



## Marriage and Divorce of Illiteracy, Poverty and Conflict: A One-Class Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

Understanding the intricate relationships that exist between poverty, illiteracy, conflict, education, development, and peace is essential, especially in environments as destitute as the Philippines. The purpose of this study is to find out how 18 fourth-year Mindanao State University-Buug Campus Bachelor of Public Administration (BPA) students see these related occurrences. Using the theoretical frameworks of Human Capital Theory, Conflict Theory, and Development Theory, the study investigates the relationship between illiteracy and poverty, as well as the possible benefits of education in resolving these problems. Recurring themes emerge from thematic analysis of qualitative data, such as the conviction that education is a means to peace and progress and that illiteracy is the primary source of poverty. Furthermore, statistical analysis using straightforward frequency counts and percentages improves the understanding of the patterns found in the data. The results indicate that respondents generally agreed on the connections between poverty, conflict, education, development, and peace, although minority opinions should also be taken into consideration. In order to advance our knowledge of these intricate relationships and provide information for evidence-based policymaking targeted at combating poverty and advancing peace, development, and prosperity in the Philippines, the study emphasizes the significance of thorough methodologies and ongoing research. Going forward, it is suggested that bigger and more varied groups be included in studies using validated and pilot-tested questionnaires.

**Keywords:** illiteracy; poverty; conflict; education; development; peace

### I. Introduction

People who lack basic reading and writing skills or have low levels of education are less likely to be employed compared to their better-educated counterparts (GALE), and if employed, will land in low-paying jobs and are more likely to suffer from poverty. High rates of unemployment due to low level of education and its resultant inequality provide motives for fighting (National Literacy Trust Research Review, 2011). Therefore, poverty leads to an increase in conflict (IKEJIYAKU, 2001). Poverty and conflict are widely understood to be closely interconnected. In fact, poverty increases the likelihood of civil war in countries, while armed conflict undermines governance and economic performance (Goodhand, 2001). However, research indicates that literacy (and numeracy) skills play an important role in terms of employability and wages (National Literacy Trust Research Review, 2011) suggesting that literacy fights poverty through employment. Employment has proven to be the most effective tool in reducing poverty, and better employment opportunities come through better education (borgenproject.org). For these reasons, the notion that employment based on education can

lift a person out of poverty and promote development and peace, both personal and societal, seems controlling. However, this notion underscores the complex relationships of illiteracy, poverty, conflict, education, development and peace, and is therefore, not exempt from nuances. Hence, this notion needs to be tested and retested time and time again and at this time, with the BPA150 (Public Policy Analysis) students as respondents.

The Philippines is an impoverished country. That is a fact, hence, indubitable. As such, the most that we can do is to determine which among the many ways best remedy it. To remedy Philippine poverty and its effects, the root cause must be identified. Only then can we move towards development and peace. However, individuals from diverse backgrounds hold varying opinions on the underlying reason for poverty. As a result, various solutions are presented in the form of public policies.

The government's decision to do or not to do is shaped by individuals or group of individuals, among others, who are knowledgeable about identifying problems, designing, and selecting public policies. Though not policy analysts in the professional sense, yet BPA150 (Public Policy Analysis) students of MSU-Buug possess a certain level of knowledge and educational background in analyzing complex social

problems such as poverty. Their unique knowledge and background compared to students who are not enrolled or have not taken BPA150 are suggestive of the quality of responses and insights needed, making them the most appropriate respondents for this study.

The purpose of this study is to examine the views of the BPA150 students regarding the interconnectedness of illiteracy, poverty and conflict in the country. Besides, it will help us find out whether these students feel illiteracy has a significant role in contributing towards poverty and conflict in the country. This is followed by an examination of their opinions concerning education being a viable solution to these interrelated concerns and hence facilitating growth as well as peaceful coexistence. Mainly, the direction of this research is to further our knowledge of how public policy analysis students perceive the intricate connection between poverty, illiteracy, and conflict. Also, the study hopes to offer insightful information to practitioners and policymakers who are attempting to address these issues within the Philippine context.

