

Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace: Narratives of Mediators at the Grassroots

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Abstract

This study explored the lived experiences of Lupon Tagapamayapa chairpersons in mediating community disputes in selected barangays of Buenavista, Bohol. It was anchored on the Theory of Conflict and Resolution, Decision Theory, and Self-Efficacy Theory to explain the dynamics of grassroots conflict resolution, decision-making, and mediator resilience. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, the study gathered data through a validated researcher-made interview guide administered through individual interviews and a focused group discussion. The respondents were ten Lupon Tagapamayapa chairpersons selected through purposive sampling based on their years of service, current residence and work in their barangays, and voluntary participation. Data were analyzed using transcendental phenomenological analysis. The findings revealed that mediation at the barangay level was both meaningful and challenging. Positive experiences were reflected in the themes *Healing Justice: Where Compassion Meets Resolution* and *Silent Architects of Daily Harmony*, showing that mediators valued reconciliation, restored relationships, and the preservation of community peace. Negative experiences emerged in *When Land Becomes Legacy and Liability* and *Bloodlines and Battle Lines: A Kinship Divided*, indicating that land and family disputes were among the most difficult cases to mediate because of their emotional, relational, and social complexities. The challenges encountered were expressed through *Wisdom in Stillness: The Quiet Power of Calm and Clarity* and *Grace in Mediation: Faith, Fellowship, and the Soul of Resolution*, highlighting the importance of calmness, fairness, emotional control, empathy, faith, and peer support. The study concluded that barangay mediation is not merely a procedural duty but a deeply human peacebuilding practice grounded in compassion, fairness, and trust. It recommends continuous training in mediation, emotional intelligence, and conflict transformation, along with stronger institutional support and values-based approaches to strengthen grassroots dispute resolution. The study is closely aligned with SDG 16 on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions and SDG 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities. Its sustainability impact lies in strengthening community harmony, local governance, and institutional capacity for peaceful and accessible justice at the grassroots level.

Keywords: Barangay Justice, Community Disputes, Conflict Resolution, Grassroots Mediation, Lived Experiences, Lupon Tagapamayapa, Peacebuilding, Self-Efficacy

1. Introduction

This study examines the lived experiences of Lupon Tagapamayapa chairpersons in mediating community disputes at the barangay level in Buenavista, Bohol. Mediation has become an important mechanism in justice systems worldwide because it promotes restorative justice, reduces court congestion, and strengthens community cohesion. In the Philippine setting, this function is institutionalized through the Katarungang Pambarangay system, which positions the barangay as the first venue for resolving minor disputes. Despite the legal and social importance of this mechanism, existing studies have focused more on its structure, effectiveness, and procedures than on the lived realities of the mediators themselves. Guided by the Theory of Conflict and Resolution, Decision Theory, and Self-Efficacy Theory, this study seeks to understand how grassroots mediators experience conflict resolution, how they make decisions, and how they sustain confidence and resilience in performing their role.

Across the world, mediation has become a central pillar of modern justice systems, particularly in societies seeking to reduce court congestion, promote restorative justice, and strengthen community cohesion. International organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the European Union frequently highlight community-based mediation as an essential mechanism for peaceful dispute resolution, especially in culturally diverse and developing nations. Globally, alternative dispute resolution frameworks have gained recognition for their ability to empower communities, provide faster access to justice, and preserve social relationships by focusing on dialogue and reconciliation rather than adversarial proceedings. Many countries have institutionalized community mediation centers as part of their national justice strategies, emphasizing localized, culturally grounded, and participatory justice principles. In the Philippines, community mediation is deeply institutionalized through the Katarungang Pambarangay under the Local Government Code of 1991. The system reflects the national government's commitment to restorative community justice and the decongestion of formal courts. It

