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Village Justice System Implementation and Performance among Selected Villages in Southern Leyte Province, Philippines

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Abstract

The successful implementation of the Village Justice System (Katarungang Pambarangay) relies on the effectiveness, efficiency, creativity, and resourcefulness of Village Justice Committees. With the enactment of the Local Government Code of 1991 (RA 7160), the authority to resolve community disputes was decentralized to the 42,025 villages nationwide. This study aimed to review and analyze the implementation and performance of the Village Justice System in selected best performing villages of Southern Leyte Province. Specifically, it assessed the degree of law implementation, performance profile, significant relationships between variables, and the severity of problems. Employing both descriptive and inferential methods, the researcher selected top five best performing Village Justice Committees out of 500 in Southern Leyte, based on rankings provided by the DILG-Southern Leyte Provincial Office. The findings reveal excellent performance among the selected Village Justice Committees,

demonstrated by high compliance with settlement procedures and deadlines, regular meetings, and quality case settlements. The study suggests a correlation between case settlement quality and committee performance in terms of adherence to procedures and meeting frequency. This exemplary performance is credited to the creative and resourceful approaches of committee members, utilizing best practices, innovative mediation techniques, robust communication strategies, and support system. However, there were problems due to lack of monetary remuneration and non-monetary incentive support as well as other administrative assistance given by Municipal/City Local Government Units (LGUs), National Government Agencies (NGAs), Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)/ Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the Private Sector. A Development Action Plan is formulated to solve the problems.

Keywords: Village Justice System, Lupon Performance, Southern Leyte, Katarungang Pambarangay

1. Introduction

The Village Justice System (local: Katarungang Pambarangay) is an innovation of the Philippine Justice System. It is considered an alternative dispute resolution at the village level, chaired by the Village Chairperson and heavily recognized by law. This recognition is given because it provides not only accessible and effective resolution of disputes between community members but also contributes significantly to maintaining peace and harmony within the community. Rev. Martin Luther King once said, "Without justice, there can be no peace."

However, the Village Justice System is not as simple as many people think. Like the processes involved in the formal Justice System, this alternative also incurs technicalities that some villages find non-compliant, rendering it ineffective and inefficient. According to the 2007 baseline study conducted for the Access to Justice for the Poor Project, as mentioned by Barraca, Delorino, Duman, Dumlao, Grepo, Ocampo, Reyes, and Salazar (2009)^[1], 98 percent of the total 41,995 villages all over the country, or around 41,155 villages, have organized functional Village Justice Systems. But what happened to the remaining two (2) percent or the 840 villages? Different local studies and reports from DILG and LGUs reveal that the functionality of these VJCs is highly confronted with different problems.

One very common problem is the non-observance of settlement procedures. For some, Village Chairpersons don't follow the correct processes involved. They accept cases and settle them without observing significant protocols. The worst is that other

Village Chairpersons simply issue Certificates to File Action (CFA) so that the case can be forwarded to court without village settlement. However, the law is strict on this. It is the basic philosophy of this system that no complaint, petition, action, or proceeding involving any matter within the authority of the VJC shall be filed or instituted directly in court unless there has been a confrontation between the parties before the Village Justice Committee.

The second common observation in some villages is that this significant committee (Village Justice Committee) is not given importance. The Village Chairperson focuses solely on being the Village Chief Executive, as the Presiding Officer of the Village Legislative Body and as a Mediator of cases. In these villages, there are no or little efforts to include the VJC in the activities and affairs of the village government. The obvious result is that no regular meetings for the VJC are conducted, and there is minimal administrative support (supplies and honorarium for VJC members). Obviously, this leads to low performance and sometimes non-compliance with the salient provisions of the law.

The third common observation is the lack of attention to VJS records and reports by the VJC Secretaries. Employees are expected to complement the Village Chairperson in the administrative functions of Village Justice System implementation. Noticeably, due to the lack of administrative support, there are insufficient VJS Forms. Hence, settlement procedures are not properly documented, and the quality of reports submitted also suffers. Some villages don't even bother submitting reports, especially the Amicable Settlement Reports to the Local Trial Court.

Another common observation during the settlement of cases is that some Village Chairpersons don't spend much time looking for conflict solutions. Some are solely focused on their other functions, disregarding VJS implementation. Others are also mediocre and don't make extra efforts to seek innovative mediation techniques. Some also give up immediately when confronted by heated arguments and simply forward the case to the next level.

Finally, the most common observation regarding these inefficiencies and ineffectiveness is the lack of knowledge on relevant training for Village Justice Committees. All these issues could be avoided if everyone is well-informed.

