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Competencies and Challenges of the Barangay Secretaries in the Local Government Unit of Dipolog City

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ABSTRACT: This study determined the perceived competencies and challenges of barangay secretaries in the Local Government Unit of Dipolog City during Calendar Year 2025. Using a descriptive-correlational survey design, the study collected completed questionnaires from 181 of 189 eligible barangay officials, excluding barangay secretaries. Data were analyzed using the average weighted value (AWV), standard deviation (SD), and Spearman rank-order correlation. Findings revealed that barangay secretaries were rated Competent overall (AWV = 4.01, SD = 0.89); human relations ranked highest (AWV = 4.41), while shorthand writing skills ranked lowest (AWV = 3.43). The perceived level of challenges was Low overall (AWV = 2.55, SD = 1.10), with time management (AWV = 2.93) and job-related stress (AWV = 2.86) receiving the highest ratings. The relationship between perceived competencies and challenges was negligible and not statistically significant ($\rho = 0.086$, $p = 0.247$). The Department of the Interior and Local Government and the city government could prioritize targeted skills training, workload management, and administrative support to address the areas identified.

KEYWORDS: Barangay secretaries, competencies, challenges, local government unit, Dipolog City, Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

Competencies of barangay secretaries refer to the knowledge, skills, abilities, and work attitudes needed to perform administrative, clerical, records-management, communication, technology-related, and legally mandated functions in the barangay office. Section 394(d) of Republic Act No. 7160, or the Local Government Code of 1991, requires barangay secretaries to maintain records of the sangguniang barangay and barangay assembly, prepare minutes of meetings, maintain a list of barangay assembly members, assist with election-related forms and civil registration, and maintain updated records of barangay inhabitants. Section 403 also provides that the barangay secretary concurrently serves as secretary of the lupong tagapamayapa, recording mediation proceedings and maintaining related records (Republic Act No. 7160, 1991). These responsibilities require appropriate competencies for effective barangay administration. Salazar (2022) assessed the competencies of barangay secretaries in shorthand writing, office management, records management, human relations, and computer literacy and operation. Similarly, Valera and Briones (2024) documented the value of computer-literacy training for barangay secretaries and treasurers. These studies underscore the importance of administrative, interpersonal, and technological competencies in supporting local public service delivery.

The importance of these competencies becomes more evident when considering the essential role of barangay secretaries in ensuring effective barangay operations and public service delivery. Ocat-Beloy and Prado (2026) emphasized that barangay secretaries require competencies in office administration, records management, information and communication technology, and clerical functions to perform their administrative responsibilities effectively. Similarly, Gannaban (2023) stressed the importance of understanding the functions and legal responsibilities of barangay secretaries in promoting transparency, accountability, and orderly local governance. These studies highlight that barangay secretaries serve as essential administrative personnel responsible for maintaining accurate records, preparing official documents, coordinating with barangay officials and residents, and ensuring the efficient delivery of public services. However, despite the importance of these competencies, barangay secretaries may encounter various challenges that affect their ability to perform their duties effectively.

Challenges of barangay secretaries refer to work-related difficulties that could affect the performance of their administrative, clerical, records-management, communication, and public service functions. Jalisan et al. (2026) identified training needs in office management, including technical, operational, and communication competencies among barangay officials and employees. Similarly, Salazar (2022) reported challenges related to workload, stressful work, limited resources, and professional development opportunities among barangay secretaries. These studies indicate that workplace challenges can arise from work demands, available resources, organizational support, and training opportunities. Examining these difficulties alongside perceived competencies provides a basis for testing whether the two variables are significantly related.

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The relationship between competencies and challenges of barangay secretaries concerns the extent to which their administrative, records-management, human relations, and computer literacy skills are related to the difficulties they encounter in performing their duties. De Guzman et al. (2021) found that barangay secretaries demonstrated competencies in information and communication technology, communication, and records management, which supported the effective performance of their administrative responsibilities. However, their findings also emphasized the importance of continuous competency enhancement through appropriate training programs. Similarly, Aňar et al. (2024) highlighted that workplace training improved barangay secretaries' communication skills, confidence, efficiency, and ability to prepare reports, memoranda, resolutions, and other official documents. These findings suggest that competency development could strengthen administrative efficiency and help barangay secretaries manage work-related difficulties. Nevertheless, whether higher competency levels are significantly related to fewer challenges remains an empirical question that requires further investigation.

