

Institutional Capacity, Procedural Governance, and Community Justice: Evidence From Barangay Dispute Resolution in The Philippines

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Abstract: This study examines the institutional capacity of barangay officials in administering community-based justice and procedural governance in Tabuk City, Philippines. Grounded in decentralization and participatory governance perspectives, the study explores how awareness of the Barangay Justice System (Katarungang Pambarangay) and the application of parliamentary procedures shape local dispute resolution practices. A convergent mixed-methods design was employed involving 196 barangay officials from 43 barangays through surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions. Quantitative findings indicate that barangay officials demonstrate moderate awareness of the Barangay Justice System, while parliamentary-based procedures are widely practiced during mediation and conciliation proceedings. Qualitative findings reveal persistent institutional and operational challenges, including non-attendance of disputing parties, limited procedural knowledge, political and social influence, emotional conflicts, and administrative constraints. Despite these limitations, barangay officials employ community-based mediation practices and culturally grounded approaches to sustain local dispute resolution processes. The study contributes to decentralization and procedural legitimacy scholarship by demonstrating that the effectiveness of community-based justice systems depends not only on legal frameworks but also on institutional capacity, procedural competence, and locally embedded governance legitimacy. The findings highlight the need to strengthen procedural literacy, institutional capacity, and governance support mechanisms to improve the legitimacy and effectiveness of decentralized community justice systems.

Keywords: community justice; decentralized governance; Katarungang Pambarangay; procedural legitimacy; procedural governance; barangay institutions

Introduction

Community-based justice systems continue to occupy an important, though often contested, place in contemporary governance. Across decentralized political systems, local mediation bodies and community dispute mechanisms function not merely as alternatives to formal courts, but as institutions that shape public trust, procedural legitimacy, and democratic participation at the grassroots level. In many communities, particularly where judicial institutions remain geographically distant, financially inaccessible, or socially intimidating, citizens continue to rely on localized forms of mediation and conciliation to resolve everyday disputes. Such mechanisms remain visible across Asia, Africa, and Latin America, often operating alongside formal legal systems within hybrid governance arrangements (Golub, 2003; Isser et al., 2009; Merry, 1988). Their persistence reflects a broader understanding that justice is experienced not solely through legal procedures and court decisions, but through institutions capable of responding to the realities of community life..

Recent empirical studies in Southeast Asia further suggest that community-based justice mechanisms remain central to local governance, particularly in areas where social relationships and informal institutions continue to influence conflict resolution processes. In Indonesia, village-level mediation systems continue to function as important mechanisms for preserving social cohesion despite the expansion of formal legal institutions (Vel, Zakaria, & Bedner, 2017). Similar observations have been reported in Thailand and Cambodia, where local dispute resolution practices remain closely intertwined with customary authority, administrative legitimacy, and community trust (Un, 2021). These studies collectively suggest that localized justice systems remain deeply embedded within broader governance structures rather than functioning merely as informal alternatives to state institutions.

The continued relevance of community-based justice systems, however, does not automatically translate into institutional effectiveness. Mediation structures may exist formally, procedural rules may be codified, and decentralization policies may promise participatory governance, yet these systems frequently struggle when local actors lack procedural competence, organizational support, or public legitimacy. Recent scholarship increasingly links procedural legitimacy to citizens' willingness to cooperate with governance institutions and comply with dispute resolution outcomes. Walters and Bolger (2019), through a meta-analysis on procedural justice and legal compliance, argue that perceptions of fairness significantly shape institutional trust and voluntary participation in justice systems. Similar observations appear in governance and policing literature, where procedural fairness within institutions often produces stronger public cooperation and legitimacy (Yesberg et al., 2024). In decentralized justice systems, these dynamics become particularly significant because mediation processes rely heavily on voluntary participation, social trust, and perceptions of neutrality among local actors.

Localized justice mechanisms also confront tensions between informality and legality, cultural expectations and procedural consistency, or political influence and institutional impartiality. These tensions become more visible in communities experiencing rapid administrative or social transition, where local officials are expected to manage increasingly complex governance responsibilities despite uneven institutional capacity. Studies on local justice systems in developing governance environments continue to report recurring concerns involving inconsistent implementation, procedural uncertainty, weak administrative coordination, and limited technical competence among community actors (Crook et al., 2006). More recent studies in Southeast Asian governance contexts similarly report that local mediation institutions often struggle with political influence, inadequate procedural training, and uneven administrative support despite formal decentralization reforms (Antlöv, Wetterberg, & Dharmawan, 2016; Kim, 2020). Such conditions not only affect the efficiency of dispute resolution processes but may also weaken public confidence in grassroots governance institutions over time.

