

Knowledge and Attitude of Barangay Officials on Pork Barrel System and their Perception on its Abolition

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Pork Barrel, otherwise known as priority development assistance fund is the appropriation of government spending for localized projects by allocating funds to each representative for their respective districts. The study aims to get an insight on the knowledge and view of Barangay Officials about Pork Barrel System and its abolition. Descriptive correlational method was applied using self-made closed-ended questionnaires to gather data from the participants consisting of 146 (46%) of the elected Barangay Officials in the City of Binan, Laguna, Philippines. The study found that most of the respondents are knowledgeable on pork barrel and the respondents agreed to the negative implications of the pork barrel system, as well, they agreed to the negative consequences on the abolition of pork barrel system. The data gathered shows that the respondents' level of knowledge on pork barrel system has no bearing with the respondents' attitude on pork barrel system. The more knowledgeable the respondents on pork barrel are, the more they agree on the negative consequences on the abolition of pork barrel system. It is recommended that instead of the abolishment of the pork barrel funds, the government should create and develop programs to educate the general public on the importance of the pork barrel funds for the development of their localities and also, channels should be created for effective monitoring of the projects embarked on by each representative to ensure accountability with regards to the pork barrel funds as well as other allocated funds and where there is misappropriation, the representative should be hold culpable and be punish according to the constitution.

Keywords: Knowledge, Attitude, Perception, Pork Barrel, Abolition.

INTRODUCTION

In the current society we are in, corruption is one of the major problems the country is facing. Politics becomes a way of ensuring one's wealth and furthermore the politicians use it to gain leverage over the masses. The general perceived effect of the growing system of usage of funds to gain favors and be politically popular is prevalent. Distributive policies are those which

concentrate benefits in specific geographic areas (congressional districts) while spreading costs through general taxation. The legislators may rationally prefer universalism to "hard-ball" coalition politics that results to pork-barrel politics, which includes projects that are economically inefficient, and demonstrates how packages of economically inefficient projects can nevertheless be politically popular (Shepsle and Weingast, 2001). There is the need to have a study that offers the general public a view of what the manifestation of the abolition of "pork barrel" system is to its beneficiaries. This study aimed at relating the attitude of the respondents (the government

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officials representing the people through the government local unit) on the “pork barrel” system to their perception on the consequences of the abolition of “pork barrel” system. There has been no study at the present time that concentrates on how the budget of legislators affects their beneficiaries, and how the perceived effect will do to the attitude and perception of barangay officials. Budget is a foundation of economic management of a country, and therefore, in the context of developing countries, it is a primary issue of development. The Philippine budget institution is characterized by its high degree of politicization. Such politicization is said to be one of the major causes of corruption, opaque plutocratic policy-makings and frequent delays in budget process.

The primitive form of what could be denoted as “pork-barrel” in the Philippines emerged in 1922, when the Public Works Act was passed. From 1950, it was made clear that Congress was allowed to specify the projects which were to be funded under the Act, and from 1955, those legislature-sponsored projects were segregated from all other items under the name “community projects”. Throughout the Marcos regime (1972 - 1986), the major area for pork barrel funding was public works appropriations under this Act, a multi-year appropriation for infrastructure projects set aside from the rest of the national budget. Regarding this appropriations, the Congress had complete freedom to change President's proposal or even enact new and larger appropriations (Noda, 2011). Because public works appropriations was a multi-year appropriation, and since not all parts of the appropriations coming out of the congress were backed up by available funds, there was always a substantial accumulation of unimplemented projects from previous years. After the democratization in 1986, pork-barrel was eventually incorporated into the general budget. Currently there is no separate budget appropriation outside of the regular budget proposal. This, on one hand, improved the transparency of the budget system, at least superficially. Pork-barrel nevertheless did not cease to exist; rather, it took different forms of budgetary items within the general budget and thus became even more invisible. However, in the actual implementation, these safeguards were circumvented or ignored. No checking of NGO's was made, no public bidding held and no bonds required. After recent Senate committee hearing (September 26, 2013), an incensed Sen. Francis Escudero blurted out that the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) was riddled with “ghost deliveries, fake receipts, NGO's that you cannot locate, and nonexistence suppliers”. The net result: The pork barrel, in the billion pesos, rolled into private pockets (Panganiban, 2013).

