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# **Managerial Efficiency of Officers and Office Performance of the Department of Agrarian Reform in Northern Negros Occidental**

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**Abstract.** The determination of the managerial efficiency of the heads of offices of DAR, particularly in the DAR municipal offices of Northern Negros Occidental, is found to be an imperative need, hence this study. For the establishment of an efficiently running agency, the level of work performance of the offices is also expected to be at par, and so is the necessity of its evaluation in this study. This descriptive research design used a researcher-made survey questionnaire with 87 personnel to answer and help determine the level of managerial efficiency of the 33 MARPOs. As to the work performance of the DAR offices, the same descriptive design was used utilizing document analysis which is the Office Performance and Commitment Review (OPCR) of the MARPOs and a checklist determined the challenges encountered by the agrarian reform offices in Part III of the questionnaire. As a whole, the level of managerial efficiency of the MARPOs is high, indicating that the MARPOs are capable and competent and have demonstrated excellence in performing their functions. Positively, the result of a high level of managerial efficiency is exhibited by the MARPOs in the discharge of their official functions and outstanding performance of the DARMOs over the years.

**Keywords.** Social Science, managerial efficiency, level of work performance, DAR, descriptive, Northern Negros Occidental, Philippines

## **1. Introduction**

A crucial factor and of utmost importance in the success of any organization is the managerial efficiency and performance of the people at the helm that steers and directs its operation (Rogge et al., 2017). The managerial efficiency of heads of offices or managers is measured based on their inputs and outputs and is necessary for any organization or office (Lee, 2020). For this reason, governments worldwide streamline their processes in terms of efficiency and performance to address the continuing need for improvement in the delivery of services (Elena-Iuliana & Maria, 2016). Essentially, the quest for improvement always continues as demands continue to surge. Managerial efficiency should always be in step with these challenges.

In the Asian region, evaluation of work performance becomes necessary for referencing decisions and improvements. For competitiveness to be achieved, improving efficiency should be through improved services, and cost reduction and upgrading of work processes should be given priority. While job performance should cover the skills, professional competencies, and expertise of employees, countries in the region focus on these aspects to compete with other countries around the globe (Fogaca et al., 2018).

In the Philippines, the enactment of both RA 6713, "Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees," and RA 9485, "An Act to Improve Efficiency in the Delivery of Government Service to the Public by Reducing Bureaucratic Red Tape, Preventing Graft and Corruption, and Providing Penalties Therefor" is due to the increasing demand for government service improvement. These laws demand efficiency and delivery of outstanding performance among government workers (Benedicto & Caelian, 2020).

The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) Western Visayas has ranked second nationwide in land redistribution since 1972, and the 2017 Philippine Statistic Authority (PSA) Report 2018-8 showed a rating of .89 percent accomplishment. DAR Negros Occidental is the foremost contributor in terms of accomplishment for the region but has chalked up an accomplishment of less than 50% only. While DAR has not fared well in instantly fulfilling its lofty billing as a purveyor of progress in the countryside due to the myriad of issues besetting it, it has been working feverishly to address this most efficiently. It has been making headway toward this end. This obtaining fact has all the more whetted the appetite of the author to undertake this study to find the reasons behind it. Begging for an answer is the question that this matter could be all about managerial efficiency, which, if addressed accurately, could ramp up the delivery of services.

Studies reviewed include the methodological approaches to managerial efficiency by Cheymetova and Scherbakov (2017), employee relations practices by Bacong and Encio (2017), and the extent of the practice of work ethics and job performance of local government employees by Benedicto and Caelian (2020). While studies on agrarian reform that dealt with civil society organization, taxation, and land distribution were investigated by Lorayna and Caelian (2020), taxation of agrarian reform properties was studied by Zaragoza and Caelian (2020). Ballesteros et al. (2018) focused on land distribution; however, the studies mentioned did not deal with the managerial efficiency of officers/heads of office and work performance of offices based on the Office Performance Commitment and Review (OPCR) of the MARPOs as prescribed by the Civil Service Commission. Hence, there is a glaring gap in the literature.

