

Challenges in the Implementation of Katarungang Pambarangay Law

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the implementation of the Katarungang Pambarangay (KP) Law and the challenges faced by the Lupong Tagapamayapa in selected barangays of Naga City, 2024. It identified the most common cases filed, particularly small claims, unjust vexation, and physical injuries. The research assessed the level of implementation of the KP Law in terms of mediation and conciliation, and examined challenges such as non-appearance of parties, social status influence, stakeholder interference, trust and confidence issues, and delays due to limited resources. Furthermore, it analyzed the association between common cases and the level of KP implementation, as well as differences across aspects and respondents. The study proposed a plan of action to strengthen the KP Law's implementation and address the recurring challenges encountered by the Lupong Tagapamayapa. The respondents of the study were the members of Lupon Tagapamayapa, Barangay Officials, and identified residents involved in dispute resolution. Purposive sampling was used in selecting the respondents. The descriptive-comparative design was employed. The Katarungang Pambarangay (KP) Law proves to be an essential mechanism in resolving everyday disputes within communities, with small claims emerging as the most frequently filed cases. Barangay C and Barangay E stand out as the most active in terms of case filings, while Barangay B records the least, reflecting varying levels of community engagement. Implementation of the KP Law is strong across its three aspects, mediation, conciliation, and referral, with referral being the most consistently applied, mediation highly practiced, and conciliation showing relative weakness due to challenges in sustaining compromise agreements. Despite its active utilization, the system's overall effectiveness is hindered by social dynamics and structural constraints, which reduce efficiency, compromise fairness, and weaken community trust in barangay justice, underscoring the need for continuous improvement in sustaining equitable and reliable conflict resolution.

Keywords: community engagement, conflict resolution, structural constraints, trust.

INTRODUCTION

Community-based dispute resolution systems are widely practiced across the globe, particularly in regions where access to formal courts is limited. Nearly two-thirds of the world's population relies on informal or local justice mechanisms because they are affordable, accessible, and culturally relevant (UNDP, 2025; UNAFEI, 2023; Avancena et al., 2023; Katada et al., 2023; UNDP Yemen, 2025). These systems emphasize mediation, conciliation, and restorative justice, often led by community elders or local councils.

While effective in reducing court congestion and fostering harmony, they face recurring challenges such as inconsistency in outcomes, lack of oversight, and weak integration with national legal frameworks. These global experiences highlight the importance of strengthening local justice systems through institutional support, modernization, and community participation.

The relevance of grassroots justice systems is further underscored by their alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 16.3 calls for promoting the rule of law and ensuring equal access to justice, SDG 11.3 emphasizes inclusive and sustainable communities, and SDG 10.2 focuses on empowering marginalized groups. The Katarungang Pambarangay (KP) system directly contributes to these goals by fostering peace, inclusivity, and justice at the barangay level. However, its effectiveness depends on consistent implementation, institutional reinforcement, and integration with broader justice systems.

In the Philippines, the KP system was formally established under the Local Government Code of 1991 (Republic Act No. 7160), mandating the creation of the Lupon ng Tagapamayapa in every barangay to resolve disputes through mediation, conciliation, and arbitration. Recent issuances, such as the DOJ Memorandum Circular (2025) and the DILG Advisory (2024), reaffirm KP's role as a frontline mechanism for declogging court dockets and promoting peace through amicable settlement. Despite this legal foundation, challenges persist. National studies reveal systemic gaps: Arnaldo et al. (2022) observed inadequate training among Lupon members; Lorenzo et al. (2023) highlighted the absence of digital case management tools; Ateneo Human Rights Center (2024) reported barriers faced by women and marginalized groups; and De Torres & Del Rosario (2023) found unresolved disputes frequently escalating to litigation.

Local research in Bicol and Naga City highlights operational challenges that mirror national concerns. Damayon et al. (2023) reported case backlogs and repeat disputes undermining trust in KP, while Adamos (2023) identified resource constraints in funding and facilities. Arnaldo et al. (2022) noted limited public awareness of KP procedures, Zurtiga et al. (2022) emphasized weak community participation, and Mendoza et al. (2023) observed recurring disputes between the same parties, underscoring limitations in achieving lasting settlements. Naga City, with its dual character as a progressive urban hub and a community rooted in traditional dispute resolution, provides an ideal setting to assess KP's effectiveness. This study is significant for barangay officials, Lupon members, policymakers, and community residents as it addresses persistent challenges in KP implementation. By examining unresolved disputes, repeat complaints, and operational inefficiencies, the research aims to generate evidence-based insights that can guide reforms, strengthen grassroots justice delivery, and foster trust in local governance.

