirants comes into question. The study also questioned whether their responsibility as public servants is fulfilled or whether they are using their position for personal gain.

Dulay (2021) asserted that municipalities with mayors from dynastic families spend 4-5% more than non-dynastic mayors, which does not lead to development. In contrast, Balanquit et al. (2017) provided an alternative perspective regarding political dynasties wherein dynastic public officials who have long been in the position may lengthen the time to plan and implement social and economic development programs. Oslo (2003) also asserted that dynastic officials may likely implement long-term investments as this will benefit their constituents.

However, Punongbayan (2018) argued that dynastic politicians are opportunistic. He contends that dynastic politicians corrupt local governments by exploiting public funds

to accrue more funds, partly or wholly. He further cited the study of Petracca (1991), where it was concluded that a first-time mayor with a dynastic background might pursue a policy or behavior driven by his self-interests rather than a path that prioritizes public interests. Punongbayan (2018) correlates the existence of political dynasties and their local and national governance activities to the prevalence of poverty in the Philippines.

He contends that being driven by self-interests and pursuing familial power, these political dynasties need to perform more in their duties and responsibilities as government leaders.

Other studies also suggest that dynastic roots and kinship may or may not have deleterious effects on the overall quality of governments and good governance (Tusalem & Pe-Aguirre, 2013). George & Ponattu (2018) contend, on the other hand, that although dynastic and non-dynastic politicians appear comparatively analogous with their apparent characteristics, non-dynastic politicians outperform the political actions of dynastic public officials at all points.

Based on the aforementioned related literature, it is evident that there have been many studies putting the political culture of the dynasty phenomenon in the Philippines and other countries under a microscope, attacking it from different angles.

Since analysts noted that the country has one of the highest rates in the world (France-Presse, 2022), it is imperative that aside from examining the presence of political dynasties and their destructive consequences, it is also proper to investigate whether their political positions in the national and local government result in excellent services that are beneficial to their constituents.

Utilizing the current issues regarding the pandemic and the long-standing academic discourse regarding political dynasties, this study sought to answer the following questions:

- (1) Were the first-time mayors from dynastic and non-dynastic families able to fully implement the following pandemic mitigation and management programs (curfew implementation; border control and security measures; delivery of food packs or *ayuda*; distribution of DSWD cash aid for qualified beneficiaries; operational restrictions on transactions of commercial businesses to control the onset of social gatherings; establishment of COVID-19 health facilities; and, vaccination programs)?
- (2) What are the programs implemented by first-time mayors from dynastic and non-dynastic families to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic?

- (3) Lastly, is there a significant difference in the pandemic management of first-time mayors from dynastic and non-dynastic families based on the rate of COVID-19-positive cases, recoveries, and deaths per quarter in their respective municipalities or cities?

The study aims to identify whether or not dynastic roots play an advantage in the effectiveness of mayors as administrative leaders in their mitigation policies and programs. Hence, it is safe to assume that the study results would give the public appropriate and adequate information regarding the assessment of individual performances of these mayors. Citizens would be able to have a solid grasp of making clear decisions in choosing compassionate, competent, effective, and efficient leaders during elections. In sum, as a resource material, the knowledge gained may uplift the awareness and understanding of the Filipino people regarding effective governance. Thus, it may fuel them to participate in public affairs actively.

In addition, with the booming number of aspirants who want to enter politics, this study could guide them in performing the duties and responsibilities of a rightful leader. It is challenging for first-time mayors from non-dynastic and dynastic families in the Philippines to handle this COVID-19 situation, such as implementing health protocols, strengthening security, and providing economic support or packages for business owners. This study will then evaluate the efforts of first-time mayors in working towards economic recession through their enacted ordinances and programs despite the mobility restrictions. Hopefully, the study findings will serve as a basis for shaping the Filipino people's voting preferences.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized the qualitative research approach. Purposive-criterion sampling was undertaken and filtered in mayors who met the requirements provided under the study's established criteria. To prevent inconsistencies and enable an equal number of samples in each group, a simple random sampling (fish bowl technique) was utilized.

The mayors comparatively assessed in the study were strictly "first-time mayors." The term was operationally defined as "individuals and public officials who have never been elected as a mayor before the 2019 local elections". The first-time mayors were then classified based on their family backgrounds. The term "dynastic family" was operationally defined for the study as "a family where at least two members in first-degree of consanguinity, including the first-time mayor, are occupying political offices

simultaneously.” Conversely, non-dynastic families are those who do not fall into the category above. In sum, there are 22 first-time mayors divided into two groups: 11 from the non-dynastic family group, as shown in Table 1, and the other 11 from the dynastic family group, shown in Table 2.

Table 1
Mayors and their respective city/ municipality (Non-Dynastic)

Mayors	Location
A	Cebu Province
B	City from NCR
C	Nueva Ecija
D	Part of CAR
E	MIMAROPA
F	Cebu Province
G	Camarines Sur
H	Part of CAR
I	Cavite Province
J	City from NCR
K	Pangasinan

Table 2
Mayors and their respective city/ municipality (Dynastic)

Mayors	Location
1	MIMAROPA
2	City from NCR
3	Basilan
4	Leyte
5	Ilocos Norte
6	Misamis
7	Island from the South
8	City from NCR
9	Ilocos Sur
10	Samar
11	City from NCR

The study utilized secondary data sources only. The conduct of personal interviews was deemed unfeasible because of the existing dangers the COVID-19 cases posed in the Philippines. Although on-call interviews were possible, this still needs to be done since the local executives were busy implementing their pandemic response programs. The researchers maximized the use of journals, news articles, and social media accounts of the selected mayors, as well as the Department of Health (DOH) legitimate online pages to acquire the number of COVID-19 cases (active cases, recoveries, and mortality rate) of their respective municipalities/cities. The data gathered for the study was limited to seven quarters, starting from March 15, 2020, to November 15, 2021.