To solve the mess, members of the Congress should be stripped of their prerogative to direct or allocate funds.

Spending the budget should be left to the executive agencies, subject to safeguards enacted by Congress. After all, this is the real constitutional order: Executive officials implement what legislators enact. The solution is not really complicated. It is simply going back to the basic system of checks and balances, which was precisely instituted to curb excesses and minimize corruption. Congress, which enacts the budget, should be independent of Malacañang, which spends it, and likewise independent of the judiciary, which decides conflicts between these two great branches of government (Noda, 2011).

This study aimed at determining the relationship between the respondents' knowledge, attitude, and perception of the abolition of pork barrel system. Specifically, it determined the respondents' level of knowledge on pork barrel system, the respondents' attitude towards the pork barrel system as well as the respondents' perception on the consequences of the abolition of pork barrel system. It also determined how the respondents' level of knowledge on the pork barrel system relate to their attitude on pork barrel system, how does the respondents' attitude towards pork barrel system relate to their perception on the consequences of its abolishment and also how does the respondents' level of knowledge on the pork barrel system relate to their perception on the consequences of its abolishment.

World Bank defined corruption as the abuse of public power for public gain. By comparison, the “sale of public assets for private gain” is more restrictive, since it limits the transactions to those mediated by money-exchange. It gives a definition that is suited mostly to bribe “an illegal payment to a public agent to obtain a benefit that may or may not be deserved in the absence of payoffs” (De Dios and Ferrer, 2001). In an article titled “Pork Barrel Issue Far From Dead” by Salaverria (2013) in the Philippines Daily Inquirer, it says that the pork barrel issue is far from dead even though Filipinos are often derided for having short memories. Filipinos are not about to let go off the issue because they have not heard anything to convince them that there is going to be a change. If the government thinks that the people will soon forget this because of short memories, then, that is not the case, the idea that public funds were stolen and could continue to be diverted for private use under the current system, continues to strike a chord with Filipinos. It is because everyone who pays taxes in one form or another is affected, people are not ready to forget the issue because they are not yet convinced that change will actually happen. There is need for the scrapping of all pork barrel funds and for transparency in how public money is used. The education campaign against the pork barrel system will continue to be pursued in various

forms. Pork Barrel describes our politics. In the Philippines, the central purpose of power was to loot the public sphere in the name of charity. It was the outcome of an oligarchic society where the political elite drew support by means of patronage and nothing else, commandeering state resources for the purpose. The pork barrel-public funds dispensed entirely on the personal discretion of power wielders. Money politics is the medium by which power is accessed and support is secured. It enables politicians to claim personal credit for what the State, as a matter of primal function, ought to be delivering to its citizens (Magno, 2013). According to Quimpo (2009), over the past decade, and especially over the past few years, political corruption, fraud and violence in the Philippines have reached such alarming levels that many Filipinos have grown despondent, even cynical, about their country's political system. The predatory regime, controlled by rapacious elite, that held sway during the years of the dictator Marcos, has made a comeback in the Philippines. Under the governments of President Joseph Estrada and Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, traditional clientelism has given way to pervasive corruption, a systematic plunder of government resources and the rapid corrosion of public institutions into tools for predation.

