

## **Influence of Servant Leadership among Government Employees in the Province of Romblon, Philippines**

**Bro.Arul Rayan, Ph. D.**

Director  
Montfort Academy, Romblon, Romblon 5500  
[rayannit@yahoo.com](mailto:rayannit@yahoo.com)

**Jonathan P. Wong**

Associate Professor  
Romblon State University – Romblon Campus  
Romblon, Romblon, Philippines 5500  
[jo\\_wong3@yahoo.com](mailto:jo_wong3@yahoo.com)

**Jackie Len P. Bañas, Ph. D.**

Director, Research and Development Services  
Northern Iloilo Polytechnic State College  
Victorino Salcedo Campus, Sara, Iloilo, Philippines

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**Abstract:** *This descriptive-correlational study was set out to investigate the influence of Servant Leadership on the job satisfaction of employees in the provincial government of Romblon, Philippines. The participants of the study were the 210 employees randomly selected from the different departments of the provincial government of Romblon. It measured the extent to which employees exhibit commitment to supervisor, work engagement and job satisfaction. The correlation analysis revealed that servant leadership has a positive and significant relationship to employee commitment to supervisor, work engagement and job satisfaction. This empirical study also disclosed that the influence of servant leadership on job satisfaction was enhanced by the mediating role of employee commitment to supervisor and work engagement of employees. In addition, this research explored the meaning and relevance of servant leadership in public service in the Philippine context as the country prepares for its general and local elections in 2016.*

**Keywords:** *Servant leadership, employee commitment to supervisor, work engagement, job satisfaction and government sector.*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Leadership is the most influential factor in the performance of any organization whether it is private or public sector. It is a process by which one person influences the thoughts, attitudes and behaviors of others (Mills, 2005), and the styles that leaders use will be based on a combination of their beliefs, values and preferences. Organizations benefit from understanding of how leadership engages followers in day-to-day activities because the outcomes of this act contribute to the organization's ability to be effective. In any organization leadership influences workplace outcomes such as employee engagement, commitment and satisfaction. This is true to public sectors such as provincial government agencies. Moreover, the performance of a local government unit is ultimately affected by the practice of a particular leadership style. One of the greatest challenges facing the government leaders in the Philippines is the urgent need to practice honesty, integrity and commitment to the common good. Public service is a vocation to serve the common good of all and Philippines needs real public servants. According to Nair (1994); "As long as power dominates our thinking about leadership, we cannot move toward a higher standard of leadership. We must place service at the core; for even though power will always be associated with leadership, it has only one legitimate use: service."

The world is crying out for ethical and effective leadership that serves others, invests in their development and fulfills a shared vision. Among the many leadership styles (i.e., authoritarian,

benevolent dictatorship, participatory, etc.) the one that best represents the ideals embodied in the human factor is servant-leadership (Shekari & Nikooparvar, 2012). Servant leadership is a timeless concept extensively studied in the west across different sectors. It is centered on the core values of 'Caring' and 'Serving others' and focuses on the values of trust, appreciation of others and empowerment (Hoveida et al., 2011). Further, Servant leadership goes beyond putting others first. It is supporting and growing individuals to allow them to do their best work.

A Servant leader's behaviors can be seen as a major source of influence for bringing about change and development in the followers. Thus, the commitment of government employees to work and to their leaders can be greatly influenced by the servant leadership behaviors of supervisors. Since Servant leadership cares for the well-being of the followers, it can influence the general feeling about the job done and thus, the job satisfaction of employees. Moreover, Servant leadership enhanced work engagement in different work places and employees who engage to a great extent in their work tend to feel positive and satisfaction in their job done.

As the concept of servant leadership is acquiring greater significance in the academia in other sectors in the western countries, it has relative shortage of empirical studies in Asia, especially in the Philippines context. This empirical study focused on the extent to which the servant leadership is practiced and its relationship between employee commitment to supervisor, work engagement and job satisfaction. This study also determined the mediating role of employee commitment to supervisor and work engagement between Servant leadership and job satisfaction.

