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## PERSPECTIVE ON PEACE IN MINDANAO AMONG MSU MARAWI CITY MUSLIM STUDENTS IN COLLEGE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine Muslim college students' perspectives on peace in Mindanao at the College of Public Affairs, Mindanao State University, Marawi Campus. Using a descriptive method and a self-constructed questionnaire, results showed that most respondents view peace as tolerance, respect, and harmony among Muslims, Christians, and Lumads. However, they oppose increased foreign investment and emphasize self-determination. Respondents identified key barriers to peace, including criminality, discrimination, marginalization, economic struggles, and political abuse. Many were undecided about whether safety, equal rights, and government accountability are truly experienced. Additional perceived obstacles to peace included political dynasties, rido (clan feuds), poverty, unemployment, land neglect, and maratabat (honor-driven pride). Some respondents remained unsure about the root causes of conflict in Mindanao.

Keywords: Mindanao Peace, Discrimination, Tri-People, RIDO Conflict

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### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana mahasiswa Muslim di Fakultas Urusan Publik, Universitas Negeri Mindanao, Kampus Marawi, memaknai perdamaian di Mindanao. Melalui metode deskriptif dan kuesioner yang disusun sendiri, hasil menunjukkan bahwa mayoritas responden melihat perdamaian sebagai bentuk toleransi, saling menghormati, dan hidup rukun antarumat Muslim, Kristen, dan masyarakat adat Lumad. Meski begitu, mereka cenderung menolak masuknya investor asing dan lebih mendukung prinsip penentuan nasib sendiri. Para mahasiswa juga menyoroti sejumlah hambatan terhadap perdamaian, seperti maraknya kriminalitas, diskriminasi, marginalisasi, kesenjangan ekonomi, dan penyalahgunaan kekuasaan. Banyak dari mereka merasa belum yakin apakah masyarakat benar-benar hidup aman, mendapatkan hak secara adil, dan memiliki pemerintahan yang bertanggung jawab. Faktor lain yang dianggap menghambat perdamaian adalah keberadaan dinasti politik, konflik rido, kemiskinan, pengangguran, lahan yang tidak digarap, dan maratabat atau harga diri yang berlebihan. Beberapa responden juga masih merasa bingung dalam melihat akar persoalan konflik di Mindanao.

Kata kunci: Perdamaian di Mindanao, Diskriminasi, Tri-People, Konflik RIDO

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## BACKGROUND

Violence ranging from ethnic cleansing, tribal or civil wars, terrorism and state conflict is challenging global effort toward building a peaceful world. However, although we are alarmed by this global crisis, this culture of violence prompted groups of people from North to South to find solutions to finally put an end to it. Global pursuit of building a peaceful world gained interest among all kinds of people all over the world. They become aware, conscious, and interested in saving humanity, that the quest for peace began and is continuing to happen. The need for building and transforming the world into a culture of peace can no longer be denied according to George as cited by Atkinson (1993).

The 21st century has been an enormous progress in science and technology, making life processes and activities more convenient. Transportation facilities give people access to information throughout the world through computer networks that in turn enhance global interaction. Spectacular changes in the people's political and social life are visible, since this is now the era of post-cold war when humanity is no longer threatened by super rivalries and nuclear annihilation (Boulding E. and Raimo V., 1999). In the Philippines both the government and the private sector are now concerned with peace. Organizations geared towards the attainment of peace from both sectors and the private sectors are now very active in national peace conferences, and coalitions for peace. Corazon Aquino declared the period from 1990 to 2000 the "decade of peace," likewise for President Fidel V. Ramos, his Philippines 2000 economy program puts an emphasis on "just a comprehensive lasting peace and political stability" as an important condition for economic development and national prosperity (Reardon B., 1999).

According to Coser (2001), there are a number of different concepts that are important to understand what is involved when a person talks about peace studies. Most academic students and researchers agree upon a certain point of reference in defining peace and the human motivation that drives the desire for peace. There are two main distinctions that identify the two types of peace that could exist. The first is called "peace and means" where there is 'no direct violence' present. The second type is called "positive peace" and is a state where there is not only no direct violence present, but that there is also no indirect structural violence present. In Mindanao, the idea of establishing a peace studies program at Mindanao State University-Marawi Campus was conceived in October 1978 by concerned officials of the university. In January 1979, the peace proposal committee was formed in August at the same year; the Board of regents of MSU approved the creation of the Southern Philippines Center for Peace Studies (SPCPS) through resolution no. 1983.

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The center was designed to promote peace and stability in the Southern Philippines through peace research, peace action and peace education including the development of the human and material resources (Madale, Hall, 1990). Thus in June 1982, the center under the leadership of Dr. Nagamura Madale, MSU-Marawi offered and introduced peace studies as a course for the tertiary level, and a cognate subject in the Social Sciences. Four pioneering students enrolled in the course. Subsequent to the appointment of Madale as director of the center in 1981, Madale introduced a 3-unit multi-disciplinary introductory course on peace studies. However, due to some institutional constraints the program did not mature (Garcia, Bartolome, 2000).

