



## PEACE VALUES AMONG MUSLIM COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN CAMIGUIN, PHILIPPINES

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### ABSTRACT

This study documented the peace perspectives of the Muslim community in Camiguin along with the aspects of the Focolare Movement. The researcher employed quantitative and qualitative methods. The results of the t-test for gender, number of years in the community and work status and the Bonferroni Correction for age groups and educational levels confirmed that there are no significant differences in the peace perspectives along the seven aspects. Results from key informant interview and focus group discussions revealed that the aspect of Economy and Work emphasizes the “culture of giving” with the realization that each is part of big family; The aspect of Relationship with Others, promotes harmonious relationships through the “art of loving” particularly, it calls for being “one with the other.” Spirituality and Prayer Life, were deeply rooted in one’s rapport with God, the source of strength in loving others; Health is focused on the physical and the spiritual, wherein one may lack in physical health but may be spiritually healthy when one submit to God’s will; Ecology and Harmony is reflected in the external appearance of the individual and communal surroundings of the community as a consequence of being united; Wisdom and Education- calls for knowledge lived in the spirit of wisdom, when employed for love of others; Social Communication and Unity brings about one family by being open to one another and listening to the other as practiced with love. The paradigm can be integrated in peace and development plan for local government units.

**Keywords:** *culture, Focolare movement, Maranao, peace education, spirituality*

## INTRODUCTION

Peace Education is a new discipline in the Philippines. In the past, Western model of peace education was presented in this country. Therefore, a need to evolve a program of peace education in the Philippines came forth. Through a process of dialogue, a framework for educating for peace evolved in the Philippines, focusing on six issues clustered into militarization, structural violence, human rights, environmental care, cultural solidarity and personal peace (Purywanto et al, 2023)

In the light of these issues, roots of peacelessness in our society, four pedagogical principles were integrated in the process of educating for peace. These principles are holism, value formation, dialogue and conscientization. The holism framework perceives the issues as interrelated and that there is no hierarchical order in viewing them. The Peace Education framework highlights some of the values like justice, compassion, caring for life, spirituality and a “one world” orientation. As to the method of pedagogy, peace education has to be stepped in a dialogue as a banking method in teaching is certainly in contradictory to peace (Kester, 2023).

So much national resources are being drained and wasted in the pursuit of sustainable peace especially in Mindanao, the seedbed of conflict. People have defined peace in the area as premised on development. But, in spite of efforts on development, peace is still elusive in the area. A Muslim scholar once defined peace in their own terms: “Peace is a basic need”. In short, there is peace when there is food, clothing and shelter. Peace is equated with development (Kilag, 2023)

There has been a growing desire for development in our own context. For the past two decades, development meant to “generate and sustain” an annual increase in its gross national product at rates of 5 to 7 per cent for national economy. This is confirmed by the fact that the 60’s and 70’s were defined as the Development Decades by resolutions of United Nations. Development here is an attainment of a 6% annual target growth rate of GNP. However, in spite a number of Third World countries did achieve the target goals set by UN, the levels of living of the masses remained unchanged ( Maleh, 2021).

The same reality for peace education emerged in the Philippines given that our political, economic and socio-cultural matrix are designed differently from the Western models who have pioneered the Peace Education programs. It is a fact that Filipinos experience their own peacelessness in a society punctuated by diverse cultures, beliefs and practices. (Sears, 2022)

A new economic view of development is proposed. Higgins (2020) proposes a more complex definition of development involving economic, political, social, and human (personal) development. He believes that unless the individual is motivated from within, efforts to promote change will not be sustained. It means gaining self-respect, becoming self-confident, self-reliant, cooperative and tolerant of others’ shortcomings together with acquiring new skills and knowledge and active participation in the economic, social and political development of their community.

## **Research Questions**

The study generally aimed to assess the peace perspective among Muslim community members in Camiguin along with the FOCOLARE Movement (Lubich,2023), a proven paradigm on peace values.

1) What is the profile of the participants?

2) What is the peace perspective of the Muslim community in Camiguin along the seven aspects of the Focolare Movement?

3) Is there significant difference in the peace perspective among participants along with the seven aspects of the Focolare Movement when grouped according to age group, gender, educational level, number of years in the community and working status; and

3) What are the insights gained from the issues affecting the family, the community and the nation as a whole?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The researchers employed quantitative and qualitative methods. Survey questionnaire was used to gather data on the demographic profile of the respondents. Focus group discussions, key informant interviews and participant observations were done to triangulate responses. Secondary data were requested from the local government units.

### **Research Locale**

The research was done in Barangay Poblacion, Municipality of Mambajao (the capital town) Camiguin Province, Northern Mindanao, Philippines. Poblacion which is classified as urbanized, has a total land area of 1,627 hectares and a population of 11,027 (PSA-Camiguin 2020). It is the center of commerce and trade in the province.

