

# COVID-19 Challenges and Responses of the Roxas City Government towards Sustainable Strategies for Inclusive Policy Directions

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**Abstract:** *The Local Government Unit is responsible for ensuring the welfare of its people. This research determined the preparatory and interventive measures in response to COVID-19 pandemic in Roxas City as to policy changes, health programs, social services, and economic strategies. It looked into the challenges encountered, level of response, if differences exist in age, sex, educational attainment, estimated monthly family income, position in government, and respondents' length of service, and if there is significant relationship between challenges encountered and level of response. This was a descriptive-correlational research, which utilized a validated and reliability tested researcher-made survey questionnaire. The 318 respondents consisted of Barangay Officials, Day Care Workers, Barangay Tanods, and Barangay Health Workers. Data were processed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences employing frequency, percentage, mean, t-test, Analysis of Variance and Pearson r. The results revealed that preparatory and interventive measures considered highly responsive were in policy changes, social services, economic strategies, and health programs. Trust in the government was the most challenging aspect although response was found highly responsive. Significant differences were established on sex, estimated monthly family income, and position in government for both challenges and response. Challenges encountered was also found significantly associated with level of response.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Challenges and Responses, Roxas City Government, Sustainable Strategies, Policy Direction

## 1. Introduction

The Roxas City Government is the principal government body in charge of guaranteeing the welfare of all citizens residing within its territorial and political subdivision through the provision of quality basic services and proper implementation of ordinances, rules, and regulations in accordance with the current laws of the Philippines.

The City Social Welfare and Development Office, as a leader in social protection and health care services, is mandated to work towards the achievement of improved capacities and opportunities of the poor, vulnerable, and disadvantaged individuals, families and communities, to enable them to improve their quality of life. One of the programs of the Roxas City Government is to provide immediate assistance in cash or in kind to individuals and/or families, whose normal functioning has been hampered due to difficult situation brought by dysfunctional circumstances that may be caused by poor health conditions, natural and man-made calamities, and other crises.

In the first six months of 2020, COVID-19 has affected almost all countries and fifty million people around the world. More than half of the world's population experienced lockdowns and governments operating in a context of radical uncertainty, and faced with difficult trade-offs given the health, economic and social challenges it raises (OECD, 2020). These resulted to work disruption and stoppage, loss of livelihood, as well as health, economic and social difficulties. The government was put in dilemma of choosing between sustainability of economy and health and protection of the people.

The Roxas City Government have reacted quickly to address the economic and fiscal consequences of the crisis and adopted measures to support and address issues concerning health, economic, social, and fiscal affecting the communities. But the COVID-19 has a strong territorial dimension with significant policy implications and challenges for managing its consequences that needs to be considered by policymakers and program implementers.

Communities around the world are united by these challenges engendered by the COVID-19 threat. The Local Government Units (LGUs) are at the forefront of the fight. The tone and immediacy of their response to this emergency not only define their leadership, but also directly impact the health and wellness of their citizens.

Pursuing this research would give the local government officials an idea on the manner, which the LGU and its various front line service providers, including legislators or policymakers respond to the COVID-19 crisis and how this will influence citizens' trust and societal well-being for years to come, as to how the LGUs will establish strong, transparent, and accountable spending measures in response to emergency relief packages to ensure proper funding allocation and regulation; responsible for distributing support inclusively and transparently among citizens and coordination with the National Government Agencies, including private sectors and International Non-Government Organizations in order to establish a convergence response to COVID-19 crisis. This research may also help the researcher identify quick measures for the LGU to ramp up health service provision, revise fiscal policies, and implementation of new public safety regulations. Also, opportunities for innovations, collaborations, and creative solutions in response to the pandemic while strengthening

the delivery of services to the citizens and/or the general public.

