

Ease of Doing Business as an Indicator of Local Governance Efficiency: A Quantitative Study of Business-Government Transactions in Quirino Province, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This quantitative study examined ease of doing business as an indicator of local governance efficiency in Quirino Province, Philippines. It focused on business-government transactions experienced by owners and managers across the six municipalities of Aglipay, Cabarroguis, Diffun, Maddela, Nagtipunan, and Saguday. A cross-sectional explanatory design was used with 384 business respondents. Ease of doing business was operationalized through five dimensions: procedural efficiency, regulatory clarity, digital accessibility, staff responsiveness, and transaction predictability. Governance efficiency was measured through perceptions of timeliness, coordination, transparency, consistency, and capacity to resolve transaction-related concerns. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Descriptive statistics summarized transaction experiences and construct levels; Pearson product-moment correlations estimated bivariate relationships; and multiple linear regression determined the unique contribution of the five ease-of-doing-business dimensions to perceived governance efficiency. The composite ease-of-doing-business score was high ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.38$), while perceived governance efficiency was likewise high ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.54$). The composite ease-of-doing-business measure was strongly and positively associated with governance efficiency ($r = .669$, 95% CI [.610, .721], $p < .001$). The five predictors jointly explained 44.9% of the variance in governance efficiency, $F(5, 378) = 61.58$, $p < .001$. Procedural efficiency, regulatory clarity, digital accessibility, staff responsiveness, and transaction predictability each made significant independent contributions. The findings supported the use of business-facing administrative experience as one practical lens for evaluating local governance efficiency, while also showing that ease of doing business should complement rather than replace broader measures of accountability, service quality, equity, and development outcomes. The paper offered a replicable analytical framework for province-wide assessment of business-facing public services.

1. Introduction

Ease of doing business had become an important operational concern in public administration because firms experienced government not only through statutes and policy statements but through concrete procedures, processing times, information requirements, digital systems, fees, frontline interactions, and the predictability of regulatory decisions. International research on entry regulation had long shown that excessive procedures and regulatory costs could inhibit entrepreneurship and formalization, while later studies of registration reforms found that faster and simpler processes could increase formal business entry under particular conditions.¹⁻⁴

More recent business-environment frameworks had moved beyond a narrow count of procedures. The World Bank's Business Ready framework assessed the business environment through the quality of the regulatory framework, the public services that supported compliance, and operational efficiency in practice. Its business-entry measures considered the quality of rules, the availability and transparency of digital public services, and the time and cost required to complete registration. This broader approach was relevant to governance because it treated the business environment as an interaction between rules, institutions, service systems, and actual user experience.^{5,6}

Administrative simplification had likewise been treated as a governance reform rather than merely a convenience measure. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development identified one-stop shops as instruments for improving regulatory delivery by consolidating access points, reducing fragmentation, clarifying responsibility, and lowering transaction costs for citizens and businesses. These mechanisms were most useful when process integration was accompanied by information transparency, service standards, digital accessibility, and continuous monitoring.⁷

In the Philippines, Republic Act No. 11032, or the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018, strengthened the national anti-red-tape framework and required government agencies and local government units to improve processing efficiency, transparency, and accountability. The law prescribed service standards and required streamlined procedures for local business licenses, including a unified business application form and a Business One Stop Shop. Its implementing rules further required cities and municipalities to establish business one-stop arrangements and move toward electronic business permitting and licensing systems.^{8,9}

The national policy architecture also connected ease of doing business with local competitiveness. The Department of Trade and Industry's Cities and Municipalities Competitiveness Index defined government efficiency in terms of the quality and reliability of government services that supported productive expansion. Its government-efficiency pillar incorporated indicators related to national directives, investment promotion, the Citizen's Charter, local resource generation, public services, recognition of performance, business permits, peace and order, and social protection. Business-facing regulatory performance was therefore situated within a wider governance framework rather than treated as a stand-alone administrative statistic.¹⁰

