



## Contribution of Women Leaders in Conflict Resolution Among the Maranaos in Marawi City

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### ABSTRACT

Rido is rampant in the province of Lanao del Sur, particularly in Marawi City. In response to this problem, the participation of women in conflict resolution is important because they are respected in the Maranao community. This study aims to determine the contribution of female leaders in conflict resolution among the Maranaos of Marawi City. Also, it identifies different types as well as causes of conflict, and it also investigates the strategies and characteristics used to resolve conflicts. The data were used using a questionnaire and interviews with key informants to ensure that the information gathered was substantial and adequately presented. A snowballing technique was also used to identify respondents who were women leaders. The findings show that there are nine (9) common causes of conflict in the locality. These are maratabat, murder, accidental killing, marital discord, elopement, non-payment of debt, land dispute, belittling, and political rivalry. Factors or characteristics possessed by female leaders contribute to their role in resolving conflicts. Thus, women leaders are actively involved in conflict resolution, as they serve in conflict resolution. This study recommends that women need to be empowered to be more participatory in conflict resolution, not only in the Maranao society but in others to achieve peace. Empowering them will boost their morale and enable them to realize the important role they play and will play in society.

**Keywords:** conflict resolution, rido, peace, women leaders, Philippines

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Women are essential component of the community. They play a big role in fostering harmony and working together to resolve disputes.

Article II, Section 14 of the 1987 Constitution, provides that the state shall recognize the role of women in nation-building and shall ensure the fundamental equality before the law of women and men. With this constitutional provision, Maranao women leaders were given roles in settling disputes. The Datus of Marawi City is getting support from women leaders to launch additional strategies. They are seen as respectable and significant in Maranao society, and as such, they act as organizers, advisors, consultants, and conflict resolution secretaries. They contribute significantly to the promotion of harmony, peace, and unity. Women leaders can help eliminate rido (conflict in the family) because they are experts in resolving conflict just as they calm down their children when they are fighting. Their gentle voice helps.

However, family conflict is still on the rise in Lanao del Sur, specifically, Marawi City residents. And mostly conflict resolutions

were undocumented. Thus, this paper feels the need to write down the roles of Maranao women who played important roles in resolving conflict. Further, this study hopes to unveil the heroic deeds of women and include them in the historical records to inspire the female sector of our society to deal with conflict resolution for a more peaceful and progressive society.

In addition to being dependable at home and partners in raising their children, the researcher wishes to emphasize that women also go above and beyond to support their neighbors, including assisting Datus in resolving conflicts. The notable gap found by the researcher were the characteristics of women that can help resolve conflict and are not emphasized in other studies on conflict resolution. Further, were those strategies used by the women leaders to resolve conflict. Therefore, this research will address any gaps that were not found in other studies.

#### 1.1 Literature Review

### 1.1.2 Rido

The term "rido" evolved from the root word "ridowae" which means enemy used when colonizers first invaded Mindanao and the Moro warriors defended their land and consequently, called their colonizers as ridowae (Kalilintad 2020).

### 1.1.3 Impact of Rido

Clan disputes, or rido, are quite common in Maranao culture, even though it is destructive to the well-being of individuals and their surroundings. Education is affected by family involvement in ridos as well as cultural, social, economic activities and properties can be damaged, and income will decrease. The social life of the communities and families is affected. In Maranao societies, violent disagreements frequently result in rido, especially those disputes involving large families or clans. For some, rido refers to a cyclical system of retaliation used by family or clan members for specific purposes. It is always typified by a series of violent retaliatory actions directed towards the adversary, who is the focus of the rido. There are instances where the revenge chain extends up to three generations (Matuan, 2004).

According to Matuan (2004), conflicts are a pervasive human activity that persists in every society. This means that it is an inevitable process in which everyone is or may be involved. Indeed, everyone must also perform roles in its resolution processes. However, not all of everyone's contributions are recorded and recognized, especially women's contributions.

### 1.1.4. Empowering women

Beauvoir, cited in the research of Ali et al., asserted that historically, women have been considered inferior to men, not because of a woman's characteristics, but because of social norms and education that governs people. In other tribes, however, even tribal leaders may accept women who possess magical abilities, intelligence, the ability to communicate with the afterlife, and the ability to perform divine rituals. This is particularly valid for them as women. This means that women have always had the ability to lead their tribes and acquire properties since time immemorial. Also, women are already playing important roles in their communities. The Maranaos have always recognized the value of women in conflict resolution. In fact, among the Maranaos, respect for women has always been emphasized. Thus, one should never underestimate the value of women's opinions and women's leadership qualities in the community because they are equal to men's in making decisions on some matters pertaining to the family.