### **Research Participants**

Participants of the research study were purposely selected from the list of community members who were residents of Mambajao for more than six months, at least 18 years old to 65 years old and practiced Islam since birth.

### **Research Instrument**

The researchers used survey questionnaire to gather data on the profile of the participants.

In the survey questionnaire, Likert Scale was used, reference was given to high scores which were then summed up and cross tabulated according to the five variables of age, gender, number of years in the community, educational level and working status, with respect to the seven aspects.

## Data Gathering Procedures

Survey questionnaire was administered to 157 Muslim brothers and sisters who are 18 years old and above residing in Camiguin. This was complemented with a semi-structured interview to probe their various insights on their perception of peace along seven aspects. Prior informed consent was also asked from the participants.

Interviews of some early settlers from Lanao provinces, beneficiaries of the progressive and peaceful environment of the province who are now successful in their businesses and careers reinforced the findings. A component of the qualitative method used by the researchers was participant observation.

The case study utilized scholarly researches done by both Muslim and Christians on the cultural traits of the Maranaos who were the respondents of the study.

## Statistical Techniques

Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages were used to describe the profile of the respondents. To test the differences of means, the t-test for equality of means was employed for the pairs of gender, number of years in the community and working status as to see if the differences are statistically significant with respect to the seven aspects. To enable a comparison of groups of means at the same time for age groups and educational level, the Bonferroni Multiple Comparison procedure was used.

## RESULTS

### Profile of the Participants

The participants were grouped according to age, gender, educational level, number of years in the community and working status.

#### A. **Age Group**

The age of the respondents is from 18 to 65 above. The young population totals 75 which is 47.77 %, the mid adult as 56, which is 35.67 % and the older group is 26, or 16.56 %.

#### B. **Gender**

The male participants are 82, which is 52.23 % while 75 are female participants which constitutes 47.77 %.

#### C. **Educational Level**

According to educational status, 32 participants obtained elementary education, which is 20.38 %; those with secondary education totals to 72 consisting of 45.86 % and 47 have tertiary education which is 29.94 % .

#### D. **Number of Years in the Community**

Of the 157 respondents, 102 have been in Camiguin Island for a period of at least ten years below, constituting 64.97% while only 55 have been in the island for more than eleven years which is 35.03%.

#### E. **Working Status**

Of the 157 who responded, 74 are either employed or self-employed comprising of 47.13% the total, while 83 are not working, which comprises 52.87% of the total participants.

The results of the t-test for gender, number of years in the community and the Bonferroni Multiple Comparison procedure for age groups and educational levels confirm that there are no significant differences in the peace perspective along the seven aspects, except for the variable gender with respect to Relationship with Other. In this case, the female is in the forefront of this peace perspective.

However, post-research interviews confirm the initial findings of raw scores pointing to the older group who prevail in various aspects like Economy and Work, Relationships with Others and Wisdom and Education, as more attuned to the peace perspectives. That they are also in the frontline in the other aspects of but is given focus by the educational level, number of years in the community and working status. Spirituality, Health, Ecology and Harmony, where raw scores for age group indicate they are not in the top is compensated by post research interviews, which reiterate they are more peace-oriented than the other groups because they have a major role to play in resolving family and community conflicts. Certain situations call for their wisdom and experience, rather than scholastic degrees, where they have proven they can be impartial to the clan system as Islamic teachings prevail.

### **Insights Gained on Peace Issues Affecting Family, Community and Nation**

Findings also from issues which directly affect peace within the family and community highlights the older group with the highest scores as not favorable to the cultural practice of revenge; as adhering to Muslims and Christians working together for community development and as not favoring to matchmaking. However, results showing the older group as more hesitant in having a Christian administrator, it is but a logical consequence of historical precedents, negative experiences, which they witnessed and encountered during Christian migration. This however, does not contradict their peace orientation as peace, in their paradigm is equated with their people's empowerment economically, socially, culturally, spiritually, educationally and above all politically. In their perspective, peace would not be that distant if given the opportunity to govern themselves and utilize for their own communities.

### **Insights Gained from Semi-Structured Interviews**

Over-all data shows that Ecology and Harmony and Relationship with Others are perceived consistently as foundations for attaining peace. The absence of the two aspects is also key factors for peace to be elusive.

### **Participant Observation**

Through participant observation, the researcher participated in the religious, economic, social activities, which are peace activities in line with the peace paradigm of the study. The researcher noted particularly that the older group comprises a bigger portion of those

who frequent the mosques daily. This is also validated by the majority of the older group present in spiritual gatherings.

