

# Determinants of success and failure in conciliation: An analytical study of contributing factors

<sup>1</sup>Norman Biagcong Bustillo & <sup>2</sup>Filibert Patrick F. Tad-awan

## Abstract

This qualitative-descriptive study investigates the factors contributing to the success and failure of conciliation efforts within Baguio City's *Katarungang Pambarangay* system, with a focus on selected barangays in the Central Business District area. Drawing on the perceptions and experiences of eight participants, comprising complainants, witnesses, respondents, *Lupon Tagapamayapa* members, mediators, and barangay officials, the study employed unstructured interviews and reflexive thematic analysis to pursue two objectives: (1) identifying the factors that contribute to conciliation success or failure; and (2) exploring participants' lived experiences of the process. Key findings indicate that success is driven by effective communication fostering mutual understanding, the conciliator's neutrality and emotional intelligence, and community engagement that leverages local trust and indigenous cultural practices of the Cordillera region. Participants further highlighted perceived fairness, barangay officials' patience and procedural competence, and outcome satisfaction manifested through emotional relief and restored relationships. Failure, by contrast, stems from training gaps, power imbalances, confidentiality concerns, and mismatched expectations. Grounded in Interest-Based Negotiation Theory, Communication and Trust Theory, and the *Katarungang Pambarangay* institutional framework, the findings affirm conciliation's role in reducing court congestion and strengthening community peacebuilding. The study acknowledges limitations in sample scope and transferability and recommends enhanced mediator training, procedural safeguards, and future disputant-centered research to strengthen this ADR mechanism within the Philippine criminal justice system.

**Keywords:** *katarungang pambarangay, conciliation success, lupon tagapamayapa, restorative justice, effective communication*

## Article History:

*Received: January 18, 2026*

*Accepted: March 30, 2026*

*Revised: March 27, 2026*

*Published online: April 18, 2026*

## Suggested Citation:

Bustillo, N.B. & Tad-awan, F.P.F. (2026). Determinants of success and failure in conciliation: An analytical study of contributing factors. *International Review of Social Sciences Research*, 6(2), 25-48. <https://doi.org/10.53378/irsr.353344>

## About the authors:

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding author. Master of Science in Criminal Justice with Specialization in Criminology. Faculty Member, Baguio Central University. Email: [20190768@s.ubaguio.edu](mailto:20190768@s.ubaguio.edu)

<sup>2</sup>Doctor of Philosophy in Criminology. Faculty Member, University of Baguio. Email: [fptad-awan@e.ubaguio.edu](mailto:fptad-awan@e.ubaguio.edu)



## 1. Introduction

Conciliation, as a form of alternative dispute resolution (ADR), has been widely recognized as a vital mechanism for promoting amicable settlements, which reduces judicial backlogs to ensure timely restoration of rights. In the Philippines, Republic Act No. 9285 institutionalized ADR, including conciliation, mediation, and arbitration, as a state policy to promote party autonomy and decongest court dockets (Republic Act No. 9285, 2004). The Katarungang Pambarangay (KP) system (*barangay justice system*), established under Presidential Decree No. 1508 (1978) and strengthened by the Local Government Code of 1991 (Republic Act No. 7160), operationalizes this policy at the grassroots level by requiring that most disputes between residents of the same barangay be brought first to the *Lupong Tagapamayapa* (*council of peacemakers*) for conciliation before they may proceed to formal courts.

Despite its legal mandate and proven value in reducing court congestion, the KP system faces persistent operational challenges. Lupon members frequently lack adequate training in conflict resolution, communication, and legal procedures, while power imbalances between disputants, confidentiality concerns, and the tension between formal KP procedures and indigenous modes of dispute settlement continue to undermine conciliation effectiveness (Sotto, 2021; Araña et al., 2023). These challenges are particularly salient in Baguio City, where the urban-rural character of the Central Business District (CBD) barangays intersects with the Cordillera region's strong indigenous conflict resolution traditions, including bodong, tongtongan, and mankusjon, creating a settlement environment that is analytically distinct from other Philippine contexts (Alviento, 2023; Balatong et al., 2022).

The continuing relevance and institutional vitality of the KP system in Baguio City is affirmed by recent recognition through the 2025 Lupong Tagapamayapa Incentives Awards (LTIA), which honored Barangays AZKCO, Palma-Urbano, and Slaughter House Area for exemplary performance in community dispute resolution. This demonstrates that impartiality, community trust, and effective facilitation remain achievable standards within the system (DILG Baguio, 2025). At the same time, the Supreme Court ruling in *Angel L. Boleyley v. Hon. Clarence J. Villanueva et al.* (G.R. No. 128734, 1999) reminds practitioners that overly rigid reliance on procedural technicalities can obstruct rather than enable justice, underscoring the need to understand not only the formal structure of the KP system but the conditions under which it succeeds or fails in practice.

Studies have examined general KP effectiveness through settlement rates and procedural compliance metrics (Gonzales, 2022; Rebayla et al., 2023), however, localized research on the Cordillera region that captures the experiential and relational dimensions of conciliation, specifically Baguio City remains limited. This study addresses that gap. Specifically, it investigates the determinants of conciliation success and failure through the lived perceptions and experiences of participants in four CBD barangays, producing contextually grounded insights that existing quantitative and procedure-focused studies have not surfaced.

The study contributes to the literature in two ways: first, by providing experiential evidence from a culturally distinctive urban-barangay setting that has been underrepresented in ADR scholarship; and second, by connecting participant-level insights to theoretical frameworks, Interest-Based Negotiation, Communication and Trust, and the KP institutional framework, to produce an integrated analysis of what makes conciliation work, and what causes it to fail. Two research objectives guide the inquiry: (1) to identify and analyze the factors that contribute to the success or failure of conciliation efforts in the selected barangays; and (2) to explore the perceptions and experiences of individuals who have participated in the conciliation process.

## **2. Literature Review**

This section reviews relevant theoretical and empirical literature organized into three thematic areas: (1) mediator competencies and process-level factors; (2) community, cultural, and institutional dimensions; and (3) the Philippine barangay conciliation context. A brief account of the study's knowledge gap and theoretical framework concludes the section.

