

Alternative Dispute Resolution Awareness, Accessibility, and Utilization among Justice Stakeholders

Sherwin H. Pinalgan^{1*} and Glenda G. Mina^{1,2}

¹Northeastern College

*shpinalgan14@gmail.com, ²minaglenda@yahoo.com

Date Submitted:
January 19, 2026

Date Accepted:
March 25, 2026

Date Published:
July 08, 2026

DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.21253336

ABSTRACT

This study investigated how justice stakeholders in Quirino Province understood, accessed, and utilized Alternative Dispute Resolution as a practical pathway for resolving suitable disputes outside full adversarial proceedings. Using a cross-sectional explanatory pathway design with construct validation and utilization mapping, the study measured ADR awareness, accessibility, and utilization through a validated researcher-developed instrument. The findings showed that ADR awareness was very high, indicating strong stakeholder familiarity with ADR modes, principles, benefits, and appropriate referral. ADR accessibility was also rated high, although minor concerns were noted in referral clarity, availability of public information, and procedural convenience. ADR utilization remained

favorable, particularly in encouraging settlement and referring parties to appropriate mechanisms, but slightly lower scores were observed in settlement documentation, post-settlement follow-through, and compliance monitoring. Structural model results confirmed that ADR awareness significantly influenced accessibility and utilization, while accessibility exerted a stronger direct effect on utilization. The mediation result further showed that awareness improved utilization partly by strengthening access conditions. Importance-performance analysis identified referral flow, settlement documentation, follow-through, public information, and compliance monitoring as priority areas for improvement. The study concludes that ADR practice in Quirino Province is positively established among justice stakeholders, but its continued effectiveness requires stronger procedural systems, capacity-building, coordinated referral mechanisms, and simple monitoring tools to ensure that settlement efforts lead to dependable justice outcomes.

Keywords: *accessibility, ADR awareness, alternative dispute resolution, justice stakeholders, utilization*

INTRODUCTION

Disputes are part of ordinary public life. They may arise from family concerns, neighborhood misunderstandings, property issues, workplace relations, business transactions, barangay matters, or complaints involving public services. When these conflicts are brought at once to formal litigation, the process may become costly, time-consuming, and emotionally difficult for the parties. Alternative Dispute Resolution, or ADR, responds to this concern by offering processes such as mediation, conciliation, arbitration, and other settlement-oriented methods that allow disputing parties to reach fair and practical solutions without immediately going through a full court trial. In current justice reform discussions, ADR is not treated as a lesser form of justice, but as a necessary pathway for making justice more accessible, especially for communities where distance, cost, delay, and lack of information can discourage people from pursuing remedies. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development explained that people-centred justice requires the whole justice system, including

courts, justice ministries, police, prisons, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, and other service providers, to be guided by the actual needs of people who seek justice (OECD, 2025). This view gives importance to ADR not only as a legal option, but also as a practical service that should be known, reachable, and trusted by the public.

In the Philippines, ADR has become closely connected with the broader effort to improve access to justice and reduce the burden of formal adjudication. The Philippine Development Plan 2023–2028 recognizes that an efficient administration of justice is necessary for public trust, and that a stable and accountable justice system, whether traditional or alternative, must be marked by integrity, fairness, and accessibility (National Economic and Development Authority [NEDA], 2023). The same plan specifically calls for advancing ADR mechanisms at all levels, including capacity-building and advocacy programs through the Office for Alternative Dispute Resolution, and the strengthening of ADR in both public and private sectors (NEDA, 2023). These directions show that ADR awareness and utilization are not merely technical concerns for lawyers and mediators. They are public governance concerns because they affect how citizens, barangay officials, law enforcers, court personnel, prosecutors, public attorneys, private practitioners, and local officials understand and use peaceful methods of dispute settlement.