requires most interpersonal disputes to undergo barangay conciliation before court action, thereby making the barangay not only the smallest political unit but also the first line of justice delivery. However, national assessments show wide variation in the effectiveness of the Katarungang Pambarangay depending on leadership, resources, training, and community engagement. In Bohol, where barangays are geographically scattered and structurally diverse, the Katarungang Pambarangay plays an important role in maintaining peace and order. The province promotes barangay-based mediation to support tourism safety, rural development, and community resilience, yet disparities remain among barangays due to limited training, weak documentation, personal conflicts, and low participation of disputing parties. In Buenavista, some barangays manage disputes effectively while others exhibit signs of a non-functional justice system. Conciliable cases are sometimes left unresolved because of non-attendance during mediation schedules and the insistence of some parties to escalate minor issues to formal legal processes. These conditions underscore the importance of examining the experiences of Lupon Tagapamayapa chairpersons, whose role is central to accessible community justice.

Related literature consistently presents the Barangay Justice System as an important administrative and conciliatory mechanism for resolving disputes without resorting to formal litigation. According to Murphy P. Mohammed and Nicanor C. Caingat (2017), the Katarungang Pambarangay is intended to promote the speedy administration of justice and relieve the courts of conciliable civil and criminal cases. Similarly, Mohammad et.al (2017) emphasized that the system allows community members to settle disagreements outside court and is a preferred mechanism for barangay-level mediation among Filipinos. Several studies also emphasize the qualities needed for effective mediation. Effective dispute resolution requires sound decision-making, impartiality, transparency, accountability, and knowledge of rules and procedures, and harmonious resolution is more likely when lupon representatives properly exercise their legal mandate and evaluate cases thoroughly (Fritz et. al.,2021). Conciliation, as explained by Bercovitch and Houston (2015), is a reactive process of conflict management in which parties seek assistance to change behavior, settle conflict, or resolve problems without force or formal law, and this framework helps explain mediation conditions and outcomes. Empirical studies further show both strengths and challenges of the Barangay Justice System. Buenconsejo et al. (2022) found that the system was highly effective in promoting amicable settlements and preventing disputes from reaching formal courts, although problems such as reluctance to attend hearings, low public awareness, and inconsistent participation remained. Noveloso et al. (2023) likewise reported success in complaint processing and conciliation, but noted insufficient public awareness and underutilization of the system. Lim (2019) showed that Punong Barangays often favor informal and discreet conflict resolution in order to preserve harmony and avoid “hiya,” reflecting the cultural preference for reconciliation over confrontation. These studies collectively suggest that barangay mediation is effective when supported by legal literacy, public trust, leadership, and culturally sensitive conflict management.

Globally, mediation is recognized as a participatory and community-based justice mechanism that promotes reconciliation and preserves social relationships. Nationally, the Philippine government has embedded this framework in law through Republic Act 7160 and reinforced party autonomy in dispute settlement through Republic Act No. 9285 or the Alternative Dispute Resolution Act of 2004 (Sidiq & Hariyanto, 2019). These laws position the Barangay Justice System as an accessible, less expensive, and faster alternative to court litigation, where parties attempt to settle disputes amicably without legal counsel, and where cases are often resolved in weeks instead of years (Katarungang Pambarangay Handbook, 2004). At the local level, challenges remain. Members of the Katarungan Pambarangay encounter lack of training, weak supervision systems, and lack of cooperation from either party (Guia, K., & Mangubat, D. 2021). Other studies identified misunderstanding, differences in principles and value judgment, jealousy, theft, selfishness, vices, and broken relationships as common causes of conflict (Jumalon, J. U., Pelima, R. G., & Caday, K. A. 2018). Gender-related factors were also found to influence dispute settlement and aggressiveness in pursuing cases, indicating the need for information drives and stronger paralegal skills among Lupon members (Sobradil, M. 2019). In Buenavista, Bohol, these broader issues become more concrete through inconsistent functionality across barangays, unresolved conciliable cases, and complex realities surrounding attendance, escalation of disputes, and mediator burden.

