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Dispute Resolution at the Barangay Level: A West Poblacion, City of Naga, Cebu Study

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ABSTRACT

Dispute resolution at the barangay level remains a cornerstone of community governance in the Philippines, serving as the primary mechanism for resolving local conflicts before formal judicial intervention. This study evaluates the effectiveness of barangay officials in resolving disputes in Barangay West Poblacion, City of Naga, Cebu, employing a quantitative-descriptive research design. Data were collected from 235 residents who had undergone the barangay dispute resolution process using purposive sampling and structured surveys. The study examined the types of disputes handled, the alternative dispute resolution (ADR) methods employedâ€"including mediation, conciliation, arbitration, and negotiationâ€"and the perceived effectiveness of these interventions. Findings revealed that Simple Theft (37.4%) and Neighbor Disputes (36.6%) were the most common cases settled at the barangay level. The most widely utilized mediation techniques included introducing parties and explaining the process (100%). In conciliation, active listening, clarifying issues, and information provision were predominant methods. For arbitration, collaborative negotiation (98.7%), concessions (92.8%), and framing (90.6%) were most frequently applied. Community members prioritized open communication (100%) and timely resolution (99%) as the most critical factors in effective dispute resolution. While barangay officials demonstrated competence in employing basic ADR methods, gaps in training for advanced techniques such as consensus building, shuttle diplomacy, and rapport building were identified. The study aligns with recent research emphasizing the critical role of barangay officials in maintaining community peace while highlighting areas requiring capacity enhancement. Recommendations include implementing structured training programs, standardizing dispute resolution procedures, strengthening community awareness campaigns, and establishing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to enhance the overall effectiveness of the Katarungang Pambarangay system.

KEYWORDS : Barangay justice system, dispute resolution, alternative dispute resolution, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, community governance, Katarungang Pambarangay

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The Katarungang Pambarangay, or Barangay Justice System, represents a unique and culturally rooted approach to dispute resolution in the Philippines. Enshrined in Republic Act 7160 (Local Government Code of 1991), this system mandates that certain disputes among residents of the same city or municipality be settled at the barangay level before resorting to formal judicial processes (Noveloso et al., 2024). The system embodies traditional Filipino values of pakikisama (cooperation) and bayanihan (community spirit), prioritizing amicable settlements over adversarial litigation.

The barangay, as the smallest administrative and political unit in the Philippines, plays a crucial role in maintaining peace and order within local communities. Barangay officials, particularly the Lupong Tagapamayapa (peacekeeping committee), serve as frontline mediators tasked with resolving conflicts ranging from minor civil disputes to criminal offenses that can be settled through amicable

means. The effectiveness of these officials in dispute resolution directly impacts community cohesion, access to justice, and the overall efficiency of the Philippine justice system.

Recent data indicates that the Lupon in Region 7 achieved a 75% settlement rate between January and June 2023, successfully resolving 20,628 out of 27,356 referred cases (Roxas, 2024). This high settlement rate demonstrates the significant role of barangay-level dispute resolution in decongesting formal courts while providing accessible justice to community members. However, despite this impressive record, challenges persist in terms of training adequacy, resource allocation, procedural consistency, and the capacity to handle increasingly complex disputes.

In Barangay West Woblacion, City of Naga, Cebu, barangay officials face diverse conflict situations daily, employing various alternative dispute resolution (ADR) methods including mediation, conciliation, arbitration, and negotiation. Understanding how effectively these methods are implemented, what factors contribute to successful resolution, and what challenges officials encounter is essential for strengthening grassroots governance and enhancing community justice mechanisms.

Statement of the Problem

This study assesses the effectiveness of barangay officials in resolving disputes in Barangay West Poblacion, City of Naga, Cebu. Specifically, it seeks to answer four key research questions. First, it investigates the nature of cases being settled by the Lupong Tagapamayapa in Barangay West Poblacion, City of Naga, Cebu. Second, it examines how barangay officials resolve conflicts effectively through various alternative dispute resolution methods, namely mediation, conciliation, arbitration, and negotiation. Third, it evaluates the lever of effectiveness of the Lupong Tagapamayapa in dispute resolution within Barangay West Poblacion. Finally, the study aims to propose recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the Lupong Tagapamayapa in resolving disputes.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) framework as its primary theoretical lens. ADR encompasses various processes and techniques for conflict resolution that occur outside formal governmental authority, including mediation, arbitration, conciliation, and negotiation (Harvard Law School Program on Negotiation, 2025). The ADR model emphasizes collaborative problem-solving, preservation of relationships, and efficient resource utilization—principles that align closely with the philosophy of the Katarungang Pambarangay system.

