

Governance Capacity Gaps among Fisherfolk Communities: A Training Needs Assessment for Public Administration in Sagay City, Philippines

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ABSTRACT:

This study examines the governance capacity gaps among fisherfolk communities in Sagay City, Philippines, with particular focus on their public administration and governance training needs within a decentralized governance context. Drawing on a quantitative descriptive design, data were collected from 488 members of fisherfolk associations using a validated survey instrument. The findings reveal a consistently high demand for capacity-building across key domains, including fiscal administration, legal literacy, participatory decision-making, and institutional linkages. Notably, no statistically significant differences were observed across demographic variables, indicating that governance-related capacity gaps are systemic and widely shared rather than group-specific.

The results further highlight a critical disconnect between policy awareness and compliance, suggesting that economic constraints and limited livelihood alternatives shape governance behavior more than knowledge deficits alone. Grounded in participatory governance and public service capacity perspectives, the study argues that effective interventions must move beyond knowledge transfer toward integrated, community-wide strategies that combine governance training with livelihood support.

By providing empirical evidence from a resource-dependent coastal setting, this study contributes to the growing discourse on inclusive governance by demonstrating that capacity-building efforts in marginalized communities are most effective when designed as collective, context-sensitive, and institutionally supported interventions. The findings offer practical insights for policymakers and local government units in developing adaptive extension programs that strengthen both governance participation and socio-economic resilience.

Keywords: Fisherfolk communities; Governance capacity; Public administration; Training needs assessment; Participatory governance; Coastal communities; Philippines

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Introduction

Fisherfolk communities play a critical role in sustaining marine ecosystems and supporting

local economies, particularly in coastal regions of developing countries such as the Philippines. Despite this contribution, they remain among the

most marginalized sectors, facing persistent constraints in policy literacy, institutional access, and socio-economic security. In many coastal settings, governance systems have not adequately translated into meaningful participation for fisherfolk, resulting in limited influence over policies that directly affect their livelihoods (Caldas et al., 2024). These conditions reflect broader structural inequalities in resource-dependent communities, where economic vulnerability and weak institutional linkages reinforce cycles of exclusion.

The decentralization of governance in the Philippines, institutionalized through the Local Government Code of 1991, was intended to empower local communities by devolving authority to local government units (LGUs). In practice, fisherfolk associations are formally recognized at both the city and provincial levels and are often invited to participate in local government forums and consultative meetings related to policy-making. However, the ability of these groups to engage meaningfully in such processes remains constrained. While participation is institutionally encouraged, many fisherfolk lack the necessary administrative, legal, and governance competencies to effectively articulate their concerns, interpret policy frameworks, or contribute to decision-making. This creates a critical gap between formal inclusion and actual participation, raising the question of how meaningful engagement can occur in the absence of adequate capacity.

From a theoretical perspective, participatory governance and public service capacity frameworks emphasize that effective governance is not solely dependent on institutional structures but also on the capabilities of citizens to engage with these systems (Osborne et al., 2013; Voorberg et al., 2015). In this regard, governance capacity is understood as a function of both institutional arrangements and the skills, knowledge, and agency of community members. For fisherfolk communities, limited exposure to formal administrative processes, legal frameworks, and fiscal management systems constrains their ability to participate meaningfully

in governance, thereby weakening both accountability and policy responsiveness.

These challenges are further compounded by socio-economic and contextual factors. High levels of poverty, livelihood insecurity, and geographic isolation often force fisherfolk to prioritize immediate survival over long-term governance engagement. Studies have shown that even when awareness of environmental regulations is relatively high, compliance remains inconsistent due to economic pressures and lack of viable alternatives (Salayo et al., 2022; Warren and Steenbergen, 2021). This suggests that governance participation is not merely a function of knowledge, but is deeply embedded in broader socio-economic realities.

Despite a growing body of literature on fisheries governance and coastal resource management, existing studies have largely focused on policy outcomes and environmental compliance, with limited attention to the governance capacity of fisherfolk at the community level. In particular, there remains a lack of empirical research that systematically assesses the training needs of fisherfolk in public administration and governance within decentralized systems. This gap is significant, as capacity-building interventions are often designed without a clear understanding of the specific competencies required at the grassroots level.

To address this gap, the present study examines the perceived public administration and governance training needs of fisherfolk communities in Sagay City, Philippines. Specifically, it aims to assess the level of socio-economic and governance-related needs, determine whether these needs vary across demographic groups, and develop an evidence-based extension service program to enhance governance capacity. By situating the analysis within a decentralized governance framework, the study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that governance capacity gaps in marginalized coastal communities are systemic rather than demographic, thereby supporting the need for inclusive, community-wide capacity-building strategies.

