

The Influence of Cultural Values on Management Practices in Local Government Units

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Publication Date: 2026/09/23

Abstract: Cultural values significantly influence leadership, decision-making, communication, employee relations, and service delivery within local government units (LGUs). This study explores how cultural beliefs, traditions, religious principles, and social relationships shape management practices in the culturally diverse province of Sulu. It draws on relevant literature and previous studies concerning Filipino values, including *pakikipagkapwa*, *bayanihan*, *pakikisama*, *hiya*, *utang na loob*, and respect for elders, together with Islamic principles, kinship networks, customary practices, and traditional leadership. The reviewed evidence indicates that these values may strengthen cooperation, trust, organizational commitment, conflict resolution, and community participation. However, they may also create administrative challenges when personal relationships and social obligations affect merit-based decisions, impartiality, transparency, accountability, and compliance with formal procedures. Effective local governance therefore requires culturally responsive management practices that remain consistent with legal, ethical, and professional standards. Integrating cultural awareness into governance can improve organizational effectiveness, community relations, public trust, and inclusive, accountable service delivery.

Keywords: Cultural Values, Management Practices, Local Government Units, Leadership, Governance.

How to Cite: Dolly Jane M. Alibasa; Arwina A. Aming; Arvelyn M. Majul; Al-johara I. Hajiron; Alshaima S. Hadani; Mohammar S. Jun; Shernahar K. Tahlil; Khader H. Madjani; Mharcelyn M. Kiram; Datu Ansaruddin K. Kiram; Jul-asri A. Hadjibun (2026), The Influence of Cultural Values on Management Practices in Local Government Units. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology* 11(9), 900-906.
<https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26sep302>

I. INTRODUCTION

The cultural values that shape the attitudes, actions, and decision-making processes of public officials and the communities they serve are just as vital to the effectiveness of local government units (LGUs) as formal administrative structures, policies, and legal frameworks. Within organizations, culture influences how people interact, make decisions, and exercise authority. It also affects how government institutions develop policies, deliver services, and engage with communities. In culturally diverse societies like the Philippines, local customs, beliefs, social norms, and interpersonal relationships play an important role in governance. Understanding how cultural values and

management practices interact is therefore essential in public administration, particularly in areas where indigenous traditions and community customs remain influential (Schein & Schein, 2021).

Cultural values refer to shared beliefs, norms, traditions, and principles that guide people's attitudes and behavior. These values shape perceptions of leadership, authority, cooperation, accountability, and decision-making (Hofstede, 2011). Management practices refer to the methods and administrative processes organizations use to plan, organize, lead, coordinate, and control resources to achieve goals (Robbins & Coulter, 2021). In LGUs, these practices include leadership, human resource management, policy

implementation, service delivery, communication, and community involvement. They also include planning, staffing, directing, coordinating, and evaluating programs for public welfare (Daft, 2022).

Ideally, management processes should be guided by responsibility, transparency, effectiveness, participation, and responsiveness. In practice, however, social expectations and cultural norms can influence administrative decisions. Leaders may rely on consensus-building, consultation with community elders, respect for traditional authority, and culturally recognized conflict-resolution methods. These approaches may strengthen trust and cooperation, but they may also make it difficult to maintain impartiality, follow standard procedures, and ensure equitable public service delivery (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2019).

In the Philippine context, local governance takes place in communities with rich cultural diversity. National policies provide a common framework for public administration, but their implementation often reflects the characteristics of local communities. This is especially evident in the Province of Sulu, where the predominantly Tausug population, together with Sama and other ethnolinguistic groups, preserves traditions and social values that continue to shape leadership, governance, and public administration. Respect for elders, kinship ties, collective responsibility, religious values, and traditional leadership structures may influence the management practices of LGUs and affect administrative processes and public service delivery.

Examining the influence of cultural values on LGU management practices is important because effective governance requires approaches that respond to the cultural realities of the communities being served. A deeper understanding of this relationship can provide insights into how culturally informed management affects organizational effectiveness, employee behavior, decision-making, and citizen satisfaction. It can also contribute to culturally responsive public administration by emphasizing the importance of local cultural contexts in governance and management strategies.