However, despite all these issues, there are still a few villages that excel in the field of Village Justice System implementation. These villages are recognized in the Annual Search for Outstanding Village Justice Committees, wherein their recognition is primarily based on their efficiency in operations, effectiveness in securing the VJS objectives, and their creativity and resourcefulness.

Based on the above information, the researcher is interested in understanding the implementation and performance, as well as uncovering the secrets and best practices of selected top-performing VJCs. It is hoped that the findings of the study can be used by the researcher and other stakeholders in providing support, especially technical assistance through replicable insights, practices, and learnings to other non-functional or low-performing VJCs. Furthermore, it is also expected that the results of the study could lead to the formulation of a Development Action Plan for Village Justice System implementation.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed the quantitative research method, focusing on the analysis of the village justice system implementation among selected villages in the Province of Southern Leyte. Both descriptive design and inferential method of quantitative research were utilized. A descriptive method aims to determine "what is," thus observational and survey methods are frequently employed to collect descriptive data (Borg & Gall, 1989). On the other hand, inferential methods deal with correlation studies between different variables used in the study.

2.2 Research Participants

100 individuals from the 5 VJCs of the Province of Southern Leyte were purposively identified as respondents for the study. They were chosen because of their direct involvement in the administration and operation of the Village Justice System, ensuring the validity and reliability of their responses. Table 1 shows the details of the research participants.

Table 1: Distribution of the research participants

Respondents of the Study	Frequency	Percentage
Subject		
VJC Chairpersons	5	5
VJC Secretaries	5	5
VJC Members	50	50
Validators		
Case Complainants	10	10
Case Respondents	10	10
DILG Field Officers	5	5
Local Trial Court Judges	5	5
PNP – Chiefs of Police	5	5
Municipal Officials	5	5

2.3 Research Instrument

The study utilized two instruments: (1) Questionnaire; and (2) VJS Records. A modified questionnaire, based on the tool designed by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) for the implementation of the Search for Outstanding Village Justice Committees, was used. This questionnaire underwent a pre-test or dry run in villages of other non-research municipalities (Sta. Cruz of Macrohon, Nahulid of Libagon, and District 1 of Hinundayan) to trial answers by non-respondent VJCs. Adjustments and modifications were made based on the results to confirm the questionnaire's validity in the research municipality, using Cronbach's Alpha. The application yielded the following results for reliability: (1) Settlement Procedures: 0.907; (2) Conduct of Regular Monthly Meetings: 0.912; (3) Nature of Filed Cases: 0.890; (4) Actions Taken on Cases Handled by VJCs: 0.919; (5) Quality of Settlement of Cases: 0.922; (6) Records Management: 0.950; (7) Submission of VJC Reports: 0.945; (8) Application of Innovative Mediation Techniques: 0.820; (9) Information, Education, and Communication Strategies: 0.891; (10) Mobilization of Support System: 0.910; and (11) Level of Severity of Problems Encountered: 0.802. The questionnaire's reliability and validity were certified by the DILG VJC Focal Person and Evaluator.

The second instrument utilized was the examination of records and documents, which included minutes, transmittal of submission of reports, duly filled-out VJS forms, cases, and appointment papers, among others. Documents, including pictures maintained by the Village Secretary and the MLGOO, were checked to cross-examine the validity and authenticity of the data gathered from the responses of the informants.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

Interviews were done for approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes regarding the issue of concern. In addition to interviews and answered questionnaires, the researcher also utilized other forms of data, such as primary VJC records filed and maintained by VJC secretaries. These documents were used to cross-check the accuracy of some data needed for the study.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical guidelines during data collection. Participation was entirely voluntary, and no respondents were coerced into participating. They were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point, even after providing consent, if they felt uncomfortable.

2.6 Data Analysis

The gathered data were analyzed, interpreted, and presented

using statistical tools, employing four main methods:

1. **Simple Percentages:** Frequency measured the occurrences of particular indicators, while the percentage represented the ratio of frequency over the population multiplied by 100.
2. **Ranking:** Ranking determines the most important/urgent and the least important/urgent aspects of the data.
3. **Weighted Mean:** The weighted mean calculated is the sum of all indicators divided by the number of scales used in the study. This method was used to compute the average of responses per category of indicators in the study.
4. **Spearman Rho Coefficient of Correlation:** This coefficient measured the strength and direction of the monotonic relationship between two ranked variables. In this study, the correlation between the quality of settlement and settlement procedures, as well as the quality of settlement and the conduct of regular monthly meetings, was determined.