The researchers incorporated the COVID-19 IATF Resolutions and guidelines accessible from the DOH website into the list of COVID-19 mitigation programs to be able to identify whether the mayors have entirely implemented the programs or not (*refer to Appendix I for a copy of the IATF Guidelines*). Official government websites and social media pages of the selected municipalities/cities were utilized, including published news articles on the internet, to determine innovative COVID-19 mitigation programs for first-time mayors. Furthermore, the Philippine COVID-19 Data Dashboard NRCP COVID-19 Cases Monitor (CCMon) was utilized to collect the quarterly number of positive cases, deaths, and recoveries from the respective areas of the selected first-time mayors.

Descriptive Analysis, Thematic Analysis, and Analysis of Variance were used in analyzing the data. Descriptive statistics, particularly percentages, were computed to determine the rates of COVID-19 positive cases, deaths, and recoveries. Thematic Analysis was likewise utilized to enumerate new and unique pandemic mitigation programs. Finally, ANOVA was used to treat the data statistically and to analyze significant differences, if any, in the rates of positive cases, death, and recoveries from localities under first-time mayors from non-dynastic and dynastic families.

While the study presented human factors, no direct in-person contact existed throughout the research period. As such, there is no need to ensure participants' voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, or data confidentiality since all information and data used came from publicly published available sources. The researchers were aware that regardless of the lack of direct in-person communication, a guarantee that any work or material obtained from other authors and used in the study or any part of it is appropriately acknowledged and referenced using the correct referencing or citation method. Furthermore, during the investigation, the researchers maintained neutrality and objectivity, regardless of their political beliefs, throughout the research process.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

All mayors from both groups could fully implement the IATF Omnibus Guidelines on enacting community quarantine protocols and mitigation programs in the Philippines as enumerated earlier. The guidelines provided by the national government required them to adapt rapidly to a changing environment and implement new policy approaches to comply with the increasing demands of the situation (Presto, 2020).

The IATF provided a direction on how LGUs can respond to crises such as this pandemic which requires clarity on who should do what, who must control the funds, and who is intended to make critical decisions. Generally, the urgency of their response to implementing the guidelines will mirror their leadership, drastically affecting the citizens' welfare, safety, health, and wellness (Kabagani, 2021); hence immediate action from the mayors was observed. Table 3 enumerates other projects implemented by first-time mayors which are not stated in the IATF guidelines.

Table 3

Projects Implemented by First-time Mayors (Non-dynastic) that are not stated in the IATF guidelines

Mayors	Programs
MAYOR A	Targeted and Strategized Community Mass Testing and Libreng Swab Testing
MAYOR B	<i>Oplan Wisik</i> (Misting Operations); City Response Plan: CODE CoVid-19 (COntain and DElay); Financial Assistance for All Employees and Job Order Workers of the City Government; Suspension of Rental Payment for Market Vendors and Stall Owners; Masks for the Markets; Liquor Ban; 189 E-Trikes; Shelter for Street Dwellers; Ordinance 8618 (<i>Bawal ang Overpricing</i>); City Amelioration Crisis Assistance Fund (CACAF); <i>Kadiwa</i> Rolling Store; Mass Testing; <i>Pandatoda</i> ; Partnership with GRAB PH to Hire 2000 Displaced Tricycle, Motorcycle Riders; Distribution of Learning Devices to the Division of City Schools (DepEd Manila); Cash Incentives for <i>Barangays</i> with Zero New CoVid-19 Cases from December to January; and, COVID-19 Senior Supplemental Kit: <i>Alalay sa Buhay</i>
MAYOR C	Liquor Ban; <i>Nanay Bayanihan 2020: "Masustansiyang Pagkain Laban sa Covid-19"</i> ; LED Wall Truck
MAYOR D	Liquor Ban; and Recovery and Resiliency Plan (RRP)
MAYOR E	<i>Libreng Sakay Para sa mga Puerto Galerans</i> ; Rapid Mass Screening Test; Setting up of Computer Laboratory of Mindoro State College of Agriculture and Technology; Free Philhealth Membership Card
MAYOR F	Trace. Test. Isolate. Treat; and <i>Barangay</i> -Based Entrepreneurial Mentoring Program
MAYOR G	Loitering and Liquor Ban; Covid -19 Oplan Sita: Violation Apprehension; Free transportation and accommodation; Business Stimulus Program; Community Employment Program; eSalvar Contract Tracing; and, <i>Tabang Tugang</i> Program
MAYOR H	Contact tracing and detection practices
MAYOR I	Sharing Table, and RAK out of the box
MAYOR J	Contact Tracing; Disinfecting Activity; Ordinance No. 7 Series of 2020: Anti-Panic Buying and Anti-Hoarding Ordinance of Pasig City; <i>#LibrengSakay</i> ; <i>#LibrengHatid</i> ; Pasig Bike Share; Community Kitchen for Pasig City Frontliners; Mobile <i>Palengke</i> ; Financial Assistance for Public Transport Drivers Affected of Community Quarantine; COVID-Related Death (Cremation); Mass Testing; Food Coupon Distribution; Pasig City Supplemental SAP; Barangay Coding; Regularization of Employees; TAPAT: <i>Tulong at Pampuhunang Ayuda para sa Taga-Pasig</i> (TAPAT) Loan Program; Installation of Bike Racks; Wifi Center; Bike Loan Program; Tablets and Laptops for Public School Students and Teachers; Early Childhood Care and Development Kits; <i>Malusog na Batang</i> Pasigueño; and Universal Health Care and Telemedicine Program
MAYOR K	Daily Disinfection; Free Transportation; Temporary Pharmacy or Drug Store in Sison Public Market; Mini Grocery in Sison Public Market; and TUPAD/ <i>Tulong Panghanapbuhay</i> Program

Among the unique covid-related projects implemented by non-dynastic mayors are **programs for the labor sector** to prevent the sector from collapsing, as well as to downsize labor fragility. Three localities were found to have initiated job employment opportunities while two types of labor assistance were provided by four first-time mayors. Specifically for a City in the National Capital Region, Mayor J strengthened the implementation of employee regularization while another City Executive (Mayor B) enabled the distribution of face shields to stall owners and vendors in public markets to save them from infection while serving their communities.