This study determined the challenges and response of the Roxas City Government during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically the preparatory and interventive measures the Roxas City Government put in place in response to the pandemic and their level of response in terms of policy changes, health programs, social services, and economic strategies. Likewise, it determined the level of challenges encountered as a whole and in terms of the economy, health care, security, and trust in government. The study also looked into whether there are significant differences in the challenges as well as in the level of response of the Roxas City Government when respondents were grouped according to their profile. And, if there is a significant relationship between these challenges and the level of response to come up with recommendations based on the results of the study towards inclusive policy directions and strategies that can be adopted by the Local Government Units.

## 2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study was anchored on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 adopted by the United Nations (2015) to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all. It seeks to strengthen universal peace in the context of eradicating poverty in all of its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, a global challenge and an essential prerequisite for long-term development.

Following the lead of the United Nations' adoption of the SDG, the Philippines' Ambisyon Natin 2040 was introduced to enable and empower the Filipinos to achieve "matatag, maginhawa, at panatag na buhay" through building a prosperous, predominantly middle-class society, where no one is poor; promoting a long and healthy life; becoming smarter and more innovative; and building a high-trust society. The Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022 has been formulated to lay down the foundation for inclusive growth, a high-trust and resilient society, and a globally competitive knowledge economy (NEDA, 2021).

Additionally, Besley and Burgess (2000), in their Political Economy of Government Responsiveness Theory stated that in low income countries, where vulnerable populations rely on state action for their survival, the key issue is then what institutions-economic, social and political-can be built to enhance the effectiveness of the state in social protection. Government responsiveness is likely to be a function of the severity of shocks. As shocks get bigger and affect a larger group of people, the electoral cost of not responding to them increases. Over time, measures, including public food distribution, calamity relief expenditure, and public works projects had been developed to deal with these shocks.

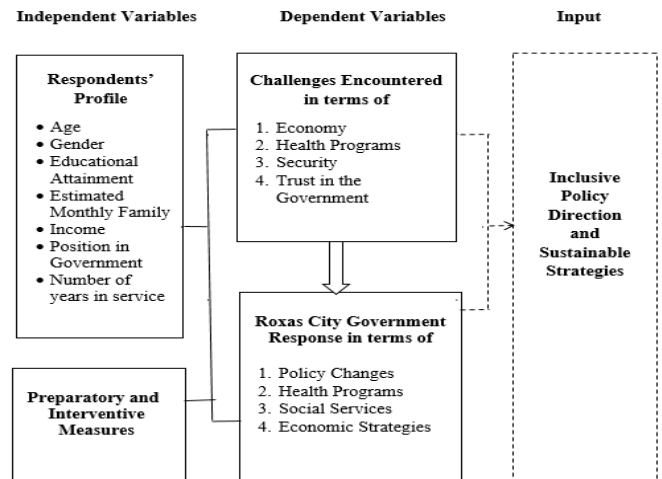


Figure 1. Schematic diagram showing the hypothesized relationship between the independent and dependent variables of the study.

## 3. Research Design

This study included the 318 respondents from a population of 428. They consisted of 5 City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) personnel, 47 Barangay Captains, 329 Barangay Councilors, and 48 Child Development Workers. Out of 3, 432 total population in these barangays. The sample size calculated using the Cochran Formula was 318.

A researcher-made survey questionnaire was used as the research instrument, which was validated by the panel of experts and the City Social Welfare and Development (CSWD) officer of Roxas City. Moreover, all questions and items were either revised and retained as recommended by the advisory committee.

To analyze the data gathered, statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, and mean were used as descriptive statistics. The researcher also employed t-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Pearson product-moment correlation as inferential and correlational statistics set at .05 alpha.