Review of Related Literature

Fisherfolk communities in developing countries continue to experience persistent structural challenges in governance participation, resource access, and socio-economic development. Despite their central role in sustaining marine ecosystems and local economies, they remain marginalized due to limited policy literacy and weak institutional integration. In the Philippine context, decentralization through the Local Government Code of 1991 was intended to enhance grassroots participation. However, recent studies indicate that fisherfolk participation remains constrained by bureaucratic complexity and limited administrative competencies, preventing them from effectively influencing governance processes (Gonzales et al., 2023; Torres and Lim, 2022).

A critical issue emerging from the literature is the gap between formal inclusion and actual participation. Fisherfolk associations are often recognized and invited to policy-making forums, yet their ability to contribute meaningfully remains limited. This reflects what Cornwall (2008) describes as “invited participation,” where stakeholders are formally included but lack the capacity to influence outcomes. Similarly, Mansuri and Rao (2013) argue that participatory development initiatives often fail when communities are not adequately capacitated, emphasizing that empowerment requires both institutional access and capability development.

The literature further highlights the importance of capacity-building in enabling effective governance participation. Fisherfolk communities frequently lack foundational competencies in areas such as fiscal administration, policy interpretation, and organizational management (Torres and Lim, 2022). Recent studies in fisheries governance emphasize that capacity-building interventions are critical in improving community resilience and enabling participation in decentralized governance systems (Caldas et al., 2024; Caballero and Lim, 2023). These findings suggest that governance effectiveness is closely tied to the

availability of structured and context-specific training interventions.

Moreover, governance participation cannot be separated from broader socio-economic conditions. High levels of poverty and livelihood insecurity significantly constrain the ability of fisherfolk to engage in governance processes. Even when awareness of environmental policies is relatively high, compliance remains inconsistent due to economic pressures and lack of viable alternatives (Salayo et al., 2022; Warren and Steenbergen, 2021). This indicates that governance engagement is shaped not only by knowledge but also by livelihood realities.

Recent developments in participatory and collaborative governance further emphasize the importance of co-production and multi-stakeholder engagement. Effective governance requires not only institutional mechanisms but also the active capability of communities to engage in policy processes (Voorberg et al., 2015; Osborne et al., 2013). Without adequate capacity, participatory structures risk becoming symbolic rather than transformative.

Despite these advances, a significant gap remains in the literature. Existing studies have largely focused on environmental outcomes, policy compliance, and macro-level governance frameworks, with limited attention to the specific public administration and governance training needs of fisherfolk at the community level. In particular, there is a lack of empirical research that systematically examines how governance capacity gaps manifest across communities and how these can inform the design of targeted extension programs.

In response to this gap, the present study contributes to the literature by providing an empirical assessment of governance-related training needs among fisherfolk in Sagay City, Philippines. By integrating socio-economic analysis with governance capacity assessment, the study demonstrates that capacity gaps are systemic and widely shared, reinforcing the need for inclusive and community-wide capacity-building strategies.

Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored on the Input–Process–Output (IPO) model to systematically examine the socio-economic needs and governance capacity of fisherfolk communities. The input component consists of the respondents' demographic profile, their socio-community economic needs, and their existing levels of public administration and governance skills. These variables provide the foundational data necessary to understand the conditions and capacity gaps within the fisherfolk population.

The process involves the application of a quantitative research approach using a researcher-developed and validated survey instrument. Data are collected, organized, and analyzed through appropriate statistical methods to determine patterns, relationships, and differences in the assessed needs and skills across demographic groups. This phase ensures that the findings are empirically grounded and reflective of the community's actual conditions.

The output of the study includes three key components. First, it generates an assessment of the level of socio-economic or community-economic needs of fisherfolk. Second, it determines the perceived level of public administration and governance skills training requirements among fisherfolk association members. Third, it culminates in the development of a public administration and governance extension service program in the form of a strategic action plan designed to address identified gaps and enhance community capacity.

Statement of the Problem/Objectives

In order to determine the precise training requirements for an efficient public administration and governance extension program, this study sought to evaluate the perceived level of financial and accounting skills among the fishermen in one city. This study specifically aimed to address the following goals:

1. To determine the profile of the fisherfolk association members in terms of their age, gender, current civil status, educational

attainment, nature of work, sources of income & average family monthly income.