The study found seven (7) types of **social service-related programs** implemented by some mayors, examples of which were feeding as well as assistance-extension programs. Worth highlighting was a feeding program for lactating mothers in a municipality in Nueva Ecija. Likewise, to supplement the giving of goods in his area, a Mayor in Cavite (Mayor I), further implemented RAK Out of the Box which provided “fun” gifts for children in their municipality. Subsequently, to regulate the availability of goods and prevent panic among their constituents, two (2) mayors were found to have enacted City Ordinances to combat panic buying and hoarding goods amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. These Ordinances carried with them appropriate guidelines and penalties for violations.

Aside from the goods and subsidies given by the national government, two mayors initiated and provided additional city financial assistance in their localities. Last on the list of other social services conducted was Mayor J’s free cremation for all covid-related deaths within their City.

Mayor C was found to have been the only one to have **programs for free seminars related to livelihood projects, economics, and business-related endeavors**, one of which was called the Barangay-Based Entrepreneurial Mentoring Program (BBEMP) created to help micro, small and medium companies or MSMEs. Temporary shelters and adequate food were also provided to street dwellers through the efforts of Mayor B. To cut the influx of people in various public markets and to provide easy access to buyers, three mayors launched roving and temporary stores to make products available to citizens.

The study found that aside from the mitigation programs to stop the spread of the virus, there were mayors that **allocated funds for health-related projects** for testing, machinery, and infected families. Mayor B issued a cash-incentive program that served as awards for barangays with zero new covid-19 cases from December to January to motivate the barangays to actively fight and maximize their efforts to combat COVID.

To ensure discipline, as well as peace and order at the height of the pandemic, some mayors also implemented **programs to maintain peace and stability**. Three (3) non-dynastic mayors enforced liquor bans in their respective areas to limit and prevent

group transmission of the virus. Mayor D from the Cordillera Administrative Region, also implemented the Covid-19 Oplan *Sita*: Violators were apprehended by patrolling police within various *Barangays* within the municipality to ensure adherence to mandated health protocols. Mayor J enacted the Barangay Coding scheme to control the influx of people going to the market by allowing only residents of ten *Barangays* per day.

Programs for the education sector were implemented to address the abrupt shift from school to home learning. Two (2) mayors provided free Wi-Fi areas for education purposes. Two mayors likewise distributed learning materials to students. Commendable was the move of Mayor E who enabled the set-up of a computer laboratory in their area. Similarly, Mayor C pursued the construction of an LED Wall Truck to aid in child-development care.

Specifically for **transportation projects**, five (5) mayors were found to have initiated transit efforts that included free transportation and accommodation programs. Mayor J conducted the installation of Bike Racks and implemented a Bike Share and the Bike Loan Program to promote the use and accessibility of bikes as primary means of transportation.

The implementation of any type of activity requires the conduct and maintenance of **health-sanitation programs** to ensure that citizens are safe. The study found that three (3) mayors have conducted regular cleaning and disinfection programs that were focused on establishments, including both public and common areas.

Lastly, three (3) mayors conducted similar **contact tracing programs**. In terms of free and accessible mass testing, the study found that four (4) mayors conducted various mass testing. Furthermore, the study found that further health assistance was provided through Mayor E’s program of free Philhealth Membership Cards and Mayor J’s Universal Health Care and Telemedicine Program.

Table 4

Projects Implemented by First-time Mayors (Dynastic group) that are not stated in the IATF guidelines

Mayors	Programs
MAYOR 1	Liquor Ban; Bloodletting Activity for Covid Patients; Goods Drop-off Station Project; and Reams of Bond Paper Project
MAYOR 2	Systematic Mass Approach to Responsible Testing; Free Shuttle; Service Program; Telemedicine Program; and Taguig Amelioration Program
MAYOR 3	Clean Hands Hours Program; Anti-Hoarding and Anti-Panic Buying Ordinance; AGRI-Isabela Distribution of Seedlings; <i>Palengke</i> on Tour Project; Isabela City TelEdukasyon; and Isabela City Free Special Delivery Service

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Mayors	Programs
MAYOR 4	<i>Pangkabuhayan sa Pagbangon at Ginhawa</i> ; Disinfection Program; and Distribution of Photocopier Machines to Central Schools and High Schools
MAYOR 5	Disinfection Program; Laoag Shuttle Service; Liquor Ban; Free RT-PCR Covid Testing
MAYOR 6	Hazard and 3-month Financial Allowances, plus 10kg of rice for Barangay Health Workers; Financial Assistance and Risk Allowances for City Health Office and SM Lao Memorial Hospital Medical Frontliners; Financial Assistance for Seaport Porters; Birth to Death Assistance Program; Asenso Ozamiz Market on Wheels; Asenso Ozamiz Local Amelioration Program; and Distribution and granting of 4,283 Brand New Tablets Public Senior High School students
MAYOR 7	LGU Mambajao Basic Decontamination Areas in Public Market; Anti-Hoarding and Anti-Panic Buying Ordinance (MO No. 2020-05); Clean Camiguin QR Code System; Distribution of 2,150 Bond Paper Reams to Public Elementary and Secondary Schools; and LGU Mambajao Quick Response (QR) ID system
MAYOR 8	Mobile <i>Palengke</i> ; <i>Kandili ng Kalusugan</i> ; Disinfection Program; and Liquor Ban
MAYOR 9	Disinfection Program; and Liquor Ban
MAYOR 10	Liquor Ban; <i>Libre Sakay Operation</i> ; “ <i>Ayuda para han mga Napasada</i> ” (Assistance for Public Utility Drivers); and Catbalogan E-Market
MAYOR 11	Liquor Ban; Free Swab Testing; and Free Medicine Program

Among the topmost, different, unique, and new COVID-related programs implemented by first-time mayors with dynastic family backgrounds were restrictions and regulations for liquor consumption and sales and programs for disinfection and cleanliness. In response to the growing concern regarding the spread of Covid-19 through social gatherings, six (6) local executives signed and implemented ordinances imposing liquor bans in their respective municipalities and cities. These ordinances are similar to the programs implemented by mayors from non-dynastic families to maintain peace and order.