### Research Gap

Studies have been conducted acknowledging the link between illiteracy, poverty and conflict. In fact, numerous literatures pointed out that it is more likely that an educated person is less likely to live below the poverty line making that person less likely to commit crimes. Similarly, research proved conflict-free and convenient lifestyle out of economic stability due to education-guaranteed jobs. Moreover, many studies suggest the significant contributions of illiteracy or literacy in a person's life.

Yet, there is a lack of empirical knowledge into how students of public policy analysis perceive the root cause of poverty in the Philippines and the role of education in addressing the issue. Hence, this remains a gap in research that is worthy of investigation.

Uncovering and comprehending the perspectives of the BPA150 students on the connection between illiteracy, poverty and conflict could provide valuable insights in designing effective educational public policies geared toward poverty alleviation and promoting peace and development.

### 1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Poverty's prevalence in the Philippines is undeniable. The severe imbalance between the rich and the poor is alarming. Attempts have been made to remedy the same. But even up to this day, poverty remains. Considering the, this research was conducted to extract from the minds of BPA150 students their perspectives on illiteracy, poverty, and conflict, as well as education, development, and peace. Specifically, the study is conducted to investigate whether BPA150 students perceived illiteracy as the root cause of poverty; see poverty as necessarily resulting to conflict; consider education as the best solution to attain development; and perceived that development result in peace?

### 1.3 Research Objective

The primary objective of the study is to look into the perspectives of the BPA150 (Public Policy Analysis) students on illiteracy, poverty, conflict, education, development and peace in the context of the Philippines and investigate whether or not the said students see a significant connection among these phenomenon in the hope of addressing the prevalence of poverty and its resultant issues through identification and acknowledgment of its root cause and remedying the same with a suitable public policy.

### 1.4 Rationale

The urgent need to address the intricate relationships between illiteracy, poverty, education, and conflict—particularly in the context of the Philippines—forms the basis of the study's justification. The nation is still struggling with high rates of illiteracy and socioeconomic inequality, which are closely related to enduring poverty and social unrest, despite continuous efforts to reduce poverty and advance development. People with low levels of education are more likely to have low incomes, unemployment, and restricted access to essential services, which feeds the cycle of deprivation and poverty. Furthermore, a low level of education can worsen social inequality in society by increasing social exclusion, exploitation susceptibility, and low civic engagement. People may turn to conflict as a way of resolving issues or standing up for their rights when their fundamental needs are not met and there are few economic possibilities available, which can result in cycles of violence and insecurity.

This research aims to expand our knowledge of the relationships between illiteracy, poverty, education, and conflict in the Philippines due to the complex nature of the issues at hand. The study aims to discover important insights and solutions for tackling these interconnected difficulties by examining the perspectives of BPA 150 (Public Policy Analysis) students, who are positioned to become future leaders and policymakers. Ultimately, the research aims to influence evidence-based policies and actions that support sustainable development and peace in the Philippines and abroad by illuminating the underlying causes of poverty and conflict as well as the transforming power of education.

### 1.5 Significance of the Study

The study's conclusions have important ramifications for a number of parties. The results are anticipated to support increasing financing for scholarship awards, improving access to higher education, and promoting growth through educated graduates for the MSU-Buug Administration. In addition to getting graduate degrees, teachers are urged to improve the efficacy of their instruction since they understand how important it is to mold the leaders of tomorrow. Pupils are driven to achieve academic excellence with the goal of being eligible for scholarships, which will further their own and society's advancement. In order to cultivate a more educated community that is ready for socioeconomic growth and communal concord, parents are urged to prioritize education on a societal level. Policymakers are compelled to give literacy initiatives top priority because they recognize that education is essential to reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development, which in turn promotes a more affluent and harmonious society.

### 1.6 Theoretical Framework

The study makes use of Human Capital Theory, Conflict Theory, and Development Theory as vantage points to comprehend the intricate connection between conflict, poverty, and illiteracy in the Philippines.

