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PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT: IN THE LENS OF BARANGAY OFFICIALS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the perceptions of barangay officials regarding peace and development programs in the Municipality of Dujali, Davao del Norte. Using a qualitative research design, the study identified 14 barangay officials as key informants to gain in-depth insights into the local implementation of peace and development initiatives. Amid growing global and local challenges, peace remains a fundamental pillar of progress as it supports education, health, infrastructure, and social cohesion. In the Philippine context, peace is both internal and relational, rooted in connections with the community, nature, and the Divine. This research highlights the role of barangay governance in sustaining peace through grassroots policies, local councils, and community involvement, while addressing persistent challenges such as armed insurgency, poor delivery of services, and limited coordination. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of citizen participation and accountable leadership in achieving long-term peace and good governance. By examining the lived experiences of barangay officials, this research contributes to the broader discourse on community-based peacebuilding. It offers practical recommendations for improving security, governance, and socioeconomic outcomes in similarly challenged localities.

KEYWORDS: Peace and Development and Barangay Officials

1. INTRODUCTION

This study applies Social Systems Theory to analyze barangays as interconnected systems shaped by socioeconomic, cultural, and political factors (Roth & Guedes, 2025; Luhmann, 1995). Barangays function through interdependent institutions—departments, committees, and local associations—that require coordination to enforce laws and sustain governance (DILG, 2020). The theory underscores how system members influence each other and their environment, necessitating shared goals and adaptive structures (Parsons, 1951).

Barangays in Braulio E. Dujali, Davao del Norte, struggle with insurgent recruitment, governance gaps, and community fragmentation, undermining peacebuilding efforts (World Bank, 2022). Weak service delivery and propaganda exploit poverty, fueling distrust in government (Kovacs et al., 2021). Historical parallels, like the Bangsamoro peace process, show that unresolved tensions risk relapse

into violence (Hernandez, 2019). A capabilities-based approach (UNESCO, 2020) is proposed to strengthen governance, security, and stakeholder collaboration.

The study fills gaps in local peace and development frameworks, aiding officials in policy refinement and participatory governance (Brillantes & Fernandez, 2021). It aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on peace, justice, and strong institutions (UNDP, 2023). Findings will inform infrastructure, education, and anti-poverty programs (DILG, 2020), while serving as a reference for future research on conflict-sensitive development (Kaldor, 2012).

Immediate action is critical to counter insurgent influence and prevent systemic collapse (World Bank, 2022). Lessons from post-conflict regions (e.g., Colombia, East Timor) show that delays worsen poverty and radicalization (Galtung, 1996). By assessing Braulio E. Dujali's needs—farm-to-market roads, irrigation, and youth engagement—this study equips leaders to act before instability escalates (OECD, 2021).

This study is significant to the unsettled scheme of the Barangay officials' approach to peace and development. Contributed to the service of humanity and community in Barangay Braulio, Dujali, Davao del Norte. Furthermore, it will assist them in crafting new ordinances and revisiting the conduct of peace and development. It would display the essential points and gaps of peace and development in the areas needed for improvement. The study results would bring additional information to develop the barangay officials' peace and development procedures. It would give them an appreciation of the system and advise them on proper procedures in dealing with the peace and development that must be included in the primary thrust of the people in the barangay.

Furthermore, this study will give future researchers a broader understanding to come up with productive research, and this could also give them further insights and help them find answers to the questions they want to explore relative to peace and development. Thus, the outcome of this study is beneficial to present and future researchers, and it could serve as the basis for new theories insofar as peace and development are concerned.

2. METHODS

2.1. Research Respondents

The researchers investigated the phenomenon by exploring the barangay officials' lived experiences, as these are related to the research questions posed in this study. There are parameters on which to estimate the study's sample size or the subset of participants drawn from the target population. The study's target population corresponds to the entire set of subjects whose characteristics interest the researcher.

Purposive sampling was used in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases to use limited resources effectively. This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups that are exceptionally knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest

(Robinson,2024).

The total sample consisted of 14 Barangay Officials primarily working in the identified most populated barangays of Dujali, Davao del Norte. Most Barangay officials are adults, often ranging from 30 to 60 years old, including the barangay captain, barangay councilors, and SK councilors. Most of them have previous experience in public service and conflict resolution. The sample consisted of 14 Barangay Officials, 7 for IDI, and 7 for FGD. This complies with the suggestion of Boddy (2016) and other studies (Bercilla et al., 2023; Tacadena & Muico, 2022; Espiritu et al., 2023). Moreover, participants should know socioeconomic, technological, cultural, peace, and development initiatives. Before gathering information, the participant has appropriate approval or consent for ethical considerations. In this regard, the researcher notified the barangay captain of the interview's selected date, time, and place. If they do not answer within seven days, a follow-up phone call will be made utilizing the previous script for the request (DJS Research Ltd, 2021).