For community disinfection and cleanliness, classified under **health and sanitation projects**, six (6) mayors were found to have implemented programs like misting and spraying substances believed to have antiviral efficacy. For their localities, Mayor #7 approached the disinfection campaign by installing DIY Basic Decontamination Units at the entrances of the public market in their municipality. At the same time, Mayor #3 of a City in the North of the Philippines implemented the Clean Hands Hour Program. The program required business owners and operators to install hand-washing stations in their respective establishments and institute a city-wide washing of hands campaign at the sound of the siren at specified hours of the day.

Some mayors also implemented **programs for the education sector**, which was greatly affected by the pandemic due to the transition from face-to-face classes to flexible online and modular learning modalities. Among the first-time mayors from dynastic

families, Mayor #1 and Mayor #7 initiated a donation program of bond paper reams in the different public schools in their municipalities to be utilized by the teachers to reproduce the learning modules and packets for the students. Mayor #4 also spearheaded the distribution of photocopier machines to central schools and high schools in a municipality in Leyte to reproduce learning materials. Mayor #6, on the other hand, donated brand-new tablets intended for use by SHS students in all public high schools in their city. Further, Mayor #3 initiated the City TelEdukasyon, a program facilitating the renting of four cable channels from Cable Home CATV Network for broadcasting educational materials dedicated primarily to catering the lessons for students under the K-12 program.

Some mayors from dynastic families also implemented **programs for the labor sector**, an example of these is Mayor #6's program related to the cancellation of flights and sea trips to suppress the infection of the covid-19 virus. Many airport and seaport employees were laid off, including porters, who were seen as the most affected group. To support and lessen the financial burden of the laid-off workers, Mayor #6 granted financial assistance and ten (10) kilograms of rice for each beneficiary.

Incidentally, the researchers discovered that only Mayor #6 among the dynastic mayors had introduced **programs for medical front-line workers**. The Mayor spearheaded the provision of financial support and risk allowances to the staff of the City Health Office and SM Lao Memorial Hospital. The Mayor also gave out three-month allowances and in-kind bonuses to Barangay Health Workers.

For the **business sector programs** under his jurisdiction, Mayor #4 implemented the *Pangkabuhayan sa Pagbangon at Ginhawa*, a program in partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), distributed livelihood kits and in-kind start-up capital for local small businesses. In line with the concerns of spreading infections in public areas, five (5) dynastic mayors implemented programs associated with roving stores and purchasing through delivery services. At the same time, three (3) mayors implemented their branding of purchase delivery services through online or direct phone messaging. Similar to the issues concerning markets and grocery stores, two (2) mayors from the dynastic group signed ordinances prohibiting and restricting panic buying and hoarding activities in the markets and grocery stores within their jurisdictions.

To mitigate the effects of the pandemic on the economy and financial stability of the **workers in the transport sector**, two (2) local government units implemented their local version of amelioration and financial assistance programs. Similarly, Mayor #10 implemented a cash assistance program for Public Utility Vehicle drivers to alleviate their financial burdens caused by the imposition of restrictions on transportation.

For the **agricultural sector programs**, it was only Mayor #3 who implemented a unique program. The AGRI-Isabela program was designed to encourage the residents to cultivate their lands for backyard farming and gardening by distributing seedlings and plants to mitigate the effects of food shortage brought about by pandemic restrictions.

Five (5) mayors in this group implemented **healthcare and medical sector programs**. Mayor #8 and Mayor #2 implemented free medical consultations through telephone and online calls and mobile messaging. They likewise provided free medicines delivered through door-to-door services. Similarly, Mayor #11 of a City in the NCR implemented a free medicine program through cash assistance. Mayor #1 conducted a bloodletting program for COVID-related patients. At the same time, Mayor #6 re-calibrated his pre-pandemic Birth to Death Assistance Program to help residents hospitalized during the pandemic by granting financial assistance for hospital bills to be paid directly to the hospitals concerned.

To progressively strengthen the COVID-19 response of their local government units, three (3) mayors implemented **comprehensive measures for Mass Testing**. Mayor #7, for instance, went beyond the traditional means of contact tracing by implementing a Quick Response (Q.R.) I.D. system for his constituents.

Three (3) mayors implemented **free transportation** undertakings in keeping with the challenges of travel restrictions. Mayor #2, #5, and #10 implemented free shuttle and transportation services for workers, medical front liners, other essential labor personnel, and authorized persons outside their residences in their respective cities and municipalities.

Comparing the two (2) groups as clusters of mayors, standard programs implemented aside from those under the IATF guidelines were the following: programs for the labor sector, peace and stability, education, transportation sector, and health and sanitation projects. Unique for the non-dynastic cluster are the social-service-related programs, programs for free seminars for livelihood projects, and on contact-tracing.

Unique for the cluster of dynastic mayors, on the other hand, are the following: a program for the agricultural sector and that for medical front-liner volunteers.

In enumerating the additional programs per mayor, we can observe from Tables 3 and 4 that in their specific clusters (non-dynastic and dynastic), there were mayors with very minimal projects, while there were those with projects in almost all sectors of their localities. Hence, belonging to a non-dynastic or dynastic family orientation does

not guarantee that a first-time mayor will perform better than the other. We can say, therefore, that it is individual leadership and resourcefulness, including the availability of local funds— that matter most if these local chief executives can provide for their constituents.