II. RELATED LITERATURE

➤ *Cultural Values*

Culture is one of the important factors shaping individual behavior, organizational processes, and governance systems. Cultural values include shared beliefs, norms, customs, and principles that guide how people think, interact, and make decisions. They influence leadership styles, workplace relationships, communication, and organizational behavior. Schein and Schein (2021) explain that organizational culture develops through shared experiences that become accepted assumptions among members. These assumptions influence how individuals understand problems, respond to challenges, and interact with others.

Bogale and Debela (2024), in a systematic review of 52 studies, found that organizational culture is associated with employee behavior, organizational commitment, teamwork,

innovation, leadership effectiveness, communication, and strategic decision-making. Their findings suggest that organizations with cultures emphasizing collaboration, participation, innovation, and shared values may achieve stronger organizational effectiveness.

Hofstede (2011) remains an important theoretical foundation for understanding cultural values. His dimensions include power distance, collectivism versus individualism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity versus femininity, long-term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint. These dimensions help explain differences in perceptions of authority, group relationships, rules, and decision-making. However, culture continues to change because of globalization, technology, and changing social expectations, so traditional frameworks should be considered together with current evidence.

Within the Philippine context, cultural values continue to influence governance and public administration. Values such as *pakikipagkapwa* (shared identity), *bayanihan* (community cooperation), *hiya* (sense of propriety), *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude), and respect for elders shape relationships within government institutions. These values can encourage cooperation, mutual support, and social harmony, which may strengthen teamwork and community engagement. At the same time, when personal relationships become stronger than institutional rules, they may create challenges for merit-based decisions, accountability, transparency, and fairness (Ampog, 2015).

The importance of cultural values is particularly clear in culturally distinct provinces such as Sulu. Tausug, Sama, Yakan, and other ethnolinguistic communities maintain traditions that influence governance, leadership, and public service. Islamic principles, respect for traditional leaders, kinship networks, customary practices, and communal decision-making are important parts of the local social environment. These characteristics may affect administrative processes, leadership behavior, conflict resolution, communication, and community participation.

Public administration does not operate separately from society. Management practices are carried out within communities whose cultural beliefs shape expectations concerning leadership, authority, accountability, and public service. Understanding these cultural dynamics can help local governments develop approaches that are both administratively effective and culturally responsive. Thus, cultural values may be considered an important factor in understanding management practices in LGUs in Sulu.

➤ *Management Practices of Local Government Units*

Management practices are fundamental to effective organizations, especially in the public sector, where managers are responsible for delivering services efficiently, ethically, and according to community needs. In LGUs, management practices include planning, organizing, leading, coordinating, and evaluating government operations. These practices support organizational goals, accountability, and quality public service. Because LGUs operate within different social and cultural settings, management practices

are influenced not only by laws and policies but also by community values, traditions, and expectations.

Robbins and Coulter (2021) describe management as coordinating and overseeing the work of others so organizational objectives are achieved efficiently and effectively. They emphasize planning, organizing, leading, and controlling as major management functions. Daft (2022) likewise describes management as a dynamic process requiring leaders to respond to organizational challenges and changes in internal and external environments. Successful managers develop systems that support collaboration, innovation, and accountability.

Public-sector management differs from private management because government institutions prioritize public welfare rather than profit. Denhardt and Denhardt (2019) explain that public management should emphasize democratic governance, participation, accountability, transparency, and service to citizens. Under the New Public Service perspective, public administrators are servants whose responsibility is to address community needs while supporting ethical governance and citizen engagement. Therefore, LGU management must balance administrative efficiency with public participation, social equity, and accountability.

In the Philippines, LGU management practices are guided largely by the Local Government Code of 1991 (Republic Act No. 7160). The Code decentralizes governance by giving provinces, cities, municipalities, and barangays greater administrative, fiscal, and political responsibilities. LGUs are authorized to formulate development plans, generate local revenues, manage human resources, implement programs, and deliver essential services. This decentralized structure allows local governments to respond to local economic, political, social, and cultural conditions.