## 4. Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1 presents the level of challenges encountered by the Roxas City Government during COVID-19 pandemic as a whole and in terms of economy, health program, security, and trust in government. The result revealed that the level of challenges encountered by the Roxas City Government during the COVID-19 pandemic as a whole received a grand mean of 4.80, verbally interpreted as very challenging. The four components of challenges encountered by the Roxas City Government had means ranging from 4.78 to 4.85, which were all interpreted as highly responsive. Of the four components, trust in government got the highest mean of 4.85, followed by security with 4.81, economic with 4.79, and the lowest is health programs with 4.78. The result implies that the respondents find all aspects of governance for Roxas City as challenged during the pandemic. This can be inferred that the respondents of the study, who were the frontline officers of the Local Government Unit of Roxas City in its goal at minimizing the impact of the pandemic,

encountered challenges, first and foremost, on the issue of trusting the government. It cannot be denied that the general public were watchful of the changes in policies and program implementation of the Local Government Units relative to the issue of corruption in government service. Changes in fund allocation, especially channeling most of it to health expenditures to buy protective gears, sanitation supplies, medicines, and vaccines, must go through grueling processes despite the urgency of the situation. The public also did not trust the vaccines bought by the government due to issues of efficacy and side effects causing delay and low vaccination rate. The lockdown, though short for Roxas City, brought economic uncertainties, hurt the business sector, and caused hunger among the marginalized.

Moreover, the head of the City Environment and Natural Resources Office, who was also commissioned to head the Command Center, disclosed that it has been a hundred years since the last pandemic was experienced and there was no standard template to follow on how to respond and how effective would be the response to cure or mitigate the spread of the virus. Specifically, the immediate problems encountered by the city government when it hit Roxas City were the lack of knowledge and instruments to detect the virus, how to manage the patients who were positive of COVID-19, how to limit mobility of people to mitigate the spread of the virus, lack of isolation and quarantine facilities, inadequate number of medical and other frontline personnel, and logistics and budget to operationalize effective response and management of the pandemic situation, among many others.

This result of the study conforms with the results of the study of Geanuracos (2022), who enumerated that among the challenges faced by local governments in the United States of America were revenue losses, budget cuts and staffing changes. She further opined that while some governments have already instituted significant staff cuts, most will not feel the full impact of pandemic budgets until the 21/22 budget year and beyond. While home prices have remained stable or risen in some places, experts estimate local governments to face between a 5 and 40 percent decline in revenue based on reliance on tourism and sales taxes. Additionally, it was observed that governments offered retirement packages and instituted hiring freezes and furloughs in the hope of avoiding layoffs. Many staff close to retirement chose to leave rather than face belt-tightening. Similarly, Hapal (2021) asserted that during the pandemic the lockdown was difficult, especially for the poor, while the World Bank forecasts that 100 million people will fall into poverty. Their situation was further exacerbated by the slow distribution of the emergency subsidies under the government's Social Amelioration Program (SAP).

**Table 1:** Level of challenges encountered by the Roxas City Government during COVID-19 pandemic as a whole

Indicator	Grand Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Economy	4.79	Very Challenging
Health Program	4.78	Very Challenging
Security	4.81	Very Challenging
Trust in Government	4.85	Very Challenging
Grand Mean	<b>4.8</b>	Very Challenging

#### **Mean Range Verbal Interpretation**

4.21 – 5.00 Very Challenging

3.41 – 4.20 Challenging

2.61 – 3.40 Moderately Challenging

1.81 – 2.60 Less Challenging

1.00 – 1.80 Least Challenging

Presented on Table 2 are the responses of the Roxas City Government during the COVID-19 pandemic as a whole with a grand mean of 4.82. The result revealed the means, which ranged from 4.79 to 4.82, all of which had verbal interpretation of highly responsive. The City Government was more responsive in terms of economic strategies, which garnered the highest mean of 4.88, followed by social services with a mean of 4.82, while health program got the lowest mean of 4.79. Although these components were verbally interpreted as highly responsive, Roxas City Government needs to exert more efforts, incorporate learning to plans to improve its level of response in the future.

In an interview with the chief of City Environment and Natural Resources, revealed that the City Government implemented measures that could best harness within its limited budget and capacity, while following the advises and guidelines set by the national government. First, a one command center was established to coordinate all responses and measures with the national, provincial, and barangay governments, hospitals, and all other agencies and sectors of the society. The Sanguniang Panlungsod passed ordinances to limit the mobility of people, especially the vulnerable sector; required the mandatory wearing of face mask, face shield and social distancing; observance of minimum health standards; establishments of checkpoints in boundaries, ports, seaports and strategic areas; establishment of contact tracing mechanisms; and the provision of budgetary support to purchase equipment, facilities, Personal Protective Equipment, supplies and materials, vaccines and medicines.