2.2. Materials and Instruments

The researchers used a variety of instruments for data collection. The ideas and thoughts were translated into the script. The data were then analyzed. Data collection, note-taking, coding, and memorandum transpired simultaneously from the onset of the research, and a sorting process facilitated project organization to achieve categorical saturation. Then, the answers and observations were considered, and a framework was constituted in which codes and themes were formed. After that, every participant's interview and FGD were coded separately based on related themes.

The study used triangulation, a data analysis technique in multi-method research designs. Some research projects utilize more than one data collection method, resulting in the development of different datasets. Datasets might be from in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions, and documents. The results from these datasets are analyzed independently, but will be compared to each other in some way, depending on the methodological framework used. Triangulation is used for mutual verification purposes, in which it is explicit that measures from the application of one method are correlated with the outcome of the other methods.

2.3. Design and Procedure

To better understand the nature of peace and development through the lens of barangay officials, the researcher used the qualitative research design to understand the concept of peace and development better, discover and prove theories, and explore previous studies. The phenomenological design included individual descriptions of an experience related to the phenomenon. The individual is aware of this experience, and the researcher will try to contact the participants about their experiences.

Qualitative research methods are essential to understanding social phenomena from those involved, contextualizing issues in their socio-cultural-political setting, and sometimes transforming or changing social conditions. Qualitative inquiry involves an interpretive, inductive, and naturalistic

approach to the world (DJS Research Ltd, 2021). The phenomenological investigation is utilized to develop the qualitative frame further. This methodology helps discover and understand the data-rich environment evolving from military officers' and barangay officials live experiences regarding their striving for peace and development.

This type of inquiry is used to obtain knowledge about how we think and feel in the most direct ways to get to and describe live experiences that are free from the frame of the intellect and society as much as possible. The aim is to understand phenomena in their own terms and to describe human experience as the person herself experiences it. Phenomenology also aims to explore contextual meaning through situational knowledge. It can contribute to the literature and provide substance where a void exists due to a lack of available research. The phenomenological approach describes an individual's experiences or a group of people.

The model highlighted abstract patterns and described the researcher's preparation process for the investigation. The following steps guided the researchers in analyzing the data (DJS Research Ltd, 2021). The researcher thoroughly read and reread the transcribed interviews to identify with the data and understand each individual and their background and experiences. The researcher identified significant statements from the transcripts that pertain directly to the proposed phenomenon.

The interpretative meanings were arranged into clusters, allowing themes to emerge. The researcher sought validation, avoided repetitive themes, and noted discrepancies during this process. The themes were then integrated into a detailed description. The researcher also referred to the theme clusters and the protocols to substantiate them. The researcher produced a concise statement of the detailed description and provided fundamental ideas for identification, also referred to as the experience's overall essence. The reduced view of the detailed description was presented to the study's participants to verify the conclusions and the development. The study employed two steps: a structured interview and a focus group discussion. Data sources or instruments centered on fourteen (Barangay Officials) respondents.

The qualitative research design establishes answers based on the key informant and the focus group guide questionnaire. Also, the data collected from qualitative research cannot typically be analyzed quantifiably utilizing statistical methods because there may not be commonalities between the diverse collected findings. Hence, the researcher leads the study in a specific direction while fostering the respondent to expand and gain more in-depth information on particular points raised or explored (DJS Research Ltd, 2021). This will be applied through triangulation using the Key Informant Interview (KII), Focus Group Discussion (FGD), and Document Analysis to search for approaches and needed materials to analyze the problem. The following processes were employed to gather the data by questioning and recording the participants' ideas and thoughts.

A structured interview was conducted via Zoom or Google Meet, where one by one, the participants

were asked about the research. Participants were invited to an interview scheduled for approximately 45-60 minutes. Researchers also prepared open-ended interview questions with prompts to guide the experience for in-depth understanding. After the interview, the researchers gathered all participants in the focus group discussion, wherein everyone shared ideas and thoughts.