The conduct of this research arises from the recurring challenges that undermine KP's credibility and effectiveness. Identifying these gaps will provide actionable recommendations to improve KP's efficiency, align it with the SDGs, and strengthen grassroots justice in Naga City and beyond. Ultimately, this study seeks to ensure that KP fulfills its mandate of delivering accessible, impartial, and sustainable justice at the community level, contributing to peacebuilding and the strengthening of the rule of law.

Research Objectives

This study determined the level of implementation of the Katarungang Pambarangay Law and the challenges encountered by the Lupon ng Tagapamayapa in selected barangays in Naga City. Specifically, the following objectives were considered: identified the most common cases filed at the Lupon ng Tagapamayapa, particularly in terms of small claims, unjust vexation, and physical injuries; assessed the level of implementation of the Katarungang Pambarangay Law in mediation, conciliation, and referral;

examined the challenges encountered by the Lupong Tagapamayapa in the implementation of the Katarungang Pambarangay Law, along the non-appearance of concerned parties, the social status of persons involved, the influence of other stakeholders, the difficulty in resolution, trust and confidence, and the slow resolution due to lack of resources; determined the significant association between the most common cases filed in the Lupong Tagapamayapa and the level of implementation of the KP; established the significant differences in the level of implementation of the KP among aspects and among respondents; and recommended a plan of action that can improve the implementation of the KP Law and address the challenges encountered by the LT.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive-associational-comparative design to provide a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of the Katarungang Pambarangay (KP) Law and the challenges encountered by the Lupon Tagapamayapa (LT). The descriptive design was applied to identify and describe the most common cases filed, such as small claims, unjust vexation, and physical injuries, presenting the current status of disputes and the level of KP implementation in mediation, conciliation, and referral. The associational design was employed to determine the significant relationship between the types of cases filed and the effectiveness of KP processes, establishing correlations between dispute categories and resolution outcomes. Meanwhile, the comparative design was used to examine significant differences in KP implementation across its major aspects and among respondents, highlighting variations in performance and perceptions.

Supporting studies reinforce these methodological approaches. Sotto (2021) and Lim (2019) emphasized the descriptive role of KP in identifying disputes and enhancing access to justice. Noveloso et al. (2024) and Lupao et al. (2022) demonstrated associations between community awareness, resource limitations, and dispute resolution effectiveness. Reyes (2020) and Ateneo Human Rights Center (2024) highlighted comparative differences in KP implementation across urban and rural settings, as well as in contexts involving gender, child-friendliness, and indigenous peoples.

Data were gathered through structured questionnaires patterned from the provisions of the Katarungang Pambarangay Law in Republic Act 7160 (The Local Government Code of 1991) and the DILG Advisory (2025) to measure the level of KP Law implementation in terms of mediation, conciliation, and referral, rated on a four-point Likert scale:

Weight	Scale Interval	Interpretation
4	3.26-4.00	Very Much Implemented (VMI)
3	2.51-3.25	Much Implemented (MI)
2	1.76-2.50	Fairly Implemented (FI)
1	1.00-1.75	Less Implemented (LI)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study on the level of implementation of the Katarungang Pambarangay Law and the challenges encountered by the Lupong Tagapamayapa in selected barangays in Naga City. The results are organized according to the research objectives, highlighting the most common cases filed, the extent of mediation and conciliation, the challenges faced in implementation, the

associations between cases and implementation, the differences among respondents, and the proposed plan of action.

Most Common Cases Filed at the Lupon Tagamayapa

Table 1a outlines the most common cases based on the documents filed at the Lupon Tagapamaya across five barangays. For small claims, Barangay C recorded the greatest number with 21, followed by Barangay A with 18, Barangay B with 16, Barangay E with 15, and Barangay D with the least at 14, giving a total of 84.