This study determined the level of managerial efficiency of Municipal Agrarian Reform Program Officers (MARPOs) and office performance of DAR Municipal Offices (DARMOs) in Northern Negros Occidental. It also investigated the challenges encountered by these offices in their work environment. The findings of the study were utilized as the basis of a strategic plan to enhance the managerial efficiency of heads of offices and improve the work performance of DAR Municipal Offices (DARMOs) in Northern Negros Occidental.

## **2. Literature Review**

**2.1. Managerial efficiency.** The efficiency measurement of any production function of a business is highly significant for decision-making, further improvement, and survival as a whole. The following parameters were found effective in measuring managerial efficiency: effectiveness, resource-intensiveness, operational efficiency, quality, sustainability, consistency, the integrity of management potential, and good organization of enterprise functions (Cheymetova & Scherbakov, 2017).

**2.1.a. Planning.** Schraeder et al. (2014) posited that planning is about setting future goals and assumptions about the environment and choosing the directions of action, including the means and ways of achieving the goals. Further, the author averred that planning provides stability and a certain level of safety and efficacy. As such, planning should involve the participation of employees because they are engaged directly with clients, customers, and stakeholders; hence, they have first-hand knowledge of information useful in guiding the planning process.

**2.1.b. Organizing.** According to Kapur (2018), organizing involves the identification of the activities required for the achievement of the objectives of the enterprise and the implementation of plans, the grouping, and the assignment of jobs and activities to the departments and individuals. It also includes delegation of authority and responsibility for performance and vertical and horizontal coordination of activities.

**2.1.c. Controlling.** Misun (2017) postulated that controlling is a managerial process of designing standards, measuring performance, comparing performance with standards, and implementing corrective action. The author further claimed that the characteristics of controlling are the feedback and corrective action. Thus, it is an essential and integral part of the role of management.

**2.1.d. Motivating.** Kapur (2018) underscored that the main purpose of motivating is to ensure that the measures formulated to achieve the desired goals and objectives are moving in the right direction. It involves three sub-functions: communication, motivation, and leadership.

The study of Godwin et al. (2017) suggested that Fayol's management principle on remuneration is a vital motivating factor in the work performance of employees. The author believes that remuneration should be determined based on the job role of employees, the financial state of the organization, and the cost of living, as this reduces tension at the workplace, increases productivity, reduces conflict and differences among the staff, and promotes synergy in the working environment.

**2.1.e. Coordinating.** In order to achieve organizational objectives efficiently and effectively, managers have to give a common direction to group efforts and the department as a whole. It was articulated that coordination is the orderly arrangement of the group and individual efforts to maintain harmony toward accomplishing a common goal. It is the synchronization of the efforts of different groups of employees from various units, maintaining a good bond between the organization and individual objectives, hence, motivating employees to achieve higher productivity.

**Managerial efficiency and demographics.** Beyene and Gituma (2017) stressed the significant relationship between age, work experience, and job satisfaction; however, academic qualifications did not influence job satisfaction. It necessarily follows that job satisfaction increases with age.

The moderating effects of demographics, such as age, education, tenure, and work experience, were studied by Flanigan et al. (2017). The results suggest that a leader or manager who demonstrates transformational leadership tendencies is more successful than those who practice transactional leadership skills, regardless of age, education, and experience. This implies that leadership skills play an integral role in the process of managing an organization.

The study of Ganjali et al. (2016) also revealed no significant relationship between efficiency and effectiveness in terms of age and years of service but a significant relationship in terms of educational attainment. It was elucidated that for an organization to be successful, it must have not just one strong leader at the top but effective leadership throughout the

organization. The ability of senior leaders to incorporate strategic policy is highly dependent on the alignment of leaders across the organization at all levels.

**Work performance and educational attainment.** The study by Konya et al. (2016) disclosed how the demographics of employees influence organizational commitment, which is one of the most important indicators of organizational behavior that drives work performance. It was found that higher education demonstrated a higher commitment to organizations' values. It means that highly-educated personnel are more committed to staying with their current employer because they know they do not have much choice but to find a better job, especially since they are already occupying managerial positions. Meanwhile, those employees with lower education often display low commitment levels that prevent them from perceiving and evaluating the values and goals of the organization.

**Length of service.** Length of service is noted to positively relate to work performance. Authors Benedicto and Caelian (2020) disclosed that male employees are consistently rated the lowest when it comes to efficiency and timeliness upon exploring the concept that in terms of efficiency, employees who are regular and longer in the service were rated outstanding.

