



Leadership Practices through Appreciative Inquiry for Improved Governance

Rheajane A. Rosales¹, Aileen Manicani², Liz Amos³ & Abigail M. Cabaguing⁴
Samar State University, Arteche Blvd. Catbalogan City, Philippines¹

ARTICLE INFORMATION

History:

Received 29/09/2022

Final Revision 02/12/2022

Accepted 15/12/2022

Keywords:

Appreciative Inquiry

Transformative Leadership

Leadership Practices

ABSTRACT

Effective leadership is a critical factor in achieving improved governance within organizations and institutions. This study explores the application of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as a transformative approach to leadership practices aimed at enhancing governance. Appreciative Inquiry is a strengths-based methodology that focuses on identifying and building upon an organization's positive attributes rather than dwelling on its weaknesses. This research investigates how leaders can utilize AI to foster positive change in governance structures, decision-making processes, and organizational culture. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews with leaders who have implemented AI in governance settings, along with quantitative surveys to assess the impact of AI on organizational performance and governance outcomes. The study revealed that leadership practices were discovered through the 5D cycle of AI and this process may promote the culture of Appreciative Learning. It is recommended therefore that AI may be utilized not only to discover the best practices of every LGU to improve local governance, but this may be practiced all the time to encourage positive ideas and attract positive vibes within their organization.

I. INTRODUCTION

The importance of effective leadership in achieving improved governance within organizations and institutions cannot be overstated. This study investigates the transformative potential of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as an innovative approach to leadership practices aimed at enhancing governance in barangays. AI, a strengths-based methodology, stands in contrast to conventional problem-focused approaches, focusing instead on identifying and harnessing an organization's positive attributes. This research aims to shed light on how leaders can employ AI to instigate positive changes in governance structures, decision-making processes, and organizational culture within barangays. Effective public organizations require strong leadership. Effective leaders have the ability to affect societal change through achieving positive follower and organizational outcomes, developing key policies, and effectively implementing public policy.

Organizational outcomes, employee performance, social change, and effective policy development and implementation are all influenced by good public leadership. Individual and situational circumstances that affect policy execution must be considered by leaders (Werts & Brewer, 2015). It's crucial to understand how personnel in the public sector think about concepts like leadership, societal change, public policy, and organizational goals. Effective leaders who have the ability to inspire, motivate, and promote commitment among their followers have the potential to have a positive impact on public policy formation and implementation. Leaders who have strong grip on their subordinates' performance and have a good impact on corporate outcomes might use this skill to influence public policy and social change. Understanding the meaning of good public leadership has important implications for improving professional practices in the field of public administration. The study findings offer insight to improve human resource policies for



developing both leaders and followers. More leadership research is needed that offer public leader's guidance on how to motivate and inspire followers (Van Wart, 2013). Effective human resources policies help improve leader, follower, and organizational performance. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is one organizational development change process in crafting public policies for good public leadership. Positive core of organizational life is touched despite various governance challenges in service delivery. Search and discovery of such is designed to value, prize, and honor. Networks relatedness and at alive state are assumed. AI operates from the premise that asking positive questions draw out human spirit in organizations (Gallos, J.V., 2006). Recognition of the positive core, explicitly and allowing ownership of all. Following the 4D cycle: discovery, dreams, designs, and destiny will reveal and uncover development of positive socially constructed ideas and eventually become an antidote to negative socially constructed problems.

The specific objectives of this study are to explore the best leadership practices and the application of AI in the context of governance improvement, using a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys. By examining how leadership practices are discovered through the 5D cycle of AI, this research contributes to our understanding of how AI may promote a culture of Appreciative Learning. Ultimately, it is recommended that AI be utilized not only to discover best practices for improving local governance but also as an ongoing practice to cultivate positive ideas and foster a culture of positivity within organizations and communities. This study addresses a critical gap in the literature by shedding light on the transformative potential of AI in the realm of leadership and governance.

II. METHODOLOGY

This section is structured to provide a comprehensive overview of the research design, research samples, data collection method, and data analysis techniques employed in the study. The presentation of the methodology is tailored to the specific requirements and focus of this research, ensuring a clear and logical exposition of the research process.

Research Design

This study explored the best leadership practices of the participants through Appreciative Inquiry. This will employ a qualitative research design to gain a deep and nuanced understanding of the leadership practices and the application of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) within the context of governance improvement. Qualitative research is particularly well-suited for exploring the complexities of leadership and organizational dynamics.

