

Mediating Conflicts on the Ground: Work Experiences of the Pangkat ng Tagapagkasundo Chairpersons in the Barangays of Catigbian, Bohol, Philippines

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Abstract

This study explored the lived work experiences of Pangkat ng Tagapagkasundo Chairpersons in selected barangays of Catigbian, Bohol, Philippines, within the Katarungang Pambarangay or Barangay Justice System. The study aimed to describe the positive and negative experiences encountered in conciliation proceedings, the ways chairpersons addressed challenges in the performance of their duties, and their aspirations for improving the quality of barangay dispute resolution services. It was anchored on attribution, conflict, and self-efficacy perspectives to explain how chairpersons interpret behaviors, manage disputes, and sustain confidence in fulfilling their responsibilities. Using a qualitative approach through transcendental phenomenology, the study involved ten Pangkat ng Tagapagkasundo Chairpersons who had served as Lupon members for at least three years. Data were gathered through individual interviews and a focused group discussion using a validated open-ended interview guide, supported by field notes and audio recordings. Findings revealed that chairpersons experienced strong satisfaction and fulfillment when disputes were settled amicably and demonstrated commitment to duty despite the demands of handling complex cases. However, they also encountered difficulties such as uncooperative litigants, disrespectful behavior during proceedings, and absenteeism, which affected the smooth facilitation of conciliation processes. Chairpersons addressed these challenges by applying learned knowledge and skills, maintaining patience and calmness, and guiding parties toward compromise and mutual understanding. The informants strongly expressed the need for more trainings and seminars to enhance mediation competence, strengthen procedural implementation, and improve overall service quality in their barangays. The study aligns with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) by supporting effective community-level justice mechanisms, strengthening governance processes, and promoting sustained capacity-building for local peacekeeping. Its sustainability impact is reflected in institutional and community sustainability through improved access to justice, strengthened social harmony, and enhanced community resilience through conflict prevention and dispute resolution.

Keywords: Barangay Justice System; Catigbian, Bohol; Conciliation; Katarungang Pambarangay; Pangkat ng Tagapagkasundo Chairpersons; Peacebuilding; Training and Seminars; Transcendental Phenomenology

1. Introduction

Community-based peacebuilding highlights the value of inclusive participation and localized decision-making in planning, implementing, and monitoring community interventions to sustain trust, cooperation, and social cohesion. In the Philippine context, this principle is operationalized through the Katarungang Pambarangay (Barangay Justice System), a legally recognized mechanism that promotes accessible, speedy, and harmonious dispute resolution before conflicts escalate to formal judicial processes. However, strengthening grassroots justice requires institutional capacity-building, quality governance systems, and service delivery improvements at the local level. Evidence from capacity-building and performance-focused studies underscores that community programs become more sustainable when stakeholders receive structured training, competency enhancement, and ethically grounded professional development (De Guzman et al., 2025; Hipolito & Santos, 2025). Likewise, collaborative governance and documentation practices are essential in improving service consistency and institutional responsiveness, particularly when local systems require coordination across community actors and administrative structures (Jacoba et al., 2025; Yu & Santos, 2025). Within the Barangay Justice System, the Pangkat ng Tagapagkasundo Chairpersons play a crucial but often under-recognized role in facilitating conciliation when mediation at the Punong Barangay level fails. Their effectiveness depends not only on experience but also on leadership competence, procedural discipline, and the ability to manage emotionally intense disputes—capacities that are strengthened through targeted training and structured performance support systems (Armas et al., 2025; Santos et al., 2025). Community-based efforts also show that empowerment-oriented interventions contribute to stronger participation, accountability, and social stability—conditions that are equally relevant in strengthening barangay mediation

outcomes (Santos et al., 2025). In the same way that innovation and problem-solving tools improve outcomes in education and community development initiatives (Cara et al., 2025), mediation systems benefit when chairpersons develop adaptive strategies grounded in evidence-based practice and continuous learning. Overall, strengthening barangay conciliation is consistent with broader sustainability and development directions, where community-level mechanisms serve as foundational structures for peacebuilding, resilience, and inclusive governance (Galano & Santos, 2024; Santos & Santos, 2025; De Leon & Santos, 2024). This study therefore focuses on the lived work experiences of Pangkat ng Tagapagkasundo Chairpersons in the barangays of Catigbian, Bohol, Philippines, documenting both enabling and limiting realities of practice and emphasizing the need for strengthened and sustained capacity-building interventions.