Table 1a
Most Common Cases based on the Documents Filed at the Lupon Tagapamaya

Barangay	(f)			Total	%
	Small Claim	Unjust Vexation	Physical Injury		
A	18	10	5	33	18.64
B	16	8	4	28	15.82
C	21	14	8	43	24.29
D	14	11	7	32	18.08
E	15	17	9	41	23.16
Total	84	60	33	177	100

In unjust vexation, Barangay E registered the highest with 17, next was Barangay C with 14, Barangay D with 11, Barangay A with 10, and Barangay B with the lowest at 8, summing up to 60. For physical injury, Barangay E again had the largest number with 9, followed by Barangay C with 8, Barangay D with 7, Barangay A with 5, and Barangay B with the least at 4, reaching a total of 33. Looking at the overall totals per barangay, Barangay C had the most cases with 43, closely followed by Barangay E with 41, then Barangay A with 33, Barangay D with 32, and Barangay B with the lowest at 28, amounting to a total of 177. The results show clear variations in the frequency of disputes across barangays, and when examined per case type, deeper insights emerge. For small claims, Barangay C leads with the highest number, reflecting more financial or contractual disagreements, while Barangay D has the least, suggesting fewer monetary disputes or stronger informal settlements; Barangays A, B, and E fall in between, showing moderate levels of financial disputes. In unjust vexation, Barangay E tops the list, pointing to heightened interpersonal conflicts, while Barangay B has the lowest, indicating stronger cohesion; Barangays C, D, and A occupy the middle range, showing varying degrees of social tension. For physical injury, Barangay E again ranks highest, implying more frequent altercations, while Barangay B has the least, suggesting a calmer environment; Barangays C, D, and A fall in between, reflecting moderate levels of physical confrontations. Overall, Barangay C and E consistently appear at the top across categories, while Barangay B remains lowest, with A and D positioned in the middle, highlighting distinct social and economic realities that shape the nature of disputes in each community.

The variations in barangay dispute filings reveal how communities balance formal and informal mechanisms of resolution, with higher counts reflecting reliance on institutional processes, lower counts pointing to cohesive social ties that prevent escalation, and mid-range figures indicating mixed dynamics shaped by both social and economic interactions. These findings align with scholarship that underscores the effectiveness of mediation and conciliation when supported by trained Lupon members (Acabay et al.,

2021), critiques inconsistencies in the legal framework (Valones, 2022), and highlights the peace-building role of Katarungang Pambarangay (Almazan, 2023). Studies in Nueva Vizcaya (Ordoñez & Ordoñez, 2025) and restorative justice contexts (Padmavathi & Hashmi, 2023) further emphasize community trust, adaptability, and reconciliation as central to grassroots justice. Built on Deutsch’s Conflict Resolution Theory (1973), updated by Lai (2023), the analysis shows that cooperation, communication, and structured processes explain why barangays differ in dispute frequency and management, ultimately demonstrating that the Lupon Tagapamaya functions not only as a venue for resolving conflicts but also as a mirror of each community’s social cohesion and economic dynamics.

Table 1b presents the most common cases filed for barangay dispute resolution by theme. This highlights the patterns of causes, the nature of disputes, and the critical factors influencing resolution. It shows that while small claims are rooted in financial practices, unjust vexation stems from social tensions, and physical injuries from escalated conflicts, the success of barangay mediation depends heavily on timely attendance and trust in impartiality.

Table 1b
Most Common Cases filed for Barangay Dispute Resolution by Theme

Common Case	Key Causes / Reasons	Illustrative Responses	Settlement Process	Implications for Resolution	Other Relevant Factors
Small Claims	Informal lending practices; trust-based transactions without documentation; repayment issues	“Utang dahil sa karaniwan ito sa komunidad madalas nababayaran oras”; “Pinahiram ko pero wala kaming kasulatan”; “Nagkautang ngunit hindi na nabayaran”	Mediation by Punong Barangay (15 days); Lupon Mediation (15 days); Pangkat Hearing (15 days); maximum 45 days before referral to court	Financial disputes escalate quickly to a lack of formal agreements, requiring barangay mediation	Attendance issues due to work; trust in fairness and transparency; perceived bias erodes confidence
Unjust Vexation	Interpersonal/neighborhood conflicts; gossip, noise, boundary disputes, irritations	“Paninirang puri o mga chismis”; “Reklamo dahil sa malakas na ingay”; “Hindi pagkakaunawaan dahil sa alagang hayop”	Same 45-day mediation process: Barangay → Lupon → Pangkat Hearing; often resolved earlier	Everyday social tensions often escalate into formal complaints, reflecting community dynamics	Fear of retaliation; reluctance to attend hearings; importance of impartiality in mediation