### ***2.1. Mediator Competencies and Process-Level Factors***

A well-established body of research identifies mediator competencies as central to conciliation outcomes. Impartiality and neutrality are foundational: disputants who perceive the conciliator as fair and unbiased are significantly more likely to accept agreements and comply with outcomes (Qarmout, 2024; Korneeva et al., 2022). Beyond neutrality, effective mediators demonstrate emotional intelligence, the capacity to manage high-affect interactions, reframe hostile communication, and sustain a safe dialogical space. Korneeva et al. (2022) found that mediators' professional competencies and personal qualities, including

communication prowess, empathy, and analytical skill, were the strongest predictors of conciliation outcomes across processes with varying degrees of success.

Process design equally shapes outcomes. Stevens et al. (2022) found that structured dialogue sessions with clear sequencing, early timing, and protected speaking turns foster genuine engagement even when power imbalances and emotional intensity are pronounced. Hence, failures in these dimensions are predictable: training gaps leave conciliators unprepared for emotionally or legally complex disputes, while unaddressed power imbalances distort communication and compromise the voluntary character of agreements (Espino, 2025).

## ***2.2. Community, Cultural, and Institutional Dimensions***

Beyond individual mediator competence, community and institutional factors significantly shape conciliation outcomes. Social trust and the moral authority of community leaders strengthen voluntary compliance and reduce escalation to formal courts (Damayon et al., 2022). Inclusivity, meaningful participation by all stakeholders, including marginalized groups, improves the legitimacy and durability of agreements. However, community embeddedness also carries risks: social pressure can compromise the voluntariness of agreements and raise confidentiality concerns, particularly when disputes occur within close-knit neighborhoods where social visibility is high (Puspasari & MoHa, 2024).

Institutional theory highlights how formal structures, organizational support, and governance arrangements constrain or enable conciliation. Where legal frameworks are rigid or enforcement mechanisms are weak, even competent mediators struggle to achieve durable outcomes (Santos & Tonella, 2025). Conversely, strong institutional backing, through regular training, documentation systems, and clear mandates, supports consistency and accountability. Communication and Trust Theory (Kressel, 2000) adds that the quality of interpersonal dialogue and the degree of trust between parties and in the conciliator determine outcomes at least as much as procedural compliance does.

## ***2.3. The Philippine Barangay Conciliation Context***

Within the Philippines, research consistently identifies conciliator adherence to procedure, community participation, and capacity-building as predictors of KP effectiveness (Leonor, 2023; Villamor & Dagohoy, 2021). Gonzales (2022) found positive community ratings of the barangay justice system in Calauan, Laguna, attributing these to consistent and

inclusive procedural implementation. In addition, Rebayla et al. (2023) identified mediator skill, process duration, and party satisfaction as key determinants in NLRC labor dispute conciliation. Araña et al. (2023) identified significant unmet training needs among Lupon members in Ozamiz City across conflict resolution, legal knowledge, and cultural sensitivity, gaps that directly undermine conciliation credibility.

Within the Cordillera Administrative Region, indigenous conflict resolution practices, *bodong*, *tongtongan*, *tut-uya*, and *mankusjon*, prioritize communal harmony, elder-guided deliberation, and restorative settlement, and have been shown to influence conciliators' facilitation methods and to encourage positive party engagement within the formal KP framework (Alviento, 2023; Balatong et al., 2022). These traditions align with global restorative justice frameworks that emphasize repairing relational harm and reintegrating disputants into their communities rather than pursuing punitive outcomes. In Baguio City's demographically diverse CBD, the intersection of these cultural practices with formal KP procedures creates conditions for conciliation analysis that are distinctive and underrepresented in the existing literature.

#### ***2.4. Knowledge Gap***

While the general contours of conciliation effectiveness are well established, limited research examines the specific interplay of relational, procedural, community, and cultural factors in the Cordillera urban-barangay context. Existing Philippine studies (Gonzales, 2022; Rebayla et al., 2023; Damayon et al., 2022) tend to focus on institutional implementation and settlement rates rather than on the experiential and perceptual dimensions of participants undergoing the process. This study addresses that gap by centering the voices and experiences of complainants, witnesses, respondents, mediators, and barangay officials in four CBD barangays in Baguio City

#### ***2.5. Theoretical Framework***

This study is anchored on the following theories.

**Interest-Based Negotiation Theory** serves as the primary analytical framework for understanding the dynamics of conciliation. Rooted in the work of Fisher and Ury (1991), this theory emphasizes that durable agreements are not achieved through positional bargaining, where parties cling to rigid demands, but through the identification and satisfaction of

underlying interests. It advances four guiding principles: (1) separating people from the problem to reduce personal animosity and focus on substantive issues; (2) prioritizing interests rather than positions, thereby uncovering the real needs and motivations behind demands; (3) generating options for mutual gain, which encourages creativity and collaboration in finding solutions; and (4) applying objective criteria to evaluate settlements, ensuring fairness and legitimacy. In this study, these principles are operationalized as analytical categories: their presence in conciliation practice is associated with successful outcomes, while their absence or distortion, often due to power asymmetries, lack of facilitation skills, or entrenched hostility, signals conditions of failure. Thus, this theory provides a structured lens for dissecting both the successes and shortcomings of barangay-level dispute resolution.

**Communication and Trust Theory** (Kressel, 2000) complement the analytical lens by highlighting the interpersonal and relational dimensions of conciliation. While legal frameworks and procedural rules establish the formal structure of dispute resolution, the quality of dialogue and the degree of trust among parties and toward the conciliator often determine whether agreements are genuinely accepted and sustained. Trust operates on two levels: interpersonal trust between disputants, which reduces suspicion and opens space for compromise, and institutional trust in the conciliator or Lupon, which legitimizes the process. Communication, meanwhile, is not merely the exchange of information but the medium through which empathy, respect, and sincerity are conveyed. When either trust or communication is deficient, conciliation outcomes tend to be fragile or fail altogether, even if procedural requirements are technically satisfied. This theory therefore underscores the human dimension of conciliation, reminding us that resolution is not only a matter of law but also of relationships.

