



CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING KATARUNGANG PAMBARANGAY IN SORSOGON PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

The Katarungang Pambarangay is primarily governed by Republic Act No. 7160, particularly Chapter 7 (Sections 399–422), which formally established the barangay justice system in its current form. The Katarungang Pambarangay is a time-honored and culturally grounded mechanism that promotes reconciliation and harmony within communities. This study determined the status of reported cases handled by Katarungang Pambarangay, analyze the challenges encountered, assess the strategies applied to address the challenges encountered by the Lupong Tagapamayapa members in the administration of Katarungang Pambarangay and propose an Enhanced Katarungang Pambarangay Program to improve the performance of the Lupong Pamayapa in handling cases. This study was conducted in the province of Sorsogon, covering the period from CY 2023 to 2025. This study used the descriptive qualitative method research design. The participants of the study are the Lupon members. The study reveals that Katarungang Pambarangay system effectively resolves common community disputes such as misunderstandings, financial issues, and family conflicts through amicable settlements, preventing escalation to higher courts despite fluctuations in case numbers. Although the Lupong Tagapamayapa faces challenges like non-cooperation,

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delays, and complex cases, it addresses them through communication, fair mediation, and proper case management, with the Enhanced Katarungang Pambarangay Program further strengthening its efficiency and effectiveness.

Keywords: *Social Science, Challenges, Strategies, Katarungang Pambarangay, Lupon Tagapamayapa*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of the rule of law has evolved across different legal traditions, notably the common law and continental systems. While the common law tradition emphasizes limiting state power, the continental approach not only restricts but also seeks to empower the government in ensuring justice and governance. Despite these distinctions, both systems place a high value on the rule of law as a foundation for civil society.

Globally, the rule of law is recognized as essential to achieving sustainable development. This is evident in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG-16), which promotes Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. SDG-16 encourages the reduction of violence, the strengthening of legal institutions, and inclusive governance. It also highlights the potential of leveraging emerging technologies to support access to justice and reinforce the rule of law in underserved communities. Case studies from various international organizations show that adopting innovative, tech-enabled justice systems can significantly enhance institutional transparency and accountability (Küfeoğlu, S. (2022)).

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This international trend toward community-based justice finds resonance in the Philippines, where the Katarungang Pambarangay (KP) or Barangay Justice System (BJS) serves as a localized mechanism for resolving disputes. The KP system, rooted in traditional conflict resolution practices, is formalized under the Local Government Code of 1991 (RA No. 7160). It empowers the barangay, the smallest political unit in the country, to mediate minor disputes and prevent litigation overload in courts. Disputes are handled by the Lupon Tagapamayapa, a council led by the barangay captain and appointed community members who mediate and conciliate cases (Metillo et al., 2022; Respicio, 2025).

At the local level, particularly in the Bicol Region and the province of Sorsogon, the KP remains instrumental in preserving peace and resolving conflicts. Sorsogon, with its socio-economic diversity, faces unique challenges in implementing justice at the barangay level. Here, the KP system not only addresses local disputes but also fosters community solidarity and shared responsibility in maintaining order. By integrating digital tools and launching community awareness campaigns, the province aims to improve KP's functionality and public trust. The Katarungang Pambarangay system embodies the Philippines' commitment to grassroots justice, reflecting both international best practices and localized traditions. While its value is undeniable, persistent challenges necessitate comprehensive evaluations and strategic reforms.

To gain a deeper understanding of the current state and effectiveness of the Katarungang Pambarangay system in Sorsogon Province, this study aims to examine its operational status, identify the challenges faced by the Lupon Tagapamayapa, assess the

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strategies employed to overcome these challenges, and ultimately propose an enhanced program to strengthen its implementation. The specific objectives of the study are as follows: determine the status of reported cases handled by Katarungang Pambarangay in terms of number and nature of the cases; and disposition of cases; analyze the challenges encountered by the Lupong tagapamayapa members in the administration of katarungang pambarangay; assess the strategies applied to address the challenges encountered by the Lupong Tagapamayapa members in the administration of Katarungang Pambarangay in Sorsogon province and propose an Enhanced Katarungang Pambarangay Program to improve the performance of the Lupong Pamayapa in handling cases in Sorsogon Province.