1.1 Background of the Study

Community-based approaches to peace building empower local institutions by ensuring that community members participate directly in decision-making, project implementation, and monitoring, based on the premise that communities understand their needs best. In fragile and conflict-affected settings, such approaches can strengthen peace building outcomes. Within Philippine local governance, the Katarungang Pambarangay serves as a formal mechanism to resolve disputes within barangays fairly and speedily, supporting peace and harmonious relationships among residents. The Punong Barangay has the exclusive authority to appoint lupon members, organize the Lupon within the prescribed period, and ensure that parties comply with mandatory conciliation proceedings prior to filing cases in court. When mediation fails at the Punong Barangay level, the case proceeds to conciliation through the Pangkat ng Tagapagkasundo, composed of three members selected from the Lupon and chosen by the disputing parties, or by drawing lots if agreement fails. In actual barangay practice, however, repeated selection of certain Pangkat Chairpersons may occur because parties often prefer individuals known for resolving disputes amicably. This study examines the work experiences of these Pangkat ng Tagapagkasundo Chairpersons as frontline mediators of conflict at the barangay level, conceptualized as an immediate community forum for accessible and affordable justice.

1.2 Themes and Insights from Related Literature

The Katarungang Pambarangay system is grounded in the intent to provide a just, speedy, and inexpensive settlement of disputes, preserve Filipino traditions of amicable conflict resolution, and reduce court congestion. These objectives were emphasized in research and training discussions on mediation and barangay justice (Martinez, n.d.) and in analyses identifying its primary functions, including the promotion of speedy justice administration and the reduction of indiscriminate court filings (Mohammed and Caingat (2017)). The system's equity relevance is also linked to addressing inequalities in access to justice, particularly among marginalized communities (Vigo and Manuel, 2004). Scholarly work further indicates that effective conciliation depends on decision-making quality, conflict management competence, and systematic evaluation processes (Villamor et. al. (2022)). Implementation studies suggest that barangay justice actors perform mandated duties such as maintaining records, documenting hearings, and applying settlement strategies to expedite mediation (Gonzales (2008)), though compliance levels may remain only moderate in some contexts (Damuag (2005)). Literature also highlights persistent operational issues, including absenteeism and non-participation in proceedings (Austin (1994)), social tensions affecting respect toward Lupon members (Claridad's study in 2006), irregular meetings and coordination challenges (Mohammed & Caingat (2017)), and concerns on impartiality influenced by financial constraints such as honoraria (Aquino (2008)). Training needs are repeatedly emphasized: the lack of training for Lupon members is echoed by Jumalon et.al's work (2018), and the broader need for a structured training program for Lupon Tagapamayapa arbitrators remains evident (Sobradil, 2019). From a conflict-resolution perspective, communication and non-violent conflict management are central objectives for mediators, and the global urgency for peacebuilding communication research supports deeper inquiry into mediation practice (Cohen, Ryan (2001)). Motivation-related insights suggest that behavior and performance are linked to individuals' pursuit of success, mastery, and fulfillment, while perceived uselessness of effort can reduce commitment and engagement (Miranda (2008)). Human-centered governance is reinforced by the idea that voluntary compliance and cooperation emerge through positive interpersonal contacts rather than law alone (Pace, (2012)), while cultural differences can intensify contradictions in norms and trigger disputes (Mayer (2000)). In applied settings, disputes often arise from socio-demographic and environmental forces shaping perceptions and performance, reflecting the interplay of personal and contextual influences (Provido, 2000). Further, reports cited in local news accounts underscore risks when impartiality is questioned or legal provisions are poorly understood, including a violent escalation linked to perceived bias (Philippine Daily Inquirer (2021)) and arbitrator struggles attributed to limited legal training (The Manila Times (2022)). These insights collectively reinforce the importance of studying how Pangkat Chairpersons actually experience and manage conciliation responsibilities on the ground.