The foregoing facts drove this paper's proponents to conduct a study determining the concept and perspective of peace among the Muslim students of the Mindanao State University, Marawi City specifically in the College of Public Affairs. Generally, the study attempted to determine the conceptual perspective of peace among the Muslim students of the College of Public Affairs, Mindanao State University, Marawi Campus. Specifically, it sought to answer the following inquiries:

1. What are the respondents' views on the term "Peace in Mindanao"?
2. What is the respondents' perception on the absence of peace in Mindanao?
3. What are the college Muslim students' perceived conditions if peace is achieved in Mindanao?
4. What are their perceived problems in attaining peace in Mindanao?

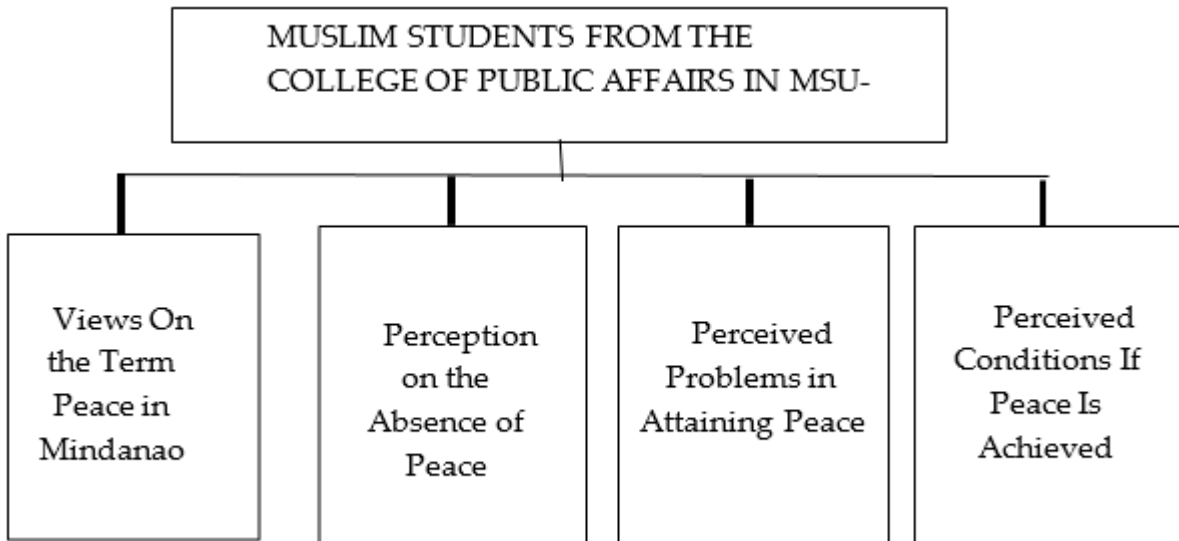
## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is referred to the work of Manubag (2001) who gives the idea that peace is not only the absence of war but also the absence of social injustice, poverty, human rights, violations, inequalities, environmental degradation and homogenization of culture and other. Peace can be of different levels; it could be personal peace or global peace. Peace could also be viewed differently by people depending upon their social, cultural, political, educational and religious background. Peace is also holistic as it shows in the framework of Notre Dame University Peace Education. It compasses and considers everything with equal importance. All issues such as militarization, human rights, poverty, cultural solidarity, environmental concern, structural violence, and inner peace (Mascado, 2002). In other words, based on the works of Gandhi and Martin Luther King (Engler, 1999), peace can be attained through non-violence is consonance with the saying which goes "violence only begets violence" from here, peace scholar come up with the concert of active non-violence, self-renewal, societal transformation, civil disobedience, and value formation.

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The above mentioned theories and concepts served as basis and guide for this study. The various concepts are mostly a reflection of their needs, interests, cultures, religion, beliefs, the condition of their time and their experiences.

### CONCEPTUAL MODEL



### DISCUSSION

This chapter presents, analyzes, and interprets the data collected in pursuit of answering the problems relating to the respondent's perspective on Peace in Mindanao. Tables and discussion were presented based on the questions cited in the statement of the problem.

#### **Respondents' Views on the Term "Peace in Mindanao"**

The distribution of the respondents' knowledge of the respondents on the term "Peace in Mindanao". As it is shown 96.1%, 95.6%, and 91.7% of the respondents perceived knowledge on the term "Peace in Mindanao" are: the integration of the tri-people of Mindanao (Christians, Muslims, and Lumads), with weighted mean 1.04, tolerance and respect on culture, beliefs, and religion, with weighted mean 1.04, and harmonious relationship regardless of tribes and customs with weighted mean 1.10, respectively. However, about 58.8% of the respondents believed the concept of "Investors are willing to invest" and "Self-determination for the so called marginalized people" are not their knowledge on the term of "Peace in Mindanao" with weighted mean 1.60. Generally, 73% of the respondents believed in item number 1 to 5 and 27% of the respondents didn't believe in it.