Saligumba (2013), states that a professor of the University of Philippines (UP) has offered a formula "for a more systematic" abolition of the pork barrel system and it is to 'abolish political dynasties'. "The abolition of the pork barrel system is as probable as the abolition of political dynasties," said Prof. Roland Simbulan of the UP Development Studies and Political Economy (Saligumba, 2013). The pork barrel fund is the "umbilical cord that allows political dynasties to thrive." As of 2010, there were already 178 dominant political dynasties in national politics, 100 (56%) of them belonging to the old elite while 78 (44%) are the new elites that emerged after Edsa 1 in 1986 and the 1987 post-Marcos elections. In the House of Representatives, the dominance by political families increased from 64% to 68% (or 115 families) after the May 2010 elections. Dominance is higher in the Senate with 80% of the 23 members elected in 2010, including the new elites represented by the Cayetano siblings, Pia and Peter Alan. The elite include those of the Ampatuan clan of Maguindanao, the Arroyos and the Marcoses, their names made infamous by widespread accusation of violence and corruption. Those propertied and pampered dynasties were given privilege rights and opportunities by being the only ones allowed to vote and run for political office. Since then, those who were able to acquire, or bestowed political power were only the "rich and landed" Filipinos. If government would go as far as "officially" abolishing the PDAF, it would do so but by changing only

the name. The PDAF is the official name of the pork barrel funds. Prof. Roland Simbulan said he would not be surprised if investigations would reveal that the same political families created the bogus NGOs themselves. If not, he said, the lawmakers may resort to certifying questionable NGOs if only to ensure their lion share in the funds funneled to these NGOs (Saligumba, 2013). This was already shown in the recent report of the Commission on Audit, which revealed that legislators had certified NGOs, including the bogus NGOs of Janet Lim-Napoles, to implement their PDAF funds (Macaraig, 2014). Napoles was the pinpointed mastermind in the manipulation of the PDAF funds of lawmakers, many of these personalities representing the known political families in the country. The mishandling of the discretionary funds was also brought into the open with the Commission on Audit (COA) disclosure of the PDAF that was "not properly released by the Department of Budget and Management

Decentralization has swept across the developing world in recent years. Although the speed and scope of the shift toward more decentralized practices is striking, decentralization is neither inevitable nor irreversible. Rather, it faces enormous political obstacles and can be subject to serious setbacks. As for Argentina and the Philippines, it suggests that even after the political decision to decentralize has been made, national politicians may face deep-seated incentives to preserve centralized control over fiscal policy. In Argentina, President Carlos Menem partially reversed the previous decentralization of revenue because fiscally-independent provincial governors were a challenge to his political interests and capabilities (Eaton, 2001). In the Philippines, legislators attempted to reverse and then circumvent decentralization since it threatened their status as brokers claiming personal credit for negotiating fiscal transfers from the centre. It identifies an intermediate outcome in both countries, according to which decentralizing policies are neither entirely reversed nor implemented as initially designed (Eaton, 2001).

Judicial review has been under attack for being anti-democratic since a non-representative and accountable court interprets and enforces the constitution. There is a case study that investigates the role of judicial review in the anti-corruption agenda of abolishing the pork barrel in the Philippines. The case is unique because it presents a situation wherein resort to the representative or political branches of the government proved to be difficult, if not inutile and resort to the judiciary which proved to be an available and adequate means to advance the anti-corruption agenda (Rodrigo, 2014).

Pork-barrel spending is an unflattering term used to describe spending projects earmarked for a particular

member's district that are buried deep inside appropriations bills. These projects are hidden in mandatory appropriations bills so as to ensure passage while keeping them hidden from the public and even other members of Congress. The biggest culprits in pork-barrel spending typically are powerful committee and subcommittee chairmen, as well as other senior members (Ragone, 2013). The appropriation of the pork barrel of many governments showed the same abusive effect limiting other parties to get their part of the pork or patronage system in general. Milligan and Smart (2005) investigated the political and economic factors influencing the allocation of regional development grants. According to Golden and Picci (2008), the political determinants of the distribution of infrastructure expenditures by their government distributive policies are those which concentrate benefits in specific geographic areas (states, congressional districts) while spreading costs through general taxation. The explanation offered here that legislators may rationally prefer universalism to "hard-ball" coalition politics generalizes earlier work of Weingast and Fiorina in particular, it extends their results to pork-barrel politics, i.e., projects that are economically inefficient, and demonstrates how packages of economically inefficient projects can nevertheless be politically popular (Weingast *et al.*, 2001).