**The Katarungang Pambarangay (KP) Framework** (Presidential Decree No. 1508, 1978; Republic Act No. 7160, 1991) provides the institutional and contextual foundation of the study. As a legally mandated system of community-based dispute resolution in the Philippines, the KP framework defines the composition and authority of the Lupon Tagapamayapa, prescribes procedural steps such as mediation and arbitration, and establishes the legal character of the kasunduan or settlement agreement. These structural elements are not merely background conditions but active factors influencing conciliation outcomes. For instance, the authority vested in the Lupon shapes parties' willingness to participate, while the procedural requirements ensure that settlements carry legal weight. At the same time, the

framework's limitations, such as resource constraints, uneven training of Lupon members, or cultural variations in dispute resolution practices, can hinder effectiveness. By situating the study within the KP framework, the analysis remains grounded in the specific realities of Philippine barangay justice, ensuring that theoretical insights are applied within their proper institutional context.

These three theories create a multi-layered analytical approach. Interest-Based Negotiation Theory provides the structural categories for evaluating success or failure; Communication and Trust Theory illuminate the interpersonal dynamics that sustain or undermine agreements; and the Katarungang Pambarangay Framework anchors the study in the Philippine legal and institutional setting. Their integration allows for a holistic understanding of conciliation, recognizing that outcomes are shaped simultaneously by principles of negotiation, the quality of human interaction, and the institutional structures within which these processes unfold.

### **3. Methodology**

#### ***3.1. Research Design***

This study employed a qualitative-descriptive research design to investigate the determinants of success and failure in conciliation proceedings within four barangays in Baguio City's Central Business District: Barangay Upper Session Road, Barangay Lower General Luna Road, Barangay Kabayanihan, and Barangay Central Business District proper.

A qualitative approach was deliberately selected because the study's central objectives required in-depth understanding of participants lived experiences and contextual interpretations of the Katarungang Pambarangay (KP) conciliation process, dimensions that quantitative instruments are structurally ill-suited to capture. Human behavior in dispute resolution is embedded in relational, cultural, and situational contexts that resist reduction to numerical measurement. By privileging the voices and meaning-making of participants, the qualitative approach allowed the researchers to access the subjective realities underlying conciliation outcomes.

The descriptive orientation complemented this by allowing recurring patterns and themes to emerge from participant accounts without the imposition of predetermined categories. This inductive stance enabled a rich, grounded account of conciliation dynamics at

the barangay level, one that reflects how the process actually operates in practice rather than how it is formally prescribed.

### *3.2. Participants of the Study*

Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that all participants possessed direct, firsthand experience with the barangay conciliation process. It is the appropriate technique when the research requires specific knowledge or experience that only a defined population can provide, and when representational breadth is secondary to depth and relevance.

A total of eight (8) participants were recruited across the four study barangays, which represents two distinct stakeholder groups. The first group consisted of four participants comprising complainants, respondents, and witnesses who had undergone formal KP conciliation proceedings as parties to a dispute. The second group consisted of four participants comprising Lupong Tagapamayapa members, mediators, and barangay officials who were directly involved in facilitating the conciliation process. This multi-stakeholder composition was intentional: by capturing perspectives from both the facilitation and disputant sides of the conciliation experience, the study ensured that findings reflected the process as understood by those who administered it as well as those who were subject to it.

Participants were included in the study if they: (1) resided in or were formally affiliated with one of the four designated study barangays; (2) had direct involvement in at least one KP conciliation session within the past three years; and (3) provided voluntary informed consent. Conversely, individuals with no direct conciliation experience, those residing outside the designated barangays, and minors without parental or guardian consent were excluded, as were barangay officials with no substantive involvement in dispute resolution proceedings.

The researchers acknowledge that a sample of eight participants constrains the breadth of the findings; results are therefore interpreted as contextually specific to the study setting rather than as generalizable across all KP contexts in the Philippines. However, within the qualitative-descriptive tradition, this sample size is consistent with established practice for producing the depth and richness of participant accounts required to address the study's objectives. The criterion of data saturation further supports the adequacy of the sample for this scope of inquiry.

### ***3.3. Instrumentation and Data Gathering Process***

Data were collected through unstructured, face-to-face individual interviews as the primary instrument for this study. The interview is the most appropriate instrument for qualitative research of this nature, as it enables participants to articulate experience-based perspectives in their own words and at their own pace. The unstructured format was specifically chosen over semi-structured or structured alternatives to allow maximum flexibility and depth. In this method, participants were not constrained by predetermined question sequences to allow the conversation to follow the natural flow of each individual's experience and enable the emergence of themes that the researchers may not have anticipated.

The interview guide was organized around two thematic areas corresponding directly to the study's research objectives: (1) the factors participants perceived as contributing to the success or failure of their conciliation experience; and (2) their overall perceptions of the process, including assessments of fairness, the conduct of barangay officials, and the adequacy of outcomes. The guide functioned as a loose framework rather than a fixed script to ensure that key thematic areas were covered while preserving the exploratory character of the interaction.

Interviews were conducted in English, Filipino, or Ilocano depending on each participant's preference to ensure linguistic accessibility and cultural appropriateness for the Baguio City context. All interviews were conducted at a time and location convenient to the participant to minimize power imbalances and support open disclosure. Sessions were audio-recorded with participants' prior informed consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim by the research team to preserve the integrity and granularity of the data.

Throughout data collection, the researchers maintained a deliberate posture of neutrality and reflexivity by refraining from leading questions, evaluative commentary, or expressions of judgment that could have influenced participant responses. Upon completion of the initial transcriptions, member checking was conducted with selected participants, who were invited to review and verify the accuracy of their transcribed accounts and the preliminary interpretations drawn from them. This step strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of the data by ensuring that participant meanings were accurately represented.

### ***3.4. Data Analysis***

Reflexive thematic analysis, following the six-phase framework established by Braun and Clarke (2006), was employed to analyze the interview data. This approach was selected for its capacity to generate rich, interpretive accounts from qualitative data while maintaining methodological rigor and transparency. Unlike more prescriptive coding frameworks, reflexive thematic analysis acknowledges the active role of the researcher in constructing, rather than merely discovering, themes.

