

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Effects of Balik Barangay Program to the livelihood, peace and order, public safety, and education in Patikul, Sulu

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ABSTRACT

Despite concerted efforts to combat terrorism, it remained a persistent and evolving threat that requires ongoing vigilance, cooperation, and resilience from the global community. Terrorists frequently operate within hidden networks, taking advantage of grievances as well as political, social, and economic vulnerabilities to promote their causes. This was an impact analysis using descriptive-correlational study analyzing the effects of Balik Barangay Program to the state of livelihood, peace and order, public safety, and education in Patikul, Sulu. Residents (n=100) were purposively sampled in each of 10 identified barangays in the municipality. Findings indicated that the Balik Barangay Program had positive effects on the livelihood ($\bar{x}=4.213$; $\sigma=0.143$), peace and order ($\bar{x}=4.283$; $\sigma=0.192$), public safety ($\bar{x}=4.172$; $\sigma=0.197$), and education ($\bar{x}=4.197$; $\sigma=0.169$). Findings also indicated that these variables had weak but correlated results. Balik Barangay Program had a transformative impact on the lives of residents in Patikul, Sulu, by addressing socio-economic vulnerabilities, restoring peace and order, enhancing public safety, and providing opportunities for education and development. Through initiatives such as training, capacity building, and access to resources, the program has helped enhance agricultural productivity, create sustainable livelihood, alleviate poverty, create a safer environment for residents and visitors alike, and reducing the risk of criminal activities and violence.

Keywords: balik barangay program; education; livelihood; peace and order; public safety; terrorism

1. Introduction

The impact of terrorism extends beyond the immediate loss of life and destruction of property. It instills fear and uncertainty, disrupts societal cohesion, undermines trust in government institutions, and poses significant challenges to national security and international stability.

There are over a hundred terrorist outfits inflicting harm around the world, with Asian and African countries being the most afflicted. Asia has been affected by radical Islamic extremist organizations like Al-Qaeda, a notorious and rapidly growing network^[1-3].

Terrorist organizations are groups of people who plan, coordinate, and manage terror attacks with strategic and tactical purposes of using terrorist acts. Terrorist organizations maintain concealment to prevent tracking by the police, law enforcement officers, and competing groups^[4,5]. Terrorist organizations are characterized as

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groups that have been established for a minimum of one year and consistently engage in activities that breach the laws of armed conflict, with a particular focus on the principles of differentiation and proportionality^[6].

Terrorist organizations possess the intention and capability to conduct attacks in various locations across the nation. Potential targets include places of worship, transportation systems such as airports and metro lines, shopping centers, and entertainment venues^[7]. Small firearms and improvised explosive devices, both people- and vehicle-borne, have been utilized in various attacks. This action is carried out with the purpose of exerting pressure on the authorities to meet the demands set by the group^[8,9].

Based on the Global Terrorism Index for 2019, the Philippines ranked among the top ten countries most impacted by terrorism. The Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army (CPP-NPA) are identified as the most dangerous terrorist groups presently operating in the Philippines. They have been implicated in 36% of all homicides and 39% of all terrorist incidents and assaults targeting entities associated with law enforcement, the armed forces, and governmental institutions^[7]. The Philippines recognizes the importance of comprehensively tackling the underlying factors of terrorism through a comprehensive approach involving all government sectors and society, in cooperation with intergovernmental organizations, civil society, communities, victims, and their families to enhance counterterrorism efforts^[10,11].

Balik-Barangay Program in Patikul Municipality was conceptualized and implemented by three important figures in addressing the conflict-affected areas in the province of Sulu, most particularly the Municipality of Patikul. The concept was created by the Municipality, together with the Deputy Commander of initially the 1102nd Brigade, then later 1103rd Brigade, Colonel Taharudin Piang Ampatuan, and put into a workable program by then Brigade Commander of 1102nd Brigade, now Major General Ignatius Patrimonio, and the most important figure, Mayor of the Municipality of Patikul, Mayor Kabir Hayudini, who, not only embraced the program, but supported with resources, executive order, and municipal ordinance.