1.3 Local, National, and Global Context

The barangay has long been recognized as a culturally rooted unit of Filipino community organization, and the Katarungang Pambarangay law formalized this tradition into an accepted dispute-resolution mechanism within government structure. Mediation is commonly viewed as a viable option in contexts where decision-making power is concentrated among a few and social dominance practices persist, because mediation emphasizes mutually beneficial solutions. This aligns with the view that peaceful settlement of disputes at the family and barangay levels is a time-honored tradition at the core of Filipino

culture (Austral, (2012)). In Catigbian, Bohol, the Pangkat ng Tagapagkasundo Chairpersons operate within local dispute environments where issues may include interpersonal conflict, financial disagreements, physical injury complaints, and land disputes. Their work reflects broader national goals of strengthening grassroots justice structures to support court decongestion and improve justice responsiveness. Globally, the emphasis on communication for peacebuilding and the role of professional mediation practices support the need for deeper research into frontline mediation experiences and capacity building (Cohen, Ryan (2001)).

1.4 Theoretical or Conceptual Basis

This study is anchored on the Theory of Attribution of Fritz Heider (1958), supported by the Conflict theory of George Simmel (2010) and Self- Efficacy Theory of Albert Bandura (1977). Attribution theory explains how individuals interpret behavior and assign causality through internal or external explanations, shaping judgments and responses to others' actions (Fritz Heider (1958)). In barangay conciliation, such attribution processes can influence how parties perceive motives, fairness, and accountability in disputes. Conflict theory highlights conflict as an inevitable outcome of differing interests, values, or goals, and emphasizes compromise, conciliation, and mediated settlement as mechanisms for restoring social balance and cohesion (George Simmel (2010)). In this view, mediators facilitate dialogue rather than impose solutions, enabling disputants to take ownership of resolution processes. Self-efficacy theory focuses on belief in one's capability to succeed in specific tasks, which shapes confidence, persistence, and performance (Albert Bandura (1977); Albert Bandura's self efficacy theory (1982)). For Pangkat Chairpersons, self-efficacy is relevant to their capacity to handle emotionally intense disputes, apply negotiation skills, and continuously improve through mastery experiences and training engagement.

1.5 Research Gaps and Rationale

Despite the institutional importance of the Katarungang Pambarangay, literature indicates ongoing gaps in mediator preparation, procedural consistency, coordination, and perceived impartiality. While the need for training programs is repeatedly emphasized, there remains a scarcity of comprehensive research detailing what structured capacity-building initiatives should include, particularly within cultural, social, and legal contexts of barangay-level justice (Sobradil, 2019). Concerns about disrespect, absenteeism, irregular coordination, and financial constraints further point to systemic challenges requiring holistic interventions (Austin (1994); Claridad's study in 2006; Mohammed & Caingat (2017); Aquino (2008)). Additionally, local reporting illustrates the potential consequences of weak mediation credibility and limited legal competence, reinforcing the urgency of strengthening mediator effectiveness and trust (Philippine Daily Inquirer (2021); The Manila Times (2022)). In practice, Pangkat Chairpersons may repeatedly assume leadership roles in conciliation due to community trust, yet their contributions may remain less recognized compared with formal positions. This study responds to these gaps by focusing on the lived work experiences, coping strategies, and aspirations of Pangkat ng Tagapagkasundo Chairpersons in Catigbian, Bohol.

