

The Students' Perceptions on Mindanao Conflict and Its Implication to Peace and Solidarity

Mohammad Amil Kamlian Abdul

SST. Prof. IV, College of Arts and Sciences, Sulu State College Jolo, Sulu Philippines, yasserailsamsaljr16@gmail.com

Abstract—This study aims to identify the perceptions of the Muslims and Christians students at Sulu State College on the issues and problems confronting Mindanao conflicts. The investigation focuses on the perceptions of the students on the nature, primary causes. This study also verifies further the subject who should be responsible for the continuance of the conflict and determined the factors that influences such perceptions.

Thorough analysis of data with its appropriate statistical treatment, the researcher have found that: (a) there is no significant difference on the Muslims and Christians students' perceptions on the nature and causes in Mindanao conflict and its implication to peace and solidarity; (b) that there is no significant difference on the male and female students' perceptions on the nature and causes of Mindanao conflict; (c) there is no significant difference on the Muslim and Christian students' perception on the dissemination of knowledge on Mindanao conflicts and its implication to peace and solidarity.

The researcher has concluded, that the people in Moro land develop all kinds of consciousness how the Mindanao conflicts end. This study helps a lot in leading to the improvement of plans and actions on the greatest possibility to solve the Mindanao conflicts. The study has proven that the students have common perceptions regarding the nature and primary causes of the Mindanao conflicts. Knowing these natures and primary causes appropriate solutions should be established which leads to peace and solidarity of the people not only in the province of Sulu but also in the cities and provinces in entire Mindanao regardless of religion, ethnicity, social status and other aspects of life.

Therefore, the viability of the solutions included in the study should be given a great privilege by the Philippine government and other member of society who in one-way or the other opposing the law of the land as established by the Philippine government. The perceptions of the students could be given emphasis to reality; hence, the Philippine government and the people of Mindanao should unite for the cause of love, peace and tranquility in which identified and construed as the sole aim of all religions.

In the light of peace and solidarity, the researcher recommends that: (a) Religion should not be taken as the nature and the primary cause of the Mindanao conflicts as perceived by the students. Islam is the only true religion ordained by Allahu subhanahu wa ta'ala, therefore Muslims should propagate it to the Christians on the way how Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) propagated Islam in his life time. Allah guides whom he will. (b) The Philippine government should be sincere to give the Mindanaoans the legal agreement they have promised in the peace talks. (c) The Mindanao conflicts should be taught and integrated to the curriculum of the social studies and history classes in elementary, secondary and tertiary level so that the young generations absorbed the first hand information about the situations of their country in the formal and legal ways mandated by the Educational institutions. (d) The Philippine government should recognize the traditions of the Muslims and integrate these traditions in their cultural development program, until the Muslims would feel the national integration. (e) The Philippine government should stop the military operations in the areas of Mindanao and give privilege to

the military Muslims to guard their own people and their homeland. This way the people of Mindanao would attend peace and tranquility.

Keywords— Perception of Muslim and Christian on the nature of the Mindanao Conflict, Perception on the possible solution to the Mindanao conflict, Rebellion is in the heart of the Muslim, Sources of Knowledge in the Mindanao conflict, Muslim and Christian living together in a Plural society.

I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with a brief historical background of the Muslim struggle even before the revolution of the Moro National Liberation Front Historically, the struggle of the Muslim began during the Spanish regime.

The Spaniards like most of the other colonizers, made use of divide and conquer strategy. This proved to be very effective for soon the native Christians started helping in their military expedition against the Muslims. Aside from coercing the Christianized natives to constitute the colonial army, the Spaniard also designed propaganda bullets, i.e. the folk theatre. The popular Moro is an example of popular theatre used not only to show negative characteristics of the Muslims but also to criticize Islamic religion and its leaders. From this context one finally understand the anti-Muslim attitude of the present-day Christians (George, 1980).

The Spanish colonial government believed that only a thorough Christianization of the Moro people world make them totally subjugated and thus turn them into loyal colonial subjects to the Spanish crown, like their northern counterparts (George, 1980)

The Moro people emerged from the unconquered. However, there was political and economic decay in their homeland. Politically, the Spanish colonizers drained and sapped the energy of the Moro sultanates. Making them lose control of their authority over most part of Mindanao and even over their Muslims followers. Moreover, the sultanates instead of expanding their political power over the years contracted as they began to lose political and economic control. For instance, the territorial domain of the Sulu sultanate at the height of its power, included the entire Sulu archipelago (i.e. including Tawi Tawi), Basilan, Palawan, the Zamboanga peninsula, and North Borneo (now Sabah) (Saleeby, 1963).

For a span of 330 years, they had channeled their efforts. energies and economic and natural resources, in maintaining this defensive war against the colonizers (Majul, 1973).

However, just they were beginning to recover from Spanish aggression, the Americans came in 1898 Compared to their Spanish predecessors, the American aggressors were not only more determined but also more advanced politically,

scientifically, economically and militarily. Before their display of superior might and fresh vitality the weary, flagging and worn-one resistance of the Muslims gain way. But significantly, this happened only after a decade of fighting and heroic struggles against, the more shrewed and calculating Americans (Gowing, 1970)

The Christian settlers who took over the lands of the Muslims were actually victims of the agrarian unrest that period. In 1939, in the Koronado Valley of Cotabato alone, 97000 hectares of lush grass land were given incentives priorities in the granting of land ownership privileges as compensation for land losses incurred in Luzon and the Visayas which at that time were beginning to feel the brunt of the control and monopolistic policies of the local elites and American capitalists (George, 1980).