In addition, this empirical study likewise aimed to explore the meaning and relevance of servant leadership in public service in the Philippines context as the country prepares for its general and local elections in 2016. It will help instill among the government leaders the desire and commitment to practice servant leadership as a calling in one's personal life while reminding the government leaders that employees need leaders who will serve for the sake of others and for the common good. The servant leadership model presented in this study could be useful in designing strategies to enhance employee work engagement and commitment to supervisor. At the same time, it is advantageous to improve job satisfaction and well-being of employees.

## **2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

After shedding some light on the importance of servant leadership and its effect on followers' workplace outcomes, the question that needs to be answered is: to what extent is servant leadership practiced by the leaders in the provincial government of Romblon, Philippines, and to what extent do employees exhibit commitment to supervisor, work engagement and job satisfaction? Another important problem investigated is the influence of servant leadership on the employee workplace outcomes and the mediating role of employee commitment and work engagement in the enhancement of job satisfaction.

## **3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. To what extent is Servant leadership practiced by the leaders of the provincial government of Romblon, Philippines?
2. To what extent do government employees exhibit commitment to supervisor, work engagement and job satisfaction in the province of Romblon?
3. What is the relationship between servant leadership, employee commitment to supervisor, work engagement and job satisfaction among employees in the province government of Romblon?
4. How do employee commitment to supervisor and work engagement mediate between servant leadership and job satisfaction?

## **4. HYPOTHESES**

H<sub>1</sub> Servant leadership is significantly related to Employee Commitment to supervisor

H<sub>2</sub> Servant leadership is significantly related to Work Engagement

H<sub>3</sub> Servant leadership is significantly related to work Job satisfaction

H<sub>4</sub> Employee commitment to supervisor mediates between Servant leadership and Job Satisfaction

H<sub>5</sub> Work Engagement mediates between Servant leadership and Job Satisfaction

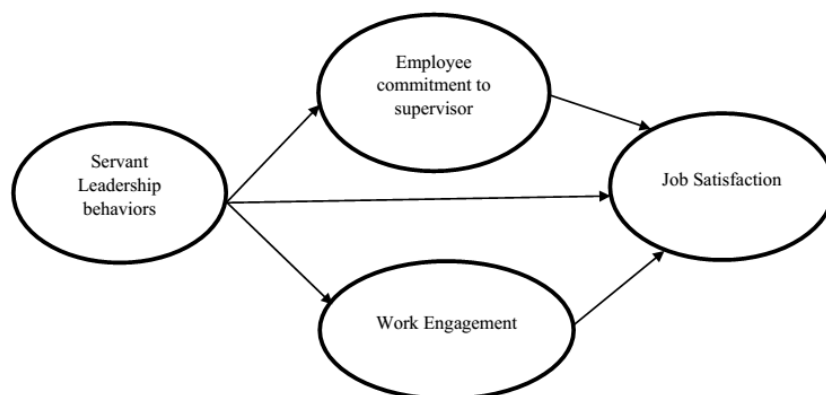
## **5. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is anchored on Greenleaf's (1977) Servant Leadership theory and Robert House's Path-Goal theory. Servant leadership is a philosophy and set of priorities that enriches the lives of individuals, builds better organizations and ultimately creates a more just and caring world. Servant leadership is not viewed as a position of power. Rather, leaders act as coaches and facilitators to their subordinates.

House's Path-Goal theory is based on the premise that an employee's perception of expectancies between his effort and performance is greatly affected by leader's behavior. According to House and Mitchell (1974), the first proposition of the Path-Goal theory is that leader behavior is acceptable and satisfying to subordinates to the extent that subordinates see such behavior either as an immediate source of satisfaction or as instrumental to future satisfaction. The second proposition of this theory is that the leader's behavior will be motivational, e.g., increase effort, to the extent that (1) such behavior makes satisfaction of subordinates' need contingent on effective performance and (2) such behavior complements the environment of subordinates by providing the coaching, guidance, support, and rewards necessary for effective performance. These two propositions suggest that the leader's strategic functions are to enhance subordinates' motivation to perform satisfactory with the job and acceptance of the leader. The servant leader serves others, rather than others serving the leader. Serving others thus comes by helping them to achieve and improve (Greenleaf, 1977). House's theory advocates servant leadership.