MATERAILS AND METHODS

This study used the descriptive qualitative research design. This descriptive This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. This study used Interview Guide Question. The 15 participants were selected from the top-performing barangays across the different districts of Sorsogon Province. A total of five barangays from second district were purposively identified based on their level of activity and involvement in the administration of the Katarungang Pambarangay. This study employed a purposive sampling technique to select information-rich participants who possess direct experience with the Katarungang Pambarangay system. To get a reliable response, this study used the Thematic Analysis and Documents Review.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the key findings of the study, highlighting the patterns, themes, and insights that emerged from the participants' responses. This section organizes the results according to the major variables of the research, allowing a clear understanding of how the Katarungang Pambarangay operates in terms of the number and nature of disputes handled, and the disposition or outcomes of these cases.

1. Status of Reported Cases handled by Katarungang Pambarangay

The status of reported cases handled by the Katarungang Pambarangay provides an overview of the types of disputes brought before the barangay and how these cases are resolved. It describes the nature of the cases whether they are settled amicably, referred to higher authorities, or remain unresolved. This information reflects the effectiveness of the barangay justice system in maintaining peace and order at the community level.

a. Number and Nature of the Cases

In 2023, Barangay San Francisco (42 cases) recorded the highest number of disputes, followed by Zone 7 (35), Managa (32), Obrero (30), and Carriedo (27), with most cases involving misunderstandings, family conflicts, debt, and land issues. In addition, in 2024, cases increased in some areas, with San Francisco rising to 57 cases, followed by Managanaga (35), Obrero (29), Zone 7 (23), and Carriedo (22), largely involving misunderstandings, debt, and minor physical injuries. Moreover, in 2025, reported disputes slightly declined, with San Francisco at 29 cases, Obrero (26), Managanaga (25), Carriedo (23), and Zone 7 (20), still dominated by misunderstandings, debt, and family-related conflicts.

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The data from 2023 to 2025 implies that most disputes brought to the Katarungang Pambarangay are consistently rooted in interpersonal misunderstandings, financial obligations, and family-related concerns. Although there was an increase in reported cases in 2024 followed by a decline in 2025, the recurring nature of these issues suggests that underlying social and economic factors such as communication gaps, financial instability, and domestic tensions continue to affect community relationships. This highlights the need for strengthened preventive measures, including community education on conflict resolution, financial management, and family counseling. Furthermore, the consistent handling of these cases at the barangay level underscores the importance and effectiveness of the Katarungang Pambarangay in maintaining peace and order, while also pointing to opportunities for enhancing its programs to reduce the frequency of recurring disputes.

The literature consistently highlights the important role of the Katarungang Pambarangay (KP) in resolving community-level disputes and promoting social harmony. Eustaquio (2026) explains that KP commonly handles neighborly conflicts, family issues, and minor ordinance violations, with barangay officials using their knowledge of local customs to achieve culturally appropriate and restorative outcomes. This supports restorative justice principles and fosters accountability among citizens, potentially reducing crime over time. Similarly, Teves (2026) emphasizes that KP helps prevent minor disputes from escalating into serious cases, thereby easing the burden on formal courts, while also recommending additional training for barangay officials to improve fairness and competence.

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In terms of operational effectiveness, Pacer (2026) notes that the community-based and informal structure of KP enables faster dispute resolution, supported by the strong public service motivation of barangay officials. Meanwhile, Gaviola, Bautista, and Castillo (2026) highlight KP's role in addressing juvenile cases through compliance with the Juvenile Justice Welfare Act, promoting rehabilitation and reducing repeat offenses. This contributes to stronger community cohesion, as further supported by Berou Jr. et al. (2026).

b. Disposition of Cases

In 2023, all cases were resolved amicably, with San Francisco (42 cases) and Managa (32) settled through simple agreements, while Obrero (30), Zone 7 (35), and Carriedo (27) used formalized settlements. In addition, in 2024, 11 disputes were again settled amicably, with San Francisco (57), Obrero (29), Zone 7 (23), and Carriedo (22) resolved through formal agreements, while Managanaga (35) used simple amicable settlement. Furthermore, in 2025 all cases continued to be resolved through amicable means, with San Francisco (29), Obrero (26), Zone 7 (20), and Carriedo (23) using formal agreements, while Managanaga (25) relied on simple settlements.

The data on case disposition from 2023 to 2025 implies that the Katarungang Pambarangay remains highly effective in resolving community disputes through amicable settlement, with little to no need for escalation to higher courts. The consistent pattern of resolution either through simple settlement or formalized agreements shows strong community participation and acceptance of the barangay justice system as a primary venue

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for conflict resolution. However, the variation in whether cases are settled with or without agreements also implies differences in case complexity and the need for more structured documentation in disputes involving financial, family, or property issues. This indicates that while the system is successful in maintaining peace and order, there is still a need to strengthen consistency in settlement procedures and documentation to further improve transparency, accountability, and long-term conflict prevention within the community.