The resettlement program in Mindanao paved the way for the massive entry of the big landlords and American capitalists, including the American corporations into Mindanao economy. The Christian settlers who were previously allowed to cultivate and own lands, alter found out that they had lost their lands through bureaucratic and political maneuvers of the vice and powerful landlords and specially the American corporations and capitalists. These American corporations included the BF Goodrich Company with its rubber plantation in Basilan since 1902, in south Cotabato in 1908 and del Monte in Bukidnon in 1925. Because of this a big chunks of the Christian-dominated resettlement areas went into the hands of a few local elites and foreign investors. These lands were soon planted with cash crops and other commercial products. Large-scale production of export crops such as copra, abaca, rubber, pineapple and sugar cane followed (Silva, 1978).

Gradually, the Christian settlers also suffered the fate met by the Muslims. They were dispossessed of their private lands. Their individual private lots soon became part of the multinational corporation, landholdings. This land-grabbing problem brought about social and political repercussions (Silva, 1978).

In the political arena, the American imperialists made score that the traditional Moro and Christian leaders were amply trained and pampered to become their sympathetic "allies, un euphemism for collaboration." In talking about a better way of subverting a people's resistance (Silva, 1978). Gowing (1980) cited the following leaders who were the beneficiaries and products of their American educational policy, Hadji Butu, and Hadji Gulamu Rasul of Sulu, Datu Facundo Mande of Zamboanga, and Sultan Alaoya Alonto of Lanao.

Aside from pampering and educating the Moro leaders, the American imperialist also implemented the police of recruiting the sympathetic Moro into the colonial army to fight their fellow Moro. For instance, in 1904, the Moro Company of the Philippines constabulary was formed to provide scouting services and intelligence information to the U.S. Army (Tan, 1967).

It is in this light that the weakening of Muslims resistance against the American can be understood. Faced with compliance and life versus resistance and death, the majority of Muslim leaders chose life and compliance with their leaders

either demoralized or acting as American collaborators, Muslims resistance lasted only for a decade (Tan, 1967).

The American colonial government in the Philippines did not only perpetuate the Spanish colonial legacy of mutual hatred and prejudices between the Christians and the Moros but it also added a new dimension to the conflict. The monopoly by big landlords and American of the Mindanao economy, thus making the Christian and Moro masses turn against each other in suspicion and anger with both parties not knowing and understanding that they were being made to fight each other at their own expenses (Tan, 1967).

The granting of Philippine independence in 1946 did not change the economic situation of the Christian and Moro masses. The American imperialists decided to relinquish their direct political rule over to the Filipinos when they were already sure that the new Filipino leaders, got Muslims and Christians alike, would be local allies, and only when they were sure that they would remain the economic rulers of the land, thus the post-war government continued to protect and even strengthen American economic interests in the country in general and Mindanao in particular. This continues to the present. One can mention, for instance, the multinational corporations extensive control for the Mindanao economy, particularly in the export of pineapple, banana, rubber, sugarcane, etc. (Tadem, 1980).

The banana industry in Mindanao alone covered 27000 hectares of land wholly controlled by four agribusiness multinationals. As of 1973, 20 of these 27000 hectares were in the hands of the three American corporations. Dole had 9000 hectares, del monte owned 6588 and Tadeco had 4500. At present, del monte owns the world's biggest pineapple plantation of total of 36000 acres of land in Mindanao (Ahmad, 1980)

The Muslim independence movement was born in 1968. It called for outright secession of the Mindanao Sulu-Palawan regions from Philippine territory, it also called for a JIHAD (Holy War) to defend Muslim homeland. The word "Muslim" in the Muslim Independent movement was soon changed to Mindanao in order to accommodate inhabitants in Mindanao who were non-Muslims (Amilbangsa, 1961).

Muslim resentment becomes more intense with the expose of the Jabidah incidents in 1968. The Jabidah incident which involved the killing of Muslim trainee in Corregidor by their Christian military superiors, made the Muslims believed even more that the Christian government was out to eliminate them. Four separate inquiries by congressional and military authorities besides the fully treated reportage of the Philippine government failed to unearth the real story. Then the accused officers and men were acquitted. The feeling of outrage became widespread among The Muslims. Social and civic organizations like the Ansarul Islam and the Muslim Student Association of the Philippines) Militantly joined forces to denounce the court martial verdict as a whitewash and describe it as eloquent proof of the criminal designs of the Philippine government against the Muslim masses and emphasized the necessity of the federalization of the country. This Jabidah incident was one of the dramatic incidents that precipitated the Muslims movement towards a separate independent state. A myriad of Muslim youth group also emerged, ventilating the plight and grievances

of the Muslim people. Later young Muslims underwent military training here and abroad to prepare for armed confrontations. This group served as the foundation of the MNLF that become the leading group of the Muslims struggle for self-determination and national liberation (Sali Wali, 1980).

Christian politicians in Mindanao particularly in Cotabato and Lanao Provinces responded by creating the fanatical Illaga movement relying on anti-Muslim sentiments to generate large following among Christian masses (Gowing, 1979).