The researcher investigated the phenomenon by exploring the barangay officials lived experiences as these relate to the research questions posed in this study. There are parameters on which to estimate the study's sample size or the subset of participants drawn from the target population. The study's target population corresponds to the entire set of subjects whose characteristics interest the researcher.

The research started by securing an approved request letter from Atty. Leah Marie Morral-Romano, the Municipal Mayor of Braulio, Dujali, Davao del Norte, dated 22 January 2024. The study centered on the barangay officials' peace and development perspective. The researchers used in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to explore their experiences, sentiments, and insights. The data collection was done in May 2024 due to the hectic schedule of the participants. Due to their availability, many barangay officials were helpful and adjusted their schedules on Saturday or Sunday, during the day and at night. Conducted interviews were informative, and there was a deep reflection, sharing with participants their real-life experiences and challenges in their community. Recorded the audio and manually transcribed for each session, revisiting the messages conveyed by the participants.

The researcher ensured the reliability of the study by addressing credibility, dependability, conformability, and transparency. The researcher engaged deeply with participants to establish credibility and used member verification to validate the results (Krefting 217-218). The study's dependability stemmed from portraying the participants' perspectives, allowing a clear understanding of the phenomenon (Bitsch 86). Conformability was upheld by grounding findings in a thorough inquiry rather than personal bias (Tobin and Begley 392). Additionally, the transferability of the study was considered to facilitate its applicability to different contexts (Bitsch 85).

Moreover, the researchers secured a certificate of approval from the University of Mindanao Ethics Review Committee (UMERC) to guarantee that ethical considerations are given due importance during the study. UMERC granted the certificate of approval on December 4, 2023.

3. RESULTS

This section presents the analysis, interpretation, and presentation of the data gathered from the survey conducted among barangay officials regarding their commitment to peace and development programs. The findings are organized into essential and emerging themes derived from participants' responses. Their responses provided valuable insights into the motivations, challenges, and mechanisms that drove their efforts to ensure peace and development within their communities.

Table 1. The Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Views of the Participants: In Commitment to Peace and Development Programs

Essential/Emerging Themes	Core Ideas
Sense of Responsibility and Honor	• Honor in implementing community programs • Pride in contributing innovative ideas • Privilege of public service • Community-centered leadership
Pride and Determination	• <i>Trust as motivation for service</i> • <i>Unwavering commitment to safety</i> • <i>Future-oriented responsibility</i> • <i>Duty-driven program implementation</i>
Proactive Planning and Engagement	• Preparedness brings peace • Community collaboration prevents disorder • Holistic barangay development • Active participation maintains order
Collaboration with Authorities	• Joint safety initiatives with authorities • Inter-agency coordination • Strategic partnerships for peace • Legal awareness campaigns
Compassionate Leadership	• Heart-led public service • Teamwork ensures sustainable development • Empathy as motivation • Leaders as community exemplars.”

3.1 Sense of Responsibility and Honor

The participants emphasized a deep sense of honor and responsibility in implementing programs, reflecting the concept of public service motivation (PSM) (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008). Their statements, such as "It is an honor to ensure the implementation of programs for peace and development", resonate with PSM's emphasis on duty and self-sacrifice in governance. This aligns with findings from Kim et al. (2013), who found that public officials driven by intrinsic motivation exhibit more substantial commitment to community welfare.

3.2 Pride and Determination

The theme of pride and determination underscores the role of social trust in governance. Participants expressed pride in being trusted, which is critical in fostering collaborative governance (Putnam, 2000). Their determination to ensure safety and program success mirrors Ostrom's (1990) principles of collective action, where local leaders play a pivotal role in sustaining community-driven initiatives.

3.3 Proactive Planning and Engagement

The councilors' focus on preparedness and resident involvement aligns with the participatory development framework (Chambers, 1997). Statements like "encouraging youth and residents to work together" reflect the importance of grassroots engagement in peacebuilding, as Lederach (1997) noted in his conflict transformation work. Additionally, their commitment to multi-sectoral programs supports Sen's (1999) capability approach, which argues that holistic development requires addressing multiple dimensions of well-being.

3.4 Collaboration with Authorities

The emphasis on joint initiatives with police and military reflects the network governance approach (Rhodes, 1997). This is consistent with studies showing that effective peace and order programs depend on strong inter-agency coordination (Bayley, 2006). The councilors' legal awareness campaigns align with Tyler's (2006) procedural justice theory, which posits that law compliance increases when citizens perceive authorities as legitimate.