Additionally, a Scoring Procedure was employed to determine both the degree of implementation of the Village Justice System and the degree of severity of the problems encountered by the selected Village Justice Committees.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Implementation of Village Justice System Settlement Procedures

Table 2: Degree of village justice system implementation in terms of settlement procedures

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. Once the case is identified as within the purview of the VJS Law, the complainant is instructed to pay the filing fee and given an OR.	4.00	Well Implemented
2. If mediation fails within 15 days, a conciliation panel of three (3) members, chosen by agreement of the parties from the members of the VJC is being constituted.	4.00	Well Implemented
3. During mediation, the Chairman instructs the Secretary to record all the proceedings and once an amicable settlement is reached, both of the parties are instructed to sign the settlement agreement.	3.98	Well Implemented
4. The Chairman helps the two disputing parties find ways to resolving their conflicts amicably within 15 days.	3.97	Well Implemented
5. Within the next working day from the date of the receipt of the the complaint, summons are sent to the respondent/s and the notice of hearing to the complainant	3.95	Well Implemented
6. Once organized, the Conciliators thereafter conciliate and hear the parties, simplify issues, and explore all possibilities for amicable settlement within 15 days, extendible at the discretion of the Conciliators for another 15 days, in clearly meritorious cases.	3.90	Well Implemented
7. During conciliation, the Secretary records all the proceedings and once an amicable settlement is reached, both are instructed to sign the settlement agreement.	3.87	Well Implemented
8. The Village Chairman entertains all complaints, either written or oral properly and allots time with the complainant to discuss and analyze the case, whether it is covered under the VJS law or not.	3.85	Well Implemented
9. In cases when either the complainant or respondent fails to attend any of the mediation/conciliation proceedings, the concerned individual is directed to explain before the VJC Chairperson or the Conciliators Chairperson the reason/s for his/her non-appearance.	3.38	Fairly Implemented
10. If conciliation still fails within a given period, the Conciliators issue the Certificate to File Action in favor of the complainant and the complaint will be lodged at the Local Trial Court.	3.25	Fairly Implemented
Average Weighted Mean	3.82	Well Implemented

Note: Weighted Mean		Verbal Interpretation
3-26 – 4.00	=	Well Implemented
2.51 – 3.25	=	Fairly Implemented
1.76 – 2.50	=	Somewhat Implemented
1.00 – 1.75	=	Poorly Implemented

Section 410 of RA 7160, also known as the Local Government Code of 1991, outlines the correct procedure for settlement under the Village Justice System. According to the research study, under the first indicator – settlement

procedures, the average weighted mean is 3.82, indicating that the settlement procedures among selected Village Justice Committees of the Province of Southern Leyte are well-implemented. Table 2 illustrates that two indicators

("Once the case is identified as within the purview of the VJS Law, the complainant is instructed to pay the filing fee and given an official receipt" and "If mediation fails within 15 days, a conciliation panel of three members, chosen by agreement of the parties from the members of the VJC is being constituted") received the highest weighted mean of 4.0, signifying that these aspects are well-implemented. Conversely, one indicator ("If conciliation still fails within a given period, the Conciliators issue the Certificate to File Action in favor of the complainant and the complaint will be lodged at the Local Trial Court") received the lowest mean of 3.25, indicating that this aspect is fairly implemented.

One notable observation made by the researcher regarding the best practices of the selected Village Justice Committees in the Province of Southern Leyte is their consistent coordination with different offices such as DILG, PNP, and the Local Trial Court in matters relating to Village Justice System implementation. According to a Village Chairman, this strong coordination has facilitated compliance with accurate settlement procedures. In case of doubts, they immediately coordinate with the mentioned offices, either through personal visits or phone calls.

Another identified best practice is the Annual Refresher Course on Village Justice System Implementation conducted by Hingatungan, Silago. This refresher course helps the VJC regularly review significant settlement procedures. The MLGOO mentioned that this activity aligns with Mun. Ordinance No. 2013-05, which mandates the conduct of Annual Refresher Courses on VJS among the Villages of the Municipality of Silago. The responsibility for this is vested in the VJC Development Council, composed

of various stakeholders. Moreover, another best practice is the conduct of Quarterly Performance Assessments, where Hingatungan VJC invites the MLGOO to visit their Village and conduct assessments.