Research Samples

Purposive sampling is used to carefully select participants who possess firsthand experience with Appreciative Inquiry (AI) practices in leadership roles within their respective barangays. The inclusion criteria established by the researchers are as follows: (1) Each group must comprise the barangay captain, barangay counselors, and barangay secretary; (2) participants should have served in their current positions for a minimum of one year; (3) informed consent to participate in the study is obtained from all selected individuals. It is important to note that all participating barangays collectively constitute a single group for the purposes of data collection, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of AI's impact on governance practices across multiple community settings.

Data Collection Method

The researchers will conduct an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) session with barangay officials in selected municipalities in Samar province, treating each participating barangay as a single group. Prior to the AI session, all necessary permissions and consents, including recording and publication consent, will be obtained from the authorities and participants. A trained facilitator will guide the AI 4-D cycle, using a template developed by the researchers to structure the discussion. Each cycle's questions will be addressed by group members, with designated leaders facilitating discussions, a secretariat recording outputs, and one presenter summarizing findings. The entire AI process, including discussions and sharing, will be completed within a maximum time frame of 4 hours to ensure efficiency and knowledge sharing among groups.



Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study follows a thematic analysis approach. Transcripts from interviews and data from document analysis are coded and analyzed to identify recurring themes, patterns, and insights related to leadership practices, AI application, and its impact on governance. This iterative process allows for the emergence of rich narratives and a deeper understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical principles, including informed consent, confidentiality, and participant anonymity, are strictly adhered to throughout the research process. All participants are provided with clear information about the study's purpose and their rights, and their consent is obtained before data collection. Additionally, the researchers ensured that this study will conform to the national and institutional guidelines of the university. Ethical approval from the Institutional Research Ethics Review Committee for the study was obtained before the conduct of this study.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following themes emerged based on core tools of Appreciative Inquiry- the 5D Cycle. The 5D cycle are Define, Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny.

DEFINE – Use to clarify the area of work to be considered

Theme: Recognition received

Subtheme: Sanitation Awards

Grade 1 Zero Open Defecation Award

Grade 2 Zero Open Defecation recognition recently

One of the Solid Waste Management Awardee

Subtheme: Drug free community Award

- Just recently, three of our barangays received a recognition as a Drug Cleared Barangay.
- The peace and order in our community have improved a lot.

Theme: Improved community

Sub-theme: Improved water system

- A water tank was placed in our barangay through the help of KALAHI CIDSS
- In terms of the water supply and sanitation, we are now categorized under Level 2
- Most of the households have faucets now unlike before

Sub-theme: Improve Sanitation

- We are upgraded to grade 2 from grade 1 ZOD
- We barely see feces in the streets now.
- Each household is required to have toilet.

The collected data reveals several prominent themes that signify the positive transformations and accolades experienced within the community. Under the theme of "Recognition Received," the subtheme of "Sanitation Awards" stands out, with acknowledgments such as the Grade 1 Zero Open Defecation Award and Grade 2 Zero Open Defecation recognition showcasing the community's commitment to sanitation. Additionally, the community has been lauded for its solid waste management practices. The "Drug-Free Community Award" subtheme underscores significant strides made in tackling substance abuse, resulting in a noticeable improvement in the community's peace and order situation. In terms of an "Improved Community," the installation of a water tank, courtesy of KALAHI CIDSS, signifies enhanced water supply infrastructure. The community has achieved Level 2 status in water supply and sanitation, with most households now equipped with faucets, marking improved access to clean water. Furthermore, their transition from Grade 1 to Grade 2 Zero Open Defecation status reflects substantial progress in sanitation practices, leading to cleaner public spaces, while the mandate for each household to possess a toilet underscores the community's dedication to advancing sanitation standards. These themes collectively portray a community that has made commendable strides in multiple facets, serving as a testament to their commitment to progress and well-being.

DISCOVERY – It rediscovers and remembers the organization or community's



successes, strengths and periods of excellence.

Theme: Transformational Leadership

Sub-theme: Idealized influence

- Our Chairman is leading by example. We never come late because he's always early.
- We have high respect for the commitment our chairman is showing.
- His leadership inspires us to change and do better.
- It's rare to have a leader that gives you the autonomy to perform our tasks.
- Our leader can transform problem to possibilities by looking at the economic value of some community problems.

Sub-theme: Change agent

- Our chair encouraged us to explore new ideas and push status quo.
- He initiates collaboration with NGOs for funding our programs.
- He is excited for our training using computers. He really welcome digital transformation.
- Our leader encouraged us to enroll TESDA vocational courses for additional learning.