Despite existing studies on the competencies, responsibilities, and challenges of barangay secretaries, limited evidence is available on these variables in the specific context of the Local Government Unit of Dipolog City. Previous research has considered administrative functions, training needs, competency development, and work-related difficulties; however, the relationship between perceived competencies across five domains and the challenges encountered in barangay secretarial work warrants local examination. This gap motivated the present study during Calendar Year 2025. Its findings could guide interventions to enhance relevant competencies, address workplace difficulties, and strengthen administrative efficiency and public service delivery.

LITERATURE

Competencies

Competencies refer to the knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and work behaviors that enable barangay secretaries to perform their administrative and public service duties effectively. Salazar (2022) emphasized that barangay secretaries need competencies in shorthand writing, office management, records management, human relations, and computer literacy because these skills support documentation, filing, communication, and day-to-day barangay operations. Gannaban (2023) also explained that barangay secretaries must understand their duties, functions, and legal responsibilities, since their role requires accuracy, accountability, and proper handling of official records and transactions. These studies show that competency is important because barangay secretaries serve as key administrative personnel who help ensure organized, transparent, and responsive barangay governance.

Shorthand Writing Skills

Shorthand writing skills refer to the ability to record spoken words quickly and accurately using symbols, abbreviations, brief forms, and outlines. In secretarial work, shorthand can assist in capturing proceedings, instructions, and dictated information. Salazar (2022) identified shorthand writing as a competency relevant to barangay secretaries' clerical and documentation tasks. Tabe and Materechera (2024) examined stenography as an academic writing technique and its relevance to students' writing performance. For barangay secretaries, shorthand may support minute-taking, timely document preparation, and the recording of official transactions.

Office Management

Office management enables barangay secretaries to organize daily office activities, coordinate transactions, follow instructions, manage time, and assist in preparing and monitoring official documents. Salazar (2022) identified organizational and planning skills, oral communication, filing knowledge, independent work, and teamwork as relevant competencies. Inarda et al. (2019) similarly examined organizational, communication, technology, records-management, and human relations skills among local government personnel. These competencies support orderly office operations and more efficient services for community residents.

Records Management

Records management is an essential competency of barangay secretaries because they create, organize, maintain, retrieve, and safeguard official documents. Salazar (2022) included filing skills, written communication, records creation, indexing, and records disposition among important records-management tasks. Bakare et al. (2016) emphasized the role of effective records management in local government accountability and administrative efficiency. Competent records management helps keep minutes, resolutions, reports, correspondence, certificates, and other records accurate, accessible, and properly preserved.

Human Relations

Human relations are important competencies of barangay secretaries because their duties require regular interaction with barangay officials, co-workers, and community residents. Salazar (2022) included courtesy, friendliness, helpfulness, appropriate responses to criticism, and consideration for others as important interpersonal skills. Quinto et al. (2025) likewise highlighted the importance of communication, adaptability, leadership, decision-making, and conflict management among public servants. These skills can support professional relationships, respectful communication, and responsive service in the barangay office.

Computer Literacy and Operation

Computer literacy and operation are important competencies of barangay secretaries because many administrative tasks require office software and other digital tools. Valera and Briones (2024) examined a computer-literacy workshop for barangay secretaries and treasurers and reported improved proficiency following the intervention. Patria-Dy et al. (2023) also evaluated Microsoft Office literacy training for barangay officials to support workplace communication and public service delivery. These studies support continuing digital-skills development for personnel responsible for preparing reports, minutes, letters, certifications, and other official documents.

Challenges Encountered by Barangay Secretaries

Challenges encountered by barangay secretaries refer to the work-related difficulties that may hinder their efficiency in carrying out administrative, clerical, records, communication, and public service duties. Salazar (2022) found that barangay secretaries may experience challenges such as stressful work, communication gaps, lack of productive interaction among co-workers, delays in the release of budget, insufficient annual budget, inadequate office supplies, limited training opportunities, poor working environment, and pressure to meet deadlines.