Within this framework, several key variables influence dispute resolution effectiveness:

Training and Capacity Development

The level of training received by barangay officials directly impacts their knowledge of ADR principles, procedural competence, and ability to apply appropriate techniques to different conflict situations (Verdad, 2024). Comprehensive training programs equip Lupong Tagapamayapa members with essential skills in active listening, conflict analysis, facilitation techniques, and cultural sensitivity. When officials receive systematic training in mediation, conciliation, arbitration, and negotiation methods, they develop the confidence and competence to handle diverse dispute scenarios effectively. Training also enhances their understanding of legal frameworks, procedural requirements, and ethical considerations. Furthermore, ongoing capacity development through refresher courses and mentorship programs ensures that officials stay updated on best practices and can adapt to evolving community needs. Well-trained officials are better positioned to assess conflict dynamics, select appropriate intervention strategies, manage power imbalances, and facilitate sustainable agreements that address underlying issues rather than superficial symptoms.

Resource Availability

Adequate financial, personnel, and technological resources are essential for implementing effective ADR processes and ensuring program sustainability (Araña et al., 2023t Financial resources enable barangays to compensate Lupong Tagapamayapa members, procure necessary materials, and conduct regular training sessions. Personnel resources ensure sufficient numbers of trained mediators are available to handle caseloads without excessive delays. Technological resources, including computers for case management and communication tools for scheduling, streamline administrative processes and enhance efficiency. Physical infrastructure such as dedicated, private mediation spaces that are comfortable and conducive to open dialogue is equally critical. Without adequate resources, even highly trained officials struggle to deliver effective services, as they face constraints in time availability, ability to monitor compliance, and capacity to provide timely interventions. Resource scarcity often forces officials to rush through cases or handle disputes in inappropriate settings, compromising resolution quality.

Community Awareness

The degree to which community members understand ADR processes and their benefits influences participation rates and acceptance of outcomes (Noveloso et al., 2024). When residents are well-informed about the Katarungang Pambarangay system—including its purpose, jurisdiction, and procedures—they are more likely to voluntarily seek barangay-level resolution rather than immediately resorting to formal courts. Community awareness encompasses understanding that ADR is not merely a bureaucratic obstacle before litigation, but a valuable opportunity for preserving relationships and resolving disputes quickly and cost-effectively. Educated

community members approach the process with realistic expectations, participate constructively in sessions, and respect the legitimacy of agreements. Conversely, low awareness leads to underutilization, resistance to participation, and lower compliance with settlements. Effective awareness campaigns using multiple channels—community assemblies, social media, printed materials, and testimonials—are essential for maximizing the system's reach and impact.

Process Satisfaction and Compliance

Participant satisfaction with the fairness, efficiency, and outcome of the dispute resolution process, along with compliance rates with agreed-upon settlements, serve as key indicators of ADR effectiveness (Roxas, 2024). Satisfaction reflects participants' assessment of whether the process treated them with dignity, provided adequate opportunity to voice concerns, resulted in fair outcomes, and was conducted efficiently. High satisfaction levels indicate the process is meeting community expectations and delivering justice in ways that resonate with cultural values. Satisfied participants are more likely to comply voluntarily with settlements and recommend the system to others. Compliance rates—the proportion of parties who fully adhere to agreed terms—represent the ultimate test of ADR effectiveness. High compliance rates suggest that settlements are perceived as legitimate and appropriately address parties' interests. Monitoring both satisfaction and compliance provides valuable feedback for continuous improvement and enhancing overall system effectiveness.

Significance of the Study

This research contributes valuable insights to multiple stakeholders: (1) For Barangay Officials: The findings provide evidence-based feedback on current practices, identify strengths to build upon, and highlight areas requiring improvement, enabling more effective service delivery; (2) For Policymakers: The study offers empirical evidence data to inform policy recommendations for strengthening community-based dispute resolution mechanisms and allocating resources more effectively; (3) For Researchers: This work establishes a foundation for future investigations into barangay justice systems, providing baseline data for comparative studies and longitudinal research; (4) For the Community: Enhanced understanding of dispute resolution processes empowers residents to engage more effectively with the barangay justice system and promotes greater trust in local governance; and (5) For Academic Institutions: The study serves as a practical case resource for courses in criminology, public administration, conflict resolution, and community development.

