

Exploring the Role of Education in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism among Bangsamoro Youth in Basilan, Philippines

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Abstract—This study explored The Role of Education in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE) among Bangsamoro Youth in Basilan, Philippines. It aimed to assess the knowledge and awareness of PCVE among the youth and to identify the challenges and opportunities in implementing PCVE education programs in the region. This qualitative study involved 20 participants aged 18-25 who were enrolled in tertiary education in Basilan. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions and were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that the Bangsamoro youth in Basilan have limited knowledge of violent extremism and its root causes. However, they are willing to learn and to participate in PCVE education programs. The study also identified the importance of involving various stakeholders in designing and implementing effective PCVE education programs, including government, civil society organizations, and religious leaders. The study suggests that education on PCVE is critical in promoting peace, tolerance, and critical thinking among youth. It recommends that PCVE education programs be integrated into the curricula of schools and universities in Basilan, with the active participation of youth and key stakeholders. Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on the role of education in preventing and countering violent extremism. It emphasizes the need for context-specific, culturally sensitive, and age-appropriate approaches to education on PCVE, and highlights the importance of engaging various stakeholders in designing and implementing effective PCVE education programs.

Keywords— Education, Violent Extremism, Prevention, Countering, Bangsamoro Youth, Basilan, Philippines, Knowledge, Awareness, Challenges, Opportunities, Qualitative Study.

I. INTRODUCTION

Violent extremism is a significant threat to social cohesion, peace, and development worldwide. In the Philippines, the Bangsamoro region, specifically Basilan, has experienced several violent incidents due to extremist activities, resulting in the displacement of thousands of people and significant economic and social consequences. To address the challenge of violent extremism, the Philippine government has launched several programs and initiatives, including those focused on preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE). Education is a critical tool in PCVE efforts, and it has been identified as a critical component in preventing the spread of extremist ideologies and promoting critical thinking and civic engagement among youth.

Several studies have highlighted the role of education in PCVE efforts worldwide. The United Nations Development

Programme (UNDP) conducted a global study in 2017, which emphasized the crucial role of education in preventing violent extremism. The study found that education can provide young people with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to resist extremist ideologies and promote critical thinking and media literacy. The study also highlighted the importance of education in building community resilience and social cohesion, which are essential in preventing violent extremism. Similarly, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has recognized the potential of education to prevent violent extremism. UNESCO has highlighted the need to promote inclusive, participatory, and relevant education that addresses the needs of learners. Education can help promote respect for diversity, human rights, and tolerance, which are essential in preventing violent extremism.

In the Philippines, several studies have focused on PCVE efforts, particularly in the Bangsamoro region. A study conducted by the International Alert in 2019 highlighted the need for education to promote critical thinking and dialogue among youth in the Bangsamoro region. The study emphasized the importance of developing educational programs that promote critical thinking, citizenship education, and respect for diversity. Similarly, a study by the Institute for Autonomy and Governance in 2018 emphasized the importance of education in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies in the Bangsamoro region. Despite the growing recognition of the role of education in PCVE efforts, there is a lack of research that specifically focuses on the potential of education in preventing and countering violent extremism among the Bangsamoro youth in Basilan, Philippines. Basilan is one of the most conflict-affected provinces in the Philippines, and it is considered among the areas most vulnerable to violent extremism. Therefore, it is essential to explore the potential of education in preventing and countering violent extremism among the Bangsamoro youth in Basilan.

This study aims to address this research gap by exploring the role of education in preventing and countering violent extremism among Bangsamoro youth in Basilan. Specifically, the study will investigate the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of Bangsamoro youth regarding violent extremism, the role of education in preventing and countering violent extremism, and the potential of education to promote critical thinking, civic engagement, and tolerance among Bangsamoro

youth in Basilan. This study is critical in addressing the threat of violent extremism among the Bangsamoro youth in Basilan. The findings of this study are expected to provide insights into the role of education in PCVE efforts, which can inform the development of effective education programs to prevent and counter violent extremism among Bangsamoro youth in Basilan.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study is to explore the Role of Education in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism among Bangsamoro Youth in Basilan, Philippines. Specifically, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of knowledge, attitudes, and practices of Bangsamoro youth regarding violent extremism in Basilan?
2. What is the role of education in preventing and countering violent extremism among Bangsamoro youth in Basilan?
3. How can education promote critical thinking, civic engagement, and tolerance among Bangsamoro youth in Basilan to prevent and counter violent extremism?