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Gannaban (2023) also emphasized that barangay secretaries need stronger professional development because their work involves legal, administrative, and documentation responsibilities that require proper knowledge, skills, and continuous support. These studies indicate that the challenges of barangay secretaries are closely connected to workload, resource availability, training, and the level of administrative support provided by the barangay or local government unit.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the study. The first variable is the perceived competencies of barangay secretaries, measured through five domains: shorthand writing skills, office management, records management, human relations, and computer literacy and operation. The second variable is the perceived challenges encountered by barangay secretaries, measured through 12 questionnaire items. The framework guides the examination of the relationship between these variables without implying causation.

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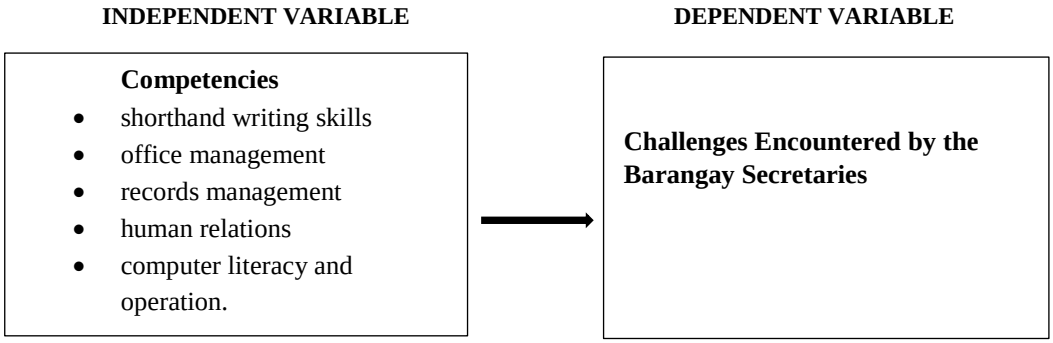


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the perceived competencies and challenges of barangay secretaries in the Local Government Unit of Dipolog City during Calendar Year 2025.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the perceived level of competencies of barangay secretaries, as assessed by barangay officials, in terms of:
   1.1 shorthand writing skills;
   1.2 office management;
   1.3 records management;
   1.4 human relations; and
   1.5 computer literacy and operation?
2. What is the perceived level of challenges encountered by barangay secretaries, as assessed by barangay officials?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the perceived levels of competencies and challenges encountered by barangay secretaries?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Method Used

The study employed a descriptive-correlational survey design. A questionnaire was used to obtain barangay officials' assessments of the competencies and challenges of barangay secretaries. Survey research gathers information through questions administered to respondents (Farrow et al., 2020; Symbaluk & Hall, 2024). Correlational research examines relationships between measured variables without experimental manipulation (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). This design was appropriate for describing the ratings and testing the relationship between perceived competencies and challenges without establishing causality.

Respondents of the Study

The target respondents were 189 barangay officials in Dipolog City, excluding barangay secretaries, during Calendar Year 2025. Total enumeration was used to invite all 189 eligible officials. Upon retrieval of the questionnaires, 181 completed responses were obtained, representing a response rate of 95.8%. Eight eligible officials did not return completed questionnaires or declined to participate. The final sample comprised 181 barangay officials who rated the competencies and challenges of barangay secretaries.

Research Instrument

The questionnaire was adopted from Salazar (2022) and consisted of two parts. Part I assessed the perceived competencies of barangay secretaries across five domains: shorthand writing skills, office management, records management, human relations, and computer literacy and operation. Part II assessed the perceived challenges encountered by barangay secretaries through 12 items. Barangay officials, rather than barangay secretaries themselves, completed the questionnaire.

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Scoring Procedure

Competencies

Scale	Range of Weighted Mean	Description	Verbal Interpretation
5	4.21 – 5.00	Strongly Agree	Highly Competent
4	3.41 – 4.20	Agree	Competent
3	2.61 – 3.40	Moderately Agree	Moderately Competent
2	1.81 – 2.60	Disagree	Less Competent
1	1.00 – 1.80	Strongly Disagree	Not Competent

Challenges Encountered by Barangay Secretaries

Scale	Range of Values	Description	Interpretation
5	4.21–5.00	Strongly Agree	Very High
4	3.41–4.20	Agree	High
3	2.61–3.40	Somewhat Agree	Average
2	1.81–2.60	Disagree	Low
1	1.00–1.80	Strongly Disagree	Very Low

Ethical Considerations

The study obtained ethical clearance from the Research and Ethics Committee of Andres Bonifacio College, Inc. The researcher secured institutional permission and informed consent from respondents before questionnaire administration. Participation was voluntary, and individual responses were treated confidentially and reported without identifying respondents. Collected information was used for research purposes and maintained securely.