The judiciary has also continued to promote dispute resolution mechanisms that can help resolve cases more efficiently. The Supreme Court of the Philippines, through its Strategic Plan for Judicial Innovations 2022–2027, placed court reform within the constitutional mandate to deliver speedy and equal justice for all (Supreme Court of the Philippines, 2022). In civil cases, the 2020 Guidelines for Court-Annexed Mediation and Judicial Dispute Resolution identify the cases that may be referred to mediation and judicial dispute resolution, and set procedures for their conduct before the courts (Supreme Court of the Philippines, 2021). More recently, the Supreme Court stated that mediation can complement efforts to decongest court dockets, especially when parties are guided toward settlement in appropriate disputes (Supreme Court of the Philippines, 2024). These developments indicate that ADR is not outside the justice system. Rather, it works alongside courts, barangays, and other justice institutions to encourage faster, less adversarial, and more participatory conflict resolution.

At the community level, the Katarungang Pambarangay remains one of the most familiar forms of local dispute resolution in the Philippines. The Ateneo Human Rights Center described Katarungang Pambarangay as a community-based mechanism administered through the barangay, where the Punong Barangay, Lupong Tagapamayapa, and Pangkat ng Tagapagkasundo assist parties in resolving disputes through mediation, conciliation, and related settlement processes (Ateneo Human Rights Center [AHRC], 2023). The same report noted that this system is intended to provide speedy, accessible, and inexpensive justice without the immediate need for formal court proceedings, yet it also identified continuing access-to-justice gaps, especially among poor and disadvantaged groups (AHRC, 2023). This makes awareness, accessibility, and utilization important areas for research. A justice mechanism may exist in law and policy, but it may still remain underused if people do not know when to use it, where to go, whom to approach, what procedures to follow, or whether the process will be fair.

The need to study ADR becomes more meaningful in a provincial context such as Quirino. The Philippine Statistics Authority reported that Quirino Province had a total population of 210,841 as of the 2024 Census of Population, with six municipalities and 132 barangays (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2025). This local setting suggests a justice environment where formal institutions, barangay justice structures, law enforcement offices, local government units, and community-based actors may all play roles in resolving disputes. In provinces where communities are spread across municipalities and barangays, accessibility is not limited to the physical presence of courts or offices. It also includes the availability of information, the competence of frontline justice workers, the clarity of referral systems, the affordability of the process, the public's confidence in neutral settlement, and the willingness of justice stakeholders to encourage ADR when it is appropriate.

Despite policy support, the actual use of ADR still depends heavily on the awareness and behavior of justice stakeholders. The World Justice Project continues to show that civil justice remains a difficult area for many jurisdictions, including the Philippines, because access, affordability, delay, and effectiveness remain important measures of how people experience justice (World Justice Project, 2025). National policy also tracks ADR settlement rates through Katarungang Pambarangay, judiciary-based ADR, and executive branch ADR,

which means utilization is now treated as a measurable part of justice performance (NEDA, 2023). However, statistics alone do not fully explain whether justice stakeholders understand ADR, whether the process is truly accessible to users, and whether local actors actively refer, support, or use ADR in real disputes. These concerns point to a research gap that is both practical and policy-relevant.

The study focuses on three connected concerns. Awareness refers to how justice stakeholders understand ADR concepts, procedures, benefits, limitations, and available mechanisms. Accessibility refers to the extent to which ADR services are physically, financially, procedurally, and informationally reachable to those who need them. Utilization refers to the actual use, referral, promotion, and acceptance of ADR in resolving disputes. By examining these areas among justice stakeholders in Quirino Province, the study can provide grounded evidence on how ADR is understood and practiced at the local level. It may also help identify areas where information campaigns, training, referral systems, stakeholder coordination, and community-based justice services can be strengthened so that ADR becomes not only a formal legal option, but a meaningful and trusted pathway to justice.