With the budget passed by the Sangguniang Panlungsod, the City Government also procured the Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) laboratory so that swab test can be done immediately and people found positive can also be isolated immediately. The Hortus Botanicus was converted into an isolation facility, and private hotels, schools, and other establishments were used as quarantine facilities for Overseas Filipino Workers, travelers, and direct contacts with negative results. More medical personnel were hired to augment the exhausted and inadequate number of frontline workers. The Roxas City Government has likewise accepted donations and help from the private sector and other government agencies in terms of equipment, supplies, manpower, ingenious inventions of Personal Protective Equipment, food, free transportation, or whatever can be provided in helping the City Government and one another to combat the disease. Mobility was limited and displaced workers were given assistance.

The City Government also devised an ingenious way of providing food to majority of the population. The "Bugas para sa taga-Roxas" became a hallmark response that provided food security to the people in the midst of hardship and economic displacement. The barangay governments



were accorded more roles and responsibilities to be in the frontline of the war against the pandemic and the first responders at the barangay level. They were provided with the trainings, logistics and the opportunity to be the first level of defense and offense against the disease. The BHERTs were organized, the Barangay Tanods were mobilized, the Day Care workers were utilized for the distribution of food packs, barangay-based checkpoints were established, and oxygen tanks were purchased to take care of home-based patients, among others. Roxas City Government also allocated budget and immediately facilitated the procurement of vaccines when it became available in the country. The City Government was the first to procure Molnupiravir as a cure to the disease and distributed the same for free to Roxas City residents.

The result implies that the respondents perceived that the Roxas City Government did well in giving response to the challenges brought by the pandemic. Its response and measures adapted to soften the impact of the pandemic, followed outstanding principle of whole-of-government approach to the situation. It took the lead, but it gathered its strength and effectiveness from the unity, cooperation and contributions of everyone, which ultimately redounded to the benefit of all.

Condoba, Benito and Sanchez (2021) concluded that the pandemic changed the life of people and presented an opportunity for political leaders to reflect on their management to identify mistakes and improve the implementation of effective measures. Hapal (2021) averred that the government response was more focused on containment and law enforcement strategies. Additionally, it was observed that governments offered retirement packages and instituted hiring freezes and furloughs in the hope of avoiding layoffs. Many staff close to retirement chose to leave rather than face belt-tightening (Geanuracos, 2022). To keep the number of infections and mortality at bay while minimizing negative economic impact, Talabis (2021) presented that Local Government Units (LGUs), depending on the extent of the pandemic in their locality, only kept essential businesses open or allowed all establishments to operate at a certain capacity. Other measures also involve prohibiting individuals at a certain age bracket from going outside of their homes. Some LGUs have demonstrated a remarkable response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Table 2.** Level of response of the Roxas City Government as a whole.

Components	Grand Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Policy Changes	4.82	Highly Responsive
Health Program	4.79	Highly Responsive
Social Services	4.82	Highly Responsive
Economic Strategies	4.82	Highly Responsive
Grand Mean	4.82	Highly Responsive

**Mean Range Verbal Interpretation**

4.21 – 5.00 Highly Responsive

3.41 – 4.20 Responsive

2.61 – 3.40 Moderately Responsive

1.81 – 2.60 Less Responsive

1.00 – 1.80 Least Responsive

Data on the differences in the challenges encountered by the respondents when grouped according to selected variables is presented on Table 3. The result of the study displayed that significant differences in the challenges encountered when respondents were grouped according to sex, estimated family monthly income and position in the government were considered because the p-value of 0.012 for sex, 0.000 for estimated monthly family income, and 0.000 for position in the government were lesser than the alpha of 0.05.

