

**Addressing the Causal Factors of Poverty in Muslim Mindanao:
Perspectives from Thomas Pogge and Iris Marion Young****Christopher Ryan B. Maboloc**Philosophy Department, Ateneo de Davao University, Philippines, ORCID: 0000-0001-7057-4032
Email: crbmaboloc@addu.edu.ph

Abstract: This paper intends to discuss the nature and consequences of the institutional causal factors of deprivation in Muslim Mindanao. Poverty can be attributed to clannish rivalries, failures in peace agreements, a shadow economy controlled by local bosses, and a patronage system of government dominated by the elites. Historical as well as structural injustice are the direct causes of poverty in the region. Exclusion is anchored in centralised rule, which denies Muslim Filipinos their basic rights to human well-being. The existing approaches to improving the standard of living in Muslim Mindanao do not address the control of political dynasties, enabled by political power brokers who want to perpetuate their vested interests. Following the ethical frameworks of Thomas Pogge and Iris Marion Young, I argue that overturning the problem of poverty in the Bangsamoro requires the levelling of the playing field by introducing grassroots-based political parties who in turn, once in power, can dismantle the dominance of influential clans and families by introducing inclusive and competitive economic policies that can promote equitable wealth distribution within the region.

Keywords:

1. Poverty
2. Bangsamoro
3. Patronage System
4. Clannish Politics
5. Underground Economy

2025 Journal ASAP

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.15372925](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15372925)Received 3 October 2024
Revised 5 May 2025
Accepted 6 May 2025
Available online 9 May 2025**1. Introduction**

Thomas Pogge (2008) presents a moral approach to fighting poverty. Society, according to Pogge (2007), has a negative duty not to harm the poor. Pogge's theory asserts that the present international rules and policies established by a hegemonic global order led by affluent and powerful states violate the basic rights of human beings. The duty to prevent harm comes from the corrective or rectificatory approach to justice (Collste, 2015). Rectificatory justice is about compensating the victims of colonialism and its aftermath (Browne, 2024). Beyond the Rawlsian principle of distribution, Pogge (2007) asserts that this moral obligation applies to instances where the basic structure is damaged by the colonial power that has exploited the local population. For Pogge (2008), emphasising the negative duty of affluent states is more

important than providing aid to poor countries. In the case of the Philippines, improving the situation of Muslim Filipinos requires dismantling a patronage system that has stifled human progress.

Improving the life situation of people in Muslim Mindanao necessitates repairing unjust structures and uneven systems that deprive people of the opportunity to realize a dignified life. People in the Bangsamoro suffer from particular forms of injustices that deprive them of the resources needed to obtain a decent standard of living. Iris Marion Young (2002) mentions such forms of injustice, which include exploitation, cultural imperialism, and violence. People who have become victims of conflict and wars continue to suffer because they are denied their rights. Young's perspective is useful in understanding the nature of structural injustice. In the Bangsamoro, the reality of social, cultural, and political types of oppression can be found in the dynamics of power that prevail in the region. The dynastic nature of its politics is a threat to human well-being and the peacebuilding process. The existence of an underground economy and the discrimination of minorities are impediments to human development in the region.

Filling a gap in the existing discourse on poverty in Muslim Mindanao, this paper employs the ethical frameworks of Thomas Pogge's rectificatory justice and Iris Marion Young's politics of difference to analyse how historical and institutional forces—specifically predatory political structures—have caused poverty in marginalised communities in the Bangsamoro region. Such causal factors are rooted in colonial history and are made manifest in the patronage system of governance that favours local bosses and results in clashes between powerful political clans. The study looks into the interrelationship of the power dynamics in the region as it seeks to address the problem of deprivation. Poverty cannot be described as a mere “lack of income” (Sen, 2000). It has a structural aspect in the sense that people are fettered by the reality of uneven socio-political and economic structures that are rooted in oppressive norms and practices (Young, 2002). Mindanao was exploited for its mineral resources and timber by the Americans (Gaspar, 2021). The Commonwealth Government of President Manuel Quezon failed to deliver equitable growth to the island (McCoy, 1988). President Quezon instead brought landless peasants from Luzon and Western Visayas to populate Mindanao during the 1920s up to the 1940s, displacing Muslims and Indigenous Peoples who previously occupied vast tracts of land.

In fact, a *World Bank Report* (2017) states that “Mindanao's comparative advantage lies in agriculture, yet its full potential is not being realized, mainly because productivity remains low.” Post-conflict colonial development efforts in Mindanao failed to consider the root cause of the problem, which is the marginalisation of its people (Gaspar, 2021). The centralised government after the war was all-focused on rebuilding Luzon (Abinales, 2000). According to Jonathan Malaya (2017, 217), the unitary system of government in the Philippines “concentrated political and economic power in the centre and thus, development was limited in areas close to Manila and stifled elsewhere.” Politically, the central government in Manila chose to ignore the problem of political dynasties because these powerful clans served the interests of the elites in the capital (Hotchkroft & Rocamora, 2003). In the Bangsamoro, the state (State rather than state?) appears to have no clear-cut approach in terms of responding to the threat coming from the vested interests of rival political families. According to one participant in the FGD held in Cotabato City, “political clans want to control the politics because they benefit from it economically.” In this sense, if the Bangsamoro¹ must emerge out of poverty, it must find a way

¹ The Bangsamoro or Muslim Mindanao is an area in the Southwestern part of the Philippines. The region covers 11,608 km² or 4% of the total land area of the Philippines. As of 2020, it has a population of 4,984,000. The Bangsamoro region consists of 5 provinces and 116 municipalities (See Philippine Statistics Authority, “Highlights of the BARMM Population Census,” 2020).

to put an end to the rule of elitist politics and clan rivalries that often endanger the lives of the people and cause economic stagnation.

According to Francisco Lara Jr. (2015), the Bangsamoro “stands out for having the lowest levels of economic and human development in Mindanao and the rest of the Philippines.” To understand the above, it is necessary to distinguish two types of causal factors. Pogge (2008) explains that there are “interactional” as well as “institutional” causal factors when it comes to the problem of poverty. On one hand, interactional reasons point to the actions of particular individuals that make them blameworthy. For instance, political warlords and dynasties make the lives of the people difficult as the former act like bosses who control the daily activities of the local population (Sidel, 1999). In such an unjust system, there exists a blatant abuse of power and corruption (Lingga, 2015). On the other hand, institutional factors are about economic rules, laws, and policies (Urbano, 2008). The political structure of the Philippines means that its national budget depends on the decisions of people in the capital, while its oligarchic economic system dictates the course of the country’s future. Too little has been spent to improve the condition of Mindanao. This is a result of a centralized form of government (Malaya, 2017). While projects meant for local infrastructure and economic development have been given to places that are predominantly Christian, very little improvement can be seen in Muslim-dominated areas (Diaz, 2005). In addition, according to one FGD participant, “members of indigenous communities in the region have no say in the affairs of government.”