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The foregoing findings imply that the respondents are fully aware of the issue regarding peace in Mindanao, thus, there is harmonious relationship regardless of tribes and customs. Furthermore, some respondents don't believe that the statement indicators - "Investors are willing to invest" is a possible success due to the issues concerning peace in Mindanao, hence investors are not willing to risk their business. Furthermore, some of the respondents rejected the premise that there is peace when self-determination is provided to the marginalized people. For some, the right to self-determination is their right to live. The 79.9% and 60.8% of the respondents agreed to the statement indicators - uncontrolled criminality and discrimination within the tri-people of Mindanao, respectively, are among their perceptions concerning the absence of peace in the region of Mindanao. From the results it could be glanced that all items were rated 'agree' based on their weighted mean.

This denotes that majority of the respondents sees the following statements as problems that have and may have affected the peace in Mindanao: uncontrolled criminality (1.2843), discrimination with in the tri-people of Mindanao (1.5196), marginalization of tribes (1.6275), economic downfalls (1.4559), and political abuse (1.4069). Overall, 64% of the total sample agreed to these statement indicators with a weighted mean point of 1.4588. It reveals that 38.7% of the total respondents disagreed that living in safety could be considered a condition to achieving peace in Mindanao. Though, 36.3% of them responded to the statement indicator 'everyone has an equal opportunity to work and make a living regardless of ethnic and gender.' As shown from the result the following items were rated 'undecided' which denotes that majority of the respondents neither agree nor disagree that the following statements could be considered as one of the perceived conditions when is achieved, in Mindanao: everyone lives in safety (2.0490); fair and effectiveness laws protects people's right (2.000); everyone is able to participate in shaping political decisions and government is accountable to the people (2.0147); everyone has fair and equal access to the basic needs for the people's well-being (1.8578); and everyone has an equal opportunity to work and make a living regardless of ethnic and gender (1.8873).

Overall, the agreement or disagreement of the respondents is marginal. As it shows in the pie chart that only 35% of the respondents agreed to these items resulting in a weighted mean of 1.9618. Therefore, most of the respondents cannot decide if these items can be considered as one of the perceived conditions to achieve peace in Mindanao. The foregoing findings imply that most of the respondents cannot decide if these items can be considered as one of the perceived conditions to achieve peace in Mindanao. The above result reveals that items number 1 to 6, and 9 are rated 'agree' which implies that most of the respondents believed that some of the problems causing the almost impossible attainment of peace in Mindanao are political dynasty, presence of RIDO in Muslim areas, discrimination or marginalization, poverty, unemployment, laziness to fill their lands, and Maratabat(pride) with weighted mean points 1.3431, 1.4069, 1.5049, 1.4118, 1.4412, 1.4706, and 1.3529, respectively. However, the majority

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of the respondents are not certain whether western influences and the concept of easy money are among these problems that are considered to continuously drag the process of attaining peace.

## CONCLUSIONS

Firstly, a great majority of the respondents viewed Peace in Mindanao on tolerance, integration, respect and harmonious relationship among tri-people such as the Muslims, Christians, Lumads. On the other hand, the respondents were not on the idea of having more investors and self-determination. Secondly, Majority of the respondents agreed that the uncontrolled criminality and discrimination within the tri-people of Mindanao as one of their perceptions on the absence of peace in Mindanao. On the other hand, the majority of respondents agreed that uncontrolled criminality, discrimination within the tri-people of Mindanao, marginalization of tribes, economic downfalls and political abuse are some perceptions in the indication of chaos in Mindanao. Thirdly, Great majority that most of the respondents cannot decide that everyone lives in safety, fair and effectiveness laws protect people's right, everyone is able to participate in shaping political decisions and government is accountable to people, everyone has fair and equal access to the basic needs for the people's well-being, and, everyone has an equal opportunity to work and make a living regardless of ethnic and gender. Fourthly, a great majority of the respondents agreed that perceived problems in the attainment of peace in Mindanao are political dynasties, presence of RIDO among Muslim areas, discrimination or marginalization, poverty, unemployment, laziness to fill their lands, and maratabat. On the other hand, some respondents cannot decide if western influence and easy money concept can be considered as one of the problems in attaining peace in Mindanao.