Quirino Province provided a useful provincial setting for such an assessment. The Philippine Statistics Authority reported that the province had six municipalities and a 2024 population of 210,841. The provincial economy was estimated at PhP 23.00 billion in 2024, while PSA Quirino continued to collect establishment-level information through the Annual Survey of Philippine Business and Industry and the Survey on Information and Communication Technology. These conditions underscored the importance of reliable local administrative services for enterprises operating across a geographically dispersed provincial economy.¹¹⁻¹³

Recent government reports also documented continuing business-service reforms in the province. A January 2026 Business One Stop Shop initiative in Quirino consolidated local and national government services during the annual permit-renewal period. Earlier digital-government implementation had enabled business-permit and other local transactions through eGovPH and eLGU systems in several Quirino municipalities. DTI Quirino had also reported plans for one-stop business registration assistance in sector-specific enterprise activities. These initiatives established a relevant institutional context for examining whether business users perceived administrative convenience and predictability as indicators of efficient local governance.¹⁴⁻¹⁶

The study treated ease of doing business as a business-facing measure of governance efficiency, not as a complete measure of good governance. Efficient permitting could reveal administrative capacity, coordination, transparency, responsiveness, and regulatory discipline, but broader governance also involved accountability, participation, equity, public financial management, social services, environmental stewardship, public safety, and other outcomes. This distinction was consistent with the Seal of Good Local Governance framework, which evaluated local governments across multiple governance areas, including business-friendliness and competitiveness as only one component of wider institutional performance.

The study therefore examined business-government transactions as an observable interface between entrepreneurs and local institutions. It built on the premise that the quality of administrative interaction could be evaluated through multiple dimensions rather than a single satisfaction score. Procedural efficiency captured the economy of steps and time; regulatory clarity captured the intelligibility and consistency of requirements; digital accessibility captured the availability and usability of electronic channels; staff responsiveness captured frontline assistance and problem resolution; and transaction predictability captured the stability and reliability of processing expectations. Together, these dimensions reflected both operational efficiency and the quality of public services emphasized in contemporary business-environment frameworks.⁵⁻⁷

1.1 Research Questions and Hypotheses

The study answered the following questions:

- What was the profile of business respondents in terms of municipality, enterprise size, years of operation, and most recent government transaction?
- What was the level of ease of doing business in terms of procedural efficiency, regulatory clarity, digital accessibility, staff responsiveness, and transaction predictability?
- What was the level of perceived governance efficiency in business-facing local government services?
- Were the ease-of-doing-business dimensions significantly related to perceived governance efficiency?
- Which ease-of-doing-business dimensions significantly predicted perceived governance efficiency when considered simultaneously?

The null hypotheses stated that the ease-of-doing-business dimensions were not significantly related to governance efficiency and that none of the dimensions made a significant independent contribution to governance efficiency. Tests were evaluated at $\alpha = .05$.

2. Conceptual and Analytical Framework

The analytical framework linked ease-of-doing-business experience to governance efficiency. The independent-variable block contained five dimensions of business-facing administration. The dependent variable represented the perceived efficiency of local governance in handling business-related transactions. The framework was influenced by the World Bank's distinction among regulatory rules, public services, and operational efficiency; by the Philippine legal requirements for streamlined government service; and by the DTI's treatment of government efficiency as a competitiveness pillar.^{5,8-10}

The analytical expectation was that easier, clearer, more accessible, more responsive, and more predictable transactions would be associated with higher assessments of governance efficiency. The framework did not infer that fewer regulations were always preferable. Efficient governance required legitimate regulatory objectives to be implemented through proportionate, transparent, coordinated, and user-accessible processes.

Table 1. Operationalization of the Study Variables

Construct	Operational meaning	Indicators	Scale
Procedural efficiency	Perceived economy of steps, waiting, repeat visits, and processing effort	Four items on steps, time, routing, and completion	1-5 agreement
Regulatory clarity	Perceived clarity and consistency of requirements and instructions	Four items on information, requirements, fees, and consistency	1-5 agreement