3.5 Compassionate Leadership

The participants' heartfelt dedication resonates with servant leadership theory (Greenleaf, 1977). Their role as "guides and role models" echoes Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, where leaders influence community behavior through exemplification. This finding supports contemporary studies on ethical leadership in local governance (Brown & Treviño, 2006).

The study's results on participants' coping mechanisms in response to challenges in their commitment to peace and development programs demonstrated several key strategies that barangay officials used to overcome obstacles and maintain peace within their communities. These are reflected in Table 2,

Table 2: The Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Coping Mechanisms in Response to Challenges in Commitment to Peace and Development Programs

Essential/Emerging Themes	Core Ideas
Collaborative Engagement with Authorities	• Inter-agency coordination for peacekeeping • External threat mitigation through mayoral collaboration • Military-police partnership for nighttime security • Rapid response through police partnerships
Community Awareness & Mobilization	• <i>Legal compliance education through campaigns</i> • <i>Continuous peace guidelines dissemination</i> • <i>Participatory ownership in community projects</i> • <i>Resident-official synergy for disorder prevention</i>
Strategic Planning & Resource Allocation	• Capacity-building for local security forces • Enhanced security through institutional coordination • External funding advocacy for program sustainability • Budgetary prioritization for peace initiatives
Strengthening Community Relationships	• Proactive communication to prevent conflicts • Rule of law as community shared responsibility • Unity as foundation for public well-being • Grassroots engagement through active listening
Leadership & Accountability	• Action-oriented leadership for public trust • Personal compliance as leadership modeling • Empathy-driven program improvement • Transparent governance for peace attainment

3.6 Collaborative Engagement with Authorities

The emphasis on police and military coordination demonstrates an institutional coping mechanism consistent with Brass et al.'s (2021) networked resilience framework. This approach is particularly relevant when security threats require multi-agency responses (World Bank, 2023). However, the expressed need for mayoral intervention in vertical fragmentation in local governance systems echoes Ortega et al.'s (2022) findings on decentralized peacebuilding challenges in Southeast Asia.

3.7 Community Awareness & Mobilization

The participatory strategies reflect what Aldaba (2020) terms "collective efficacy coping," where communities develop shared capacity to address challenges. This aligns with contemporary shifts toward asset-based community development (Mathie & Cunningham, 2021). The legal awareness campaigns demonstrate proactive norm-setting, a coping strategy that reduces implementation resistance in development programs (Gopalan et al., 2024).

3.8 Strategic Planning & Resource Allocation

Officials' emphasis on budget and external funding appeals reflects adaptive coping through financial innovation. This resonates with Jha et al.'s (2023) findings on fiscal resilience in local governments, though the expressed resource gaps highlight persistent challenges noted in UNDP's (2024) assessment of Philippine barangay capacities.

3.9 Strengthening Community Relationships

The stress on continuous communication and listening exemplifies relational coping mechanisms. These findings support Reyes' (2023) social scaffolding theory in peacebuilding, where trust-building buffers against implementation challenges. The explicit link between unity and outcomes empirically validates the social cohesion indicators proposed by the OECD (2023) for fragile contexts.

3.10 Leadership & Accountability

The self-regulatory behaviors represent what Tuminez and Esguerra (2024) term "moral coping" - using ethical leadership to overcome legitimacy deficits. This aligns with global evidence on integrity-building in local governance (Transparency International, 2023), though the Philippine context adds cultural dimensions of "hiya" as a compliance mechanism.

The barangay officials offered enlightening viewpoints on their commitment to peace and development programs, which is reflected in Table 3, essential themes of communication, discipline, leadership, community cooperation, and personal growth. These revelations demonstrated how their experiences influenced their approaches to peacebuilding in their communities and showed their awareness of their responsibilities to uphold law and order.

Table 3: The Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Significant Insights of Barangay Officials in Commitment to Peace and Development Programs

Essential/Emerging Themes	Core Ideas
Importance of Following the Law	• Legal compliance prevents community harm • Consistent legal education for residents • Lawfulness as protective mechanism • Legal adherence ensures positive outcomes
Role Modeling and Discipline	• <i>Self-discipline as civic duty</i> • <i>Unified ethical exemplification</i> • <i>Visible compliance inspires community</i> • <i>Interpersonal solidarity among leaders</i>
Community Cooperation and Unity	• Rule-following as unifying practice • Collective action drives success • Leadership cohesion for peace • Trust-building through collaboration
Communication and Engagement	• Proactive public interaction • Dialogue sustains social order • Targeted community consultations • Strategic planning for conflict prevention
Exemplary Leadership and Personal Growth	• Success-motivated mentorship • Empathetic service orientation • Equitable governance principles • Personal integrity as leadership foundation

3.11 Importance of Following the Law

Barangay officials emphasized legal compliance as critical for community safety and stability, with statements like "Following the law keeps us from disasters". This aligns with Chavez and Escobar's (2021) findings on legal frameworks fostering harmony. Valdez (2021) further highlights how officials' dedication to compliance strengthens community security.