To restore peace and order in the community, the participation of women leaders is considered necessary. Due to the ongoing problems that complicate the peace process in Mindanao, several women have established organizations to help BARMM's peace and development and express their concerns. This led to the emergence of the following organizations: Mindanao Sultanate Women Al-Itihad, Buliok Women's Association, Lupah Sug Bangsamoro Women, and others. The help of Maranao women leaders is needed because they play a big role in resolving conflicts. Since women's opinions are often valued and recognized in Muslim communities, espe-

cially those in Maranao society, many Muslim women help Sultans and Datus resolve conflicts and create resolution strategies for conflict. Women are also known for being calm, which helps keep things simple by keeping everyone calm during heated conversations.

## 1.2 Significance of the Study

This study on the processes of conflict resolution is important to determine the kinds and causes of conflict. The answer to the questions, "What are the strategies employed to resolve conflicts in Marawi City?" and "What are the factors or traits that Maranao women leaders possess that help in conflict resolution?" can be used as a reference to understand the role of traditional systems in resolving such conflicts.

Particularly, this study may be beneficial to the following groups: (1) Maranao Community, a tribal group of Lanao and the majority of the people living in Marawi City, for this study hopes to help them initiate more strategies for solving conflict; and (2) students, for them to be fully aware of the roles of women who are not just symbols but contributors to establishing order in society. Further, this study gives the (3) readers some useful ideas for handling and managing conflicts. Additionally, it provides information for (4) policymakers to bring peace and order to Maranao society.

## 1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To determine the kinds and causes of conflict that Maranao women leaders resolved;
2. To determine the strategies employed to resolve such conflicts; and
3. To identify the traits that Maranao women possess which help in conflict resolution.

## 1.4 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study focused on determining the conflict resolution strategies among the Maranaos of Marawi City and how women leaders have contributed to them. The key informants of this study were purposefully chosen from the women residing on the Mindanao State University-Main Campus and women working and holding traditional positions on the State University-Main Campus. These key informants were the Sultans, wives of Sultans, Datus, wives of the Datus, wives of the barangay captains, Imams, wives of Imams, professors, instructors, staff, and other prominent personalities who are known to have contributed to conflict resolutions in the locality. Some informants who had been involved in conflicts were also interviewed to augment the collected data. Furthermore, the barangays were determined based on the number of conflicts brought to resolution.

The data were collected using questionnaires, interviews with key informants, and focused group discussions (FGD).

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Respondents

The key informants of this study were the Sultans, Bae a Labis, Datus, wives of the datus, barangay captains, wives of the barangay captains, and other prominent personalities who are known to have handled conflict resolution before. Some of the disputants were also interviewed.

### 2.2 Population

This research intends to interview at least 20 respondents. Bai a Labis, Datus, wives of the datos, barangay captains, wives of the barangay captains, and other prominent personalities who are known to have handled conflict resolution.

### 2.3 Sampling

Purposive selection of the key informants was used to ensure that the information gathered was substantial and would be adequately presented. Particularly the key informants were Bae a Labis, Datus, wives of the datos, barangay captains, wives of the barangay captains, and other prominent personalities who are known to have handled conflict resolution before. Some of the disputants were also interviewed. The snowballing technique was also used in gathering the possible respondents. Snowballing, as defined by Simkus, J. (2023), is a type of sampling technique that works like chain referral. After observing the initial subject, the researchers asked for assistance from the subject to help identify people with similar traits. Snowballing was utilized in this study since Marawi City does not have any pertinent listings or records of all the women engaged in conflict resolution. Also, two phases of data collection were conducted throughout the research. As a result, the researchers gathered and examined the quantitative data first. In the study's second phase, qualitative data were gathered and analyzed about the quantitative phase's results. There was no limitation as to age, marital status, and length of experience. Only respondents who were willing to participate were included in this study.

### 2.4 Research Instruments

The questionnaire in this research has two parts. The first part is an adopted questionnaire, and the second part is an open-ended questionnaire so that respondents can share their opinions and ideas freely and can supply their own.

### 2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

The first part of the research instrument used to gather data on the demographic profile of the respondents utilized an adopted but modified questionnaire. The second part is an open-ended questionnaire containing follow-up questions. To complement the data gathered, focus group discussions (FGD) were also conducted among selected key informants. The information that was gathered was recorded, consolidated, and contextualized. The information was then utilized to substantiate the analyses and findings of the study.

### 2.6 Research Ethics

To maintain ethical behavior throughout the study process and protect the confidentiality and sensitivity of the data collected, the researchers kept in mind and satisfied these important requisites: (1) The researchers must obtain informed consent from respondents before they participate in the study, (2) respondents must give clear and understandable information about the purpose of the study, procedures, potential risks, benefits, and their rights as respondents, (3) they should inform the informants that they have the freedom to voluntarily decide whether to participate or not; (4) the responders' privacy and anonymity should be guaranteed, (5) any personal data gathered must be kept private and never shared without the responders' explicit consent, and (6) to preserve the respondents' anonymity, data should be coded or anonymized.

To prevent plagiarism and copyright violations, the dates

and materials utilized in the study were properly and accurately sourced. A communication letter was presented to the people who helped in the validity check and verification of the questions used in the questionnaire to ensure that the questionnaire distributed is organized and does not tamper with any ethical standards.