Human Capital Theory holds that improving individual productivity and economic growth require expenditures in education and training (Becker, 1964). Nevertheless, human capital theory underscores that education and literacy are essential for enhancing job opportunities, raising salaries, and eventually lowering poverty (Psacharopoulos &

Patrinos, 2018) in the context of this study. The approach emphasizes the value of literacy as a type of human capital that promotes social mobility and economic growth (Schultz, 1961). Henceforth, the expenditures in education and training are just worth it. On the other hand, Conflict Theory's emphasis is on how social and economic injustices fuel social unrest and violence (Dahrendorf, 1959). It holds that unequal access to possibilities for work can give rise to resentment and conflicts within society, which in turn can fuel violence (Marx, 1867). Conflict theory is used in this study to shed light on how poverty brought on by illiteracy and low educational attainment can fuel social discontent and instability in the Philippines. Furthermore, Development Theory focuses on the procedures and systems that enable countries to advance politically, socially, and economically. It highlights how education plays a crucial role in development by empowering people to get the knowledge and skills required to participate in the contemporary economy (Collins, 1975). Based on development theory, it can be said that decreasing poverty in the Philippines and promoting sustainable development require tackling illiteracy and raising educational standards.

Through the integration of the above theoretical viewpoints, the research study aims to clarify the fundamental mechanisms by which poverty and conflict in the Philippines are caused by illiteracy. It also emphasizes how crucial education is as a possible solution to these inter-related problems and how it might advance national development and peace.

### 1.7 Scope and Limitations

The goal of the study is to understand how MSU-Buug's BPA150 students perceive the intricate relationships between illiteracy, poverty, conflict, education, development, and peace. The study includes a thorough investigation of the BPA150 students' viewpoints of the intricate connections between education, development, and peace as well as between poverty, conflict, and illiteracy. Examining the interactions and effects of these variables will be the primary objective of the research. Notwithstanding the scope of the research, a number of limitations are acknowledged, including limitation in generalizability due to the focus

on a particular class population thereby resulting into limited applicability. Another limitation is in measure validity due to the use of a non-validated and non-pilot tested questionnaire resulting into reduced validity and lower reliability. Despite these drawbacks, the research will add to our understanding of these intricate social phenomena by offering insightful information about how poverty, illiteracy, conflict, education, development, and peace intersect from the viewpoint of a single class.

## 2 RELATED LITERATURE

The literature presented highlight the critical role that education plays in tackling global issues including violence, injustice, and poverty. The UNESCO worldwide Monitoring Report, which covers a number of years, emphasizes the transformative potential of education in society while offering thorough insights into worldwide trends in education. It draws attention to how education affects literacy rates, quality, and accessibility—all of which have a significant global impact on people's chances and socioeconomic results.

The positive role of education is further emphasized in Krugman's work. In his groundbreaking book "The Conscience of a Liberal" (2007), Paul Krugman explores the relationship between social unrest and economic inequality. He contends that social policies and education can reduce poverty and inequality, two factors that are crucial for promoting social cohesiveness and stability in society. According to Krugman's study, education is a critical instrument for improving economic opportunities and lowering social inequalities, which promotes more social peace.

Moreover, in "Education and Economic Development: Exploring Their Symbiotic Bond" (2024), education is portrayed as a catalyst for economic growth through the development of human capital. The acquisition of knowledge, skills, and abilities among populations contributes significantly to economic productivity and innovation. Hence, education facilitates social mobility and poverty reduction, thereby promoting inclusive growth and prosperity.

Interestingly, Cortright (2016) has emphasized that social science research highlights the favorable relationship that exists between economic development, peace, and education. Higher per capita income, steady economic development, more trade and investment, and increasing industrial openness are all indicators of economic prosperity in countries with higher levels of education. This correlation highlights the importance of education as a catalyst for economic growth as well as a cornerstone of sustainable and peaceful development.

In conclusion, the literature reviewed underscores education as a transformative force capable of addressing multifaceted global challenges, from poverty alleviation to promoting peace and resilience.