The analytical process proceeded through the following phases. First, the researchers familiarized themselves with the data through repeated and active reading of the full transcripts, noting initial impressions and points of interest. Second, initial codes were systematically generated by labeling meaningful textual segments, words, phrases, or passages, that captured something analytically relevant to the research objectives. Third, candidate themes were constructed by grouping related codes and examining the broader patterns they collectively represented. Fourth, themes were reviewed and refined to assess their internal coherence, distinctiveness from one another, and fidelity to the underlying data set as a whole. Fifth, themes were clearly defined and assigned descriptive names that conveyed their analytical content. Sixth, the final analysis was produced by integrating themes with supporting participant excerpts and situating the findings within the study's theoretical framework.

Peer debriefing was conducted throughout the analytical process: coded themes and interpretations were reviewed and discussed among all members of the research team to minimize the influence of individual bias and enhance analytical consistency. Data saturation was assessed through ongoing comparison of emerging codes across interviews. No substantially new themes emerged in the final two interviews, indicating that the data had reached a level of saturation sufficient for the scope and objectives of the study.

### ***3.5. Research Ethics***

*Approval and institutional clearance.* The study was conducted in strict accordance with the ethical guidelines of the University of Baguio Research Development Center and received formal institutional clearance from the School of Criminal Justice and Public Safety prior to the commencement of data collection. This approval process ensured that the study's design, participant recruitment procedures, and data management protocols met the ethical standards required for research involving human subjects.

*Informed consent and voluntary participation.* Informed consent was obtained from all participants before any data were collected. Each participant received a clear and complete briefing on the study's purpose, the nature and duration of their involvement, the procedures to be followed, and the potential uses of the data. Participants were explicitly informed that their involvement was entirely voluntary, that they retained the right to withdraw at any time and for any reason without consequence, and that declining to participate would carry no adverse implications of any kind. Written consent was obtained from all participants prior to the commencement of interviews.

*Participant safety and welfare.* Given the potentially sensitive nature of dispute-related experiences, the researchers exercised particular care throughout the data collection process to avoid re-traumatization or psychological distress. Probing questions that could reopen unresolved conflicts or cause emotional harm were deliberately avoided. Participants were reminded at the outset of each interview of their right to decline to answer any question and to halt the interview at any point. The researchers maintained a supportive and non-judgmental demeanor throughout, and no participant exhibited signs of distress during or following the sessions. Reflexivity was maintained across both data collection and analysis to guard against the inadvertent projection of researcher assumptions onto participant accounts.

*Confidentiality and data protection.* Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained throughout all phases of the study. All identifying information was removed from transcripts and field notes during the transcription process. Participants are referred to exclusively by role and assigned number throughout this report, ensuring that no individual can be identified from the published findings. Raw data, including audio recordings and verbatim transcripts, were stored in password-protected digital files accessible only to the members of the research team. Data will be retained for the duration required by institutional policy and securely destroyed thereafter. Findings were prepared for peer-reviewed publication, and all participants were offered access to the final report upon its completion.

#### **4. Findings and Discussion**

This section presents and discusses the themes that emerged from reflexive thematic analysis of the interview data, organized according to the two research objectives. The first part addresses the factors contributing to the success and failure of conciliation efforts. The second explores participants' perceptions and experiences.

#### ***4.1 Factors Contributing to Success and Failure of Conciliation Efforts***

Conciliation success emerged from the convergence of three broad thematic areas: effective communication and mutual understanding, the conciliator's active facilitation role, and community engagement and cultural support. These themes were identified across all four barangays and across both stakeholder groups, suggesting they represent generalizable dimensions of the KP conciliation process in this context. Failure, by contrast, was associated with training inadequacies, unaddressed power imbalances, confidentiality risks, and procedural opacity.

***Effective communication and mutual understanding.*** Effective communication emerged as the most consistently cited determinant of conciliation success. Participants across roles emphasized that the capacity and willingness of parties to genuinely listen to one another, facilitated by a skilled, neutral conciliator, was foundational to reaching agreement. This finding aligns with Communication and Trust Theory's central claim that the quality of dialogue and the degree of trust between parties are at least as important as procedural compliance in determining conciliation outcomes (Kressel, 2000). Participant 1 emphasized party willingness as the starting point, "*if the parties involved also have the desire to feel peace or a willingness to compromise, they realize that settling is better than fighting.*" This aligns with Interest-Based Negotiation Theory's principle that parties must first reorient from positional demands to underlying interests before productive dialogue can occur.

Participant 4 (Complainant, CBD Proper) identified structured, safe process environments as enabling this reorientation, "*for me, the establishment of good communication and mediation toward the parties... creating a setting where disputing parties feel safe and respected.*" Participant 5 highlighted the active dimension of listening as a facilitation skill, "*communication, you really need to know how to listen to both sides... patience, especially when emotions are running high.*" These accounts demonstrate that effective communication in barangay conciliation is not a passive channel but an actively managed process. Conciliators must engineer the conditions for dialogue, not merely preside over it. In the Philippine context, Rebayla et al. (2023) argue that session design and facilitation quality are significant predictors of settlement satisfaction.

Conciliator neutrality was specifically linked to communication trust. For example, participant 6 articulated, "*both sides should feel that you are fair, that you are not taking sides.*

*Because once they doubt that you are biased, it will be hard to regain trust, especially when religion or culture is involved."* This account highlights a vulnerability specific to culturally heterogeneous settings: perceived neutrality must be actively demonstrated through culturally competent facilitation, not merely claimed as a procedural posture. In Baguio City's CBD, where disputants may come from diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, this dimension of communicative trust is particularly consequential.

The physical context of sessions also shaped communication quality. Participants noted that the familiar, community-embedded setting of the barangay hall reduced the intimidation associated with formal court proceedings. De Ramos and Pasion (2023) affirm that the social environment of conciliation significantly influences communication quality. This is illustrated in this study by the participants' preference for in-person facilitation over virtual modalities, which several noted reduced the non-verbal cues that conciliators rely on to gauge emotional states (Urias et al., 2021).