The Philippine Barangay Justice System (BJS), locally known as the Katarungang Pambarangay (KP), represents one of the most institutionalized forms of community-based dispute resolution in Southeast Asia. Established through Presidential Decree No. 1508 and later reinforced under Republic Act No. 7160 or the Local Government Code of 1991, the system was intended to decongest courts, promote amicable settlement, and strengthen grassroots participation in justice administration. The barangay, as the smallest political unit in the Philippines, occupies a distinctive governance role because it simultaneously functions as a political, administrative, and social institution. Ideally, the KP enables disputes to be settled within the community through mediation and conciliation before escalation to formal courts, thereby making justice more accessible, less adversarial, and culturally responsive.

Barangays occupy a particularly significant position within the Philippine decentralized governance structure because they function simultaneously as frontline governance institutions and community-based social structures. Unlike larger administrative units, barangays operate within highly localized social environments where personal relationships, kinship networks, and informal political dynamics frequently intersect with formal governance processes. Philippine governance scholars have long noted that these dynamics shape not only administrative effectiveness but also citizens' perceptions of legitimacy, accountability, and fairness within grassroots institutions (Tapales,

2003; Brillantes & Moscare, 2022). As a result, the effectiveness of barangay justice mechanisms cannot be separated from the broader institutional and social realities within which barangay governance operates.

Despite these institutional goals, implementation across Philippine localities remains uneven. Philippine decentralization scholarship has consistently emphasized that local governance effectiveness depends not merely on formal devolution policies but also on the institutional capacity and administrative competence of local actors (Capuno, 2005). Existing studies on barangay governance further reveal continuing concerns involving inconsistent procedural application, weak documentation systems, limited mediation competencies, and inadequate institutional support among barangay officials (Brillantes & Fernandez, 2011). Recent local assessments additionally suggest that barangay justice implementation continues to encounter operational constraints involving case documentation, mediation participation, and procedural compliance in several Philippine communities (Brillantes & Fernandez, 2011; Kim, 2020). In some communities, mediation processes are reportedly shaped by kinship networks, political affiliations, or informal social pressures that complicate perceptions of neutrality and fairness. Elsewhere, barangay officials struggle with procedural distinctions and administrative requirements, resulting in delayed settlements or unresolved disputes. These institutional limitations become particularly significant because barangays often represent the first and most accessible point of legal recourse for ordinary citizens, especially in geographically isolated or economically constrained communities.

Recent governance reforms and capacity-building initiatives likewise suggest that local institutions continue to experience procedural and administrative challenges. Although training programs on parliamentary procedures and local governance have emerged in several Philippine localities, concerns regarding procedural literacy, documentation practices, and institutional preparedness remain evident within barangay governance systems (Danlag & Calva, 2024). Similar concerns have also been documented in other Southeast Asian local governance systems, where community-based governance actors frequently perform quasi-judicial and administrative responsibilities without sufficient technical preparation or institutional support (Kim, 2020; Un, 2021). These continuing challenges raise broader questions regarding how procedural governance shapes the operational environment of community-based justice mechanisms and whether barangay officials possess sufficient institutional capacity to manage increasingly complex governance responsibilities.

At the same time, another dimension of barangay governance remains comparatively underexamined despite its direct relevance to local justice administration: procedural governance through parliamentary practice. Barangay councils do not merely enact ordinances or approve local programs. They also establish the institutional conditions within which community-based justice systems operate. Budget allocations for mediation activities, scheduling of hearings, adoption of local resolutions, and oversight of justice-related concerns all pass through council deliberations. Consequently, the effectiveness of local dispute resolution depends not only on mediation skills or legal awareness, but also on the procedural competence of officials in conducting orderly, transparent, and accountable governance processes.

Contemporary governance scholarship consistently associates procedural legitimacy with institutional trust and administrative effectiveness. Deliberative democratic theory, for instance, emphasizes that procedural structures shape participation, accountability, and the legitimacy of governance decisions within democratic institutions (Dryzek, 2000). In local governance environments, procedural discipline influences whether public actions are perceived as fair, transparent, and responsive to community concerns. More recent studies further suggest that local institutional legitimacy is shaped not only by formal authority but also by perceptions of fairness, responsiveness, and moral credibility within everyday governance interactions (Liu et al., 2025). In decentralized governance environments, procedural inconsistencies or weak administrative practices can gradually erode institutional trust, particularly when local justice actors are perceived as politically influenced, procedurally uncertain, or administratively ineffective.

Despite these connections, discussions surrounding barangay governance in the Philippines often examine local dispute resolution and parliamentary governance as separate institutional

concerns. Existing scholarship on the Katarungang Pambarangay has largely focused on implementation effectiveness, mediation outcomes, or citizen satisfaction with barangay justice services. Meanwhile, studies on parliamentary procedures tend to emphasize legislative efficiency or organizational management within local councils. Rarely are these two dimensions analyzed together as interconnected components of grassroots institutional capacity. Consequently, limited attention has been given to how procedural governance shapes the operational environment of community-based justice systems or how the institutional awareness of barangay officials influences the consistency, legitimacy, and effectiveness of local dispute resolution practices.

