

The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations in Advancing Peace Education in Selected Barangays in Zamboanga del Sur: A Case Study

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Abstract. This case study explores the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in advancing peace education in selected barangays of Zamboanga del Sur, Philippines. The study aims to provide insights into the specific challenges and strategies of NGOs promoting peace education at the local level. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews with representatives from two NGOs actively engaged in peace education initiatives across multiple barangays. Thematic analysis revealed that although these organizations are dedicated to fostering peace, maintaining Indigenous culture, and engaging in community service, they face several obstacles: (1) Indigenous children's lack of interest and awareness, as well as Indigenous leaders' lack of peace education knowledge and skills; (2) schedule conflicts and limited funding (3) noncompliance with requirements, and (4) lack of support from partner organizations. To cope with these challenges, the selected NGOs involve Indigenous leaders in program planning and implementation, encourage community involvement and support, and customize programs to the specific needs and customs of the community. This highlights the significance of adaptability and inclusivity in promoting peace education and fostering sustainable change within the community they serve. The findings underscore the importance of adaptability and inclusivity in promoting peace education and achieving sustainable change within the communities served.

Keywords: Non-governmental organization; Peace education initiatives; Zamboanga del Sur; Social capital theory; Conflict transformation theory.

1.0 Introduction

Peace education encompasses various dimensions, such as human rights, global citizenship, intercultural understanding, conflict resolution, and nonviolent communication (Gur-Ze'ev, 2001). It is based on the belief that education can contribute to the prevention of violence, resolution of conflicts, and promotion of social justice (Brantmeier et al., 2010). Its mission is to provide individuals with the knowledge and skills they need to develop and preserve peace in their communities (Salomon & Cairns, 2011). However, traditional formal education institutions frequently need help to appropriately handle these complex concerns, necessitating alternate methods of peace education.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have emerged as critical participants in spreading peace education by filling gaps in formal education systems and working directly with communities (Leicht et al., 2018). These groups

work independently or in partnership with governments and educational institutions, and their contributions to peace education are varied and significant (Kennedy & Dornan, 2009). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provide vital resources, experience, and grassroots networks that improve the effectiveness and durability of peace education efforts (Lewis & Kanji, 2009).

In the context of Zamboanga del Sur, Philippines, an urban area characterized by intercultural and interreligious conflicts, the involvement of NGOs in furthering peace education is significant. There is a notable presence of intercultural and interfaith conflicts within the urban areas in the said region. These conflicts are frequently caused by differences in cultural practices, beliefs, and social standards among the region's many communities. NGOs are critical in promoting peace education in a complex and diverse environment. Ergo, this study's focal points provide insights into the specific challenges and opportunities experienced by NGOs in promoting peace education within a complex social fabric.

The effectiveness of peace education programs must be evaluated to understand their impact and suggest areas for development (Del Felice et al., 2015). Research studies have shown that peace education programs can help individuals and communities improve their attitudes, behaviors, and relationships. Heydenberk and Heydenberk (2000) discovered that school peace education interventions resulted in lower levels of aggressiveness, more empathy, and enhanced student conflict resolution abilities. Similarly, UNESCO (2009) contended that peace education workshops improve intergroup connections and reduce preconceptions and prejudices.

Despite the numerous studies of peacebuilding and security processes across the globe, there is a dearth of research focused on the specific roles NGOs carry out in these processes (Christie, 2012). Understanding the roles and performance of NGOs in diverse settings has been a subject of scholarly interest for decades. These roles refer to NGOs' specific functions, responsibilities, and strategies to develop, implement, and sustain peace education initiatives (e.g., curriculum design, community mobilization, advocacy, and resource allocation).

For instance, an early contribution to the field by Kalyadin (1987) examined NGOs' involvement in conflict resolution and peace processes through a combination of policy analysis and comparative studies. The study underscored that measuring performance must account for policy influence and stakeholder perceptions, which was done by mapping the political and historical contexts in which NGOs operated. This approach recognizes the role of NGOs as service providers that frequently shape or inform policy discussions, making a purely quantitative assessment of their work insufficient.