2. To assess the level of socio-economic skills of the community in terms of community-economic needs

3. To assess the training requirement level of public administration and governance skills of the fisherfolk members

4. To determine the significant difference in the public administration and governance' skills perceived training requirement level when grouped according to demographic profile

5. To determine the significant difference in the assessed socio-economic needs of the community when grouped according to their demographic profile

Hypothesis

1. There's no significant difference in the public administration and governance' skills perceived training requirement level when grouped according to demographic profile

2. There's no significant difference in the assessed socio-economic needs of the community when grouped according to their demographic profile

Materials and Methods

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to systematically assess the socio-economic needs and governance capacity of fisherfolk communities in Sagay City. A quantitative approach was deemed appropriate as it allows for the collection of structured numerical data and the application of statistical techniques to identify patterns, relationships, and differences across variables. This design is particularly suitable for examining variations in perceived training needs and determining whether these differ across demographic groups.

The study adopted a descriptive-comparative approach, enabling the researchers to both describe the level of socio-economic and governance-related needs and test for significant differences when respondents are grouped

according to selected demographic variables. Statistical analyses, including measures of central tendency and inferential tests, were utilized to ensure objective interpretation of the data.

Research Instrument

The data for this study were collected using a structured and validated questionnaire designed to assess the socio-economic conditions and governance-related training needs of fisherfolk communities. The instrument was developed in alignment with the objectives of the study and informed by relevant literature on public administration, governance, and community development. It consisted of several sections that captured key variables necessary for analysis.

The first section gathered demographic information, including age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, nature of work, source of income, and average monthly family income. These variables were used to examine potential differences in perceived needs and training requirements across respondent groups. The second section focused on assessing the community-economic needs of fisherfolk, capturing data related to livelihood conditions, access to resources, and prevailing economic challenges within the community. The third section measured the perceived level of public administration and governance skills training requirements, covering areas such as fiscal administration, legal literacy, participatory decision-making, organizational management, and institutional engagement.

To ensure the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to content validation by a panel of eight experts composed of practitioners and academics in the fields of public administration, management, community development, and fisheries governance. The experts evaluated the instrument in terms of clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness. Based on their recommendations, revisions were made to improve item wording and ensure alignment with the intended constructs. In addition, selected items were translated and adapted into the local dialect to enhance respondent

understanding and ensure contextual appropriateness.

The reliability of the instrument was established through Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The Public Administration and Governance Skills Training Requirement Scale obtained an alpha value of 0.91, indicating excellent internal consistency, while the Community-Economic Needs Scale yielded an alpha value of 0.88, reflecting high reliability. These results confirm that the instrument consistently measures the intended constructs and is suitable for assessing the training needs and socio-economic conditions of fisherfolk communities.

Research Respondents

The respondents of the study consisted of 488 members of registered fisherfolk associations in the City of Sagay. A stratified purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure adequate representation across different community clusters. Specifically, twenty-five (25) identified fisherfolk associations from five coastal barangays served as the basis for stratification. Within each association, respondents were purposively selected based on their active membership and involvement in association activities and community affairs.

This sampling approach was appropriate given the study's focus on assessing governance-related training needs among organized fisherfolk groups, as these individuals are more likely to participate in local governance processes and community decision-making. The sample size was considered sufficient to support statistical analysis and provide reliable insights into the socio-economic conditions and governance capacity of the target population.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering process was conducted systematically in several stages to ensure accuracy, ethical compliance, and comprehensive coverage of respondents. Prior to data collection, the researchers secured the necessary permissions and clearances from relevant local government authorities and community leaders.

Potential respondents were then approached through their respective associations and were provided with a formal communication letter explaining the purpose, scope, and significance of the study. This process also served to obtain their informed consent and voluntary participation.

Data collection was carried out in multiple phases to ensure representation across all twenty-five (25) identified associations. The survey questionnaires were administered directly to respondents, with assistance provided when necessary to clarify items, particularly for those requiring translation into the local dialect.

After data collection, all completed questionnaires were carefully reviewed, coded, and encoded into a statistical software system. The dataset underwent verification and cleaning procedures to ensure accuracy, completeness, and consistency prior to analysis.

Data Analysis Procedure

The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques aligned with the objectives of the study. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were used to summarize the demographic profile of respondents and assess the levels of socio-economic needs and governance-related training requirements.

To determine whether significant differences existed across demographic groups, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed as the primary inferential statistical tool. ANOVA was selected due to its suitability in comparing mean differences among multiple groups. Prior to conducting the analysis, standard assumptions such as normality and homogeneity of variance were considered to ensure the validity of the results.

All statistical analyses were performed using statistical software, and the results were presented in a clear and organized manner through tables and narrative interpretation.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. Prior to participation, all respondents were provided with a written informed consent form outlining the purpose of the study, their rights as participants, and the voluntary nature of their involvement. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequence.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by ensuring that no personally identifiable information was disclosed in any part of the study. All data collected were used solely for research purposes and were handled in accordance with the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173).