Literature Review

ADR Awareness as Legal Literacy among Justice Stakeholders

Awareness of Alternative Dispute Resolution is best understood as more than simple familiarity with the term. It includes knowing the available modes, the proper disputes for referral, the rights of parties, the limits of settlement, the role of the neutral facilitator, and the value of confidentiality and voluntary participation. Sandefur (2019) argued that access to justice should not be reduced to access to lawyers or courts, since many justice problems require lawful and practical resolution through institutions that people can understand and approach. This is consistent with the finding of the Task Force on Justice (2019) that everyday justice problems often involve land, housing, neighbors, family, money, employment, business, and public service concerns. For justice stakeholders in Quirino Province, awareness therefore becomes a professional and community responsibility. When barangay officials, police officers, court personnel, prosecutors, lawyers, public attorneys, local officials, and community leaders have clear knowledge of ADR, they are more capable of guiding disputing parties toward remedies that are appropriate, less intimidating, and less costly than immediate litigation.

Accessibility of ADR as a People-Centered Justice Pathway

Accessibility in ADR refers to the actual ability of parties and stakeholders to reach and use dispute resolution services without unnecessary barriers. These barriers may include lack of information, distance from justice offices, cost of transportation, unclear procedures, fear of bias, language difficulty, weak referral systems, or limited confidence in local dispute handlers. The United Nations Development Programme (2022) treated access to justice as a concern that must include community-level mechanisms, informal or traditional processes, legal empowerment, and institutional capacity, while also emphasizing the need to protect human rights in the use of alternative or informal dispute resolution mechanisms. Sandefur and Burnett (2022) likewise emphasized that access-to-justice research must be people-centered and must generate evidence that can guide practical reforms, not only theoretical discussions. In the context of Quirino Province, ADR accessibility should therefore be examined not only by asking whether ADR services exist, but also whether justice stakeholders can explain them clearly, refer people properly, and make the process reachable to residents across municipalities and barangays.

Institutional Legitimacy, Fairness, and Enforceability of ADR

ADR gains public acceptance when people see it as fair, orderly, and connected to the rule of law. The United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (2018) recognized mediation as a process that benefits from clear procedural rules, confidentiality safeguards, and predictable treatment of settlement agreements. The Singapore Convention on Mediation, adopted in 2018, also strengthened the international view that mediated settlements can be treated as serious and enforceable outcomes in appropriate commercial disputes (United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, 2018). At the same time, the European Network of Councils for the Judiciary (2017) cautioned that court-related ADR must remain consistent with access to justice, due process,

and the right to trial without undue delay. These points are important for the present study because justice stakeholders do not only promote ADR. They also shape whether parties trust the process. In Quirino Province, legitimacy may depend on whether ADR is explained as voluntary, impartial, properly documented, and suitable to the nature of the dispute.

ADR Utilization, Capacity, and Stakeholder Coordination

Utilization refers to the actual use, referral, support, and acceptance of ADR in real justice situations. It is influenced by the knowledge, confidence, training, coordination, and institutional habits of justice stakeholders. In the Philippine labor dispute system, the International Labour Organization (2022) reported that conciliation, mediation, and voluntary arbitration form part of the country's dispute resolution structure, but it also noted uneven knowledge and use of relevant rules among stakeholders, particularly in relation to voluntary arbitration. The same assessment stressed that effectiveness depends on institutional capacity, authority, fairness, timely disposition, and implementation of settlements or decisions. Stipanowich and Fraser (2017) also observed that dispute resolution practice increasingly involves interaction among mediation, evaluation, arbitration, and other settlement-oriented methods, which requires trained actors who understand when and how each process should be used. For Quirino Province, ADR utilization may therefore depend on whether stakeholders merely know ADR in principle or actively apply it through proper referral, case screening, documentation, follow-up, and inter-office coordination.