The literature on the Katarungang Pambarangay (KP) highlights its continuing importance as a community-based dispute resolution system in the Philippines. Ampoloquio and Sabijon (2026) explain that barangay mediators, particularly the Pangkat ng Tagapagkasundo chairpersons, use their local knowledge and close community ties to effectively resolve conflicts and strengthen social relationships. Similarly, Ligson, Maribbay, and Redondo (2026) emphasize that technology-assisted approaches within KP have improved efficiency and expanded access to justice, especially for marginalized groups.

In addition, Atilano, Valerio, and Moreno (2026) highlight KP's role in addressing environmental governance issues, showing that it can help manage local environmental disputes despite broader institutional limitations. Meanwhile, Cruz and Dela Cruz (2026) found that KP also influences community cooperation in areas like solid waste management, where informal but binding resolutions encourage compliance and strengthen collaboration between residents and local leaders.

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2. Challenges Encountered by the Lupong Tagapamayapa Members in the administration of Katarungang Pambarangay

The administration of the Katarungang Pambarangay presents various challenges for members of the Lupong Tagapamayapa as they work to mediate and resolve community disputes.

Lack of Cooperation and Compliance from Parties

This theme highlights situations where involved parties fail to follow instructions, provide required documents, or actively participate in the case process, leading to difficulties in proper case management and resolution. Many LT highlighted that non-cooperation from involved parties significantly affects case resolution. This includes refusal to cooperate, unwillingness to attend hearings, and failure to follow procedures. These responses show that lack of cooperation leads to delays, unresolved conflicts, or escalation of cases to higher authorities.

As stated by LT 8, "It is difficult to resolve when they are not cooperating. In addition, LT 12 "The failure of each involved party to attend delays the resolution of the problem".

The responses from LT 8 and LT 12 highlight two major challenges in the implementation of the Katarungang Pambarangay: lack of cooperation and non-attendance of involved parties. LT 8 emphasized that resolution becomes difficult when parties are unwilling to cooperate, which directly affects the mediation process and limits the Lupon's ability to facilitate agreement. Similarly, LT 12 pointed out that the failure of parties to attend scheduled

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hearings causes delays in resolving disputes. These statements indicate that the effectiveness of barangay mediation heavily depends on the active participation and commitment of all parties involved, and without it, the process becomes inefficient and prolonged.

The findings imply that strengthening the enforcement of attendance and improving community awareness about the importance of cooperation in barangay hearings are essential for enhancing the effectiveness of the Katarungang Pambarangay. If parties continue to ignore summons or refuse to cooperate, cases are likely to be delayed or escalated to higher courts, defeating the purpose of accessible and speedy local justice. Therefore, reinforcing compliance mechanisms and promoting community responsibility may help ensure faster, more efficient, and more successful dispute resolution at the barangay level.

Relatedly, Sarjito (2026) explains that the historical legacy of colonialism and the formation of nation-states in Asia have created competition rather than cooperation, particularly within ASEAN, where differing historical experiences affect political stability and decision-making. Khaikham (2026) emphasizes that cultural values such as “face” and honor in Thailand and other Asian societies discourage open criticism and dialogue, which leads to weaker compliance in agreements and limits effective collaboration, especially in environmental campaigns. Phyo, Aung, and Liu (2026) highlight how political instability in Myanmar’s forest certification sector disrupts both national and regional cooperation, showing how differing political systems and national interests hinder compliance with regional frameworks.

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Attendance Issues and Absenteeism

This theme focuses on the frequent absence of parties during hearings or meetings, which causes interruptions in proceedings and often results in postponements or delays in case disposition. A recurring challenge is the failure of parties to attend scheduled hearings, which disrupts the mediation process. Absence of either party often results in delayed proceedings, dismissal of cases, or failure to reach settlement.

LT 1 noted, "If the parties do not attend or follow the rules, the case cannot be resolved quickly". Likewise, LT 3, "They no longer return after being summoned or have transferred residence".

The responses of LT 1 and LT 3 emphasize the significant impact of non-attendance and non-compliance on the efficiency of Katarungang Pambarangay proceedings. LT 1 highlighted that failure of parties to attend hearings or follow established rules results in delays in resolving cases, demonstrating how procedural non-compliance disrupts the mediation process. Similarly, LT 3 pointed out that some parties do not return after being summoned or have already relocated, making it difficult for the Lupon to continue proceedings. Together, these responses show that the absence or unavailability of parties is a major barrier to timely and effective dispute resolution at the barangay level.