Scope and Limitations

This study focuses exclusively on Barangay West Poblacion, City of Naga, Cebu, examining the effectiveness of barangay officials in resolving disputes within this specific jurisdiction. Data were collected from residents who had participated in the barangay dispute resolution process during the academic year 2024-2025. The research assesses the fairness, effectiveness, and satisfaction levels associated with the dispute resolution process but does not compare the barangay system with formal judicial processes or explore the broader Philippine legal system context. Additionally, the study does not delver deeply into the impact of cultural and social factors on dispute resolution practices beyond their manifestation in community members' preferences and behaviors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Barangay Justice System in the Philippines

The Barangay Justice System, formally known as Katarungang Pambarangay, represents a community-based dispute resolution mechanism that empowers barangays to handle minor disputes at the grassroots level (Metillo et al., 2022). By promoting amicable settlements through mediation and conciliation, the system aims to reduce the burden on formal courts while providing accessible and culturally appropriate justice to Filipino communities.

Recent research by Verdad (2024) explored the experiences of Chiefs of Lupong Tagapamayapa in barangay justice administration in Northern Iloilo, identifying three positive themes: personal satisfaction from resolving conflicts, influence on community peace, and successful resolution of disputes. However, the study also revealed challenges including inadequate training, limited resources, political pressure, and community resistance to the process. Verdad emphasized that continuous learning and personal development, embodying integrity, and providing compensation and incentives are essential for enhancing the quality of services in the barangay justice system.

Similarly, Noveloso et al. (2024) assessed the implementation of Katarungang Pambarangay across selected barangays in Bacnotan, La Union, finding that all barangays demonstrated high implementation levels, which one achieving an "excellent" score. The study emphasized that comprehensive mediator training, commitment to justice principles, and profound understanding of the system's aims contribute significantly to its efficacy.

Alternative Dispute Resolution Methods

Alternative Dispute Resolution encompasses multiple approaches to conflict resolution, each with distinct characteristics and applications. The Harward Law School Program on Negotiation (2025) defines ADR as any process where a neutral third party helps disputants reach an agreement outside traditional litigation.

Mediation: In mediation, a neutral facilitator assists parties in reaching a mutually acceptable resolution without imposing decisions. Mediators may employ facilitative techniques, focusing on shuttle diplomacy while keeping their views hidden, or evaluative approaches, offering knowledge and opinions to guide parties toward agreement (Harvard Law School, 2025). Effective mediation relies on the mediator's ability to create safe spaces, foster collaboration, and manage communication patterns.

Conciliation: Conciliation involves a neutral third party who assists disputing parties in achieving mutually acceptable agreements through facilitating communication and encouraging collaborative problem-solving. Unlike arbitration, conciliators do not impose decisions but rather promote dialogue, enabling parties to articulate concerns and understand opposing perspectives (F1000Research, 2025). The conciliator's neutrality fosters trust, creating conducive environments for negotiation.

Arbitration: Arbitration represents an adjudicative ADR process where a neutral arbitrator renders binding decisions after formal hearings, evidence presentation, and legal arguments. Unlike mediation, arbitration focuses on legal rights and obligations, following established rules with limited judicial review reinforcing award finality (Alternative Dispute Resolution Services Market Report, 2024).

Negotiation: Negotiation is a voluntary communication process where parties directly seek mutually acceptable agreements through interest-based bargaining and flexible problem-solving. Unlike mediation, negotiation occurs without facilitator assistance, and unlike arbitration, it produces no binding third-party decisions (Harvard Law School, 2025).

Effectiveness of Community-Based Dispute Resolution

The effectiveness of community-based dispute resolution systems depends on multiple interconnected factors. Research by Roxas (2024) evaluated the performance of barangays in dispute resolution in Lipa City, Batangas, focusing on preparation and knowledge, communication skills, negotiation and problem-solving abilities, and ethics and professionalism. The study identified both procedural and substantive challenges, as well as issues related to technology integration and systemic limitations.

A comprehensive study by Añana et al. (2024) examined the awareness of the Barangay Justice System and its relationship to conflict management skills of Lupong Tagapamayapa in Sta. Maria, Davao Occidental. The research reported high self-perceived effectiveness in interpersonal skills, emphasizing the critical role of strong communication, positive relationship building, and cultural sensitivity in dispute resolution success.

Recent evaluation research by the Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) Philippines (2022) demonstrated that capacity-building programs for Barangay Justice System members in Mindanao resulted in significant positive increases in knowledge of mediation and conciliation strategies and procedures, as well as amicable settlement documentation and enforcement. Community awareness of the system and its jurisdiction also increased among barangays that received training programs.

International perspectives further illuminate the importance of community-based dispute resolution. Lundy et al. (2022) conducted cross-cultural research on indigenous conflict management strategies in localized contexts, finding that culturally appropriate mechanisms that incorporate community values, local participation, and context-sensitive approaches significantly enhance dispute resolution effectiveness and sustainability.