## 3 METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

The study employed a qualitative research approach and a one-class perspective or single-group research design because it aims to explore the perspective of BPA150 (Public Policy Analysis) students only on a complex social phenomena: the relationship between illiteracy, poverty, and conflict in the context of the Philippines and their views on the effectiveness of education as a potential remedy for addressing these interconnected issues and promoting development and peace.

### 3.2 Respondents

Since the direction of the study is to contribute to the understanding of how individuals studying public policy analysis conceptualize the complex relationship between illiteracy, poverty and conflict, and the role of education in addressing these interconnected issues, the eighteen (18) 4<sup>th</sup> Year Bachelor in Public Administration (BPA) students who were enrolled in the sole section of BPA150 at the Mindanao State University-Buug Campus in Buug, Zamboanga Sibugay were selected as participants. Their selection as participants was based on the following criteria: enrollment in BPA150 course; they came from different backgrounds; they demonstrate an interest in and awareness of public policy issues; they possess a unique level of knowledge and educational background in analyzing complex social problems particularly those related to poverty, education, and conflict in the Philippines compared to non-

public policy analysis students; they are available and willing to participate; and, they have the ability to provide informed perspectives.

### 3.3 Population and Sample

Since the study employs a one-class perspective or single-group research design, all of the 18 students under the sole section of BPA150 were taken as respondents. There was no sampling. The researcher included the entire population as a sample.

### 3.4 Research Instrument

In view of the exploratory nature of the research, an open-ended multiple choice or multi-response questionnaire with three (3) choices: "Yes", "No" and "It depends", was used. The questionnaire had four (4) structured questions. For each choice made, the students were asked to provide their detailed opinions and reasoning by their own words. This way, in-depth information about the participants experiences, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions contributing to the formation of their individual perspective on the matters under consideration were explored. Further, by providing the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) option "it depends", the questionnaire allowed responses that did not fit into the binary Yes/No.

### 3.5 Data Gathering Procedure

An open-ended, multiple-choice, or multiple-response questionnaire was given to participants in order to gather data for this study. This approach was used because it allows for the collection of many viewpoints while maintaining respondents' anonymity, encouraging open

and truthful communication. The researcher designed and personally administered eighteen identical questionnaires to ensure consistency and reliability. By giving out the questionnaires in person, the researcher could give participants precise instructions, quickly respond to any questions, and emphasize the value of anonymity and secrecy. By making participants feel at ease, this strategy hoped to increase their readiness to give truthful, unreserved answers. After the respondents finished the questionnaires, they were collected, guaranteeing safe data processing and participant anonymity throughout the study.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

The collected data underwent a dual analytical approach to uncover key insights aligning with the study's objectives. The data gathered were subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring themes, patterns, or concepts in the data collected which are helpful in achieving the objective of the study. The same data were likewise subjected to statistical analysis to strengthen the interpretation and identification of patterns or trends uncovered from the participants' responses.

#### 3.6.1 Thematic Analysis.

Thematic analysis was conducted to explore the complex phenomena regarding the interplay between illiteracy, poverty and conflict, and between education, development and peace. Recurring patterns, within the textual responses were coded to gain insights into the respondents' views on illiteracy, poverty, conflict, education, development and peace. Reflecting on the research questions and objectives, the following patterns/themes were derived: perception that illiteracy is the root driver of poverty; recognition of the link between poverty and conflict; belief in education as a path to development; and, consensus on the importance of development in pro-

moting peace.

#### 3.6.2 Statistical Analysis

Although the study is a qualitative inquiry, the thematic data analysis was reinforced by using statistical analysis. The primary data that were obtained from the questionnaire were likewise analyzed using simple frequency counts and percentages. The researcher tabulated the responses to each question, calculating the percentage of respondents' who selected each response choice (Yes, No, It depends). Additionally, a graph was utilized to visually compare the distribution of responses across the structured questions. This statistical analysis facilitated the interpretation and the identification of patterns or trends in the respondents' opinions.