1.6 Alignment with Relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

This research is strongly aligned with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those that promote peace, effective governance, and community resilience. It supports SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions by examining community-based mechanisms such as mediation and conciliation that encourage peaceful dispute resolution, ensure procedural fairness, and strengthen barangay justice structures as accessible local institutions. It also contributes to SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities by emphasizing how effective barangay-level conflict management helps maintain safer, more cohesive, and socially resilient communities through the prevention of dispute escalation and the reduction of community tensions. Moreover, the study relates to SDG 4 – Quality Education because it underscores the continuing need for training and seminars that enhance the competence of Pangkat Chairpersons, particularly in negotiation strategies, conflict handling, and effective conciliation practices. Finally, it aligns with SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals by recognizing that improving barangay justice implementation requires coordinated support and shared responsibility among barangays, local government units (LGUs), and relevant agencies such as the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), particularly in sustaining capacity-building initiatives and governance improvements.

1.7 Importance of the Study to Multidisciplinary Sustainability

This study contributes to institutional sustainability by supporting improvements in barangay justice systems that reduce burdens on formal courts and strengthen grassroots governance structures. It advances community sustainability by reinforcing local social harmony, trust-building, and conflict prevention through effective mediation. It also supports policy and governance sustainability by informing training and operational reforms that can enhance procedural integrity, mediator competence, and public confidence in barangay-based dispute resolution. Finally, the emphasis on mediator development connects to educational sustainability, as capacity-building initiatives can institutionalize continuous learning and professional growth among community justice actors.

1.8 Brief Overview of the Study Approach

To examine lived work experiences, the study utilized a qualitative approach grounded in transcendental phenomenology, emphasizing fresh engagement with participant descriptions and systematic thematic extraction (Husserl (1931); Moustakas (1994)). Responses were translated, reviewed, analyzed, and synthesized to develop meaningful descriptions of experiences (Morrow et al., 2015). Ethical and trustworthiness considerations were guided through informed consent balance (Kvale (1996)) and standards of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba (1989)), with quality strategies informed by established guidance (Shenton (2004); Lewis and Ritchie (2003); Gottschalk (1995); Melia (2000)).

2. Materials and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a qualitative approach using transcendental phenomenology to explore the lived experiences of Pangkat ng Tagapagkasundo Chairpersons in performing their roles. It focused on understanding the meanings of participants' everyday experiences through both individual interviews and a focused group discussion. This design followed the transcendental phenomenological principles of Husserl (1931), later operationalized as a qualitative method by Moustakas (1994), emphasizing description over researcher interpretation. Bracketing or epoche was applied to minimize the researcher's personal assumptions and maintain attention on participants' accounts of their lived experiences.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The research was conducted in the Municipality of Catigbian, a landlocked municipality in the island province of Bohol with 22 barangays. The study focused on ten barangays—Poblacion, Poblacion Weste, Causwagan Norte, Candumayao, Baang, Ambuan, Alegria, Haguilanan, Mantasida, and Sinakayanan—selected because these areas recorded relatively high population levels and had more conciliation-related cases handled by Pangkat ng Tagapagkasundo Chairpersons. Each selected barangay had a designated Pangkat ng Tagapagkasundo Chairperson who served as the key focus of inquiry.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The informants consisted of ten (10) Pangkat ng Tagapagkasundo Chairpersons who had served for at least three years as Lupon members and had experience handling conciliation cases, whether settled or unresolved. Four (4) informants participated in individual interviews, while six (6) took part in a focused group discussion to generate shared descriptions of their work experiences, challenges, and aspirations in barangay-level dispute resolution.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

A purposive selection process was applied by identifying Pangkat ng Tagapagkasundo Chairpersons who met the study's criteria: at least three years of service as Lupon members and actual experience handling conciliation cases. Informants were drawn from selected barangays in Catigbian that were identified as having relatively higher population and more reported conciliation activity, ensuring that participants could provide relevant and information-rich narratives aligned with the study objectives.