Balik Barangay Program started with a deliberate planning made at the level of Municipal Task Force on Ending Local Armed Conflict (MTF-ELAC). The Secretariat laid down the requirements and develop plan to integrate government agencies that will be involved. It involved pulling of resources and integration of affirmative intervention programs.

As envisioned to restore the peace and order in Patikul, Sulu, the MTF-ELAC conducted several activities under the Balik Baragay Program. For instance, the MTF-ELAC disseminate training assistance and tool kits to the community to facilitate a fresh start and bolster their economic development initiatives. Within this training program, there were 1,859 training beneficiaries from 11 barangays accomplished the skills training course within 9 distinct training areas^[12].

This study explored the role of Balik Barangay Program in mitigating the effects of armed conflict and promoting peacebuilding efforts in conflict-affected areas like Patikul. By examining the perceptions of constituents regarding the program's effects, researchers can identify areas of success and areas needing improvement, thus informing future program implementation and policy decisions aimed at conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

By addressing concerns of livelihood, education, and public safety, the initiative hopes to alleviate some of the underlying frustrations and vulnerabilities that drive violence and extremism. Thus, the study aims to assess the program's potential as a tool for conflict resolution and peacebuilding, as well as its contribution to larger efforts to establish long-term peace and development in the area.

2. Literature

2.1. Community displacement and armed conflicts

Humanitarian crises are worldwide issues that have a significant impact on mortality and distress, resulting from either natural disasters or conflicts^[13]. This factor is manipulated by threatening groups through armed violence and conflict. War, armed conflict, political unrest, and other forms of organized violence possess a detrimental role in the worldwide impact of disease, affecting not just immediate casualties but also leading to long-term consequences^[14]. In addition to enduring prolonged violence, individuals residing in conflict zones also face challenges related to poverty, limited access to healthcare, and food insecurity^[15,16].

Refugees and internally displaced individuals make up the majority of the 80 million people who are escaping armed violence and oppression on a global scale^[17]. By the end of 2019, armed conflict led to 76,480 fatalities and a peak of 79.5 million forced-displaced individuals. Among them, 45.7 million were internally displaced, 26.0 million were refugees, and 4.2 million were asylum seekers^[16,18]. As per Relief Web^[19], an estimated 274 million individuals worldwide will require humanitarian assistance and protection by year 2022, marking an increase from the 235 million people reported in the preceding year.

The mental health of refugees and internally displaced individuals affected by armed conflict is a major concern during humanitarian crises. Armed conflict poses distinctive hazards for psychiatric diseases such as severe depression, generalized anxiety disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder^[20]. The priority should be to ensure safety and security, followed by strengthening of community support structures, short-term and planned psychosocial treatments, and specialized services^[21-24].

2.2. Terrorism in the Philippines

The “chosen traumas” experienced by Filipino Muslims caused by the Abu Sayyaf Group, are primarily rooted in their economic marginalization within Philippine society and their inability to achieve independence from the Philippine state despite the efforts of the Moro National Liberation Front and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front^[25]. Disillusionment has impacted disadvantaged Muslim Filipino communities as they persist in their protests and struggle for independence.

Fear-based oppression is defined as the illegal use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political objectives. The Fear-based Oppression Index in the Philippines increased from 7.10 in 2015 to 7.13 in 2016. Additionally, the Fearmongering Index in the Philippines revealed a median value of 6.65 between 2002 and 2016. The Philippines ranked twelfth globally in terms of terrorism impact due to a rise in the number of terrorist activities and fatalities^[26].

On December 31, 2018, there were explosions at a Roman Catholic cathedral on Jolo Island in Sulu Province, resulting in the death of 27 individuals and causing injuries to many others. On January 27, 2019, an improvised explosive device (IED) detonated at the entrance of the South Seas shopping mall in Cotabato City, resulting in the death of 2 individuals and causing serious injuries to numerous others. In remote regions, there is a high frequency of combat between security forces and extremist groups, often occurring suddenly and unpredictably. A dual suicide attack on a military base in Indanan, Sulu Province on June 28, 2019, which resulted in the deaths of 3 civilians, 3 military personnel, and 2 attackers^[7].