Common Case	Key Causes / Reasons	Illustrative Responses	Settlement Process	Implications for Resolution	Other Relevant Factors
Physical Injury	Personal conflicts escalating into physical confrontations; anger and provocation	“Minor physical injuries dahil sa simpleng alitan”; “Nasuntok dahil sa mainit na argumento”; “Nagkaroon ng sugatan matapos ang alitan”	through dialogue Barangay mediation within 45 days; unresolving, referred to court; critical prevent escalation	Verbal physical, to showing early need for intervention and mediation	Victims may hesitate to participate; delays the undermine trust; need for swift, impartial handling

The data shows three distinct themes of barangay disputes. Small Claims are primarily caused by informal lending practices and trust-based transactions without documentation, often leading to repayment issues. Illustrative responses include statements such as “Utang dahil karaniwan ito sa komunidad at madalas hindi nababayaran sa oras” and “Pinahiram ko pero wala kaming kasulatan.” [Debt because it is common in the community and often not paid on time. I lent money, but we had no written agreement.] These disputes follow a settlement process beginning with mediation by the Punong Barangay, then Lupon Mediation, and finally Pangkat Hearing, all within a maximum of 45 days before referral to court. Unjust Vexation arises from interpersonal or neighborhood conflicts, including gossip, noise, and minor irritations, with responses like “Paninirang puri o mga chismis” and “Reklamo dahil sa malakas na ingay.” [Defamation or gossip. Complaint due to loud noise.] These cases also undergo the same 45-day mediation process, often resolved through dialogue, demonstrating the effectiveness of community-based mechanisms in addressing minor interpersonal disputes before escalation to formal courts. Physical Injury cases stem from personal conflicts escalating into physical confrontations, with responses such as “Minor physical injuries dahil sa simpleng alitan” and “Nasuntok dahil sa mainit na argumento.” [Minor physical injuries due to a simple quarrel. Got punched because of a heated argument.] These are mediated at the barangay level within 45 days, but unresolved cases are referred to court.

The data reveal that barangay disputes reflect deeper social and economic dynamics, with small claims cases exposing reliance on informal lending systems, unjust vexation highlighting fragile neighborhood relations, and physical injury disputes underscoring the urgency of early intervention. These patterns show that barangay justice functions as both a legal and social mechanism, addressing financial literacy gaps, community cohesion, and preventive conflict management. Scholarship reinforces these findings, noting how informal lending often triggers disputes (Reyes, 2021; Dela Cruz, 2024), neighborhood tensions escalate into mediation (Garcia & Santos, 2022; Tanaka, 2022), and impartiality and trust remain central to effective resolution (Lee, 2023). More recent studies emphasize localized practices, transparency, and community participation as key to grassroots justice, while challenges in resources and consistency

explain variations across regions (Almazan, 2023; Guia & Mangubat, 2021; Agoot & Dela Cruz, 2023; Dizon, 2022; Santos & Reyes, 2024). Rooted in Deutsch’s Conflict Resolution Theory (1973), updated by Lai (2023), and supported by Zehr’s Restorative Justice Theory (1990), advanced by Suzuki (2023), the analysis shows that structured mediation, reconciliation, and dialogue transform disputes into cooperative outcomes, demonstrating how barangay-level processes sustain harmony, prevent escalation, and strengthen community cohesion.

Level of Implementation of the Katarungang Pambarangay

The level of implementation of the Katarungang Pambarangay in mediation, conciliation, and referral is presented in Table 2, which provides the structured data on how these processes are carried out within the barangay justice system. For Group A, the highest aspect was “mediation” with a weighted mean of 3.56, followed by “referral” at 3.51, while the lowest was conciliation at 3.48, all “very much implemented.” For Group B, the highest aspect was “referral” at 3.81, followed by medication at 3.75, while the lowest was conciliation at 3.65, all “very much implemented,” too. For Group C, the highest aspect was mediation at 3.42, followed by referral at 3.41, while the lowest was conciliation at 3.31, all of which were “very much implemented.” Among aspects, the highest was “referral” with an average weighted mean of 3.58, followed by “mediation” at 3.56, while the lowest was “conciliation” at 3.48, all “very much implemented.” Among respondents, A obtained the highest average weighted mean of 3.72, followed by A at 3.52, while the lowest was C at 3.38, all “very much implemented,” as well. The overall average weighted mean was 3.54, interpreted as “very much implemented.”

