

Correspondence

Transparency of the national government as key in promoting the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines

ABSTRACT

A recent correspondence discussed two important attributes of the government officials, namely, public service and common good. These two could possibly help the government in terms of promoting vaccination programs in the Philippines. This paper proposes transparency as the third attribute that could help in gaining trust from the people in promoting vaccination in the country.

Keywords COVID-19 vaccination program, government officials, transparency

A recent correspondence mentioned the two important attributes of government officials are public service and common good.¹ These two factors could help the government promote the vaccination program of the Philippines. This paper proposes another fundamental characteristic among government leaders as the third quality of good governance in building the confidence and the trust of the people to get vaccinated—transparency.

The local government unit of Borongan City in Eastern Samar in the Philippines considered transparency as a key in boosting confidence among its residents on the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines.² Citizens have the right to know what is happening in this public health crisis, especially the health programs of the government. Also, the government must be vigilant in informing the people regarding the results of clinical trials of the COVID-19 vaccines to ease public fear. People are hesitant in receiving the vaccine because of its potential side effects.³ In the Philippines, people are hesitant due to the Dengvaxia controversy in February 2018 after the supposed vaccine led to over 100 deaths.⁴ Thus, one way to regain the confidence of Filipinos toward vaccination is through the effort of the government to be transparent in the planning and implementation of the vaccination program.

Transparency must be maintained and held by the Philippine government by promising transparency on national matters to maintain its democratic nature. This is even constitutionally mandated. In the National Budget Circular 542, in compliance with the General Appropriations Act, Sec. 93, a transparency seal is required of all government websites

in the spirit of openness of civil service to citizens and of inviting the people to participate in governance.⁵ In comparison to Israel's rapid rollout of vaccines, the Philippines has evidently been falling late in the recuperation process because of vagueness and disagreements. The Philippine government may need to refrain from joining other political leaders who have been in denial, disengaged or have actively refuted empirical evidence.⁶ Transparency may just as well begin the cooperative action which the people demand from the government.

Thus, transparency is generally considered as one of the main pillars of good governance.⁷ It is a public norm of behavior to counter possible corruption. When the citizens have information, governance improves.⁸ Common good and public service will be actualized if the value of transparency is evident among government officials. If truth is evident in their public service to achieve the common good, then, their intentions to serve the people are pure.¹ Hence, the people are also invited to put their trust in the hands of their leaders to combat the pandemic. With the mutual effort of the government and its citizens, the sense of the normalcy in the middle of a pandemic is never far from impossible.

Authors' contributions

All authors contributed to all aspects of the manuscript.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest in this paper.

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