Brigadier General Francisco Cruz said that a basic military approach is insufficient to eradicate the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in the country^[25]. A comprehensive approach would be required by the government to address an adversary with economic, social, political, and psychological dimensions at its core.

3. Research objectives

Patikul is a coastal municipality located in the province of Sulu. Its land area is 434.24km² accounting for 9.55% of total area of Sulu Province. In the 2020 census, its population was 79,564 constituted 7.96% of the entire population of Sulu province. The population density is calculated to be 183 residents per square kilometer or 475 residents per square mile^[27].

The island province of Sulu has experienced a prolonged military presence due to a rebel uprising in 1974, which led to the destruction of the capital town of Jolo. The entity has not achieved complete recovery since that time. Over time, the military has transitioned from employing a search-and-destroy strategy to implementing a civil-military campaign focused on improving basic services^[28]. However, challenges continue to exist, stemming from the difficult issue of managing extremist insurgents engaged in abductions, community leaders maintaining their own armed factions, and people who are trapped in a cycle of poverty.

Balik Barangay Program in Patikul Municipality was conceptualized and implemented to address the armed conflict in the province of Sulu, most particularly the Municipality of Patikul. This study aimed to explore the effects of Balik-Barangay Program to the constituents based on four metrics (i) livelihood, (ii) peace and order, (iii) public safety, and (iv) education. Below are the specific objectives sought to be answered in this study.

- Determine the extent of the effects of Balik Barangay Program among the constituents of Patikul Municipality, Sulu in terms of livelihood, peace and order, public safety, and education.
- Assess the associations between the livelihood, peace and order, public safety, and education as variable of effect of Balik Barangay Program.

4. Methods

4.1. Research design

This study used survey data to analyze the perceptions of the constituents of Patikul, Sulu about the effects of Balik Barangay Program in terms of (i) livelihood, (ii) peace and order, (iii) public safety, and (iv) education. This study carried out descriptive-correlational design in analyzing the effects of the program.

Descriptive research aims to describe the characteristics of a phenomenon, while correlational research examines relationships between variables^[29-31]. For descriptive analysis, the study described the perceptions of constituents regarding the effects of the Balik Barangay Program. For correlational analysis, this study explored the association between different metric variables *i.e.*, livelihood, peace and order, public safety, and education. This design allowed the researchers to assess both the prevalence of certain perceptions^[32] and the strength of relationships between variables. This analysis was essential in understanding how the variables of effect could potentially interact along with the implementation of Balik Barangay Program.

4.2. Participants and sampling

The participants were randomly selected from 10 different barangays under Balik Barangay Program. The barangays identified to have undergone the program were the Barangay Pansul, Kabbon Takas, Panglayahan, Tugas, Maligay, Bungaung, Latih, Buhanganan, Bakung, and Langhub. There were 10 participants selected in each of these barangays.

In selecting the participants (n=100), purposive sampling was used. This study selected the participants based on their demographic profiles ensuring each characteristic receive equal representation in the sampling pool. By randomly selecting the participants, the data collected could represent the population of the

constituents. It is important to note that this sampling technique could introduce unintended bias to the data especially when the sample is small^[33-35].

4.3. Research instrument

This study developed a questionnaire to gather data from the responses of the participants. The research instrument consists of a Likert-scale for each of the measured variables.

The instrument had two parts. Part I collected the demographic profile of the participants, their age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, and average monthly income. Part II elicit the effects of Balik Barangay Program based on four (4) metrics i.e., livelihood, peace and order, public safety, and education. This Likert-scale had scale values of 1 (No effect), 2 (Less Positive), 3 (Moderate), 4 (Positive), and 5 (Highly Positive). The scale was written in both Filipino and English to ensure comprehensiveness and clarity.