This effective implementation of the Village Justice System is strongly supported by the Filipino Values Theory, wherein Dolan (1991) ^[5] emphasized that Filipinos are heavily influenced by values and religion. Filipino culture is often associated with several positive attributes, such as a strong belief in God, respect for authority and laws, and utmost regard for self-worth and good human relationships. This fact enables the Village Justice System Committees to handle their role of preserving peace and order in the community as Persons in Authority, as outlined in the provisions of the Local Government Code of 1991. The performance of Village Justice Committees is further bolstered by Dy's (1994) ^[6] Peace and Order theory, which posits that Filipinos, as peace-loving people, can pursue justice without resorting to violence. What is crucial is the use of dialogue or "pakikiusap," as emphasized by Baraza (2011) ^[2], because valuing peace has always been a priority among humanity. Despite differing ideologies, customs, and communication methods, humans can coexist in harmony and amity.

Conduct of Regular Monthly Meetings

Section 402 of RA 7160 enumerates the function of the VJCs including the conduct of regular monthly meetings to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas among its members.

Table 3: Degree of village justice system implementation in terms of conduct of regular monthly meetings

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. VJC regular meetings are properly documented evidenced by the signed Minutes of Meeting that are readily available anytime if needed.	4.00	Well Implemented
2. There is an organized agenda in every VJC meeting.	3.88	Well Implemented
3. The VJC has conducted regular monthly meetings exclusively for VJS	3.77	Well Implemented
4. In emergency cases, the VJC has called for special meetings which are also properly documented.	3.70	Well Implemented
Average Weighted Mean	3.84	Well Implemented

Table 3 indicates that the selected Village Justice Committees of Southern Leyte have effectively implemented the conduct of regular monthly meetings exclusively for VJS concerns, as evidenced by a 3.84 average weighted mean. Among the four indicators mentioned, one indicator ("VJC meetings are properly documented, evidenced by the signed Minutes of Meeting that is readily available anytime if needed") received the highest rating with a mean rating of 4.00, while another indicator ("In emergency cases, the VJC has called for special meetings which are also properly documented") received the lowest rating with a mean rating of 3.70.

Respondents attribute the successful implementation to their commitment, noting that the conduct of monthly meetings for the VJC has proven to be advantageous in upholding rapport among members. This is supported by best practices and innovations applied by these selected VJCs. One observed best practice is the formulation of internal rules of procedure, including provisions that set the date, time, and venue of every meeting. Additionally, despite having a regular schedule, some VJCs, like Hingatungan of Silago, still send notices of meetings with agendas and require members to sign upon receipt to ensure attendance,

especially for older members who may be forgetful.

Furthermore, the research study revealed that VJC meetings are properly documented, evidenced by signed Minutes of Meeting and attached signed attendance reports duly certified by the VJC Secretary, readily available if needed. VJC Secretaries indicated that these minutes are presented before the Village Justice Committee for consideration and approval in succeeding regular meetings. This was confirmed by the DILG-MLGOOs of these VJCs, as these documents are submitted to their respective DILG Field Offices. In the case of Canlabian, Anahawan, these minutes are also submitted to the Office of the Municipal Mayor as supporting documents for processing the monthly allowance for all VJC members of the Municipality of Anahawan.

Furthermore, Table 3 also indicates that in every meeting, there is an organized agenda, demonstrating that the meetings serve their intended purpose. When asked about the usual matters discussed, participants mentioned actions taken on cases reported by the VJC Chairman, financial reports, feedback from attended trainings, and plans for the next month. Additionally, some agendas include sharing techniques or strategies to settle disputes and reviewing and updating information on VJS and other relevant laws.

A notable best practice observed is the formulation of a VJC Annual Work and Financial Plan, duly adopted by the Village Council with appropriate funds, serving as a guide in every meeting of the Village Justice Committee of Hingatungan, Silago. Moreover, according to the VJC Chairman, despite not being a legislative body, they observe proper parliamentary procedures and decorum in every meeting. They formally express sentiments, feelings, and emotions through resolutions. In fact, in 2023, the Hingatungan Village Justice Committee passed seven resolutions aimed at enhancing their performance as mediators/conciliators.

However, the lowest mean rating of 3.70 is attributed to very informal arrangements for emergency meetings. Respondents claim that in cases of emergency, they immediately convene, but no minutes are kept. Hence, these meetings are seldom documented, which is a requirement for the full functionality of the Village Justice Committees. Nevertheless, all recorded practices of these selected VJCs demonstrate their excellence in this program. This aligns with what Exforsys Inc. (2009) [7] states about face-to-face meetings providing several benefits for the team or group. Face-to-face meetings foster good working relationships, allow spontaneous expression of sentiments, boost individual morale, and enhance team building, transforming meetings into exciting and enjoyable gatherings among members.