In line with the data from the Philippine COVID-19 Data Dashboard/ NRCF COVID-19 Cases Monitor (CCMon), Figures 1 and 2 show the rates of positive cases from areas under non-dynastic and dynastic mayors from the 1st to the 7th quarter after the onset of the pandemic (March 15, 2020, to November 15, 2021).

Figure 1

Rate of COVID Positive Cases from Municipalities/cities under Non-Dynastic Mayors

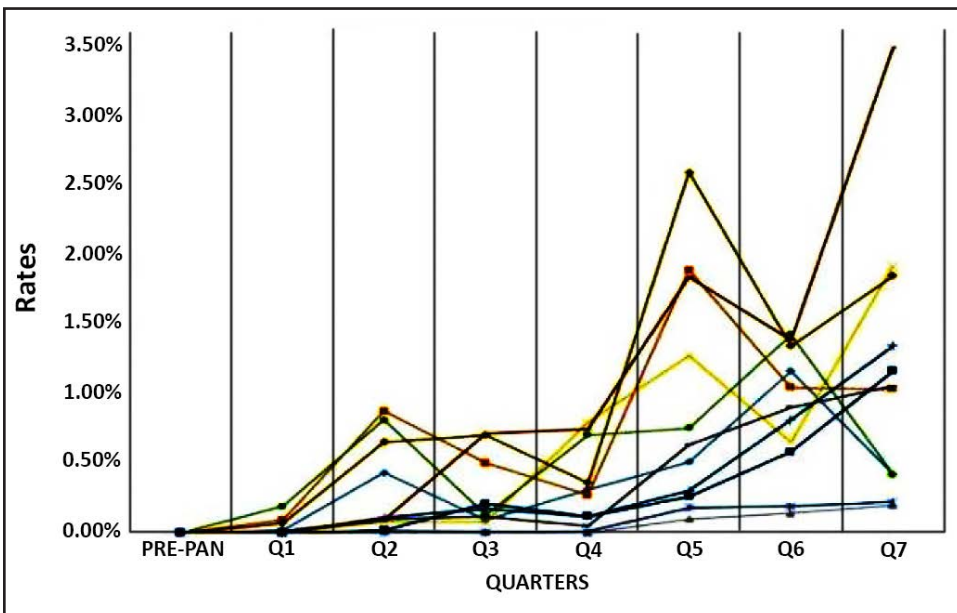
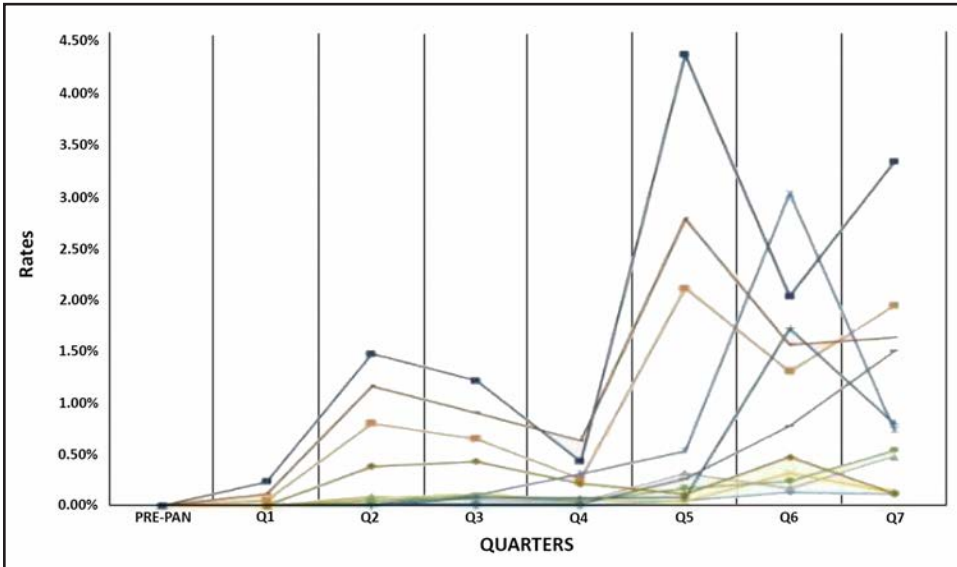


Figure 2

Rate of COVID Positive Cases from Municipalities/ Cities under Dynastic mayors



In the dynastic group, eight (8) localities did not have positive cases in the first quarter when the COVID-19 transmission started in the Philippines. A City from the NCR, however, logged the highest positive rate with 0.23% in this quarter. In the second quarter, only two (2) municipalities were consistent with no positive cases recorded, while the rest of the localities recorded an increase in positive cases (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2020).

A Part of MIMAROPA still had no positive case in the third and fourth quarters. Another province in MIMAROPA and Ilocos Norte, on the other hand, logged lower positive rates in the fourth quarter compared to the third quarter. One possible explanation for the results was the warning provided by the Department of Health (DOH) to the LGUs to impose more stringent COVID-19 protocols and enforce granular lockdowns in their municipalities in preparation for the holidays. A City from the NCR however, still logged the highest positive cases in the fifth quarter with 4.37%. According to Haseltine (2021), the presence of the B.1.1.28.3, another COVID-19 variant, which was reportedly first detected during this quarter, along with the resurgence of cases of SARS-CoV-2 resulted in an extraordinary increase in COVID-19 cases in areas like the National Capital Region.

In the sixth quarter (June -August 2021), a City from Ilocos Norte had a sudden surge of COVID-19 cases with 3.03%, and an island from the South with 1.72%. Cities from the NCR continued to record higher positive cases in the seventh quarter. A possible reason could be the onset of the rainy season in the country and the detection of the

Delta variant in the Philippines. The increase in the number of testing facilities around the country might also contributory to the rise of positive cases (Philippines Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Situation Report #79, 21 June 2021).