This gap becomes particularly relevant in localities undergoing demographic expansion and administrative transition. Tabuk City in Kalinga presents a compelling setting because it combines characteristics of urban growth, indigenous social structures, and rural governance realities. Barangays in the area mediate a wide range of disputes involving land boundaries, interpersonal tensions, neighborhood conflicts, and culturally embedded practices. Within these contexts, barangay officials are expected not only to facilitate dispute resolution but also to navigate procedural governance responsibilities requiring administrative coordination, legal awareness, and political judgment. The complexity of these responsibilities raises broader questions regarding the institutional preparedness of barangay officials and the extent to which procedural governance supports—or constrains—the effective implementation of community-based justice mechanisms.

The present study is guided by perspectives from decentralization theory and institutional capacity frameworks. Decentralization theory suggests that transferring governance functions to local institutions may improve responsiveness, participation, and accountability when local actors possess sufficient administrative and institutional capacity (Brillantes & Fernandez, 2011). Yet decentralization alone does not automatically produce effective governance. Contemporary studies on local governance continue to demonstrate that weak institutional coordination, limited technical competencies, and inadequate procedural systems often constrain the effectiveness of local institutions despite formal devolution policies (Acharya, 2022; Kim, 2020). Viewed through these perspectives, the effectiveness of the Barangay Justice System cannot be understood solely through legal provisions. It must also be examined through the procedural and institutional realities shaping governance at the barangay level.

Against this backdrop, the study examines the awareness, challenges, and governance practices of barangay officials in implementing the Barangay Justice System and applying parliamentary-based procedures in Tabuk City, Philippines. Specifically, it seeks to: (1) determine the level of awareness of barangay officials regarding the Barangay Justice System; (2) identify the challenges encountered in implementing the Katarungang Pambarangay; (3) document best practices in local dispute resolution; (4) assess the extent to which parliamentary-based procedures are applied in barangay governance processes; and (5) propose recommendations to strengthen institutional capacity and procedural governance at the grassroots level.

The study contributes to ongoing discussions on decentralized governance, community justice, and institutional legitimacy in three ways. First, it expands existing scholarship by examining local justice administration and procedural governance as interconnected governance processes rather than separate institutional concerns. Second, it provides empirical evidence from a Philippine local governance context that remains underrepresented in international discussions on decentralized justice systems. Third, it highlights how institutional awareness and procedural competence shape the everyday functioning and legitimacy of community-based justice mechanisms. Beyond its academic contribution, the study also carries policy relevance for local government units, governance agencies, and training institutions involved in strengthening barangay administration and grassroots justice processes.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods research design to examine the awareness, implementation challenges, and governance practices of barangay officials in relation to the Barangay Justice System (BJS) and parliamentary-based procedures in Tabuk City, Philippines. The study

combined quantitative and qualitative approaches because the research objectives required both measurable indicators of institutional awareness and contextual understanding of governance experiences within barangay administration. Quantitative methods were used to determine awareness levels, implementation challenges, and procedural practices among barangay officials, while qualitative inquiry explored the institutional realities and governance experiences shaping community-based dispute resolution processes.

A convergent mixed-methods design was adopted in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected during the same phase of the study, analyzed independently, and integrated during interpretation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The design was considered appropriate because governance and dispute resolution processes involve both observable administrative patterns and socially embedded institutional experiences that require interpretive analysis.

The study was conducted in Tabuk City, the capital of Kalinga Province in Northern Luzon, Philippines. Tabuk City was selected because of its combination of rural governance structures, urban expansion, and culturally diverse communities. Barangays within the city regularly handled disputes involving land boundaries, interpersonal conflicts, family concerns, and neighborhood disagreements under the jurisdiction of the Katarungang Pambarangay. At the same time, barangay officials performed legislative, administrative, and procedural governance functions requiring familiarity with parliamentary procedures and local governance processes.

These governance conditions made the locale appropriate for examining the relationship between procedural governance and community-based dispute resolution. Data collection was conducted from January 2025 to April 2025.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Ifugao State University prior to data collection. Formal permission was likewise secured from the local government unit of Tabuk City and participating barangays.

All participants received written information regarding the objectives and procedures of the study prior to participation. Written informed consent was obtained from all respondents before survey administration and interviews were conducted. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without consequence.

To protect participant confidentiality and institutional privacy, all responses were anonymized during transcription, analysis, and reporting. No personally identifiable information was included in the presentation of findings. Interview recordings, questionnaires, and research transcripts were securely stored and accessed only by the researchers for academic purposes.

The participants of the study consisted of barangay officials directly involved in governance and dispute resolution processes within selected barangays in Tabuk City. These included barangay chairpersons, barangay councilors, members of the Lupon Tagapamayapa, barangay secretaries, and other barangay personnel engaged in mediation and governance activities.

For the quantitative component, purposive sampling was employed to identify participants with direct involvement in the implementation of the Barangay Justice System and parliamentary-based governance procedures. Purposive sampling was considered appropriate because the study required participants possessing governance-related knowledge and procedural experience relevant to the objectives of the study (Palinkas et al., 2015). A total of 196 barangay officials from 43 barangays participated in the quantitative phase of the study.