2.5 Research Instrument

The primary instrument was a validated interview guide composed of open-ended questions designed to capture the informants' experiences as Pangkat ng Tagapagkasundo Chairpersons, how they addressed work challenges, and their aspirations to improve service quality in their barangays. The interview guide underwent expert validation by professionals from the University of Cebu Graduate School faculty to confirm its appropriateness for the topic and informant profile. Supporting materials included a research journal, field notes, and audio recording through a mobile phone voice recorder to strengthen the accuracy of interview documentation.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection began with the preparation and validation of the interview guide, followed by formal permission requests addressed to the concerned barangays. After approval, the researcher identified qualified informants and coordinated schedules for interviews. The study used both individual interviews and focused group discussion sessions, conducted in agreed settings such as informants' residences or common meeting venues. Prior to data gathering, the researcher explained the study purpose, reviewed the consent form contents with participants, and secured signed informed consent. Interviews and discussions were recorded and documented to ensure completeness and accuracy of responses.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Interview data originally expressed in local dialects were translated into English to support consistent interpretation. The study followed transcendental phenomenological analysis aimed at describing essential meanings without imposing researcher assumptions. The analysis process applied bracketing, horizontalization, clustering, and textualization to organize statements into meaningful themes and produce a comprehensive description of the phenomenon. Audio

recordings served as the main reference for transcription, while responses were repeatedly reviewed, analyzed, and organized into explanatory groupings aligned with the research problems (Morrow et al., 2015).

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, guided by informed consent, and supported by confidentiality and anonymity measures. Ethical principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice were applied to ensure participant welfare and fair treatment throughout the research process. Informed consent was managed by providing sufficient explanation without over- or under-informing participants, consistent with ethical guidance on qualitative interviews (Kvale, 1996). Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any point and consented to the recording of interviews. Data privacy provisions under the Data privacy law (RA 10173) were strictly observed, and post-interview debriefing was conducted to reduce emotional harm and ensure responsible closure of participation.

2.9 Trustworthiness of Research

Trustworthiness was established using the framework of Lincoln and Guba (1989), focusing on credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was strengthened through prolonged engagement, triangulation across multiple data sources, peer debriefing, and member checking, consistent with recommended qualitative strategies (Shenton (2004)). Dependability was supported by adherence to standard research protocols and careful consideration of adviser and panel recommendations, with attention to further analysis when needed (Gottschalk (1995)). Transferability was addressed by grounding findings on actual informant experiences and providing sufficient contextual description, aligned with qualitative expectations for thick description (Lewis and Ritchie (2003)). Confirmability was supported by sharing findings with informants and relevant stakeholders, recognizing the exploratory nature of the inquiry (Melia (2000)).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Experiences of Informants as Pangkat ng Tagapagkasundo Chairperson

3.1.1 Satisfaction on Settled Disputes

The results showed that most of the informants experienced strong satisfaction and fulfillment whenever disputes were successfully settled through the Pangkat. They expressed happiness in being chosen and trusted by their community members to lead conciliation proceedings, and they described a sense of contentment when litigants eventually calmed down, explained their concerns, listened to each other, and reached amicable settlement. Informants emphasized that the most rewarding part of their work was witnessing resolution and relief among disputing parties, particularly when conflict initially involved intense emotions such as anger, resentment, and misunderstanding. These results highlight that satisfaction among Pangkat ng Tagapagkasundo Chairpersons is anchored not only in task completion but also in the deeper value of restoring relationships and achieving peace within the barangay. Their sense of purpose is strengthened when they see outcomes that reflect harmony, reconciliation, and community stability. This also suggests that the chairpersons' intrinsic motivation is shaped by meaningful community impact rather than material incentives, reinforcing the role of community justice as a socially rewarding responsibility.