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Construct	Operational meaning	Indicators	Scale
Digital accessibility	Perceived availability and usability of electronic transaction channels	Four items on online access, submission, tracking, and digital support	1-5 agreement
Staff responsiveness	Perceived timeliness and helpfulness of frontline assistance	Four items on assistance, response, courtesy, and problem resolution	1-5 agreement
Transaction predictability	Perceived stability of requirements, schedules, costs, and expected outcomes	Four items on consistency, published standards, fees, and processing expectations	1-5 agreement
Governance efficiency	Perceived capacity of local institutions to deliver coordinated, timely, transparent, and reliable business-facing services	Five items on timeliness, coordination, transparency, consistency, and resolution	1-5 agreement

3. Methods

3.1 Research Design

The study used a quantitative, cross-sectional explanatory design. The design was appropriate because the inquiry required measurement of business users' experiences and estimation of the strength and direction of relationships between ease-of-doing-business dimensions and perceived governance efficiency. The province served as the geographic case, while the six municipalities formed the local administrative environments from which business respondents were represented. The design supported statistical association and prediction but did not establish temporal causality.

3.2 Study Setting

Quirino Province consisted of six municipalities: Aglipay, Cabarroguis, Diffun, Maddela, Nagtipunan, and Saguday. PSA's 2024 census recorded a provincial population of 210,841, with Diffun as the most populous municipality and Cabarroguis as the provincial capital. The study focused on businesses that had interacted with government for registration, renewal, licensing, clearances, or related permitting services.¹¹

The provincial framing recognized the institutional division of responsibility. Business permits and many frontline licensing transactions were processed primarily by municipal governments, while provincial offices, national line agencies, Negosyo Centers, and other institutions contributed to the wider business-support environment. Accordingly, the study interpreted province-wide results as evidence about the local governance environment experienced by businesses across Quirino rather than as an exclusive evaluation of the provincial government.

3.3 Respondents and Sampling

The analytical sample consisted of 384 business owners or managers. Respondents were distributed across all six municipalities to preserve geographic coverage. Eligibility required direct knowledge of at least one recent business-related government transaction, such as new registration, permit renewal, licensing, clearance processing, or a related regulatory service. Only one respondent represented each enterprise record in the analytical file. The sample size was adequate for the planned multiple regression because it substantially exceeded conventional minimum observations-per-predictor rules and provided sufficient precision for moderate correlations.

Table 2. Profile of Business Respondents (n = 384)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Municipality	Aglipay	58	15.1
	Cabarroguis	78	20.3
	Diffun	96	25.0
	Maddela	72	18.8
	Nagtipunan	48	12.5
	Saguday	32	8.3
Enterprise size	Micro	313	81.5
	Small	59	15.4
	Medium	12	3.1
Most recent transaction	Renewal	245	63.8
	New registration	85	22.1
	Other permit/licensing	54	14.1
Years in operation	Mean = 8.06 years	-	-
	Median = 7 years	-	-

3.4 Research Instrument

The survey questionnaire contained four sections. The first documented enterprise and transaction characteristics. The second measured the five ease-of-doing-business dimensions. The third captured selected operational experiences during the most recent transaction. The fourth measured governance efficiency. Construct items used a five-point agreement scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher values indicated more favorable assessments of the business-government interface and governance efficiency.

Item development followed the substantive logic of Republic Act No. 11032, the law's implementing rules, the DTI competitiveness framework, the World Bank's operational-efficiency and public-service concepts, and OECD guidance on one-stop administrative services.

Items were written to assess user experience without reproducing proprietary instruments. Content coverage emphasized transaction time, process integration, information transparency, digital service availability, frontline responsiveness, and consistency of requirements.^{5,7-10} Composite scores were computed as arithmetic means of the items belonging to each construct. Descriptive interpretation used the following ranges: 4.21-5.00, very high; 3.41-4.20, high; 2.61-3.40, moderate; 1.81-2.60, low; and 1.00-1.80, very low. These labels summarized scale position and were not treated as external performance ratings.

3.5 Data Collection and Ethical Safeguards

The study protocol treated participation as voluntary and confidential. Respondents were informed that the inquiry concerned administrative experience rather than political preference and that individual responses would not be released to licensing personnel, elected officials, employers, or other businesses. No personally identifying information was required for the statistical analysis. The questionnaire was framed around recent transactions to reduce recall ambiguity, and neutral wording was used to permit favorable, neutral, or unfavorable responses.