***The conciliator as a skilled facilitator.*** Participant narratives consistently positioned effective barangay conciliators as active architects of the process rather than passive administrators. Three sub-dimensions of this facilitative role emerged: neutrality as active practice, strategic linguistic intervention, and procedural integrity. Participant 6 described the foundational bridging function, *"my role is really just like a bridge between the two sides... I do my best to remain neutral; I don't take anyone's side. Instead, I help them see their common ground."* Participant 5 illustrated how linguistic reframing operates as a strategic intervention, *"I filter the aggressive language and reframe it so the other side can actually hear the underlying interest, not just the conflict... I help them compare the certainty of compromise with the uncertainty and expense of litigation."* This technique directly embodies Interest-Based Negotiation Theory's principle of separating people from the problem and redirecting attention from positions to interests. Villamor and Dagohoy (2021) affirm that this decision-making quality, knowing when and how to intervene, is a defining characteristic of high-performing Lupon facilitation in Philippine contexts. On the other hand, participant 6 described the management of emotional escalation, *"when things become emotional, I listen to both sides first, then guide the discussion back to the main issue. My role is like a facilitator and peacemaker, helping them reach agreement smoothly and respectfully."*

Procedural integrity, transparent, consistent case administration, was identified as a structural dimension of facilitative effectiveness that builds institutional trust. Participant 8 explained, "*my role is to ensure efficient and transparent administration of cases... supporting the Lupon Chair by making sure documents are filed systematically.*" This affirms that transparent procedural administration reinforces disputants' confidence in process fairness aligned with institutional theory's emphasis on organizational support as a prerequisite for consistent outcomes.

A significant barrier to effective facilitation, however, was training inadequacy. Several facilitator participants noted limited preparation for disputes involving complex power dynamics, legal technicalities, or deep interpersonal conflict. Espino (2025) identified inadequate facilitator training as the primary driver of process breakdown in a comparable conciliation center context, while Araña et al. (2023) found significant unmet training needs among Philippine Lupon members specifically in conflict resolution techniques, legal procedures, and cultural sensitivity. These institutional gaps represent a structural vulnerability that individual competence cannot fully compensate for.

***Community engagement and cultural support.*** Community engagement strengthened conciliation legitimacy through two mechanisms: the moral authority of community-embedded figures, and the normative pull of shared cultural values around peaceful settlement. These mechanisms operated most powerfully in the Cordillera-influenced CBD context, where indigenous practices provided a cultural vocabulary for restorative resolution that formal KP procedure alone does not supply.

Participant 2 described the compliance effect of trusted community figures, "*when village officials or respected elders give guidance, it's easier for people to comply because they trust them.*" Participant 1 identified the community visibility of settlements as a legitimacy mechanism, stating that "*they feel more shame in the eyes of their neighbors. This external motivation pushes parties to be more flexible and agreeable... The settlement becomes public knowledge and is viewed as legitimate.*" This reflects Social Exchange Theory's (Homans, 1958; Blau, 1964) logic where parties cooperate when perceived social benefits of resolution, including restoration of community standing, outweigh the costs of continued dispute (Kressel, 2000). Participant 6 reframed community pressure as constructive social accountability rather

than coercion, "*community involvement acts like a moral support system, providing pressure but in a good way, so the conflict can be resolved properly.*"

In the Cordillera context, conciliators who drew on indigenous practices, *tongtongan*, *bodong*, *mankusjon*, reported stronger party engagement, as these cultural frameworks carried relational and moral weight that purely procedural interventions could not replicate (Alviento, 2023; Balatong et al., 2022). This integration of indigenous and formal approaches represents a contextually specific success factor unlikely to be captured in KP effectiveness studies conducted outside the Cordillera region. However, community embeddedness also presents challenges. Social pressure can compromise the voluntariness of agreements, and dispute details circulating in close-knit neighborhoods raise legitimate confidentiality concerns. Puspasari and MoHa (2024) caution that community-based conciliation must be deliberately structured to prevent social influence from crossing into coercion, particularly where power differentials exist between parties. Conciliators must therefore channel community social capital toward voluntary harmony rather than allowing it to operate as an unmanaged force.

#### ***4.2 Perceptions and Experiences of Individuals on Barangay Conciliation***

This study also explored the participants' experiences on conciliation process. Thematic analysis revealed five themes: perceived fairness and impartiality; effectiveness of barangay officials; expectations versus reality; outcome satisfaction; and changes in perception of the other party. The expectations versus reality theme emerged most clearly within the fairness and outcome satisfaction themes.

***Perceived Fairness and impartiality.*** Perceived fairness was the most frequently recurring theme across disputant accounts, encompassing both procedural fairness (equal speaking opportunities, consistent rule application, transparent process explanations) and interpersonal fairness (respectful, dignified treatment by officials throughout proceedings). Participant 1 highlighted the value of an inclusive, non-intimidating atmosphere, "*I felt that both sides were given the same chance to speak. It was not like court where I felt scared. The barangay official made sure I could say everything I needed to say.*" Participant 3 articulated a fairness assessment that distinguished process fairness from outcome satisfaction, "*I did not get exactly what I wanted, but I felt that the process was fair. I was listened to, and the decision made sense.*"

This aligns with procedural justice theory's well-established finding that perceived fairness of process has a stronger effect on outcome acceptance and system legitimacy than the favorability of outcomes alone (Qarmout, 2024; Rehman et al., 2021). Disputants in this study demonstrated a similar sophistication that they could distinguish between a fair process and a favorable outcome, and they valued both, though the experience of being heard appeared to anchor their sense of justice regardless of outcome.

A contrasting case is analytically important here. Participant 2 expressed concern that *“the opposing party's longer-standing relationship with the barangay official may have subtly affected the process, noting lingering doubt about impartiality even after a formal settlement was reached.”* This account points to a structural risk in community-based conciliation that the social embeddedness that confers moral authority can simultaneously create the appearance of partiality. Transparent procedures, including documented reasoning for agreements, are necessary to manage this risk.

In the culturally diverse Cordillera-CBD setting, several participants additionally valued instances where officials incorporated indigenous dialogue practices, communal consensus-building and deference to elder guidance, as these culturally resonant elements deepened their sense of being heard within a process that recognized their social identity (Justin, 2021; Laguda, 2024).