Participants were required to be currently serving barangay officials with at least one year of involvement in governance or dispute resolution activities. Officials without direct participation in mediation processes or barangay governance functions were excluded from the study.

For the qualitative component, criterion-based purposive sampling was used to identify participants with substantial experience in barangay governance and community mediation. Fifteen key informants participated in the interview phase, including barangay chairpersons, lupon members, and senior barangay officials. Interviews continued until thematic saturation was achieved and no substantially new insights emerged from succeeding interviews (Saunders et al., 2018).

Quantitative data were gathered using a researcher-developed questionnaire based on Republic Act No. 7160, literature on barangay governance, and studies concerning procedural governance and institutional capacity. The questionnaire consisted of four sections covering demographic characteristics, awareness of Barangay Justice System procedures, implementation challenges, and application of parliamentary-based governance procedures.

Survey items were measured using a five-point Likert scale. Indicators concerning awareness and procedural application ranged from 1 ("Very Low") to 5 ("Very High"), while indicators concerning governance practices and implementation challenges ranged from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree").

To establish content validity, the instrument was evaluated by three experts in public administration, governance studies, and dispute resolution. Revisions concerning clarity and contextual appropriateness were incorporated into the final instrument. A pilot test involving 30 barangay officials outside the study locale was subsequently conducted. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.86 to 0.91, indicating acceptable internal consistency for social science research instruments (Taber, 2018).

For the qualitative component, semi-structured interview guides were used to explore governance experiences, mediation practices, procedural challenges, and institutional limitations encountered by barangay officials. Audio recording devices and field notes were likewise utilized to ensure accurate documentation of participant responses.

Following ethical approval and institutional coordination, survey questionnaires were personally distributed to selected participants in participating barangays. Prior to administration, respondents were informed regarding the purpose of the study and confidentiality measures. Completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately after administration and reviewed for completeness.

Following the quantitative phase, qualitative interviews were conducted through scheduled face-to-face sessions at locations agreed upon by the participants. Interviews focused on governance practices, mediation experiences, procedural challenges, and parliamentary-based governance processes. With participant consent, interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim for analysis. Field notes were maintained during interviews to document contextual observations relevant to the study.

The primary outcomes of the study included the level of awareness of barangay officials regarding the Barangay Justice System, the extent of application of parliamentary-based procedures, and the implementation challenges encountered during community-based dispute resolution. These outcomes directly reflected the institutional and procedural dimensions central to the objectives of the study.

Secondary outcomes included the identification of governance practices, institutional coping mechanisms, and recommendations for strengthening procedural governance and dispute resolution capacities at the barangay level.

Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, and standard deviations were used to summarize demographic characteristics, awareness levels, governance practices, and implementation challenges among barangay officials.

Inferential statistical analyses were likewise employed to determine whether significant differences existed in awareness levels and governance practices when respondents were grouped according to selected demographic variables. Independent samples t-tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were applied where appropriate using a significance level of 0.05.

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Interview transcripts were reviewed repeatedly to ensure familiarity with the data. Initial codes were generated from recurring institutional experiences, procedural concerns, governance practices, and mediation-related narratives. Similar codes were subsequently grouped into

broader themes reflecting institutional capacity, governance effectiveness, procedural legitimacy, and community-based dispute resolution practices.

To strengthen trustworthiness, the study employed member checking, peer debriefing, triangulation, and audit trail documentation. Quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated during interpretation to contextualize statistical trends using participant narratives and governance experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study involved 196 barangay officials from the 43 barangays of Tabuk City, including Punong Barangays, Kagawads, and Lupon members. Most respondents were Lupon members (50%), followed by Kagawads (43%), while Punong Barangays comprised only 7% of the respondents. In terms of years in service, the largest proportion had served for 1–3 years (30%) and 4–6 years (27%), suggesting that many participants already possessed moderate governance exposure and experience in handling community disputes.

The composition of the respondents is important because Lupon members are directly involved in mediation and conciliation proceedings under the Katarungang Pambarangay. Their experiences and perspectives therefore provide substantial insight into the realities of local justice administration at the barangay level. The moderate years of service among respondents also suggest that many participants had already encountered actual dispute resolution processes, although some may still be developing procedural competence and institutional familiarity.

Table 3 Level of Awareness of Barangay Officials on the Barangay Justice System

<i>Level of Awareness</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Moderate Awareness	128	65%
High Awareness	56	29%
Others	12	6%
Total	196	100%

The findings revealed that most barangay officials demonstrated a moderate level of awareness regarding the Barangay Justice System, with 128 out of 196 respondents or 65% falling within this category. Meanwhile, 56 respondents or 29% demonstrated high awareness. Only a small proportion belonged to the lower awareness categories.