3.6 Statistical Analysis

Data analysis proceeded in four stages. First, frequencies and percentages summarized respondent and transaction characteristics. Second, Cronbach's alpha assessed internal consistency of each multi-item scale. Third, means and standard deviations described ease-of-doing-business dimensions and governance efficiency. Fourth, Pearson product-moment correlations tested bivariate relationships between each ease-of-doing-business dimension and governance efficiency. The overall composite correlation was accompanied by a 95% confidence interval using Fisher's z transformation.

Multiple linear regression then estimated the independent contribution of procedural efficiency, regulatory clarity, digital accessibility, staff responsiveness, and transaction predictability to governance efficiency. Unstandardized coefficients (B), standard errors, standardized coefficients (beta), t statistics, p values, and 95% confidence intervals were reported. Multicollinearity was examined through variance inflation factors. Residual behavior and homoscedasticity were examined using residual diagnostics and the Breusch-Pagan test. A nonparametric Spearman analysis was also used as a sensitivity check because scale scores were derived from ordinal questionnaire items. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$, two-tailed.

4. Results

4.1 Business Transaction Experience

Table 3. Selected Operational Experiences in the Most Recent Government Transaction

Indicator	n	%
Requirements were clear before submission	287	74.7
Transaction was completed within the expected time frame	280	72.9
Transaction was completed without more than one in-person visit	239	62.2
At least one online or electronic step was used	255	66.4
A document or requirement had to be resubmitted after initial submission	85	22.1

The operational indicators showed a generally favorable but not frictionless business-service environment. Nearly three-fourths of respondents indicated that requirements were clear before submission, and 72.9% reported completion within the expected time frame. Approximately two-thirds used at least one online or electronic step, showing meaningful penetration of digital channels while also indicating that digital use was not universal.

A smaller proportion, 62.2%, completed the transaction without more than one in-person visit. This finding suggested that physical interaction remained part of the experience for a substantial share of business users. In addition, 22.1% reported having to resubmit a document or requirement after initial submission. These indicators were important because a high average satisfaction score could otherwise conceal specific sources of administrative burden.

The pattern was consistent with the logic of business one-stop and electronic-government reforms, which sought to reduce fragmentation, repeat visits, and redundant submission while improving information access. Philippine law required unified application processes and one-stop arrangements, while recent Quirino reports documented BOSS and eLGU initiatives intended to consolidate and digitalize transactions.^{8,9,14,15}

4.2 Reliability of the Measures

Table 4. Internal Consistency of the Study Scales

Scale	Items	Cronbach alpha	Interpretation
Procedural efficiency	4	.823	Good
Regulatory clarity	4	.845	Good
Digital accessibility	4	.860	Good
Staff responsiveness	4	.816	Good
Transaction predictability	4	.861	Good
Governance efficiency	5	.877	Good
Overall ease-of-doing-business composite	20	.890	Good

All scale coefficients exceeded .80. The results indicated adequate internal consistency for construct-level analysis and supported aggregation of the item responses into mean scores. The overall ease-of-doing-business composite obtained an alpha of .890, indicating that the five dimensions shared a common business-service orientation while retaining distinct substantive content.

4.3 Level of Ease of Doing Business

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics for Ease-of-Doing-Business Dimensions

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
Regulatory clarity	3.98	0.57	High	1
Transaction predictability	3.97	0.58	High	2
Procedural efficiency	3.96	0.53	High	3
Digital accessibility	3.93	0.55	High	4
Staff responsiveness	3.93	0.51	High	5
Overall ease of doing business	3.96	0.38	High	-

The overall ease-of-doing-business mean was 3.96 (SD = 0.38), which fell within the high descriptive range. Regulatory clarity obtained the highest mean ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.57$), followed closely by transaction predictability ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.58$) and procedural efficiency ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.53$). The narrow spread among dimensions indicated that the favorable assessment was not confined to a single aspect of the transaction experience.

Digital accessibility ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.55$) and staff responsiveness ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.51$) were also rated high. These two dimensions nevertheless represented practical areas where additional gains could be examined because digital channels depended on connectivity, platform completeness, payment integration, and user capability, while frontline responsiveness depended on coordination and problem-solving across offices.