Table 2
Level of Implementation of the Katarungang Pambarangay Law

Aspects	A	B	C	AWM	Int.	R
Mediation	3.56	3.71	3.42	3.56	VMI	2
Conciliation	3.48	3.65	3.31	3.48	VMI	3
Referral	3.51	3.81	3.41	3.58	VMI	1
Overall Average Weighted Mean	3.52	3.72	3.38	3.54		
Interpretation	VMI	VMI	VMI	VMI		
Rank	2	1	3			

Note: 3.26-4.00=Very Much Implemented, 2.51-3.25=Much Implemented, 1.76-2.50=Fairly Implemented, 1.00-1.75=Less Implemented (LI); A=Lupon, B=Barangay Officials, C=Constituents.

The findings show that while the Katarungang Pambarangay (KP) system is consistently “very much implemented” across mediation, conciliation, and referral, its strongest aspects lie in procedural escalation and mediation, reflecting efficiency in immediate resolution and accessibility of justice. Conciliation, however, remains the weakest, pointing to challenges in sustaining compromise agreements and long-term harmony. Contemporary studies confirm these results, noting that KP is effective in grassroots dispute resolution but constrained by attendance, resources, neutrality, and trust (DILG Region V, 2024; Studocu, 2023; Barcellano, 2025; Cruz, 2023; Faina, 2025). Secured in Deutsch’s Conflict Resolution Theory (1973), updated by Lai (2023), the analysis underscores that constructive negotiation and structured processes explain KP’s strength in mediation and referral, while weaker conciliation outcomes highlight the need for stronger accountability, monitoring, and community trust. Thus, KP remains a reliable

framework for grassroots justice delivery, but reinforcing conciliation is crucial to balance procedural efficiency with lasting community cohesion.

Challenges Encountered by the Lupon Tagapamanya (LT) in the Implementation of the Katarungang Pambarangay (KP) Law

Shown in Table 3 are six interconnected themes that capture the challenges faced by the LT in implementing the KP Law, from the documentary analysis and focus group discussions. These are non-appearance of parties, social status differences, stakeholder influence, difficulty in resolution, trust and confidence, and resource limitations.

Non-appearance of Parties. This refers to the absence of concerned individuals during mediation or conciliation sessions, causing delays in dispute resolution. Respondents shared, “May mga pagkakataon po na hindi dumadalo ang isa sa mga partido kahit pinatawag na ng barangay,” and “Minsan po hindi sumisipot ang kabilang panig kaya napo-postpone ang mediation,” while others noted, “May mga kaso po na paulit-ulit na ipinapatawag pero hindi pa rin dumadalo.” [There are instances when one of the parties does not attend even if summoned by the barangay. Sometimes the other party does not show up, causing the mediation to be postponed. There are cases where a party is repeatedly summoned but still does not attend.] The underlying factors include work obligations, personal matters, lack of interest, and unwillingness to participate. The implication is that settlement processes are postponed, prolonging disputes and reducing efficiency.

Table 3
Challenges Encountered by the LT in the Implementation of the KP Law

Theme	Description	Illustrative Quotes	Underlying Factors	Implications for KP Implementation
Non-appearance of Parties	Absence of concerned parties during mediation or conciliation sessions delays resolution.	“May mga pagkakataon po na hindi dumadalo ang isa sa mga partido kahit pinatawag na ng barangay.” “Minsan po hindi sumisipot ang kabilang panig kaya napo-postpone ang mediation.” “May mga kaso po na paulit-ulit na ipinapatawag pero hindi pa rin dumadalo.”	Work obligations, personal matters, lack of interest, or unwillingness to participate.	Causes postponements, prolongs disputes, undermines efficiency, and weakens trust in the process.
Social Status Differences	Power imbalance when individuals of higher social standing dominate discussions.	“Nahihiya magsalita ang kabilang panig lalo na kung mas mataas ang katayuan sa buhay ng kausap nila.” “Mas may impluwensya sa barangay kaya nagiging mahirap balansehin ang usapan.” “Minsan po natatakot ang mahihirap na magsalita dahil baka hindi sila pakinggan.”	Cultural norms, economic inequality, political influence, intimidation.	Creates inequality in participation, discourages weaker parties, and challenges fairness in mediation.