To further ensure inclusivity and understanding, selected portions of the questionnaire and consent process were translated into the local dialect for respondents who had difficulty with the primary language of the instrument. Additionally, no form of coercion or undue influence was exerted on participants, and their responses were obtained freely and voluntarily. Upon completion of the study, all data will be securely stored and properly disposed of in accordance with ethical data management practices.

Results and Discussion

The following findings were derived from the stated research objectives:

Table I. Profile of the Respondents

Profile Variables	Frequency	Percent
Age		
Gen Z	25	5.1
Millennials	175	35.9

Gen X	176	36.1
Boomers	112	23.0
Sex		
Male	270	55.3
Female	218	44.7
Civil Status		
Single	63	12.9
Married	348	71.3
Separated	18	3.7
Widowed	30	6.1
Civil Partnership	29	5.9
Educational Attainment		
No Formal Schooling	46	9.4
Elementary Level	164	33.6
Elementary Graduate	90	18.4
High School Level	67	13.7
High School Graduate	90	18.4
Vocational Graduate	4	0.8
College Level	14	2.9
College Graduate	13	2.7
Nature of Work		
Temporary	349	71.5
Permanent	126	25.8
Contract	13	2.7
Source of Income		
Salaries	47	9.6
Self-Employed	337	69.1
Government Subsidy	19	3.9
Other Income	85	17.4
Average Monthly Family Income		
Below Php 10, 957 (Poor)	481	98.6
Php 10, 957 – Php 21, 194 (Low Income)	6	1.2
Php 21, 195 – Php 43, 828 (Lower Middle Class)	1	0.2
Total	488	100

The study surveyed 488 respondents, with Gen X (36.1%) and Millennials (35.9%) constituting the largest age groups, followed by Boomers (23.0%) and Gen Z (5.1%). The sex distribution showed a male majority (55.3%) compared to females (44.7%). Marital status data revealed that married individuals were the largest group (71.3%), while single (12.9%), separated (3.7%), widowed (6.1%), and civil partnership (5.9%) respondents were less represented.

Male respondents (55.3%) outnumbered females (44.7%), reflecting the traditionally male-dominated nature of fishing and related livelihood activities. Although women play significant roles in post-harvest processing, marketing, and household economic management, their participation in fisheries-related activities is often underrecognized. The observed gender distribution may therefore reflect prevailing social norms and the gendered division of labor within fishing communities.

Only 2.7% of respondents were college graduates, while 33.6% had only elementary-level education. This educational profile may constrain access to formal employment opportunities and limit the capacity of community members to adopt alternative livelihood strategies. Low educational attainment has been associated with restricted livelihood options and increased vulnerability among resource-dependent communities (Allison and Ellis, 2001). The findings suggest the need for interventions that

promote lifelong learning, skills development, and community-based capacity-building programs.

The predominance of temporary work (71.5%) and self-employment (69.1%) highlights the informal nature of the local economy. These findings are consistent with the characteristics of many small-scale fishing communities, where households depend on multiple and often unstable livelihood activities to sustain their daily needs (Allison and Ellis, 2001). Such employment arrangements typically offer limited social protection and increase susceptibility to economic shocks.

The finding that 98.6% of respondents live below the poverty line underscores the severity of economic deprivation within the community. Allison and Ellis (2001) emphasized that poverty among small-scale fisherfolk is often linked to structural constraints, including limited livelihood diversification opportunities, restricted access to resources, and inadequate institutional support. Similarly, Béné (2003) argued that poverty in fishing communities should be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by broader social, economic, and environmental factors rather than individual characteristics alone. The widespread prevalence of poverty among respondents highlights the urgent need for integrated interventions that strengthen livelihood resilience and improve socio-economic conditions.

Table II. Socio-economic needs in terms of community-economic needs

Needs	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Orientation to Community Trust Fund / Community-based Association to fund our association's needs	2.92	.979	Training is Minimally Needed
Partnership creation with Private Sector and other relevant industry sectors	2.18	1.171	Training is Highly Needed
Linkage establishment with Government & Non-Government/non-profit Organizations	2.74	1.102	Training is Minimally Needed
Utilization of benefits as a result of adoption of a particular practices and principles based on sustainability of our association	2.55	1.154	Training is Minimally Needed

Access to Concrete Infrastructure and Facilities for the Association	2.28	1.133	Training is Highly Needed
Utilized Community-related job opportunities: Fishing Business	2.37	1.166	Training is Highly Needed
Utilized Community-related job opportunities: Craftwork Business	2.05	1.085	Training is Highly Needed
Utilized Community-related job opportunities: Agricultural Business	2.24	1.070	Training is Highly Needed
Job Opportunities availed born out from the Association	2.37	1.137	Training is Highly Needed
As a Whole	2.42	.804	Training is Highly Needed

The results indicate that fisherfolk communities identified partnership creation with the private sector ($M = 2.18$) and access to concrete infrastructure ($M = 2.28$) as areas where training is highly needed. These findings suggest a critical gap in formal economic linkages and physical resources necessary for sustainable livelihoods.