3.2 Performance Profile of Village Justice Committees of the Province of Southern Leyte

Nature of Filed Cases

Table 4: Performance of village justice committees in terms of the nature of cases filed

Indicators	Mean	Description
Criminal Cases	16.2	Medium (M)
Civil Cases	4.20	Low (L)
Others	1.40	Low (L)

Table 4 indicates that the highest mean rating of 16.2 comes from criminal cases, which include but are not limited to slight and less serious physical injuries, threats, slander, theft, and trespassing. Cases classified under "others" by the respondents typically involve matters that are neither criminal nor civil. However, upon validation of administrative records in all selected villages, it was found that many cases classified as "others" may fall under either criminal or civil categories. The issue lies in the proper labeling of cases, which is usually the task of the Secretaries. However, VJC Secretaries claim to have only basic knowledge of case classification before the Village Justice Committee. In terms of performance, criminal cases are described as medium in terms of the number of cases filed. However, a lower number of cases does not necessarily indicate less efficiency because, in rural villages like those in the study locale, informal intercessory activities often precede formal VJC procedures.

The presence of cases demonstrates that these selected VJCs are actively involved in resolving conflicts. This aligns with Manaligod's (2023) [12] theory on Peace and Order, which suggests that Filipinos are sensitive and easily take offense at negative remarks but are also quick to forgive and forget. This viewpoint is supported by Max Lucado (2005) [11], a Christian author and minister, who acknowledges that

conflict is inevitable. Kellett and Dalton (2012) [9] also assert that conflict is inherent to human society and arises from diverse values, interests, and beliefs. Ramsbotham *et al.* (2011) [15] further elaborate on conflict as an inherent facet of societal transformation, emphasizing that the way we address conflict is a matter of choice and can involve various approaches to resolution.

Actions Taken on Cases Handled by the VJCs

Table 5: Performance of village justice committees in terms of actions taken on cases filed

Indicators	Mean	Description
1. Mediated Cases	21.0	High (L)
2. Complied Agreements	20.2	Medium (M)
3. Conciliated Cases	0.4	Low (L)
4. Certified Cases	0.2	Low (L)
5. Pending Cases	0.2	Low (L)
6. Arbitrated Cases	0	Low (L)
7. Dismissed Cases	0	Low (L)
8. Repudiated Cases	0	Low (L)

As indicated in Table 5, a mean rating of 21.0 resulted in the highest number of mediated cases with a High (H) performance description. This indicates that cases were settled by the Village Chairman, providing strong evidence of their exemplary performance. In fact, among the selected VJCs of Southern Leyte, no cases were dismissed, recurred, or had agreements repudiated. Moreover, there were no instances of technical arbitration proceedings. Section 411 of RA 7160, also known as the Local Government Code of 1991, outlines the procedures under the Village Justice System. Based on the gathered data, one clear indication of best practices is the commitment of these selected Village Justice Committees to achieving amicable settlements, significantly aiding in the decongestion of court cases. Regarding compliance with agreements, a notable best practice observed among these selected Village Justice Committees is the meticulous handling of payments (for cases involving the collection of money) between parties. They require actual payments to be made at the Village hall with the Village Secretary as a witness. These transactions are supported by acknowledgment receipts signed by both parties, properly documented, and stored at the office. Furthermore, some VJCs ensure photo documentation of the payment process. For cases not involving monetary transactions, such as threats or public disturbances, a post-settlement monitoring program is implemented. In this strategy, VJC members conduct follow-up visits to the involved parties to ensure compliance with the settlement terms. Subsequently, a monitoring report is prepared by the visiting VJC member and reported to the Chairman for information and guidance.

This high level of performance can be attributed to several factors. As cited in the findings of a related study by Gabuya (1988) [8], most cases were settled by the Chairman, with very few elevated to the Conciliation Panel due to the respected position, power, and influence of the Village Chairman. This method aligns with the theory of Tadiar (2008) [17], which emphasizes three general categories for resolving conflicts: Unilateral, bilateral, and third-party intervention modes. The role of the Village Justice Committees falls under the third-party mode, utilizing facilitative intervention in the form of conciliation or

mediation. Here, a neutral third party facilitates communication between the parties to analyze their true interests, often referred to as assisted negotiations. Furthermore, the high level of performance in mediated cases is attributed to very cooperative parties, aligning with the idea of forgiveness and justice emphasized by Pope John Paul II (2002)^[14]. Additionally, Filipinos' love for peace and harmony motivates them to forgive, as noted by respondents. Many constituents resort to mediation to save time and money, with village mediation offering cheaper costs (a maximum of 100.00 filing fee) compared to litigation costs in court and other miscellaneous expenses (transportation, food, and snacks). This idea is linked to Lee's (1989)^[10] economic theory on scarcity and savings, as Filipinos value financial management and savings. Robbins (2002) also supports this notion, stating that people solve the problem of scarcity by allocating scarce resources to the best possible use.