**Designation of assessors.** Employees are the most important asset in an organization; without them, the goals and objectives of the office may not be attained. Benedicto and Caelian (2020) discovered that one of the indicators used to determine the quality of job performance, which was rated outstanding by regular employees, is the statement, "renders service that meets clients' satisfaction."

In relation to the study of Narbon-Perpina and De Witte (2018), it was emphasized that the efficiency of local government units is reflected in their management of sources, and the efficiency of each office depends on the performance of their employees.

**2.2. Work performance.** The total value of an individual's behavior over a period in an organization is called job performance. It refers only to behaviors that can make a difference in organizational goal accomplishment. The work performance of employees is usually measured using certain tools such as the performance management system (PMS). It emphasizes the basis of an organization in identifying current and future competency gaps, thus determining training needs, conflict, mentoring, and optimization of resources and resource pools (Mangipudi et al., 2019).

Meanwhile, Bacong and Encio (2017) studied employee relations practices in improving employee morale, building company culture, conveying expectations, and participating in management decisions to measure employee performance. Results showed that employees always want to feel part of its objectives, which require continuous learning, better communication, and fair benefits. Employees agree that the atmosphere and interpersonal relations in respective departments are necessary, and strong working relationships among co-employees within the company can deliver a good quality of performance.

**2.2.a. Quantity.** Quantity of work performance is measured in terms of meeting targets, delivering compliance as contained in the Office Performance Commitment and Review (OPCR), including serving a considerable number of beneficiaries, accomplishing all target activities, and significantly contributing to the attainment of the office outputs. The study found that the level of performance of government employees was very satisfactory, which means that their performance was above standards set in terms of quantity of outputs, among others. However, it was concluded by the authors that employees have become complacent because performance is not tied to the level of pay and perks enjoyed by government employees (Benedicto & Caelian, 2020).

**2.2.b. Quality.** The study of Akinbode et al. (2020) considers submitting accurate reports, processing transactions without corrections, rendering services that meet clients' satisfaction, acting on queries promptly and courteously, and practicing creativity and innovativeness as indicators to measure the quality of services.

**2.2.c. Timeliness.** Benedicto and Caelian (2020) highlighted that the lowest-rated indicator of job performance is timeliness; however, bearing a "very satisfactory" rating for all employees regardless of demographics. Still, this finding is why the public clamors that government is inefficient, consequently paving the way for enacting the Anti-Red Tape Act.

**Work performance and variables.** The study of Zaragoza and Caelian (2020) in Negros Occidental revealed very great negative fiscal implications on collections of real property taxes when land areas covered by CARP were used as variables. The same study also found great negative fiscal implications when grouped according to the number of property owners.

Another study that dealt with agrarian reform implementation in relation to the work performance of agrarian reform offices focusing on the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) was conducted by Lorayna and Caelian (2020). Although the participation of the CSOs was instrumental in the success of the program, the accomplishments of the offices did not reach the standard outputs desired and expected of the offices in the province. They were found to have lagged in delivering services such as land distribution.

Tadem (2015) pointed out that the implementation of the agrarian reform program is hampered by an ineffectual bureaucracy, displacement of peasant communities, and other factors, such as expanding the urban core to the countryside, among others. Overall, the author claimed that the government's tame and lame responses damaged the credibility of the agrarian reform program.

**2.3. Challenges encountered in the implementation of the agrarian reform program.** Although DAR has created strategies to ensure the smooth implementation of its projects and programs, some problems have arisen from its implementation and beset the program since its inception nearly three decades ago. The most onerous problem remains the strong resistance of the landowners that caused the struggle and hardships of the beneficiaries throughout the process. The delaying tactics of these landowners further hamper the program.

The study of Lorayna and Caelian (2020) pointed out that the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) was instrumental in the partial success of the program. However, generally, the accomplishments of the offices of the DAR did not reach the standard outputs expected of these offices. Also, the struggle to implement genuine agrarian reform in the country continues despite the involvement of non-government peoples' organizations and civil society organizations in the effort.