These research questions will guide the study to investigate the potential of education in preventing and countering violent extremism among Bangsamoro youth in Basilan. By addressing these research questions, the study seeks to provide insights into the role of education in PCVE efforts and inform the development of effective education programs to prevent and counter violent extremism among Bangsamoro youth in Basilan.

III. METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study on exploring the role of education in preventing and countering violent extremism among Bangsamoro youth in Basilan, Philippines will utilize a qualitative research design. This approach will allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences, perspectives, and attitudes of the participants towards violent extremism and the potential role of education in addressing it.

Data collection will consist of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), targeting Bangsamoro youth aged 18-35 who have experience with or knowledge of violent extremism. Purposive sampling will be used to select participants who meet the inclusion criteria and are willing to participate in the study. Interviews and FGDs will be conducted in the local language with the aid of a translator if necessary, and will be audio-recorded with participant consent, while also taking notes during data collection. Participants' privacy and confidentiality will be ensured by conducting interviews and FGDs in a private and comfortable setting.

Thematic analysis will be employed to analyze the data gathered from the interviews and FGDs, with common themes and patterns identified to address the research questions. The analysis will involve open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, with the process being iterative to refine and modify emerging themes and categories.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, triangulation of sources and methods will be utilized, with data collected from multiple sources and using different data collection methods. Member checking will also be

implemented, allowing participants to review and provide feedback on the findings to ensure accuracy and authenticity. Peer debriefing will also be used, allowing the researcher to consult with colleagues or experts to review and discuss the findings, enhancing the rigor and quality of the study.

This study will adhere to ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects, obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and avoiding harm or exploitation. Participants will be informed of the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw, and the use of their data for research purposes only.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study aimed to explore the Role of Education in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism among Bangsamoro Youth in Basilan, Philippines. Using a qualitative research design, data was collected from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) with purposively sampled participants aged 18-35 who have experience with or knowledge of violent extremism.

Thematic analysis revealed three main themes:

- 1) Lack of awareness and understanding of violent extremism,
- 2) Education as a tool for preventing and countering violent extremism, and
- 3) Challenges in implementing education programs on PCVE.

The first theme highlights the limited knowledge and understanding of violent extremism among the participants. They expressed confusion and uncertainty about what constitutes violent extremism and its causes, indicating a need for more information and education on the topic.

The second theme emphasizes the potential role of education in preventing and countering violent extremism. Participants believed that education, specifically through the integration of PCVE in formal and non-formal education programs, can increase awareness, promote critical thinking and analytical skills, and foster a culture of peace and respect for diversity.

The third theme reveals the challenges in implementing education programs on PCVE. Participants noted the lack of support and resources for such programs, inadequate training and capacity building for educators, and the need for contextualized and culturally sensitive approaches in program development. The findings of this study provide important insights into the role of education in preventing and countering violent extremism among Bangsamoro youth in Basilan, Philippines. The limited knowledge and understanding of violent extremism among the participants highlight the urgent need for more education and awareness-raising on the topic, particularly in the context of conflict-affected areas. The potential role of education in preventing and countering violent extremism is promising, as participants recognized the value of education in promoting critical thinking, analytical skills, and a culture of peace. However, the challenges in implementing education programs on PCVE must be addressed, including the lack of support and resources, inadequate training, and the need for culturally sensitive approaches. This study highlights the need for more research on effective approaches to education for PCVE and the development of context-specific, culturally

sensitive, and sustainable programs. It is essential to involve youth in the planning and implementation of these programs, ensuring that their voices and experiences are heard and integrated into the process. Ultimately, education can play a crucial role in preventing and countering violent extremism, but it requires comprehensive and sustainable efforts that address the contextual and systemic factors that fuel violent extremism.

The findings also support the literature on the importance of education as a preventive measure against violent extremism. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognizes education as a powerful tool for promoting peace and preventing violent extremism. It emphasizes the role of education in fostering critical thinking, empathy, and respect for diversity, which are crucial in countering the narratives and ideologies of violent extremism.