METHODOLOGY

The researchers employed the descriptive-correlational method of research, emphasizing both the survey and documentary analysis. Descriptive method describes a situation, problem or phenomenon accurately and objectively. Correlation study is designed to estimate the extent to which different variables are related to each other (Bermudo and Yango, 2010). It often involves some types of comparison or contrast and may attempt to discover a cause-effect relationship that exists between variables. The primary sources of data were the elected Barangay Officials of the City of Biñan Laguna serving a three-year term from 2013 to 2016 as the respondents of the study. Secondary sources were the internet, books, online journals and the likes. The respondents of the study composed of one hundred (or 46 percent) elected Barangay officials in the city of Biñan, Laguna, Philippines. They were chosen through convenience sampling from the total population of 216. The researchers obtained consent from the Captains of the different Barangays of Biñan Laguna to conduct the survey with their Barangay officials and the researchers ensured that confidentiality was kept.

The researchers used self-made closed ended

questionnaire consisting of three parts. The first part of the questionnaire was for level of knowledge on pork barrel system. The second part of the questionnaire focused on the respondents' attitude towards pork barrel System while the third part consisted of the respondents' perception on the abolition of pork barrel system. The contents of the questionnaire were validated by a panel of experts in the field of research, statistics and political science. The corrections and suggestions were incorporated in the final draft of the questionnaire. The questionnaires were distributed by the researchers to the participants and after filling, the researchers retrieved the filled questionnaires, recording 100% retrieval without any of the questionnaires been discarded. The data were tallied, tabulated and interpreted; Weighted Mean was used to determine the (a) respondents' level of knowledge, (b) attitude towards pork barrel system and (c) respondents' perception on the abolition of pork barrel system. Pearson product moment correlation was used to determine the relationship between and among the variables under study. To measure the respondents' level of knowledge as well as the respondents' attitude towards pork barrel and their perception on the consequences of its abolition, the following scale were used: 3.51 - 4.0 is Strongly Agree (Very High), 2.51 - 3.5 Agree (High) , 1.51 - 2.50 Disagree (Low) , 1.00 - 1.50 Strongly Disagree (Very Low).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' Level of Knowledge on the Pork Barrel System

Table 1 has seven (7) indicators and as shown in the Table 1 which is the respondents' level of knowledge on pork barrel system, indicator 2 which is "I know that pork barrel system is for the purpose of aiding the congressional representatives with their constituents" has a weighted mean of 3.15 (Ranked 1st); indicator 3 which is "I have ample understanding about the use of pork barrel system" as well as indicator 6 which is "The pork barrel system financial aid empowers the Local Government" both has the lowest weighted mean of 2.75 each and were ranked 6th each. The average weighted mean is 2.88 which is verbally interpreted as 'high', meaning that the respondents knowledgeable about the use of the funds from the pork barrel system. This finding was supported by Monsod (2013) which claimed that pork barrel must be allotted on local projects that are primarily used to bring more money to a specific representatives' district. It should be spend in a locality to the benefit of legislators' constituents.

Table 1: Respondents' Level of Knowledge on Pork Barrel System.

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. I have knowledge about the history of Pork Barrel System.	2.85	Agree (High)	4
2. I know that Pork Barrel System is for the purpose of aiding the congressional representatives with the needs of their constituents.	3.15	Agree (High)	1
3. I have ample understanding about the use of Pork Barrel System.	2.75	Agree (High)	6
4. The Pork Barrel fund is used to solve problems that the central government can't address on a day to day basis.	2.84	Agree (High)	5
5. The funds from Pork Barrel supply the emergency needs of the Local Government	2.91	Agree (High)	3
6. The Pork Barrel System financial aid empowers the Local Government.	2.75	Agree (High)	6
7. Through Pork Barrel System funds many scholars are being financed.	2.94	Agree (High)	2
Average	2.88	Agree (High)	

Table 2: The Respondents' Attitude towards the Pork Barrel System.