After the declaration of martial law in 1972, the Moro national Liberation Front came to the forefront of the Muslim struggle (Kamlan, 1999).

The Moro national Liberation Front, whose membership is heavily dominated by the youth and educated Moros, originally demands a separate and independent Bangsa Moro Republic in Mindanao. But now, it has shifted its demand to autonomy for the Moros within the realm of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Philippine republic. This can be gleaned from the Tripoli agreement signed on December 23, 1976 by the Philippine Government and the MNLF, under the auspices of the Islamic conference. The areas of autonomy include the following (1) Basilan (2) Sulu (3) Tawi-Tawi (4) Zaboanga del Sur (5) Zamboanga del Norte (6) North Cotabato (7) Maguindanao (8) Sultan Kuradarat (9) Lanao del Sur (12) South cotabato (13) Palawan (14) All cities and villages situated in the whole mentioned areas (Kamlan, 1999).

However, the Tripoli agreement was not implemented instead the Philippine government instituted its own version of autonomy through the establishment of the two regional autonomous government in Regions IX and XII Region IX is made up of the provinces of Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Basilan, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte and the cities of Zamboanga, Pagadian, Dapitan and Dipolog, While Region XII is composed of the provinces of Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norter, Sultan Kudarat, North Cotabato, Maguindanao and the cities of Marawi, Iligan and Cotabato It is interesting to note that South Cotabato and Davao del Sur, where the multinational corporation, Agri-business operations are located, as well as Palawan with its potential oil resources, were not included in the two autonomous regions (Kamlan, 1999).

This plan was implemented after a referendum plebiscite was called on April 17, 1977, asking for the people's mandate. In existence for almost five years, the autonomous government seems to be ineffective in solving the Mindanao conflict because power was again given to the same Christian-Muslim elite group which again instituted the same programs with the same ineffective results The MNLF demanded for the implementation of the Tripoli Agreement and continued fighting. It was during the Aquino Administration that give birth to autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) At this Point both government and MNLF Have reached seemingly genuine agreement. Many of the Muslim elites including the chairman of the MNLF have joined the ARMM. But they felt that ARMM is not really the solution to Mindanao conflict. The chairman of the MNLF and his loyal supporters turned back and continued the fighting Up this point, the struggle is going on, although the chairman of the MNLF is in prison

This historical truth remained unexposed to the youth especially the students in this contemporary society. This convinced the researcher of this study to conduct a quantitative survey to express the vital change undergone in these historical events. The researcher therefore urges to define the following problems.

Statement of the Problem

This study surveyed the Muslim and Christian students' perceptions on the Mindanao conflict and its implication to peace and solidarity Specifically, it answered the following research problems.

1. What are the natures and causes of the Mindanao Conflict and its implication to peace and solidarity?
2. What are the feasible solutions to the Mindanao Conflict and its implication to peace and solidarity?
3. How they perceive on the dissemination of knowledge on Mindanao conflict and its implication to peace and solidarity?
4. Is there significant difference between the Muslim and Christian students' perceptions on the nature and causes of Mindanao conflict and its implication to peace and solidarity.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between the Muslim and Christian students' perceptions on the nature and causes of Mindanao conflict and its implication to peace and solidarity.
2. There is no significant difference between Male and Female students' perceptions on the nature and causes of Mindanao conflict and its implication to peace and solidarity.

Significance of the Study

This study sought to discover the Muslim and Christian students' perceptions on the Mindanao Conflict and its implication to peace and solidarity and to determine the point of views of the Muslim and Christian students on the Mindanao conflict and its implication to peace and solidarity.

This study contributed to the development a common and more systematic approach for a course offering for all students in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). This may help clarify issues involved in the conflict by identifying and quantifying actual perceptions of the students directly affected by the conflict.

Limitation of the Study

This study surveyed the Muslim and Christian students' perceptions on the Mindanao conflict and its implication to peace and solidarity. This study was conducted in Sulu State College during the first semester of school year 2005-2006. The questionnaire was distributed to the total population of Muslim and Christian Students in the six schools in Sulu State College,

This study was limited to the acquisition of the Muslim and Christian students' perceptions on the Mindanao conflict and its implication to peace and solidarity.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

For background knowledge, the researcher relied on the authoritative materials written by both Filipinos and western scholars on Muslim history, society and culture. Specialized

books and magazines on the Mindanao conflict and other contemporary problems have also been consulted.

Foremost among these is Cezar Adib Majul's *Muslim in the Philippines* (1973), which discussed Muslim history, and the various struggles the people had waged against the Spanish colonizers. Majul (1973) stressed that Setting aside some of the accomplishments of the Commission on National Integration, the fact that the secessionists movement among the Muslim began to germinate in the late '60s, shows that it failed to integrate the bulk of the Muslim population into the body politics.

Majul (1973) also draw description on the Maguindanao Sultanate in the time of Sultan Dipatuan Kudarat and its territorial boundaries. He wrote the coastal area from Zamboanga to the gulf of Davao was tributary to him. He was acknowledged as the paramount lord of the Pulangi. His sphere of influence extended to the Iranun and the Maranao territories and even as far as Bukidnon and Butuan in the North of Mindanao. His rule held sway over Sangil and Sarangani. Except in points like Butuan and Cagayan de Oro cities and in almost inaccessible part of the interior of the island, practically all of the inhabitants of the island of Mindanao have accepted him as suzerain.