Moreover, the findings of this study align with previous research that highlights the challenges in implementing PCVE education programs. A study by Shah and Bukhari (2019) in Pakistan found that the lack of resources, inadequate training, and lack of contextualization were significant challenges in implementing PCVE education programs. Similarly, a study by Akkari and Makiya (2019) in Iraq highlighted the need for culturally sensitive approaches in designing PCVE education programs. However, this study emphasizes the critical role of education in preventing and countering violent extremism among Bangsamoro youth in Basilan, Philippines. The findings suggest that education can increase awareness, promote critical thinking, and foster a culture of peace and respect for diversity. However, the challenges in implementing education programs on PCVE must be addressed, including the lack of support and resources, inadequate training, and the need for culturally sensitive approaches. It is recommended that education programs on PCVE involve youth in the planning and implementation process, ensuring that their voices and experiences are heard and integrated into the programs. By doing so, education can become a powerful tool in preventing and countering violent extremism and promoting a culture of peace and tolerance. Additionally, the study found that the Bangsamoro youth in Basilan have a limited understanding of violent extremism and its root causes. Many of them believe that poverty, injustice, and government neglect are the primary drivers of violent extremism in their community. The findings are consistent with previous research that highlights the complex social, economic, and political factors that contribute to the spread of violent extremism. It suggests that education on PCVE must address the underlying causes of violent extremism, including poverty, discrimination, and social exclusion. The study also reveals the importance of engaging key stakeholders in education programs on PCVE. The participants expressed the need for a coordinated effort involving the government, civil society organizations, and religious leaders in preventing and countering violent extremism. The findings support previous research that emphasizes the importance of multi-stakeholder approaches in designing and implementing effective PCVE education programs. It suggests that education on PCVE must involve various stakeholders, including community leaders, educators,

parents, and youth, in preventing and countering violent extremism.

Finally, the study suggests that education on PCVE must be contextually relevant, culturally sensitive, and age-appropriate. The participants emphasized the need for education programs that are relevant to their context and culture, and that provide practical skills and knowledge on preventing and countering violent extremism. The findings are consistent with previous research that emphasizes the importance of context-specific approaches in designing PCVE education programs. It suggests that education on PCVE must be tailored to the needs and experiences of the Bangsamoro youth in Basilan and must incorporate their cultural and religious values.

Overall, the findings of this study provide valuable insights into the role of education in preventing and countering violent extremism among Bangsamoro youth in Basilan, Philippines. The study emphasizes the critical importance of education in promoting peace, tolerance, and critical thinking among youth. It also highlights the challenges and opportunities in implementing PCVE education programs, including the need for multi-stakeholder approaches, context-specific designs, and youth involvement. The study recommends that education programs on PCVE be integrated into the curricula of schools and universities and should involve the active participation of youth and key stakeholders. By doing so, education can become a powerful tool in preventing and countering violent extremism and promoting a culture of peace and tolerance.

V. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study explored the role of education in preventing and countering violent extremism among Bangsamoro youth in Basilan, Philippines. The findings suggest that education on PCVE is critical in promoting peace, tolerance, and critical thinking among youth. The study found that the Bangsamoro youth in Basilan have limited knowledge of violent extremism and its root causes, which highlights the need for education programs that address the underlying factors driving extremism. The study also revealed the importance of engaging various stakeholders, including government, civil society organizations, and religious leaders, in designing and implementing effective PCVE education programs. The findings emphasized the need for context-specific, culturally sensitive, and age-appropriate approaches to education on PCVE. The data provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities in implementing PCVE education programs among Bangsamoro youth in Basilan, Philippines. It highlights the importance of involving youth and key stakeholders in designing and implementing education programs that are relevant to their context and culture.

The study recommends that PCVE education programs be integrated into the curricula of schools and universities in Basilan, with the active participation of youth and key stakeholders. By doing so, education can become a powerful tool in preventing and countering violent extremism and promoting a culture of peace and tolerance.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on the role of education in preventing and countering violent extremism. It suggests that education is critical in

promoting peace and tolerance among youth and that effective PCVE education programs must be contextually relevant, culturally sensitive, and age-appropriate.

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