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Kinds and Causes of Conflicts

Majority of the respondents identified two kinds of conflicts: (1) da makapataya, and (2) miakapataya. Da makapataya means that no one died or if someone was injured, it can be settled, and blood money can be given with the help of the women leaders and of course with the respected Datus. It means light offenses such as fighting, insults, physical injuries, and others. Miyakapataya means, someone died, and many livelihoods were lost including the guns and ammunition that were used in their battle. The cycle will unavoidably repeat itself when there are many deaths and many families affected, and it is not easy to end it. This refers to grave offenses like murder, land disputes related to politics, maratabat, etc. According to informant 20, both grave and light, no matter how minor, have the potential to escalate into rido if they are not resolved at an early stage.

In the interviews conducted during the focused group discussion (FGD) conducted, the common causes of conflict experienced by the Maranao in the locality were: maratabat, murder, accidental killing, marital disputes, non-payment of debts, land disputes, belittling, elopement, political rivalries.

Table No.1: Causes of Rido

	Frequency	Percentage
1. Maratabat	4	20%
2. Murder	4	20%
3. Accidental Killings	2	10%
4. Marital Dispute	2	10%
5. Elopement	1	5%
6. Non-payment of debt	2	10%
7. Land Disputes	2	10%
8. Belittling	1	5%
9. Political Rivalries	2	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table shows that maratabat and murder are the primary causes of rido both garnering 20% of the responses. It is followed by accidental killings, marital disputes, non-payment of debts, land disputes, and political rivalries, each with 10% of the responses, then by elopement and belittling with 5% of the responses each.

#### 1. Maratabat

Maratabat is a virtue that has to do with self-worth, dignity, pride, and honor. It is said that every Maranao has it from birth. According to Respondent 1, a person cannot be regarded as pure Maranao if he does not possess maratabat. He continued by saying that, without it,

shame is nonexistent. As a result, maratabat holds great value and significance in the Maranao community.

The Maranaos placed great importance on maratabat, therefore, it has significant impact on their way of life. Hence, conflict occurs due to maratabat. Respondent 2 shared a story of a boy shot dead because he humiliated a Maranao lady who was not properly dressed. The father of the girl felt that the family's maratabat was dishonored. As a consequence, the father shot the boy. Respondent 3 said that Maratabat is part of Maranao culture. According to him, maratabat is shown through retaliation when it is gravely disrespected. Respondent 4 also mentioned that the dimensions of maratabat are based on status, position, and prestige. But it doesn't mean that if you are poor, your maratabat is low.

### 2. Murder

Murder is another thing that leads to conflict. Among the major crimes that lead to serious disputes that frequently turn into feuds within the family or clan is murder. When a person dies, those who are close to the victim experience immense grief. Due to this, Maranao frequently seeks revenge on the murderer and even believes that family members or other relatives should be responsible for avenging death. Family feuds result from serious disputes that develop when vengeance is exacted on the killer, as the perpetrator's families experience the same pain of losing a family member. Respondent 5 mentioned a case where a half-Maranao and half-Bisaya boy had a girlfriend who was pure Maranao. The boy who spent most of his time in Iligan City spoke fluently in Bisaya rather than Maranao. When he was invited by the girl, her boyfriend went to visit Marantao for a few days. The cousins of the girl killed her boyfriend. The incident resulted in conflicts between the families of the boy and his girlfriend.

### 3. Accidental Killings

Accidental killings represent an additional avenue for conflict. The term "Kiyalinguan" (as used by the Maranao people) describes accidental murder as a violent crime that does not specifically target the victim. Respondent 6 stated that accidental killing often leads to violence since rido is common in Maranao societies. Innocent lives may be in danger when retaliation takes place; this is especially true in crowded places. Consequently, conflicts between two families may also involve conflicts with other families.

### 4. Marital Dispute

When the conflict between husband and wife is intense and it affects their relationship, it is called marital conflict. When needs, wants, and desires are not met, it leads to selfishness which leads to marital discord. Mutual understanding is lost, goals are no longer taken care of, and jealousy or mistrust prevails in a relationship. Most conflicts begin with serious misunderstandings. Failure to communicate and disrespect of each other can lead to conflict if not resolved immediately. Further, the conflict worsens when there is verbal provocation between the clans, where inappropriate advice is given and rumors are added or subtracted.

Respondent 8 mentioned a case that happened in Marawi City when

a couple quarreled because of a third party. The wife suspected her husband of having another woman. When the wife confronted her husband, surprisingly, the husband admitted that he had a relationship with somebody and that he would transfer his government claims to the girl. He was a policeman. That night, when the husband was asleep, the wife got her husband's caliber 45 pistol and shot him dead.