Statistical Treatment of the Data

The following statistical tools were used to analyze the data:

Average Weighted Value (AWV). This was used to summarize the barangay officials' ratings of the competencies and challenges of barangay secretaries.

Standard Deviation (SD). This was used to describe the variability of respondents' ratings around the mean. A lower SD indicates more consistent responses, while a higher SD indicates greater variation (Field, 2018).

Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient (Spearman rho). This was used to test the relationship between the perceived competency and challenge ratings at the 0.05 level of significance. The following guide was used to describe the magnitude of the correlation coefficient (Cohen et al., 2014):

Value	**Size**	**Interpretation**
±0.50 to ±1.00	Large	High positive/negative correlation
±0.30 to ±.49	Medium	Moderate positive/negative correlation
±0.10 to ±0.29	Small	Low positive/negative correlation
±0.01 to ±0.09	Negligible	Slight positive/negative correlation
0.0	0.00	None No correlation

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The results are organized according to the three research questions in the Statement of the Problem.

1. What is the perceived level of competencies of barangay secretaries, as assessed by barangay officials, in terms of:
   1.1 shorthand writing skills;
   1.2 office management;
   1.3 records management;
   1.4 human relations; and
   1.5 computer literacy and operation?

Table 1. Perceived Level of Competencies of Barangay Secretaries

Competency Domain	**AWV**	**SD**	**Description**	**Interpretation**
A. Shorthand Writing Skills	3.43	1.03	Agree	Competent
B. Office Management	4.15	0.76	Agree	Competent
C. Records Management	4.14	0.81	Agree	Competent
D. Human Relations	4.41	0.65	Strongly Agree	Highly Competent
E. Computer Literacy and Operation	3.92	0.94	Agree	Competent
Overall	**4.01**	**0.89**	**Agree**	**Competent**

AWV = Average Weighted Value; SD = Standard Deviation

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Table 1 presents the barangay officials' assessments of the competencies of barangay secretaries. The overall AWV of 4.01 (SD = 0.89), described as Agree and interpreted as Competent, indicates a generally favorable assessment of the five competency domains. Human Relations had the highest AWV of 4.41 (SD = 0.65), interpreted as Highly Competent. Office Management (AWV = 4.15, SD = 0.76) and Records Management (AWV = 4.14, SD = 0.81) followed, both interpreted as Competent. Computer Literacy and Operation had an AWV of 3.92 (SD = 0.94), also interpreted as Competent. Shorthand Writing Skills received the lowest rating (AWV = 3.43, SD = 1.03), although it remained within the Competent range. Its relatively higher SD indicates greater variation in the officials' assessments. The findings are broadly consistent with Ocat-Beloy and Prado (2026), who reported generally favorable office-skills ratings but identified specific ICT competency needs. Catid et al. (2026) also identified training needs among barangay secretaries, while Salazar (2022) reported differences in competency levels across administrative domains. The results suggest that further professional development could prioritize shorthand writing and digital skills.

2. What is the perceived level of challenges encountered by barangay secretaries, as assessed by barangay officials?

Challenges Encountered by Barangay Secretaries

Table 2. Perceived Level of Challenges Encountered by Barangay Secretaries

Challenges Encountered	AWV	SD	Description	Interpretation
1. Lack of productive interaction among coworkers	2.32	1.09	Disagree	Low
2. Communication gap between/among personnel	2.51	1.29	Disagree	Low
3. Stressful job	2.86	1.41	Somewhat Agree	Average
4. Delays in the release of the budget	2.46	1.24	Disagree	Low
5. Insufficient annual budget to accomplish the target	2.40	1.08	Disagree	Low
6. Inability to fully utilize office equipment and devices	2.42	1.17	Disagree	Low
7. Inadequate office supplies and materials	2.51	1.15	Disagree	Low
8. Staff development programs and training grants are seldom provided	2.75	1.23	Somewhat Agree	Average
9. Non-cooperation among colleagues	2.29	1.29	Disagree	Low
10. Insufficient office space and poor office layout	2.61	1.34	Somewhat Agree	Average
11. Poor working environment	2.50	1.31	Disagree	Low
12. Time management to meet deadlines	2.93	1.46	Somewhat Agree	Average
Overall	**2.55**	**1.10**	**Disagree**	**Low**