***Effectiveness of barangay officials.*** Participants evaluated barangay officials along two dimensions: interpersonal competence (patience, respectfulness, emotional management) and procedural competence (organizational skill, clarity of process, consistency of follow-through). Both contributed to perceptions of effectiveness, but gaps in either undermined confidence in the process. Participant 1 offered a candid assessment that *“the barangay officials should be better at leading the conciliation process. From my experience, most of them were patient and respectful, making sure everyone got a chance to speak. There were also some days when controlling people's emotions seemed very difficult, but overall, their service was good.”* On the other hand, participant 3 emphasized the intersection of organizational skill and emotional composure. *“The barangay officials were very effective in running the conciliation process. They served as mediators and guides to smooth out the conversation and prevent the conflict from worsening. They skillfully organized the meetings and ensured that everyone had a chance to speak.”*

Korneeva et al. (2022) identify patience, respect, and sustained impartiality as the core personal attributes that distinguish effective conciliators. Even imperfect facilitation, conducted with consistent good faith, is sufficient to sustain disputants' confidence. When officials demonstrated both organizational skill and emotional composure, disputants were more inclined to trust the proceedings and accept outcomes (Alviento, 2023). A recurring concern among disputant participants, however, was inconsistent follow-through. Agreements formally recorded during conciliation were not always monitored, and when conflicts recurred, the conciliation outcome was perceived as having failed even where a settlement document existed. This gap between formal agreement and sustained resolution is a noted limitation of community-based ADR that the literature has flagged but remains structurally unaddressed in many KP settings (Sotto, 2021; Leonor, 2023).

**Outcome satisfaction.** Outcome satisfaction in this study manifested primarily as emotional relief, relational restoration, and perceived equity of compromise rather than simple agreement with the decision reached. This finding is consistent with restorative justice's argument that the most meaningful metrics of successful dispute resolution are healing and relational repair, not settlement rate alone. For example, participant 1 described the holistic quality of a well-facilitated resolution that *"the outcome helped all parties in the case... I felt calm and understanding of the situation."* Participant 2 used somatic language to convey psychological relief, *"the weight on my chest lightened after the process... I felt there was resolution and understanding."* Participant 3 framed satisfaction in terms of equitable compromise, *"I'm happy we found a compromise... the decision was fair, so no one was hurt too much."* These accounts collectively demonstrate that outcome satisfaction in KP conciliation is rooted in three interlocking dimensions: fairness in decision-making, emotional restoration through acknowledgment and compromise, and prevention of further escalation. Rehman et al. (2021) affirm that transparent, proportionate outcomes that are clearly explained produce not only compliance but renewed institutional trust.

A contrasting account from Participant 4 warrants attention. *"I expressed dissatisfaction with the financial terms of the settlement, feeling that the agreement did not adequately reflect the material harm sustained."* This negative case illustrates that outcome satisfaction is not uniform across dispute types, and that cases involving clear material or financial stakes may be more resistant to the relational and emotional framing that

characterizes successful KP conciliation. This suggests a need for barangay officials to calibrate their facilitation approach to the nature and stakes of the dispute at hand.

***Changes in perception of the other party.*** Several participants reported meaningful shifts in how they perceived the opposing party as a result of the conciliation process. Structured, mediated face-to-face dialogue appeared to humanize the other party in ways that prior adversarial interactions had not, aligning with restorative justice's emphasis on relational repair as a central outcome. Participant 2 described a cognitive and empathic shift, "*I did not realize how the other person felt. When they explained it during the conciliation, I understood them better. It changed how I saw the situation.*" Participant 4 reflected on the relational aftermath, "*we are not close friends now, but we can pass each other in the street without problems. That is already a big improvement.*" In the closely-knit barangay setting, where parties continue living in proximity after a dispute, this relational transformation may be conciliation's most socially significant contribution, one that formal courts cannot replicate and that settlement rate data cannot capture. These accounts support the KP system's foundational premise that grassroots dispute resolution, when well facilitated, strengthens rather than merely manages community bonds.

***Expectations versus reality.*** A fifth theme that emerged from disputant accounts concerned the gap, or alignment, between what participants expected from the conciliation process and what they actually experienced. Several complainants entered the process expecting a process similar to formal court adjudication, with a clear winner and a binding judicial decision. When conciliation instead proceeded through dialogue and mutual compromise, some participants initially experienced this as a frustration of their expectations. Participant 1 acknowledged this initial gap, stating, "*at first I thought the barangay would decide who was right and who was wrong. But it was more about both of us agreeing to something that worked for both sides.*"

Participants who initially held adjudicatory expectations typically revised these as the process unfolded, particularly when officials took time to explain the conciliation model before proceedings began. This suggests that pre-conciliation orientation, clearly explaining what the process is and is not, and what kinds of outcomes it aims to produce, is an underutilized intervention that could meaningfully improve participant experience and outcome acceptance.

The expectation-reality gap also reinforces the broader finding that procedural transparency and communication are not merely facilitation tools but foundational to participants' ability to evaluate the process fairly.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendation**

### ***5.1. Theoretical Contribution***

This study contributes a culturally-grounded process framework, the Integrative Conciliation Effectiveness Framework (ICEF), derived inductively from the thematic findings. The ICEF synthesizes three interdependent domains that together explain conciliation outcomes in community-based dispute resolution: (1) Facilitator Capacity, encompassing the conciliator's neutrality, emotional intelligence, linguistic reframing, and procedural integrity; (2) Relational-Communicative Quality, defined as the degree to which dialogue is structured, trust-generative, and mutually intelligible across cultural and social differences; and (3) Community-Cultural Embeddedness, capturing how indigenous practices, elder authority, and social accountability mechanisms interact with the formal KP institutional framework to produce (or undermine) voluntary, durable agreements. Unlike previous process-outcome models that treat these dimensions independently, the ICEF positions them as mutually reinforcing high facilitator capacity amplifies communicative quality, which in turn activates community-cultural legitimacy. Conversely, deficits in any one domain, particularly training gaps or power imbalances, propagate across the system and produce predictable failure patterns. This framework extends Interest-Based Negotiation Theory and Communication and Trust Theory by embedding them within an indigenous-institutional context specific to the Philippine barangay system. This study offers a replicable analytical template for qualitative ADR research in other culturally plural, community-based dispute resolution settings (Suzuki & Yuan, 2021; Munduate et al., 2022).