Quality of Settlement of Cases

Table 6: Performance of village justice committees in terms of quality of settlement of cases

Indicators	Mean	Description
1. Professionalism of the Mediator or Conciliator	3.92	Excellent
2. Competency of the VJC Secretary During Settlement	3.90	Excellent
3. Settlement Skills of the Mediator or Conciliator	3.85	Excellent
4. Responsiveness of the Complainant to the Settlement	3.68	Excellent
5. Responsiveness of the Respondent to the Settlement	3.65	Excellent

Table 6 indicates that the selected village justice committees of Southern Leyte have an excellent quality of settled cases, with an average mean rating of 3.80. Among the five indicators, the professionalism of the mediator or conciliator received the highest mean rating of 3.92, indicating excellent quality. Professionalism in the VJS is characterized by integrity, impartiality, and independence in handling disputes. The data demonstrates that mediators and conciliators clearly understand their roles in dispute resolution. Conversely, the lowest mean rating of 3.65 pertains to the responsiveness of the respondent to the settlement.

3.3 Relationship between Quality of Settlement of Cases and Performance

Table 7: Correlation between quality of settlement of cases and performance

Variables	P-Value	Decision
Quality of Settlement of Cases and Settlement Procedures	0.018	Reject Ho
Quality of Settlement of Cases and Conduct of Regular Monthly Meetings	0.000	Reject Ho

Table 7 reveals a significant relationship between the quality of settlement of cases among the selected Village Justice Committees of the Province of Southern Leyte and the adherence to settlement procedures. This indicates that when there is high performance in compliance with settlement procedures, there is also a high quality of settlement of cases. In essence, these two variables are directly correlated. This suggests that for villages to achieve an excellent quality

of settlement of cases, compliance with settlement procedures must be effectively implemented. This correlation is also evident in some non- or low-performing villages where insufficient attention has been given to this requirement. Despite the existence of laws, the challenge lies in their implementation, as program implementers often receive inadequate support, particularly in terms of capacity-building through training and refresher courses. When we mention insufficient attention or support, it implies that the VJC members themselves may not exert extra effort to adhere to the provisions of the law. This assertion is supported by Pastor (1999)^[13] in her study, which revealed a significant relationship between attending relevant training sessions and the quality of performance, indicating that those who have undergone such training exhibit better performance quality compared to those who have not.

Similar to the findings presented in the preceding paragraphs, Table 9 also demonstrates a significant relationship between the quality of settlement of cases among selected Village Justice Committees of the Province of Southern Leyte and the conduct of regular monthly meetings. The high or excellent quality of the settlement of cases is largely attributed to the regularity of these meetings. This correlation is straightforward because, during these monthly gatherings, various issues related to case settlement are discussed. For the selected VJCs of Southern Leyte, it is imperative that during these meetings, they deliberate on the cases brought before the VJC Chairman and devise different strategies to resolve them, while also outlining the roles and responsibilities of each member. As the saying goes, "Two heads are better than one," and in the case of VJC meetings, it becomes "more heads are better than one."

3.4 VJC Secretaries' Performance Records Management

Table 8 presents the performance of the secretaries among the selected Village Justice Committees of the Province of Southern Leyte in terms of records management in 2023. The table illustrates that in terms of records management, the selected VJC Secretaries exhibit excellent performance. Among the various indicators, the item "1-case, 1-folder" filing is observed to have the highest mean rating of 4.00, indicating exemplary performance. Conversely, the item "DOs and DON'Ts in the filing are properly observed" received the lowest mean rating of 3.13, indicating satisfactory performance.

Section 403 of RA 7160, also known as the Local Government Code of 1991, delineates the role of the VJC Secretary in maintaining proper record-keeping. As per the statute, the VJC Secretary is entrusted with recording the outcomes of mediation proceedings before the VJC Chairman and is required to submit a report on these proceedings to the appropriate city or municipal courts. Additionally, the Secretary is responsible for receiving and preserving the records of proceedings submitted by the various conciliation panels. Furthermore, it is mandated that the Secretary maintains a record book containing all complaints filed with the VJC Chairperson, numbered consecutively, and includes details such as the names of the parties, date and time filed, nature of the case, and its disposition. Finally, the Secretary is tasked with issuing certified true copies of any public record in their custody that is not otherwise declared confidential.