From the data gathered and analyzed the following major findings are enumerated: *Firstly*, there are (73%) of the respondents believed that there is peace when there's integrating of tri-people of Mindanao (Christian, Muslims, Lumads), tolerance and respect on culture, belief and religion, having harmonious relationship among people regardless of tribe and customs, investors willing to invest, having self-determination for the so called "marginalized people" means having equal right and opportunity and perform their freedom, and, 27% of the respondents does not believe on it; *Secondly*, Sixty – four percent of the respondents agreed that uncontrolled criminality, discrimination with the tri-people of Mindanao, marginalization of tribes, economic downfall and political abuse as perception of the respondents on the absence of peace in Mindanao. However, *Thirdly*, The perceived conditions to achieve peace in Mindanao as perceived by the Muslim students of the College of Public Affairs are political dynasty, presence of RIDO in Muslims area, discrimination/

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Marginalization, poverty, unemployment, laziness to fill their lands, western influence, easy money concept and maratabat.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn: Their perspective in the term "peace in Mindanao" includes the integration of its tri-people along with tolerance and respect for each of their culture, beliefs and religion, hence, despite their differences. Most respondents believed that the problems in fully attaining peace in Mindanao are political dynasty, presence of RIDO (family feud) among Muslims areas, discrimination, poverty, unemployment, laziness, to fill their land, and maratabat (pride). Thus it will lead to some certain and new issues like political abuse, uncontrolled criminality, discrimination both within the tri-people of Mindanao, marginalization of tribes, and economic downfall. Thus, in order to achieve peace in Mindanao, the citizen's safety must be also its priority along with the assurance that everyone has the equal opportunity to work and make a living regardless of their ethnicity and gender, However, majority of the respondents were undecided for the statement indicators: everyone lives in safety, with fair and effectiveness laws that protect the people's rights, everyone is able to participate in shaping political decisions, government is accountable to its people, everyone has fair and equal access to basic needs for the people's well-being and everyone has an equal opportunity to work and make a living regardless of ethnic and gender as can be considered as one of perceive condition to achieved peace in Mindanao.

Moreover, the word peace is almost preferable to war and, moreover, can and must not only the absence of war but also the establishment of positive, life-enhancing values and social structure. Our choice is to live with each other in peace, unification of tri- people in Mindanao (Lumads, Christian, Muslims). Its pride was manifested in every area in Mindanao, whether it may be local or not. After the unity and dynamism of tri- people working in harmony, tolerating and respecting each other despite differences, they can perform their freedom to make their own choices. On the other hand, mutual respect and mutual acceptance among the tri- people is the must. The absence of peace and order in Mindanao is one of the reasons why the efforts of the government toward progress may be considered wanting, uncontrolled criminality in different places in Mindanao, discrimination with the tri- people of Mindanao negative views regarding their beliefs, religion etc. Marginalization of tribe, economic downfall, and political abuse. In his regard, peace is not just absence of conflict but the prevalence of justice, equality and prosperity of all.

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Perceived conditions when peace is achieving everyone's lives safety, a commitment to human rights and freedom are the key characteristics of a peaceful country. Social justice is ending all forms of structural violence. It is underpinned by equality, primacy of the dignity of people and human rights for all. Promote more public participation in governance, multiple flow of information. Everyone has an equal opportunity to work without discriminating regardless of ethnic and gender. Some of the problems in Mindanao is the long standing neglect from the national government in the political dynasty and lack of economic development. The root cause of cultural, religious and armed conflict still goes back to the problem of lack of job and economic development and this leads to a various cycle of poverty. And other the presence of RIDO in Muslims area which is commonly cause due to Maratabat commonly in Meranao. Laziness to fill their lands due to lack of equipment, funds, resources so they do not use their lands, for some reason parents are growing old and they don't have enough strength to fill their lands and their children have shifted into other careers.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the light of the foregoing findings, conclusions and implications of the study, the following recommendations are hereby submitted for considerations:

- 1) School administrators should encourage their teachers and students to understand and live peacefully and harmoniously with each other. They should encourage their teachers to include peace education in their everyday teaching of values;
- 2) Policy makers should make policies and measures to reform curricular offerings and government regulations in all forms that emphasize justice, equality, and fairness;
- 3) Students should participate on the seminars conducted regarding issues like peace and development for them to be familiar of the different problems that they might encounter;
- 4) Muslims should take advantage of the things that are necessary in attaining peace and development. And should serve as baseline data in making relevant policy decisions to push and promote peace in MSU college students;
- 5) Parents should encourage and inculcate among their children the value and importance of peace not only for themselves but also for the goodness of the country. Peace can be attained through parents' modeling and example on how to live peacefully and harmoniously within the family, the neighborhood, and in the community;
- 6) Everybody should be aware of what is happening in our community and try to do a move or help in solving problems even for them only if we can't do it for the sake of the whole community. In other words, everybody should start peace from his or her own self;

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7) The results and findings of this study may serve as a springboard for other researchers who are also interested to pursue similar studies in the future. Finally, it is hoped that further studies regarding the prevailing peace and development be made.

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