Theme	Description	Illustrative Quotes	Underlying Factors	Implications for KP Implementation
Influence of Stakeholders	Relatives, friends, neighbors interfere, influencing decisions of parties.	<p>“Minsan po may nakikisawsaw na kamag-anak o kaibigan kaya lalo lang lumalala ang hindi pagkakaunawaan.”</p> <p>“May mga pagkakataon po na pinapangunahan ng ibang tao ang desisyon ng nagrereklamo.”</p> <p>“May mga kapitbahay na nakikialam at nagdadagdag ng isyu.”</p>	Strong kinship ties, community pressure, and external manipulation.	Neutrality is compromised, disputes and Lupon’s authority is undermined.
Difficulty in Resolution	Parties are unwilling to compromise due to emotions or long-standing disagreements.	<p>“Matigas ang ulo ng parehong panig kaya mahirap silang pag-ayusin.”</p> <p>“Minsan po hindi handang magpatawad ang isa sa mga partido kaya tumatagal ang pagresolba ng kaso.”</p> <p>“May mga alitan na matagal nang nakaugat kaya mahirap nang ayusin.”</p>	Deep-seated conflicts, pride, unresolved grievances, and emotional attachment.	Requires greater effort from Lupon, prolongs mediation, and reduces the chances of a peaceful settlement.
Trust and Confidence	Effectiveness depends on the community's trust in Lupon’s fairness and transparency.	<p>“Kapag may tiwala ang mga tao sa Lupon, mas madali silang lumapit para magpaayos ng problema.”</p> <p>“May ilan pa ring nagdadalawang-isip na magreklamo sa barangay dahil iniisip nila na baka may kinikilingan.”</p> <p>“Kung nakikita nilang patas ang Lupon, mas nagiging bukas sila sa proseso.”</p>	Past experiences, perceived bias, lack of transparency, and political affiliations.	High trust encourages participation; low trust discourages use of KP, weakening its legitimacy.
Resource Limitations	Lack of facilities, materials, availability of Lupon members slows resolution.	<p>“Minsan po kulang sa gamit o dokumento kaya natatagalan ang pagproseso ng mga kaso.”</p> <p>“Hindi rin po palaging available ang mga Lupon members dahil may iba rin silang responsibilidad.”</p> <p>“May mga barangay na walang maayos na lugar para sa mediation.”</p>	Limited funding, inadequate training, and competing responsibilities of Lupon members.	Delays in case processing, and inefficiency, and reduced credibility of the Lupon KP system.

Social Status Differences. This highlights power imbalances when individuals of higher social standing dominate discussions. Respondents explained, “Nahihiya magsalita ang kabilang panig lalo na kung mas mataas ang katayuan sa buhay ng kausap nila,” and “Mas may impluwensya sa barangay kaya nagiging mahirap balansehin ang usapan,” [The other party feels shy to speak, especially if the person they are talking to has a higher social status. Has more influence in the barangay, making it difficult to balance the

discussion.] While others added, “Minsan po natatakot ang mahihirap na magsalita dahil baka hindi sila pakinggan.” [Sometimes the poor are afraid to speak because they fear they might not be heard.] The underlying factors include cultural norms, economic inequality, political influence, and intimidation. The weaker parties are discouraged from participating fully, challenging fairness in mediation.

Influence of Stakeholders. This occurs when relatives, friends, or neighbors interfere and influence the decisions of the parties involved. Respondents noted, “Minsan po may nakikisawsaw na kamag-anak o kaibigan kaya lalo lang lumalala ang hindi pagkakaunawaan,” and “May mga pagkakataon po na pinapangunahan ng ibang tao ang desisyon ng nagrereklamo,” while others shared, “May mga kapitbahay na nakikialam at nagdadagdag ng isyu.” [Sometimes a relative or friend interferes, which only worsens the misunderstanding. There are instances when other people influence or dictate the complainant’s decision. Some neighbors meddle and add to the issue.] The underlying factors include strong kinship ties, community pressure, gossip, and external manipulation. Neutrality is compromised, disputes escalate, and the Lupon’s authority is undermined.

Difficulty in Resolution. This arises when parties are unwilling to compromise due to emotions or long-standing disagreements. Respondents expressed, “Matigas ang ulo ng parehong panig kaya mahirap silang pag-ayusin,” and “Minsan po hindi handang magpatawad ang isa sa mga partido kaya tumatagal ang pagresolba ng kaso,” while others added, “May mga alitan na matagal nang nakaugat kaya mahirap nang ayusin.” [Both parties are stubborn, making it difficult to reconcile them. Sometimes one of the parties is not ready to forgive, causing the resolution of the case to take longer. Some disputes have long been rooted, making them difficult to resolve.] This includes deep-seated conflicts, pride, unresolved grievances, and emotional attachment. The Lupon members are expected to exert greater effort, prolonging mediation and reducing the chances of peaceful settlement.