The high scores were conceptually consistent with the direction of current Philippine administrative reforms. Republic Act No. 11032 emphasized streamlined service, while the World Bank and OECD frameworks treated transparency, digital public services, process integration, and operational efficiency as core elements of a supportive business environment.^{5,7-9}

4.4 Level of Perceived Governance Efficiency

Table 6. Governance Efficiency Scale

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Business services were delivered within reasonable and communicated time standards	3.87	0.67	High
Offices involved in business transactions appeared coordinated	3.87	0.68	High
Requirements, fees, and procedures were communicated transparently	3.89	0.67	High
Similar transactions were handled in a generally consistent manner	3.89	0.66	High
Transaction-related concerns were resolved with reasonable efficiency	3.91	0.65	High
Overall governance efficiency	3.88	0.54	High

The overall governance-efficiency mean was 3.88 (SD = 0.54), indicating a high assessment of the business-facing administrative environment. Item means ranged only from 3.87 to 3.91. Respondents therefore tended to view timeliness, coordination, transparency, consistency, and problem resolution in broadly similar terms rather than identifying one dominant strength.

The result supported the analytical usefulness of business transactions as a governance interface. Efficient public administration was reflected not only in whether a permit was ultimately issued but also in whether the process was understandable, coordinated, predictable, and responsive. At the same time, the governance-efficiency scale was deliberately limited to business-facing administration and did not represent the full range of local-government responsibilities.

4.5 Relationship Between Ease of Doing Business and Governance Efficiency

Table 7. Pearson Correlations with Perceived Governance Efficiency

Ease-of-doing-business variable	r	95% CI	p	Interpretation
Procedural efficiency	.468	[.386, .543]	< .001	Moderate positive
Regulatory clarity	.481	[.401, .555]	< .001	Moderate positive
Digital accessibility	.455	[.372, .531]	< .001	Moderate positive
Staff responsiveness	.429	[.343, .507]	< .001	Moderate positive
Transaction predictability	.474	[.392, .548]	< .001	Moderate positive
Overall ease of doing business	.669	[.610, .721]	< .001	Strong positive

Each ease-of-doing-business dimension was significantly and positively related to perceived governance efficiency. Dimension-level correlations ranged from $r = .429$ for staff responsiveness to $r = .481$ for regulatory clarity. These moderate coefficients indicated that each administrative feature captured meaningful but nonredundant variation in governance assessments.

The composite ease-of-doing-business measure had a stronger relationship with governance efficiency, $r = .669$, 95% CI [.610, .721], $p < .001$. The coefficient indicated that favorable business-facing administrative experience tended to co-occur with favorable perceptions of governance efficiency. The magnitude also showed that the constructs were related without being identical, which was important because governance efficiency contained broader judgments about coordination, transparency, consistency, and institutional problem resolution.

The relationship was consistent with the logic of contemporary regulatory-governance frameworks. The World Bank's B-READY approach explicitly linked operational efficiency with the practical effectiveness of regulations and public services, while OECD one-stop-shop guidance emphasized that integrated administrative delivery could reduce burdens and improve service quality. Earlier empirical research likewise showed that registration procedures and regulatory burdens influenced firm entry and formal business activity.¹⁻⁷

4.6 Predictors of Governance Efficiency

Table 8. Multiple Linear Regression Predicting Governance Efficiency

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p	95% CI for B	VIF
Procedural efficiency	.218	.045	.211	4.85	< .001	[.130, .306]	1.30
Regulatory clarity	.184	.043	.192	4.25	< .001	[.099, .270]	1.40
Digital accessibility	.207	.042	.209	4.90	< .001	[.124, .290]	1.25
Staff response	.160	.046	.151	3.47	.001	[.069, .251]	1.30
Transaction predictability	.193	.042	.206	4.66	< .001	[.112, .275]	1.34
Regression statistics	R ² = .449	Adj. R ² = .442	-	F(5,378) = 61.58	< .001	-	-

The five ease-of-doing-business dimensions jointly explained 44.9% of the variance in governance efficiency, $R^2 = .449$, adjusted $R^2 = .442$, $F(5, 378) = 61.58$, $p < .001$. The explanatory share was substantial for a perceptual cross-sectional study and indicated that business-facing administrative experience was closely connected with how respondents evaluated governance efficiency.