3.12 Role Modeling and Discipline

Officials viewed themselves as behavioral exemplars, noting, "You are the model of the barangay, so do what is right". Agustin and Rosales (2020) corroborate this, showing disciplined leadership cultivates communal respect. Plaza-Saligumba and Ligan (2022) add that such professionalism is vital for peace committees.

3.13 Community Cooperation and Unity

Unity was deemed essential: "Cooperation is the key to a successful barangay". Mena and Delos Santos (2023) link this to social capital's role in peacekeeping, while Habiatan (2019) stresses collective responsibility for sustained peace efforts.

3.14 Communication and Engagement

Clear communication was prioritized ("Engage with the people"), echoing Lopez et al. (2019) on its role in peacebuilding. Jacinto et al. (2023) highlight how oral skills reduce misunderstandings, reinforcing trust.

3.15 Exemplary Leadership and Personal Growth

Officials reported growth in empathy and patience ("More prepared to help others"). Palma and Reyes (2022) tie this to transformative leadership, while Dela Cruz (2021) notes its impact on emotional intelligence and resilience.

4. CONCLUSION

The study highlighted the barangay officials' commitment to peace and development programs, emphasizing their sense of duty, leadership, and accountability. Their proactive strategies, including collaboration with law enforcement, structured planning, and community mobilization, played a crucial role in addressing challenges and sustaining peace initiatives. Despite facing resource constraints and external security threats, their resilience and adaptability underscored the effectiveness of localized governance. These findings reaffirm the significance of strong leadership, stakeholder engagement, and a participatory governance framework in ensuring community stability and development.

The barangay officials perceived their commitment to peace and development programs as a duty and an honor, characterized by a profound sense of accountability and pride. This perspective reflects their dedication to leadership and proactive role in addressing their communities' dynamic and multifaceted needs. Their emphasis on integrity and proactive engagement underscores the critical relationship between trust-building and sustainable community development, positioning barangay officials as key drivers of localized governance.

The participants demonstrated resilience and adaptability by employing effective coping mechanisms to navigate the challenges of peace and development programs. These mechanisms, including strategic collaboration with law enforcement agencies, proactive planning, and community mobilization, highlight the importance of a systems approach in addressing immediate and long-term concerns. Such strategies mitigate conflicts and security threats and establish a foundation for enduring peace and development by fostering collaborative partnerships and empowering grassroots stakeholders.

The insights provided by barangay officials emphasize trust, empathy, and collective effort as the pillars of effective leadership and governance. Compassionate and inclusive leadership was essential in fostering unity and cohesion, ensuring that all community members actively contribute to peace and development initiatives. Moreover, the study underscores the critical role of strategic partnerships and stakeholder involvement in addressing systemic challenges and promoting sustainable progress. This reflects a governance framework that is both participatory and adaptive, ensuring the alignment of local efforts with broader policy objectives.

5. Implications for future practice

It would be beneficial to expand on this study by exploring new perspectives and research methods to understand better how barangay governance impacts peace and development. Increasing the scope of research to include perspectives from community residents, law enforcement officers, and local government units would provide a more comprehensive analysis of peace and development efforts at the barangay level. Conducting comparative studies across multiple barangays or municipalities could highlight best practices and common challenges in localized governance, leading to more effective policy recommendations.

Likewise, integrating quantitative methodologies with qualitative approaches could offer measurable insights into the impact of barangay-led initiatives on crime reduction, economic development, and social cohesion. Future studies could evaluate the effectiveness of government policies related to barangay peace and development programs. Analyzing policy implementation gaps and proposing data-driven reforms would improve governance structures. Exploring the role of digital technologies in barangay governance and communication could provide insights into innovative strategies for strengthening peacekeeping efforts. Understanding how technology facilitates governance, transparency, and citizen engagement would contribute to more efficient barangay-led initiatives.

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