These findings imply that the effectiveness of the Katarungang Pambarangay is highly dependent on the presence and continued participation of disputing parties. When individuals fail to attend hearings or relocate without notice, cases are either delayed or left unresolved, weakening the goal of speedy community justice. This shows the need for stronger monitoring

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systems, improved tracking of participnats, and heightened community education on the importance of compliance with barangay summons to ensure more efficient and effective dispute resolution.

Melencion Jr. and Sabijon (2026) explain that KP also strengthens community engagement beyond mediation sessions by building trust, social connections, and collaboration among members. These relationships encourage continuous dialogue and help reduce both future conflicts and absenteeism. However, Andan and Sumayo (2026) note that absenteeism remains a challenge due to socio-economic constraints, lack of motivation, and insufficient training among Lupon members. Many individuals prioritize personal or work obligations over community responsibilities, while inadequate training in conflict resolution also leads to low confidence and increased non-attendance.

Difficulty in Resolving Disputes

This theme reflects cases where disagreements between parties remain unresolved due to conflicting interests, lack of agreement, or unwillingness to compromise, making settlement challenging. Several responses indicate that some cases are inherently difficult to resolve due to disagreements between parties.

LT 2 says, *"It is difficult to resolve the problem".* In addition, LT 15, *"It is difficult to resolve, especially if both parties are not cooperating".*

The responses of LT 2 and LT 15 highlight the difficulty faced by Lupon members in resolving disputes under the Katarungang Pambarangay, particularly when parties are uncooperative. LT 2 simply stated that resolving problems is difficult, indicating the general

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complexity of mediation work. LT 15 further explained that resolution becomes even more challenging when both parties fail to cooperate, which directly affects the negotiation and settlement process. Together, these responses show that the success of barangay mediation largely depends on the willingness of disputing parties to engage constructively in the process.

These findings imply that the effectiveness of the Katarungang Pambarangay is significantly reduced when disputing parties are unwilling to cooperate. Lack of cooperation leads to prolonged mediation, unresolved conflicts, or escalation of cases to higher authorities, which defeats the purpose of accessible local justice. This shows the need for stronger community education on conflict resolution, as well as strategies that encourage active participation and cooperation from both parties to improve the efficiency and success rate of barangay-level dispute settlement.

Talib, Mustaffa, and Syed Mubarat (2026) explain that disputes in areas such as public projects and family law are often complicated by communication barriers, where misunderstandings and poor communication can escalate conflicts and prolong resolution processes. Moscati (2026) adds that emotional influences such as anger, sadness, and resentment can further complicate dispute resolution by affecting judgment and negotiation behavior, particularly in sensitive cases like family disputes. Hansen (2026) highlights that cultural differences also contribute to dispute complexity, as varying values, traditions, and conflict resolution styles influence how parties communicate and negotiate, with some cultures favoring collective decision-making while others prioritize individual approaches.

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Case Escalation and Legal Progression

This theme involves cases that move from initial informal resolution attempts to more formal legal processes due to unresolved issues or failure to settle at earlier stages. When disputes cannot be resolved at the barangay level, they are referred to higher authorities. This shows that while KP aims for local resolution, unresolved conflicts still move to formal legal systems.

This is reflected in responses by LT 5,6 and 7, "They refer it to a higher authority if we cannot resolve it or if the parties do not agree".

The responses of LT 5, 6, and 7 indicate that when disputes cannot be resolved through barangay mediation, cases are escalated to higher authorities. Their statement, "They pass it on to higher ground if we can't resolve or they don't agree," reflects the procedural limitation of the Katarungang Pambarangay in handling cases where parties fail to reach an agreement. This shows that while the barangay system serves as the first level of dispute resolution, its effectiveness is dependent on mutual agreement between parties, and unresolved conflicts are formally referred to the next level of the justice system.

These findings imply that the Katarungang Pambarangay functions primarily as a preliminary venue for dispute resolution rather than a final adjudicating body. When parties fail to cooperate or reach agreement, cases are escalated, which may contribute to longer resolution times and increased workload for higher legal institutions. This highlights the need to strengthen mediation strategies at the barangay level to improve settlement rates and

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reduce the number of cases being elevated, thereby enhancing the efficiency of local justice delivery.