In addressing the problem of economic as well as political exclusion, rebuilding the Bangsamoro requires institutional reforms. Young (1990) argues that the liberal concept of justice is limited as it only focuses on the redistribution of goods. If the structural problems are not addressed, then the resources will only fall into the hands of powerful politicians who are in control of the local economy. For Pogge (2007), people’s natural rights must be guaranteed, and this includes securing for them the things that enable people to live decently. In this regard, state authorities must embrace a sense of “accountability” and “transparency” in the exercise of one’s political power (Teehankee, 2022). Unless equitable systems are set in place to prevent political dynasties from abusing the electoral exercise and the conduct of government functions in the Bangsamoro region, any development effort would be ineffective (Teehankee & Agoho, 2023).

The Bangsamoro is considered an experimental step towards a federal state (Malaya, 2017). But, given that the same old influential power players are there, the experiment might only yield negative results. The approach of the Philippine Government should not be limited simply to addressing the socio-political question. Lara (2015) thinks that, aside from the reality of corruption, one needs to address “the serious infirmities of the formal institutions of the state and the loopholes of the state’s social justice instruments.” It is for this reason that Pogge and Young’s frameworks are useful. Pogge argues for securing the basic rights of the people to emancipate them from deprivation, while Young’s theory advocates for structural changes to ensure that positional hierarchies will not put people at a disadvantage. An inclusive approach to development will ensure the equitable redistribution of wealth within the Bangsamoro region.

2. Methodology

The methodology of this study seeks to merge the depth of philosophical analysis and the richness of human experience through the stories of people. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and content analysis were done to explain the structural nature of poverty in Muslim Mindanao. The researcher gathered primary data from the FGD participants to determine the prevailing

sentiments, concerns, and behaviours of people (Charmaz, 2014). The questions asked were meant to determine the reality of poverty and the influence of the political dynamics within the Bangsamoro (see last page 17 for Appendix for the questions asked of the FGD participants). The first FGD, with nine (9) participants, was conducted in Koronadal City on November 12, 2023. The participants included a peace advocate, two academics, two members of Indigenous communities, two peace workers, and two students. The questions were structured in such a way as to draw in-depth discussions that generated meaningful insights from the participants (Charmaz, 2014). The recurring themes were human poverty and social discrimination, violence, including the psychological effects and economic impact of the many years of conflict in the Bangsamoro. A second FGD was conducted in Cotabato City on November 18, 2023. The seven (7) participants included an official of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), a religious peace advocate, two academics, two Non-Government Organisation officers, and a lawyer. They offered their sentiments on the political threats in the region that hamper human development, the prevalence of dynastic politics that prevent the creation of better socio-economic policies, and the need for dialogue to make peace sustainable and economic growth equitable. The participants argued that equal representation is crucial to attain sustainable peace and development. The insights of the two FGDs enabled the author to draw unique insights on the character of the underground economy in the Bangsamoro. Finally, a third FGD was conducted in Zamboanga City on January 14, 2024. This was necessary to get the views from the people who live in Tawi-Tawi, Jolo, and Basilan. The six participants included one each from the three island provinces mentioned, two academics, and a member of the Peace Panel who negotiated with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines. The participants of the third FGD expressed the threat from terrorist groups, which was not apparent in the first FGD. Terrorism impedes economic development as it discourages the creation of investments. As a result, poverty and conflict have become cyclical. The last FGD also revealed for the first time that ~~the~~ peace in the region looks superficial because of the presence of powerful politicians who continue to control the area. The participants in the FGDs were randomly chosen and the questions were designed to address the theme of poverty and power dynamics as the causal factors of poverty in the local area of study (Charmaz, 2014).

Hunt (2009) mentions the limitations of the interpretive or qualitative method, which can include the “potential bias” and “subjective interpretation of phenomena.” Unlike positivistic research methods that depend on statistical probabilities, the qualitative method of analysis can be prejudiced by human subjectivity. Nevertheless, the interpretive method can provide insights that quantitative data sometimes overlook. In this way, the FGDs were critical to giving a voice to the meaning and value of the experiences of the research participants, which provided the appropriate contexts in understanding the reality of poverty. The FGDs allowed the researcher to refine his theoretical framework based on the rich and illuminating inputs from the participants. The analysis of the data is anchored in the concept of structural justice developed by Young and the institutional causes of poverty as espoused by Pogge. The author analysed the insights from the participants to see if the theoretical frameworks of Young and Pogge resonate with the real experiences of the participants. Secondary data came from articles, books, and other materials that reveal a robust, evidence-based content analysis of the situation in the area (Charmaz, 2014). The literature came from local Filipino scholars who studied the Bangsamoro as well as the primary works of Pogge and Young. This investigation used two strategies: first, listening to the voice and sentiments of stakeholders and second, applying the framework of Pogge and Young in analysing the problem of poverty in the Bangsamoro. The investigator looked for emerging themes from the primary data, which was the key focus of the iterations in the paper. The study’s results were based on the original

insights of the participants, who narrated their experiences that helped the author identify the important issues in this study. Ethical principles were followed in the conduct of this investigation. Furthermore, the key themes that emerged during the discussions include the reality of patronage politics, the influence of political dynasties, and the dynamics of an underground economy. These causal factors aligned with the theory of Young, who suggests that structural injustice is a result of the unequal position of people in society. Pogge's idea of negative duty also resonated with the participants. It appears that policies and laws favour the powerful and those who are influential, which means that the poor suffer from the harms caused by policies and institutions that are supposed to protect them. The FGDs provided a deep understanding of the participants' experiences in terms of the reality of poverty and deprivation, the political exclusion of individuals and groups, and their sentiments on Philippine society and politics. The FGDs encouraged the stakeholders to share their insights, feelings, and personal views in the spirit of open dialogue. The results from the FGDs were analysed rigorously.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. How Exclusion Results to Clan Rivalries and Failed Peace Agreements

The present problems of Philippine society, especially here in Mindanao, are a result of its colonial history. One can judge it as a form of cultural imperialism, in which colonies are simply reduced to inferiors who succumb to the whims of their overlords. Even before the Spaniards came to the Philippines, Mindanao and Sulu already had flourishing trade relations with China and its neighbouring countries, with whom barter trade was a prominent means of economic exchange (Hernandez, 2003). With the arrival of Miguel Lopez de Legazpi in 1574, who established Manila as the capital, the Spaniards wanted to subjugate Mindanao, but its Muslim rulers resisted many attempts (Jubair, 2007). The subordination of Muslim chieftains in the other parts of the country allowed the Spanish friars to administer the Philippine archipelago through a centralised form of government. They imposed the *encomienda* system that enabled those who were favoured by the Spanish authorities to attain an elite status in Philippine society (Cullinane, 2009). When the Spaniards left the country, the *haciendas* (large plantations) were handed over to the relatives and cohorts of friars, including the members of the *ilustrados* (rich, influential, and educated Filipinos) who held positions in government. In post-colonial society, local politicians were able to perpetuate themselves in power because they are better connected (Coronel et al., 2004).