For non-dynastic mayors, five (5) localities did not register any positive cases in the first quarter. Alternately, a City from Cebu province logged the highest rate this quarter with 0.19%. For the second quarter, all the localities logged higher rates compared to the first quarter. For the third and fourth quarters, the localities of non-dynastic mayors continue to record low positive rates, with less than 1% of their total population infected by COVID-19. Noticeably, in the fifth quarter, all the localities of non-dynastic mayors logged higher rates of COVID-19 positive cases compared to the fourth quarter with a City from NCR reporting a high positive rate of 2.58%. This quarter, the DOH blamed the increase in COVID-19 cases on poor public compliance with prevention measures and new and more infectious COVID-19 variants in the country.

A place from the Cordillera recorded the highest positive rate out of all quarters in the seventh quarter with 3.47%. The results can be attributed to the public’s level of complacency during this quarter. Reportedly, a complacent attitude was shown amidst the distribution of vaccines in the Philippines (Thu, 2021). On the other hand, Figures 3 and 4 below show the rate of the recoveries for the COVID-19 cases in the different municipalities and cities led by first-time Mayors from non-dynastic and dynastic families.

Figure 3
Rate of COVID Recovered Cases (Non-Dynastic)

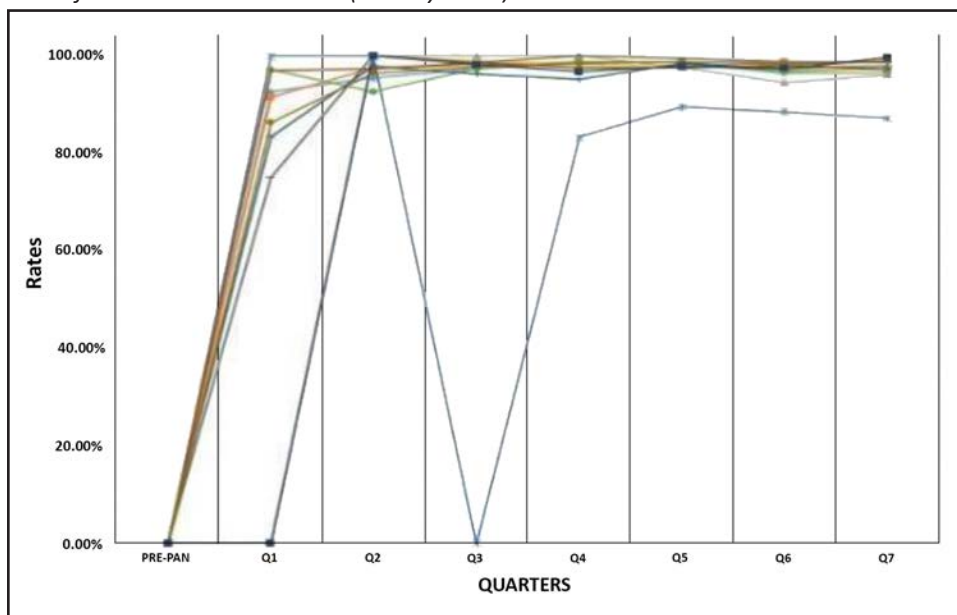
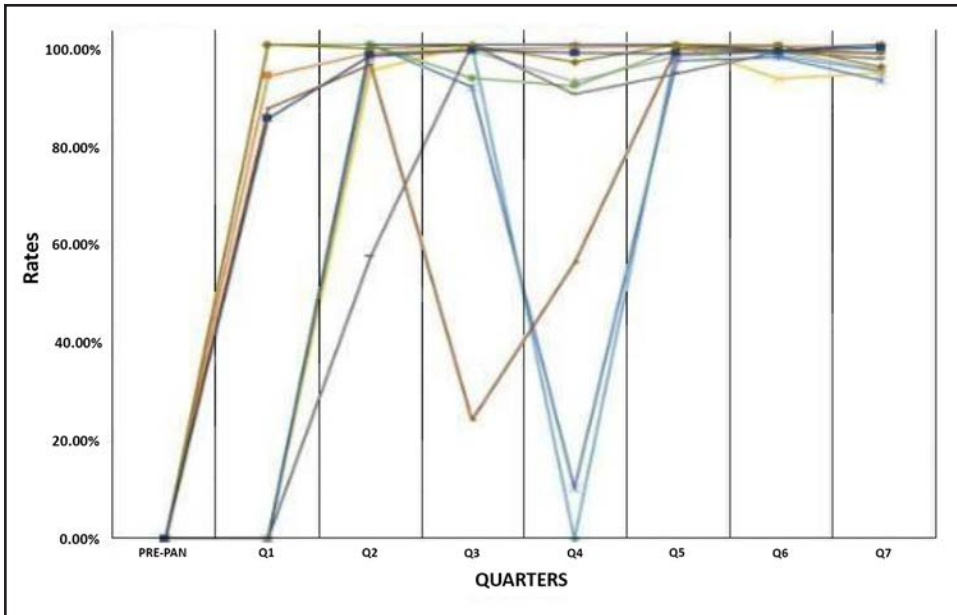


Figure 4

Rate of COVID-19 Recovered Cases (Dynastic)



No case of recovery was recorded in all localities led by the mayors (from non-dynastic and dynastic families) for the first quarter included in the study (March 15-May15, 2020).

For the second quarter, all municipalities and cities in the non-dynastic and dynastic category yielded recovery rates of at least 90% of those affected, except for a municipality in Ilocos Sur, which recorded only a 57.14% recovery rate.

Similarly, all LGUs from the non-dynastic category recorded recovery rates of at least 95% for the third quarter, except for the municipality that is part of MIMAROPA, which had no positive case. As a result, no recovery case was recorded. On the other hand, all the cities and municipalities from the dynastic category recorded recovery rates of at least 90%, except a particular City in NCR, which only had 23.88% of recoveries.