On the other hand, the result also revealed no significant differences established when the respondents were grouped according to age, civil status, highest educational attainment and length of service because the p-value of 0.974 for age, 0.574 for civil status, 0.062 for educational attainment and 0.541 for length of service were greater than 0.05 alpha. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in the challenges encountered by the Roxas City Government in terms of sex, estimated family monthly income, and position in the government was rejected but accepted in terms of age, civil status, educational attainment, and length of service.

This result implies that respondents differ in their perception of challenges encountered when sex, estimated family monthly income, and position in the government were considered but perceived these challenges the same way when age, civil status, and educational attainment were looked into.

The result on the variable sex was in favor of the male respondents. The result further implies that female respondents were more challenged and may need more assistance to cope with the challenges brought by mitigating the impact of COVID-19. This result can be inferred to the fact that women have more health care responsibilities than men since they have to care for family members at home.

The result of the study affirms the result of the study presented by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2020). According to their study, men were hit harder by COVID-19 than women but since 70 percent of the health care workforce were women, the impact of the pandemic on them became increasingly severe. The OECD Development Centre’s Social Institutions and Gender Index’s (SIGI) findings suggest that travel restrictions, at-home quarantines, school and Day Care Center closures, and the increased risks faced by elderly relatives were expected to impose additional burdens on women, even when both women and their partners are confined and may be expected to continue working from home. Crucially, lockdown situations exacerbate risks of violence, exploitation, abuse or harassment against women, as has been seen from previous crises and from the early case of China during the COVID-19 crisis.

With regard to estimated monthly family income, the respondents of the study differ in their perception of the challenges they encountered. Based on the means, the result implies that the respondents of the study differ when their estimated monthly family income was considered in favor of those earning PhP15, 001 to PhP30, 000. This further implies that the challenges encountered by the respondents,

who are earning lower are more challenged. This can be generalized to the fact that those earning less may have difficulty getting their hands on needed supplies and equipment using their own money when the government fall short in providing them with these protective supplies and gears. At the same time, those earning less may suffer more financially when required to report for work given that they may not have personal vehicles to bring them to and from work and hiring a vehicle had cost them more than before since transportation means were also limited during this time.

The result of the study relates with the result of the study of Kalil, Mayer, and Shah (2020), who found that parents, who experienced household income losses alone or who struggle to make ends meet also experienced an increase in life stress. On the one hand, those who lost both job and income report feeling less hopeful about the future as do those who struggle to make ends meet.

Additionally, the survey conducted by Karpman et al. (2020) showed that as families cope with new financial challenges, many have experienced serious material hardships. Nearly one-third of adults reported that their families could not pay rent, mortgage, or utility bills, were food insecure, or went without medical care because of the cost of living during the pandemic. The respondents of this study who belong to the low income families may have not lost their jobs but members of the family may have and they too had to suffer from increased household expenses due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Moreso, Karpman et al. (2020) stated that a successful government response to the economic consequences of the pandemic is critical for sustaining families' health and well-being and allowing families to remain housed as major sectors of the economy remain closed. The success of this response will partly depend on its effectiveness in reaching the families hardest hit by the loss of jobs and incomes.

Looking into the result on the challenges encountered where significant difference was found when respondents were grouped according to position in the government, the result implies that the respondents of the study differ in their perception of the challenges encountered by the Roxas City Government during the pandemic when their position in the government is taken into consideration. The result can be attributed to the variation of responsibilities attached to a person's position in the government. Policymakers, who are decision-making individuals, have heavier responsibilities when it comes to planning, financing and overseeing. They are both mentally and physically challenged compared to ground implementers. On the other hand, ground implementers like the frontline employees, Barangay Officials, and Barangay Health Workers (BHW) may be physically rather than mentally challenged. However, they are more exposed to COVID-19 infections, which make them feel stressed out when performing their duties worrying that nobody will take care of their families or cannot go to work and lose income when they get infected.