### ***5.2. Conclusion***

This study used reflexive thematic analysis of eight participants across four CBD barangays in Baguio City to identify the factors shaping conciliation success or failure, and assess participants' perceptions of the conciliation process. The findings show that success is multifactorial, emerging from the interplay of communication quality, facilitator competence, and community-cultural legitimacy. The settlement rates alone are an inadequate measure;

what matters is whether the process is experienced as genuinely fair and produces relational repair as well as formal agreement. Participants emphasized procedural fairness, being heard, respected, and treated equitably, as the primary determinant of legitimacy, and many reported cognitive and empathic shifts toward the other party that structured dialogue facilitated, a restorative outcome formal courts rarely achieve. The integration of Cordillera indigenous practices (tongtongan, bodong, mankusjon) within the KP framework enhanced legitimacy and agreement durability. This demonstrates that culturally congruent hybridity strengthens ADR effectiveness in plural settings. Practically and theoretically, the study recommends shifting KP evaluation from metrics-only approaches to experience-centered frameworks that capture relational and restorative dimensions, and treating cultural congruence and facilitator quality as core components of KP system design and reform.

### ***5.3. Recommendations***

The actionable recommendations are directed at the relevant institutional actors within the Philippine barangay justice system. First, call for mandatory, competency-based training for all Lupon Tagapamayapa members instituted by the DILG and barangays, delivered as ongoing professional development with periodic certification and modules on interest-based facilitation, power-sensitive interventions, confidentiality, and culturally responsive facilitation that integrates Cordillera dialogue practices. Complementing training, barangay councils should implement standardized pre-conciliation orientation for disputants to clarify the nature and limits of KP conciliation, align expectations, and reduce early resistance to non-adjudicatory processes.

Second, barangay secretaries and Lupon chairs are urged to adopt systematic case documentation and post-settlement monitoring, including standardized records and scheduled compliance check-ins at 30, 90, and 180 days, plus defined re-conciliation pathways for recurring disputes, with DILG support for logistical and digital infrastructure to avoid overburdening staff. Procedural safeguards against social coercion and power imbalances should be institutionalized: conciliators must be trained to detect and counteract power differentials, use structured speaking-turn protocols, appoint independent co-conciliators or neutral community observers when needed, and enforce clear confidentiality protocols from the outset.

Lastly, researchers and the DILG should co-develop an experience-centered KP evaluation instrument that measures participant-perceived procedural fairness, relational repair, and outcome satisfaction alongside settlement rates, and validate it across diverse Philippine settings. Future research should use longitudinal designs tracking settlement durability over 12–24 months, intentionally include failed or incomplete conciliation cases for comparative analysis, and examine how digital modalities affect the relational dimensions of KP proceedings.

Beyond methodological constraints, the study's findings derive from a small, localized sample in Baguio City and reflect Cordillera-specific cultural dynamics, so generalizability to other Philippine regions and cultural contexts is limited. Practical implementation faces institutional, resource, and political barriers, DILG support, funding shortfalls, and stakeholder resistance, that could hinder adoption of culturally hybrid KP reforms. There is also risk of unintended consequences such as co-optation or dilution of customary practices, reinforcement of local power imbalances, and confidentiality breaches, so reforms should proceed via participatory co-design, phased pilots, robust monitoring, and explicit safeguards to protect cultural integrity and equitable outcomes.

### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

### **Funding**

This work was not supported by any funding.

### **Institutional Review Board Statement**

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines set by University of Baguio Research Innovation Extension and Community Outreach. The conduct of this study has been approved and given relative clearances by University of Baguio-Research Ethics Committee.

### **AI Declaration**

The authors declare the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in writing this paper. In particular, the authors used Copilot AI and Perplexity AI in searching appropriate literature, summarizing key points and paraphrasing ideas. They take full responsibility in ensuring proper review and editing of content generated using AI.

### **ORCID**

Norman Biagcong Bustillo– <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-6069-591X>

Filibert Patrick F. Tad-awan– <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0193-9189>

### **References**

- Alviento, A. T. (2023). Mankusjon: Traditional Ibaloi settlement of disputes in the Cordillera Administrative Region. *International Journal of Natural and Rural Development*, 14(9), 231–245. <https://www.ijnrd.org/papers/IJNRD2309164.pdf>
- Angel L. Boleyley v. Hon. Villanueva, C. J., & Surla A. S., G.R. No. 128734 (Supreme Court of the Philippines, September 14, 1999). [https://lawphil.net/judjuris/juri1999/sep1999/gr\\_128734\\_1999.html](https://lawphil.net/judjuris/juri1999/sep1999/gr_128734_1999.html)
- Araña, H. M., Pala, E., Talip, K. C. C., Culanag, T. Y., Jr., & Cuevas, J. F., Jr. (2023b). Enhancing community conflict resolution skills: A training needs assessment for Lupon Tagapamayapa. *Mediterranean Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences*, 7(2), 126–135. <https://doi.org/10.46382/mjbas.2023.7215>
- Balatong, L., Banglig, V., Dato, R., & Laltoog, B. (2022). Tongtong practices of Bakun Benguet: Its historical and political relevance. *E-Journal of Nusantara Social Science Proceedings*, 4(s). [https://european-science.com/eojnss\\_proc/article/view/6716/0](https://european-science.com/eojnss_proc/article/view/6716/0)
- Blau, P. M. (1964). *Exchange and power in social life*. John Wiley & Sons.