Further, Zaragoza and Caelian (2020) found several challenges in the program implementation of the DAR, such as the practice of joint ventures, cooperatives undertaking, leaseback agreements, and growers, among others.

Tadem (2015) was very vocal in expressing that there were land grabbing and land use conversions even in landholdings already covered by the program. These are misappropriated for non-agricultural purposes, such as real estate development, tourism, mining, and special economic zones encouraged by local governments, politicians, and giant property developers. The DAR offices also encountered several challenges, such as insufficient budgetary support and a scaling down of personnel. At the same time, the mishandling of records by some government agencies was discovered by Zaragoza and Caelian (2020).

Carranza (2015) reported the following challenges to CARP implementation: the absence of accurate data on the current status of land distribution, violence and strong resistance by landlords, reversals and land conversion, inadequacy in the provision of support services, and a conservative, legalistic bureaucracy.

Drbohlay et al. (2017) assessed the challenges faced by the CARP in the Philippines and its extension. They found many critical constraints, such as slow bureaucracy, lack of support services, landowners with political and administrative connections, delaying implementation through court cases, access to credit, and weak capacities of agrarian reform beneficiaries.

### **3. Methodology and data**

The study used a descriptive research design utilizing a survey questionnaire and document analysis. The descriptive research design was used to describe the level of managerial efficiency of the MARPOs in the areas of planning, organizing, motivating, controlling, and coordinating. Moreover, the same design was used to determine the work performance of the DARMOs in the areas of quantity, quality, and timeliness of submission of outputs. In addition, it revealed the challenges encountered by the agrarian reform offices in the course of implementation.

#### ***3.1 Study participants/respondents***

The respondents of the study were 87 personnel of DAR-Northern Negros Occidental, which includes four (4) Division Chiefs, ten (10) Section heads, thirty-four (34) SARPTechs respondents, and thirty-nine (39) ARPTechs. Total enumeration was used for division chiefs, section heads, and SARPTechs, and incidental sampling was utilized for ARP technologists.

#### ***3.2 The research instrument***

The researcher-made survey instrument to measure the level of managerial efficiency of MARPOs is based on Koontz and O'Donnell's (1976) management principles in the areas of planning, organizing, motivating, controlling, and coordinating. The instrument consists of three (3) parts. Part 1 of the questionnaire is on the profile of the respondents. Part II is the questionnaire proper, which contains Likert-type statements that determine the level of managerial efficiency of the MARPOs. Part III of the survey instrument is a checklist of the challenges encountered by agrarian offices in the local government units.

The content validity result was 4.67, denoting that the questionnaire was valid. The questionnaire was likewise subjected to a reliability test to ensure that the questions included can measure what it purports to measure by a pilot test to 30 participants, who were not respondents of the study. Cronbach Alpha was used to compute the reliability score resulting in 0.987 index, interpreted as very strong reliability. Meanwhile, the level of work performance was measured by using the Office Performance and Commitment Review (OPCR) of the MARPOs based on the prescribed scale of the Civil Service Commission (CSC MC No. 6, s. 2012).

**4. Results and discussion**  
**Level of Managerial Efficiency of MARPOs**

**Table 1. Level of Managerial Efficiency of Municipal Agrarian Reform Officers (MARPOs) in Northern Negros Occidental**

Variable	Planning			Organizing			Motivating		
	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int
<b>Educational Attainment</b>									
Bachelor's	3.92	0.64	Hi	3.85	0.62	Hi	3.99	0.64	Hi
with unit Masters	3.91	0.61	Hi	3.87	0.54	Hi	3.92	0.58	Hi
Master's Graduate	3.90	0.61	Hi	3.87	0.58	Hi	3.92	0.64	Hi
LLB	4.15	0.56	Hi	4.11	0.53	Hi	4.20	0.56	Hi
<b>Length of Service</b>									
Shorter (15 to 30 years)	4.02	0.61	Hi	3.96	0.57	Hi	4.05	0.63	Hi
Longer (31 years & up)	3.92	0.62	Hi	3.87	0.59	Hi	3.97	0.63	Hi
<b>Assessor's Designation</b>									
SARPTech	3.92	0.63	Hi	3.88	0.59	Hi	3.97	0.62	Hi
ARPTech	3.95	0.62	Hi	3.89	0.59	Hi	3.99	0.63	Hi
Section Head	3.92	0.62	Hi	3.86	0.61	Hi	3.96	0.66	Hi
Division Chief	3.86	0.57	Hi	3.84	0.57	Hi	3.90	0.57	Hi
<i>Whole</i>	<i>3.93</i>	<i>0.62</i>	<i>Hi</i>	<i>3.88</i>	<i>0.59</i>	<i>Hi</i>	<i>3.98</i>	<i>0.63</i>	<i>Hi</i>