Relatedly, Andriyani, Gunawan, and Manitra (2026) explain that case escalation often begins with preliminary negotiations or Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), where facilitative communication and restorative justice approaches are used to prevent disputes from progressing to formal litigation, particularly in contexts such as Indonesia. They emphasize that success at this stage can reduce the likelihood of cases escalating further. Mascitti (2026) describes the litigation phase as a more structured legal process involving discovery, evidence gathering, and strategic legal argumentation, where attorneys build narratives to support their clients and determine whether cases settle or proceed to trial.

Resource Limitations

This theme addresses constraints such as limited personnel, time, funding, or facilities that affect the efficiency and effectiveness of handling and disposing of cases. Some Lupon members reported challenges related to insufficient facilities, materials, personnel, and funding. These limitations hinder smooth case processing and affect the efficiency of hearings and mediation.

LT 4 says, "There is a lack of personnel in the barangay". Moreover, LT 3 says, "Yes, such as the place where the hearing is conducted".

The responses of LT 4 and LT 3 highlight resource-related challenges in the implementation of the Katarungang Pambarangay. LT 4 pointed out a shortage of personnel in the barangay, indicating that limited human resources may affect the efficiency and speed

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of case handling. Meanwhile, LT 3 mentioned the lack of an appropriate venue for hearings, showing that inadequate facilities also hinder the proper conduct of mediation sessions. Together, these responses suggest that logistical and infrastructural limitations can negatively affect the smooth operation of barangay justice processes.

These findings imply that insufficient manpower and inadequate facilities may reduce the effectiveness of the Katarungang Pambarangay in delivering timely and organized dispute resolution. Without enough personnel and proper hearing spaces, cases may experience delays, reduced formality, or less efficient proceedings. This highlights the need for increased support from local government units in terms of staffing, funding, and infrastructure to strengthen the capacity of the barangay justice system and improve overall service delivery.

In relation to this study, Tuguinay and Pijano (2026) explain that insufficient membership in the Lupon Tagapamayapa (LT), particularly in barangays of Marikina City, leads to delays in conflict resolution and ineffective implementation of dispute mechanisms, which can result in unresolved cases and increased community tensions that weaken local governance and public trust. Pacer (2026) further notes that inadequate LT representation reduces public service motivation among officers, as they become overburdened by excessive workloads, leading to less effective intervention in dispute resolution and contributing to declining civic participation and community dissatisfaction. Teves (2026) emphasizes that strong community engagement is essential for an effective barangay justice system, arguing that limited LT participation weakens the connection between governance structures and the

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community, ultimately discouraging public involvement and reinforcing a cycle of disengagement and ineffective local dispute resolution.

Delays in Case Resolution

This theme highlights the prolonged processing of cases caused by various factors such as scheduling conflicts, incomplete requirements, or procedural backlogs. Many responses emphasized that delays occur due to absenteeism, lack of cooperation, and coordination problems. These delays reduce the efficiency of the barangay justice system.

As stated by LT 12, "This problem causes delays in the resolution of the issue".

In addition, LT 13 says "The process or progress of the complaint is prolonged".

The responses of LT 12 and 13 both emphasize the issue of delay in the Katarungang Pambarangay process. LT 12 noted that existing problems in the mediation process led to delays in resolving disputes, while LT 13 further explained that complaints tend to take longer to progress. These statements indicate that various factors such as lack of cooperation, absenteeism, and procedural limitations contribute to the slow movement of cases. Overall, the responses reflect that inefficiencies in the system affect the timeliness of conflict resolution at the barangay level.

This imply that delays in the Katarungang Pambarangay may weaken its goal of providing quick and accessible justice within the community. When cases take too long to resolve, parties may lose trust in the system or escalate their concerns to higher courts, increasing the burden on formal judicial institutions. This highlights the need for improved

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case management, stronger enforcement of attendance, and more efficient mediation procedures to ensure faster resolution of disputes at the barangay level.

In this connection, Agom (2026) explains that delays in dispute resolution, particularly in the construction industry in Nigeria, are often caused by weak legal frameworks and limited access to alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms, which result in prolonged cases and reduced efficiency in the justice system. Abeywickrama et al. (2026) propose that integrating digital technologies into dispute resolution, especially in construction-related cases, can improve accessibility and streamline processes, helping reduce case backlogs and improve the speed of justice delivery. In addition, Ossama et al. (2026) highlight the importance of structured case management systems, such as congestion resolution techniques, which prioritize cases based on urgency and complexity to reduce waiting time and improve judicial efficiency.