Subsequent scholarship has delved deeper into NGOs' peace-related intervention. The study highlighted the challenges of evaluating ongoing conflicts. Austin et al. (2003) illustrate how participant-centered feedback and conflict-sensitive frameworks are crucial for assessing NGO-led programs. Due to the protracted nature of conflicts in Israel/Palestine, efforts to foster coexistence often hinge on whether NGOs can adapt their program goals to rapidly changing on-the-ground realities.

In contexts like Nigeria, where NGOs strive to address communal tensions and promote peace, evaluators frequently adopt needs-based assessment and community engagement metrics to gauge program effectiveness. Dele and Odoma (2024) point out the importance of measuring both local stakeholders' trust in NGOs and the extent of their grassroots involvement.

These studies illustrate that NGO evaluations require frameworks sensitive to local culture, conflict dynamics, and community participation. They also prove that NGO effectiveness cannot be fully captured by simple metrics alone. Instead, researchers must account for how NGOs shape and are shaped by sociopolitical environments, particularly in peace education contexts where success may be measured less by immediate program outcomes and more by the long-term transformation of community relationships and attitudes.

Hence, this study aims to investigate the role of NGOs in advancing peace education in selected barangays in Zamboanga del Sur, Philippines. It aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on peace education and provide insights into potential strategies for enhancing peace education practices at the local level.

The case study's aims are threefold. First, it intends to explore how NGOs fulfill their roles in designing and implementing peace education programs in selected barangays in Zamboanga del Sur. This investigation will shed light on the unique programs, actions, and techniques used to promote peace education at the local level. Second, the study seeks to identify the obstacles that NGOs encounter in furthering peace education in the local environment. Understanding these problems is critical for generating successful solutions and interventions.

Finally, the study seeks to identify strategies for improving peace education practices in Zamboanga del Sur. The study intends to provide practical recommendations for strengthening peace education efforts in the local context by investigating successful approaches, new methodologies, and lessons learned through NGO-led initiatives. These proposals might be a significant resource for NGOs, governments, educators, and other stakeholders promoting peace education in Zamboanga del Sur and other comparable situations.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

A case study design was chosen to delve thoroughly into the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in promoting peace education in Zamboanga del Sur. Case studies are instrumental when researching current phenomena in real-life situations, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are unclear (White & Cooper, 2022). This study examines the selected NGOs, emphasizing understanding their impact, activities, and strategies in advancing peace education.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in selected barangays in Zamboanga del Sur, wherein NGOs actively operate peace education initiatives. Several key factors influenced the choice of this locale. First is the region's rich cultural diversity. It encompasses different ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups. This often leads to intercultural and interreligious tensions, which makes it an ideal setting to explore how peace education can address misunderstandings. Second, these barangays have experienced periodic community disputes rooted in competing for cultural practices and socioeconomic inequalities, which prompt NGOs to collaborate with local leaders in devising programs to reduce conflict. Third, NGOs' visibility and track record in implementing grassroots educational initiatives further validated this locale as an informative case for studying peace education strategies.

Against this backdrop, Zamboanga del Sur's ongoing efforts to promote social cohesion (e.g., government-led and NGO-led projects) offer a diverse and dynamic environment for understanding how peace education is conceptualized, delivered, and evaluated. This research would gain rich insights into the challenges and successes of NGOs working in areas prone to tensions, which would ultimately strengthen the overall inquiry into effective peace education practices.

2.3 Research Participants

Selection of NGOs (Cases)

NGO participants were selected based on specific criteria to ensure the relevance to the research objectives:

- a) Only NGOs based in Zamboanga del Sur were considered for this study. This criterion guarantees that the focus remains on organizations familiar with the local context.
- b) NGOs focused on peace education projects or initiatives were included. This criterion ensures that the participating NGOs have the necessary expertise and competence in furthering peace education.
- c) NGOs that demonstrated interest and interview availability were included to facilitate timely data collection.
- d) Earnest efforts were made to include NGOs with diverse organizational characteristics, such as varying sizes, target demographics, and peace education approaches.