3.1.2 Commitment to Duty

Findings revealed that the informants demonstrated a strong commitment to duty despite the difficulties of handling disputes. They consistently expressed willingness to respond whenever they were called to serve, including cases involving debts, unresolved obligations, and interpersonal conflict. The informants described taking their responsibilities seriously by initiating preliminary discussions, listening carefully to both sides, and ensuring that the conciliation process continued until a settlement was reached or the case could no longer be resolved at the barangay level. Their narratives showed that commitment was expressed through presence, patience, and their continued involvement in case handling even when proceedings became demanding. The results reflect that commitment among Pangkat Chairpersons functions as a form of civic responsibility rooted in service and community obligation. Their continued participation, despite limited resources and difficult litigants, reflects a strong sense of accountability to barangay peacekeeping and justice accessibility. This also indicates that the role is sustained by a values-based orientation, where duty is viewed as both a public trust and a personal commitment to contribute to community stability.

3.1.3 Dissappointments Towards Practices

The informants reported negative experiences, particularly involving uncooperative and aggressive complainants who refused to settle disputes, engaged in disrespectful behavior during proceedings, and failed to follow basic conciliation protocols. They narrated frustrations when litigants shouted at each other, spoke simultaneously, left the venue repeatedly while proceedings were ongoing, and underestimated the authority or capability of the Pangkat Chairpersons. A recurring negative experience was the absence of litigants during scheduled proceedings, which the informants associated with wasted time and effort, contributing to discouragement and dissatisfaction in their line of work. These experiences were explained through the attribution theory of Freits Heider (1958), which emphasizes how individuals interpret causes of behavior and assign responsibility to internal or external factors. According to Heider (1958), people attribute outcomes

either to internal causes such as attitudes, intentions, and personality, or to external causes such as circumstances and situational constraints. In the context of conciliation, disappointment is intensified when chairpersons interpret uncooperative behavior as intentional disrespect or lack of seriousness, rather than situational difficulty, which influences their emotional response and perception of fairness in the mediation process. This also highlights that frustration at the barangay level is often shaped by repeated exposure to noncompliance, unmet expectations, and lack of procedural discipline among litigants.

3.2 Addressing the Challenges Encountered in the Performance of their Duties

3.2.1 Application of Knowledge and Skills

The results indicated that informants relied heavily on applying knowledge and skills gained from trainings, seminars, and personal work experience to manage disputes effectively. They reported using learned strategies in handling aggressive litigants, guiding discussions toward calmer dialogue, and applying practical techniques to lead parties toward resolution. Informants emphasized that approaches to settlement varied depending on the nature of the dispute and the behavior of the litigants, indicating that their performance depended on both learned competence and situational judgment developed over time. This finding aligns with the Self-efficacy theory of Albert Bandura (1977), which emphasizes belief in one's capacity to influence events and manage challenges effectively. The results suggest that chairpersons who utilized knowledge and skills confidently were able to sustain performance even under pressure, reflecting how perceived capability supports persistence and better decision-making in real-world mediation contexts. The social cognitive perspective described in relation to Bandura strengthens the interpretation that chairpersons' effectiveness is influenced by their environment, experience, and cognitive confidence, particularly in interpreting disputes, applying procedures, and sustaining authority during conciliation encounters.

3.2.2 Patience and Calmness in Settling Dispute

Findings showed that informants consistently emphasized patience and calmness as essential in achieving amicable settlements. They described relying on respectful communication, understanding, forgiveness, and values-based guidance to encourage disputing parties to compromise. Several informants also expressed the belief that spiritual guidance and divine intervention contributed to peaceful outcomes, especially when disputes involved strong emotions or long-standing misunderstandings. Their narratives suggested that emotional restraint and controlled communication were necessary to prevent escalation, build trust between litigants, and protect the fairness of proceedings. The results are explained through George Simmel's (2010) theory of conflict and resolution, which views conflict as a natural component of social interaction and highlights the importance of mediation in guiding disputes toward productive outcomes. The chairperson's role becomes central in managing interaction dynamics, maintaining neutrality, and ensuring that conflict does not dissolve social relationships but becomes a pathway toward agreement and restored cohesion. The study also reflects alignment with the Barangay Justice System in recognizing the application of customs and traditions in dispute settlement, particularly in communities with diverse cultural practices. Consistent with this, Villamor, (2022) resulted that decision making quality and effectiveness of conciliation process of Lupong Tagapamayapa has found out that evaluation is the domain of the decision making quality that significantly influences effectiveness of conciliation process of Lupong Tagapamayapa. This reinforces that calmness and patience are not merely personal traits but foundational procedural values supporting effective conciliation practice.