### 5. Elopement

It is an act or instance of running off secretly just to be married to someone. It is considered by the informant to be disrespectful and dishonorable on the part of the woman's family. One CPA professor expressed, "It is an insult to one's maratabat if a girl in the family goes out dating a boy." It is not allowed for a girl to have a relationship with a boy before marriage because it means that the boy does not respect the girl and her family. That insult could only be repaired if the boy marries the girl.

### 6. Non-payment of debt

One of the causes of conflict is the non-payment of debt because of failing to meet financial obligations. Respondent 10 mentioned that although this does not happen often in Maranao societies, problems related to it still exist. He added that the biggest case of non-payment of debt resulting in grave conflicts is the pyramiding scam. The conflict starts when the investors do not receive their investment returns after investing a certain amount of money. In one case, the husband of the agent was abducted to force her to pay the investment returns.

### 7. Land Disputes

When two distinct parties believe they each have a legitimate claim over a piece of land, land dispute arises. Respondent 10 narrated the story of four siblings who fought over their parents' piece of land. Their brother had been benefiting from their land rental since their parents had left. Several times, his brother asked to borrow the land so he could plant some crops. However, his sibling consistently declined. When he returned one day, another brother told him it was time for them to start using their land. He declined once more. His brother killed his brother by gunshot.

Another instance of land dispute is what Respondent 11 mentioned. The Maranao tribesman was killed by a hack in 2012 when the Higaonon tribe in Lanao del Sur saw him cleaning a parcel of land that he held in Bumbaran Town's isolated barrio. After learning of the incident, the victim's relatives went to exact revenge. The Maranaos had guns, while the Higaonon tribesmen had only bolos. The Higaonon tribesmen fought back, even hacking one of their attackers, but five of their members passed away in the attack. As a result, the Higaonons and the Maranaos have no longer a standing land dispute because the incident was just a result of a petty misunderstanding.

### 8. Belittling

Belittling is the term for derogatory behaviors or remarks directed at an individual. Belittling someone in Maranao culture also belittles that person's family. This can lead to hurting pride. Respondent 7, relate a story about a man being reprimanded in front of many peo-



ple. The offended considered this thing as an insult or a derogation of his well-being. He added that there might have been major fighting if the insult had been made to someone unable to control their temper.

### 9. Political Rivalries

In the past, there has been a strong rivalry for posts in the Philippines when seeking positions in politics. Numerous rivals engage in violent and dishonest conduct from the time of voter registration until the winner is declared. These political disputes result from anomalies such as vote-buying, poor competition, and unhealthy rivalry between the politicians.

Respondent 8, relates an incident that occurred in Lanao that resulted in the deaths of ten people, five injuries, and the displacement of about fifty households. She explained that the fighting resulted from a long-standing conflict that was revived during intense rivalry during the most recent municipal elections in a nearby town. A few Family 1 members gave their support to local candidates. She thought the attack on Family 1 early in the morning was the result of "devil whispers," which inspired some forty (40) armed members of the Family 2 and Family 3 clans. Before dark on Friday, the combined groups of mediators had initially pacified the parties, citing the necessity for everyone to break the day's fast. She stated that the opening burst of fire instantly killed one, causing some forty-armed relatives of the fatality to fight back in a following gunfight. However, violence started up again at 8:00 p.m. in such a vicious way that at least eleven houses were destroyed. The family conflict remained unresolved.

## 3.2 Conflict Resolution Strategies

Four types of legal traditions exist in Lanao provinces or Maranao conflict resolution practices in the modern era. These are *taritib ago igma'* kitab, *Kokoman a kambhatabata'a*, and the Philippine Court (Abdullah, 1982). In this research study, the Maranao Customary Laws are used to settle disputes between *Kokoman*, *kambhatabata'a*, and *taritib ago igma*. As a result, there are three ways for Maranao to manage conflicts. This comprise of Shariah (kitab), customary laws, and Philippine laws. According to Vitug (2005), the majority of Maranao believe that Philippine laws are slow and corrupt, taking years to effect reconciliations. Because of this, Maranao people prefer to settle disputes primarily through the application of Shariah laws in conjunction with customary laws.

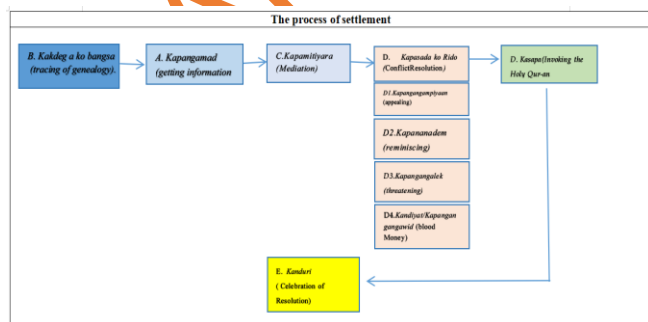


Table No.2: The process of settlement

The table shows the process of settlement when a conflict is led by a datu with Maranao women leaders on his side during conflict resolution.