In essence, employees are an integral part of the government management system. Thus, a leader's decisions or actions in the workplace may influence employees' commitment to leader, work engagement and job satisfaction. Northouse (2010) suggests that leadership involves influence, and is concerned with how the leader affects followers. Influence is the sine qua non of leadership (Northouse, 2010). Without influence, leadership does not exist. Theorists in the field have realized that to maximize a leaders' decision-making effectiveness in organizations, leaders need to evaluate and be aware of the perceptions of workers as well as their own perceptions of their inner spirit, moral values, and desires (Northouse, 2010). This theory also gives a guide map to the leaders about how to increase subordinates satisfaction and performance level.

Based on the discussion on servant leadership and Path-Goal theory, one can realize that Servant leadership behaviors can influence the employee commitment, work engagement and job satisfaction. Whether there exists mediating effect of employee commitment and work engagement on Servant leadership to improve job satisfaction is yet to be examined. Therefore, the research model is presented as shown in Fig.1



**Fig1.**

## **6. RELATED LITERATURE**

### **6.1. Servant leadership and Job satisfaction**

According to Greenleaf(1977), servant leadership is a philosophy and set of priorities that enriches the lives of individuals, builds better organizations and ultimately creates a more just and caring world. The output is to have a better society, one that is more loving, and one that provides greater creative opportunity for its people. Servant Leadership differs significantly from other leadership styles in leader motivation, organizational objectives, and measures of success, resulting cultures, and

contextual appropriateness. In a study, according to Donghong, Lu and Lu, (2012) revealed that servant leadership possesses significant positive correlation with employee satisfaction. Employee satisfaction is one of the key elements in determining organizational performance and effectiveness. In addition, Sarkar and Atiqur (2009) found strong correlation between Servant leadership and Job satisfaction among employees in a private commercial banking sector in Bangladesh. While a study among the nurses in the U.S revealed that servant leadership had strong correlation with nurse satisfaction. Further, an empirical study on Servant Leadership by Drury (2004) also resulted significant correlation with job satisfaction. In addition, a case study conducted by Shekari and Nikooperwar (2012) resulted a significant relationship between Servant leadership and Job satisfaction among teachers. The literature on Servant Leadership and job satisfaction is relatively limited in the Philippine context.

## **6.2. Servant Leadership and Employee commitment to Supervisor**

Sokoll (2014) in his study cited the positive relationship between servant leadership and employee commitment which were conceptually proposed by Jacob (2006); Russel & stone (2002). He also presented empirically confirmed investigations by Hu and Liden (2011). The relationship between servant leadership and employee commitment to supervisor has not been quantitatively researched in the public sector in Philippine context. Sokoll's (2014) study on servant leadership was found to a significant ( $p < .001$ ) effect on employee commitment to a supervisor, shown by an increased R-square value of 0.22 (22.4%). This empirical study on servant leadership in the government sector is another exploration as suggested by Sokoll (2014).

## **6.3. Servant Leadership and Work Engagement**

Servant Leadership also influences the work engagement of employees. When employees recognize that their immediate superiors and top management have the skillful insight and ability to augment the growth and productivity of the organization by making competent decisions, it would give them increased assurance of a more profitable future with the organization (Spreitzer and Mishra, 2002). In other words, there can be an increase in work engagement among employees if there is a sound sense of trust in the competence and capability of their immediate supervisors. Furthermore, supervisory coaching in the form of assisting employees in locating their goals, organizing their work, highlighting drawbacks, taking a keen interest in their professional and career advancement, and offering advice as needed, has been positively related to work engagement (Schaufeli and Salanova, 2007).

Drawing from research on the relationship between work engagement and servant leadership, the relationship among employees of four information technology (IT) companies showed that servant leadership enhances work engagement (Bouckenoghe et al, 2014).

In addition, Bakker & Leiter (2010) asserted that in the contemporary world of work, to compete effectively, companies not only must recruit the top talent, but must also inspire and enable employees to apply their full capabilities to their work. Contemporary organizations need employees, who are psychologically connected to their work; who are willing and able to invest themselves fully in their roles; who are proactive and committed to high quality performance standards. They need employees who are engaged with their work.