Conferring to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2020) report, most public

servants are using new technology and ways of working to carry out their jobs. Online learning tools and coaching can help to up-skill the workforce, including digital skills. Leadership and management skills are also key to maintaining productivity in transformed work environments and supporting workers to manage the transition.

**Table 3:** Differences in the challenges encountered by the respondents when grouped according to profile

Variables	t – value/ F-value	p – value	Remarks
Age	0.026	0.974	ns
Sex	2.526	0.012	s
Civil Status	0.726	0.574	ns
Educational Attainment	2.160	0.062	ns
Estimated Monthly Family Income	-7.737	0.000	s
Position in the Government	12.005	0.000	s
Length of Service	0.616	0.541	ns

$p\text{-value} > 0.05 = \text{not significant}$

$p\text{-value} < 0.05 = \text{significant}$

Table 4 presents the differences in the level of response of the Roxas City Government during the COVID-19 pandemic. The result revealed significant differences in the level of response of the respondents when sex, estimated family income, and position in the government were considered because the p-value of 0.005 for sex, 0.000 for estimated family income, and 0.000 for position in the government were lesser than the alpha of 0.05.

Contrary, no significant differences were found in the level of response of the Roxas City Government during the COVID-19 pandemic, which age with a p-value of 0.872, civil status with 0.709, educational attainment with 0.058, and length of service with 0.560 were greater than 0.05 alpha. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in the level of response of the Roxas City Government in terms of sex, estimated monthly family income, and position in the government was rejected but accepted in terms of age, civil status, educational attainment, and length of service.

The result implies that male and female respondents differ in their perception of level of response in favor of the male respondents. The female respondents were less responsive than their male counterpart and may need more motivation to increase their level of response. The result may be attributed to the fact that women, especially married, are caught up in their household responsibilities compared to men who are more free to spend extra time to devote to service thus are more exposed to the level of response of the Roxas City Government.

The result of the study differs with the result of the study of Saeed et al. (2021), whose findings on the level of knowledge and practice toward COVID-19 reported significant differences in level of knowledge but no significant differences on practice toward COVID-19 to the respondents when grouped according to gender in favor of women.

With regard to estimated monthly family income, the respondents also differed in their perception of the level of response of the Roxas City Government. The result implies

that the respondents had different perception of the level of response of the Roxas City Government when their estimated monthly family income was considered in favor of those earning PhP15, 001 to PhP30, 000. The level of response of those who are earning lower are also less compared to those who are earning more. This can be inferred to the capability of those earning more to get more involved because they have the time, resources, and financial capability to extend more assistance beyond of what the government can provide. Their families do not depend on them to look for other sources of income to augment the families' household income.

The result of the study agrees with Morgan and Long's (2021) that among the countries in Asia, it can also be observed in the Philippines that various household characteristics including household income class were affected by the loss of job of one member of the household. Families experienced financial difficulties and affected other aspects in life like education due to insufficient internet connections and lack of digital devices.

Likewise, the result also implies that respondents are not the same in their perception of the level of response of the Roxas City Government when their position in government were considered. The respondents differ in their outlook of the level of response the Roxas City Government gave during the pandemic. It can be deduced that the difference lies in the information the respondents received depending on their position in the government. Government employees working with the implementers in the planning and commanding aspects of the response to COVID-19 such as the Barangay Captains and Department Heads of the Local Government Units may have received more information compared to Barangay Health Workers and frontline employees of the City Government. Sensitive information may have been kept at the higher ranks so as not to jeopardize implementation of programs such as the kind and amount of vaccines available, the personal information of COVID-19 deaths and the likes, which may violate the data privacy of persons.