This study is anchored on the Theory of Conflict and Resolution by George Simmel, Hansson’s Decision Theory, and Self-Efficacy Theory by Bandura. Simmel (2014) posits that conflict is an inherent and unavoidable aspect of social interaction. Rather than being purely destructive, conflict may clarify boundaries, redefine relationships, and reinforce social norms. It can lead to compromise, negotiation, or conciliation, thereby functioning as a catalyst for change and social reintegration (Simmel, 2014). Conflict arises from divergent interests, incompatible goals, misunderstandings, and competition, yet when properly managed it contributes to social integration and equilibrium (Wolff, 1950; Coser, 1956). This perspective is relevant because Lupon chairpersons facilitate dialogue and transform disputes into opportunities for restoring order and strengthening community relationships (Dofeliz & De la Peña, 2021). Hansson’s Decision Theory explains the tension between normative and descriptive decision-making in grassroots mediation (Hansson, 2005). Normative decision-making emphasizes rationality, objectivity, and fairness, while descriptive decision-making acknowledges that actual decisions are shaped by emotions, personal experiences, cultural norms, and situational constraints. In barangay mediation, where mediators are often personally familiar with disputing parties, these tensions are especially relevant. Lupon chairpersons are expected to decide fairly and impartially, yet they must do so under pressures arising from community relationships,

politics, and emotional dynamics (Dagohoy & Villamor, 2021). Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory explains how confidence influences mediator performance. Self-efficacy refers to one's belief in the ability to perform behaviors needed to achieve desired outcomes (Bandura, 2018). Lupon chairpersons with strong self-efficacy are more likely to approach disputes with persistence, confidence, and a problem-solving orientation. Their self-efficacy is shaped by performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological or emotional states. Past success, observation of other mediators, positive feedback, and emotional regulation all contribute to stronger confidence in resolving disputes, while repeated failures, anxiety, and exhaustion may weaken it (Bandura, 2018; Dagohoy & Villamor, 2021). Together, these theories provide a strong conceptual basis for understanding conflict, decision-making, and mediator resilience in barangay justice.

Although many studies have examined the legal basis, administrative functions, effectiveness, and implementation of the Katarungang Pambarangay, very few have focused on the lived experiences of Lupon Tagapamayapa chairpersons, especially in rural municipalities such as Buenavista, Bohol. Existing literature has largely emphasized settlement rates, complaint processing, compliance with procedures, or the general effectiveness of the system, rather than the mediators' personal burdens, motivations, community pressures, emotional strain, and decision-making realities. The reviewed studies also show recurring concerns such as inadequate training, public unawareness, participation issues, and operational barriers, but they do not sufficiently explain how these are experienced and navigated by chief lupons themselves. As noted in the thesis literature synthesis, many scholars explored lupon tagapamayapa experiences and conciliation processes, and there were conflicting results especially on the qualification of the lupons, but only few studies directly investigated the number of years in service and educational qualifications of the chief lupons. Furthermore, there is no published studies of chief lupons in the municipality of Buenavista, Bohol. This gap justifies the need for a qualitative inquiry centered on the narratives of grassroots mediators. By exploring these lived realities, the study aims to contribute a deeper and more human understanding of how barangay justice functions in practice and why some barangays perform better than others in mediation.

This study aligns most directly with SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions because it examines a grassroots justice mechanism designed to promote peaceful conflict resolution, accessible justice, and stronger local institutions. The Katarungang Pambarangay serves as a community-based structure for resolving disputes amicably, reducing unnecessary litigation, and sustaining peace and order at the barangay level. It also relates to SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities because effective barangay mediation contributes to safer, more harmonious, and more resilient communities. In addition, the study has relevance to SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals since strengthening barangay justice may require collaboration among barangay officials, local government units, DILG, PNP, DSWD, courts, and community members in order to improve training, coordination, and public awareness.

This study contributes to community sustainability by examining how local mediation practices preserve harmony, reduce escalation of disputes, and strengthen social cohesion. It contributes to institutional sustainability by identifying operational strengths and weaknesses in barangay justice that may guide improvements in training, supervision, and policy support. It also contributes to policy and governance sustainability because the findings may support evidence-based enhancements in local justice administration and grassroots governance. From a broader multidisciplinary perspective, the study is relevant to criminology, public administration, local governance, peacebuilding, and social psychology. Its focus on mediation, decision-making, and self-efficacy helps explain how justice institutions function not only through rules and procedures but also through human experience, emotional resilience, and community trust. In this way, the study supports the long-term sustainability of peaceful, fair, and community-centered dispute resolution systems.