AWV = Average Weighted Value; SD = Standard Deviation

Table 2 presents the barangay officials' assessments of the challenges encountered by barangay secretaries. The overall AWV of 2.55 (SD = 1.10) was described as Disagree and interpreted as Low. The highest-rated concern was time management in meeting deadlines (AWV = 2.93, SD = 1.46), followed by stressful work (AWV = 2.86, SD = 1.41), limited staff development opportunities (AWV = 2.75, SD = 1.23), and insufficient office space and poor layout (AWV = 2.61, SD = 1.34). All four items fell within the Average range. Non-cooperation among colleagues (AWV = 2.29, SD = 1.29) and lack of productive interaction among co-workers (AWV = 2.32, SD = 1.09) received the lowest ratings. These relatively low interpersonal challenge ratings are consistent with the Highly Competent assessment for Human Relations in Table 1; however, they do not establish a causal explanation. The findings identify workload, time pressure, professional development, and office conditions as priority areas for practical support. Catid et al. (2026) similarly emphasized the need for targeted training, and the Department of the Interior and Local Government Region XII (2025) reported a technical-training initiative for barangay secretaries.

3. Is there a significant relationship between the perceived levels of competencies and challenges encountered by barangay secretaries?

Table 3.Test of Relationship Between the Perceived Competencies and Challenges encountered of Barangay Secretaries

Variables Correlated	rho value	p value	Interpretation
Perceived competencies and challenges encountered of Barangay Secretaries	0.086	0.247	Negligible/slight positive correlation; not significant

Table 3 presents the relationship between the perceived levels of competencies and challenges encountered by barangay secretaries. Spearman rank-order correlation yielded a rho value of 0.086 and a p-value of 0.247. The coefficient indicates a negligible or slight positive correlation, while the p-value exceeds the 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was therefore not rejected. These results do not provide sufficient statistical evidence of a significant relationship between the two variables in the sample. The result does not show that competencies cause or reduce challenges, nor does it prove that no relationship exists in all settings. Barangay secretaries could receive favorable competency ratings while their offices still face deadlines, workload demands, resource constraints, or limited training opportunities. Salazar (2022) likewise documented both competency strengths and workplace difficulties among barangay secretaries, while Catid et al. (2026) identified continuing capacity-building needs.

DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that barangay officials generally perceived barangay secretaries in the Local Government Unit of Dipolog City as competent in their administrative and clerical functions. Human relations emerged as the strongest area, followed by office management, records management,

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and computer literacy and operation, while shorthand writing skills received the lowest competency rating. The perceived level of challenges was low overall, although meeting deadlines, job-related stress, limited staff development opportunities, and inadequate office space were comparatively more noticeable concerns. Furthermore, the analysis revealed no statistically significant relationship between perceived competencies and challenges. This means that the competency ratings were not significantly related to the challenge ratings in the sample. This implies that capacity-building initiatives could be complemented by workload management, adequate office resources, and organizational support to strengthen barangay secretarial services.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, barangay officials generally assessed the barangay secretaries of Dipolog City as competent, with human relations as their strongest domain and shorthand writing as the area most in need of improvement. The overall level of perceived challenges was low, although time management, work-related stress, limited professional development, and inadequate office space remained noteworthy concerns. The lack of a statistically significant relationship between perceived competencies and challenges indicates that the study did not establish a meaningful link between the two ratings. This means that stronger competency ratings did not necessarily correspond to fewer perceived challenges. This implies that professional development, practical workload support, and sufficient administrative resources could be addressed together to strengthen barangay-level public service delivery.

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Conflict of interest statement: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethical review statement: The study obtained approval from the Research and Ethics Committee of Andres Bonifacio College, Inc., prior to questionnaire administration.

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