Another book is Najeeb Saleeby's *the Moro Problem* (1913). This book discussed the historical roots of the Mindanao conflict as well as the role played by the American colonialists in the shaping of the problem Saleeby (1963) in his *The History of Sulu*, wrote: The Bangsamoro people, on the strength of their centralized sultanates, their Islamic tenets and progressive trade fought the Spaniards defensively and offensively throughout the 330 years of their colonial domination of the archipelago. This historical fact provided sufficient evidence in the strength and power of the Sultanate to uphold Islam

Peter Cordon Gowing's two books on the conflict, *mandate in Moro land: The American government of Muslim Filipinos, 1899-1920* (1977) and *Muslim Filipinos: Heritage and Horizon* (1879) were also consulted though Gowing (1979) discussed the conflict from a colonizer's viewpoint. He claimed that the Mindanao conflict is a Muslim-US-Christian one caused primarily by religious differences. Gowing (1979) described the loss of the Bangsamoro's sovereignty: The Bangsamoro's resentment over the loss of their political sovereignty, ancestral land and economic resources were expressed occasionally from 1914 to 1940 in minor incidents. Kamlian (1999) states that: In the 1960's these minor incidents were transformed into systematic opposition. Congressman Ombra Amilbansa filed a bill in the House of Representatives in 1961 seeking the political independence of Sulu.

In contrast to this, Rad D. Silva's (1978) *two Hills of the Same land: truth behind the Mindanao* presents the opposite view of the Mindanao conflict by looking at it from an anti-colonial point of view, Silva claimed that the Mindanao conflict is not a religious one, but a legacy of Spanish and American colonialism and a result of neglect by the Philippine government since 1946. Silva (1978) emphasized the strategies and tactics used by the Spanish colonial aggressors in the Bangsamoro homeland: The Spaniards came to these islands to extend their colonial empire, they came to conquer us, to

subjugate us and to remain as masters of the archipelago. Thus if they had to Christianize the natives it was because such act was necessary to extend and consolidate their colonial holdings and render their rule more effective. If they had to coerce Christian natives to fight the Moros this was also extension of their colonial ends.

With regards to the contemporary problems of Mindanao, the researcher relied on the various works of a Muslim scholar, Alunan Chang. (1971) in one of his books, *Muslim Secession on Integration: Blamed the Philippine government (1946-1968)* for its discriminating policies against the Muslim, at the same time, he admitted the negative aspects and effects of the traditional Datu system

Filipinos foundation incorporated published the autonomy of the Muslim affairs Tan (1977), which stressed the various development strategies that could resolve the Mindanao conflict

Another studies, *Philippine majority-minority relations and ethnic attitudes* Tan (1976) by the same foundation. Explored how the various ethnic groups in the country view and rate themselves. This study showed that the Muslims are those most discriminated against when it came to employment business deals, personal relationships, etc.

Kamlian (1982) described the beginning of the Bangsamoro struggles: The struggle of the Bangsamoro people against foreign domination did not begin in 1972. It started immediately in 1565 when the Spanish colonial aggressors began to penetrate the Bangsamoro homeland and made their presence felt. After successfully Christianizing and colonizing the natives of the northern part of the archipelago, the Spaniards, with the cross on the one hand and the sword on the other, proceeded to the Bangsamoro territories to suppress Islam and neutralize the economic and political activities of the Bangsamoro Sultanates.

Kamlian (1982) quoted George (1980) made his comments on the moro-more theater as the most effective brainwashing device made by the Spaniards: Among the simple people of the islands, passion plays were sure to be popular. The Spaniards made them a way of life. The plays they introduced revolve around a single theme. Christian heroes tangling with Muslim villains in garish black and white. Nothing was too mean for the villains to try; there was no limit to the nobility of the heroes. Every play led to a shattering climax which the baddies were crushed, along their horrible faith while the Christian goodies triumphant and The became integral part of the festivals. profoundly they govern the average Filipinos' picture the It was the West's most successful campaign hearts and Asia.

Kamlian (1982) the *Moro Research* (no date) emphasized U.S. tactics strategies: US rule in the Bangsamoro homeland both brutal and subtle. The brutal and effective military campaign complemented education programs and economic development schemes. colonial administration was there systematize whole process of landownership, land registration, Cadastral survey homesteading and agricultural investments.

Ahmad (1980) related facts on the land grabbing one of the basic objectives the Americans: effect of this systematization was devastating. Because this, the resettlement programs the US imperialists began The natives, both the Bangsamoro and

the Lumad lost their ancestral lands to the Filipino Christian settlers and large US corporations.

U.S. Senator Albert Beveridge's statement described the basic motives of the Americans in coming to the Philippine. This statement was cited by Gowing (1977) and cited by Kamlian (1982): We must obey our blood and occupy new markets and if necessary new lands. American factories are making more than the American people can use, American soil is producing more than they can consume.

Asani (1986) expressed his sympathy on the Bangsamoro people. No people or nation has been victimized and suffered so much from the conspiracy of the imperialist forces as represented by those evils we call multinationals than in the Southern Philippines.