Ideally, it is necessary to build the basic structure from the ground up. For Young (1990), this means giving people a real voice. The exclusionary approach to Mindanao had a tremendous social and economic impact. President Quezon, for instance, simply reduced the whole of Mindanao into a rich source of votes (Hotchcroft & Rocamora, 2003). The policies of the Commonwealth Government resulted in the marginalisation of Indigenous Peoples and Muslim Filipinos (McCoy, 2009; Gaspar, 2021). For Young (2002), when people are forced into the margins, they are actually stripped of their rights. In the Philippines, this happened because rich Filipino politicians simply became the new elites in the post-colonial society. The political as well as economic elites in the country control the affairs of the government. For Young (1990), such a situation reinforces the positional injustice in the social hierarchy. Those in a position of power abuse their authority because of the weakness of institutions. Politicians serve their interests and those of their patrons instead of the public. This is made manifest by the fact that corrupt public officials make a lot of money while in office. Basically, the people do not know what to

do in order to change their situation because they have become victims of political machinations. The participants in the FGD, for instance, expressed the fact that they do not have the means or the motivation to seek remedy whenever they feel that their rights have been threatened: “People do not have any means nor any access to the courts nor to the local councils which makes it difficult for them to overcome their day-to-day problems.” – Source for this quotation?

The perception that Mindanao is a place of violent conflict is nothing but an orthodoxy or bias (Abinales, 2000). In fact, there was a parallel state-building in Mindanao during the time of the Spanish conquest, although efforts to govern the Philippines were concentrated in the capital (Abinales, 2010). Muslims, Indigenous Peoples, and Christians have lived among themselves. There was even a process of intermarriage in places such as Marawi and Iligan (Yoshizawa & Kusaka, 2020). However, the prevailing clannish structure already existed in the Bangsamoro from the very start (McKenna, 1998). This often resulted in clashes between clans in what is called *rido*, or the practice of seeking justice through revenge. Often violent, this happens when a member of one clan is offended by another (Kreutzer, 2005).

From a historical vantage point, it was during the regime of President Ferdinand Marcos Sr. that Filipino Muslims first felt the resentment against the National Government in Manila when young Moro soldiers were massacred by their Filipino counterparts in what was known as the Jabidah Massacre (Gloria, 2014). Reports had suggested, first revealed by then Sen. Benigno Aquino Jr., that the Moro soldiers complained about the non-release of their allowance. This resulted in a mutiny (Jubair, 2007; Gloria, 2014). The Jabidah massacre, which occurred in Bataan, galvanized the resentment of the Moro people against the Philippine state (McKenna, 1998; Teehankee & Agoho, 2023). This would result into the Muslim insurgency in Mindanao that has claimed more than a hundred thousand lives (Jubair, 2007).

Nur Misuari, then a young instructor at the University of the Philippines, founded the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), a Muslim separatist movement, in 1972 (Gloria, 2014). The MNLF burned Jolo, Sulu in 1974, considered to be the first major military confrontation between Muslim rebels and the Philippine Government (Jubair, 2007). The event forced the hand of President Marcos to negotiate with the separatist group, which resulted in signing of the Tripoli Agreement in 1976, meant to allow autonomous rule in Muslim Mindanao, while maintaining the country’s territorial integrity (McKenna, 1998). But the Tripoli Agreement was never implemented by Marcos (Gloria, 2014). When President Corazon Aquino took power, she wanted to broker a new peace agreement with the Muslim rebels, although this was complicated by the situation of quarrelling clans and local elites. Clannish politics became an impediment to peace and progress in the Bangsamoro. One FGD participant mentioned that clashes between clans often result in murder. In fact, while doing our investigation in Cotabato City, a community leader of a local politician was shot on the road. This incident was revealed to us by one of our informants. Peter Kreutzer writes (2005):

The social order in Muslim Mindanao is characterized above all else by a juxtaposition of rival clans. Thinking in the categories of the clan and the associated code of honor result, in the institutional context of the Philippine electoral democracy, in highly violence-oriented political debates, which reach their highpoints directly before and after elections. Although the paraphernalia of democratic elections is widely fulfilled – emotional electoral battles, electoral advertising everywhere, a multitude of events and the common rhetorical exchange of blows between political rivals – politics in this region is to a very great extent a purely intra-elitist event between rival clans.

The rivalries and infighting among elite Muslim political clans meant that the security situation in the Bangsamoro region is a product of concessions given by a National Government that was eager to implement a peace process to power brokers who want to maintain their vested interests (Kreutzer, 2005). Macapundo Muslim (1994) believes that the idea of devolution paved the way for protracted conflicts in the region. President Corazon Aquino, who subsequently negotiated a peace deal with the Muslim rebels, wanted to institutionalise the devolution of power by means of a new law, the Local Government Code of 1991, even before a peace agreement had been signed (Lara, 2015). This proved to be a mistake. Misuari wanted no less than the implementation of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement, which contained a contested provision that made 13 provinces a part of the proposed autonomous region (Gloria, 2014). However, the organic law passed by the Philippine Congress in 1989 only included four provinces. President Aquino, therefore, failed to appease the Muslim insurgents (Lara, 2015). Finally, it was President Fidel Ramos who was able to negotiate a peace deal with the MNLF in 1996, which gave birth to the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The ARMM largely failed to improve the situation of Muslim Filipinos. The reason was due to a failure of governance. Corruption was rampant (Laut et al., 2015).