## **7. METHODOLOGY**

### **7.1. Research Design**

Descriptive correlational design was employed to measure relationship between servant leadership and other work place outcomes. Regression analysis was used to test the mediating effect.

### **7.2. Sample**

The sample of the study consisted of 210 government employees working in various departments under the provincial government of Romblon, Philippines. The sample was made of Male (40.5%) and Female (59.5%). When the respondents were classified according to the number of years working under their leader, it was found that 37% were less than five years, 20% were six (6) to 10 years, 22.9% were 11-15 years, and 20% were above 15 years.

**7.3. Instruments and Data Gathering Procedures**

Survey questionnaires were used to gather data in this study. The questionnaire was consisted of four parts. Part one of the instrument was developed to obtain demographic information of the respondents. Part two utilized Fields and Winston’s (2010) Essential Servant Leadership Behavior Instrument, a single dimension tool. The reliability test on this scale resulted a Cronbach coefficient alpha of 0.96 (Field and Winston, 2010). Part three measured employee commitment to supervisor using the Becker et al’s (1996) second instrument which consisted of nine questions. The first five questions measured the employee’s identification with the leader and next four questions were used to measure the employee’s internalization of the values of the leader. Becker et al’s (1996) initial study returned an alpha of 0.89 and the recent study of Sokoll (2014) resulted an alpha of 0.92. The part four of the instrument was utilized to measure the work engagement of employees using Schaufeli, Salanova, et al’s (2002) 17-item Utrecht Work Engagement scale. The first six items measured on Vigor, the second six items measured the dedication and the last five items measured the absorption subscale. The fifth part of the instrument measured job satisfaction using the Weiss et al’s (1967) MSQ-short version (20 items) which was rated on Five-point Likert-Scale. The researcher obtained permission from the Provincial Administrator of Romblon for the conduct of the survey on the scheduled dates and administered the survey instrument in the various departments of the provincial government of Romblon.

**7.4. Data Analysis**

The descriptive statistics determined the extent to which servant leadership was practiced by the leaders and the extent to which employees exhibit commitment to supervisor, work engagement, and job satisfaction in the provincial government. To test the hypothesis for significant relationship, Pearson’s (*r*) was used to measure the correlations between the variables. To investigate the mediating effect of Employee Commitment to supervisor and Work Engagement between Servant Leadership and Job Satisfaction Baron and Kenny’s (1986) model with the regression analysis was employed. All the data analysis were performed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21.0 Software.

**8. RESULTS**

The findings of the study revealed that the Servant leadership behaviors were often exhibited by the leaders and supervisors in the provincial government of Romblon. The perception of employee commitment to supervisor in terms of identification with their leader and internalizing the values of their leader revealed that the provincial government employees were often committed to their leaders or supervisors. As to Work Engagement, the employees often engaged in their work. The job satisfaction was found “very good” in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

The results on the testing of hypotheses, revealed that Employee Commitment to supervisor( $r=.26$ ,  $p<.01$ ), Work Engagement ( $r=.58$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and Job Satisfaction ( $r =.39 < .01$ ) are positively and significantly related to Servant Leadership (See Table.1). Thus, the results on correlation with servant leadership supported the hypotheses  $H_1$ ,  $H_2$  and  $H_3$ .

**Table1.** *Correlation with Servant Leadership*

Hypothesis	Variables	Mean	SD	P(r)	Result
$H_1$	Employee commitment to supervisor	3.7	0.72	0.260**	Hypothesis Supported
$H_2$	Work engagement	4.3	0.58	0.314**	Hypothesis Supported
$H_3$	Job Satisfaction	4.0	0.49	0.395**	Hypothesis Supported

\*\* *Correlation significant at 0.01 level*

**8.1. Mediation Method**

Baron and Kenny’s (1986) technique was used for testing the predicted mediation of Employee Commitment to Supervisor and Work Engagement between Servant Leadership and Job Satisfaction. According to this mediation test, there is a support for mediation if model-1: independent variable relates to dependent variable, Model-2: independent variable relates with mediating variable; Model-3: Mediating variable related to dependent variable and Model-4: the relationship of independent variable with the dependent variable is reduced significantly (partial mediation) or remains no longer significant (full mediation) when controlled for mediator. All of these conditions must be met to prove the mediating effect of Employee Commitment and Work Engagement between Servant Leadership behaviors and Job Satisfaction