Kamlian (1999) commented on the fate of the Bangsamoro people and the Lumad The resettlement programs in the Bangsamoro homeland was punctuated by the establishment of agricultural colonies or settlements in Cotabato, Lanao, Davao, Zamboanga, and Agusan from as early as 1913. The one in Lanao was for the benefit of the American soldiers who were married to Filipinas and had no desire to go home to the U.S. All of these naturally displaced the Bangsamoro and the Lumad, who were pushed out of their ancestral land into the periphery, where social, political or economic development was hardly possible. Worse, they were given the remaining unproductive lands to till. This signaled the beginning of their socio-economic marginalization.

Kamlian (1999) cited Silva (1978) said: The pensionado program, the equivalent today's scholarship grants, had more lasting effects. Under this program sons and daughters of the Moro ruling elite, as also the case in the North, were sent for studies in the United States or Manila. Graduates came home with their stateside values, outlooks and beliefs. While the program constituted only a small portion of the public school system, it cannot be regarded lightly. For as was envisioned by the American colonizers, this was part and parcel of the grand design to develop American oriented leaders from among us under the guise of training us for self-government. With this program the colonizers in fact succeeded in softening our resistance to the American rule. This strategic school program by the Americans softly cooling down the hatred in the heart of the Bangsamoro people, which causes the resistive forces bow down to follow the rules of the Americans.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study dealt with the premise that students hold inaccurate perceptions of the Mindanao conflict. As observed by the researcher students of the Sulu State College have not actuated the right basically the history of Muslim Filipinos as manifestation of the Mindanao conflict at its implication to peace and solidarity. The institution should have offered one course on History of the Muslim Filipino to update their perceptions Time and again negative perception about the conflict linger in the mind of the students.

The Schematic diagram in figure I Shows the students' perceptions of the Mindanao conflict and its implication to peace and solidarity

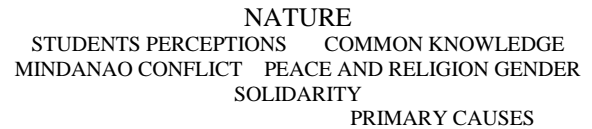


Figure 1. Schematic Diagram: Shows the dependent variables and independent variables.

In this diagram the dependent variables are the student's perceptions on Mindanao conflict and its implication to Peace and Solidarity while the independent variables are the Nature, Primary Causes, and the knowledge of the students on the Mindanao conflict and its implication to Peace and Solidarity.

Number 1. This means that the respondents perceived religion was the primary causes of Mindanao conflict

Perceptions on the responsibility for the continuance the Mindanao conflict

Most of the respondents blamed the government for continuing the conflict. The percentage, frequency and rank of the students' responses are shown in table 1.

TABLE 1. Frequency, Percentage and rank of the responses on the continuity of MINDANAO conflict

Factors (responses)	f	%	Rank
a. The Muslims	82	41.84	2
b. The Christians	3	1.52	4
c. The Government	103	52.55	1
d. The Colonizers (Spanish and American	1	0.05	7.5
e. Foreign capitalist (e.g., American , Japanese , Multinational Corporations)	4	2.04	3
f. The MNLF	2	1.02	5.5
g. All of the above	2	1.02	5.5
h. I do not know	1	0.05	7.5
Total	198	100	

When the respondents were inquired about the factors, which causes the continuation of the Mindanao conflict, they arranged their answers in rank. Their responses were reflected in table 1.

In spite of the projects and development extended to the people in Mindanao, this study has found out that it is the Philippine government was held responsible for the continuity of the Mindanao conflict. In a similar study conducted by Kamlian (1999) the following reasons were cited by the respondents in blaming the government for the continuation of the conflict:

- a The government is not sincere in dealing with the problem; there are external factors pressing the government, the solution to the problem is remote.
- b. The government has no word of honor.
- c. The government created all the troubles in Mindanao.
- d. Malversation, graft and corruption would depress the country's economy since it is a common practice in government offices, in Mindanao.
- e. The government should undertake genuine economic reforms, it should get rid of the foreign investments in Mindanao.

This study also revealed that the Muslims rank second as the primary causes in the continuity of Mindanao conflict. The respondents do not give further reasons in this study. However, in the data gathered by Kamlian (1999) also disclosed that the

Muslims themselves should be blamed for the continuing conflict. The respondents cited the following reasons for this:

- a. Rebellion is in the heart of the Muslim.
- b. The Muslims are demanding too much from the government.
- c. The Muslims do not identify themselves as Filipinos, but as Muslims.

Therefore, the primary causes of the continuity of the Mindanao conflict were the Philippine government and the Muslims in Mindanao. The Muslims were on the vision of proclaiming their own Islamic government, which is very independent from the corrupt and non-Islamic government of the Philippines. The Mindanao conflict will continuously troubled the people in Mindanao not unless the Philippine government be blessed by their own reasons to give the Muslims a chance to establish the so called Islamic government.

Sources of knowledge in the Mindanao conflict

The respondents were given questions lettered a to f. The researcher specifically inquired direct questions. The responses were tabulated in table 2. As can be seen from table 2, majority of the respondents claimed that their knowledge of the Mindanao conflict were primarily traceable to, their direct experience of the conflict, mass media and their family.