The strong demand for private-sector collaboration may reflect the limited integration of fisherfolk communities into broader economic networks, restricting their access to markets, technologies, and livelihood opportunities. Caldas et al. (2024) emphasized that fisherfolk organizations often face structural barriers that constrain their effective participation in fisheries value chains and limit their contributions to local economic development. Addressing these barriers requires strengthening partnerships and enhancing the capacity of fisherfolk to engage with external stakeholders. Furthermore, Ansell and Gash (2008) argued that collaborative governance depends on the development of trust, shared understanding, and institutional arrangements that facilitate stakeholder cooperation. Strengthening partnerships between fisherfolk communities, the private sector, and government institutions may therefore improve access to resources and enhance livelihood opportunities.

Similarly, the need for infrastructure highlights deficiencies in physical facilities necessary to support fisheries-related enterprises. Inadequate

infrastructure may limit opportunities for product processing, storage, and transportation, thereby constraining the economic potential of fisherfolk communities. Improving these conditions is essential to facilitate value addition and strengthen participation in local value chains (Caldas et al., 2024).

Training was deemed highly needed for fishing businesses ($M = 2.37$), craftwork ($M = 2.05$), and agricultural businesses ($M = 2.24$), indicating a pressing need to diversify income sources and enhance livelihood skills. Allison and Ellis (2001) emphasized that livelihood diversification is a critical strategy for reducing vulnerability among small-scale fishing households, particularly in contexts characterized by uncertainty and limited economic opportunities. Reliance on a narrow range of livelihood activities may increase susceptibility to environmental and economic shocks. Consequently, strengthening skills in complementary sectors such as craftwork and agriculture may enhance resilience and improve household well-being. The relatively lower ratings for craftwork and agriculture suggest untapped opportunities for supplementary income generation that could reduce dependence on fishing as the sole source of livelihood.

The utilization of sustainable practices scored moderately ($M = 2.55$), while linkages with government and non-government organizations ($M = 2.74$) and community trust funds ($M = 2.92$) were rated as minimally needed, revealing

gaps in institutional support and sustainability awareness. The moderate score for sustainable practices suggests the need to strengthen community understanding of long-term resource stewardship and adaptive management. Berkes (2009) highlighted the importance of social learning, knowledge sharing, and community participation in fostering effective co-management and sustainable resource use. Integrating sustainability principles into training initiatives may therefore contribute to the long-term viability of fisheries and coastal ecosystems.

The relatively low priority assigned to institutional linkages may indicate limited

awareness of the benefits of external partnerships or a preference for community-based approaches to problem-solving. Cornwall (2008) argued that meaningful participation requires moving beyond symbolic involvement toward genuine empowerment and engagement in decision-making processes. Likewise, Voorberg et al. (2015) emphasized that effective co-production depends on active collaboration among stakeholders and the recognition of citizens as partners in public service delivery. Strengthening institutional relationships through participatory and transparent approaches may therefore enhance trust and encourage greater community engagement in development initiatives.

Table III. Public Administration and Governance Perceived Skills Training Requirement Level

Needs	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Strong community awareness of micro-enterprise policies	2.33	1.090	Highly Needed
Moderate familiarity with Local Government Code provisions	2.17	1.036	Highly Needed
Basic understanding of government structure exists	2.00	1.011	Highly Needed
Partial awareness of public fund management	1.97	1.022	Highly Needed
Recognized but limited fiscal administration knowledge	1.95	.976	Highly Needed
Varied awareness of development plans across levels	1.97	.964	Highly Needed
General knowledge of illegal fishing prohibitions	2.16	1.059	Highly Needed
Decentralization improves local governance and community welfare	2.24	1.090	Highly Needed
Fishing without permits is strictly prohibited by law	2.29	1.099	Highly Needed
Only registered fisherfolk can fish commercially	2.29	1.126	Highly Needed
Association members understand fiscal administration basics	2.18	1.026	Highly Needed
Good governance principles are recognized by members	2.19	1.038	Highly Needed
Members received training on rights and development	2.09	1.014	Highly Needed
Experience in community planning and policy-making exists	2.08	1.016	Highly Needed

Awareness of Wildlife Conservation Act impacts business	2.17	1.093	Highly Needed
Wildlife hunting without permits is illegal	2.23	1.115	Highly Needed
Practicing wildlife conservation promotes ecological balance	2.29	1.125	Highly Needed
Supporting biodiversity research fulfills social responsibility	2.25	1.096	Highly Needed
Government and NGO benefits available for fisherfolk	2.33	1.118	Highly Needed
Proficiency in conducting structured parliamentary procedure meetings.	2.22	1.034	Highly Needed
Confidence in applying motions, voting, and proposal amendments.	2.22	1.031	Highly Needed

The study revealed that fisherfolk communities in Sagay City perceived a high need (Mean = 2.19 overall) for capacity-building in public administration and governance. Key areas requiring attention include awareness of micro-enterprise policies (Mean = 2.33), understanding of the Local Government Code (Mean = 2.17), and knowledge of fiscal administration (Mean = 1.95). These findings suggest gaps in governance literacy that may limit the ability of fisherfolk to actively participate in local decision-making processes and access available development opportunities.