The results suggest that barangay officials in Tabuk City generally possess functional knowledge of the Katarungang Pambarangay and its role in community dispute resolution. However, the concentration of responses within the moderate category indicates that awareness may not yet be consistently comprehensive across all officials. Many respondents appear familiar with basic mediation and conciliation processes but may still encounter difficulty in interpreting more technical provisions or procedural requirements.

The findings suggest that procedural understanding among barangay officials continues to be shaped largely through experiential governance practice rather than formal legal or technical training. While experiential learning contributes significantly to dispute resolution competence, it may also result in inconsistencies in the interpretation and application of procedures, particularly in complex or emotionally sensitive disputes.

The findings support earlier studies emphasizing that awareness among barangay officials does not always correspond to procedural mastery. Brillantes and Fernandez (2011) similarly emphasized that variations in procedural competence among local governance actors may influence the consistency and effectiveness of barangay-level dispute resolution processes. Similarly, Kim (2020) argued that

limitations in technical training often affect the ability of local officials to implement Katarungang Pambarangay procedures accurately and confidently.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government likewise emphasizes that the effectiveness of the Barangay Justice System depends heavily on the procedural competence and institutional preparedness of barangay officials. Without sufficient orientation and continuing training, dispute resolution practices may become inconsistent, potentially affecting public trust in barangay-level justice mechanisms.

Overall, the findings indicate that while barangay officials already possess a working awareness of the Katarungang Pambarangay, strengthening procedural literacy and technical competence remains necessary to improve the consistency and effectiveness of local justice administration.



Figure 1. Challenges Encountered by Barangay Officials and Lupon Tagapamayapa

Theme 1: Non-Attendance and Lack of Cooperation of Parties

Non-attendance and lack of cooperation emerged as the most dominant challenge, identified by 14 participants. Respondents consistently described situations in which complainants or respondents failed to appear during mediation or conciliation proceedings despite receiving summons.

Several participants explained that some disputing parties deliberately avoided barangay proceedings because they preferred to elevate their cases to formal courts. Others described situations in which parties refused to cooperate during settlement discussions or were unwilling to compromise. These findings indicate that barangay officials often experience practical limitations in facilitating mediation because the process relies heavily on voluntary participation.

This finding is consistent with mediation literature emphasizing that effective community dispute resolution depends substantially on the willingness of parties to participate in dialogue and negotiation (Wall & Dunne, 2012). In the Philippine context, De Guzman and Torres (2021) similarly observed that non-appearance of disputing parties significantly disrupts mediation efforts and delays settlement processes at the barangay level.

The findings also suggest that public trust and confidence in the Barangay Justice System may influence participation. When disputing parties perceive barangay mediation as ineffective or biased, they may become less willing to engage in the process.

Theme 2: Limited Knowledge and Training of Lupon Members

Another recurring challenge involved limited procedural knowledge and insufficient training

among Lupon members, as identified by seven participants. Respondents admitted that some officials struggled to determine which disputes properly fell under the jurisdiction of the Katarungang Pambarangay. Others experienced confusion regarding procedural distinctions between mediation and conciliation.

Participants also emphasized the lack of continuing training opportunities for Lupon members. These responses indicate that some barangay officials continue to rely primarily on experience and informal practice when handling disputes rather than on formal procedural training.

This observation aligns with governance studies emphasizing that procedural gaps and insufficient institutional preparation may affect the consistency and quality of local dispute resolution processes (Brillantes & Fernandez, 2011; Kim, 2020). The DILG likewise emphasizes the importance of continuous orientation and skills development among Lupon members to ensure proper implementation of the Katarungang Pambarangay.

The findings demonstrate that while barangay officials may already possess basic awareness of dispute resolution processes, procedural competence requires sustained institutional support and continuing capacity-building.

Theme 3: Bias, Conflict of Interest, and Social or Political Influence

Six participants identified bias, conflict of interest, and social or political influence as challenges affecting dispute resolution proceedings. Respondents explained that maintaining neutrality can become difficult in close-knit barangay communities where disputing parties are often connected through family relationships, friendships, or political affiliations.

Some participants reported instances where parties questioned the fairness of mediation proceedings because of perceived favoritism or familial relationships between officials and disputants. Others noted that political influence occasionally affected local dynamics surrounding dispute settlement.

Viewed through decentralization theory, these findings suggest that localized justice systems remain heavily dependent on institutional legitimacy and community trust, particularly in governance environments where social relationships intersect with administrative authority (Kim, 2020; Un, 2021).

The findings also reinforce broader discussions on procedural legitimacy and institutional trust. Even the perception of bias may weaken confidence in local justice institutions and discourage cooperation among disputing parties.

Theme 4: Emotional Conflicts and Difficulty in Reaching Settlement

Emotional conflict and difficulty in reaching amicable settlement were identified by 11 participants. Respondents described mediation sessions characterized by anger, pride, mistrust, and unwillingness to compromise. Several participants observed that parties frequently interrupted one another, raised their voices, or firmly maintained their positions during discussions.