TABLE 2. Frequency, percentage and rank distribution of the respondents as to their sources of knowledge

Responses	f	%	Rank
a. My family	30	15.14	3
b. My friends and neighbors	15	7.60	5
c. My teachers (elementary and secondary)	20	10.10	4
d. My own direct experience with the conflict.	86	43.43	1
e. Mass media (newspaper ,radio and T.V.)	44	22.22	2
f. I do not know.	3	1.51	6
Total	198	100	

When the responses were ranked according to the number of responses, question letter d got the highest rank. This means that the respondents got information about the Mindanao conflict directly from their own experiences followed by the mass media.

In the study conducted by Kamlian (1999) revealed that the knowledge of the Mindanao conflict traceable primarily to the mass media (eg radio, newspaper, TV, etc), their family and neighborhood environment. The data revealed that their elementary and secondary school teachers ranked second to the last as source of knowledge

In this study, the family rank third and teachers rank fourth as the source of information about the Mindanao conflict. The conflicts have lasted for thirty-seven years until the present time still lingering on the heart and mind of the young Mindanaoans. This is the reason when they asked questions as to the source of information of the Mindanao conflicts they answered direct experiences.

The Suluans are not relying so much on the information given by the mass media (e.g Radio, Newspapers, TV etc.) because they believed that the mass media as stressed by Kamlian (1999) that the government-controlled mass media has been the only permissible source of information available to respondents due to the banning of other sources of information which were anti-government. Therefore, the respondents perceived that the mass media is the second source of

information when discussing about the Mindanao conflict. Actually, the information was totally manipulated for the purpose of political campaign of the giant politicians.

The researcher inquired from the respondents how often their elementary teachers mentioned the Mindanao conflict either inside or outside the classrooms. The data in table 3, gives the responses.

TABLE 3. Frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents as to their discussion with their elementary teacher about the Mindanao conflict

Responses	Inside the Classroom		Outside the Classroom	
	F	%	f	%
Yes	86	43.43	70	35.35
No	107	54.04	105	53.03
Abstained	5	2.53	23	11.62
Total	198	100	198	100

As reflected in table 3, majority of the respondents claimed that their elementary teacher did not discussed the Mindanao conflict with them inside the classroom, in fact 107 or 53.03 percent of the respondents denied the discussion of the Mindanao conflict inside the classroom. Likewise, the respondents also denied the discussion of the Mindanao conflicts outside the classroom and they further claimed that if they ever discussed the conflict, the discussion was just occasional Kamlian (1982) revealed this manner for discussion that will not give and in-depth understanding the issues involved.

When Kamlian (1999) conducted interview with selected elementary teachers from both public and private schools in Iligan City they revealed that the schools do not have any course offering that focuses the discussion on the Mindanao conflict This scenario may be identical to the situation in the province of Sulu and even other cities and provinces in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. There is no single elementary school offered courses aimed to discuss the Mindanao conflict. Kamlian (1999) stressed further if they did happen to discuss the problem, it was merely cited as an example in the process of studying current events, a part of their social studies curriculum

On the other hand, the high school students discussed the conflict with their teachers inside and outside the classroom.

TABLE 4. Frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents as to their discussion with their high school teachers about the conflict

Responses	Inside the Classroom		Outside the Classroom	
	F	%	f	%
Yes	128	65.30	93	47.45
No	70	35.71	97	49.49
Abstained	0	0	8	4.08
Total	198	100	198	100

The respondents perceived that the high school students discussed the Mindanao conflict with their teachers inside the classroom as part of their subject matter. However, they seldom discussed the matter outside the classroom. The reason for this minimal discussion as revealed by Kamlian (1999) the school system and the teachers cannot be blamed in this case. Many do not conduct open discussions on the problem for fear of arrest and detention. With the declaration of Martial Law and even

with normalization the threat to academic freedom and freedom of the press still remains. News reports on arrests made of teachers and journalists, which are documented by the Tasks Force Detainees of the Philippines attest to this.

Perception on the possible solution to the Mindanao conflict

When the respondents were asked the question, can the Mindanao conflict be solved through national integration? A gleaned from table 5 the respondents perceived that national unity as possible solution of the Mindanao conflicts with 51.52 percent answered yes and only 43.43 percent answered no.

TABLE 5. Frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents on the national integration to solution to the conflict.

Responses	f	%
Yes	102	51.52
No	86	43.43
Abstained	10	5.05
Total	198	100

Kamlia (1999) stressed further that the overwhelming choice of national integration as a solution to the Mindanao conflict can probably be best understood historically in view of the fact that the government has used the policy of integrating the Muslims into the mainstream of the structure of the Philippine society as a solution to the Moro problems.

When the respondents were asked the question, if the Muslims and the Christians are segregated in separated territories, will the conflict be solved? There are 108 or 54.55 percent of the respondents answered yes and 90 or 45.45 percent answered no. The respondents did not give any further reasons for their answers.

In his study, Kamlia (1999) were able to gather the following reasons cited for their agreement on the solution

- The separation of the Muslim and the Christian will make the former strong enough to fight the latter.
- There is no place in the Philippines where there are no Christians, where the Muslims can live.
- The Christians need Moroland for economic reasons, while the Muslims also need education, philosophy and ideology from the modernized Christians.
- It is impossible to sever completely the ties between the Muslims and the Christians unless the Muslims will be sent to a country far away from the Philippines.
- This is depriving the Christians of their rights.