### **In Depth Interviews**

In depth interviews, conducted among the older group, also reinforce their peace orientation and involvement in peace efforts in the municipality. The resulting data imply that as Maranaos get uprooted from their own communities, certain negative practices entrenched for generations and have been root causes of the absence of peace in the families and communities gradually disintegrate, as other values gain upper hand. Apart from the results of the study, scholarly researchers of Cagape et al (2024) confirm social changes in Maranaos' way of life, attributed to Western values, deterioration of cultural traits, gradual acceptance and recognition of Islam as a way of life, which sees humanity as one fraternity, thus diminishing of clannishness. From the major findings, one can say that dialoguing efforts are recommended which could be undertaken through concrete projects along the seven aspects.

### **DISCUSSION**

Scholarly researches gives an over- all picture of the respondents in their own setting. Abuza (2020) says that Maranao social organization revolves on four basic units: the household, the community, the state and the nation or society as a whole.

In synthesis, the households may consist of as many as forty residents persons (children and adults) with 35 as frequent size. There are three focal points of the community: the mosque, the community leader's house and the lama (plaza). Devout Muslims pray five times a day and usually frequent the mosque. The community leader's house is the meeting place whenever there is a community decision or problem to discuss. The plaza is a gathering place for socializing (Ragandang, 2023)

The Muslim communities or agamas have their own set of elected leaders with an advisor who may represent specific lineages in the community. Decisions are arrived at through discussion and consultation involving persons in the community according to their prestige, importance and persuasiveness. The imam is the religious leader who is powerful in mosque affairs and activities (Eder, 2020)

There are three levels of units in Maranao society whose relationship are important. These are the individual, the household and the community. There are two major principles that are to be considered fundamental encompassing and pervasive in these three levels: 1) descent or lineage and 2) relative worth or prestige (Perez, 2021)

Bangsa or descent lines who one is, what rights and duties one has in relation to others, who one is affiliated with and where one belongs- all depend upon who one's ancestors were. For this reason, market relationships, political relationships and participation in works and feuds, friendship and enmity are defined by the relative distance and closeness of the several parties' bangsa (Farooqui, 2021).

Political alliance is a major for social and economic status. Social and economic mobility depends on political alliance. There is no single community that runs without politics. One needs to sustain status with money and sustain relationships with politics (Tatsumi, 2020)

An aspect to be considered in Maranao society is marriage since it is the most important specific relationship. Primarily, it means an affiliation between lineages, rather than between persons. They are contracted in the interest of lineage groups and agamas for gaining political power and to ensure body of supporters (Ferrer, 2023)

Ragsag (2020) stressed a particular Maranao trait – their entrepreneurship. He explains that early historians observed that the Maranaos had been a trading people even prior to contact with the Spaniards and later with the Americans. This particular trait for entrepreneurship is one of the factors for social mobility among the early settlers of Camiguin.

## **Conclusions**

Given this characteristics, one could appreciate more the efforts for the individual and community to bring about peace in their surroundings. These cultural traits like entrepreneurship and clannishness are also the foundations for peace when utilized positively. Those who were early settlers have proven they were in the frontline for peace efforts in the locality. They are involved in peacekeeping in the various communities. Their own interests to have better education, economic gains and political recognition for their own family and community are springboards for maintaining peace in the municipality. On the other hand, the past and present local leaders have opened the various opportunities for them to bring about social mobility.

## **Recommendations**

**A. For Economy and Work** – Local resources like DILG funding could be looked into through loan program could be sustained. NGOs could also involve them in cooperative and micro-finance training. Joint projects of Muslims and Christians could be done like fund raising for the needs of the community.

**B. For Relationships with Others** – Sustain Muslim Christian ventures in different aspects especially the Muslim women sector has proven to be more open towards the peace paradigm.

**C. For Spirituality and Prayer Life** - Muslim-Christian Symposium would be a possibility to get to know each other's culture and religion. Participation of youth in certain religious activities like Ramadan and Easter celebrations would be an eye opener for both.

**D. For Health** – Sports activities could be initiated where young Muslims and Christians in the medical field could initiate projects for both Muslim and Christian beneficiaries.

E. **For Ecology and Harmony** – Youth activities where both Muslims and Christians could work together in certain projects like tree planting, garbage recycling and coastal clean-up.

F. **For Wisdom and Education**, further researches could be done to isolate certain factors in other regions in Mindanao where Muslim and Christian conflicts could be triggered. Seminars and lectures on local history through the Muslim perspective could serve as enlightenment as Muslims felt the lack of the Muslim ingredient in the documentation of local histories.

G. **Social Communication and Unity** – More involvement in the updating and sharing of educational researches could be organized by institutions of higher learning.

### **Compliance with Ethical Standards**

Entry protocol was done by asking approval from the officers of the Camiguin Muslim Association (CMA). Prior informed consent were sought from the participants before administering the survey and conducting the focus group discussion and key informant interview. The participants have the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time. There was no conflict of interest that exist. Anonymity of the participants was observed and their well being was safeguarded from the start of the research until its termination. Plagiarism was strictly avoided. There was no bias in interpreting the findings. The results were used solely for research.

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