**Table2.** Mediation between Servant Leadership and Job Satisfaction

	Mediating Variables	Model -1		Model-2		Model-3		Model-4		Result
		$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	B	R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	
H <sub>4</sub>	Employee Commitment to Supervisor	.395**	.156	.260**	.068	.535**	.286	.274**	.354	Hypothesis Partially Supported
H <sub>5</sub>	Work Engagement	.395**	.156	.314**	.098	.265**	.070	.346**	.178	Hypothesis Partially Supported

\*\*  $p < 0.01$

### 8.2. Employee Commitment to Supervisor as Mediator

All of the conditions in the mediation method were tested by performing regression analysis (refer to Table.2). Servant Leadership was regressed on Job Satisfaction and the relationship was significant and positive ( $\beta = 0.395$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $R^2 = .156$ ). When Servant Leadership was regressed on Employee commitment, the relationship was found positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.260$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $R^2 = 0.068$ ). Regression analysis of Employee Commitment on Job Satisfaction was found significant and positive ( $\beta = 0.535$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $R^2 = 0.286$ ). Finally, when Servant Leadership was regressed on job satisfaction while controlling for Employee Commitment to Supervisor, the model was significant ( $\beta = 0.274$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $R^2 = 0.356$ ) and the relationship between Servant Leadership and Job Satisfaction was weakened. Hence, it can be concluded that employee commitment to supervisor partially mediates the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction. Thus, hypothesis H<sub>4</sub> was partially supported.

### 8.3. Work Engagement as Mediator

The mediation method also was used to test the mediating effect of Work Engagement between Servant Leadership and Job Satisfaction. Model-1: Servant Leadership was regressed on Job Satisfaction. The result was found positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.395$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $R^2 = .156$ ). Model-2: When Servant Leadership was regressed on Work Engagement, the relationship was found significant and positive ( $\beta = 0.314$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $R^2 = 0.098$ ). Model-3: Work Engagement was further regressed on Job Satisfaction. The relationship was positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.265$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $R^2 = 0.07$ ) and finally Servant Leadership was regressed on Job Satisfaction while controlling for Work Engagement. The relationship was positive and significant but it was weakened ( $\beta = 0.346$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $R^2 = 0.178$ ). Hence, it can be concluded that Work Engagement partially mediates the relationship between Servant Leadership and Job Satisfaction. Thus, hypothesis H<sub>5</sub> was partially supported.

## 9. DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this empirical study was to investigate the relationship between Servant Leadership and the Employee Commitment to Supervisor, Work Engagement and Job Satisfaction among the provincial government employees. It also extends the Sokoll's (2014) study on servant leadership as it investigates the relationship between servant leadership and employee commitment to supervisor in terms of identification with their supervisor and internalizing the values of their supervisor, and further the significant and positive mediating role of employee commitment to supervisor between servant leadership and job satisfaction.

A positive and significant partial mediating role of Work Engagement between Servant Leadership and Job Satisfaction was observed in this study. The predicting role of Employee Engagement to Job Satisfaction is in line with other research studies (Alarcon & Lyons, 2011; Cervoni & Delucia-Waack, 2011; Yanhan, 2013; Romos et al, 2013). The mediation role and Work Engagement between Servant Leadership and Job Satisfaction is significant in this study. According to Saks (2006), individuals who continue to engage themselves do so because of the continuation of favorable reciprocal exchanges. As a result, individuals who are more engaged are likely to be in more trusting and high quality relationship with their employers.

The findings of the study also suggest that Work Engagement is a key factor in the prediction of Job Satisfaction. These results are consistent with those found in other studies (Alarcon & Lyons, 2011; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Saks, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Simpson, 2009).