### The settlement process

#### A. Kakdeg a ko bangsa (tracing of genealogy)

According to the Bai a Labis, gathering information about the concerned parties, such as their family tree, is essential before the mediator can settle with the parties involved. This procedure is referred to as "tracing of genealogy" or "Kakdeg a ko bangsa." The process of tracing the parties involved in the dispute is called "kakdeg a ko bangsa," or *kapanalsila*. It is believed that the Maranaos of Lanao are linked as they have a common ancestry. The territory that became Maranao's homeland, Lanao, was divided into four principalities by their ancestors, or *Pat a Pangamong ko Ranao*. The mediators may find it helpful to know their near-blood relatives during the settlement procedure. Respondent 12 mentioned that the process has proven to be effective in many cases, especially when blood relations are closer.

#### B. Kapangamad

Finding out what transpired and what the underlying reason of the disagreement comes after obtaining their family tree. We refer to this as "Kapangamad." The mediator will begin by asking why the conflict arose. In an interview conducted with Princess Tarhata Lucman, she said: "I immediately pay a separate visit to the conflicting parties without the knowledge of the other party, asking the same questions. After getting all the information from both sides, the next day I look for and talk with the neighbors and relatives of those in conflict, because that's the time I can compare the statements of both parties to see if they are telling the truth. It is difficult to get information from conflicting parties because they will be both defensive. They will only speak for their rights. I'll never go in to solve the conflict until I learn from the other people around me what the cause of the conflict is. Sometimes, the other party lies. So, when I already ask the people around me who they think is right and who is wrong, I never hesitate to tell the one telling lies that he/she is wrong. Whether you like it or not, you have to abide by our decisions, or else I can get you out of the way. I talk to people, and they tell me that you are wrong. So, you must be corrected. It is my strategy to consult the guilty person. And then I will threaten the disputant that if he does not obey, I'll be the one to kill him; no one will hit me back because I am a woman and I am the daughter of the Sultan of Ramain." After the information is properly gathered and sufficient enough, it will be consolidated and used as a reference for appropriate settlements.

#### C. Kapamitiyara (Mediation)

The Maranao culture is open to different dispute resolution methods during mediation, such as the Philippine courts, the Kitab (Shariah Court), the *taritib ago igma* (consensus), or the *kokoman a kambhatabataa* (law of the kinsmen). *Taritib ago igma* requires the provision or payment of damages as well as various forms of punishment, such as public censure of the guilty. This is in contrast to *kokoman a kambhatabataa*, which is a peaceful manner of resolving conflicts

without the need for payment of damages. This is when the two parties are related by blood or consanguinity.

#### D. *Kapasada ko Rido* (Conflict Resolution)

This is how the mediator assesses the conflicting parties and determines whether they want a resolution. In this situation, the mediator needs to be able to convince and exert influence. Before a final resolution is reached, she must consult with the parties involved in the conflict on a daily or monthly basis. The mediator, however, waits until both parties have approved the settlement parameters. The process of arranging a settlement is started and explored by one or more mediators. The methods of communication are:

##### d.1. *Kapangampiyan* (appealing)

Mediators use empathy and sympathy to appeal to the parties involved in the conflict. Crying a little bit sometimes to express how the situation affects her. She weeps and keeps rubbing her eyes as she tells the story, bowing her head. She is telling the parties in dispute to keep thinking critically about the situation and to express their desires for a resolution.

##### d.2. *Kapananadem* (reminiscing)

Reminiscing can be used by the mediator if appealing is unsuccessful. This will work if the mediator has a debt of gratitude to both parties who are also deeply hurt by what is happening. By saying how can they dare killing each other. The mediator has a way of arousing the guilt feelings of the disputants.

##### d.3. *Kapangangalek* (threatening)

An effective mediator who has come from a rich and powerful family can use threats to coerce someone who has acted wrong. He/She can use threats to impose a decision. Princess Tarhata Lucman also said in an interview that during her time one of her strategies was threatening the offender. Saying "if you do not obey our decision, I will get you out of the way, or worse I will be the one to kill you".

##### d.4. *Kandiyat/Kapangangawid* (blood Money)

These are monetary reparations given to the victim's heirs. The incentive for bringing a criminal to justice is known as "blood money." The monetary fine that a murderer pays to the victim's family depends on various circumstances. These fines completely protect the offender (or the kinsfolk thereof) from the vengeance of the injured family. The offender (or their kinsfolk) is fully shielded by these sanctions from the wounded family's retaliation. It may be stated how much money was involved in the settlement. In particular, for conflicts that lead to property damage and physical injury, further payment and arrangements are also included. When a clan dispute has resulted in multiple deaths, donating blood money is a standard component of the settlement process.

In an agreement, the payment of a large amount of money, or its equivalent value in the form of goods, is shared by the perpetrator/s and relatives. The pattern of who receives or gives value is not always predictable. The amount of money varies depending on the nature of the conflict, the number of deaths, and the economic status of the parties. Payment is made to the one who most persuasively demonstrates that they have suffered more material losses and that

their maratabat has been seriously affected. The traditional and local political leaders give P50,000 to P150,000 for the resolution of the conflict. The victim's party demands that the weapon—typically an M14 or Armalite—used in the murder be taken away. Depending on the circumstances and the mediator's ability to appeal, the sum may be lowered.