**Table 4:** Differences in the level of response by the respondents when grouped according to profile

Variables	t – value/ F-value	p – value	Remarks
Age	0.137	0.872	ns
Sex	2.801	0.005	s
Civil Status	0.537	0.709	ns
Educational Attainment	2.160	0.058	ns
Estimated Monthly Family Income	-8.424	0.000	s
Position in the Government	10.699	0.000	s
Length of Service	0.580	0.560	ns

*p-value >0.05 = not significant*

*p-value <0.05 = significant*

The relationship between the level of challenges encountered by the Roxas City Government and their level of response during the COVID-19 pandemic is reflected on Table 5. The result revealed a significant relationship between the challenges encountered by the frontline workers, barangay officials, and Barangay Health Workers (BHW) and their perception of the level of response of the Roxas City Government because the Pearson r correlation

was 0.756 with a p-value of 0.000, which was less than 0.05 level of significance. The result indicates that there is a positive association between these variables. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between the challenges encountered by the Roxas City Government and their level of response was rejected. The result of the study implies that the Roxas City Government officials and frontline workers experienced a great deal of difficulty in helping the government mitigate the impact of COVID-19 to the health of the people, the economy of the city, and greatly to the lives of people. The scenario is the same not only in the province or the country but worldwide. This can also be inferred that the limitations of government and individuals affected their response in different ways and magnitudes because they too are victims of the pandemic.

Although the result of the study establishes a significant relationship between challenges encountered and level of response of the Roxas City Government, the researcher, based on the results of this study and his experience with the local government believes that the association between these variables is positively towards the improvement of the level of response despite the highly challenging situation the Roxas City Government faced because lives are at stake and governments are expected to act in the best possible way. The result of the study agrees with the result of the study of Biswakarma et al. (2021), who acknowledged that it is difficult to prepare strategies or policies in a rapidly changing and uncertain scenario during the pandemic since this is new to our times and little is known about the virus. Most organizations devised their strategies in accordance with governmental guidance. Task forces were formed quickly to monitor the progression of the pandemic, address the immediate consequences, and maintain essential operations safely.

**Table 5:** Relationship between challenges encountered and level of response of the Roxas City Government during the COVID-19 pandemic

Variable	N	Mean	Pearson r- value	Degree of Relationship	p-value	Probability
Challenges Encountered	318	4.80	0.756	High to very high relationship	0.000	s
Level of Response	318	4.82				

*Level of significance at 0.05*

**Insights to Sustainable Strategies for Inclusive Policy Directions**

The interventions provided by the Roxas City Government in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic were identified based on the perception of the respondents of this study. As a whole, the Roxas City Government was able to respond to the call of serving its people to the best of what the city government can offer in terms of manpower, financial resources, and policy changes. At the same time, challenges were also discovered in this study affecting the overall level of response to the pandemic such as issues on the trust with the government, security, and compliance to health protocols, and these need further consideration and support of local practices.

The researcher believes that the Roxas City Government



may have its needs, peculiar with that of other local governments. Providing the same interventions per barangay may not address all these challenges using the same strategy and tools but these issues may be properly and timely addressed with proper coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of the steps or strategies being implemented to attain its goal.

The overall plan for the city’s response to the pandemic or any future disaster of this magnitude must be based on the actual condition of each barangay in order to deliver the appropriate interventive measures and services and implement programs tailored to the specific needs of each community.

As a takeaway from this study, the following may be considered to attain sustainable response in addressing future challenges:

The Molecular Laboratory may be modified to accommodate testing for other communicable and infectious diseases aside from Coronavirus disease. The Hortus Botanicos will also continually serve as waiting facility for patients in case hospitals are overwhelmed with patients. To achieve efficiency, the facility will need improvements to assist patients medically. Likewise, to augment the lack of medical personnel, Barangay Health Workers (BHWs) can be accredited after attending series of skills enhancement and informal education as well as passing assessment tests.

The Command Center may continue to exist to immediately address challenges arising from occurrence of any adversity, calamity, disaster, or pandemic. Under this organization, barangay officials may be commissioned to spearhead data gathering, information dissemination, training, and drills to enhance barangay level preparedness.

corruption stigma led frontline officials to doubt government programs during the pandemic.

The Roxas City Government was able to implement various strategies, programs, and activities to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and maintained a low death rate.