All municipalities and cities in the non-dynastic and dynastic categories recorded recovery rates of at least 95% in the fourth quarter, except for two (2) cities. A City from the NCR recorded a 55.81% recovery rate, while a City from Ilocos Norte recorded only 10.23%.

In the fifth quarter, the researchers observed that all municipalities and cities from dynastic and non-dynastic categories recorded recovery rates of at least 90%, except for the municipality, which is part of MIMAROPA, yielding a recovery rate of 89.47%.

Similarly, for the sixth and seventh quarters, all LGUs from both dynastic and non-dynastic categories recorded individual recovery rates of not lower than 90% except for a municipality in MIMAROPA which recorded an 88.46% recovery rate in the sixth quarter and an 87.10% recovery rate for the seventh quarter.

From these findings, the researchers inferred that some factors may have affected the recovery rates of COVID-19 cases in the different municipalities and cities. In the first quarter, we have to note that some LGUs still had COVID-positive cases as the transmission had yet to reach some areas in the Philippines. As a result, and as mentioned above, these areas did not register any recovered cases. Remarkably, compared to the earlier quarters, the municipalities and cities maintained relatively higher recovery rates in the latter months of May 2021 to November 2021.

The same can be attributed to the different programs that the LGUs and the mayors implemented, such as the progressive efforts of vaccinations, stricter quarantine protocols, and the establishment of additional quarantine facilities and COVID-designated medical centers. Furthermore, on November 18, 2021, DOH reported that about 29.71% of the population in the Philippines is fully vaccinated (Department of Health, 2021), which is why the recovery rate in the seventh quarter was relatively high. Lastly, the data on death rates are presented in Figures 5 and 6 in the next section:

Figure 5
Rate of COVID-19 Death Cases (Non-Dynastic)

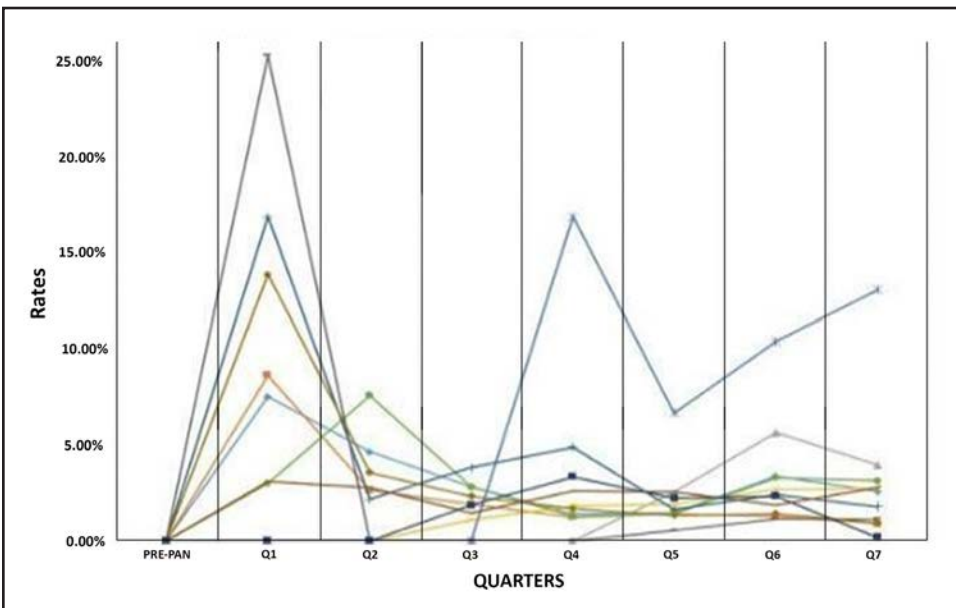
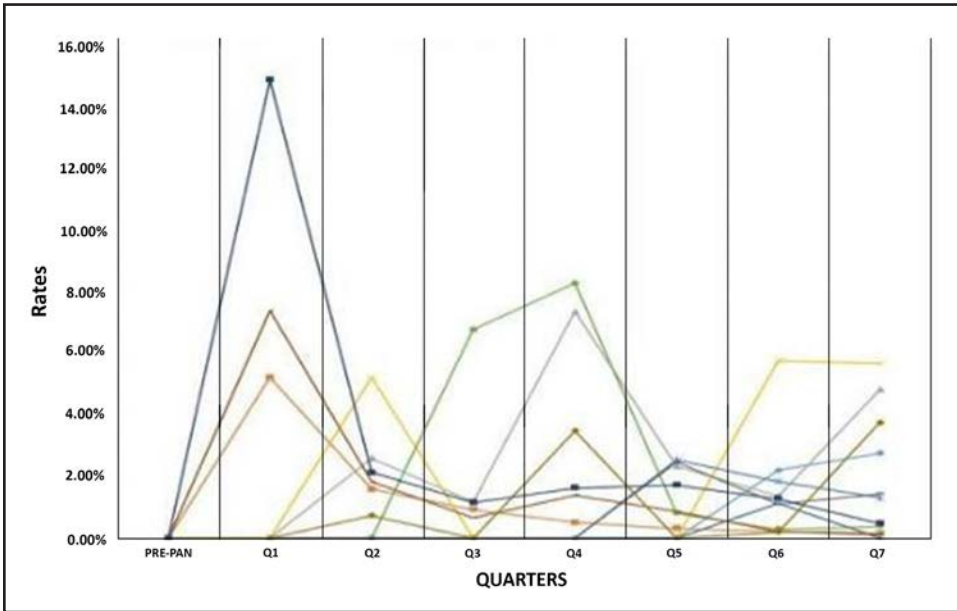


Figure 6

Rate of COVID-19 Death Cases (Dynastic)



For the first quarter, a municipality from Cavite province recorded a 25% death rate, the highest among those under the non-dynastic category. On the other hand, a City from the NCR recorded a 14.97% death rate, the highest among those in the dynastic category. For the second quarter, a 7.48% death rate from a City in Cebu was the highest recorded rate among the non-dynastic category. Meanwhile, a municipality from Leyte recorded a 5.26% death rate, the highest among the dynastic mayors.