The strong demand for training in parliamentary procedures (Mean = 2.22 for items 19–21) reflects the fisherfolk's desire for more structured and meaningful participation in governance processes. Osborne et al. (2013) argued that contemporary public service systems increasingly recognize citizens as co-creators of public value, necessitating the development of competencies that enable effective engagement in governance activities. Similarly, Voorberg et al. (2015) emphasized that co-production initiatives are more successful when community members possess the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in planning and implementation processes. The findings therefore highlight the importance of strengthening governance capacities among fisherfolk to enhance their participation in local affairs.

Awareness of environmental laws, including illegal fishing prohibitions (Mean = 2.29), was relatively high among respondents. However, the continued demand for training suggests that knowledge alone may not always result in sustainable practices. Berkes (2009) noted that effective co-management depends not only on awareness of regulations but also on social learning, knowledge sharing, and collaborative decision-making among stakeholders. Likewise, de la Cruz et al. (2025) found that although fisherfolk in the Philippines generally demonstrated high levels of knowledge, attitudes, and practices toward coastal resource management, there remains a need to strengthen educational campaigns and community outreach initiatives to promote sustainable behavior and effective marine management. These findings underscore the importance of integrating legal literacy with practical community-based learning approaches.

The perceived need for fiscal administration skills (Mean = 1.95) and development planning (Mean = 1.97) further reflects existing gaps in grassroots governance capacities. Respondents acknowledged the potential benefits of decentralization (Mean = 2.24) but also recognized the need for greater support in organizational management and resource planning. Osborne et al. (2013) emphasized that public service delivery increasingly requires

communities to develop competencies that facilitate active participation in governance processes. Similarly, Caldas et al. (2024) observed that fisherfolk organizations often encounter institutional barriers that limit their participation in fisheries governance and access to development opportunities. Furthermore, Agduma et al. (2023) highlighted the governance and implementation challenges affecting biodiversity conservation efforts in the southern Philippines, emphasizing the importance of strengthening institutional capacities and stakeholder engagement.

The persistent gaps in policy literacy and governance skills among fisherfolk highlight the critical role of local institutions in fostering inclusive participation. Cornwall (2008) argued that meaningful participation extends beyond consultation and requires empowering citizens to influence decisions that affect their lives. Likewise, Voorberg et al. (2015) emphasized that successful co-production depends on recognizing community members as active partners in public service delivery. Consequently,

local government units should adopt participatory and culturally responsive training approaches that address the realities faced by coastal communities while strengthening their capacities to engage effectively in governance processes.

Finally, the high demand for awareness of government and non-government support mechanisms reflects the importance of strengthening institutional linkages within fishing communities. Ansell and Gash (2008) emphasized that collaborative governance is built upon trust, shared understanding, and sustained interaction among stakeholders. Similarly, Caldas et al. (2024) highlighted that fisherfolk organizations often face barriers that constrain their participation in governance structures and access to external resources. Strengthening partnerships among local government units, civil society organizations, academic institutions, and fisherfolk associations may therefore improve policy literacy, expand access to development programs, and foster more inclusive governance arrangements.

Table IV. Significant difference in the public administration and governance' skills perceived training requirement level when grouped according to demographic profile

Grouping Variables	t/F	p	Interpretation
Age	0.357	0.784	Not Significant
Gender	-0.240	0.810	Not Significant
Civil Status	1.198	0.311	Not Significant
Educational Attainment	0.421	0.889	Not Significant
Nature of Work	0.236	0.790	Not Significant
Source of Income	1.352	0.257	Not Significant
Average Family Monthly Income	2.057	0.129	Not Significant

The study examined whether demographic factors influenced the perceived skills level in public administration and governance among fisherfolk communities in the City of Sagay. Statistical analysis revealed no significant differences ($p > 0.05$) across all demographic variables, including age ($p = 0.784$), gender ($p = 0.810$), civil status ($p = 0.311$), educational attainment ($p = 0.889$), nature of work ($p = 0.790$), source of income ($p = 0.257$), and average family monthly income ($p = 0.129$). The consistency in responses suggests that the need

for governance training is uniformly high regardless of socioeconomic or personal background.