The OECD (2023) emphasizes that effective public institutions need management systems that promote transparency, accountability, citizen participation, and evidence-based decision-making. The Department of the Interior and Local Government also promotes sound management through the Seal of Good Local Governance, which assesses areas such as financial administration, disaster preparedness, social protection, business friendliness, environmental management, and integrity (Department of the Interior and Local Government, 2023).

Management practices involve several connected functions. Planning identifies community needs, priorities, and resources. Organizing establishes administrative structures and responsibilities. Leadership motivates employees, builds teamwork, supports communication, and promotes ethical behavior. Controlling monitors performance, evaluates programs, and checks compliance with legal and administrative standards (Robbins & Coulter, 2021).

Institutional effectiveness also depends on leadership capability, organizational culture, employee competence, financial resources, technological innovation, and stakeholder

participation (United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2022). Leadership is especially important because public leaders need technical competence, ethical judgment, emotional intelligence, and the ability to engage citizens (Van Wart et al., 2019). Public participation also improves decision-making, policy legitimacy, and accountability. In culturally diverse communities, local knowledge and traditional leadership can contribute to more inclusive governance (OECD, 2023).

➤ *The Relationship Between Cultural Values and Management Practices*

The relationship between cultural values and management practices is important because management does not occur in a cultural vacuum. Values, beliefs, and social norms influence how organizations are led, how decisions are made, and how public services are delivered. In LGUs, management is shaped by legal frameworks and administrative policies as well as by the cultural environment where officials, employees, and citizens interact.

Bogale and Debela (2024) found that shared organizational values are associated with leadership effectiveness, employee motivation, communication, innovation, and organizational commitment. Culture can provide stability by guiding decision-making and cooperation. Schein and Schein (2021) similarly explain that shared assumptions learned through organizational experience become a foundation for leadership behavior, problem-solving, communication, and decision-making. Leaders both influence and are influenced by organizational culture.

Leadership is one management function strongly affected by cultural values. The GLOBE study showed that societal culture shapes leadership preferences and organizational effectiveness across societies (House et al., 2004). Van Wart et al. (2019) further emphasize that effective public leadership requires cultural awareness, ethical decision-making, emotional intelligence, and collaborative governance. Leaders who understand cultural differences may build trust, encourage participation, and support cooperation.

Communication is another area influenced by culture. The OECD (2023) identifies transparent communication and stakeholder engagement as important parts of effective governance. In collectivist settings such as the Philippines, communication may place greater emphasis on respect, harmony, consensus, and relationships. Managers may therefore use consultation and participation before making decisions. Such strategies can strengthen cooperation and public trust.

Cultural values also influence decision-making. Hofstede (2011) explains that power distance, collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance affect perceptions of authority, rules, and participation in decisions. Modern governance adds demands for transparency, accountability, innovation, and evidence-based decision-making, requiring managers to balance local traditions with formal administrative principles.

In Philippine LGUs, pakikipagkapwa, bayanihan, hiya, utang na loob, and respect for elders may promote solidarity, cooperation, and mutual assistance. However, personal relationships may also influence personnel decisions, resource allocation, and policy implementation, creating possible concerns about meritocracy, transparency, and accountability. Effective public management therefore requires cultural sensitivity together with legal and ethical standards.

The relationship between culture and management is particularly relevant in Sulu. The province includes Tausug, Sama, Yakan, and other ethnolinguistic communities whose traditions continue to influence leadership, governance, and community relationships. Islamic principles, customary practices (adat), kinship systems, communal decision-making, and respect for traditional leaders form part of the local social environment. These cultural elements may affect communication with citizens, conflict resolution, community participation, and implementation of development programs.

Management practices that recognize local cultural realities may gain greater public acceptance and cooperation than approaches based only on formal bureaucratic procedures. At the same time, cultural expectations may sometimes create difficulties when they conflict with requirements for impartiality, accountability, transparency, or standardized procedures. This shows that culture should be examined according to the particular management situation rather than automatically viewed as either positive or negative.