Reflected in the reasons for agreeing over the territorial segregation of the Muslims and the Christians as the solution to the conflict in the fear of the Christian students that if separated the Muslims may be able to organize and strengthen their power to fight the Christians, second, the Christian might dislocate the Christians residing in the Muslim-dominated province.

Muslims and Christians living together in a plural society

When the respondents asked the question, will the conflict be solved if the Muslims and the Christians continue to live together in a plural society where their ethnic identities are respected? There are 112 or 56.57 percent respondents answered yes and 86 or 43.43 percent of the respondents answered no. This means that the great majority of the respondents agree with this solution.

TABLE 6. Frequency and percentage distribution of the Muslims and Christians to live together in a pluralistic society as solution of the conflict

Responses	f	%
Yes	112	56.57
No	86	43.43
Abstained	0	0
Total	198	100

Kamlia (1999) in his similar study were able to find out most significant explanations for this agreement:

- If the ethnic identities are respected there would be mutual understanding and cooperation.
- If we keep in mind that we are all Filipinos, then we can live harmoniously
- Understanding among the ethnic groups would promote peace and development.
- If there will be equal distribution of wealth, there would be landlordism and capitalism.
- They will learn from each other and appreciate what they learn.

Kamlia (1999) stressed further that the statistical results and the corresponding explanations of the respondent's agreement to the solution indicated that a majority of the Christian students are consistent with their previous position on solution to the problem, which are national unity and the need for together with the Muslims.

Demand of the MNLF a solution to the Mindanao conflict

When the respondents were asked the question, will the conflict be solved if the demand of the MNLF to establish an Independent Bangsa Moro State separate from the Philippine Republic is met? There are 118 or 59.6 percent respondents answered yes and 80 or 40.4 percent answered no. The findings disclosed that a great majority of the respondents accepted the solution.

TABLE 7. Frequency and percentage distribution to the demand of MNLF to establish an independent state

Responses	f	%
Yes	118	59.6
No	80	40.4
Abstained	0	0
Total	198	100

Meanwhile table 7, shows the findings that the demand of the Moro National Liberation Front to establish an independent state is possible solution of the Mindanao conflict.

The result of this study is somewhat opposite to the findings of Kamlia (1999) where this solution is rejected by majority of the respondents. Kamlia (1999) cited the following reasons:

- The majority of the population in Mindanao is Christians. They will not accept a new government to be led by the MNLF
- If the Muslims lead, the Christians will not like it. They will lose their property
- This would put the Christians in a second-class status, which merely reverses the situation, it can, therefore, be another cause for rebellion.
- It would depress the Philippine economy.
- Muslims are not yet prepared to stand alone, they still need to be trained just like what the Americans did to our government leaders before.

Similarly, the researcher of this study found out the following reasons:

- a. Majority of the population in Sulu are Muslims. They really want a new government to be lead by the MNLF.
- b. The Muslims are prepared to stand alone, they do not want any more the Philippine government.

Furthermore, table 8 confirmed that the majority of the respondents believed that autonomous region for Muslim Mindanao serve as solution to the conflict.

TABLE 8. Frequency and percentage distribution as to the establishment of Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao as solution to conflict

Responses	f	%
Yes	102	51.52
No	96	48.48
Abstained	0	0
Total	198	100

Since there had been peace talks, ceasefire, amnesty and various economic development programs initiated by the government, the respondents were also asked if these would solve the conflict Table 9 represents their responses. There are 112 of 56.57 respondents answered yes and 86 or 43.43 percent of the respondents answered no.

TABLE 9. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents to peace talks, amnesty, ceasefires and economic development programs

Responses	f	%
Yes	112	56.57
No	86	43.43
Abstained	0	0
Total	198	100

Summing up, the respondents were asked to rank according to viability the nine listed possible solutions to the conflict. The table 10 showed the responses. When the Mean was rank according to the viability of the responses, it was found out that the options independent for the Muslims get the topmost of the rank. This means that the respondents perceived when the Muslims were given Independent state Mindanao conflict would be solved. Autonomy of the Muslims rank number 2, this means that Muslims are longing for their autonomy not only in religious or spiritual aspects but also in social, political and economical aspects of life. National integration rank number 3, this implicate that Muslims would like to share Mindanao with the Christians provided, they were given independence or full Autonomy.

TABLE 10. Mean and Rank distribution of the respondents as the possible solutions to the Mindanao conflict

Responses	Mean	Rank
a. National integration	3.5	3
b. Independent for the Muslims	2.35	1
c. Autonomy for the Muslims	3.25	2
d. Educational development for the Muslims	3.67	4
e. Economic development of Mindanao (Agrarian Reform , Infrastructure, etc.)	4.78	5
f. Inter marriage between Muslims and Christian.	6.17	6
g. Conversion of the Muslims into Christianity	6.61	8
h. Conversion of the Christians into Islam.	6.47	7
I. More foreign investments in Mindanao	7.42	9

Perceptions of Muslims and Christians on the nature of the Mindanao conflict

The researcher classified the respondents according to religion, Muslims those who believe in Islam and Christians those who believe in Christianity. The treatment will find out the differences of perceptions between Muslim respondents and Christian respondents.

The result of the survey is represented in table 11. The data is treated statistically by t-test. The researcher computed the mean responses between the Muslim and Christian respondents.