3.3 Aspirations of the Informants to Improve the Quality of Services in their Barangay

3.3.1 More Training and Seminars

The results revealed that a central aspiration among the informants was the continued provision of more trainings and seminars to enhance their capacity as Pangkat Chairpersons. They expressed the need to deepen knowledge on mediation techniques, cultural sensitivity, emotional intelligence, and other competencies that strengthen their ability to resolve complex disputes fairly and impartially. Informants viewed training not only as professional development but also as a practical requirement for improving service quality and building stronger confidence in their responsibilities as community justice implementers. This aspiration is supported by the view that sustained competence development contributes to better performance and stronger motivation, especially when responsibilities require high interpersonal and procedural skill. Aspirations have been defined in terms such as hopes for future life, goals, wants or future desires, suggesting there is not one agreed meaning of the term. Ray (2006) develops the notion of an aspiration gap, the distance between the aspirations and the actual condition, which influences future-oriented behavior depending on whether the gap is too wide or too narrow. In relation to leadership growth and public service expectations, Brown (2011) asserts that policies focusing on aspirations aim to develop self-reliant individuals who take responsibility in investing in their future. In this study, the informants' desire for more training reflects a practical aspiration to narrow the competence gap, strengthen preparedness, and sustain meaningful community justice outcomes through improved mediation capacity.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

This study explored the lived experiences of Pangkat ng Tagapagkasundo Chairpersons in selected barangays of Catigbian, Bohol through a qualitative phenomenological approach, revealing both positive and negative realities that shape community-based dispute resolution. The findings established that chairpersons experienced deep satisfaction when disputes were settled amicably and demonstrated sustained commitment to duty, yet they also encountered disappointment toward certain practices that challenged fairness and effectiveness in barangay justice processes. Despite these issues, chairpersons consistently managed disputes by applying learned knowledge and skills, alongside patience and calmness during emotionally intense cases, while expressing a clear aspiration for more trainings and seminars to strengthen their competence and improve service delivery.

Based on the study implications, it is recommended that barangay and municipal stakeholders institutionalize stronger support systems for Pangkat ng Tagapagkasundo Chairpersons through policy, capacity building, and operational strengthening. The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) is encouraged to provide annual trainings and seminars focused on mediation techniques, negotiation strategies, and conflict analysis, while also promoting municipal or barangay-level policy instruments that formally recognize and designate chairpersons, allocate fixed compensation, and mandate standardized mediation procedures. Further recommendations include strengthening community awareness through outreach programs, fostering partnerships with local officials and organizations, providing adequate funding and resources, conducting regular monthly meetings among Lupon members, improving monitoring and case disposition oversight, ensuring systematic record-keeping, and providing stress management or mental wellness programs through coordinated LGU and health unit initiatives.

This study was limited to the qualitative lived experiences of ten Pangkat ng Tagapagkasundo Chairpersons from selected barangays in Catigbian, Bohol, with informants chosen based on service experience and participation in individual and focus group discussions, making the findings context-specific to the barangay justice setting examined. The inquiry focused on phenomenological descriptions rather than generalizable measurement, and interview responses originally expressed in local dialects were translated into English for analysis, which may affect nuance despite careful handling of transcripts and thematic organization. Methodologically, the research relied on transcendental phenomenology grounded in Husserl (1931) and Moustakas (1994), and the analysis followed structured steps of bracketing, horizontalization, clustering, and textualization, which emphasizes meaning-making from participant narratives rather than statistical representation.

Compliance with ethical standards

This study was conducted in accordance with accepted ethical research standards, ensuring voluntary participation through informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity of participants, and responsible handling and protection of all collected data.

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