III. RELATED STUDIES

Ampog (2015) investigated Filipino cultural values and job performance among promotional staff within the Department of Education divisions in Lanao del Sur and Marawi City. The study focused on values such as utang na loob (debt of gratitude), bayanihan (communal unity), pakikitungo (interpersonal relations), galang (respect), pakikisama or pakikipagkapwa (getting along with others), tapang (courage), amor propio (self-esteem), and awa or malasakit (compassion or concern). Participants generally upheld these values and showed very satisfactory job performance. Seven out of the nine values were significantly linked to job performance, while amor propio and awa or malasakit were not. This research is significant as it offers insights from a predominantly Muslim and culturally unique context. However, it focused on education employees rather than management practices within local government units (LGUs).

De Leon (2017) studied the sustainability of Total Quality Management and ISO 9001 implementation in Calapan City. The research incorporated Filipino cultural values alongside factors such as management commitment, communication, training, leadership changes, and other organizational elements. Results showed that cultural values played a role in sustaining the quality management system. The study suggests that formal management reforms are more likely to endure when aligned with the cultural values of the organization's members

Guhao (2010) examined organizational culture and management effectiveness in LGUs using a descriptive-correlational method. The findings revealed high levels of both organizational culture and management effectiveness, with a significant correlation between them. This supports the idea that management should not be viewed solely through formal policies and procedures, as organizational culture can shape how management functions are carried out.

Abenoja, Blase, and Almagro (2024) explored organizational culture and leadership style among departments in the local government unit of Santo Tomas, Davao del Norte. Using a descriptive-correlational design with 108 department heads, they found very high perceptions of both organizational culture and leadership style, with a statistically significant positive relationship between the two. This study is relevant because leadership is an area where cultural values often manifest through expectations regarding respect, authority, cooperation, communication, and decision-making. However, the research addressed organizational culture in general rather than focusing on specific cultural values or local traditions.

Idris (2021) investigated how national culture influenced public-sector leadership in Brunei through a qualitative interpretivist approach using semi-structured interviews. The study found that cultural and religious contexts shaped leadership practices. It highlighted instances where Islamic work ethics and traditional or tribal expectations could conflict with principles of fairness and justice, particularly in recruitment, selection, and promotion processes. Although Brunei and Sulu differ politically and administratively, this study offers a useful comparison since both involve Muslim communities influenced by religious and traditional values.

Ugyel (2021) examined the implementation of New Public Management-related performance reforms in Bhutan, a collectivist and risk-averse society. The findings showed that some reforms were difficult to implement because they emphasized individual performance and accountability in ways that did not fully match existing cultural values and social relationships. This demonstrates that management systems cannot always be transferred from one setting to another without considering local culture.

Taken together, the studies show that culture has a meaningful but varied relationship with public-sector management. Ampog (2015) found relationships between several Filipino cultural values and employee performance; De Leon (2017) showed that cultural considerations contributed to sustaining management reforms; Guhao (2010) found a relationship between organizational culture and management effectiveness; and Abenoja et al. (2024) found a relationship between organizational culture and leadership style. These Philippine studies indicate that culture can support cooperation, organizational commitment, and management. In contrast, Idris (2021) and Ugyel (2021) show that cultural and social expectations can also create challenges when they conflict with formal administrative principles.

The differences among studies may be explained by the type of cultural values, management practice, setting, and research method examined. Quantitative studies can establish measurable relationships, while qualitative studies can provide deeper understanding of how people experience and interpret cultural expectations (Idris, 2021). Thus, the influence of culture should be understood in relation to the particular organizational situation.

IV. SYNTHESIS

The reviewed literature and studies generally agree that cultural values and management practices are closely related because organizational management is carried out within a social and cultural environment. Culture influences how people understand authority, communicate, cooperate, interact, and respond to organizational expectations. Schein and Schein (2021) explain that shared assumptions influence how members interpret situations and respond to challenges, while Bogale and Debela (2024) associate organizational culture with employee behavior, teamwork, leadership, communication, innovation, and commitment. These perspectives show that management is not simply a technical process governed by formal rules; it is also shaped by values and assumptions within the organization.

This relationship is particularly important in LGUs because management practices are carried out directly within communities. Planning, organizing, leading, coordinating, and controlling occur together with responsibilities for public participation, accountability, transparency, and service delivery. The Local Government Code of 1991 gives LGUs responsibility for local planning, resource management, human resources, program implementation, and public service delivery. Decentralization allows local governments to respond to community conditions, but it also means that management practices are affected by local political, social, and cultural circumstances.