4.4. Data gathering procedure

The researchers coordinated with the Barangay Action Group to carry out the distribution of the questionnaire to the participants. Face-to-face administration of the questionnaire was conducted as guided by the barangay officials. Ethical guidelines were rigorously upheld during the survey administration, with a primary focus on maintaining the confidentiality of results, ensuring the safety of participants, and upholding impartiality. The entirety of the data gathering and retrieval process happened within two months, from November 2023 to January 2024.

4.5. Data analysis

Scaled survey responses were the primary data in this study. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29.0.2.0 was used to analyze the responses of the participants.

Weighted mean determines the composite mean for itemized statements, considering varying weights assigned to individual items within the set of metrics. In this study, weighted mean was used to calculate the extent of the perceived effects of Balik Barangay Program among the constituents of Patikul Municipality, Sulu in terms of their (i) livelihood, (ii) peace and order, (iii) public safety, and (iv) education.

Frequency analysis was employed to gauge the prevalence of responses, with percentages utilized to illustrate proportions and facilitate comparisons across variables. This method is particularly suitable for discrete and countable variables, such as demographic characteristics of the participants.

To analyze the correlation between metric variables, this study used Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The *r* values were interpreted based on the range presented in **Table 1** and were significant at $p \leq 0.05$. Correlation analysis was used to determine whether the perceived effect of Balik Barangay Program correlated to other variables of effect. For instance, do perceptions of public safety effect correlate to peace and order or education. This analysis was valuable in determining significant associations between these variables of effect; hence providing a detailed interpretations regarding their perceptions.

Table 1. Correlation *r* values.

Range	Descriptors
±1.0	Perfect
±0.81–±0.99	Strong correlation
±0.71–±0.80	Good correlation
±0.51–±0.70	Weak correlation
±0.01–±0.50	Poor correlation
0	No correlation

5. Results

5.1. Demographic profile of the participants

Table 2 presents the demographics of the participants based on their age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, and family income.

As presented, most of the participants (n=40) were ages 40–50 years old. There were 20 participants of ages ≤ 17 years old, 15 participants from ages 18–28 years old and ≥ 51 years old. In terms of sex, 78% were males while only 22% were females. Eighty percent (80%) of the participants were married, 12% were single, 5% were widow, and 3% were separated.

Most of them (75%) had attended elementary education, 20% had their high school education, and 3% had attended college. For family income, 65% earns \leq Php5,000, 35% earns Php5,001–Php10,000, and Php10,001–Php15,000.

Table 2. Demographics of the participants.

Demographic	N=100	Percentage	
Age	≤ 17 years old	20	20%
	18 - 28 years old	15	15%
	29 - 39 years old	10	10%
	40 – 50 years old	40	40%
	≥ 51 years old	15	15%
Sex	Male	78	78%
	Female	22	22%
Civil Status	Single	12	12%
	Married	80	80%
	Separated	3	3%
	Widow	5	5%
Educational Attainment	Elementary Level	75	75%
	High School Level	20	20%
	College Level	5	5%
	Post-graduate	0	0%
Family Income	Php5,000.00 and below	65	65%
	Php 5,001.00 – Php 10,000.00	35	35%
	Php 10,001.00 – Php15,000.00	10	10%
	Php15,001.00 and above	0	0%

5.2. Effects of balik barangay program

Table 3 presents the summary descriptive analysis on the effects of the Balik Barangay Program implemented in Patikul, Sulu. Generally, the constituents of the municipality believed that the Balik Barangay Program has positive effects in terms of livelihood ($\bar{x}=4.213$; $\sigma=0.143$), peace and order ($\bar{x}=4.283$; $\sigma=0.192$), public safety ($\bar{x}=4.172$; $\sigma=0.197$), and education ($\bar{x}=4.197$; $\sigma=0.169$).

For livelihood, the constituents believe that the Balik Barangay Program helps improve the productivity of farmers, helps address the special concerns of IDPs, and enables the government employees and workers from private sectors to report daily.

For peace and order, the constituents of Patikul, Sulu believe that the Balik Barangay Program restored the trust and confidence of the people in the AFP, helps people exercise their freedom of speech, and helps rehabilitating the IDPs.

Table 3. Summary of descriptive analysis.