Trust and Confidence. This emphasizes that effectiveness depends on community trust in the Lupon’s fairness and transparency. Respondents shared, “Kapag may tiwala ang mga tao sa Lupon, mas madali silang lumapit para magpaayos ng problema,” and “May ilan pa ring nagdadalawang-isip na magreklamo sa barangay dahil iniisip nila na baka may kinikilingan,” while others explained, “Kung nakikita nilang patas ang Lupon, mas nagiging bukas sila sa proseso.” [When people trust the Lupon, they find it easier to approach for help in resolving problems. There are still some who hesitate to file complaints with the barangay because they think there might be bias. If they see that the Lupon is fair, they become more open to the process.] This includes past experiences, perceived bias, lack of transparency, and political affiliations. The high trust encourages participation, while low trust discourages use of KP, weakening its legitimacy.

Resource Limitations. This refers to the lack of facilities, materials, or the availability of Lupon members that slow down dispute resolution. Respondents explained, “Minsan po kulang sa gamit o dokumento kaya natatagalan ang pagproseso ng mga kaso,” and “Hindi rin po palaging available ang mga Lupon members dahil may iba rin silang responsibilidad,” while others added, “May mga barangay na walang maayos na lugar para sa mediation.” [Sometimes there is a lack of equipment or documents, causing delays in case processing. The Lupon members are also not always available because they have other responsibilities. Some barangays do not have a proper place for mediation.] This includes limited funding, inadequate training, and competing responsibilities of Lupon members. The delays in case processing reduce efficiency and weaken the credibility of the KP system.

The findings reveal that while the Katarungang Pambarangay (KP) system provides accessible grassroots justice, its effectiveness is constrained by systemic and cultural challenges such as non-appearance, social

status inequalities, stakeholder influence, emotional conflicts, trust issues, and resource limitations. These dynamics show that KP is procedurally strong but struggles to ensure equitable and timely outcomes, with sustainability hinging on stronger attendance mechanisms, empowerment of marginalized voices, transparency, and adequate resources. Contemporary studies confirm similar challenges in community mediation, highlighting attendance, power imbalances, and trust as recurring issues (Johnson, 2022; Lee, 2023; Gonzales, 2022; Abuela, 2024; Cruz, 2023). Founded on Bourdieu’s Social Capital Theory (1986), revisited by Horak (2024), the analysis underscores that justice at the grassroots level is inseparable from the quality of social relationships, where trust networks, inclusivity, and equitable participation are essential for sustaining long-term peace and strengthening compliance with agreements. Thus, KP remains vital but requires systemic support and cultural sensitivity to achieve lasting harmony.

Association between the Most Common Cases Filed in the Lupong Tagapamayapa and the Level of Implementation of the KP.

Table 4 presents the association between the most common cases filed in the Lupong Tagapamayapa and the level of implementation of the Katarungang Pambarangay (KP). By examining the frequency of disputes brought before the Lupong and how effectively the KP mechanisms are applied, this table highlights the extent to which barangay justice systems respond to community conflicts. The chi-square test result of $\chi^2 = 4.03$, $df = 8$, $p = 0.854$, shows that there is no statistically significant association between the barangay and the type of cases filed in the Lupong Tagapamayapa. The p-value of 0.854, which is far above the conventional threshold of 0.05, indicates that the observed distribution of cases across barangays is not meaningfully different. Since the p-value exceeds 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted, there is no significant relationship between barangay and type of cases filed, and the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Table 5

Association between the Most Common Cases Filed in the Lupong Tagapamayapa and the Level of Implementation of the KP.

Variables	χ^2	df	p-value	Interpretation
Barangay × Type of Cases	4.03	8	0.854	Not Significant

The results show that the types of disputes filed in the Lupong Tagapamayapa are consistent across barangays, driven more by recurring socio-cultural and community realities than by the level of KP implementation. Interpersonal conflicts, property disputes, and minor criminal complaints arise naturally in community life, with KP’s role focused on resolution rather than altering dispute categories. Statistical evidence confirms no significant relationship between barangay and case type, underscoring that KP’s strength lies in procedural efficiency, mediation quality, and trust-building capacity. Scholarship supports this conclusion, noting that grassroots disputes are shaped by structural and cultural factors, while KP influences outcomes rather than occurrence (Cruz & Santos, 2022; Villanueva, 2021; Reyes, 2023; Mendoza, 2020; Garcia & Lopez, 2021). Supported by Deutsch’s Conflict Resolution Theory (1973), refined by Lai (2023), the findings highlight that conflict is inevitable but can be transformed through structured mediation into constructive outcomes. Thus, KP remains vital not for changing dispute types but for ensuring fair, efficient, and trust-based resolution that strengthens community harmony.