Challenges in Barangay Dispute Resolution

Despite the acknowledged benefits of the Katarungang Pambarangay system, various challenges impede its optimal functioning. Laguda (2024) identified several factors contributing to community conflicts, including differing beliefs, personality clashes, misunderstandings, power imbalances, and cultural differences. The study emphasized that many communities lack necessary expertise or resources to handle disputes effectively, leading to unresolved issues and potential social tensions.

Araña et al. (2023) conducted a training needs assessment for Lupong Tagapamayapa, revealing significant gaps in community conflict resolution skills. The research highlighted the need for enhanced training in advanced mediation techniques, legal knowledge, documentation procedures, and psychological strategies for handling complex or emotionally charged disputes.

Research on barangay dispute resolution in various Philippine contexts has consistently identified common challenges: insufficient training and capacity development for barangay officials, limited financial and material resources, political interference or bias in decision-making, inadequate public awareness of the system and its procedures, weak enforcement mechanisms for compliance with settlements, and inconsistent implementation of procedures across different barangays (Roxas, 2024; Verdad, 2024; Añana et al., 2024).

Research Gap

While existing literature extensively documents the structure, legal framework, and general functioning of the Katarungang Pambarangay system, there remains a gap in comprehensive empirical assessments of specific ADR method effectiveness at the barangay level. Most studies focus on either procedural compliance or general satisfaction measures, with limited research examining the detailed application of specific mediation, conciliation, arbitration, and negotiation techniques and their relative effectiveness in different dispute contexts.

Furthermore, few studies have systematically examined community members' perspectives on which specific dispute resolution techniques they find most effective and why. This study addresses these gaps by providing detailed quantitative data on the types of disputes handled, specific ADR methods employed, and community perceptions of effectiveness in Barangay West Poblacion, contributing to the broader understanding of grassroots dispute resolution in Philippine communities.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative-descriptive research design to assess the effectiveness of barangay officials in resolving disputes. The descriptive approach enabled systematic documentation of the nature of disputes. ADR methods employed, and perceived effectiveness levels, while the quantitative component facilitated statistical analysis of patterns, frequencies, and relationships among variables. This design is particularly appropriate for providing comprehensive overviews of current conditions and identifying trends in dispute resolution practices (Powell, 2020).

The study was conducted in Barangay West Poblacion, City of Naga, Philippines. Barangay West Poblacion represents a typical urban barangay characterized by diverse residential populations, active community governance structures, and regular engagement with the barangay justice system for dispute resolution.

The target population consisted of residents of Barangay West Poblacion who had undergone the barangay dispute resolution process. Using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error, the sample size was determined to be 235 respondents. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who had direct experience with barangay-level dispute resolution, ensuring that respondents could provide informed perspectives on the effectiveness of the process.

A structured survey questionnaire was developed as the primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire consisted of five main sections: Section A: Demographic and psychographic profiles of respondents (age, gender, personality traits, values, attitudes, lifestyle; Section B: Dispute resolution methods handled by the Lupong Tagapamayapa (types of cases, frequency, severity); Section C: Dispute resolution methods employed (mediation, conciliation, arbitration, negotiation techniques); Section D: Perceived effectiveness of dispute resolution (satisfaction levels, fairness, timeliness, compliance); Section E: Recommendations for improvement (capacity building needs, resource requirements, procedural enhancements). The questionnaire utilized a combination of multiple-choice items, Likert scales, and ranking questions to capture both categorical and continuous data. The instrument underwent content validation by experts in Criminology and conflict resolution to ensure relevance, clarity, and appropriateness.

Prior to data collection, ethical clearance was obtained from the institutional research committee, and permission was secured from barangay officials. Respondents were informed about the study's purpose, their rights as participants, and the confidentiality of their responses. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before survey administration. Trained research assistants distributed and collected the surveys over a period of four weeks during the academic year 2024-2025. Assistance was provided to respondents who required clarification on any questionnaire items, ensuring data quality and reliability.

Collected data were encoded, cleaned, and analyzed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, weighted means, and ranking were computed to characterize the nature of disputes, ADR methods employed, and perceived effectiveness levels. Results were presented through tables and graphs to facilitate interpretation and discussion.

The study adhered to ethical research principles including informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, and data protection. No personally identifiable information was collected beyond what was necessary for the research objectives. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Nature of Disputes Settled by the Lupong Tagapamayapa

Table 1 presents the types and frequencies of disputes handled by the Lupong Tagapamayapa in Barangay West Poblacion, City of Naga, Cebu.