Two NGOs were chosen based on these criteria. They are noted for their robust engagement in peace education and significant regional presence. *NGO A* is a mid-sized institution for over a decade in Zamboanga del Sur. It represents several Indigenous communities and prioritizes cultural preservation, Indigenous well-being, and education. *NGO A* also actively engages in regional peacebuilding projects to foster unity among diverse tribal groups. Meanwhile, *NGO B* is more minor but grassroots-oriented. It is noted for its commitment to peace, solidarity, and public service. *NGO B* implements community outreach programs (i.e., providing livelihood

opportunities and humanitarian aid) across various cultural and tribal settings to promote social harmony and inclusive community development.

It is established by local community leaders to address cultural and interfaith tensions. It is primarily based in urban barangays but occasionally expands to adjacent communities.

Selection of Participants for Interviews

Multiple stakeholders from each organization were invited to participate to gather holistic insights into each NGO's peace education efforts. The following inclusion criteria were used when inviting individuals from each organization to participate in the interviews:

- a) Participants had to be employed or actively involved with the NGO for at least six months to become familiar with the organization's programs and operations.
- b) They should be involved in some aspect of the NGOs' peace education initiatives (e.g., planning, implementation, outreach, or collaboration with community members).
- c) They should be available during the data collection period and provide informed consent for the interview process.
- d) All participants must be 18 years or older at the time of the interviews to comply with ethical considerations.

2.4 Research Instrument

Primary data were gathered through structured interviews, which were conducted using electronic means such as email, Messenger, and video conferencing. Such methods were selected to overcome geographical and logistical constraints while facilitating insights into the NGOs' methodologies, challenges, achievements, and overall impact. A structured interview guide was developed to maintain a consistent line of questioning across participants. This guide was organized into four thematic areas: background and organizational context; roles and approaches in peace education; challenges and obstacles; and impact assessment and future directions.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure and Analysis

This study adopted a case study research design (Yin, 2009) to explore how NGOs implement and sustain peace education in Zamboanga del Sur. In line with Yin's emphasis on in-depth inquiry, semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives from each selected NGO, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of organizational context, strategies, and challenges.

Each interview session was guided by a set of open-ended questions designed to draw out detailed information about the NGO peace education initiatives. This approach enabled the participants to elaborate on their experiences and also made sure the discussion remained relevant to the study's focus. Interviews were recorded with the participant's consent and later transcribed verbatim to make sure that accuracy and completeness of information were obtained.

Following the collection of interview transcripts and supporting documents, the data underwent thematic analysis based on the procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006):

- a) Familiarization with the data. Interview transcripts were reviewed multiple times to gain an overall sense of the content. Initial notes were taken, especially on recurring ideas related to peace education challenges, strategies, and perceived outcomes.
- b) Generating Initial Codes: The data was then systematically coded. Emphasis was given to segments of the text that illustrated key insights about NGO roles, resource utilization, and contextual barriers within the barangays.
- c) Searching for Themes: Codes were organized into broader themes that captured significant patterns across the data.
- d) Reviewing Themes: The themes were refined by checking them against the complete data set so that each theme accurately reflected underlying concepts and was mutually distinct from each other.
- e) Defining and Naming Themes. Each theme was clearly defined, labeled, and contextualized to highlight its relevance to peace education efforts.
- f) Producing the Report: Lastly, thematic interpretations were compiled into coherent narratives, linking them to the study's aims and the theoretical framework guiding the case study.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

All participants provided informed consent. They were fully briefed on the study's purposes and their voluntary involvement. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed through pseudonyms in all internal documentation and publications.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Peace Education Programs and Initiatives Implemented

This section looks at unique peace education programs and efforts done by non-governmental organizations in Zamboanga del Sur barangays. NGOs attempt to empower individuals with the essential information, skills, and values to become active contributors to peacebuilding by executing various initiatives (Friis, 2010). Workshops, trainings, dialogue sessions, community outreach programs, and joint projects are among the activities covered by the initiatives.