## 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Illiteracy as a Root Driver of Poverty

A prominent pattern in the data is the perception that illiteracy is a primary driver of poverty. Respondents consistently highlight the challenges faced by illiterate individuals in accessing decent employment opportunities and the subsequent cycle of economic hardship and deprivation. As shown in the table below, 11 respondents or 61.11 percent of the respondents answered "Yes"; 2 respondents or 11.11 percent answered "No"; and 5 respondents or 27.28 percent answered, "It depends" to the question, "Is illiteracy the primary cause of poverty?" This shows that majority of the BPA150 students view illiteracy as the primary cause of poverty. Those who said "Yes" cited hardships in finding a decent job, well-paid job, as well illiterates falling victims to deception, cunning, and abuses of selfish employers as reasons. Laziness and corruption of government officials are the reasons cited by those who answered "No", and those who answered "It depends" point to "diskarte" wisdom acquired from the streets, handwork, and guts, as means to fight poverty despite the absence of formal education.

TABLE 1  
PA 150 STUDENTS' RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION  
"IS ILLITERACY THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF POVERTY?"

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	11	61.11
No	2	11.11
It Depends	5	27.78
Total	18	100

*The table shows that 11 or 61.11 percent of the respondents answered "Yes"; 2 or 11.11 percent answered "No"; and 5 or 27.78 answered "It Depends".*

### 4.2 Poverty's Link to Conflict

Another significant pattern found is the recognition of the link between poverty and conflict. Respondents emphasize how economic deprivation, exacerbated by factors such as unemployment and inequality, can fuel social tensions and contribute to the prevalence of conflict within communities. Evident in Table 2 below is the respondents' answers to the question "Does poverty necessarily result in conflict?" It reveals that 12 respondents or 66.66 percent of the respondents answered "Yes"; 1 respondent or 5.56 of the respondents answered "No"; and 5 respondents or 27.78 percent answered, "It Depends". The majority of PA150 students view poverty as necessarily resulting in conflict. Those who answered "Yes" cited crimes due to hunger, conflict due to poverty, and short temperaments due to poverty, as reasons; positive approach to poverty, than conflict and crime, is the reason cited by the respondent who answered "No"; and those who answered "It depends" pointed to

satisfaction despite poverty, optimism, and poverty as inspiration to get out of poverty as means to avoid conflict.

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	14	66.66
No	1	5.56
It Depends	5	27.78
Total	20	100

The table above shows that 12 or 66.66 percent of the respondents answered “Yes”; 1 or 5.56 of the respondents answered “No”; and 5 or 27.78 percent answered “It Depends”.

### 4.3 Education as a Path to Development

Another recurring theme is the belief in education as a key solution for achieving development and peace. Respondents underscore the transformative power of education in empowering individuals, increasing employability, and fostering socio-economic progress. This theme finds basis on the respondents’ answers to the question, “Is education the best solution to attain development?” tabulated in Table 3 below where 13 respondents or 72.22 percent of the respondents answered “Yes”, 2 respondents or 11.11 percent of the respondents answered “No”, and 3 respondents or 16.67 percent of the respondents answered “It Depends”.

The majority of the PA 150 students view education as the best solution to achieve development. Those who answered “Yes” cited “knowledge is power” and better income and stable jobs resulting from obtaining a college degree as reasons. Unemployment and underpayment despite profession and degree, as well as a surplus of labor when the number of vacancies is lower compared to the number of educated individuals, are seen by those who said “No”; and the manner in which education is used and whether or not professionals act professionally are among the reasons cited by those who answered “It Depends”.

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	13	72.22
No	2	11.11
It Depends	3	16.67
Total	18	100

There are 13 or 72.22 percent of the respondents who answered “Yes”; 2 or 11.11 percent who answered “No”; and 3 or 16.67 percent who answered “It Depends”.