Presence of Emotional Stress and Threats

This theme refers to occasional emotional tension, pressure, or minor threats experienced by parties or mediators during case handling, which may affect communication and decision-making. While most LT reported no violence, a few mentioned occasional intimidation or emotional tension.

LT 12 stated, "Yes, sometimes there are experiences of threats, especially when one party is emotional or aggressive".

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The response of LT 12 indicates that while the Katarungang Pambarangay process is generally peaceful, there are instances where emotional tension escalates into intimidation or threats, particularly when one party becomes highly emotional or aggressive. This suggests that although rare, conflict situations during mediation can sometimes challenge the authority and safety of Lupon members and may affect the neutrality and smooth flow of proceedings. It also reflects the emotional intensity of some disputes being handled at the barangay level.

These findings imply that there is a need to strengthen measures that ensure the safety and security of Lupon members during mediation proceedings. Proper training in conflict de-escalation, effective handling of aggressive behavior, and provision of support mechanisms may help minimize risks during hearings. Additionally, reinforcing rules of conduct during mediation can help maintain order, protect mediators, and ensure that dispute resolution remains fair, safe, and effective.

3. Strategies applied to address the challenges encountered by the Lupon Tagapamayapa members in the administration of Katarungang Pambarangay

To effectively manage the challenges encountered in the Katarungang Pambarangay system, members of the Lupon Tagapamayapa employ various strategies aimed at improving case handling and dispute resolution. Through these strategies, the Lupon Tagapamayapa enhances its ability to deliver timely, fair, and effective justice at the community level.

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Open Communication and Dialogue

This strategy emphasizes the importance of clear, respectful, and continuous communication among all parties involved in a dispute. By encouraging open dialogue, misunderstandings can be minimized, trust can be built, and parties are more likely to express their concerns honestly. This approach helps create a cooperative environment that supports effective and timely conflict resolution. A dominant strategy used by Lupon members is open communication and dialogue between disputing parties. These responses highlight that effective communication is the primary tool in facilitating understanding and settlement among parties.

LT 1 stated, "The barangay uses open communication and schedule meetings to resolve the problem," while LT 5 and 6 emphasized resolving misunderstandings through communication and by "asking their side and their opinion." Similarly, LT 9 shared, "They are first talked to".

The responses of LT 1, 5, 6, and 9 highlight that open communication is the primary strategy used by Lupon members in resolving disputes under the Katarungang Pambarangay. LT 1 emphasized the importance of structured dialogue through scheduled meetings, while LT 5 and 6 focused on resolving misunderstandings by listening to each party's side and opinions. LT 9 further supported this by stating that parties are first talked to before any formal resolution process begins. These responses indicate that communication-based

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mediation is central to the barangay justice process, allowing parties to express concerns and work toward mutual understanding.

This implies that effective communication plays a crucial role in the success of the Katarungang Pambarangay, as it promotes understanding, reduces conflict escalation, and encourages peaceful settlement of disputes. Strengthening communication skills among Lupon members and ensuring that parties are given equal opportunity to express their views can further improve the efficiency and fairness of the mediation process.

Summoning and Facilitating Face-to-Face Mediation

This strategy involves formally inviting parties to attend mediation sessions and encouraging direct, in-person discussions. Face-to-face interaction helps clarify issues, reduce misunderstandings, and create opportunities for immediate feedback, making it easier to reach mutual agreements. Another common practice is formally inviting or summoning parties to attend mediation sessions. This shows that structured meetings are essential in bringing both sides together to resolve conflicts.

LT 2, 3, 4, and 10 consistently mentioned, "Summoning the involved parties so the conflict can be discussed". LT 15 added, "The conflicting parties are brought together to talk and settle the problem".

The responses of LT 2, 3, 4, 10, and 15 highlight the consistent use of formal summoning and face-to-face mediation as a key strategy in the Katarungang Pambarangay process. The repeated mention of "pagpapatawag sa mga kasangkot/partido" shows that bringing both parties together is essential for facilitating dialogue and addressing conflicts

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Mario A. Cudiamat, Jesson L. Hero, Albert Bulawat, Cris T. Zita, Allan M. Manaloto, Jerico N. Mendoza



directly. LT 15 further reinforces this by stating that parties are physically brought together to talk and settle the issue. These responses indicate that structured, in-person mediation remains a core practice in ensuring that disputes are properly discussed and resolved at the barangay level.