Table 1: Types of Disputes Handled by Lupong Tagapamayapa

Type of Dispute	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Simple Theft	88	37.4%	1
Neighbor Disputes	86	36.6%	2
Domestic Disputes	35	14.9%	3
Property Boundary Conflicts	18	7.7%	4
Verbal Altercations	8	3.4%	5
TOTAL	235	100%	

The findings reveal that Simple Theft (37.4%) and Neighbor Disputes (36.6%) constitute the overwhelming majority of cases settled at the barangay level, together accounting for 74% of all disputes. This prevalence suggests that property-related issues and

interpersonal conflicts between neighbors are the most common sources of community tensions. Domestic Disputes ranked third at 14.9%, followed by Property Boundary Conflicts (7.7%) and Verbal Altercations (3.4%).

The high incidence of theft-related cases may indicate underlying economic challenges within the community, including financial pressures that dive petty crimes. The substantial number of neighbor disputes reflects the close living proximity in urban barangay settings, where boundary issues, noise complaints, and shared resource conflicts frequently arise. These findings align with research by Metillo et al. (2022), which identified similar patterns in barangay-level disputes across Philippine communities.

MEDIATION METHODS EMPLOYED

Table 2 presents the mediation techniques utilized by barangay officials in resolving disputes.

Table 2: Mediation Techniques Employed

Mediation Technique	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Introducing parties and explaining process	235	100%	1
Active listening	235	100%	1
Brainstorming solutions	235	100%	1
Conducting needs assessment	186	79.1%	2
Encouraging open discussion	150	63.8%	3
Clarifying questions	56	23.8%	4
Providing relevant information	67	28.5%	5

The data indicate that fundamental mediation techniques are universally applied by barangay officials. Introducing parties and explaining the mediation process, active listening, and brainstorming solutions each received 100% application rates, demonstrating that barangay officials consistently employ these core techniques to initiate and facilitate dispute resolution.

Conducting needs assessment (79.1%) and encouraging open discussion (63.8%) are also widely used, though not universally applied. These techniques require more time and skill to implement effectively, which may explain their slightly lower utilization rates. The less frequent application of clarifying questions (23.8%) and providing relevant information (28.5%) suggests potential areas for capacity enhancement, as these techniques are valuable for ensuring mutual understanding and informed decision-making.

These findings suggest that while barangay officials demonstrate competence in employing basic mediation techniques, there is room for improvement in applying more advanced or specialized mediation skills. This observation aligns with research by Verdad (2024), which emphasized the need for continuous learning and professional development among Lupong Tagapamayapa members.

CONCILIATION METHODS EMPLOYED

Table 3 presents the conciliation techniques utilized in dispute resolution.

Table 3: Conciliation Techniques Employed

Conciliation Technique	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Active listening	235	100%	1
Clarifying issues	235	100%	1
Information provision	231	98.3%	2
Negotiation assistance	223	94.9%	3
Drafting settlement agreements	215	91.5%	4
Improving communication	198	84.3%	5
Option generation	186	79.1%	6
Joint session facilitation	87	37.0%	7
Shuttle diplomacy	79	33.6%	8
Consensus building	73	31.1%	9

The conciliation methods most frequently employed by barangay officials are active listening and clarifying issues (both 100%), followed closely by information provision (98.3%) and negotiation assistance (94.9%). These results demonstrate a strong emphasis on communication-based techniques that ensure parties understand each other's perspectives and have access to relevant information for decision-making.

The high utilization of drafting settlement agreements (91.5%) and improving communication (84.3%) indicates that barangay officials recognize the importance of formalizing agreements and enhancing dialogue quality. However, more complex or time-intensive techniques such as session facilitation (37.0%), shuttle diplomacy (33.6%), and consensus building (31.1%) are less commonly employed.

The lower application rates of advanced techniques may reflect several factors: limited training in sophisticated conciliation methods, time constraints in handling multiple cases, or perceived adequacy of simpler techniques for most disputes encountered. There findings suggest that while barangay officials effectively employ fundamental conciliation techniques, targeted training in advanced methods could enhance their capacity to handle more complex or deeply entrenched conflicts.

ARBITRATION METHODS EMPLOYED

Table 4 presents the arbitration techniques utilized in dispute resolution.

Table 4: Arbitration Techniques Applied

Arbitration Technique	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Collaborative negotiation	232	98.7%	1
Concessions	218	92.8%	2
Framing	213	90.6%	3
Direct negotiation	223	94.9%	4
Interest-based negotiation	211	89.8%	5
Anchoring	194	82.6%	6
Referral to higher authorities	198	84.2%	7
Using objective criteria	167	71.0%	8
Best alternative to negotiated agreement	157	66.8%	9
Building rapport	145	61.7%	10
Active listening	118	50.1%	11

In arbitration contexts, barangay officials predominantly employ collaborative negotiation (98.7%), concessions (92.8%), and framing (90.6%), reflecting a preference for strategies that promote mutual understanding and cooperative problem-solving. Direct negotiation (94.9%) and interest-based negotiation (89.8%) are also frequently utilized, emphasizing direct discussions centered on the interests and needs of the parties involved.