The findings of the study are important to multiple stakeholders. For Lupon Chairmen, the study may help them reflect on their mediation performance and improve communication, neutrality, ethical conduct, and conflict-resolution strategies. For barangay officials, it may guide the development of regular trainings, workshops, and seminars to strengthen mediation skills and improve the efficiency of the Katarungang Pambarangay system. For the Local Government Unit, the study provides empirical data on barangay-level dispute resolution that may support policy design, resource allocation, and institutional support for Lupon Tagapamayapa members. The findings may also serve as a reference for the Department of the Interior and Local Government in reviewing and enhancing guidelines, standards, monitoring systems, and training frameworks for the Katarungang Pambarangay. For the Philippine National Police and the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the study may improve coordination in handling cases involving community, family, and domestic disputes. For courts, the study reinforces the value of barangay mediation as a mechanism for decongestion. For community members, it may deepen understanding of the role and contributions of the Lupon, thereby strengthening trust and participation. Finally, for researchers and future researchers, the study provides literature and empirical insights that may support further inquiry into grassroots justice, mediation effectiveness, and local governance.

2. Materials and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a qualitative method of research using a phenomenological approach, specifically a Husserlian descriptive phenomenological orientation, to examine the experiences of Lupon Tagapamayapa Chairmen in mediating disputes filed before the barangay. This design was chosen because it allowed the researcher to capture the actual lived experiences, meanings, and insights of the informants regarding community dispute resolution. Interviews served as the primary method of data collection, and the study focused on understanding the essence of the participants' experiences from their own accounts. Edmund Husserl's transcendental phenomenological analysis was used in interpreting the responses.

2.2 Research Setting

The study was conducted in the municipality of Buenavista, Bohol, particularly in ten selected barangays where barangay-level governance and dispute resolution mechanisms are actively practiced. These barangays were Asinan, Bantuan, Bato, Bonotbonot, Cambuhad, Cantores, Cantuba, Hunan, Poblacion, and Sweetland. The municipality was presented as a setting where the Lupon Tagapamayapa functions as a community-based mechanism for mediation and conciliation, helping reduce the number of cases brought to formal courts and strengthening local conflict management within the barangay justice system. The selected barangays differ in geographic features, land areas, population sizes, and economic activities, making them appropriate sites for examining mediation practices in varied community contexts.

2.3 Respondents

The informants of the study were ten (10) chiefs of Lupon Tagapamayapa from the selected barangays in the municipality of Buenavista, Bohol. These informants came from Asinan, Bantuan, Bato, Bonot-Bonot, Cantores, Cambuhad, Cantuba, Hunan, Poblacion, and Sweetland. They were chosen because they were directly involved in handling community disputes at the barangay level and possessed relevant lived experiences in mediation and conciliation. The study used purposive sampling in selecting the ten informants. The inclusion criteria required that the informants had rendered services as chiefs of Lupon Tagapamayapa for at least three (3) years, were currently residing and working in their respective barangays, and voluntarily participated by signing the informed consent. Of the ten informants, four were interviewed individually and six were included in the Focused Group Discussion (FGD). The four individual interview participants came from Bantuan, Bato, Cantores, and Poblacion, while the six participants in the FGD came from Asinan, Bonot-Bonot, Cambuhad, Cantuba, Hunan, and Sweetland.

2.4 Research Instruments

The researcher utilized a researcher-made interview guide as the principal instrument for gathering data through personal interviews and focused group discussion. The instrument contained questions intended to unfold the experiences of barangay officials in resolving community disputes. It was divided into two parts: the first dealt with the experiences of the informants in mediating community disputes, while the second dealt with how they addressed challenges encountered in mediating cases filed before the barangay. The interview guide contained open-ended questions, core questions, and closing questions, allowing participants to freely describe and explain their experiences and interpretations of events and phenomena they encountered firsthand. The instrument was presented, validated, and approved by the panel members to ensure the quality and reliability of the interview procedure and the credibility of the responses. In support of the use of interviews in qualitative inquiry, the study cited that interviews are usually face-to-face conversations that allow the transfer of information from participant to researcher and are useful in uncovering the story behind a participant's experiences (Creswell, 2012). It also noted that interviews are used to pursue the meanings of central themes in the world of the subjects and that the main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what interviewees say (Mc Namara, 2009).