Preservation of Indigenous Culture and Tradition

The following quote encapsulates the essential values and objectives of NGO A in Zamboanga Del Sur, Philippines. This organization represents several Indigenous populations in the region. Its purpose is to conserve and promote Indigenous culture, customs, and traditions while prioritizing Indigenous people's well-being and education. Furthermore, the organization is actively engaged in peacebuilding initiatives to promote harmony and unity among various tribal groups.

"We prioritize Indigenous people in terms of education, custom, and tradition to cultivate them in future generations. We also preserve our traditions from our ancestors and ancestral domains since Indigenous people's principle is to protect and care for our Mother Earth."

This demonstrates the organization's strong dedication to Indigenous peoples and preserving their culture and customs. The organization, according to the quote, attempts to "prioritize Indigenous people in terms of education, custom, and tradition" and recognizes their position as environmental guardians and caretakers. This commitment aligns with the findings of Maphosa and Keasley's (2019) study. Said study emphasized the importance of Indigenous knowledge and practices in promoting environmental sustainability and preserving cultural diversity. Prioritizing Indigenous culture and traditions shows that the group contributes to preserving cultural heritage and fosters a sense of identity and belonging within the community.

"Our peace education aims to nurture a culture of understanding, respect, and peace. We aim to bridge cultural gaps and empower Indigenous people to reclaim their identities."

In addition to their commitment to cultural preservation, NGO A actively participates in regional peacebuilding projects. Recognizing the value of peace, harmony, and understanding among varied populations, the organization is critical in encouraging discussion, collaboration, and reconciliation. They hope to address problems, bridge gaps, and promote long-term peace through various peace initiatives. NGO A contributes to forming a peaceful and inclusive community by developing mutual respect and understanding for all cultures and traditions. Their activities assist the local Indigenous populations and the broader social fabric of Zamboanga Del Sur.

Community Engagement and Service

The quote is from NGO B, an organization dedicated to peace, solidarity, and public service. NGO B is known for its extensive community outreach programs in Zamboanga del Sur, which aim to improve individuals' well-being and foster social harmony.

"We extend services to the community such as livelihood, giving of relief goods to the community affected by calamities regardless of their cultures and tribes, clean up drives in schools, feeding program for the marginalized children, giving personal hygiene to the prisoners, etc."

The organization's community engagement and service initiatives are committed to social responsibility and collective well-being. The data mentions numerous activities such as providing community services, giving livelihood opportunities, and delivering humanitarian supplies during disasters. These projects overlook cultures and tribes, highlighting the organization's inclusive attitude to community development. When community development programs discriminate against cultures and tribes, it can result in marginalization, exclusion, and tensions between different groups (Hettne, 1993). On the other hand, the organization can foster a sense of belonging and inclusion among community members by recognizing and valuing the diversity and originality of different cultures. This inclusive approach encourages understanding, empathy, and respect, all necessary to develop peaceful and harmonious societies (Huda et al., 2020). Furthermore, community engagement initiatives such as school clean-up drives, food programs for vulnerable children, and personal hygiene assistance to convicts address underlying socioeconomic concerns and inequality. Because of these, the organization helps to reduce socioeconomic inequities and build a fairer society. As a result, people feel respected, supported, and empowered, creating an environment conducive to peace (Matyók et al., 2011).

A Multi-Case Comparison

NGO A focuses on the preservation of Indigenous culture and traditions as its core peace education strategy. The organization aims to empower marginalized populations to reclaim their cultural identity and take pride in their role as stewards of their ancestral lands. Its peacebuilding projects seek to address lingering communal issues stemming from cultural disparities, which emphasize inclusive participation and intercultural harmony. In contrast, NGO B adopts a service-oriented approach to peace education through comprehensive outreach initiatives. These include distributing relief goods during calamities, offering livelihood support, and organizing school clean-up drives that bring community members together across diverse cultural or tribal backgrounds. Viewed side by side, NGO A's and NGO B's methods diverge in notable ways. Although both organizations strive to foster peace and unity in Zambanga del Sur, they differ in their overall approach. NGO A emphasizes Indigenous cultural preservation as a route to reconciliation, while NGO B concentrates on broad-based community service to promote solidarity and shared identity.