Metrics	Mean	St. dev.	Remarks
<i>Livelihood</i>			
Balik Barangay Program is improving the productivity of farmers.	4.350	0.450	
Balik Barangay Program is providing a healthy business for local and non-local investors.	3.960	0.137	
Balik Barangay Program addressed the special concerns of internally displaced people.	4.470	0.569	
Balik Barangay Program convinced the local stakeholders to take part in the endeavor.	4.180	0.380	
Balik Barangay Program improved the delivery of basic services, improving the local revenues collection, and tapping other sources of funds.	3.860	0.327	
Balik Barangay Program enabled the employees of government and other private sectors in the municipality to report daily to their offices.	4.460	0.369	
<i>Composite Mean</i>	4.213	0.143	Positive
<i>Peace and Order</i>			
Balik Barangay Program restored the people's trust and confidence in the AFP.	4.470	0.650	
Balik Barangay Program paved the way for the peace and order in the municipality.	4.530	0.128	
Balik Barangay Program enabled the people to exercise their freedom of speech.	4.360	0.549	
Balik Barangay Program is successful in rehabilitating and bringing home the IDPs of Barangay Bungaong, Latih, Tugas, Maligay, Kabbon Takas, Pansul, Bakung, Panglahayan, one of the sitios of Langhub.	4.240	0.578	
Balik Barangay Program built an infrastructure to enhance the development effort.	3.980	0.328	
Balik Barangay Program increased the number of balik-loob and lessen the number of rebels.	4.120	0.450	
<i>Composite Mean</i>	4.283	0.192	Positive
<i>Public Safety</i>			
Balik Barangay Program transformed the image of the municipality from being stronghold of the rebels into peace progressive municipality.	4.370	0.128	
Balik Barangay Program boasted Patikul's tourism by uncovering the hidden paradise that that have been long awaited to be discovered by the people of Sulu.	4.470	0.560	
Balik Barangay Program lessen the shooting incidents in the municipality.	3.650	0.218	
Balik Barangay Program bridged the culture and religious in the community.	4.120	0.370	
Balik Barangay Program paved the way for the public safety.	4.470	0.540	
Balik Barangay Program enabled the people to travel/cross from the municipality to other municipality during the nighttime.	3.950	0.122	
<i>Composite Mean</i>	4.172	0.197	Positive
<i>Education</i>			
Balik Barangay Program enabled the people of Patikul to send their children to schools with safety and confidence.	4.360	0.230	
Balik Barangay Program enabled the teachers to meet their classes daily with safety and confidence.	4.430	0.435	
Balik Barangay Program strengthened the education in Patikul.	3.990	0.350	
Balik Barangay Program enable the students to study in peace.	4.120	0.620	

Balik Barangay Program ease the way for the students to reach their schools through the cemented roads.	4.420	0.320	
Balik Barangay Program provided school-basic-needs for the IDPs children.	3.860	0.650	
	<i>Composite Mean</i>	4.197	0.169 Positive

Legend: 4:50-5.00 (Highly Positive); 3:50-4.49 (Positive); 2:50-3.49 (Moderate); 1:50-2.49 (Less Positive); 1:00-1.49 (No Effect)

For public safety, the constituents believe that the Balik Barangay Program improved the tourism of the municipality, transformed the image of the municipality, and increased the number of ‘balik-loob’ individuals.

For education, the constituents believe that the Balik Barangay Program enabled the people to be confident in sending their children to schools, provided school-based-needs for the IDPs children, improved the quality of road construction accessible for students, and enabled the children to study in peace.

5.3. Association between metric variables

Table 4 presents the correlation matrix associating the effects of Balik Barangay Program. As presented, it indicates that public safety was weakly correlated with education ($r=0.634$). The livelihood was weakly correlated with the peace and order ($r=0.512$), public safety ($r=0.603$), and education ($r=0.557$). In contrast, peace and order is poorly correlated with public safety ($r=0.505$) and education ($r=0.485$).

Table 4. Correlation matrix of the study variable.