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), a faction of the MNLF that broke away in 1977, negotiated with the Philippine Government in 1997. They rejected the 1996 Peace Agreement and demanded a Bangsamoro Islamic State (Kreutzer, 2005). The MILF started recruiting more members to strengthen its force. What broke the camel's back was when they attacked the town of Kauswagan in Lanao del Norte in March 2000 and held hostage 329 civilians, who were later rescued (Schiavo-Campo & Judd, 2005). President Joseph Estrada at the time held a hardline stance and directed the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to implement a policy of "all-out war" against the rebel group (Schiavo-Campo & Judd, 2005). The Philippine government asserted dominance against the secessionist group by capturing Camp Abubakar, which Estrada visited after its surrender in early July 2000. The all-out war resulted in more than a hundred military casualties, 750,000 displaced residents, and more than a thousand dead bodies on the side of the MILF (Asia Foundation, 2017). Criminal cases were filed against MILF leaders but President Estrada would later order that the same be withdrawn in order to lure the MILF back into the negotiating table. The all-out war resulted in economic decline in the Bangsamoro (Lara, 2015).

During the administration of President Benigno Aquino III (2010-16), the MILF and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines signed a Peace Agreement in 2014 that paved the way for the establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (Lara, 2015). This was an offshoot of concessions and efforts by various sectors after the MOA-AD (Memorandum Agreement on Ancestral Domain), an agreement reached in 2008 by the MILF and the government under President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (2001-10) that would establish the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity, was scuttled. The MOA-AD was ultimately rejected and declared unconstitutional by the Philippine Supreme Court, voting 8-7, because it failed to follow the consultative process that was stipulated in the original peace agreement. Various sectors opposed the MOA-AD, fearing that the same might result to an independent Muslim State.

One participant in the FGD in Zamboanga City manifested the sentiment that "peace is superficial because Muslim Mindanao has remained alienated from meaningful progress." The same participant said that "the same politics and the same politicians are there. There is corruption too." Malaya (2017) nevertheless insists that "the problem is the highly-centralised form of government and the solution is the adoption of a federal system." What Malaya is proposing, a position that transpired during the administration of President Rodrigo Duterte, is

a type of power-sharing between the National Government and the proposed regions in a federal system. But the charter reform agenda during the time of President Duterte never pushed through because lawmakers wanted to do away with term limits that have been put in place in the 1987 Constitution. In fact, it is also clear that political clans do not want any structural change because they would naturally lose their predatory control of the local economy. According to John Sidel (1999), politicians as local bosses act in cahoots with rich businessmen in monopolizing the economy. In the Bangsamoro, what this means is that local politicians behave as overlords who dictate and control the lives of the people. This type of patronage politics is destructive since it stifles economic competition as well.

3.2. How the Power Dynamics and Political Influence Cause Poverty

Culturally, there exists a prejudice against the Muslim Filipino, who is wrongly judged as violent. In addition, the members of indigenous tribes in the Philippines are labelled ignorant by the dominant majority (Maboloc, 2024). Young (1990) points to the reality of structural injustice, which does not only undermine the freedoms of people, but also tramples their dignity by denying them their basic rights and depriving them of socio-economic opportunities. The FGDs reveal the presence of such type of injustice that still prevails in the Philippines, with damaging results in the lives of Muslim Filipinos and Indigenous Peoples, who are denied the ability to realize their full potential in the Philippine societal culture. In one of the FGDs, a participant said that “other students look down upon us since we belong to the IP (Indigenous Peoples) communities.” This is a consequence of a colonial system in which people are being perceived as inferior by their fellow human beings. This type of bias is what cultural imperialism is about (Young, 1990; Maboloc, 2022). In fact, the respect that Muslim Filipinos demand is a matter of human right, a claim cannot be subordinated to any other claim (Pogge, 2008).

Collste (2015) says that locals are usually left in disarray by their colonial masters. As a result, people are detached from their identity as they are forced into the lifestyle of their foreign rulers. There is, in this sense, an erosion of cultural values. The bigger issue is that those who belong to high culture actually impose their will on those in the margins, thereby creating some sort of a moral divide. In the case of the Philippines, this is apparent in the “Manila versus Mindanao” and “Bisaya versus Tagalog” type of social division (Maboloc, 2017). Mindanao, in fact, has been viewed as the nexus of conflict and poverty. One of the reasons for this is the existence of illegal activities in the underground or shadow economy, including smuggling, narcotics, and other types of business that are led by syndicates (Lara, 2015). According to Lara (2015), these local criminal groups pay protection money to powerful political clans and the police. For instance, 12 municipalities in Lanao del Sur alone are involved in the business of illegal drugs (Muslim, 1999). The consequences of the illegal drug trade are well documented. The same results in communal decay and the rise of crimes. The illegal drug activities in the Bangsamoro contributes to the inability of the people to achieve real progress (Muslim, 1999).

From a global perspective, trade policies and barriers affect the economies of developing countries who cannot compete with affluent countries. Rich countries have the resources, power, and influence to control global trade. For Pogge (2007), such policies harm the poor. In our current situation, this is apparent in the new trade policies of US President Donald Trump, whose trade war is feared to cause a global recession. Philippine officials, however, downplayed such prognosis despite the fact that the US is imposing a 10% uniform tariff rate for all countries. According to Ryan Urbano (2008), Pogge wanted to extend the Rawlsian concept of distributive justice to the global arena. But the domestic scene is also problematic. Internal structural issues like weak government systems in healthcare and education also hound developing countries. In

the Bangsamoro, local conflicts between political clans also affect the people. Lara (2015) thinks that it is the underground economy that finances the illegal activities of big political clans. The reason is that they are using their positions to control the people and as a result, make state policies ineffective (Sidel, 1999).

The FGD in Cotabato City reveals that politics is being used to influence the economy of the Bangsamoro, with politicians and their family controlling the businesses in the region. According to one FGD participant, “politicians monopolize the distribution of commercial goods and basic commodities like rice and other agricultural products.” Upon analysis, this means that there is no market competition. The absence of the other options for both consumers implies that they are schemed by those who control the market. Many of the goods found in the market are also substandard. In addition, workers do not get to be paid the minimum wage. The problem is of course due to the lack of enforcement on the part of the authorities. As a result, the Bangsamoro is the poorest region in the entire Philippines. Such is a consequence of the social and political dynamics in the region. Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) show that the Bangsamoro has the highest poverty incidence in the country based on the available records from 2018, 2021, and 2023 (Figure 1).