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Damayon, S. B., Mendoza, L. A. G., Afan, E. A., Fernando, J. A. B., Gagate, A. T., & Santua, A. B. (2022). Dispute resolutions in the lowest political unit in the Philippines: Assessment of the difficulties and innovations in the Katarungang Pambarangay system in Northern Philippines. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 6(9), 293–299.
- De Ramos, G. S., & Pasion, E. T. (2023). Managing communication challenges towards dispute resolution in court annexed mediation. *American Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Innovation*, 2(2), 7–16. <https://doi.org/10.54536/ajmri.v2i2.1148>
- DILG Baguio. (2025). Celebrating excellence in barangay justice. DILG Baguio Official Facebook Page. <https://www.facebook.com/dilgbaguiofco/posts/pfbid0te4QrYuiWQzLtqdsxM68u6NHd1uleFsB7BJQyGBe2i4uNyCtJmftXNtviVsAZ9sZl>
- Espino, M. E. B. (2025). Formación y la satisfacción en un Centro de Conciliación Extrajudicial de Lima Este 2024. *Diálogos Abiertos*, 4(1), [Article 2](https://doi.org/10.32654/dialogosabiertos.4-1.2). <https://doi.org/10.32654/dialogosabiertos.4-1.2>
- Fisher, R., & Ury, W. (1991). *Getting to yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in* (2nd ed.). Houghton Mifflin.
- Gonzales, L. A. S. (2022). Implementation of barangay justice system and community satisfaction in the municipality of Calauan, Laguna: Basis for intervention program. *International Journal of Research Publications*, 104(1). <https://doi.org/10.47119/ijrp1001041720223512>
- Homans, G. C. (1958). Social behavior as exchange. *American Journal of Sociology*, 63(6), 597–606. <https://doi.org/10.1086/222355>
- Justin, M. M. (2021). Influence of conciliation dispute resolution mechanism on sustainable conflict resolution in Bungoma County, Kenya. *International Journal of African and Asian Studies*, 74, 26–35. <https://doi.org/10.7176/jaas/74-04>
- Korneeva, Y., Shahova, L., & Skripchenko, N. (2022). Mediators' professional competence and personal qualities in conducting conciliation processes with varying degrees of success. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 48. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v48i0.1870>
- Kressel, K. (2000). Mediation. In M. Deutsch & P. T. Coleman (Eds.), *The handbook of conflict resolution: Theory and practice* (pp. 522–545). Jossey-Bass. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2000-07807-025>
- Laguda, J. (2024). Managing disputes at the grassroots: Experiences of Lupong Tagapamayapa chiefs. *International Journal of Law and Politics Studies*, 6(5), Article 9. <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijlps.2024.6.5.9>
- Leonor, H. I. C., Kato, G. R., & Msi, J. E. (2023). *Effectiveness of Lupong Tagapamayapa in dispute resolution in selected barangays of Calauag, Quezon*. <https://mseuf.edu.ph/research/read/2460>
- Metillo, E. J. B., Ello, A. C. Q., Rone, M. D., Danganan, L. F. L., & Cuevas, J. F., Jr. (2022). The tales of barangay officials in resolving community disputes. *Middle East Journal of Applied Science & Technology*, 5(2), 190–200. <https://doi.org/10.46431/mejast.2022.5219>

- Munduate, L., Medina, F. J., & Euwema, M. C. (2022). Mediation: Understanding a constructive conflict management tool in the workplace. *Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 38(3), 165–173. <https://doi.org/10.5093/jwop2022a20>
- Presidential Decree No. 1508. (1978). Establishing a system of amicably settling disputes at the barangay level. Office of the President of the Philippines. <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1978/06/11/presidential-decree-no-1508-s-1978/>
- Puspasari, A., & MoHa, L. (2024). The effectiveness of industrial relations dispute resolution based on Law No. 2 of 2004: An analysis of mediation, conciliation, and arbitration in various industrial sectors in Indonesia. *Journal of Mujaddid Nusantara*, 1(4), 186–197. <https://doi.org/10.62568/jomn.v1i4.202>
- Qarmout, T. (2024). Predictable in their failure: An analysis of mediation efforts to end the Palestinian split. *International Peacekeeping*, 31(3), 283–308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2024.2338410>
- Rebayla, E. J. T., Segre, J. M., Rojas, M. A. V., & Indita, W. (2023). Effectiveness of conciliation mediation in regional arbitration branch – National Capital Region. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Applied Business and Education Research*, 4(1), 222–249. <https://doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.04.01.21>
- Rehman, N., Mahmood, A., Ibtasam, M., Murtaza, S. A., Iqbal, N., & Molnár, E. (2021). The psychology of resistance to change: The antidotal effect of organizational justice, support and leader-member exchange. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 678952. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.678952>
- Republic Act No. 7160. (1991). Local Government Code of the Philippines. Congress of the Philippines. <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1991/10/10/republic-act-no-7160/>
- Republic Act No. 9285. (2004). An act to institutionalize the use of an alternative dispute resolution system in the Philippines. Congress of the Philippines. [https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2004/ra\\_9285\\_2004.html](https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2004/ra_9285_2004.html)
- Santos, L. R. D., & Tonella, L. H. (2025). The effectiveness of the conciliation center of the judiciary of the district of Palmas in the state of Tocantins. *Journal of Research Group*, 8(19), e082447. <https://doi.org/10.55892/jrg.v8i19.2447>
- Sotto, C. E. (2021). Implementation of the Katarungang Pambarangay in the selected barangay in Legazpi City for FY 2015–2020. *JPAIR Multidisciplinary Research*, 44(1), 93–109. <https://doi.org/10.7719/jpair.v44i1.585>
- Stevens, E., Lohan, A., Petch, J., Lee, J., Bickerdike, A., & Cao, Y. (2022). 'We were actually able to sit down and talk': Australian parents and practitioners navigating dynamics of power and emotion in family dispute resolution. *Journal of Family Studies*, 29(4), 1967–1985. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2022.2151499>
- Suzuki, M., & Yuan, W. (2021). Qualitative evaluation in alternative dispute resolution: Developing a participant-centered assessment framework for community mediation programs. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 38(4), 321–342. <https://doi.org/10.1002/crq.21307>
- Urias, V., Barros, V. G., & Santos, M. J. D. (2021). Ethical conciliation hearings held by the Regional Nursing Council of São Paulo. *Revista Brasileira de Enfermagem*, 74(3), e20201213. <https://doi.org/10.1590/0034-7167-2020-1213>
- Villamor, J. F. M., & Dagohoy, R. G. (2021). Decision-making quality towards effectiveness of conciliation process of Lupong Tagapamayapa. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 5(2), 228–236. <https://doi.org/10.47772/ijriss.2021.5213>