Independent Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Livelihood	–			
2. Peace and Order	0.512*	–		
3. Public Safety	0.603*	0.505*	–	
4. Education	0.557*	0.485*	0.634*	–

Note. N=100. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients are reported.

* $p \leq 0.05$

Analysis indicated that although the association manifest weak correlation between variables, this observation was consistent along the randomness of the data. Essentially, even though the relationships are not very strong, they are still meaningful and reliable—hence, requiring further analysis. For instance, areas with better education offered in Balik Barangay Program tend to have slightly higher levels of public safety. It could also be that areas with better livelihood opportunities from Balik Barangay Program tend to have slightly higher levels of peace and order, public safety, and education.

6. Discussion

This study analyzed the effects of Balik Barangay Program based on the perceptions of constituents of Patikul, Sulu. Findings indicated that the constituents feel that the Balik Barangay Program has positive effects on them in terms of livelihood, peace and order, public safety, and education. Furthermore, a weak but significant correlation was observed among these variables.

The significance of the Balik Barangay Program lies in its ability to positively impact various aspects of community life, including livelihood, peace and order, public safety, and education. These effects suggest that the program is contributing to the overall well-being and development of the municipality of Patikul, Sulu, by addressing key challenges and promoting positive social change.

The findings of this study seem to coincide with the previous studies conducted regarding community development, social transformation, and capacity building. Enhanced rural development is frequently associated with increased investment. Rural areas could experience significant socio-economic development if they had improved competitive infrastructure linked to different urban areas^[36]. Enhanced quality education, improved water and electricity access, reduced transportation costs, upgraded telecommunication services, and enhanced information infrastructure in rural areas are expected to boost economic conditions and quality of life, aiding in reducing poverty and rural development^[37-41]. Effective support system can alleviate immediate stressors and empower individuals to focus on addressing the underlying causes of social problems^[42].

This study found out that with the implementation of the Balik Barangay Program, the livelihood, peace and order, public safety, and education improved in the municipality. In the review of Brocklesby & Fisher^[43], shifting to a livelihoods approach required a fundamental change in perspective, focusing on planning for people's livelihoods in a participatory manner rather than just planning for forests, agriculture, or fisheries. This reflects the characteristic of the Balik Barangay Program as a fundamental part of community development in rural areas. For instance, the constituents believed that the Balik Barangay Program provides opportunities for small farmers in Patikul, Sulu to sustain their agricultural productivity by constant training and capacity building activities.

Similarly, in an article published at Criminal Justice^[44], education plays a crucial role in deterring individuals from participating in criminal activities. It highlighted that high graduation rates are typically linked to favorable public safety outcomes and reduced crime rates in communities. This could explain weak correlation between education and peace and order effects of the Balik Barangay Program in Patikul, Sulu. While education is an important component of the program, its impact on peace and order may be indirect and dependent on a variety of intervening conditions. For example, advances in education may lead to better socioeconomic opportunities, which, in turn, contribute to lower crime rates through increased employment chances and social cohesiveness.

Notably, improved rural development is frequently associated with higher investment, with rural areas having the potential for major socioeconomic development due to improved infrastructure and access to key services. The Balik Barangay Program promotes economic growth and a better quality of life by improving education quality, infrastructure, and access to basic amenities, which helps to reduce poverty and develop rural areas.

Psychosocial care must be planned ahead of time in order to respond effectively to and rehabilitate following mass casualty occurrences like terrorist attacks^[45-47]. Iyekepolo^[48] believed that civilian protection measures would be more effective if they were combined with self-defense strategies, financial security, and ideological reorientation of populations at risk. Combining international, country, and civilian protection techniques would strengthen the community and safeguard vulnerable persons from the actions of violent non-state actors. For instance, the findings of a survey conducted in Russia's North Caucasus among 1,200 young males found out that the socio-economic challenges faced by the population, which are primarily attributed to poor governance, have significantly increased the vulnerability of individuals to recruitment by armed groups^[48]. Additionally, in Afghanistan, providing economic assistance to a community leads to a rise in the people's support of the authorities. Having an economic sufficiency could help discourage the civilian populace from heeding the call of armed organizations to take up arms against vulnerable communities, ethnicities, or even the government^[49].