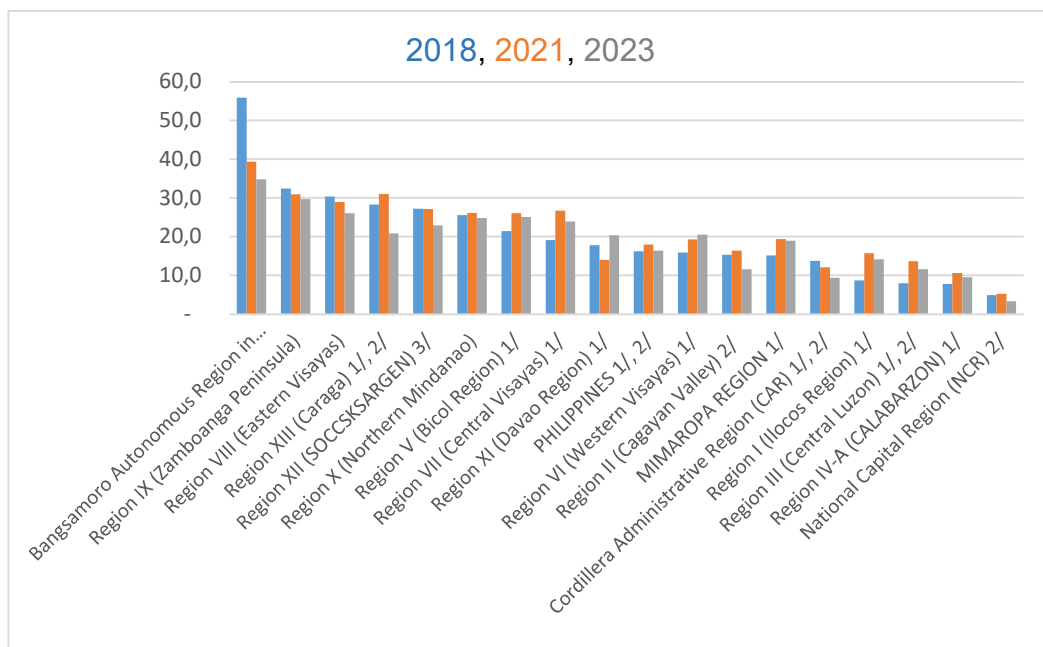


Figure 1. Poverty Incidence among Families, per Region (Source: PSA’s Preliminary, 2023)

A *World Bank Report* (2007) buttresses the above information, suggesting that “poverty is highest in conflict-affected areas. ARMM has the highest poverty incidence (59-18 % points higher than Mindanao as a whole). Municipal poverty incidence deteriorated in ARMM between 2003 and 2012, and is correlated with the incidence of rido, inter-clan feuds.” According to Pogge (2008), poverty is an “absolute evil” and for this reason, “poverty is a disease.” According to Lara (2015), “the origins of Mindanao’s informal economy can be traced to the nature of colonial state transition and transformation from Spanish to American, and from American to Commonwealth rule.” In particular, the Americans presented themselves as distinct from the Spanish regime. They imposed taxation and rules for land ownership. Lara (2015) says that “the

US colonial government changed the country’s fiscal and trade policies, placing landholdings under taxation and releasing restrictions on imports.”

The passage and implementation of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) in 2021 was seen as crucial for the development of Muslim Mindanao. Notably, with the implementation of the BOL, the rate of poverty incidence in the Bangsamoro will show a downward trend – from more than half of all the families in BARMM considered poor in 2018 (pre-BARMM) to merely a third of all the Bangsamoro families considered poor by 2023 (Table 2) The improvement in the income levels of families can be attributed to the resources being funneled into the region. Lara (2015) notes that the cycle of “bust and boom” are a result of intermittent conflicts. For instance, during Estrada’s “all-out-war,” money went into the Bangsamoro in the form of aid. But this type of progress is not sustainable and hides the evils of war. The BOL, meanwhile, empowers the local governments in the region to plan development projects and programs, control the way resources are budgeted and enable local entrepreneurs to put up business establishments and create employment opportunities. The same rests, of course, in the idea of good governance and empowering communities for them to enjoy the benefits of development and democracy. Such can only be grounded in the idea of inclusion and equal representation. While there is an improvement in family incomes in the Bangsamoro, the same is not much. Families are still in a precarious condition, especially with the unstable peace and order situation in the region because of election-related violence involving rival politicians.

Table 1. PSA’s data on Poverty Incidence in BARMM

Year	Per Capita Poverty Threshold in PhP	Poverty Incidence among Families in BARMM Estimates (%)
2018	P13,599 (\$238.5)	55.90%
2021	P14,126 (\$247.8)	39.41%
2023	P15,179 (\$266.3)	34.84%

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority (2023)

The Bangsamoro Region or BARMM has the lowest HDI scores in the Philippines from 2019-2022 (Table 2). The reason for this is the lack of political stability in the region. For the longest time, the image of Mindanao is that it is a war-torn area. The stories of beheadings by the Abu Sayyaf are prominent mass media stories that have defined the biases of people against Mindanao. As a result, the Bangsamoro region lacks enough opportunities to be able to provide good jobs to its inhabitants. In this way, some participants in the FGD in Zamboanga City believe that young men are lured into joining extremist groups, especially in the island provinces like Basilan and Sulu where members of the Abu Sayyaf remain. According to one participant, “the elders also encourage the young to join meetings that indoctrinate the latter.” This reality is a perennial threat to human security and well-being.

Politically, the reason for the difficult lives of the people is that cunning politicians control them (Teehankee, 2022). The repercussions are aplenty, including a high poverty incidence due to corruption, poor health, and the lack of access to good education. Young (1990) says that oppression results to the inability of a person to fully develop or even a society to flourish. Des Gasper (2004) identifies violence as one of the obstacles of human development. In the case of the Bangsamoro, the reality of power struggles between clans and political families contributes to the slow economic growth in the region. For instance, in the municipality of Buldon, Maguindanao, the local clan enjoys a sense of impunity (Lara 2015). In such a situation, the “rulers extend their legitimacy purely through their ability to inflict violence” (Lara 2015). Kreutzer (2005) says that “state rule in Muslim Mindanao depends on the use of violence.” Lara

(2015) adds that, “traditional legal authority and other political institutions are almost annihilated.”