This finding is consistent with studies suggesting that governance and capacity gaps among fisherfolk communities are often shaped by structural and institutional conditions rather than individual demographic characteristics. Allison and Ellis (2001) emphasized that vulnerabilities within small-scale fisheries are frequently rooted in shared livelihood constraints, limited access to

resources, and inadequate institutional support that affect communities as a whole. Similarly, Béné (2003) argued that poverty and marginalization in fishing communities should be understood as outcomes of broader socioeconomic and environmental conditions rather than differences in individual attributes. More recently, de la Cruz et al. (2025) reported that knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to coastal resource management among Filipino fisherfolk generally did not vary according to age, educational attainment, or household income, suggesting that community-level experiences exert a stronger influence than demographic characteristics. These findings imply that governance skill deficits among fisherfolk in Sagay City may reflect shared structural realities that transcend socioeconomic and personal backgrounds.

These results further support the view that governance capacity constraints are shaped by institutional and systemic conditions rather than individual characteristics. Public service research suggests that effective governance outcomes depend on the interaction between institutional arrangements, service systems, and citizen participation (Osborne et al., 2016). In this regard, the persistence of uniform training needs across demographic groups reflects broader structural limitations in access to governance processes and administrative knowledge.

Similarly, the literature on co-production emphasizes that meaningful participation and capability development are achieved through collective engagement mechanisms rather than demographic segmentation (Voorberg et al., 2015). This perspective reinforces the importance of designing inclusive, community-wide interventions that address shared constraints and promote active participation across all sectors of the population.

The absence of income-based disparities ($p = 0.129$) is particularly notable, as it challenges assumptions that economic stability correlates with governance awareness. Instead, the results highlight contextual barriers, such as geographic isolation of coastal barangays and reliance on

informal knowledge-sharing networks, that transcend individual demographics. Comparable patterns were observed in Palawan, where fisherfolk of varying income levels exhibited similar limitations in fiscal administration knowledge due to inadequate local government training (Torres and Lim, 2022).

Overall, the findings underscore the need for integrated, community-centered capacity-building strategies that prioritize inclusivity, institutional access, and participatory governance. Rather than targeting specific demographic groups, policy interventions should address systemic gaps that affect the entire fisherfolk population.

[Table V near here]

The study examined whether demographic factors influenced the assessment of socio-economic needs among fisherfolk communities. Statistical analysis showed no significant differences ($p > 0.05$) across all demographic variables, including age ($p = 0.170$), gender ($p = 0.387$), civil status ($p = 0.704$), educational attainment ($p = 0.805$), nature of work ($p = 0.060$), source of income ($p = 0.212$), and average family monthly income ($p = 0.129$). This consistency suggests that socio-economic needs are uniformly pressing across all segments of the fisherfolk population.

The findings indicate that socio-economic concerns within the community transcend demographic boundaries and are likely shaped by shared livelihood conditions and structural constraints. Allison and Ellis (2001) emphasized that vulnerabilities among small-scale fishing households are often rooted in limited livelihood opportunities, restricted access to resources, and broader socioeconomic pressures that affect entire communities rather than specific demographic groups. Similarly, Béné (2003) and Jentoft et al. (2010) argued that poverty and vulnerability in small-scale fisheries are multidimensional phenomena influenced by environmental uncertainty, institutional limitations, and economic marginalization rather than individual characteristics alone. These perspectives suggest that the socio-economic

realities of fisherfolk communities are products of collective circumstances that cut across demographic categories.

The findings further support the view that socio-economic well-being in fishing communities is shaped by shared experiences and institutional contexts rather than individual attributes. Coulthard et al. (2011) proposed that well-being among fisherfolk extends beyond material indicators and encompasses relational and subjective dimensions influenced by social networks, community cohesion, and governance structures. More recently, de la Cruz et al. (2025) found that knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to coastal resource management among Filipino fisherfolk generally did not differ according to age, educational attainment, or household income, indicating that common community experiences may exert a stronger influence than demographic factors. In Sagay City, where many households depend on fisheries-related activities, shared exposure to environmental risks, fluctuating fish catches, and limited economic opportunities may contribute to a common pattern of socio-economic needs across demographic groups. Cinner et al. (2021) emphasized that adaptive capacity in tropical coastal communities is often shaped by collective access to resources, institutions, and social support systems rather than by individual demographic characteristics. This suggests that the socio-economic challenges experienced by fisherfolk are embedded within broader community contexts that require coordinated and inclusive responses.