Table 8: Performance of village justice committee secretaries in terms of records management

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
1. "1-case, 1-folder" filing is observed.	4.00	Excellent
2. Folders are properly labeled.	3.98	Excellent
3. Vital VJS Reports and records with signatures are always in place.	3.87	Excellent
4. VJS records/files are held exclusively for village officials only.	3.75	Excellent
5. Records of cases (VJS Logbook) are always maintained.	3.72	Excellent
6. The barangay maintains both manual and computerized record keeping.	3.68	Excellent
7. Documents are properly reviewed as to their entries and signatures before they are filed.	3.63	Excellent
8. VJS records and reports are always maintained in Filing Cabinets and computer hard drives.	3.62	Excellent
9. Alpha-numeric coding/indexing is applied in record-keeping.	3.23	Satisfactory
10. DOs and DON'Ts in the filing are properly observed.	3.13	Satisfactory
average Weighted Mean	3.66	Excellent

Submission of VJS Reports

Table 9 displays the performance of the secretaries of the selected Village Justice Committees of the Province of Southern Leyte in terms of report submission (to DILG-Municipal Field Office and the Local Trial Court) in 2023. The research findings indicate that the selected Village Justice Committees of Southern Leyte strongly adhere to the requirement of report submission. Table 11 demonstrates an excellent performance in the submission of reports to

offices. However, when examined individually, one indicator ("Transmittals of Reports are always maintained and filed at the Office") garnered the highest mean rating of 3.91, while the indicator ("Reports are properly reviewed before submission to other offices") received the lowest mean rating of 3.77. Nevertheless, despite the lowest mean rating obtained, it still signifies excellent performance overall.

Table 9: Performance of village justice committee secretaries in terms of submission of VJS reports

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
1. Transmittals of Reports are always maintained and are filed at the Office.	3.91	Excellent
2. Monthly Reports on Case Profiles are submitted to DILG-MLGOO promptly.	3.87	Excellent
3. Quarterly Reports on Cases Filed & Action Taken are submitted to DILG-MLGOO.	3.85	Excellent
4. Amicable Settlement Reports are submitted to Local Trial Court, 11th to 15th days from the date of the settlement.	3.83	Excellent
5. Reports are properly reviewed before it is submitted to other offices.	3.77	Excellent
Average Weighted Mean	3.85	Excellent

3.5 Creativity and Resourcefulness Performance of Selected Village Justice Committees
Application of Innovative Mediation Techniques (IMTs)

Table 10: Creativity and resourcefulness in terms of the application of innovative mediation techniques

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
1. Innovative Mediation Techniques Applied During Mediation/Conciliation	5.60	High (H)
2. Innovative Mediation Techniques Applied Days Before Mediation/Conciliation	2.60	Medium (M)
3. Innovative Mediation Techniques Applied After Mediation/Conciliation	1.60	Low (L)
Average Weighted Mean	3.27	Medium (M)

Table 10 presents the creativity and resourcefulness of the selected Village Justice Committees of Southern Leyte regarding the application of innovative mediation techniques in the year 2023. The table indicates that among these selected Village Justice Committees, the various innovations and strategies applied during mediation received the highest mean rating of 5.60. Conversely, the application of innovative mediation techniques after the mediation received a low mean rating of 1.60. The application of innovative skills and techniques in the settlement of cases significantly contributes to achieving an effective and fair resolution of disputes. These techniques, not explicitly mentioned in the law, provide the VJC with an advantage in resolving cases effectively.

Information, Education, and Communication (IECs) Strategies

Table 11: Creativity and resourcefulness in terms of information, education, and communication strategies

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
1. Advocacy Efforts to Promote the Ideals of Village Justice System	3.80	Medium (M)
2. Training Attended by Village Justice Committees	2.60	Medium (M)
3. Training Initiated by Village Justice Committees	1.40	Low (L)
Average Weighted Mean	2.60	Medium (M)

Table 11 reveals the performance of the selected Village Justice Committees in Southern Leyte regarding the various information, education, and communication (IEC) strategies implemented. Among these strategies, the advocacy efforts to promote the virtues and noble objectives of the Village Justice System received the highest mean rating of 3.80, indicating a medium level of performance. However, training initiated by the Village Justice Committees attained the lowest mean rating of 1.40. According to the table, all selected Village Justice Committees engage in conducting VJC time during Village Assemblies, coordinating with appropriate agencies, and attending trainings. Effective implementation of the VJS Law relies heavily on raising awareness among the populace about the program's virtues and objectives. One notable best

practice observed among these Village Justice Committees is their inclusion of VJC time during Assembly meetings, where one or two VJC members are designated to discuss various topics, especially cases under the Village Justice System, with assembly members. Additionally, some committees distribute leaflets and information materials

during these meetings, containing basic information such as steps in filing a case, profiles of VJC members, and common cases settled under the Village VJC.