*Note: Hi=High*

**Table 2. Level of Managerial Efficiency of MARPOs in Northern Negros Occidental**

Variable	Controlling			Coordinating			Efficiency		
	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int
<b>Educational Attainment</b>									
Bachelor's	3.85	0.62	Hi	3.97	0.62	Hi	3.93	0.59	Hi
with unit Masters	3.87	0.54	Hi	3.95	0.55	Hi	3.91	0.53	Hi
Master's Graduate	3.87	0.58	Hi	3.90	0.59	Hi	3.89	0.57	Hi
LLB	4.11	0.53	Hi	4.13	0.51	Hi	4.15	0.52	Hi
<b>Length of Service</b>									
Shorter (15 to 30 years)	3.96	0.57	Hi	4.02	0.59	Hi	4.01	0.58	Hi
Longer (31 years & up)	3.87	0.59	Hi	3.96	0.59	Hi	3.92	0.57	Hi
<b>Assessor's Designation</b>									
SARPTech	3.88	0.59	Hi	3.97	0.59	Hi	3.93	0.57	Hi
ARPTech	3.89	0.59	Hi	3.97	0.60	Hi	3.95	0.58	Hi
Section Head	3.86	0.61	Hi	3.95	0.61	Hi	3.92	0.59	Hi

Division Chief	3.84	0.57	Hi	3.85	0.58	Hi	3.85	0.53	Hi
<i>Whole</i>	<i>3.88</i>	<i>0.59</i>	<i>Hi</i>	<i>3.96</i>	<i>0.59</i>	<i>Hi</i>	<i>3.94</i>	<i>0.57</i>	<i>Hi</i>

*Note: Hi=High*

As a whole, the level of managerial efficiency of the MARPOs is high (M=3.94; SD=0.57). The function of “motivating” was rated as the highest (M=3.98, SD=0.63) and interpreted as high. It was followed by coordinating (M=3.96, SD=3.59), and planning (M=3.93, SD=0.62). Meanwhile, the function with the lowest mean is "controlling" (M=3.88, SD=0.59) and organizing (M=3.92, SD=0.61) still interpreted as high.

The finding of a high level of managerial efficiency indicates that the MARPOs are capable and competent and have demonstrated excellence in performing their functions. It also suggests that the determinations of the government, especially the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), to streamline processes in terms of efficiency have created a need for government employees to channel their own efforts and energy into becoming more productive in the delivery of services. As such, it paved the way for the achievement of a high level of managerial efficiency. Further, because of the increasing demand for improvement in the delivery of government services, laws enacted and statutory requirements that demand efficiency and delivery of performance of government workers were followed and implemented. In addition, competitive salaries, allowances, bonuses, incentives, and recognition may somehow contribute to the efficiency of employees.

This is consistent with the studies of Cheymetova and Scherbakov (2017) that managerial efficiency is high because managers excel in planning the future of the organization and succeed in making it more productive. Further, managerial performance is built on a collaborative and friendly environment; employees appreciate the superior performance. Moreover, the finding is supported by Narbon- Perpina and de White (2018) that the efficiency of the office led by its managers is necessary for the successful realization of the goals and objectives of the organization.

In the areas of management functions, “motivating” has the highest mean score (M=3.98, SD=0.63), interpreted as high. This shows that MARPOs know how to motivate employees. MARPOs have a sense of direction and make themselves a good example as dedicated civil servants to other employees, both heads and their subordinates. Furthermore, the finding shows that MARPOs can understand diverse personalities (values, attitudes, and emotions) within the organizations, which allows them to communicate better and creates an environment to motivate employees. Thus, the sense of camaraderie of MARPOs among employees encourages employees to do and perform better. MARPOs motivating skills can be attributed to the continuing appreciation and recognition of civil servants by the government with or without monetary rewards for their exemplary service to the agency.