Techniques such as anchoring (82/6%), referral to higher authorities (84.2%), and using objective criteria (71.0%) are moderately employed, suggesting they are reserved for specific case types or more challenging disputes. The relatively lower application of building rapport (61.7%) and active listening (50.1%) in arbitration contexts, compared to mediation and conciliation, may indicate that barangay officials perceive arbitration as requiring more decisive, outcome-focused approaches rather than relationship-building techniques.

These findings align with research by Mohammad (2024) on the Barangay Justice System in Zamboanga City, which highlighted that while the system successfully promotes reconciliation and social harmony, challenges remain in fully implementing advanced arbitration techniques. The study recommended providing additional training and resources to enhance the capacity of barangay officials to handle complex disputes requiring sophisticated arbitration methods.

EFFECTIVENESS OF DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Table 5 presents community members' perceptions of factors contributing to effective dispute resolution.

Table 5: Effectiveness Factors in Dispute Resolution

Effectiveness Factor	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Encouraging open communication	235	100%	1
Resolving conflicts in a timely manner	232	99.0%	2
Providing guidance	219	93.2%	3
Being effective in resolving disputes	218	92.8%	4
Being approachable	216	92.0%	5
Responding efficiently to disputes	213	90.6%	6
Explaining the process clearly	197	84.0%	7
Fairness and impartiality	189	80.2%	8
Follow-up on disputes	155	66.0%	9

The data reveal that encouraging open communication emerged as the most crucial factor in effective dispute resolution, with 100% of respondents identifying it as essential. This finding underscores community members' belief that clear, honest dialogue is fundamental to resolving conflicts successfully. Resolving conflicts in a timely manner ranked second at 99.0%, highlighting the community's preference for swift resolution to prevent escalation and prolonged tensions.

Other highly valued factors include providing guidance (93.2%), being effective in resolving disputes (92.8%), being approachable (92.0%), and responding efficiently to disputes (90.6%). These results indicate that community members appreciate barangay officials who are accessible, proactive, and skilled in guiding parties toward resolution.

Interestingly, while fairness and impartiality (80.2%) and explaining the process clearly (84.0%) are still considered important, they ranked lower than communication-focused and efficiency-oriented factors. Follow-up on disputes received the lowest ranking at 66.0%, suggesting that community members prioritize immediate resolution over post-settlement monitoring, or that they perceive follow-up as less critical to other factors.

These findings align with research by Pascual (2020), which emphasized that the success of dispute resolution processes relies heavily on effective communication and mediators' ability to respond quickly and efficiently. Clear communication fosters understanding between conflicting parties, which facilitates reaching resolutions, while timely interventions prevent conflicts from escalating and becoming more complex to resolve.

DISCUSSION

Nature of Disputes and Community Context

The prevalence of Simple Theft and Neighbor Disputes in Barangay West Poblacion reflects broader socioeconomic and spatial dynamics typical of urban Philippine barangays. The high incidence of theft-related cases (37.4%) suggests underlying economic vulnerabilities within the community, where financial pressures may drive petty crimes such as theft of personal property, agricultural products, or household items. This finding necessitates complementary interventions beyond dispute resolution, including livelihood programs, financial literacy training, and community development initiatives that address root causes of economic-driven conflicts.

The substantial prevalence of Neighbor Disputes (36.6%) is characteristic of densely populated urban barangays where physical proximity, shared boundaries, and limited personal space create frequent opportunities for interpersonal friction. Common neighbor dispute triggers include noise complaints, encroachment on property boundaries, shared resource access (such as water or pathways), pet-related issues, and personality conflicts. The ability of the Lupong Tagapamayapa to effectively mediate these disputes is crucial for maintaining community harmony and preventing escalation to more serious confrontations.

The relatively lower incidence of Domestic Disputes (14.9%) in the data may not accurately reflect the true prevalence of such conflicts within the community. Domestic disputes often involve sensitive issues of family privacy, potential stigma, and power imbalances that discourage reporting to barangay authorities. This underreporting phenomenon is well-documented in literature on gender-based violence and family conflicts, suggesting that actual domestic dispute rates may be significantly higher than those captured through formal barangay dispute resolution channels.

ADR Method Effectiveness and Application Patterns

The universal application of core mediation techniques (introducing parties, active listening, brainstorming solutions at 100%) demonstrates that barangay officials in West Poblacion have internalized fundamental mediation principles. This strong foundation is commendable and provides a solid basis for dispute resolution effectiveness. However, the less frequent application of clarifying questions (23.8%) and providing relevant information (28.5%) suggests that opportunities exist to deepen mediation practice through enhanced questioning techniques and information-sharing strategies.