Differences in the Level of Implementation of the KP among Aspects and among Respondents.

Table 5 presents the differences in the level of implementation of the Katarungang Pambarangay (KP) across its three major aspects: mediation, conciliation, and referral. The results show that mediation and conciliation do not significantly differ among respondents, indicating consistency in their application. In contrast, referral demonstrates a significant difference, with an F-value of 10.60 and a p-value of 0.002, suggesting variability in how respondents implement or experience this aspect of KP.

Table 5**Differences in the Level of Implementation of the KP among Aspects and among Respondents.**

Aspects	Factors	Mean Square	F	p-value	Interpretation
Mediation	Respondents	0.1066	1.30	0.308	Not Significant
Conciliation	Respondents	0.1463	2.55	0.119	Not Significant
Referral	Respondents	0.2160	10.60	0.002	Significant

The findings show that mediation and conciliation are uniformly practiced across barangays, reflecting the strength of established KP protocols and the familiarity of officials with internal mechanisms of dispute resolution. However, referral practices vary significantly, underscoring systemic gaps tied to institutional support, training, and community trust in formal justice systems. Scholarship confirms that while mediation and conciliation are standardized, referral remains uneven due to unclear guidelines, resource constraints, and external cooperation challenges (Bautista, 2022; Ramos & Dela Cruz, 2021; Navarro, 2023; Flores, 2020; Tan & Rivera, 2024). Based on Systems Theory (von Bertalanffy, 1968; Bhaskar, 2023), these results highlight that KP's effectiveness depends not only on its internal processes but also on its integration with broader justice systems. While KP ensures consistent grassroots resolution, strengthening referral procedures and institutional linkages is essential to achieve equitable and comprehensive justice delivery.

A plan of action that can improve the implementation of the KP Law and address the challenges encountered by the LT

The study highlights that while mediation and conciliation are uniformly practiced due to established KP protocols, referral remains the most inconsistent aspect of implementation, reflecting systemic gaps in coordination with external institutions such as courts, police, and social services. These disparities stem from unclear guidelines, limited training, resource constraints, and varying levels of community trust, underscoring the need for standardized referral procedures, stronger institutional linkages, and enhanced capacity-building. Recent scholarship supports these findings, noting that while barangay justice systems are effective in peace-building, referral effectiveness depends heavily on institutional partnerships, trust, and resources (Almazan, 2024; Pereyra et al., 2023; Roy & Yabut, 2025; Mente et al., 2024; Pancho & Bercilla, 2025; Delgado, 2023; Flores, 2020). Guided by a modified ADDIE model: Analyze, Design, Develop, the study proposes concrete interventions such as a Referral Handbook, training modules, digital tracking tools, and community dialogues to strengthen KP's overall effectiveness. Grounded in Systems Theory (von Bertalanffy, 1968; Bhaskar, 2023), the analysis emphasizes that KP functions as a subsystem within the broader justice system, where mediation and conciliation operate effectively internally, but referral requires stronger integration with external institutions to ensure equitable and comprehensive justice delivery.

CONCLUSIONS

The Katarungang Pambarangay (KP) Law remains highly relevant in resolving everyday community disputes, with small claims as the most common cases and notable variations in case filings across barangays. KP is strongly implemented in mediation, conciliation, and referral, though conciliation emerges as the weakest area due to challenges in sustaining compromise agreements. Effectiveness is further hindered by social dynamics and structural constraints that compromise fairness and trust. Importantly, KP implementation does not significantly influence the types of disputes filed, as these arise from recurring socio-cultural realities consistent across barangays. While mediation and conciliation are uniformly practiced, referral shows significant variability, reflecting systemic gaps in coordination with external institutions. In its entirety, KP demonstrates procedural strength and community relevance but requires stronger support systems, standardized referral practices, and trust-building measures to ensure equitable and sustainable justice delivery.

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