Table 2. Human Development Index Philippines (By Region)

REGION	2019	2020	2021	2022
BARMM	0.611	0.610	0.606	0.629
Cordillera Region	0.740	0.732	0.719	0.738
I – Ilocos	0.740	0.732	0.719	0.738
II – Cagayan Valley	0.710	0.705	0.697	0.718
III – Central Luzon	0.729	0.720	0.707	0.725
IV-A - CALABARZON	0.734	0.723	0.708	0.723
IV-B – MIMAROPA	0.691	0.685	0.674	0.694
National Capital Region	0.765	0.750	0.731	0.743
V – Bicol	0.686	0.677	0.663	0.680
VI - Western Visayas	0.697	0.695	0.689	0.713
VII - Central Visayas	0.700	0.691	0.677	0.694
VIII - Eastern Visayas	0.698	0.690	0.678	0.696
IX – Zamboanga	0.681	0.671	0.658	0.674
X - Northern Mindanao	0.704	0.699	0.690	0.712
XI - Davao Region	0.704	0.698	0.688	0.708
XII - SOCCSKSARGEN	0.674	0.670	0.662	0.684
XIII – CARAGA	0.708	0.700	0.690	0.710

Source: Global Date Lab (2025).

The FGDs suggest that human destitution is due to powerlessness. Understanding poverty in this way is not just about advancing the rights of the poor. It is largely dependent on authentic democratic processes. One participant in the FGD held in Cotabato City says that “IPs lack representation in the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (the interim government in the BARMM).” Young (1990) suggests that unjust structures result to institutional failures. The poverty in the Bangsamoro, it can be argued, is not just because of the lack of autonomy of the people. It is actually rooted in an underground economic system in which power, money, and political influence make a mockery of democratic processes and as a result, the many people have remained poor. To explain this point, Lara (2015) mentions that President Ferdinand Marcos gave money and guns to political clans in the Bangsamoro, specifically the Dimaporos during the 70s, who used the same as an instrument to sustain their illegal business activities.

According to Lara (2015), the first warlord of Muslim Mindanao was Governor Datu Ali Dimaporo, who was the governor of Lanao del Sur from 1976-1986 (Lara, 2015). Dimaporo shaped the power dynamics of the region. Under President Marcos, Dimaporo delivered huge votes for the national coalition in exchange for concessions and weapons, which allowed him to continue his illicit activities, including smuggling, gun running, and illegal logging (Lara 2015). Dimaporo used the idea of Christian and Muslim conflict to advance his own personal interests (Lara, 2015). The “divide and conquer” principle enabled Dimaporo to maintain his total grip on power. When President Marcos was deposed, he intensified his attacks against his perceived enemies and killed their relatives to continue to project that he was still in control (Lara, 2015). During the time of President Marcos, he brokered arrangements for the late dictator. In exchange, he received funds for infrastructure projects, which became his main source of kickbacks.

Political clans also used the concept of modernisation (Lara, 2015). But the same is actually a cover-up for their real intent, which is corruption. Politicians get large kickbacks from projects (Laut et al., 2015). Decentralisation has been emphasised as the way forward to advance the economic development in Muslim Mindanao. However, while there has been continuous mass education, the region does not seem to get out of its difficult situation, despite billions of pesos being poured in terms of development aid. The reason is that the power dynamics in the Bangsamoro indicates the clans and political families are the ones who dictate the economic system in the region (Teehankee & Agoho, 2023). Governor Dimaporo, for instance, “ruled over a vast portion of Mindanao without the benefit of a regional administrative vehicle, building his political alliances by offering a link to national political elites” (Lara, 2015).

The predatory nature of the system works in a silent way (Sidel, 1999). The abuses by political clans and dynasties are hidden from the purview of civil society. Subtle ways of control and domination happen by means of bribery and various illegal activities that provide the local population with a source of income. As a result, the electorate appears to depend on political clans and families for protection (Lara, 2015). Young's (1990) concept of structural injustice captures how systems put people at a disadvantage. In the Bangsamoro, powerful politicians and families rule with impunity in their acts of abusing power and self-aggrandisement. For instance, Lara (2015) mentions that the Ampatuan clan “compelled other clans to negotiate alliances and arrangements with them, subjecting other strongmen and their clans to the dictates and authority of the Ampatuan clan in the resolution of inter and intra-clan violence.” The perpetuation of political dynasties is one of the main reasons why the Philippines is a basket case of democracy (Teehankee, 2016).

3.3. How Political Party Building can Level the Playing Field

On April 15, 2025, some areas in the Bangsamoro have been placed under the control of the Commission on Elections due to election-related violence. The same is reflective of the fact that some groups continue to use violence against their political enemies or threaten voters who do not support a particular candidate. The FGD in Cotabato City reveals that power play still epitomises the nature of the state in the Bangsamoro region, which is in danger of being put into the same cycle of violent conflicts if the government is not careful with its moves in the forthcoming 2025 Bangsamoro Parliamentary elections. One participant in the FGD share the sentiment that “the MILF might go back into their armed struggle if influential clans take control of the BARMM.” The promise of peace and equitable growth can die if traditional politics once again get in the way of the peace-building initiatives. This threat comes from political clans and dynasties, which can put their people into positions of power in the BARMM Parliament. Clans have become power brokers and mediators for national politicians who are greedy for power.

One of the approaches to realise human development in the Bangsamoro is by means of building political parties (Agoho & Teehankee, 2023). Political parties are seen as an alternative to political clans (Malaya, 2017). These parties are to be established from the ground up and will be developed on the basis of democratic principles and programs (Teehankee, 2022). In a way, real political parties give voice to the electorate and allow them to choose party candidates based on competence and good leadership qualities. While the same is ideal, it does not, however, have the force or strength to stop powerful dynasties from sabotaging the whole process. This is because the problem is not just about finding people who can run for office. It is about the political culture in the region. Since people remain economically dependent on political clans, the greed of powerful families will ultimately influence any electoral exercise. For

instance, traditional politicians finance the electoral campaigns of village officials to get their loyalty.

One of the biggest problems in Muslim Mindanao is that political families have their own private armies (Kreutzer, 2005). While there were efforts in the past to dismantle these militias, the same have persisted through the years. These groups are used by political warlords to secure perpetual power and, in the process, undermine the freedom of people and their opportunity to rise above the pangs of poverty. The FGD in Zamboanga City notes that “any progressive dialogue on development should focus into providing the needs of the people, including basic security against the threat of violence.” Political dynasties kill the economic as well as the political competition in the Bangsamoro. Powerful political clans such as the Ampatuans, Sinsuats, Mangundadatus, Dimaporos, among others, have been in power for decades. They control the local economy through proxies in whose names their businesses are registered. Julio Teehankee (2016) thinks that political dynasties are part of a corrupt system of politics in the Philippines where 72 out of the 81 provinces are dominated by powerful political families.