This implies that face-to-face mediation through official summons is an effective mechanism in promoting dialogue and resolution of conflicts within the community. However, its success depends on the willingness of both parties to attend and participate actively in the process. Strengthening compliance with summons and encouraging cooperative engagement can further enhance the effectiveness of the Katarungang Pambarangay in delivering timely and peaceful dispute resolution.

Neutrality and Fair Mediation

This theme emphasizes the importance of impartiality among Lupong Tagapamayapa members. By remaining neutral and treating all parties fairly, mediators build trust and ensure that decisions are based on facts rather than bias, promoting just and acceptable outcomes. Maintaining impartiality is also a key strategy. This reflects the importance of fairness and trust in ensuring both parties feel heard and respected during mediation.

LT 13 stated, *"Communicating without taking sides between either party"*, while LT 14 emphasized being *"approachable to both parties."*

The responses of LT 13 and LT 14 highlight neutrality and approachability as key strategies in the mediation process of the Katarungang Pambarangay. LT 13 emphasized the importance of communicating without bias toward either party, ensuring that fairness is

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Mario A. Cudiamat, Jesson L. Hero, Albert Bulawat, Cris T. Zita, Allan M. Manaloto, Jerico N. Mendoza



maintained during conflict resolution. Similarly, LT 14 pointed out that being approachable to both parties helps build trust and encourages open participation in the mediation process. These responses indicate that impartiality and accessibility are essential qualities of Lupon members in effectively managing disputes and facilitating peaceful settlements.

This implies that maintaining neutrality and approachability strengthens trust in the barangay justice system and encourages both parties to engage more openly in resolving conflicts. When Lupon members are perceived as fair and approachable, it enhances the credibility of the mediation process and increases the likelihood of successful settlements. Therefore, continuous training on impartiality and communication skills is important to further improve the effectiveness of the Katarungang Pambarangay.

Emotional Control and Conflict Management

This strategy focuses on managing emotions during disputes to prevent escalation. By maintaining calmness and guiding parties to control anger or frustration, mediators can create a more respectful environment that supports constructive dialogue and resolution. Some LT highlighted the need for proper behavior and emotional management during proceedings.

LT 11 noted, "Remain calm and control the situation".

The response of LT 11, "Remain calm and control the situation," highlights emotional regulation as an important strategy used by Lupon members during mediation in the Katarungang Pambarangay. This indicates that maintaining composure is essential in handling disputes, especially when parties are emotionally charged or confrontational. By staying calm,

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mediators are better able to manage discussions, prevent escalation of conflict, and guide the conversation toward a peaceful resolution.

This implies that emotional control is a critical skill for effective mediation in the barangay justice system. When Lupon members remain calm, they help create a stable and respectful environment that encourages cooperation and reduces the likelihood of conflict escalation. Strengthening training on emotional management and conflict de-escalation can further enhance the effectiveness and safety of dispute resolution processes at the barangay level.

Referral to Appropriate Authorities

This theme involves forwarding unresolved or complex cases to higher authorities or formal legal institutions. Proper referral ensures that cases beyond the scope of the barangay are handled appropriately, maintaining the integrity and effectiveness of the justice system. In cases where barangay mediation is insufficient, referral to higher or appropriate agencies is applied.

LT 12 stated, "Providing mediation and referring the case to the appropriate agency when necessary".

The response of LT 12, highlights referral to appropriate agencies as a strategic response when cases cannot be fully resolved at the barangay level. This indicates that Lupon members recognize the limits of their authority and capacity in handling certain disputes. When mediation is insufficient, cases are elevated or referred to other agencies that have the

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Mario A. Cudiamat, Jesson L. Hero, Albert Bulawat, Cris T. Zita, Allan M. Manaloto, Jerico N. Mendoza



proper jurisdiction or expertise, ensuring that issues are still addressed through the appropriate legal or administrative channels.

This implies that the Katarungang Pambarangay functions not only as a primary dispute resolution body but also as a gateway to higher legal processes when necessary. The ability to refer cases appropriately helps prevent delays in justice and ensures that more complex disputes receive proper handling. Strengthening coordination between the barangay and other agencies can further improve the efficiency and continuity of dispute resolution.

Relatedly, Tuguinay and Pijano (2026) explain that the Lupong Tagapamayapa uses structured, context-based dispute resolution mechanisms in barangays such as Marikina City, showing that localized processes are effective in addressing community conflicts. Melencion Jr. and Sabijon (2026) further emphasize that integrating community values into mediation strengthens the effectiveness of grassroots conflict resolution. Berou et al. (2026) highlight that active community engagement in barangay-level dispute resolution, particularly in West Poblacion, City of Naga, promotes shared responsibility and improves trust in the justice system. Pacer (2026) adds that public service motivation among Lupon members is a key factor that enhances their commitment and effectiveness in resolving disputes.