2.5 Data Collection

Data were gathered through individual interviews and a focused group discussion using the validated interview guide. Before the conduct of the interviews, the researcher explained to the informants the purpose of the study and the manner by which the interview would be conducted, including the use of a voice recorder. The informants then signed the informed consent form prior to participation. Voice recordings were used to support transcription and to facilitate accurate documentation of responses. This procedure enabled the researcher to collect detailed narratives about the participants' experiences in mediating disputes and the ways they addressed challenges in barangay-level conflict resolution.

2.6 Data Analysis

The study used transcendental phenomenological analysis in examining the gathered data. Recorded responses from the ten informants were transcribed and analyzed to identify substantial emergent themes that represented the real-world experiences of Lupon Tagapamayapa Chairmen in resolving community disputes. Through this process, the researcher derived thematic findings from both the individual interviews and the focused group discussion, allowing the study to capture the essence of the informants' lived experiences and challenges in grassroots mediation.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

The study observed ethical principles in dealing with the informants. Participation was voluntary, and the right of the participants to make their own decisions regarding involvement in the research was respected. This principle of autonomy was linked to the right to self-determination (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001). The researcher ensured that the purpose of the study and the interview process were explained before participation and that informed consent was obtained. Confidentiality was also observed. Information gathered during the interviews was recorded confidentially, names of informants were not divulged, and access to the recorded materials was restricted. The documented voice recordings were saved into compact disc and kept in the Graduate School Office of the University of Cebu Main Campus, with only the chairman of the research having access to the disc, which would be destroyed after the study had been accepted.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Experiences of the Informants in Mediating Community Disputes

3.1.1 Healing Justice: Where Compassion Meets Resolution

The data showed that many mediators found their most positive experiences in cases where empathy, patience, and understanding led to reconciliation. Informants described successful mediation in marital conflicts, first-time physical altercations, petty theft, and sensitive family matters. They emphasized giving people time to reconcile, choosing compassionate approaches over punitive ones, and settling issues locally to prevent escalation, legal expenses, and emotional damage. The findings also showed that mediators felt fulfilled when parties apologized, restored relationships, and resolved disputes within the barangay. These findings suggest that barangay mediation is effective not only because it resolves disputes, but because it restores relationships through empathy and emotional insight. The theme supports the idea that community mediation is a restorative form of justice in which dialogue and reconciliation are central to peacebuilding. This affirms the view that the Barangay Justice System promotes amicable settlement and avoids the costly and prolonged process of formal litigation, as noted by Murphy P. Mohammed and Nicanor C. Caingat (2017) and Mohammad et.al (2017). It also reflects the cultural and practical value of conciliation described by Bercovitch and Houston (2015), where conflict is resolved without physical force or formal adjudication.

3.1.2 Silent Architects of Daily Harmony

The results further showed that mediators derived pride and satisfaction from their consistent success in settling disputes quietly at the barangay level. Informants recounted cases involving serious sibling conflict over family debts, physical fights, and repeated community disputes that were resolved without escalation. They stressed that many cases never needed to be elevated and that local settlement often produced the best outcomes. The narratives also showed that mediators viewed humility, love, and openness among disputing parties as important factors in achieving smooth and lasting resolution. Beyond resolving cases, they saw themselves as protectors of daily peace and harmony in the community. This theme indicates that grassroots mediators often work as quiet but important agents of social stability. Their role goes beyond procedural settlement and extends to preserving harmony, preventing escalation, and reinforcing trust in the barangay as the first line of justice. The findings are consistent with Lim (2019), who observed that barangay leaders strongly favor informal and discreet resolution to preserve harmony and avoid public embarrassment. They also align with Noveloso et al. (2023), who found that the Katarungang Pambarangay is particularly effective in complaint processing, conciliation, and sustaining peace and order. The narratives additionally reflect Simmel's view that conflict, when properly managed, can strengthen relationships and restore social equilibrium (Simmel, 2014; Wolff, 1950; Coser, 1956).