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. I don't feel that Pork barrel promotes competent leaders.	2.39	Disagree	4
2. I fully agree that Congressional Representatives use the Pork Barrel for personal benefit.	2.64	Agree	3
3. I don't believe that the Pork Barrel is the only source of income for district regions	2.37	Disagree	5
4. I don't believe that Pork Barrel is the only way a Congressional Representative may help the district.	2.65	Agree	2
5. I fully agree with people who blame Pork Barrel as a source of corruption.	2.74	Agree	1
Average	2.56	Agree	

The Respondents' Attitude towards the Pork Barrel System

Table 2 has five (5) indicators and as shown, the highest rank (1st) for the respondents' attitude towards pork barrel system is with indicator 5 which states "I fully agree with people who blame pork barrel as a source of corruption" with a weighted mean of 2.74 and verbally interpreted as agree by all the respondents, whereas the lowest rank (5th) is with indicator 3 which states "I don't believe that the pork barrel is the only source of income for district

regions" with a weighted mean of 2.37 and verbally interpreted as disagree. The overall weighted mean was 2.56 which is verbally interpreted as agree, meaning that the respondents agreed to the negative implications of the pork barrel system. This finding was supported by Salaverria (2013) that some Filipinos believed that public funds were stolen and could continue to be diverted for public use. Salaverria noted also that funds were released by the Department of Budget and Management even for projects outside the legislative districts of the sponsoring congressmen.

Table 3: The Respondents' Perception on the Consequences on the Abolition of Pork Barrel System.

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Because of the abolition of Pork barrel System.....			
1. The scholars of local government cannot continue their studies.	2.96	Agree (Positive)	2
2. The projects that were funded by Pork Barrel System will not be finished.	2.85	Agree	4
3. There will be no ready funds for emergency purposes.	2.66	Agree	9
4. Corruption will not be less.	2.45	Disagree	11
5. The patronage system of politics will not be lessen.	2.61	Agree	10
6. Funds will take time to reach the provinces.	2.88	Agree	3
7. The local government functions will be slower.	2.74	Agree	6
8. Small projects will be harder to accomplish.	2.71	Agree	7
9. The local government officials will be less active in terms of project development.	2.71	Agree	7
10. The administration will have more power over local government units.	2.98	Agree	1
11. Pork Barrel System is a source of corruption.	2.84	Agree	5
Average	2.76	Agree	

Table 4: Relationship between the Respondents' Level of Knowledge and their Attitude toward Pork Barrel System.

Variable	Pearson r	p-value	Interpretation
Level of knowledge and attitude toward pork barrel system	0.146 Low correlation	0.148	Not Significant

Note: Significance level: 0.05.

The Respondents' Perception on the Consequences on the Abolition of Pork Barrel System

Table 3 which is the respondents' perception on the consequences towards pork barrel system abolition has eleven (11) indicators and as shown, the highest rank (1st) is indicator number 10 which states "The administration will have more power over local government unit" with a weighted mean of 2.98 and verbally interpreted as agree whereas the lowest rank (11th) is with indicator 4 which states "Corruption will not be less" with a weighted mean of 2.45 and verbally interpreted as disagree. The overall weighted mean is 2.76 (verbally interpreted as agree). This means that the respondents are in agreement to the negative consequences on the abolition of pork barrel system. This is in-line with the study of Krehbiel (1992), which claimed that the appropriation of the pork barrel of many

governments showed abusive effects limiting other parties to get their pork barrel. Some members of congress create institutions and use legislative rules to enhance their electoral goals. Also, the result of this study validate the claim by Saligumba (2013) which states that pork barrel did not cease to exist but rather took different forms of budgetary items and became more invisible and the pork barrel was rolled into private pockets.

Relationship between the Respondents' Level of Knowledge and their Attitude toward Pork Barrel System

The data in Table 4 shows that there was no significant relationship between the respondents' level of knowledge on the pork barrel system and their attitude towards the system. The p-value of 0.148 was higher than the

Table 5: Relationship between the Respondents' Level of knowledge on Pork Barrel System and their Perception on the Consequences on the Abolition of Pork Barrel System

Variable	Pearson r	p-value	Interpretation
Level of knowledge on pork barrel system and perception on the abolition of pork barrel system	0.497 Moderate correlation	0.000	Significant

Note: Significant @ 0.01 level.