#### E. *Kasapa* (Invoking the Holy Quran as a source of swearing)

With this action, the parties are made brothers in Islam and pledge allegiance to the agreement in the name of Almighty Allah. By the Holy Quran, both parties promise to reconcile. An imam or other religious figure leads the ritual during which this is done. The parties are bound together symbolically by this rite; the purpose of swearing is to forever seal the conflict, wherein the Quran is a witness. Nobody would break since the affected party would suffer greatly as a result. A significant part of the conflict settlement procedure is the disputants swearing on the Quran to remind them that Islam calls on its adherents to be understanding, patient, and tolerant of everyone, even the adversary. After that, the mediator will plan a public celebration where the real settlement is made, provided that terms can be agreed upon.

#### F. *Kanduri* (Celebration of Resolution)

Kanduri will happen after the conflict is settled. Food and beverages are served to all attendees during a kanduri, or money may be given out equally in the form of cash. As witnesses to the conflict's resolution, the entire community participates in the celebration attested to by all parties involved in the conflict. The ceremonial leader presents the genealogy of families, retracts their bloodlines, and discloses their common descent. The ceremony then begins with speeches by leaders confirming the parties' will to mend fences.

### Role of Women in Conflict Resolution

*Kakdeg a ko Bangsa* (tracing genealogy) and *Kapangamad* (getting information)—*Rido* in Mindanao is rampant. It is good that women are responsible for tracing the genealogy because it is unsafe for a Datu or Sultan. Women are trouble-free. She can go wherever she wants to trace the genealogy and get information.

The key informant said this in the above conflict, which I narrated earlier. "This was a half-Muslim-Christian from Marantao. The boyfriend was pure Muslim. The brothers of Mr. J called me and requested that I join them in looking for their brother. The strategy I used is this. I looked and arranged a talk with a woman who was very influential and dignified in that family, through her sister, who was my friend. After the negotiation, the family, headed by their aunt, felt that the conflict was really serious and heavy. She proposed that she and her brothers be exempted from the conflict, for they have nothing to do with it. I negotiated with my family friend after I had made things clear. They all came to our residence, and we settled among ourselves. From then on, the said family was exempted from the conflict, and even if there was no demand, they gave a kanduri of PhP70,000.00."

The conflict is only between the direct murderer and the victim's family. Traditionally, women do not have key roles in conflict resolution because it is the role of the Datu. However, they become involved, serving as mediators and pacifiers, and help communicate in the pre-negotiation stage. They are sent by the Datu to find out if the conflicting parties are willing to settle. They are sent to find out if parties are open to negotiation. At the first occurrence of conflict, they serve as shields, as they are safe from retaliation. Being regarded as harmless, women serve those who need protection. Women serve as the protection of men. Hurting or attacking women is shameful because women are seen as weak and invulnerable. Women serve as messengers. They are sent to retrieve corpses. Men cannot easily penetrate a clash, especially when there are casualties. Women serve as medics to attend to the needs of the wounded. Women are the ones who spill cold water on the blazing fire, facilitate the smooth flow of communication between the two parties to avoid misunderstandings, and deliver messages into good statements to reach amicable negotiations.

Respondent 14 mentioned that "Asnia (not her real name) and Haron (not his real name) had been married for about five years and had two children. The man is working in KSA, and the wife stays in the Philippines. Before going back to Saudi Arabia on his last vacation, they quarreled, and the man went back to KSA with their quarrel unpatched up. When the man arrived after a year, he immediately called me and requested that I settle them. The strategy I used as a mediator was a surprise arrival at the residence of Asnia, and I talked to the parents at first. It was difficult, but after a long discussion, explanation, and mediation, I asked the man if he still loves Asnia and would value their marriage. He cried and confessed that he loved his family. The family wasn't able to refuse because of the negotiation, which they also respected. As of now, the couple has a peaceful life and has another baby. The man comes and goes to work, now in Manila, but I have not heard of any conflict between them anymore."

In Ramain, Lanao del Sur, conflict is rampant. The strategy they use is for wives of the conflicting parties to mediate themselves, see each other, and ask for possible solutions that could be raised with their husbands, so the conflict does not escalate. One wife suggested that they will agree that if the husbands don't want to resolve the conflict, they will leave them because they do not want their son to die or engage in conflict.

Women play a great role in putting up blood money. They are the ones soliciting money for their respective families, relatives, and friends. And because women are known for their kindness, they use their own money to put up the amount assigned to them. Wives of both parties are present in the ceremony, serve as witnesses and assist their husbands. They are the ones convincing their spouses. They are advisers and consultants to their spouses. Women stay near their husbands. During kanduri attended by the conflicting parties, their relatives, and other political leaders, women is to prepare the food and serve the people in attendance.