The findings suggest that barangay officials are often required to manage not only procedural issues but also the emotional dimensions of interpersonal conflict. Disputes involving neighbors or family members frequently involve long-standing grievances that complicate mediation efforts.

This observation supports mediation literature emphasizing that emotional intensity significantly influences the likelihood of successful dispute resolution (Jones, 2016). Jones (2016) similarly emphasized that emotional intensity and interpersonal rigidity frequently complicate mediation processes and reduce the likelihood of amicable settlement.

The findings indicate that effective barangay mediation requires interpersonal communication skills, patience, and emotional management strategies in addition to procedural knowledge.

Theme 5: Procedural and Administrative Challenges

Nine participants identified procedural and administrative concerns involving documentation, record management, interpretation of legal provisions, and time limitations. Respondents emphasized

recurring difficulties related to incomplete records, improper documentation, and ambiguity in applying certain provisions of Republic Act No. 7160.

Participants also reported limited time availability among Lupon members, many of whom simultaneously handled multiple governance responsibilities. These administrative limitations occasionally affected the efficiency and consistency of dispute resolution proceedings.

The findings support earlier governance studies emphasizing that weak documentation systems and procedural ambiguity can undermine local governance effectiveness (Brillantes & Fernandez, 2011). Walters & Bolger (2019) likewise observed that administrative limitations often constrain the ability of barangay officials to implement dispute resolution procedures consistently.

Overall, the qualitative findings suggest that procedural effectiveness in barangay justice administration depends not only on legal mandates but also on institutional support, administrative capacity, and continuing governance development.

Best Practices in Administering Local Justice

Despite the challenges encountered in implementing the Katarungang Pambarangay, several barangays demonstrated practices that contributed to more effective dispute resolution. Thematic analysis identified three major best practices:

1. Effective mediation and promotion of amicable settlement
2. Proper observance of procedures and documentation
3. Community-based and culturally grounded approaches in dispute resolution

Theme 1: Effective Mediation and Promotion of Amicable Settlement

Despite the challenges associated with non-attendance, emotional conflict, and lack of cooperation among disputing parties, several barangays demonstrated effective mediation practices that contributed to successful settlement outcomes. Ten of the 18 participants emphasized mediation and peaceful dialogue as central approaches in administering local justice.

Participants described practices that involved active facilitation of dialogue, early engagement with complainants, and consistent encouragement of amicable settlement. Some barangay officials explained that discussions with parties often begin even before formal proceedings to reduce tension and clarify issues before mediation sessions take place. Others highlighted the role of the Punong Barangay and Lupon members in guiding conversations and encouraging compromise.

These findings suggest that effective mediation at the barangay level depends heavily on communication, patience, and the ability of officials to maintain a constructive environment for dialogue. Rather than imposing decisions, officials focused on helping disputing parties arrive at mutually acceptable agreements.

The findings align with the intent of the Katarungang Pambarangay under Republic Act No. 7160, which emphasizes amicable settlement and community reconciliation rather than adversarial adjudication. The DILG also highlights that barangay officials are expected to facilitate communication and encourage voluntary agreement among disputants.

This observation aligns with mediation scholarship emphasizing that successful community dispute resolution depends heavily on constructive dialogue, active participation, and sustained engagement among disputing parties (Wall & Dunne, 2012; Sourdin, 2016). Previous studies further suggest that mediators who maintain neutrality, patience, and effective communication are more likely to facilitate amicable settlement, particularly in emotionally sensitive disputes.

Theme 2: Proper Observance of Procedures and Documentation

Another best practice identified by participants involved careful observance of procedures and proper documentation during dispute resolution proceedings. Three participants emphasized practices such as maintaining complete records, preparing written agreements, and promptly issuing notices and summons.

Respondents explained that organized documentation helped ensure clarity, continuity, and accountability throughout the mediation process. Some participants also highlighted the importance of promptly serving summons and recording procedural developments to prevent delays and misunderstandings.

The findings indicate that procedural consistency and organized documentation contribute significantly to the efficiency and credibility of barangay justice administration. When records are properly maintained and procedures are consistently followed, disputing parties are more likely to understand the process and trust the legitimacy of outcomes.

The DILG guidelines likewise emphasize the importance of documentation, notices, certifications, and written agreements in ensuring that Katarungang Pambarangay proceedings remain valid and enforceable. Without proper records, even successfully mediated settlements may become difficult to verify or implement.

The findings support Antlöv et al. (2016), who observed that barangays demonstrating strong procedural compliance and organized record-keeping often handle disputes more effectively and transparently. Brillantes and Fernandez (2011) also emphasized that procedural consistency and documentation strengthen accountability within local governance institutions.

Overall, the findings suggest that strengthening procedural discipline and documentation practices can significantly improve the reliability and institutional credibility of barangay-level dispute resolution.