3.2 The Perceived Challenges of the Implementation of Peace Education Programs

Lack of Interest and Awareness among Indigenous Children

Katy, who has been with NGO A for five years, has noticed a considerable barrier when conducting peace education programs in Indigenous communities. Despite the organization's efforts, she has observed a need for more enthusiasm among Indigenous children in attending school and participating in peace education activities. Furthermore, she has discovered that the leaders in these communities have relatively low levels of peace education awareness, knowledge, and skills.

"The difficulties of implementing this peace education program to the Indigenous people lack their interest among the Indigenous children to be sent to school. Also, leaders were found to have low awareness, knowledge, and skills related to peace education."

The need for more interest among Indigenous children is one of the identified problems in establishing peace education programs within Indigenous communities (King et al., 2004). The lack of interest may be linked to various causes, such as cultural differences and conflicting interests. Indigenous children may value cultural customs and traditions over formal schooling (Begaye, 2007). This results in restricted participation in peace education programs. Also, Indigenous groups' historical marginalization and persecution may contribute to a sense of alienation and suspicion toward mainstream educational endeavors, including peace education. Furthermore, Indigenous leaders' poor levels of awareness, knowledge, and abilities related to peace education impede the promotion and support of these initiatives within the community (Magni, 2017). This limitation emphasizes bridging educational disparities and providing Indigenous leaders with the tools and knowledge to advocate for peace effectively (Khalifa et al., 2018).

Conflicts of Schedule and Limited Funds

Jane, a long-standing organization member of NGO B, has been actively involved in its various efforts for many years. Thanks to her dedication to community service and considerable expertise, she has seen the impact of competing schedules and time constraints on the organization's capacity to efficiently offer services and manage

funds. Managing a successful organization involves coordination and collaboration among its members, yet competing schedules can make it challenging to ensure that services and funds are provided on time and efficiently. Personal commitments, employment obligations, or other responsibilities that compete for members' time and attention might cause such conflicts.

"Conflict of schedule or time of the members to deliver services and funds is a problem."

Conflicts of scheduling and limited time availability among program members have been noted as essential challenges in executing peace education programs among Indigenous groups. Indigenous communities frequently experience many social and economic issues, resulting in competing objectives and time limits for those providing peace education services (Marten, 2004). This limitation hinders the effectiveness and reach of peace education programs because educators and facilitators may need help to devote enough time to program implementation, workshops, and activities. Furthermore, insufficient funding presents an additional issue since it affects the availability of resources required for high-quality peace education projects (Leicht et al., 2018). Inadequate financing can limit educator training, purchasing of educational materials, and staging of community involvement events.

Noncompliance with Requirements and Lack of Support

Jane's experience inside the organization has indicated that some schools they work with need help to achieve the required requirements, such as presenting an Annual Implementation Plan (A.I.P.). Because they cannot meet these requirements, educational help that may substantially benefit these institutions is withheld. This hampers the organization's efforts to provide these educational institutions with the required help and resources. Despite the challenges, Jane and her organization remain committed to providing educational support and establishing effective programs. They work hard to discover solutions, create collaborations, and push for the necessary funding to ensure that the communities they serve receive the required educational aid.

"Some of the schools did not meet the requirements. They were asked to provide an Annual Implementation Plan (A.I.P.) but did not need help. Thus, they should have been given educational support. Other programs were also not implemented due to a lack of support from partner agencies like L.G.U., RHU, and DepEd."

Noncompliance with standards and a lack of assistance from partner agencies are critical challenges in executing peace education programs among Indigenous people. Some Indigenous communities' schools need help to meet educational authorities' criteria, such as presenting an Annual Implementation Plan (A.I.P.). Due to noncompliance, schools may be denied instructional support, resources, and financing (Brown & Hunter, 2006). Furthermore, the lack of support from partner organizations such as the Local Government Unit (L.G.U.), Rural Health Unit (RHU), and Department of Education (DepEd) can limit the successful implementation of peace education initiatives. Collaboration and coordination among various stakeholders are critical for the long-term implementation and impact of Indigenous peace education efforts (Pherali & Lewis, 2019).