The results of the study are reminders for the government leaders to seek honest feedback from their followers. Leaders who embrace Servant Leadership must not face feedbacks as negative criticism but see them as positive information and useful to allow them to provide better service to their followers. Further, improving government leadership is worthy of great significance. Therefore, Government leaders wishing to adopt a servant leader approach should consider professional development and training in Servant Leadership approaches.

Job Satisfaction is assumed to have major implications as it is a prevailing construct covering all professions, work, jobs, and contexts (Spagnoli et al., 2012). Number of unengaged and dissatisfied employees have increased, costing billions in productivity losses both in non-profit and for profit organizations. The practice of servant leadership practice could help reduce these losses by helping the government leaders to set priorities on serving and caring for their followers. The findings of this study suggest that the influence of Servant Leadership on Job Satisfaction can be further enhanced by the mediation of Employee Commitment to Supervisor and Work Engagement significantly. If the Government agencies are expecting their employees to be productive and efficient, they must seek strategies to improve Job Satisfaction of their employees and understand the factors that can boost employee Job Satisfaction such as Employee Commitment to Supervisor and Work Engagement.

The results of the study imply that Government leader's commitment to Servant Leadership can change the power dynamics between the leader and the follower. Rather than demanding that followers need to serve them, servant-leaders can find meaningful ways to understand the needs of their followers and serve those they chose to lead. They can build personal trusting and relationships with the people they lead. This will allow government leaders to discover the aspirations of each team member and identify developmental opportunities that allow for growth. Followers who are under servant leaders are more engaged and committed to their leaders. This model leads to enhanced job satisfaction of followers and further increased productivity of the organization. When government leaders take their responsibility to serve employees seriously, the employees catch on quickly. In turn, they are more serious in their efforts to serve their customers and each other.

### **10. CONCLUSIONS**

In summary, the objectives of this research were (1) to describe the extent to which servant leadership was practiced by the leaders and supervisors in the provincial government of Romblon and the level of employee commitment to supervisor; (2) to determine the extent to which employees exhibited commitment to supervisor, work engagement and job satisfaction; (3) to explore the relationship between servant leadership and employee workplace outcomes: employee commitment to supervisor; work engagement & job satisfaction and (4) to determine whether employee commitment and work engagement mediate the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction.

Based on the results of this study the following conclusions were derived:

- The leaders and supervisors at the provincial government of Romblon exhibited servant leadership behaviors most of the time in their dealing with their followers.
- The employees at the provincial government are committed to their leaders most of the time in terms of identification with their leader and internalizing the values of their leaders.
- The results on the work engagement suggested that the employees at the provincial government were engaged most of the time in their work.
- The provincial government employees of Romblon were satisfied most of the time on their Jobs.
- The findings of the study helped us conclude that whenever Servant Leadership behaviors were strongly exhibited by the government leaders, there was significant increase in the Employee Commitment to Supervisor, Work Engagement and Job Satisfaction of employees.
- The partial mediation of Employee Commitment to Supervisor can further enhance the influence of Servant Leadership on Job Satisfaction
- The Influence of Servant Leadership on Job Satisfaction can be significantly improved by the mediating role of Work Engagement.

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#### **AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHY**



**Bro. Arul Rayan, FSG** is a member of Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel. Currently, he is the Director of Montfort Academy, Romblon. He holds BSME, MBA and Ph.D. from the University of San Agustin, Iloilo City, Philippines. He is also a member of International Leadership Association. He has published research articles in Technical vocational education and training.



**Jonathan P. Wong** is an Associate Professor of Romblon State University. Currently, he is the chair of the Teacher Education Department of the said university - Romblon Campus. He is also a member of State Universities & Colleges Teacher Educators Association (SUCTEA) and an active program accreditor of Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities of the Philippines (AACCUP). His line of interest in research includes Teacher Education, Management and Leadership.



**Jackie Len P. Bañasis** the Director of Research and Development Services of Northern Iloilo Polytechnic State College, Victorino Salcedo Campus, Sara, Iloilo. She earned her BSC, Master of MBA and Ph.D. from the University of San Agustin, Iloilo City. She also obtained her BSHRM degree at NIPSC-VSC. Currently, she is an instructress and the Executive Editor of the campus' publication. She also has been the Chairman of the BSHRM program.