### 4.4 Development’s Role in Promoting Peace

Additionally, there is a consensus on the importance of development in promoting peace. Respondents highlighted how addressing poverty and meeting basic needs can contribute to stability and reduce the likelihood of conflict within societies. Table 4 shows the responses of the respondents on the question, “Will development result in peace?”. 14 respondents or 77.78 percent of the respondents answered “Yes”, 2 respondents or 11.11 percent of the respondents answered “No”, and 2 respondents or 11.11 percent of the respondents answered, “It Depends”.

The majority of the PA 150 students think that development will result in peace. Those who answered “Yes” cited meeting basic needs, contentment, satisfaction, and “it is easy to understand others when the

stomach is not hungry” as reasons for believing in development as a way towards peace. For those who said “No” the human tendency to crave for more despite attainment of development is cited as the main reason for not achieving peace despite development. Those who answered “It Depends” see conflict as an inherent part of human society that cannot be eliminated by development.

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	14	77.78
No	2	11.11
It Depends	2	11.11
Total	18	100

There are 14 or 77.78 percent of the respondents who answered “Yes”; 2 or 11.11 percent who answered “No”; and 2 or 11.11 percent who answered “It Depends”.

### 4.5 Visual Distribution of Responses

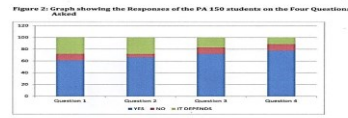


Figure 2: Graph showing the Responses of the PA 150 students on the four (4) question asked.

Fig 1. Graph showing the responses of the PA 150 students to four questions asked

The above graph shows the percentage per response of the PA150 students for the four (4) questions asked revealing their one-class perspective. Based on the graph, the majority of the respondents answered “YES” in all of the questions asked showing that they view illiteracy as the root driver of poverty; they recognize the link between poverty and conflict; they believe in education as a path to development; and, they have a consensual view on the importance of development in promoting peace.

## 5 CONCLUSION

Per research results, the researcher concludes that the BPA150 students perceived that illiteracy is a root driver of poverty; that poverty leads to conflict; that education is a path to development; and, that development promotes peace.

The respondents saw a clear chain connecting illiteracy, poverty, and conflict. For them, illiterate individuals are having a hard time securing decent, well-paid employment opportunities and are vulnerable to exploitation and mistreatment by employers. Further, they perceived that hardship and hunger drive the poor to commit crimes.

The researcher further concludes that the BPA150 students perceived a link between education, development and peace. The study reveals the perception of the BPA students on the existence of a crucial connection between education, development, and peace. The overwhelming consensus among respondents is that education is the most effective means of attaining development because it gives people the knowledge, they need to find steady work, make a living wage, and save for the future. A college degree is thought to be a ticket to economic success, giving people the means to comfortably meet their fundamental needs and wants and find fulfillment and contentment in life.

Based on these results, it seems that there is marriage of illiteracy, poverty, and conflict. However, the divorce of poverty, conflict, and illiteracy is not far-fetched, since education serves as a means to sever their ties.

By implication, the lanes of education are the best way out of poverty for it provides an avenue to change one's fate by redirecting everyone passing along the oblivious highway of life towards the route to development by merely following the signage "This Way", and "School Zone". All forms of conflict that hinder development and obstruct the emergence of a peaceful society will vanish as soon as education takes its strides.

However, despite the overwhelming views on the relationship between illiteracy, poverty and conflict, as well as on education, development and peace, there are those who do not view illiteracy as the primary cause of poverty; do not think that poverty necessarily results in conflict; do not consider education as the best solution to achieve development; and do not believe that development always leads to peace. These minority views are likewise worthy of attention. The varied responses suggest the importance of considering other factors and the need for comprehensive approaches that address both the structural drivers of poverty and individual agency in conflict prevention and resolution as well as suggest the importance of continued research and evaluation to deepen understanding of the complex relationship between education, poverty, illiteracy, and conflict. More importantly, further studies on this topic with numerous populations and enough samples with the use of validated and pilot-tested questionnaire, which this study lacks, are recommended.

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