A Multi-Case Comparison

A closer look at NGO A and NGO B reveals how each navigates unique hurdles. NGO A faces cultural and motivational barriers, particularly with Indigenous youth who are less inclined toward formal education and with community leaders who lack awareness of space education's significance. It invests heavily in cultural preservation and capacity-building, tailoring its programs to Indigenous customs and bridging knowledge gaps. In contrast, NGO B contends more with logistical and administrative concerns. These include scheduling conflicts among volunteers, insufficient funding, and partner institutions that fail to meet basic requirements for educational support. Despite these differences, both NGOs depend on communal and institutional engagement to sustain and legitimize their peace education work. They illustrate the complexity of peace education in culturally diverse and resource-constrained settings.

3.3 Strategies Utilized to Enhance the Impact and Reach of Peace Education Programs

Enhancing and Reaching I.P. Leaders in the Community

Katy believes in the need to develop and reach out to Indigenous Peoples' (I.P.) leaders in the community. According to her experience in NGO A, when I.P. executives actively participate in and take ownership of programs, their impact and efficacy are considerably increased. She further explained that the active participation of I.P. leaders is critical for pushing action and guaranteeing the education program's successful execution. She underlines that these leaders are essential to the program's success since they have valuable information, insights, and connections within the I.P. community. But in the same breath, Katy has been vocal regarding the disinterest of many I.P. leaders in actively participating in the education program. She recognizes this as a significant obstacle hindering the program's effectiveness and impact within the Indigenous community.

"The Indigenous people's leaders in the community must act for their program to be implemented. All I.P. leaders in the barangay's should be monitored to achieve the education program's success."

One strategy for increasing the impact and reach of peace education initiatives is to target I.P. leaders in the community. These leaders are critical to the programs' successful execution. For example, Leicht et al. (2018) discovered that integrating leaders in the design and execution of education programs boost their effectiveness and cultural relevance. Specific measures, such as direct monitoring and stringent oversight of I.P. leaders in the barangay, are used to ensure the active engagement of I.P. leaders. This method allows the organization to track their participation and address any issues that may arise during program implementation. Through collaborating closely with I.P. leaders, the programs can modify their content and delivery methods to correspond with the community's cultural norms and values, increasing their effect and relevance (Margolis et al., 2015).

Community Involvement and Support

According to Jane, the heart of their joint efforts in NGO B are their unique meetings, where club members convene to plan, share information, and identify solutions to the community's pressing issues. These meetings are more than just formalities; they are active venues where ideas are shared, difficulties are tackled, and solutions are developed with passion and purpose. She also disclosed that members contribute money from their pockets to ensure the community has the resources it needs.

"We conduct special meetings with the members for planning, dissemination, and direct solutions. We sometimes draw funds from our own pockets to help the community. All members must undergo services to the community and directly implement services to the needed society."

Community participation and support are essential for the success of peace education projects (Epstein, 2010). The study discovered that the programs actively include club members in planning, information dissemination, and financial assistance. In a case study conducted by Whitley et al. (2015), a community-based peace education program relied on the active participation of club members who volunteered their time, resources, and expertise to support the program's operations. The study considers that a program's success is hinged on the active participation of members who volunteered their time, expertise, and resources to support their operations. It also emphasizes the importance of volunteerism and resource mobilization.

Members' financial assistance, which comes from their pockets, indicates their dedication to the community and their importance to educational activities. This community-driven approach develops a sense of ownership and allows individuals to actively bring peace to their neighborhood. Furthermore, requiring all members to perform direct services to the community increases the program's impact by ensuring active participation and shared responsibility.

Tailoring Peace Education Programs to Community Needs

Katy's work with Indigenous Peoples (IPs) revealed that some members of these communities are skeptical of the benefits of peace education, thinking that it may clash with their deeply ingrained practices and traditions. This made her realize that implementing conventional programs without considering each community's particular needs and customs could result in resistance and alienation. On the other hand, Katy underlined the significance

of customizing peace education programs to the specific cultural settings and values of the Indigenous group being serviced.

"Some I.P.s do not believe in the benefits of peace education programs because they think this may conflict with their customs. Peace education efforts must meet the community's needs and customs."