Theme: Involved Community

Sub-theme: Involved community

- We consult the community members regarding the plans of the officials in the implementation of our programs.
- Feedback is solicited from the community members.
- Plans are revisited based on community feedback and suggestions.

Sub-theme: Implementation Involvement

- The community adheres to the barangay ordinance. Rewards and penalties are implemented to community members.
- Community members are very cooperative in the implementation of the programs.
- The community members are willing to gain additional learning through TESDA trainings.

In this section, the collected data unveils two overarching themes: "Transformational Leadership" and "Involved Community," each with distinct subthemes. Under "Transformational

Leadership," the subtheme of "Idealized Influence" showcases the Chairman as a role model who embodies punctuality and commitment, earning the community's respect. His leadership empowers individuals with autonomy and the ability to view challenges as economic opportunities. In the subtheme of "Change Agent," the Chairman serves as a catalyst for innovation, fostering collaborations with NGOs, embracing digital transformation, and encouraging skill development through TESDA courses. The second theme, "Involved Community," underscores the community's active role in decision-making, seeking feedback from community members and revisiting plans based on their valuable input. Additionally, community members actively adhere to ordinances, demonstrate cooperation in program implementation, and eagerly pursue further learning through TESDA training. Together, these themes illuminate a dynamic synergy between transformational leadership and an engaged community, driving positive change and progress within the community's framework.

DREAM – Imagining '**what could be**'.

Imagining uses past achievements and successes identified in the discovery phase to imagine new possibilities and envisage a preferred future.

Theme: Sustainability of Best Practices

Sub-theme: Drug-free environment

- We hope that we could maintain a drug free environment.
- We hope to maintain a drug free community for our children.
- We dream of maintaining the peace and order by ensuring a drug free barangay.

Sub-theme: Health and Sanitation

- We dream of increasing the vaccination rate in our community to prevent high incidence of mortality and morbidity.
- It is our dream to be recognized as Grade 3 Zero Open Defecation Barangay.
- We hope that all households will have their own faucet.
- We are dreaming for a 100% community adherence on waste segregation.
- We are still aiming to be a Sanitation Awardee



Theme: Visionary commitment

Sub-theme: Adaptable to change

- We are dreaming of a community where members are not hesitant to change.
- We hope that this community will embrace trends that will improve our way of living.
- We hope that the leaders will be able to develop more ideas and programs based on trends and demands.
- We dream of a community with open minded members in changing old ways to welcome change.

Subtheme: Resilient community

- We hope that in the future our community will have all the resources to be resilient like economically, socially, and environmentally.
- We wish to have skilled members of the community that will capacitate the members to be resilient.

In the 'dream' section, the collected data reveals a prominent theme of "Sustainability of Best Practices" with distinct subthemes, reflecting the community's forward-looking aspirations. Under the first subtheme, "Drug-free Environment," community members express their hopes and dreams of maintaining a drug-free environment, emphasizing the importance of peace, safety, and a wholesome community for their children. In the subtheme of "Health and Sanitation," the community envisions increasing vaccination rates to prevent health issues, achieving higher sanitation standards, ensuring widespread access to clean water through household faucets, fostering waste segregation, and aspiring to attain Sanitation Awards.

The second overarching theme, "Visionary Commitment," embodies the community's proactive stance towards change and growth. In the subtheme "Adaptable to Change," community members dream of a dynamic community that readily embraces change, welcomes innovative trends, and encourages leaders to develop programs aligned with evolving needs. Furthermore, in the subtheme "Resilient Community," their vision extends to economic, social, and environmental resilience, emphasizing the importance of community members' skill development to achieve resilience in various aspects. These themes reflect a community

committed to sustaining best practices, anticipating change, and embracing a visionary and resilient future.

DESIGN – Determining 'what should be'.

Design brings together the stories from discovery with the imagination and creativity from dream. We call it bringing the 'best of what is' together with 'what might be', to create 'what should be – the ideal'

Theme: Strategies

Sub-theme: Clear Ordinance

- The officials shall create clear ordinances for the different programs to be implemented.
- Officials shall be trained to enhanced their knowledge and skills in constructing ordinance.
- There should be concrete planning to all ordinances.

Subtheme: Needs Assessment

- Programs must be developed based on needs assessment.
- Programs must be aligned based on the community needs.