All five dimensions made statistically significant independent contributions. Procedural efficiency had the largest standardized coefficient ($\beta = .211$), closely followed by digital accessibility ($\beta = .209$) and transaction predictability ($\beta = .206$). Regulatory clarity contributed $\beta = .192$, while staff responsiveness contributed $\beta = .151$. The coefficients were sufficiently close that the findings did not justify treating a single dimension as the exclusive driver of governance efficiency. Rather, the results supported a multi-component interpretation in which streamlined processes, accessible digital services, clear rules, responsive personnel, and predictable transactions worked together.

Multicollinearity was not a concern because variance inflation factors ranged from 1.25 to 1.40. Residual diagnostics showed no material departure from normality, and the Breusch-Pagan test did not indicate heteroscedasticity, $p = .312$. The Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.93, which did not suggest problematic residual dependence for the cross-sectional sequence used in the analytical file. These diagnostics supported use of the linear regression estimates for the stated variables.

4.7 Sensitivity Analysis

Table 9. Spearman Rank Correlations as a Sensitivity Check

Variable	rho	p
Procedural efficiency	.476	< .001
Regulatory clarity	.493	< .001
Digital accessibility	.454	< .001
Staff responsiveness	.404	< .001
Transaction predictability	.439	< .001
Overall ease of doing business	.654	< .001

The Spearman coefficients reproduced the direction and general magnitude of the Pearson results. The composite relationship remained strong ($\rho = .654$, $p < .001$), while dimension-level relationships remained moderate and statistically significant. This consistency reduced concern that the principal findings were an artifact of treating averaged Likert scores as approximately continuous measures.

5. Discussion

The study examined whether ease of doing business could function as a practical indicator of local governance efficiency in Quirino Province. The findings supported this proposition within the defined scope of business-facing administration. Respondents reported generally favorable experiences across procedural efficiency, regulatory clarity, digital accessibility, staff responsiveness, and transaction predictability, and those dimensions were positively associated with governance efficiency. The result suggested that entrepreneurs interpreted administrative quality through a combination of process, information, technology, human interaction, and consistency rather than through processing speed alone.

The result aligned with the evolution of international business-environment measurement. Earlier research emphasized procedures, time, and cost as barriers to formal entry, while B-READY broadened the analytical lens to include the quality of regulations, public services, and operational efficiency. The Quirino framework followed that broader logic by including administrative clarity, digital access, responsiveness, and predictability alongside procedural efficiency.¹⁻⁶

Regulatory clarity showed the strongest bivariate correlation with governance efficiency. This finding was substantively important because many administrative burdens arose not from the existence of legitimate requirements but from uncertainty about what was required, where to submit documents, how fees were computed, whether requirements changed across offices, and how deficiencies could be corrected. Clear and stable information reduced search costs and made compliance more manageable, especially for microenterprises with limited administrative staff.

The Philippine EODB law and its implementing rules directly addressed this concern through Citizen's Charters, unified application forms, published procedures, and one-stop processing. The legal design recognized that transparent information and standardization were central to efficient service delivery, not merely supplementary communication activities.^{8,9}

Procedural efficiency, digital accessibility, and transaction predictability produced very similar standardized regression contributions. This pattern suggested that these features were complementary. A digital platform did not automatically improve governance if users still faced unclear requirements or uncertain processing. Likewise, a formally streamlined process could remain burdensome if applicants had to return physically for multiple steps that could have been integrated electronically. Predictability connected the two by giving business users confidence that published requirements, fees, and processing standards would be applied consistently. Recent Quirino initiatives illustrated the institutional relevance of this combination. The 2026 BOSS arrangement brought participating offices together during the permit period, while eGovPH and eLGU implementation expanded digital access to business

permits and other local services in several municipalities. These developments reflected the same integration and digitalization principles embedded in national anti-red-tape policy.^{14,15}

Staff responsiveness had the smallest standardized coefficient but remained independently significant. This result should not be interpreted as evidence that frontline personnel were unimportant. Instead, responsiveness overlapped with the benefits of clear procedures and integrated systems. When rules and digital workflows were well designed, fewer transactions depended on discretionary intervention. Conversely, responsive staff remained essential when applicants encountered exceptions, missing information, connectivity problems, unusual permits, or inter-office coordination issues.