The Bangsamoro is poor because a feudal type of economy that still exists. In this regard, ordinary people are simply left behind in terms of the requirements for a decent and meaningful life. According to Benedict Bacani (2024), state building in the Bangsamoro should involve all people and not just two political parties. The National Government must provide opportunities for Muslim Mindanao to enjoy real autonomy. At present, the financial assistance program by the present Marcos government is nothing but a means of manipulating the poor masses in the region into voting for the candidates favoured by the administration in its desire to maintain its grip on power. Respecting the rights of people should be apparent in the building and empowerment of state institutions. Ordinary citizens must be allowed to voice their opinion and dissent on matters that have a direct impact on their well-being through their political parties. It is a question of choice and giving Muslim Filipinos their authentic autonomy by empowering them. This will require putting an end to the influence of political clans by means of building just and enforceable legal mechanisms.

Correcting the uneven structures in society is critical to democracy. The Muslim sultanates in the Bangsamoro before understand the sophisticated nature of governance (Gamas et al., 2017). It is the reason why they also had their laws and customs in the practice of governance. The same appears to have been distorted by the experience of colonialism. Colonialism simply made the state predatory. The nature of politics must be rectified. Progress can be incremental, according to Bacani (2024), but the same is nevertheless important. Reforms can be done by means of the establishment of principle-based grassroots political parties (Teehankee, 2022). Program-based politics should replace the predatory nature of money politics. Basic security is critical. With law and order, the region can attain an equitable type of growth. The inability of the Bangsamoro Government to expand the region’s economy can have dire consequences. Without jobs, young Moros will be tempted by the lure of money offered by kidnap-for-ransom groups. Development means jobs for the people and food on their table (Rasul, 2007). Levelling the playing field requires dismantling the mafia-like grip of political power players in the local economy so that the people can have real options in the type of leaders they desire and the kind of government that they truly deserve.

4. Conclusion

The ethical frameworks of Pogge and Young are important when it comes to poverty and development issues. Both share the same framework with respect to the institutional approach to the problem of poverty. Injustices are also a result of structural issues. Correcting the same

requires dismantling unjust systems and empowering people through laws and policy reforms. Muslim Mindanao had been excluded from the development agenda for the longest time and for this reason, it had been left behind in education, health care, and infrastructure. The absence of opportunities in the region came about because the necessary implements for economic growth and social development were largely absent. Clannish politics, *rido*, and crimes impede economic progress. Muslim Filipinos did not have the same opportunity for growth and professional advancement compared to the Christian majority. They had been wrongly labeled as violent and as a result, are unable to find meaningful employment.

The technical interpretation with respect to the problem of poverty has something to do with the lack of input and the inability of the economy to adjust to changing global trends. But beyond this technical explanation that suggests the backwardness of Muslim Mindanao, the poverty in the region is due to powerful clans that influence the power dynamics and political outcomes in the region. Meaningful autonomy is difficult to achieve because of the presence of political dynasties that control elections and as a consequence, undermine the choices and ultimately, the lives of ordinary people. The predatory nature of politics in Muslim Mindanao means that money, intimidation, and violence, have dictated the outcomes of political exercises and ergo, the situation of the polity. Such factors, both historical and structural in nature, can have a devastating impact on the lives of people who are forced into perpetual poverty.

The politics practised by Governor Ali Dimaporo exemplify the above claim. The Manila-centric approach in Philippine politics that concentrates development in the capital has isolated Muslim Filipinos. But it can be argued that, given the power dynamics in the country, the greatest risk in the Bangsamoro is the threat of political clans and families hijacking any type of progress brought about by the peace-building initiatives. In this way, structural reforms through political party building are critical. Ordinary people must be empowered in the Bangsamoro. Both Young and Pogge advocate for authentic democratic representation, which should come by means of inclusive policies that guarantee the basic human rights of the people. In this sense, there must be a levelling of the playing field in terms of the political choices and the economic opportunities of the people in the region if the power dynamics must be changed.

References

- Abinales, P. & Amoroso, D. (2005). *State and Society in the Philippines*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Abinales, P. (2000). *Making Mindanao: Cotabato and Davao in the Formation of the Nation State*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Press.
- Abinales, P. (2010). *Orthodoxy and History in the Muslim Mindanao Narrative*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- Asia Foundation. (2017). *The State of Conflict and Violence in Asia*. Retrieved from https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/The_State_of_Conflict_and_Violence_in_Asia-10.31.17.pdf
- Bacani, B. (2024). Panel on Domestic Resilience and Meaningful Autonomy in the BARMM. Public Forum on the 10th Anniversary of the Signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB). UP Diliman, Quezon City.
- Carlos, C. (2010). *Democratic Deficits in the Philippines*. Makati City: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.
- Charbonneau, O. (2020). *Civilizational Imperatives: Americans, Moros and the Colonial World*. New York: Cornell University Press.

- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing Grounded Theory* (2nd ed.). SAGE. Retrieved from <https://tinyurl.com/4p4udrrc>
- Collste, G. (2015). *Global Rectificatory Justice*. New York: Palgrave-Macmillan.
- Constantino, R. (1974). *The Philippines: A Past Revisited*. Manila: Tala Publications.
- Coronel, S., Chua, Y., Cruz, B. & Rimban, L. (2004). *The Rule-makers: How the wealthy and well-born dominate the Congress*. Quezon City: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism.
- Cullinane, M. (2003). *Ilustrado Politics*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- Diaz, P. (2005). *Understanding Mindanao Conflict*. Davao City: MindaNews Publication.
- Gamas, J.H., Limba, M., Villa, A., Cunanan, J. & Gloria, H. (2017). *Mindanao Muslim history: Documentary sources from the advent of Islam to the 1800s*. Ateneo de Davao University Publication Office.
- Gaspar, K. (2021). *Handumanan (Remembrance): Digging for the Indigenous Wellspring*. Quezon City: Claretian.
- Global Date Lab (2025). *Subnational Human Development Index Philippines*. Retrieved April 5, 2025. <https://globaldatalab.org/shdi/table/shdi/PHL/?levels=1+4&years=2022+2021+2020+2019&interpolation=0&extrapolation=0>
- Gloria, H. (2014). *History from Below*. Davao City: Research and Publication Office – Ateneo de Davao University.
- Gloria, H. (2018). *Injustice and Prejudice in the Philippine South*. Davao City: Ateneo de Davao University Publication Office.
- Hernandez, M.B. (2003). *The Philippines's Moro Conflict: The Problems and Prospect for Sustainable Peace*. Georgetown University: Master's Thesis.
- Hotchcroft, P. & Rocamora, J. (2003). Strong Demands and Weak Institutions. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 3(2), 259-292.
- Hunt, M. (2009). Strengths and Challenges in the Use of Interpretive Description: Reflections Arising from the Study of the Moral Experience of Health Professionals in Humanitarian Work. *Qualitative Health Research*, 19 (9), 1284-1292.
- Hutchcroft, P. (2016). The travails of promoting peace and prosperity in Mindanao. In P. D. Hutchcroft (Ed.), *Mindanao: The long journey to peace and prosperity* (pp. xiii–xxxii). Anvil Publishing.
- Jubair, S. (2007). *The Long Road to Peace*. Davao City: Institute of Bangsamoro Studies.
- Kreutzer, P. (2005). *Political Clans and Violence in Southern Philippines*. Frankfurt: Peace Research Institute Frankfurt.
- Lara, F. (2015). *Insurgents, Clans, and States: Political Legitimacy and Resurgent Conflict in Muslim Mindanao*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Press.
- Laut, A., Mariano, A., Ontolan, F.E., Aguado, C. & Ponce, S. (2015). Graft and Corruption Practices among Selected Officials in Mindanao. *Journal of Government and Politics*, 4(2), 229-243.
- Lingga, A.S. (2015). Building the Bangsamoro Government, In P. Hotchcroft (Ed.), *Mindanao: The Long Road to Peace and Prosperity*. Manila: Anvil.