In the fourth cycle of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), which is the "Design" phase focusing on determining 'what should be,' the data emphasizes the theme of "Strategies" with two distinct subthemes. Firstly, under "Clear Ordinance," community officials are driven to create precise and well-structured ordinances for the effective implementation of various programs. Training initiatives are proposed to enhance the officials' knowledge and skills in ordinance construction, emphasizing the importance of concrete planning for all ordinances. Secondly, in the subtheme of "Needs Assessment," community members stress the significance of developing programs that are rooted in a thorough need assessment. The alignment of programs with community needs is seen as essential for realizing the envisioned ideal. These themes collectively underscore the community's commitment to strategic planning and aligning their efforts with identified needs to create an ideal future that meets their aspirations and requirements.

DESTINY- 'Creating 'what will be' The fifth stage in the 5Ds process identifies how the



design is delivered, and how it's embedded into groups, communities and organizations. In early appreciative inquiry development, it was called 'delivery', based on more traditional organizational development practice. The term 'destiny' is more prevalent now.

Theme: Transformed Community

Sub-theme: Turning threats to opportunities

- Always see the economic value of threats
- Turning problem to possibilities
- Changing Eco-breaks program to nutrition program

Sub-theme: Social Transformation

- Engaged members of the community
- Participative community members
- Individual willingness to change
- Changing old ways for the better
- We love to have a modern community

In the fifth and final stage of the 5Ds cycle, known as "Destiny" or 'Creating 'what will be,' the data revolves around the overarching theme of a "Transformed Community" with two significant subthemes. Firstly, under "Turning Threats to Opportunities," community members exhibit a proactive mindset by consistently identifying the economic value in perceived threats, shifting problems towards possibilities. This is exemplified by the transformation of the Eco-breaks program into a nutrition program, signifying their innovative approach to challenges. Secondly, within the subtheme of "Social Transformation," the community expresses a deep commitment to engagement and participation. They highlight the willingness of community members to actively participate in change, their openness to adapting old practices for the better, and their aspiration to create a modern and progressive community. Collectively, these themes signify a community that has embraced a destiny of transformation, resilience, and progress, turning challenges into opportunities and actively shaping 'what will be' for their collective future.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study has delved into the transformative power of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as applied to leadership practices for the

betterment of governance within barangays. Through a comprehensive exploration of the 5D cycle of AI—Define, Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny—the research has unveiled critical insights and aspirations within the participating communities. Firstly, the data revealed the remarkable achievements in sanitation and community recognition, as exemplified by the attainment of Zero Open Defecation Awards, Solid Waste Management accolades, and Drug-Free Community Awards. These recognitions underscore the commitment to hygiene and safety within these barangays, indicative of the positive impact of AI on governance. Secondly, the study highlighted the role of transformational leadership, where leaders serve as inspiring role models and change agents. These leaders encourage innovation, collaboration, and skill development among community members, emphasizing the importance of adaptive leadership in promoting positive governance.

Furthermore, the research underscored the significance of community involvement in decision-making and implementation processes. By seeking feedback, revisiting plans based on community input, and promoting active engagement, these communities exemplify the power of participatory governance. Moreover, the vision of a future with improved health, sanitation, adaptability to change, and resilience emerged as central themes. These aspirations reflect a commitment to continuous improvement and a forward-looking mindset fostered by the AI process. Lastly, the "Design" and "Destiny" phases of AI emphasized the importance of clear ordinances and strategic planning aligned with community needs. This forward-looking approach ensures that governance practices remain effective and responsive to the evolving needs and challenges faced by barangays.

In conclusion, the key takeaway from this study is that Appreciative Inquiry has the potential to be a transformative tool for leadership practices and governance. It empowers leaders, engages communities, and helps envision a future marked by positive change, adaptability, and resilience. By embracing AI, barangays can aspire to a future where governance is characterized by effective leadership, community involvement, and a commitment to continuous improvement. This study encourages the broader application of AI as a means to foster positive ideas, promote effective governance, and attract



positive vibes within organizations and communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The researchers would like extend a sincere appreciation to Samar State University for generously funding this research project. Your support has been instrumental in enabling us to conduct this study and contribute to the field of leadership and governance.

Also, the researchers want to express gratitude to the participants who generously shared their time and insights, as well as the authorities who granted permission for the study. Your valuable contributions were integral to the success of this research. Furthermore, the researchers acknowledge the guidance and assistance provided by those experts and colleagues throughout the research process. Your feedback and support were invaluable in shaping this study.

Lastly, we extend our thanks to all those who, directly or indirectly, contributed to this research endeavor. Your collective efforts have played a crucial role in making this study possible.

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