One-stop-shop guidance emphasized that simplification required more than placing multiple agencies in one location. Effective integration depended on governance arrangements, clearly assigned responsibilities, information exchange, accessible channels, and monitoring of user experience. The results were consistent with this institutional view of service integration.⁷

The operational indicators also qualified the positive scale averages. Although 72.9% reported completion within the expected time frame and 74.7% reported clear requirements, only 62.2% completed their transaction without more than one in-person visit, and 22.1% experienced a resubmission. These results illustrated why administrative performance should be examined through specific transaction indicators as well as broad perception scales. High overall ratings could coexist with friction points that mattered to smaller businesses in time, transportation cost, and opportunity cost.

The provincial context further required caution in interpreting the findings. Quirino's six municipalities differed in population, geography, administrative capacity, connectivity, and business activity. National frameworks recognized that implementation quality could vary even where common legal requirements applied. The present study therefore emphasized province-wide patterns and did not use its results to rank individual municipalities or officeholders.^{10,11}

6. Governance Implications

First, ease-of-doing-business monitoring could be institutionalized as a recurring service-quality instrument rather than an annual compliance exercise. Short transaction surveys could capture actual user experience immediately after registration, renewal, licensing, or clearance processing. Core indicators could include total elapsed time, number of physical visits, number of offices or handoffs, number of resubmissions, use of digital channels, unexpected requirements, payment convenience, and issue-resolution time.

Second, digitalization should be evaluated on end-to-end functionality. A process was only partly digital when applicants could submit forms online but still had to make multiple physical visits for verification, payment, signatures, or release. Monitoring should distinguish information-only websites from systems that supported online application, document submission, payment, status tracking, inter-office data sharing, and electronic issuance.

Third, process mapping should be used to identify redundant requirements and avoid repeated requests for information already held by another participating office. The BOSS and eBOSS concepts were designed to reduce fragmentation. Their governance value depended on actual interoperability and common workflow rules rather than simple co-location of counters.

Fourth, Citizen's Charter information and business requirements should be audited for consistency across websites, printed materials, help desks, and frontline implementation. Regulatory clarity was one of the strongest correlates of governance efficiency in the analysis. Consistent information could therefore reduce avoidable resubmission, disputes, and reliance on informal assistance.

Fifth, business-service assessment should be disaggregated by enterprise size, transaction type, sector, and accessibility constraints. Microenterprises dominated the respondent profile and typically had less administrative capacity than larger firms. A process that appeared manageable to a firm with dedicated accounting or compliance staff could remain costly for owner-managed businesses.

Finally, ease of doing business should remain one component of governance assessment. Efficient processing was valuable when it reduced unnecessary burden without weakening legitimate safeguards. Local governments still had to protect public health, safety, environmental quality, labor standards, fiscal accountability, and equitable access to services. The governance objective was therefore better regulation and better service delivery, not deregulation for its own sake.

7. Conclusion

Ease of doing business provided a useful but bounded indicator of local governance efficiency in the Quirino provincial context. The analysis showed high assessments of procedural efficiency, regulatory clarity, digital accessibility, staff responsiveness, transaction predictability, and governance efficiency. The overall ease-of-doing-business composite was strongly associated with governance efficiency, and all five dimensions made significant independent contributions in the regression analysis.

The findings supported a multi-dimensional view of efficient business-facing governance. Business users appeared to value not only speed but also clarity, digital access, responsive assistance, and predictable implementation. This perspective was consistent with Philippine anti-red-tape policy and contemporary international approaches that combined regulatory quality, public services, and operational efficiency.

For local governance practice, the study indicated that business-service reform should be measured through actual transaction experience and not only through formal compliance. Province-wide monitoring of transaction time, repeat visits, resubmissions, digital completion, information consistency, and issue resolution could provide a practical evidence base for continuous process improvement.

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