This finding is supported by Godwin et al. (2017), that presented the idea that keeping up the welfare of employees and remuneration is a vital factor that increases productivity, reduces conflicts and differences, and promotes synergy that managers should master as it affects the workplace atmosphere. The findings mentioned above affirmed the results of the studies of Kapur (2018) that motivating includes communicating effectively, training and developing, and providing measures to achieve desired goals and objectives.

On the other hand, the function of controlling and organizing was found with the lowest mean rating (M=3.88, SD=0.59) but still interpreted as high. The result shows that despite the high rating of the respondents, there are areas that need improvement. Activities under the function of controlling and organizing are not routinely practiced by the MARPOs in the field

offices. Controlling activities are practiced by the provincial office heads and provincial staff, especially in monitoring of MARPOs accomplishments. On the other hand, organizing activities such as but not limited to apportioning human resources and identifying support services for activities in areas of coverage are being handled by the provincial management which the researcher is the head.

The findings are substantiated by the study of Verburg et al. (2018), which unveiled that control and communication are needed among employees because they can understand better what is expected of them and their own roles, making it easier to perform better. Furthermore, Misun (2017) postulated that controlling is a must in an organization and creates corrective actions to further deviation to set organizational standards; thus, it is an essential and integrated part of the management.

### Level of Work Performance of DARMOs

**Table 3. Level of Work Performance of The Department of Agrarian Reform Municipal Offices 2018 – 2020**

Variable	2018			2019			2020			As a whole		
	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int	M	SD	Int
Quantity	4.5	0.3	OS	4.1	0.6	V	4.1	0.5	VS	4.2	0.3	OS
	5	4		6	1	S	1	5		7	8	
Quality	4.7	0.2	OS	4.8	0.2	O	4.7	0.2	OS	4.8	0.2	OS
	9	9		1	6	S	9	6		0	2	
Timeliness	4.0	0.3	VS	4.2	0.3	O	4.2	0.5	OS	4.2	0.2	OS
	7	5		8	7	S	9	5		1	9	
Work Performance	4.4	0.6	OS	4.3	0.3	O	4.3	0.3	OS	4.4	0.1	OS
	6	0		7	3	S	7	9		0	9	

Note: Os=-outstanding, VS= Very Satisfactory

Work performance of the DARMOs is measured using secondary data based on the submitted CY 2018 to CY 2020 OPCR of the 33 DAR municipal offices headed by the 33 MARPOs pursuant to CSC MC No. 6 series of 2012. Work performance of DARMOs is measured based on Quantity, Quality, and Timeliness of Work performed. As a whole, the level of work performance of DARMOs from 2018 to 2020 was outstanding (M= 4.40; SD=0.19). In terms of areas, quality obtained the highest rating (M=4.80; SD=0.22), which is outstanding, while timeliness was rated with the lowest mean score (M=4.21; SD=0.29), which is still interpreted as outstanding. In terms of the variables, the highest work performance was in CY 2018 (M=4.46; SD=0.60) outstanding, while the lowest work performance was in CY 2019 (M=4.37; SD=0.33), which is still outstanding, and in CY 2020 (M=4.37;SD=0.39), which is also interpreted as outstanding.

The finding of an outstanding level of work performance denotes that there is an extraordinary level of achievement and commitment for the three years as attributed to the setting of performance targets based on an annual plan as directed by the higher office through a Guide Post/ Memorandum on the matter. This finding validates the system that the performance targets of the offices are pre-determined depending on the status of the landholdings to be targeted. This presents the various strategies employed by the government

to strike a balance between duty and reward to personnel, which is key to stellar work performance.

Findings affirmed Bacong and Encio (2017) that supervisors and managers in municipal offices perform upon direction, and higher offices do the planning. They are expected to deliver performance that will contribute to the overall performance of the department. In terms of the areas, quality was rated the highest (M=4.80: SD=0.22), interpreted as outstanding, while the lowest is the timeliness of submission of output (M,4.21: SD=0.29), also outstanding. The variable quality as the highest indicates that MARPOs prepare accurate outputs and process documents without errors, and their services meet clients' satisfaction. It also implies that MARPOs practice responsiveness, are reliable, and provide a strong sense of service to farmers and property owners alike. The study of Akinbode et al. (2020) affirmed that government employees practice service quality, which covers responsiveness, accuracy, creativity, and innovativeness, which are indicators of service quality.