The near-significance of nature of work ($p = 0.060$) suggests a potential trend that may warrant further investigation. This finding may reflect subtle differences between respondents who rely exclusively on fishing and those engaged in supplementary livelihood activities. Allison and Ellis (2001) highlighted livelihood diversification as an important strategy for reducing vulnerability among fishing households, particularly in contexts characterized by uncertainty and economic instability. While diversification may influence resilience and adaptive capacity, the overall pattern observed in

this study indicates that socio-economic challenges remain broadly shared among community members.

For local government units, these findings underscore the importance of designing inclusive and community-wide interventions that address systemic constraints such as limited livelihood opportunities, weak institutional support, environmental vulnerability, and barriers to participation in fisheries value chains. Caldas et al. (2024) noted that fisherfolk organizations often encounter governance and organizational barriers that limit their effective contribution to local development processes. Consequently, policy interventions should prioritize collective capacity-building, livelihood enhancement, and integrated development strategies that respond to the shared realities of fisherfolk communities rather than focusing exclusively on demographic subgroups.

Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence that fisherfolk communities in Sagay City experience consistently high training needs in public administration and governance, particularly in areas such as fiscal management, legal literacy, participatory decision-making, and institutional engagement. The absence of statistically significant differences across demographic variables indicates that these capacity gaps are systemic and widely shared, rather than shaped by individual characteristics. This finding reinforces the argument that governance challenges in marginalized coastal communities are structurally embedded and require collective, rather than segmented, interventions.

The results also reveal a critical disconnect between policy awareness and actual compliance. While fisherfolk demonstrate a general understanding of regulatory frameworks, their ability to adhere to such policies is constrained by economic pressures and limited livelihood alternatives. This highlights the limitation of knowledge-based interventions when implemented in isolation and underscores the need to integrate governance capacity-building with socio-economic support mechanisms.

From a theoretical perspective, the study supports participatory governance and co-production frameworks by demonstrating that formal inclusion in governance processes does not necessarily translate into meaningful participation. Although fisherfolk associations are recognized and invited to local policy-making forums, their limited administrative and governance competencies restrict their ability to effectively engage and influence decision-making. This underscores the importance of moving beyond symbolic participation toward substantive empowerment through capacity development.

In practical terms, the findings suggest that local government units and development stakeholders should adopt integrated and community-wide approaches to capacity-building. Training programs must be context-sensitive, accessible, and aligned with the socio-economic realities of fisherfolk communities. Moreover, interventions should combine governance education with livelihood development initiatives to address the underlying constraints that limit participation and compliance.

Overall, the study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that governance capacity gaps in coastal communities are not merely issues of awareness or access, but are deeply rooted in structural and institutional conditions. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that strengthens both the capabilities of community members and the inclusiveness of governance systems, ultimately enabling fisherfolk to transition from passive beneficiaries to active and empowered participants in local governance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that local government units (LGUs), academic institutions, and development partners design and implement a community-wide governance capacity-building program tailored to the needs of fisherfolk communities. Given that governance skill gaps are systemic and not confined to specific demographic groups, training interventions should adopt an inclusive

approach that targets the entire fisherfolk population rather than segmented subgroups. Core training areas should include fiscal administration, legal literacy, participatory decision-making, and organizational management.

To enhance effectiveness, training programs should be context-sensitive and culturally adaptive. This includes delivering modules in local dialects, using simplified and practical teaching approaches, and incorporating real-life governance scenarios relevant to fisherfolk communities. Community-based delivery mechanisms, such as barangay-level workshops and peer-led learning sessions, should be prioritized to improve accessibility and participation.

Recognizing the observed gap between policy awareness and compliance, it is further recommended that governance training be integrated with livelihood support initiatives. Programs that link governance participation with economic opportunities, such as sustainable aquaculture, eco-tourism, and small-scale enterprise development, can help address the economic constraints that limit engagement and compliance. This integrated approach ensures that governance capacity-building is both practical and sustainable.

Strengthening institutional collaboration is also essential. LGUs should work closely with fisherfolk associations, national agencies (e.g., fisheries and coastal management offices), non-government organizations, and academic institutions to co-design and co-implement training programs. Establishing participatory platforms, feedback mechanisms, and monitoring systems can ensure that interventions remain responsive to the evolving needs of the community.

Furthermore, LGUs should institutionalize regular capacity-building forums and policy dialogues, ensuring that fisherfolk associations are not only invited to participate but are also adequately prepared to contribute meaningfully. This includes providing pre-forum orientations, mentorship programs, and technical assistance to

enhance their confidence and effectiveness in governance engagements.

Finally, future research is recommended to adopt mixed-method and longitudinal approaches to assess the long-term impact of governance

training on participation, compliance, and community development outcomes. Evaluating how capacity-building interventions translate into actual behavioral and institutional changes will provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of governance programs in coastal communities.

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