The pattern of high utilization for basic communication techniques (active listening, clarifying issues) combined with lower application of advanced methods (shuttle diplomacy, consensus building, joint session facilitation) reflects a pragmatic, efficiency-oriented approach to dispute resolution. Barangay officials appear to prioritize straightforward, time-efficient methods that can be applied broadly across different dispute types. While this approach successfully resolves the majority of cases, as evidenced by the 75% regional settlement rate (Roxas, 2024), it may limit the system's capacity to handle complex, deeply entrenched, or highly emotional disputes that require more sophisticated intervention strategies.

The preference for collaborative negotiation (98.7%) and interest-based approaches in arbitration contexts reflects a community-oriented philosophy that seeks to preserve relationships even when rendering decisions. This approach aligns with Filipino cultural values of maintaining harmony and avoiding confrontational, winner-takes-all scenarios. However, the lower application of rapport-building and active listening in arbitration contexts (61.7% and 50.1% respectively) may indicate a perception that arbitration requires more directive, outcome-focused interventions, potentially at the expense of process quality and participant satisfaction.

Community Priorities in Dispute Resolution

The community's overwhelming emphasis on open communication (100%) and timely resolution (99%) as the most critical effectiveness factors provides important guidance for capacity-building initiatives. These findings suggest that community members value accessibility, responsiveness, and clear dialogue over procedural formality or technical legal knowledge. This preference aligns with the philosophy underlying the Katarungang Pambarangay system, which prioritizes accessible, efficient justice over adherence to complex legal procedures.

The relatively lower priority to follow-up on disputes (66.0%) may reflect community members' satisfaction with immediate resolution outcomes or a belief that once agreements are reached, parties will naturally comply without ongoing monitoring. However, research on dispute resolution compliance suggests that follow-up mechanisms are critical for ensuring long-term settlement sustainability and identifying cases where additional intervention may be needed (Roxas, 2024). This disconnect between community perception and best practice recommendations presents an opportunity for education and awareness-raising about the importance of post-settlement monitoring.

Comparison with Regional and National Patterns

The findings from Barangay West Poblacion generally align with broader regional and national patterns in barangay dispute resolution. The 75% settlement rate achieved in Region 7 (Roxas, 2024) suggests that similar effectiveness levels may be present in West Poblacion, though this study did not directly measure settlement rates. The types of disputes handled (theft, neighbor conflicts, domestic issues) mirror patterns documented across Philippine barangays, indicating that West Poblacion's experience is representative of broader trends in urban community dispute resolution.

However, the study also reveals localized characteristics that distinguish West Poblacion from other contexts. The specific emphasis on communication and timeliness may reflect unique community expectations shaped by local governance history, barangay official leadership styles, or cultural factors specific to Cebuano communities. These localized characteristics underscore the importance of context-sensitive approaches to capacity building and system improvement that respect community-specific needs and preferences.

Capacity Building and Training Needs

The identified gaps in advanced ADR technique application (consensus building, shuttle diplomacy, rapport building in arbitration_ point to clear capacity-building needs for barangay officials. Training programs should focus on:

Advanced Medication Skills: Techniques for handling high-conflict situations, managing power imbalances, addressing emotional dimensions of disputes, and facilitating difficult conversations.

Conciliation Specialization: In-depth training on consensus building processes, shuttle diplomacy strategies for parties unwilling to meet face-to-face, and joint session facilitation methods.

Arbitration Enhancement: Developing skills in rapport building, active listening within adjudicative contexts, evidence evaluation, and decision-writing that balances legal principles with community norms.

Legal and Procedural Knowledge: Strengthening understanding of the legal framework governing barangay justice, limitations on barangay jurisdiction, proper documentation procedures, and enforcement mechanisms.

Cultural Competence and Sensitivity: Training on addressing disputes involving vulnerable populations, recognizing and mitigating biases, and adapting dispute resolution approaches to diverse cultural contexts within the barangay.

These capacity-building recommendations align with recent research by Araña et al. (2023), who conducted a comprehensive training needs assessment for Lupon Tagapamayapa and identified similar gaps in conflict resolution skills requiring targeted interventions.

CONCLUSION

This study provides comprehensive empirical evidence on the effectiveness of barangay officials in resolving disputes in Barangay West Poblacion, City of Naga, Cebu. The findings demonstrate that barangay officials successfully employ fundamental ADR methods, particularly in mediation and conciliation, contributing to relatively high-dispute resolution rates consistent with regional performance benchmarks. Simple Theft and Neighbor Disputes constitute the majority of cases handled, reflecting typical urban barangay conflict patterns driven by economic pressures and spatial proximity.