Timeliness was provided with the lowest mean rating; although still outstanding, it indicates that outputs are submitted on schedules, deadlines are met, and MARPOs respond to the request of farmers and landowners immediately.

With respect to the variables expressed in years, performance for every year was outstanding. The highest rating was in CY 2018 (M=4.46; SD=0.60). Meanwhile, CY 2019 was outstanding (M=4.37; SD=0.33), and CY 2020 was also outstanding (M=4.37; SD=0.39). The finding indicates that work performance from 2018 to 2020 was generally outstanding over the years and 2018 as the peak where highest performance was noted but slightly decreased and maintained in 2019 to 2020. During the first outbreak of the COVID-19 in CY 2020, performance to some extent was affected. The performance of DARMOs is essentially influenced by conditions in the field and the physical presence of their employees. It further signifies that the performance of DAR offices is affected by coordination with other employees of other government agencies, both local and national, and by organizations with concerns about property ownership and valuation.

Lorayna and Caelian (2020) corroborated the finding that the participation of civil society organizations had somehow influenced work performance as it drives DAR personnel to pursue the performance of their tasks. This is despite being confronted by landowners' strong resistance, which eggs them to work even harder to prove wrong the criticisms on the implementation of agrarian reform. Moreover, the finding of Zaragoza and Caelian (2020) is affirmed that the performance of other government agencies, such as the DAR, is affected by the guidelines followed by the local government and other line agencies. This is because the operations of the department necessitate support and assistance from these other offices, without which DAR cannot successfully implement the program.

### **Challenges Encountered in the Program Implementation**

**Table 4. Challenges Encountered by Agrarian Offices in the Implementation of the Program**

Challenges	f	%
Boundary issues/disputes	80	92.0
Landowner's strong resistance to the program	77	88.5
Critical stance of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)	69	79.3
Internal squabbles among farmers and farmers' organizations	55	63.2
Unwarranted land occupation by FBs-applicant	50	57.5

Unavailable Lot Data Computation (LDC)	48	55.2
Technically infirmed titles	47	54.0
Lost/missing titles	44	50.6
Proliferation of agrarian cases	43	49.4
Minimal support from other government line agencies	37	42.5
Illegal conversion	37	42.5
Annotation of LMS Certification	23	26.4
Reconstitution of Titles	21	24.1

Table 4 presents the challenges encountered by agrarian reform offices in the performance of their functions. The major challenge identified by respondents is boundary issues/disputes (92.0%), as expressed by eighty (80) respondents. The next set of challenges beyond the control of the DARMOs are landowner's strong resistance to the program (88.5%), the critical stance of Civil Society Organization (79.3%), internal squabbles among farmers and farmers' organizations (63.2%), and unwarranted land occupation by FBs-applicant (57.5%).

Meanwhile, the other set of challenges is administrative, requiring coordination of other government agencies. They are as follows: unavailable lot data computation (55.2%), technically infirmed titles (54.0%), lost/missing titles (50.6%), the proliferation of agrarian cases (49.4%), annotation of LMS certification (26.4%); and reconstitution of titles (24.1%). Additionally, there is also minimal support from other government line agencies (42.5%) and the challenge of illegal conversion (42.5%) participated by local government units in the preparation of their comprehensive land-use plans. It would be downright naive to say that a pivotal and game changing government program as extensive as CARP would be bereft of issues and challenges. Surely, it is saddled as well with a surfeit of problems in its implementation.

In several studies previously conducted, these perceived red flags were duly already identified. In a study conducted by Zaragoza and Caelian (2020), they found out several challenges in the program implementation of DAR. These include the practice of joint venture, cooperatives undertaking, leasehold agreements and growers, among others. Similarly, Tadem (2015) was very vocal in expressing that there are land grabbing and land use conversions in landholdings already covered under the program. What is appalling is that these landholdings, are misappropriated for non-agricultural purposes, such as real estate development, tourism, mining, special economic zones backed by the local governments, politicians and giant property developers, the study further added. Drbohlav et al. (2017) in their assessment of the challenges faced by CARP in the Philippines also pointed out many critical constraints such as slow bureaucracy, lack of support services, landowners with political and administrative connections, delaying implementation through cases, access to credit and weak capacities of agrarian reform beneficiaries as among those plaguing the program. Still, in another study by Carranza (2015), he intoned about the absence of accurate data on the current status land distribution, violence and strong resistance by landlords, reversals and land conversion, inadequacy in the provision of support services and conservative legalistic bureaucracy as among those challenges hounding the effective implementation of the program.