4. Proposed Enhanced Katarungang Pambarangay Program to improve the performance of the Lupong Pamayapa in Handling Cases

The Katarungang Pambarangay serves as the primary grassroots dispute resolution system in the Philippines, promoting peaceful settlement of conflicts within communities. In Sorsogon Province, the Lupong Tagapamayapa handles various cases such as

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misunderstandings, family disputes, debt, and property-related issues. However, its effectiveness is affected by challenges including lack of cooperation from parties, absenteeism, limited resources, and delays in case resolution. To address these concerns, the Enhanced Katarungang Pambarangay Program (EKPP) is proposed to strengthen the skills of Lupon members through continuous training, improved communication strategies, and better resource support, aiming to make dispute resolution faster, fairer, and more efficient.

The program has five main objectives: to enhance mediation skills of Lupon members, improve attendance and cooperation of disputing parties, strengthen communication and neutrality in mediation, provide adequate logistical and facility support, and reduce case escalation to higher courts by improving settlement rates at the barangay level. Its implementation includes strategies such as community orientation, summons monitoring, mediation training, case tracking systems, resource allocation, and conflict de-escalation training, with support from the Barangay Council, DILG, LGU, and other concerned offices. Expected outcomes include faster case resolution, higher settlement rates, improved community trust, and reduced case backlog, while monitoring and evaluation will be conducted through regular reports, surveys, and performance indicators such as settlement rates and resolution time to ensure continuous improvement of the program.

CONCLUSIONS

The Katarungang Pambarangay effectively handles common community disputes mainly involving misunderstandings, financial issues, and family-related conflicts, and

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ISSN: 2704-3010

Volume VII, Issue III

April 2026

Available online at <https://www.instabrightgazette.com>



consistently resolves these cases through amicable settlement from 2023 to 2025. Despite fluctuations in the number of reported cases, the barangay justice system remains successful in preventing case escalation to higher courts, highlighting its strong role in maintaining peace and order. the Lupong Tagapamayapa in the administration of the Katarungang Pambarangay faces a range of interconnected challenges that affect the efficiency and effectiveness of local dispute resolution. These challenges include lack of cooperation and compliance from parties, absenteeism during hearings, difficulty in resolving complex disputes, case escalation to higher authorities, limited resources, delays in case processing, and occasional emotional stress or threats during mediation.

The Lupong Tagapamayapa employs a combination of communication-based, procedural, and managerial strategies to address the challenges encountered in the Katarungang Pambarangay system. These include open communication and dialogue, summoning and facilitating face-to-face mediation, maintaining neutrality and fairness, practicing emotional control during disputes, and referring complex cases to appropriate authorities when necessary. These strategies work together to ensure that disputes are properly managed at the barangay level while promoting understanding, cooperation, and peaceful settlement among conflicting parties. The Enhanced Katarungang Pambarangay Program is essential in strengthening the capacity of Lupon Tagapamayapa members to address community disputes more effectively, ensuring faster, fairer, and more efficient resolution of cases in Sorsogon Province.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Based from the conclusions, the following are hereby recommended:

1. The Lupon Tagapamayapa may continue strengthening its mediation system by enhancing documentation of settlements, promoting early dispute intervention, and sustaining community awareness programs that encourage amicable settlement of misunderstandings, financial, and family-related conflicts.

2. The Barangay Council and the Lupon Tagapamayapa may enforce stricter compliance with summons, develop attendance monitoring systems, provide additional logistical and human resource support, and offer continuous training for Lupon members in handling complex disputes and emotional conflict situations.

3. The Lupon Tagapamayapa may enhance the existing strategies by institutionalizing regular training on communication skills, neutrality, conflict de-escalation, and mediation techniques, while also improving coordination with higher authorities for cases that require referral.

4. The Department of Interior and Local Government, Barangay Council and Barangay Justice System may implement the Enhanced Katarungang Pambarangay Program to fully institutionalize the adequate funding, continuous capacity-building programs, improved case tracking systems, and strengthened inter-agency coordination to ensure faster, fairer, and more efficient dispute resolution in Sorsogon Province.

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INSTABRIGHT e-GAZETTE

ISSN: 2704-3010

Volume VII, Issue III

April 2026

Available online at <https://www.instabrightgazette.com>



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