To increase the impact and reach of peace education programs, they must be tailored to the specific needs and perspectives of the communities they serve. The study emphasizes the need to develop programs that address the particular needs of the target audience. McPhail (2005) underlined the need to perform a needs assessment to discover the community's specific concerns, values, and goals, ensuring that program material is relevant and practical. This is consistent with UNESCO's (2009) recommendation that peace education initiatives be tailored to the intended audience. The study underlines the importance of completing a needs assessment to determine the community's concerns, values, and goals. Understanding these variables enables program organizers to ensure that the materials and content given are relevant and successful in promoting peace and addressing the community's specific concerns. This further emphasizes the significance of adaptability and customization in peace education programs for optimal impact.

A Multi-Case Comparison

NGO A places a strong emphasis on integrating Indigenous Peoples' (I.P) leaders and adapting peace education to the cultural context of each community. According to Katy, securing active I.P. leadership is paramount, as these leaders possess valuable connections and insights that can legitimize and sustain the program at the grassroots level. NGO A implements direct monitoring to ensure participation and addresses the skepticism of certain community members who worry that peace education might conflict with traditional customs. It aims to create culturally resonant educational experiences. This targeted strategy, although potentially challenging due to low initial interest among some I.P. leaders, underscores a commitment to capacity-building and long-term community ownership.

In contrast, NGO B foregrounds community involvement and support by hosting frequent organizational meetings and requiring all members to directly implement services in the communities. Jan notes that these meetings serve as hubs for planning, information-sharing, and collective problem-solving – members even contribute their personal funds to ensure resources are available. In doing so, NGO B fosters a sense of shared responsibility and inclusivity that crosses tribal or cultural boundaries, which emphasizes volunteerism and resource mobilization. Although both NGOs seek strong local engagement, NGO A build on I.P. leadership and customized approaches, whereas NGO B relied on grassroots participation and personal commitment from its club members. These cases illustrate how organizations can employ diverse yet complementary strategies to maximize the effectiveness and reach of peace education programs.

4.0 Conclusion

The selected NGOs in Zamboanga del Sur have demonstrated a great dedication to fostering peace, maintaining Indigenous culture, and engaging in community service through peace education initiatives. These programs have positively impacted building understanding, respect, and solidarity among diverse people while addressing underlying socioeconomic challenges. However, various obstacles exist to implementing peace education initiatives. The ineffectiveness of these programs is hampered by Indigenous children's lack of interest and awareness and Indigenous leaders' lack of peace education knowledge and skills. Schedule conflicts and limited funding pose additional challenges since they affect the availability of resources and the capacity to devote sufficient time to program implementation. Noncompliance with requirements and a lack of support from partner organizations impede the successful implementation of peace education efforts.

To enhance the impact and reach of peace education programs, strategies such as involving Indigenous leaders in program development and implementation, fostering community involvement and support, and tailoring programs to the specific needs and customs of the community are essential. Active engagement of Indigenous leaders increases program effectiveness and cultural relevance, while community involvement and support ensure shared responsibility and resource mobilization. Customizing peace education programs to community

needs and values promotes acceptance and relevance among the target audience, leading to a more successful outcome.

Strategies such as involving Indigenous leaders in program planning and implementation, encouraging community involvement and support, and customizing programs to the specific needs and customs of the community are crucial for increasing the effectiveness and reach of peace education initiatives. Indigenous leaders' active participation improves program effectiveness and cultural relevance, while community involvement and support ensure shared responsibility and resource mobilization. Moreover, customizing peace education programs to meet the needs and values of the community increases acceptance and relevance among the target audience, highlighting the significance of adaptability and inclusivity in promoting peace education and fostering sustainable change within the community they serve. Overall, the efforts of the selected NGOs in implementing peace education programs in Zamboanga del Sur are commendable. They continue to find ways to address challenges and implement effective strategies. These programs and initiatives have the potential to contribute significantly to peacebuilding, cultural preservation, and community development in the region.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

Darlyn Bucayon – Simbajon – writing, editing, revising
Mary Jane Pingki-an – data gathering, conducting interviews

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

There is no conflict of interest to declare.

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