For the third quarter, a City from Camarines Sur showed a 3.75% death rate, the highest among the non-dynastic category. In comparison, a City from Misamis Occidental revealed a 6.82% death rate, the highest among the dynastic mayors. A place from MIMAROPA now ranks the highest in death rates with recorded data of 16.67% death rate in the non-dynastic level. The City of Misamis had the highest death rate in the part of a dynastic category which accounts for an 8.33% morbidity.

For the fifth quarter, a Municipality from MIMAROPA recorded the highest death rate which accounts for 6.58%. In the dynastic group, the highest rate of deaths was recorded in Ilocos Norte, with 2.56%. Furthermore, for the sixth quarter, a place from MIMAROPA again displayed the highest rate of deaths, corresponding to 10.26% under the non-dynastic category. Consequently, the Municipality of Leyte recorded the highest death rate for the dynastic category, with 5.81%. A place from MIMAROPA repeatedly

records again the highest death rate for the seventh quarter, with 12.90%. For the dynastic group, a municipality from Leyte yet again recorded the highest rate of deaths for the seventh quarter, at 5.71%

From double-digit percentage death rates in the first quarter, mayors from the two (2) clusters could bring the count to less than 10% in the second quarter. There was also a sudden increase in the 4th quarter, but this may be attributed to the fact that there was a *“balik-probinsya”* or reverse migration program implemented simultaneously. At the end of May 2020, for example, one hundred eleven (112) individuals returned to Leyte (Ramos, 2022). The holiday season during this quarter had increased the frequency of gatherings of families and friends, correspondingly increasing the rate of infection that led to death. A municipality from MIMAROPA had the highest death rate because the area opened its doors to foreign tourists earlier than the rest (DOT, 2021).

The Analysis of Variance conducted showed no significant difference between the dynastic and non-dynastic mayors regarding the rate of Covid-19 positive cases, recoveries, and deaths for each quarter under the three (3) categories in their respective localities.

From the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that at this point, there is no substantial evidence that the dynastic familial background of the local chief executive’s mitigation efforts affects the increase or decrease in COVID-19 cases in their respective municipalities and cities. According to the gathered data, cities from dynastic and non-dynastic categories located primarily in the National Capital Region had reported confirmed cases earlier than the municipalities and cities located in the Mindanao area, affecting the reporting efficiency. While these findings and observations do not allow us to conclude and establish scientific and statistical causality since no statistical treatment was done—the researchers believe these patterns deserve further attention in future research undertakings.

Likewise, at the core and the forefront in these trying times, the primary goal of the local executives is to proactively respond to the perilous situation and hold accountability for their position. With the implementation of the programs stipulated in the guidelines of the IATF, the researchers found out that all mayors, regardless of their familial background, implemented all the programs enumerated explicitly in these guidelines issued by the IATF. From these findings, the researchers inferred that in times of a pandemic or disaster response, especially when there are guidelines from the national government, mayors from dynastic and non-dynastic families respond relatively well. This observation is congruent with the Contingency Theory of Leadership, as proposed by Fred Edward Fiedler in his landmark 1964 article, “A Contingency Model of Leadership Effectiveness” (Virkus, 2009). The theory explains that leaders change their leadership

style according to the situation they are facing or put through (Gordon, 2021). Moreover, Schoech (2006) asserted that the existence of one thing is affected by the presence of another phenomenon. This is sometimes known as the “it all depends” theory, as the management changes depending on the moving circumstances.

The difference in the rates of recoveries and deaths can be attributed to the availability of vaccines, especially in areas with high COVID-19 cases. It can be noted that vaccines arrived in the country during the fifth quarter of this study. The DOH Press Release issued on March 29, 2021, reported that the first tranche of COVID-19 vaccines procured by the government had arrived in the country.

The LGUs have been responsive in assuring vaccine delivery and administering them to their constituents. First-time mayors from non-dynastic families were apt to implement and conduct vaccination drives to counter the rising number of cases. Another reason that can be associated with the difference between the two groups is the willingness of the people at certain localities to get vaccinated because, in certain areas, several people did not want to get vaccinated. This recalcitrance to vaccination translated a higher number of COVID-19 cases and subsequently, higher death rates.

CONCLUSION

With all the results and findings presented, the researcher finally concludes that despite all the negative connotations associated with political dynasties as enumerated in the works of Setyaningrum & Saragih (2019), Mendoza et al. (2012), Tuselem & Pe-Aguirre (2013), and of George and Ponattu (2018), it is crucial to see beyond the negative stereotyped beliefs about political dynasties. In terms of electing public officials, it is advised that instead of having bias beyond reason against candidates from political dynasties, voters should focus on setting their preferences based on their personal track records, achievements, and qualifications. The study of Mendoza et al. (2022) further suggests that it is important to promote checks and balances among local government executives and officials for a more comprehensive and peaceful development in local governance, regardless of whether they are from political dynasties or otherwise. Local executives must remember that any perceived inability on their part in meeting the expectations set by their constituents may provoke a backlash which may result in shorter tenure in their present position. Hence, Mendoza et al. (2016) reiterate the importance of national government interventions for more efficient public service delivery.

Consequently, the results of this study can serve as a guide that the national government can use in its policy-making. By identifying preventive measures taken by the corresponding municipal/city administrators, the study’s results may provide practical measures to improve the public health situation in the country.

Given that the study included first-time mayors, two (2) possible terms are still available for them. The result is significant in foreseeing possible effects on their constituents' voting behavior and increasing the voters' social involvement through expressing their concerns and pursuing actions that could yield better policies/ordinances in the local framework. Studying the facets of pandemic programs promotes people's active participation in the local governing authority and puts pressure on the government to push for good governance and legislation.

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