On the part of DAR itself, it is not also wanting in its share of challenges. Among them, the insufficient budgetary support and the scaling down of personnel. In the treatise of Zaragoza and Caelian (2020), it discovered mishandling of records by some agencies as another source of the problem. The root cause of these problems appear to lie in the fact that some of the major players in the implementation of the program have not given their full support to it. For one,

majority of the landowners were never enamored about the program. In fact, some of them are oftentimes diametrically opposed to the view and belief espoused by DAR.

A major area of disagreement apparently is on the matter of compensation. Under the CARP, the law provides a certain formula in arriving at what is considered as just compensation. To the mind of the landowners, the offered compensation by DAR is a pittance and not commensurate to the value of their properties covered under CARP. This opposing view resulted in the filing of cases reaching as far as the Supreme Court which in most cases ended in favor of the government. Compounding the landowners' misery is the fact that only 30% of the land valuation is payable in cash while the remaining balance is payable in equal installment for the next 10 years. It is their belief that this system is discordant to the spirit of the program which is to spur industrialization and convince landowners to shift to this endeavor. But the big question is, how can they jump start an industry or any business for that matter with only a meager return to their acquired properties?

Verily, these are the gridlocks DAR has been grappling with for the past several years now. Be that as it may, let not your heart be troubled though as DAR is doing its level best to address these issues. To state a few, the highest current valuation of a landholding covered under CARP in one case has already surged past the P600,00.00 mark. This is almost triple the original valuation of landholdings dating back from the time CARP started. Moreover, some landholdings covered by Joint Venture Agreement (JVA) which have been identified and determined, after investigation, to have violated the agreement or ceased to be beneficial to the beneficiaries have been canceled or abrogated. Likewise, irrigated landholdings devoted to rice production are now beyond the reach of developers as conversion thereof have been rendered absolutely non-negotiable. And speaking of conversion, DAR has tightened the lid insofar as securing an order conversion or exemption is concerned in the light of a more rigid procedures and stiff requirements the agency has set upon the applicants. Another piece of good news for the ARBs is the recent action taken by the government declaring irrigation fees hitherto imposed by the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) as a thing of the past. Irrigation cost is now free. This is certainly a welcome relief to the ARBs. As regards the source of financial support, the department has tapped the assistance of private entities as well as other government agencies including the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) who has extended financial assistance to ARBs engaged in the cultivation of sugarcane. ARBs may now also avail of crop insurance and entitled to financial relief should natural calamities strike. DAR has now also packaged a slew of support services for the ARBs and re-organized fledgling agrarian reform cooperatives.

## **5. Conclusion**

The high level of managerial efficiency exhibited by the MARPOs in the discharge of their official functions implies the credibility and competence of the heads of offices of the DAR in Northern Negros Occidental, resulting in the achievement of the objectives of the agrarian reform program.

The outstanding performance of the-DARMOs over the years is a fulfillment of the DAR's continuing pursuit of a successful implementation of the program, which needs to be sustained with needed financial and human resources.

Challenges encountered by DARMOs revealed the need for a strong collaboration with the local government and the conduct of regular meetings, re-establishments of linkages, and close coordination and collaboration with these line agencies and civil society organizations. Hence, the adoption of the "whole of the nation approach" is recommended.

In the light of the foregoing, there is a need for the higher management to review, revisit, and formulate new policies, administrative orders, guidelines, and directives to strengthen, uphold, and give teeth to the existing guidelines. Moreover, MARPOs and field implementers, being frontliners in the implementation of the program should be provided with a battery of lawyers who will defend them in Court. Finally, there is a need to adopt new policies, strategies, innovations, mechanisms, and measures that would address the prevailing issues.

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