### 3.3 Factors or traits women possess

There are factors or traits that women in Maranao society possess

that make them valuable assets in resolving conflict. These are respect for women, the woman's title, influence, and other traits such as patience, neutrality, and trust.

#### a. Respect

Maranao believes that women are born peacemakers. From the time of birth, women are taught and encouraged to mediate and resolve conflict between family members and between families. The most valued and respected process for conflict resolution is that of women. Princess Tarhata Lucman said during the interview that "women are very important; aside from being highly respected, given the freedom to talk, and given the chance to convey their ideas and opinions to people, women are good advisers to their spouses, brothers, and even to their fathers. Women are consultative. They can resolve conflict because of their ability to speak justly and because they are soft-spoken."

Respondent 16, mentioned a case about how women are respected. "Sometime in 1999, a university driver named Mr. B was kidnapped at about 4 p.m. while going down from the campus. It was a kidnap-carnap case because the automobile of the victim was taken, and the kidnapper drove the car away from the campus. The car was taken to a faraway place, outside Marawi City. For about two to three weeks, there was no news about the victim. According to the informant, the victim called up through the 2-way radio, seeking a response. When the rescuer heard the voice of Mr. B, he identified his voice as familiar. The rescuer received the radio call and talked to Mr. B. To make the long story short, the rescuer was able to talk to the kidnapper. Both parties agreed to meet at a place and finally went to the place where the victim was hidden. Here is a particular instance where the respondent happens to be the wife of the rescuer. Riding on a jeep service, the wife was invited by the husband to go with him to the place identified by the kidnapper. Since he planned to negotiate peacefully, he brought along his wife, which simply means cool negotiations were taking place. The couple entered the alleged camp, where the victim stayed for weeks. They brought and gave personally some medicines and clothes to the victim. The negotiators were not really familiar with the kidnappers, and the place was really far from their hometown and didn't have connections."

#### b. Titles and Influence

Maranao women are title conscious. The customary law gives Maranao women the right to be equal to men. So, they are installed with titles or positions (*grar*) equivalent to those of their male counterparts. Some of the titles (*grar*) are *bae a labi*, *bai a dalomangcob*, *bae a cabugatan*, *potre maamor*, *bai a adil*, and all others. Each title has its own corresponding meaning. *Bai a Labi* is the most powerful title. This titleholder takes part in policy and decision-making, settling disputes, enforcing Muslim laws, promoting the rights of women, and many other functions.

Some Maranaos disqualify women from assuming the position of sultan or heading a community because of their position as mothers, for tendering care for their family. However, Maranao



women enjoy the rights and privileges of helping their society. During important gatherings or when certain decisions have to be made in the community, the Bai's are often consulted. In effect, Maranao women are free to voice their opinions on matters affecting their community. In the absence of the Sultan or Datu, in the past, the Bais served as a substitute for the Datu, and her opinion concerning the settlement dispute was considered final. The story of Mangadang validates this view.

The Maranao women occupy a very distinct position in Maranao society, and they can wield tremendous influence. Some can afford to disagree with an influential sultan's decision. Disputing parties may not hold the decision made by powerful sultans, but these parties will have to listen to and honor the opinions suggested by the sultan's wife, which are designed to end the quarrel.

The Bai Labi exercises the same authority, power, rights, and privileges enjoyed by the Sultan. Similar to a queen, she acts as an adviser to the Sultan on both temporal and spiritual matters within the Sultanate. She plays host during important family events like weddings or other occasions, even Islamic occasions such as the celebration of Eidl Fitr and Eidl Adha.

During an interview by the researchers of the Sultan of Butig, Nasroddin Ador, he mentioned that according to tradition, there were Bai Labis being enthroned because their voices, suggestions, opinions, and pieces of advice were heard. In solving a conflict, it is the women who can convince their spouses. In Maranao tradition, they give authority to women involved in conflict resolution. They teach what is good and what is wrong. Meaning that the Bais involvement plays a great part in the development and progress of society. Women are the senior advisers or consultants of the Sultan or Datu. In resolving a conflict, the Bai is allowed to negotiate and mediate. In Islam, women are highly respected. There are many Bais already engaged in conflict resolution. "In Matanog, my grandmother, Amering, mediated a conflict." Women are the mediators, and they support the Sultan or Datus in negotiating. She facilitates communication between the conflicting parties toward a mutual agreement for reconciliation. She helps them reach a compromise on the mechanics of resolving their conflicts. After doing her job, it is the Datu who will finally resolve the conflict. However, it is the mediator who plays a vital role in the mediation toward a final resolution. Since the conflicting parties are unable to communicate face-to-face, they channel their feelings, thoughts, and demands to the mediator, whom they acknowledge will speak on their behalf.

### *c. Other Traits*

#### *c.1. Patience*

The women, unlike men, have patience in creating and maintaining rapport between themselves and the party, thereby enhancing the success of the process. Displaying impatience may encourage a difficult party to think that if he remains unresponsive for a little longer, the process will end. Women can control their tempers as well.