3.2. Negative Experiences in Community Mediation

3.2.1 When Land Becomes Legacy and Liability

The findings revealed that land disputes were among the most difficult cases for the mediators. Informants shared that while many cases such as fistfights and petty conflicts could be resolved locally, land-related disputes often remained unsettled and were elevated to higher authorities. The narratives showed that these disputes were not merely about property but also involved deep family grievances, respect, and unresolved emotional wounds. In some cases, land disputes disrupted family events, strained kinship ties, and challenged the mediators' ability to maintain peace in the community. These findings indicate that land disputes exceed ordinary conciliatory processes because they combine legal, emotional, and relational complexities. This supports the idea that some community conflicts are resistant to mediation when parties are unwilling to compromise or when the dispute involves deeply rooted claims and identities. The results are consistent with the broader literature noting that misunderstanding, conflicting values, and personal interests commonly trigger disputes in the community (Jumalon, J. U., Pelima, R. G., & Caday, K. A. 2018). They also reflect Simmel's notion that conflict emerges from divergent interests and competition for valued resources, although not all such conflicts can be easily transformed into cooperative outcomes (Simmel, 2014; Wolff, 1950; Coser, 1956).

3.2.2 Bloodlines and Battle Lines: A Kinship Divided

The data showed that family conflicts, especially among siblings and spouses, were among the most emotionally charged and difficult to mediate. Informants described cases involving absent spouses, sibling rivalry after elections, and disputes driven by politics, pride, inheritance, and lingering resentment. These conflicts often extended beyond the barangay hall

and affected family unity as well as broader community harmony. The mediators found such cases particularly difficult because family bonds did not always guarantee willingness to reconcile. These results suggest that kinship-based disputes are especially difficult because emotional attachment, pride, and history intensify conflict. In such cases, mediators do not only deal with the issue itself but also with accumulated grievances and external conditions that hinder dialogue. The findings support Lim (2019), who emphasized the cultural importance of preserving harmony and avoiding confrontation, and they also echo Lupao and Alejandro (2022), who noted that mediators often face difficulty convincing parties to participate in good faith. In this sense, family conflict at the barangay level shows the limits of mediation when relationships are already fractured by pride, politics, or repeated grievance.

3.3. Challenges Encountered in Mediating Community Disputes Filed Before the Barangay

3.3.1 Wisdom in Stillness: The Quiet Power of Calm and Clarity

The results showed that one major challenge in mediation involved maintaining calmness, emotional control, and clarity during tense and unpredictable disputes. The narratives emphasized that mediators needed patience, composure, and fairness to diffuse tension and guide disputing parties toward cooperation. The data suggest that effective mediators were those who could remain steady under pressure, regulate their emotions, and create an atmosphere where parties felt heard and respected. This finding highlights the importance of self-efficacy, emotional regulation, and procedural fairness in grassroots mediation. Individuals with strong self-efficacy are better able to manage pressure and emotional strain, which strengthens their ability to mediate effectively (Bandura, 2018). The result is also supported by Tyler (1990), who explained that fairness in procedure shapes the legitimacy of authority and increases compliance. Likewise, Filella et al. (2018), Wang et al. (2018), Bradford et al. (2023), and Zamorano (2017) all underscore the value of emotional regulation, legitimacy, and fair treatment in reducing conflict and supporting peaceful resolution. These perspectives explain why calm, and clarity emerged as central strengths in effective barangay mediation.