A common finding is that cultural values can support organizational relationships and management. In the Philippine setting, pakikipagkapwa, bayanihan, pakikisama, utang na loob, and respect for elders may encourage cooperation, harmony, mutual assistance, and stronger relationships between employees and citizens. Ampog (2015) found significant relationships between several Filipino cultural values and job performance in Lanao del Sur and Marawi City. De Leon (2017) also identified cultural considerations as one factor relevant to sustaining a management system in a Philippine LGU. Guhao (2010) and Abenoja et al. (2024) further established relationships between organizational culture and management effectiveness or leadership.

However, cultural influence is not always beneficial or uniform. Personal relationships and social expectations may interfere with merit-based decisions, transparency, accountability, fairness, and standardized procedures. Idris (2021) identified tensions between cultural or tribal expectations and fairness in public-sector leadership, while Ugyel (2021) showed that performance reforms may be difficult when their assumptions do not match existing

cultural values. Hofstede's (2011) discussion of power distance and collectivism also helps explain differences in authority, group relationships, and organizational decision-making.

The literature identifies several management areas where cultural values may be expressed: leadership, communication, decision-making, public participation, employee relations, conflict management, and delegation of authority. These areas correspond directly to the management practices considered in the present study. In Sulu, Islamic principles, kinship systems, customary practices, communal decision-making, and respect for traditional leadership may influence how authority is understood, how communication occurs, how conflicts are addressed, and how citizens participate in government activities.

Overall, the reviewed literature and studies point to a consistent but context-dependent relationship between cultural values and management practices. The literature provides a conceptual basis for understanding culture as a force that shapes organizational behavior, leadership, communication, decision-making, and relationships. The empirical studies show that these influences can be observed among public employees and within LGUs. Cultural values may strengthen cooperation, organizational relationships, leadership, and employee performance, but they may also require careful balancing with accountability, transparency, fairness, and formal administrative procedures.

The reviewed studies also differ in level of analysis and research approach. Ampog (2015), Guhao (2010), and Abenoja et al. (2024) used quantitative approaches to examine relationships between cultural or organizational factors and outcomes such as employee performance, management effectiveness, and leadership. Idris (2021), in contrast, used qualitative interviews to understand how culture was experienced in public-sector leadership. These approaches complement one another: quantitative research can identify measurable relationships, while qualitative research can provide deeper explanations of how cultural expectations become part of management behavior.

The present study can contribute by examining the actual experiences and perceptions of local government officials and employees regarding the influence of cultural values on management practices. Instead of only asking whether culture and management are statistically related, it can examine how cultural values are reflected in leadership, decision-making, communication, employee relations, conflict management, delegation of authority, and implementation of administrative policies. This can provide a more contextual understanding of management in an LGU and practical insights into how formal public-administration principles can be implemented while considering local cultural realities.

The relationship between cultural values and management practices is therefore central to understanding how local government operates. Cultural values provide the social and behavioral context, while management practices represent the administrative processes through which local

government performs its responsibilities. Their interaction helps explain how management is practiced within a particular community. In Sulu, understanding this interaction provides a basis for examining how local cultural realities are reflected in the everyday practice of public administration.

V. CONCLUSION

The reviewed literature and related studies show that organizational culture has an important effect on management practices and employee performance in public organizations. It affects leadership, communication, decision-making, teamwork, relationships among employees, management, and how well employees do their work. The shared values, beliefs, and practices in an organization can affect how employees work together and help reach organizational goals. Most studies show that a positive organizational culture helps build trust, teamwork, commitment, good leadership, and better employee performance. A workplace that supports open communication, responsibility, and shared values can encourage employees to do their duties well. It can also improve work relationships and help provide better public service.

However, organizational culture can also cause problems when personal relationships or cultural practices go against fairness, transparency, accountability, and proper work rules. Strong personal connections may sometimes affect decisions and management practices. The literature also shows a research gap in the Province of Sulu. While previous studies examined organizational culture and employee performance, few focused on the selected government organization. Previous studies in Sulu also involved different agencies or several local government units. Therefore, this study aims to provide information that may help improve management, employee performance, and public service.

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