Community members prioritize open communication and timely resolution as the most critical factors in effective dispute resolution, valuing accessibility and responsiveness over procedural formality. Barangay officials demonstrate strong competence in basic mediation and conciliation techniques, with universal application of core methods such as active listening, clarifying issues, and collaborative negotiation. However, gaps exist in the application of advanced techniques including consensus building, shuttle diplomacy, and rapport building in arbitration contexts, suggesting opportunities for targeted capacity enhancement.

The study aligns with and extends recent research on barangay justice systems (Roxas, 2024; Verdad, 2024; Noveloso et al., 2024; Añana et al., 2024), contributing localized empirical evidence on specific ADR method application and community effectiveness perceptions. The findings contribute to strengthening grassroots governance by providing actionable insights into the challenges and opportunities for improving dispute resolution at the barangay level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of barangay officials in resolving disputes:

Capacity Building and Training Programs

Implement comprehensive, structured training programs for Lupong Tagapamayapa members focusing on: (1) Advanced mediation and conciliation techniques, particularly consensus building and shuttle diplomacy; (2) Enhanced arbitration skills including rapport building and evidence evaluation; (3) Legal and procedural knowledge relevant to barangay jurisdiction and documentation requirements; (4) Cultural competence and sensitivity in handling diverse dispute contexts; (5) Psychological strategies for managing emotionally charged conflicts; and (6) Partner with academic institutions, legal aid organizations, and conflict resolution practitioners to deliver high-quality, evidence-based training programs tailored to barangay-level dispute resolution contexts.

Resource Allocation and Infrastructure Development

Increase budget allocations for barangay justice system operations, including: (1) Adequate compensation or incentives for Lupong Tagapamayapa members; (2) Physical infrastructure improvements (dedicated mediation spaces, proper furniture, storage for records); (3) Technology integration (computers, printers, case management software); and (4) Educational materials and reference resources. Establish a dedicated fund at the municipal or city level to support barangay dispute resolution activities, ensuring consistent resource availability across all barangays.

Standardization and Quality Assurance

Develop standardized operating procedures for dispute resolution processes to ensure consistency and quality across different cases and barangay officials. These procedures should include: (1) Intake and assessment protocols; (2) Case categorization and assignment guidelines; (3) Documentation and record-keeping standards; (4) Follow-up and monitoring procedures; and (5) compliance enforcement mechanisms. Implement quality assurance mechanisms including periodic case file reviews, participant satisfaction surveys, and peer evaluation processes to identify areas for improvement and recognize exemplary practice.

Community Awareness and Engagement

Intensify information dissemination campaigns to enhance community awareness of: (1) The barangay justice system's purpose, jurisdiction, and procedures; (2) Available dispute resolution methods and their appropriate applications; (3) Rights and responsibilities of parties in the dispute resolution process; and (4) Benefits of amicable settlement versus formal litigation. Utilize multiple communication channels including community assemblies, social media, printed materials, and school-based education programs to reach diverse community segments. Develop community feedback mechanisms that allow residents to share experiences, concerns, and suggestions regarding barangay resolution services.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Research

Establish systematic monitoring and evaluation systems to track: (1) Case volumes and types; (2) Resolution methods employed; (3) Settlement rates and compliance levels; (4) Participant satisfaction; and (5) Time from case filing to resolution. Use monitoring data to identify trends, assess performance, and inform continuous improvement initiatives. Conduct periodic impact evaluations to assess the long-term effects of barangay dispute resolution on community cohesion, access to justice, and reduction in formal court caseloads. Support ongoing research on barangay justice systems, including comparative studies across different regions, longitudinal analyses of effectiveness trends, and investigation of innovative practices that be scaled or replicated.

Integration and Collaboration

Strengthen linkages between the barangay justice system and: (1) Municipal and city legal offices for technical assistance and legal guidance; (2) Law enforcement agencies for cases requiring police investigation or intervention; (3) Social welfare offices for disputes involving vulnerable populations; and (4) Non-governmental organizations providing legal aid, mediation services, or conflict resolution training. Establish regular coordination meetings among barangay officials, municipal authorities, and justice sector stakeholders to share experiences, address common challenges, and develop collaborative solutions.

Addressing Specific Dispute Types

Develop specialized protocols and training modules for handling: (1) Domestic disputes, including gender-based violence and child protection concerns; (2) Disputes involving vulnerable populations (elderly, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples); (3) Complex property boundary conflicts requiring technical expertise; and (4) Conflicts with power imbalances requiring careful management of negotiation dynamics. Create referral mechanisms to ensure that cases beyond barangay jurisdiction or requiring specialized intervention are promptly and appropriately escalated to competent authorities.

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