3.3.2 Grace in Mediation: Faith, Fellowship, and the Soul of Resolution

The results further showed that mediators relied not only on legal knowledge and procedure but also on faith, fellowship, empathy, and moral encouragement in handling difficult cases. The findings section and abstract indicate that prayer, fairness, empathy, peer support, and the involvement of faith leaders were seen as important in strengthening mediator resilience and effectiveness, especially in emotionally charged or identity-based disputes. The data imply that mediators viewed these elements as practical resources in sustaining peacebuilding efforts at the grassroots. This theme suggests that mediation at the barangay level is not purely technical; it is also relational, moral, and spiritual. The findings align with the recommendation that conflict transformation should be supported by continuous training, emotional intelligence, and values-based approaches. This also resonates with Bandura's (2018) discussion of social persuasion and emotional states as sources of self-efficacy, because encouragement, trust, and inner stability strengthen the mediator's capacity to act effectively. In the context of grassroots justice, faith, fellowship, and empathy appear to function as sustaining forces that help mediators persist in difficult cases and maintain the human side of peacebuilding.

3.4. Synthesis of Major Findings

Overall, the study found that Lupon Tagapamayapa Chairmen in Buenavista, Bohol experience mediation as both meaningful and demanding. Their positive experiences centered on reconciliation, compassion, and the quiet preservation of peace, while their negative experiences emerged most clearly in land disputes and family conflicts marked by pride, politics, and unresolved grievances. The key challenges they faced required calmness, fairness, emotional control, and support systems rooted in faith, empathy, and fellowship. Taken together, the results show that grassroots mediation is not simply a legal function but a deeply human process shaped by emotion, character, trust, and community relationships.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

This study concluded that the Lupon Tagapamayapa Chairmen in Buenavista, Bohol experienced grassroots mediation as both meaningful and challenging. Their narratives revealed that mediation became a source of fulfillment when it led to reconciliation, compassion, and restored harmony, as reflected in the themes *Healing Justice: Where Compassion Meets Resolution* and *Silent Architects of Daily Harmony*. At the same time, they encountered difficult and emotionally charged disputes, particularly in cases involving land and family conflict, as reflected in *When Land Becomes Legacy and Liability* and *Bloodlines and Battle Lines: A Kinship Divided*. In responding to these realities, the mediators relied on calmness, clarity, faith, fellowship, and inner resilience, which were captured in the themes *Wisdom in Stillness: The Quiet Power of Calm and Clarity* and *Grace in Mediation: Faith, Fellowship, and the Soul of Resolution*. Overall, the study showed that barangay mediation is not only a procedural task but also a deeply human peacebuilding practice grounded in empathy, fairness, and community trust.

Based on the findings, the study recommends continuous training for Lupon Tagapamayapa Chairmen in mediation techniques, emotional intelligence, and conflict transformation to strengthen their ability to handle complex disputes. It also recommends the incorporation of values-based and faith-informed approaches, stronger procedural fairness, calm and empathetic communication, peer support systems, and partnerships with legal and psychological professionals. Barangay

officials are encouraged to provide proactive institutional support through regular capacity-building activities, collaboration with community stakeholders, transparency, accountability, wellness support, and access to expert assistance for unresolved or sensitive disputes. The Local Government Unit should likewise provide stronger institutional support to both the Lupon Tagapamayapa and barangay officials in carrying out their mediation roles and in promoting sustainable grassroots peacebuilding.

The study was limited to the lived experiences of ten Lupon Tagapamayapa Chairmen from selected barangays in Buenavista, Bohol, using a Husserlian descriptive phenomenological approach based on individual interviews and focused group discussion. Because of its qualitative and locale-specific design, the findings reflect the perspectives and experiences of the selected informants only. Consistent with the thesis implications for future studies, broader and comparative inquiries may still be undertaken to examine emerging challenges, long-term mediation outcomes, and context-specific practices in other barangays or regions.

Compliance with ethical standards

The author declares no conflict of interest. This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors and was self-funded. Ethical procedures were observed throughout the study, including voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and the respectful treatment of all informants. The author expresses sincere gratitude to the University of Cebu-Main Campus and to the Lupon Tagapamayapa Chairmen from the selected barangays in Buenavista, Bohol for their valuable participation and contribution to this research.

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