Mobilization of Support System

Table 12: Creativity and resourcefulness in terms of mobilization of support system

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
1. Support Received from the Village Local Government	3.40	Medium (M)
2. Support Received from the Municipal Local Government	1.40	Low (L)
3. Support Received from the Provincial Local Government	1.00	Low (L)
4. Support Received from Other National Government Agencies	0.80	Low (L)
5. Support Received from the NGOs, CSOs, and Private Sector	0.20	Low (L)
Average Weighted Mean	1.36	Low (L)

Table 12 indicates that the selected Village Justice Committees have received support from higher-level LGUs, including national government agencies and the private sector. However, support from the Village Local Government garnered the highest mean rating of 3.40, while support from NGOs, CSOs, and the Private Sector received the lowest mean rating of 0.20. Upon closer examination of each selected VJC, additional best practices intrinsic to them become apparent. One such best practice concerning support

for these Village Justice Committees is the provision of separate offices or structures by the Village Legislative Body/Village Local Government Unit for the VJC. This practice is commendable because it signifies that, for these selected Village Justice Committees, the role of the VJC in the villages is prioritized and given utmost attention.

3.6 Degree of Severity of the Problems Encountered Among the Selected VJCs of Southern Leyte

Table 13: The degree of severity of the problems encountered among the selected village justice committees

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
1. Less remuneration and other motivating factors received	3.60	Very Severe
2. Less support from the barangay and municipal government, and other stakeholders (court, PNP, DILG, and other offices)	3.43	Very Severe
3. Non-conduct of training for the constituents	2.03	Less Severe
4. Non-conduct of advocacy efforts to promote VJS to the public	1.77	Less Severe
5. Non-compliance of parties to the settlement agreements	1.67	Not Severe at All
6. Insufficient knowledge of the Village Justice System	1.33	Not Severe at All
7. Proper settlement procedures are not observed	1.23	Not Severe at All
8. Non-conduct of regular monthly meetings	1.22	Not Severe at All
9. Non-submission/untimely submission of reports to DILG & Court	1.15	Not Severe at All
10. Poor and unsystematic recording of VJC documents	1.12	Not Severe at All
11. Poor mediation/conciliation skills of the JVC	1.10	Not Severe at All
Average Weighted Mean	1.76	Less Severe

Table 13 indicates that the selected Village Justice Committees of Southern Leyte encounter relatively minor problems, as evidenced by an average weighted mean of 1.76. However, among the different indicators mentioned, one indicator ("Less remuneration and other motivating factors received") received the highest mean rating of 3.60, indicating that this problem is very severe among the selected VJCs. Conversely, one indicator ("Poor mediation/conciliation skills of the VJC") received the lowest mean rating of 1.10.

Section 406-b of RA 7160, also known as the Local Government Code of 1991, clearly stipulates that VJC or Conciliator members shall serve without compensation. However, while performing their duties, these members, whether in public or private employment, shall be considered on official time and shall not suffer any reduction in compensation or allowances from said employment as a result.

According to Robbins and Coulter (2004), money is an important motivator, whether in the form of wages, incentive pay, bonuses, or other forms of compensation. Money's value lies in its purchasing power, and it serves as a powerful motivator due to its ability to fulfill various needs

and desires. Additionally, incentives in the form of money can have different effects on individuals in different circumstances. Several studies have shown that while money is not the sole motivator for individuals, it does play a significant role. Pastor (1999)^[13] claimed in her study that there is a significant relationship between the motivational factors of VJCs and their performance rates, indicating that those receiving honoraria tend to perform better than those who do not. Therefore, Caberte (1994)^[3] suggested including specific budgetary allocations for VJS implementation to enhance the program's excellence and productivity.

4. Conclusion

The study's findings reveal that the implementation and performance of the Village Justice System (Katarungang Pambarangay) among selected Village Justice Committees were excellent, attributed to full compliance with the provisions of the law, meticulous record-keeping, timely reporting, the application of innovative settlement techniques, and effective Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) strategies employed by the Village Chairperson and Conciliation Panel members. However,

challenges arose due to the lack of monetary remuneration, non-monetary incentives, and administrative support from Municipal/City Local Government Units (LGUs), National Government Agencies (NGAs), Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)/Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and the Private Sector. To address these issues, a Development Action Plan has been formulated.

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The sole author initiated and completed this study.

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7. Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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