Table 6: Relationship between the Respondents' Attitude toward Pork Barrel System and their Perception on the Consequences on its Abolition.

Variable	Pearson r	p-value	Interpretation
Attitude toward pork barrel system and perception on the abolition of pork barrel system	0.282 Low correlation	0.004	Significant

Note: Significant @ 0.01 level.

significance level of 0.05; therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted stating that there is no significant relationship between the respondents' level of knowledge and their attitude towards pork barrel system. This means that the respondents' level of knowledge on pork barrel system has no bearing on their attitude towards the system. According to Salaverria (2013), pork barrel issue is far from dead even the Filipinos know the purpose of pork barrel but still they will not let go of the issue because they have not heard anything to convince them that there will be a change and they have thinking that everyone who pays taxes in one form or another is affected by the issue.

Relationship between the Respondents' Level of Knowledge on Pork Barrel System and their Perception on the Consequences on the Abolition of Pork Barrel System

The data in Table 5 shows that there was a significant relationship between the level of knowledge on the pork barrel system and respondents' perception on the consequences on the abolition of pork barrel system as shown by a p-value of 0.000 which was less than the significance level of 0.01. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that the more knowledgeable the respondents on pork barrel are, the more they agree on the negative consequences on the abolition of pork barrel. As a medium for information dissemination, media plays a big role in controlling how the information is passed to the people especially in the case of politics, media effects could be direct or indirect. How it is

presented to the public will affect the perception of the respondents' towards the topic. It could be in newspaper, television, magazines, advertisements, etc. But among them, television has great effect on one's knowledge and perception of the subject (Nisbet *et al.*, 2002).

Relationship between the Respondents' Attitude towards Pork Barrel System and their Perception on the Consequences on its Abolition

The data in Table 6 shows that there is a significant relationship between the respondents' attitude toward pork barrel system and their perception on the abolition of the system. The probability value of 0.004 is lower than the significance level of 0.01, therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected stating that there is significant relationship between the respondents' attitude and their perception towards pork barrel system abolition. This means that the more the respondents agree to the negative implications of pork barrel system, the more they agree also to the negative consequences of its abolition. Salaverria (2013), cited Bretana in saying that the government is wrong in thinking that the people will forget the issue on pork barrel because of shortened memories. The idea that public funds were stolen and could continue to be diverted for private use under the current system continues to strike a chord with Filipinos.

Conclusions

Though the respondents' have good knowledge of the pork barrel system and its importance for the develop-

ment of their respective local government units, they however, agreed to its negative application probably because the funds are not been used judiciously. At the same sense, the respondents agreed to the negative consequence of the abolition of the pork barrel system. It was found that the more knowledgeable the respondents are on pork barrel system, the more they agreed to the negative consequences of its abolishment and the more the respondents agreed to the negative application of the pork barrel funds (like it can be used for personal benefits), the more they agreed to the negative consequences of its abolishment.

Recommendations

Since the tax payers hard earn resources are used to finance government projects, it is recommended that instead of the abolishment of the pork barrel system, the government should create and develop programs to educate the general public on the importance of the pork barrel funds for the development of their localities and also, channels should be created for the general public to effectively monitor the projects embarked on by their respective representative to ensure accountability with regards to the pork barrel funds as well as other allocated funds and where there is misappropriation, the representative should be hold culpable and be punish according to the constitution. Also, present as well as future representatives of the people (government officials) should understand that their primary responsibility is to serve the people of their respective localities, as such, they should be supportive to their own local government unit with or without the pork barrel funds by creating other intervention means to raise funds for the development of their units. The government officials should be more optimistic about the amendments of government budgets and portfolios to lessen the corruption in the country and the general public should be vigilant after all it is their tax that are been looted.

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