- Maboloc, C.R. (2017). Situating the Mindanao Agenda in the Radical Politics of President Duterte. *IQRA: Journal of Al Qalam Institute*, 4, 1-25.
- Maboloc, C.R. (2024). Structural Injustice and Peacebuilding in the Bangsamoro. *Social Ethics Society Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Special Issue, 37-51.
- Maboloc, C.R. (2024). Syed Hussein Alatas and Karl Gaspar: Understanding Cultural Imperialism in Contemporary Philippine Society. *Philippine Sociological Review*, 70, 53-68.
- McCoy, A. (1988). Quezon's Commonwealth: The Emergence of Philippine Authoritarianism. In *Philippine Colonial Democracy*. Ruby Paredes (Ed.). New Haven: Yale Center for International and Areas Studies.
- McCoy, A. (2009). *An Anarchy of Families: State and Family in the Philippines*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- McKenna, T. (1998). *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Muslim, M. (1994). *The Moro Armed Struggle in the Philippines: The Non-Violent Autonomy Alternative*. Marawi City: Mindanao State University.
- Philippine Statistics Authority. (2020). Highlights of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Population 2020 Census. Retrieved from <https://psa.gov.ph/content/highlights-bangsamoro-autonomous-region-muslim-mindanao-barmm-population-2020-census>.
- Philippine Statistics Authority. (2023). Preliminary 1st Sem Poverty Statistics Table. Retrieved from <https://psa.gov.ph/statistics/poverty/stat-tables>
- Pogge, T. (2007). Severe Poverty as a Human Rights Violation. In T. Pogge (Ed.), *Freedom from Poverty as a Human Right*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pogge, T. (2008). *World Poverty and Human Rights*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Rasul, A. (2007). *Broken Peace: Assessing the 1996 GRP-MILF Final Peace Agreement*. Makati: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.
- Schiavo-Campo, S. & Judd, M. (2005). The Mindanao Conflict in the Philippines: Roots, Costs, and Potential Peace Dividend. *Social Development Papers: Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction*, 24.
- Sen, A. (2000). *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sidel, J. (1999). *Capital, Coercion and Crime: Bossism in the Philippines*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Teehankee, J. & Agoho, K.N. (2023). Politics of Ideas and Discourses: Understanding the Ideational and Discursive Struggles in the Formation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. *Asia Pacific Social Sciences Review* 23 (2), 1-13.
- Teehankee, J. (2016). Duterte's Resurgent Nationalism in the Philippines: A Discursive Institutional Analysis. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 35(3), 69-89.
- Teehankee, J. (2022). Introduction: Dissecting Patronage Democracy in the Philippines. In J. Teehankee (Ed.), *Patronage Democracy in the Philippines: Clans, Clients and Competition in Local Elections*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Press.
- Urbano, R. (2008). *Global Poverty as a Moral Problem: Thomas Pogge on Global Justice and Human Rights*. Master's Thesis. Linköping University, Sweden.
- World Bank Report. (2017). *Philippines Mindanao Report: A Strategy of Mindanao Development*. Retrieved from

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/395661498616337079/117354-REVISED-PUBLIC-Philippines-Jobs-Report-FINAL.pdf>

- Yoshizawa, A. & Kusaka, W. (2020). The Arts of Everyday Peacebuilding: Cohabitation, Conversion and Inter-marriage of Muslim and Christians in Southern Philippines. *Southeast Asian Studies Journal*, 9(1), 67-97.
- Young, I.M. (1990). *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Young, I.M. (2002). The Five Faces of Oppression. In Mappes, T. & Zembaty, J. (Eds.), *Social Ethics: Morality and Social Policy*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Young, I.M. (2011). *Responsibility for Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Appendix: FGD Questions

1. Do you know the role of the Bangsamoro government in terms of poverty alleviation?
2. What kind of programs does the Bangsamoro have to address poverty?
3. Have these programs or projects reached your community?
4. What do you think are the reasons why people are poor?
5. Do you know of influential politicians or political clans in your city or municipality?
6. What type of risks do they have in terms of the welfare of people?
7. Do you feel included in terms of the programs and projects of the government?
8. How are you treated as a Muslim or as an Indigenous Person in your place of work or school?
9. What are the difficulties that you have experienced as a Muslim or as an Indigenous Person?
10. Are there threats in your communities in terms of human security?
11. What are these threats, if any?
12. What are your aspirations for the Bangsamoro as a region in terms of human development?
13. What is your concept of peace?
14. What are the threats to peacebuilding in your community? In the Bangsamoro?
15. Do you feel that the Bangsamoro government is able to redistribute resources to all sectors in the Bangsamoro?
16. Do you think that there are good laws and right policies in the Bangsamoro that can help address the problem of poverty?
17. What do you think are the present dangers in the Bangsamoro region?
18. Do you feel that some sectors or people in the Bangsamoro are excluded in terms of the governance of the Bangsamoro?
19. What types of reforms do you think are needed in the Bangsamoro government?
20. Do you think these reforms can translate to the realisation of the goals of the Bangsamoro government in the pursuit of peace and harmony in society?