#### *c.2. Trust*

Women are trusted because, without trust, a mediator is unable to function. Part of the trust a mediator is given lies in their ability to remain neutral and observe the rules of confidentiality. In addition, a mediator gains trust from the clients he or she serves by being honest. As a mediator, she can dissect each party's arguments and find the strengths and weaknesses of the case as a whole. The only way to do this honestly is to avoid regurgitating futile or weak arguments and not try to play them up. A mediator who goes back to the other side with weak arguments loses credibility and does not deal honestly with the parties.

#### *c.3 Soft Spoken*

Women are regarded as soft-spoken. She knows when and how to use her voice during mediation. It is said that from the beginning, women were peacemakers, able to fix the problems of their family at home using many techniques, whether they cooked beef randang or fried chicken, just for the family to be at peace.

#### *c.4. Neutrality*

Women can demonstrate empathy for both sides; they must do so while exhibiting the utmost neutrality in the matter. If solicitors or parties feel that the mediator has even a modicum of bias, the matter will not settle. Although mediators will have opinions on the merits of the case, women know when to reveal those opinions and just how much to reveal. Part of a mediator's job is to gently point out holes in each side's case, but they must do so very cautiously and in a non-judgmental manner.

## **4 CONCLUSION**

On the basis of the previous findings, the researchers arrived at the following conclusions: 1. That there are two (2) kinds of conflicts (da makapataya and miyakapataya which means light and grave. The study concluded that if the conflict is not dealt with immediately, it will lead to rido and rido in the area will increase. On the causes of conflict, maratabat is in the lead and this is the main reason why a rido occurs; 2. That there are five (5) conflict resolution strategies and there are processes to be followed to settle the conflict. These are ka kedeg a ko bangsa, kapangamad, kapamitiyara, kapasada ko rido, and ka kanduri; and 3. That there are factors or traits women possess that are crucial in conflict resolution. These are respect for women, the woman's title, influence, and other traits such as patience, neutrality, and trust.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

The implication of the study can be viewed in five ways. First, this study will motivate women that they can do something in conflict resolution. One respondent said that when their husbands do not want to resolve the conflict, their housewives are the ones who find ways to resolve the conflict because they do not want their children to have rido. Second, the residents of Lanao del Sur cannot avoid the Rido, particularly in the town of Marawi. Because of this, the resolution of the rido needs to be intensified, every sector needs to work together, especially the women's sector. Therefore, everyone should consider a way and offer help in avoiding it because not only one is affected if not all. Third, we found out in the results of the study that



the main cause for rido is the maratabat of an individual or family. The concept of "maratabat" is the one in Maranao culture that has undergone the greatest emotional change. Maratabat is "believed to be the main motivating force" for the Maranaos. Thus, the youth must be made to understand the concept of maratabat because it is similar to the word pakikisama, in that it has good and bad effects. Fourth, women are soft-spoken, reliable, patient, and quick to think of a way to solve a problem, so this trait should be seen by young people so that it becomes a precedent. Fifth, every institution, in the women's sector must work together to participate in providing ideas, and strategies. Sixth, to resolve conflict, Maranaos should encourage young people, and motivate them. The government should recognize women who participated in the conflict resolution due to the complexity of their role which this study revealed.

## 6 RECOMMENDATIONS

In times of war and violence, women are not only among the most vulnerable victims, but they are also often the ones who initiate peace processes. Thus, the researcher suggests the following:

1. Empowering women to take a more active role in resolving conflicts is necessary, not just for the Maranao community but also for others. Their confidence will soar, and they will come to understand the important part they play and will continue to play in society if they feel empowered. Similar to what Princess Tarhata Lucman did, the move will bring women's attitudes on promoting peace. Therefore, they should be given a role in conflict resolution.
2. They should also have seminars on how to resolve conflicts and then they will disseminate it to others to provide knowledge to the community to attain peace.
3. The local leaders should focus on conflict resolution, and if there is enough budget, give them an allowance to be more enticing. Maranao women today must be motivated so that they can lead in persuading other women to develop their roles as mediators. Community leaders should be trained through training and seminars on peaceful ways of conflict resolution.
4. Peaceful means of resolving conflict in the context of Islam should be taught to Maranao children as early as kindergarten. If necessary, peace education should be inculcated and taught among families. An educational program stressing non-violent ways of resolving conflict should be pushed to Maranao areas where rido is prevalent.
5. Educational institutions should develop partnerships with parents and leaders of organizations to explore ways in which conflict-management concepts and skills can be introduced among youth and adults.
6. Peace education in high school should be included in the curriculum where the positive and negative impact, effects, and values of rido should be integrated, especially in the values subject, where qualified and competent teachers on the said subjects must be hired and assigned.

## Acknowledgments

The authors of this study extend their profound thanks and appreciation to everyone who has assisted and mentored them to make this

research fruitful and effective, particularly their family.

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