Theme 3: Community-Based and Culturally Grounded Approaches in Dispute Resolution

The study also found that some barangays integrated community-based and culturally grounded approaches into dispute resolution processes. Three participants described practices involving the participation of elders, purok-level discussions, and indigenous peace-oriented traditions such as Paniyaw, Ngilin, and Bain.

Participants explained that involving respected elders often helped reduce tension and encouraged disputing parties to cooperate during mediation. Others described how smaller community-level discussions created a more familiar and less intimidating setting for dispute resolution. Traditional practices emphasizing respect, restraint, and reconciliation were also viewed as important influences in maintaining harmony within the community.

These findings demonstrate that dispute resolution at the barangay level is not solely procedural or legal in nature. It is also shaped by cultural norms, interpersonal relationships, and indigenous values embedded within community life. The integration of culturally grounded approaches appears to make mediation more socially acceptable and responsive to local realities.

This observation supports Golangan (2019), who argued that barangay justice mechanisms become more effective when indigenous and community-based practices are incorporated into dispute resolution processes. Torres (2020) likewise emphasized that the participation of respected community members strengthens legitimacy and encourages compliance with mediated agreements.

The findings also align with broader Southeast Asian scholarship emphasizing that informal justice systems rely heavily on trust, familiarity, and shared social norms (Penetrante, 2018). In the context of Tabuk City, where indigenous traditions and close community relationships remain influential, culturally grounded approaches appear to strengthen the effectiveness of community-based justice administration.

Overall, the findings indicate that integrating formal procedures with culturally responsive practices can enhance participation, encourage settlement, and strengthen trust in barangay-level dispute resolution mechanisms.

Table 4: Extent of Application of Parliamentary-Based Procedures in Katarungang Pambarangay Proceedings

<i>Category</i>	<i>Category Mean</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
Structured Conduct of KP Proceedings	4.40	Always Applied
Deliberation and Equal Participation	3.67	Always Applied
Decision-Making and Adoption of Outcomes	4.40	Always Applied
Documentation, Compliance, and Procedural Integrity	4.49	Always Applied
Overall Mean	4.24	Always Applied

The results revealed an overall weighted mean of 4.24, interpreted as “Always Applied,” indicating that parliamentary-based procedures were consistently observed during Katarungang Pambarangay proceedings.

Among the four dimensions, “Documentation, Compliance, and Procedural Integrity” obtained the highest category mean of 4.49, followed by “Structured Conduct of KP Proceedings” and “Decision-Making and Adoption of Outcomes,” both with category means of 4.40. “Deliberation and Equal Participation” received the lowest category mean at 3.67, although it remained within the “Always Applied” interpretation.

The findings suggest that barangay officials generally demonstrate strong adherence to procedural structure during mediation and conciliation proceedings. Activities such as formally opening sessions, verifying attendance, documenting agreements, and observing procedural timelines appear to be widely practiced.

This is particularly significant because disputes handled at the barangay level are often emotionally sensitive and socially complex. Structured procedures therefore serve as mechanisms for maintaining order, ensuring fairness, and guiding discussions toward peaceful settlement.

The strongest area involved documentation and procedural integrity. Indicators such as proper recording of complaints, preparation of minutes, maintenance of confidentiality, and documentation of non-appearance all received high weighted means. These findings suggest that barangay officials recognize the importance of documentation in maintaining procedural legitimacy and institutional accountability.

At the same time, indicators related to deliberation and equal participation received comparatively lower ratings. While parties were generally given opportunities to speak, some challenges remained in managing interruptions, ensuring neutrality, and maintaining focused discussion. These findings correspond with the earlier qualitative results showing that emotional conflict, pride, and interpersonal tension often affect the flow of mediation proceedings.

The findings support De Guzman and Torres (2021), who emphasized that structured procedures help barangay officials manage discussions more effectively and maintain clarity during mediation processes. Sourdin (2016) likewise argued that clear procedural frameworks strengthen fairness and help facilitators maintain balanced participation among disputing parties.

The results further suggest that parliamentary-based procedures are not applied rigidly but are adjusted according to the demands of specific disputes and community contexts. Barangay officials appear to balance procedural structure with flexibility in order to maintain dialogue and encourage settlement.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that parliamentary-based procedures play a significant role in supporting orderly, transparent, and accountable dispute resolution at the barangay level. While challenges remain in maintaining balanced participation during emotionally charged disputes, the

consistent application of procedural structures contributes positively to the effectiveness of community-based justice administration.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings reveals that barangay officials in Tabuk City generally possess functional awareness of the Barangay Justice System and consistently apply parliamentary-based procedures during mediation and conciliation proceedings. However, the findings also demonstrate that procedural effectiveness is influenced by several institutional, interpersonal, and contextual challenges.

Quantitative findings showed that most respondents demonstrated moderate awareness of the Katarungang Pambarangay, while parliamentary-based procedures were consistently applied across dispute resolution activities. Qualitative findings further contextualized these results by revealing recurring concerns involving non-attendance of parties, emotional conflict, procedural ambiguity, insufficient training, and administrative limitations.