TABLE 11. t-value of the respondents between Muslims and Christians on the nature of the conflict

Nature	Muslim X ¹	Christian X ²	t
a. It is a Muslim- Christian war (e.g. Ilaga vs. black shirt)	12	2	1.98
b. It is Muslim- Philippines Government conflict.	56	19	
c. It is Muslim war against land grabbing.	8	4	
d. It is a Christian aggression against Muslim minority .	21	2	
e. It is a holy war declared by the Muslims.	11	8	
f. It is an MNLF vs the government affair.	41	11	
g. It is a civil war .	3	0	
Total	152	46	

$$X=21.76 \quad X_2=6.5 \quad SDX=7.75$$

The data of table 11 showed that the computed value of t is 1.98 and the critical value at a = 0.05 with degree of freedom 10 is equal to 2.228. It appeared that the computed value is less than the critical value. This data provided sufficient evidence to conclude that

there is no significant difference on the Muslims and Christians perceptions on the nature of Mindanao conflict and its implication to peace and solidarity.

Perceptions of Muslims and Christians on the primary causes of the Mindanao conflict

Based on the data in table 12 the computed value of t is 0.03, The critical value of t at a 0.05 with degree of freedom 10 is equal to 2.228 using non-directional test. It appeared that the computed value of t is less than the critical value. This data provided sufficient evidence to conclude that there is no significant difference between Muslims and Christians in their perceptions on the primary causes of the Mindanao conflict and its implication to peace and solidarity.

TABLE 12. t-value on the respondents perception between Muslims and Christians one the primary causes of conflict

Causes	Muslim X ¹	Christian X ²	t-value
a. Religion (e.g., Islam and Christianity)	2.76	2.45	0.03
b. Economic (e.g., land grabbing ,under development , etc.)	3.14	2.63	
c. The Muslims	3.35	3.09	
d. The Christian	4.79	4.53	
e. The MNLF	3.78	4.14	
f. The Government	3.24	3.70	
Overall mean	3.515	3.425	

Df= 10

SDX-3.4

a = 0.05

Critical value of t-2.228

Perceptions of male and female respondents on the nature of the Mindanao conflict

The data in table 13 showed that the computed value of t is equal to 0.83, while the critical value of t is 2.179 at a = 0.05 with degree of freedom 12. Since the computed value of t is smaller than the tabular value of t, then this data provided sufficient evidence to conclude that there is no significant difference between the perception of male and female students on the nature of the Mindanao conflict and its implication to peace and solidarity.

TABLE 13. t-value of the respondents between male and female on the nature of the Mindanao conflict

Nature	Male X ¹	Female X ²	t- value
a. It is Muslim-Christian war (e.g. Ilaga vs black shirts).	6	8	0.83
b. It is Muslim- Philippines Government conflict.	22	57	
c. It is a Muslim war against land grabbing.	6	9	
d. It is a Christian aggression against Muslim minority.	15	13	
e. It is a holy war declared by the Muslim.	13	7	
f. It is an MNLF vs the government affair.	19	35	
g. It is a civil war .	2	1	
Total	83	130	

X= 11.8 X= 18.57 SDX= 8.10

Perceptions male and female respondents on the primary causes of the Mindanao conflict

As reflected in table 14, the computed value of t is 0.01 while the tabular value of t is equal to 2.228 at a 0.05 with the degree of freedom 10, This data provided sufficient evidence to conclude that there is no significant difference between the perceptions of male and female respondents on the primary causes of the Mindanao conflict and its implication to peace and solidarity

TABLE 14. t-value of the respondents between male and female on the nature of the Mindanao conflict

Causes	Male X ¹	Female X ²	t- value
a. Religion (e.g., Islam and Christianity)	2.68	2.7	0.01
b. Economic (e.g., land grabbing, underdevelopment, etc.)	2.89	3.15	
c. The Muslims	3.38	3.30	
d. The Christians	4.78	4.38	
e. The MNLF	4.06	3.96	
f. The Government	3.39	3.52	
Average Mean	3.53	3.50	

This study provided basic proof that Muslims and Christians students while living together sharing the same experiences in the same land there is no significant difference on their perceptions on the nature, causes and effects of the Mindanao conflicts. They do not felt the consequences viewed by the people living outside the Moroland.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The Mindanao conflicts existed for three decades in Mindanao. This time is long enough considering the sufferings of the people living in this holy land of Allahu subhanahu wa ta'ala. Therefore, the people in Morlandia develop all kinds of consciousness how the Mindanao conflicts end. This study helps a lot leading to the improvement of plans and actions on the greatest possibility to solve the Mindanao conflicts. The study has proven that the students have common perceptions regarding the nature and primary causes of the Mindanao conflicts. Knowing these natures and primary causes appropriate solutions should be established which leads to peace and solidarity of the people, not only in the province of Sulu but also in the cities and provinces in entire Mindanao regardless of region, ethnicity, social status and other aspects of life.

Therefore, the viability of the solutions included in the study should be given a great privilege by the Philippine government and other member of society who in one-way or the other opposing the law of the land as established by the Philippine government. The perceptions of the students could be given emphasis to reality, hence, the Philippine government and the people of Mindanao should unite for the cause of love, peace and tranquility in which identified and constructed as the sole aim of all religions.

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