Gender, estimated monthly family income, and position in the government were factors that differentiates the respondents’ perception of the challenges they encountered and their level of response. Women needed more assistance to be able to do more for their communities; those who have less in life need to be assigned in tasks, which may not necessitate the use of additional resources that cannot be provided by the government since they do not have the financial capability to take care of them on their own. There is also a need to consider position in the government service when considering the challenges they may encounter and how much an employee can contribute to the implementation of government response in cases of emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic. These necessitates careful human resource planning.

Moreover, the level of response of the Roxas City Government can be attained in a consistent manner and to the highest level when challenges are addressed on time. Success in mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic maybe attributed to a consistent high level of response and controlled level of challenges.

The Local Government Unit (LGU) of Roxas City may sustain the implementation of its existing preparatory and interventive measures to mitigate the increase of COVID-19 infections and improve the health services of the local government by improving and providing inclusive health care programs for frontliners and other responders with or without a pandemic.

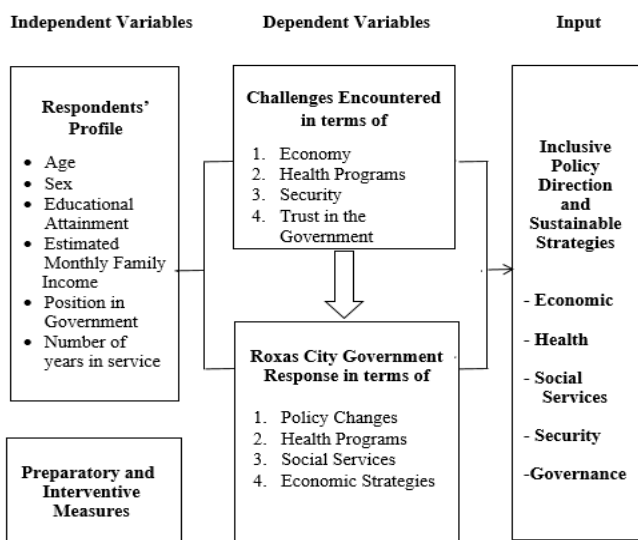


Figure 2. Revised schematic diagram showing the variables of the study.

### 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Trust is a factor that confronted front line officials in communicating the response of the government to the challenges brought by COVID-19 pandemic. The lingering

Additional measures may be considered and institutionalized and be made part of the manual of operations of the local government in addressing similar disaster in the future for easy reference of the implementers. To attain sustainability among these programs in the form of an institutionalized food security program through the passage of a city ordinance through the Sanggunianag Panlungsod; institutionalized Palay Marketing Assistance Program for Legislators and Local Government Unit (PALLGU) to continuously support local farmers in upscaling palay price into a more justifiable level; modified or innovated the molecular laboratory into a multi-laboratory not only for COVID-19 related testing but also with other diseases such as but not limited to Tuberculosis, Psoriasis etc.; and, to take into consideration all programs implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic for adaptation and institutionalization particularly those programs that generated positive outcomes and impact to the community.

The public have very high expectation from their government in times of difficulties and disasters, thus, everyone is expected to perform at their best. Women frontline employees, especially older ones, may be paired with younger co-workers with one or two male counterparts when working on a team assignment. A thorough planning,

staffing, and delegation of tasks maybe done to increase their responsiveness and performance. Likewise, the Local Government Unit (LGU) officials may request for sufficient amount of resources needed so as not to inconvenience an employee to provide for what they will need when responding to disasters.

Unemployment skyrocketed during the pandemic. In a disruptive situation, the workforce may be required to have multiple skills so that when one is not possible, they can still find ways and means to earn money in other trades or economic activities. The government may intensify skills training to match skills with market needs.

Since challenges encountered and level of response are mutually dependent, the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Roxas City may periodically determine if challenges are addressed promptly and sufficiently to ensure that level of response is consistently maintained at very high levels. A separate evaluation team may be formed for this purpose alone.

Further research may be conducted to explore on other variables such as the level of compliance to protocol and resource sufficiency and utilization rates in relation to the level of response.

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## Author Profile



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