At the same time, the qualitative findings also demonstrated that many barangays have developed adaptive practices that strengthen local justice administration. These include active mediation, consistent documentation, culturally grounded approaches, and participatory settlement processes. Such practices suggest that barangay justice administration is not solely dependent on formal legal procedures but also on community relationships, local leadership, and culturally responsive governance approaches.

Viewed through decentralization and procedural legitimacy perspectives, the findings suggest that community-based justice systems become effective not merely through formal legal mandates but through the capacity of local institutions to sustain fairness, participation, and public trust in everyday governance interactions.

The findings further reinforce broader discussions in decentralization and local governance literature emphasizing that grassroots justice mechanisms function most effectively when institutional procedures are combined with community trust, participatory governance, and culturally responsive approaches to dispute resolution.

The findings also contribute to broader international discussions on hybrid justice systems by illustrating how formal procedural governance and culturally embedded mediation practices coexist within decentralized local governance environments.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the awareness, implementation challenges, and governance practices of barangay officials in relation to the Barangay Justice System and the application of parliamentary-based procedures in Tabuk City, Philippines. Specifically, the study sought to determine the level of awareness of barangay officials regarding the Katarungang Pambarangay, identify the major challenges encountered during dispute resolution processes, document existing best practices, and assess the extent to which parliamentary-based procedures were applied in barangay governance and mediation activities.

The findings revealed that most barangay officials demonstrated a moderate level of awareness regarding the Barangay Justice System, suggesting that respondents generally possessed functional knowledge of mediation and conciliation procedures. However, the results also indicated that procedural understanding was not always comprehensive, particularly in relation to technical and documentation-related processes. The study further identified several institutional and operational challenges affecting the implementation of the Katarungang Pambarangay, including non-attendance of disputing parties, insufficient procedural training, administrative limitations, emotional conflicts during mediation, and perceived bias or political influence within some dispute resolution contexts. Despite these challenges, barangay officials demonstrated adaptive governance practices such as promoting amicable settlement, maintaining procedural documentation, and integrating culturally grounded approaches into mediation proceedings. Quantitative findings likewise showed that

parliamentary-based procedures were consistently applied during barangay dispute resolution activities, particularly in relation to procedural structure, documentation, and decision-making processes.

The findings contribute to broader discussions on decentralization, institutional legitimacy, and community-based justice systems. The study reinforces the argument that the effectiveness of grassroots dispute resolution mechanisms depends not only on legal mandates and formal governance structures but also on the procedural competence, institutional preparedness, and relational capacity of local governance actors. The findings also support governance theories emphasizing the importance of procedural legitimacy, transparency, and participatory governance in strengthening public trust and institutional accountability. In practice, the study highlights the need for continuing governance education, technical training, and procedural capacity-building programs for barangay officials, particularly in areas involving mediation techniques, documentation standards, and parliamentary governance procedures.

From an organizational and policy perspective, the findings suggest that local government institutions should strengthen support systems for barangay justice administration through sustained training initiatives, improved documentation systems, and clearer procedural guidelines. Capacity-building efforts should not focus solely on technical legal procedures but should also address interpersonal communication, conflict management, and culturally responsive mediation practices. Strengthening these institutional dimensions may contribute to more consistent, credible, and accessible community-based dispute resolution processes.

The study was not without limitations. The research focused only on selected barangays in Tabuk City, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other governance contexts in the Philippines. The study also relied heavily on self-reported perceptions of barangay officials, which may have been influenced by personal interpretation or social desirability. Future studies may expand the geographic scope of analysis, incorporate comparative local governance contexts, and include perspectives from disputing parties or community residents to provide a more comprehensive assessment of barangay justice effectiveness. Further research may also explore the long-term impact of governance training programs and procedural reforms on mediation outcomes and institutional trust.

Overall, the study advances understanding of how procedural governance, institutional capacity, and community-based justice intersect within grassroots governance systems. By examining parliamentary governance and procedural legitimacy as interconnected institutional processes, the study contributes to ongoing efforts to strengthen decentralized governance and promote more responsive, participatory, and culturally grounded justice mechanisms within contemporary Philippine society.

DECLARATION

1. Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

2. Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used generative AI and AI-assisted technologies to support language refinement, grammatical editing, and organization of academic content. The authors carefully reviewed, revised, and validated all generated outputs and take full responsibility for the content, interpretation, accuracy, and originality of the manuscript.

3. Data availability statement

The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to ethical and confidentiality considerations.

4. Ethics statement

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the local government unit of Tabuk City and the participating barangays. Written informed consent was secured from all participants prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were strictly maintained throughout the study.

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6. Contributor Role Taxonomy (CRediT)

Daisy A. Mamaril: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, writing – Original Draft, Writing – Review & Editing.

Regie S. Edduba: Supervision, Validation, Methodology, Formal Analysis, Writing – Review & Editing, Project Administration.

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