Similar mechanisms were observed in the implementation of Balik Barangay Program. Having civilian protection strategies for local communities with measures to enhance economic security and ideological

reorientation can strengthen communities and mitigate risks associated with recruitment by armed groups. Enhanced rural development, often associated with increased investment, and improved infrastructure, holds promise for significant socio-economic advancements. For instance, investments in education can lead to better socioeconomic opportunities, thereby contributing to reduced crime rates through increased employment and social cohesion. Investments in education, infrastructure, and basic amenities can lead to improved economic conditions and quality of life in rural areas, ultimately aiding in poverty reduction and fostering rural development.

To achieve success in social identity transformation, it is imperative to consider the distinct requirements of all parties involved and establish a reliable method for reintegration. Analysis on the implementation of Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in Colombia argued that the reintegration process heavily relies on the inclusion of former fighters into new organizations. Experiencing social acceptance and understanding decreases the emphasis on one's own group and enhances the inclination to resolve conflicts^[50]. Moreover, seeing potential prospects in unfamiliar societies diminishes the inclination of ex-combatants to establish groups amongst themselves and eases the process of reintegrating them^[51].

The emphasis on social acceptance, understanding, and the provision of potential prospects in local societies aligned with the purpose of the Balik Barangay Program, which wants to facilitate economic development and peace-building initiatives within the municipality of Patikul, Sulu. The deliberate planning and integration of government agencies at the local level, as seen in the coordination efforts of the MTF-ELAC, further reflect a concerted approach towards addressing conflict dynamics and promoting community resilience. Through activities such as skills training and economic assistance, the Balik Barangay Program seeks to empower individuals and foster positive social change. This study had proven that at a local level, the implementation of the Balik Barangay Program has positive outcomes within the municipality. Similar initiatives can be developed among other areas of concerns in the Philippines such as in Marawi, Cotabato, Eastern and Central Visayas.

It is essential to recognize some of the study's limitations. First, relying on constituent views in assessing the effects of the Balik Barangay Program presents a possible source of bias. Perceptions can be influenced by a variety of factors, including individual experiences, cultural beliefs, and social desirability biases, which may not accurately reflect the impacts of the program. Second, using self-reported data to assess the perceived impacts of the Balik Barangay Program may create measurement error and reliability concerns.

Future study should aim to integrate robust methods to gain an increased understanding of the impacts of the Balik Barangay Program's on rural development and community well-being. Addressing these constraints will improve the reliability and validity of future research in this area.

7. Conclusion

The findings of this study emphasize the perceived positive effects of Balik Barangay Program on several elements of community life in Patikul, Sulu. Constituents asserted significant gains in their livelihoods, peace and order, public safety, and education because of the program's execution. These findings indicate that the program is effective in addressing critical issues and fostering good social change in the municipality.

The Balik Barangay Program is significant for its ability to favorably promote rural development and community well-being. The program helps the municipality's socioeconomic growth by putting emphasis on livelihood enhancement, peacebuilding, public safety measures, and educational possibilities.

This study provides policymakers and practitioners with essential information for designing and implementing community development projects. Future research can provide a more comprehensive overview

of the Balik Barangay Program's impact and effectiveness by resolving highlighted limitations and expanding on existing knowledge. This will help to make better informed decisions and strengthen rural development activities in similar circumstances.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, AMAA, MSA and CSU; Methodology, AMAA, MSA and CSU; Software, AMAA, MSA and CSU; Validation, AMAA, MSA and CSU; Formal Analysis, AMAA, MSA and CSU; Investigation, AMAA, MSA and CSU; Resources, AMAA, MSA and CSU; Data Curation, AMAA, MSA and CSU; Writing-Original Draft Preparation, AMAA, MSA and CSU; Writing-Review & Editing AMAA, MSA and CSU; Visualization, AMAA, MSA and CSU; Supervision, AMAA, MSA and CSU; Project Administration, AMAA, MSA and CSU; Funding Acquisition, AMAA, MSA and CSU. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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