METHODS

Research Design

The study used a cross-sectional explanatory pathway design with construct validation and utilization mapping. This design was appropriate because the study did not merely describe the level of ADR awareness, accessibility, and utilization among justice stakeholders. It also examined how awareness and accessibility contributed to ADR utilization and identified which areas had the strongest practical value for improving local ADR practice. The design was quantitative in structure, but it gave attention to the pathway among the main constructs so that the findings could support policy, training, and service improvement decisions.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in Quirino Province, with attention to justice-related settings where dispute intake, referral, advice, settlement, enforcement support, and public assistance were commonly encountered. The locale was suitable because ADR practice in a provincial setting involved several points of contact, including community-based dispute mechanisms, law enforcement desks, legal assistance offices, court-related processes, local government units, and other justice-linked offices. The province provided a meaningful setting for examining whether ADR was understood, reachable, and actually used by those who had roles in guiding disputing parties.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The participants were justice stakeholders in Quirino Province who had direct or related involvement in dispute handling, referral, legal assistance, mediation, conciliation, settlement documentation, public safety, or community justice work. The study used stakeholder-domain stratified sampling with purposive eligibility screening and random selection within each eligible group. First, stakeholder domains were identified based on their connection to ADR-related functions. Second, only those whose duties or professional exposure were relevant to dispute resolution were included in the sampling frame. Third, participants were selected within the eligible domains to lessen overrepresentation from only one office or sector. No respondent profile variables were treated as part of the study.

Research Instrument

The study used a researcher-developed ADR Stakeholder Survey that measured three constructs: ADR awareness, ADR accessibility, and ADR utilization. The awareness section covered knowledge of ADR modes, procedures, benefits, limitations, confidentiality, neutrality, and appropriate referral. The accessibility section covered availability of information, office reachability, clarity of process, affordability, referral convenience, and stakeholder assistance. The utilization section covered actual use, referral behavior, encouragement of settlement, documentation, follow-through, and confidence in recommending ADR when proper. The instrument used a Likert-type response format and did not gather personal profile information.

Before the main data gathering, the instrument underwent content validation by experts in law, ADR practice, public administration, and research methods. The validators reviewed the tool for relevance, clarity, legal appropriateness, ethical sensitivity, and alignment with the title and variables. The computed scale-level content validity index was 0.96, which indicated strong content validity. A pilot test was then conducted among justice-related personnel outside the main locale who had similar exposure to dispute resolution work but were not part of the main respondents. The pilot results showed strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.91 for ADR awareness, 0.89 for ADR accessibility, 0.93 for ADR utilization, and 0.94 for the whole instrument. Based on the pilot comments, several items were refined for clearer wording, but the original construct coverage was retained.

Data Gathering

The researcher first secured the needed approvals from the concerned offices and coordinated with authorized representatives in the identified justice-related settings. After permission was granted, the purpose of the study, voluntary nature of participation, expected time for answering, and confidentiality safeguards were explained to the participants. The survey was administered in a manner that avoided disruption of official duties. Completed instruments were checked for completeness, encoded, and screened for inconsistent or unusable responses. Only responses that met the inclusion criteria and data quality requirements were included in the final analysis.

Data Analysis

The study used Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling with Importance-Performance Map Analysis as the main statistical treatment. This approach was selected because the study involved related latent constructs and aimed to determine which areas had the strongest influence on ADR utilization. Descriptive results were first presented through weighted item performance scores, medians, and interquartile ranges to respect the ordered nature of the survey responses. The measurement model was then assessed through indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The structural model examined the predictive paths from ADR awareness and ADR accessibility to ADR utilization using bootstrapped estimates, confidence intervals, effect sizes, and predictive relevance. Finally, Importance-Performance Map Analysis was used to identify priority areas where improvement would likely produce the greatest increase in ADR utilization. This was appropriate because the study needed both statistical explanation and practical guidance for justice-sector improvement.

Ethical Consideration

The study observed voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and responsible handling of data. Participants were informed that they could decline or withdraw without penalty. No names, personal identifiers, case details, pending dispute information, or sensitive legal narratives were collected. The responses were used only for research purposes and were reported in summarized form. The researcher also avoided questions that could pressure participants to disclose confidential office records, privileged communications, or details of actual cases. All encoded data were kept securely, and access was limited to the researcher and authorized research personnel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. *Reliability and Convergent Validity of the Measurement Model*

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	ρ_A	Composite Reliability	AVE	Indicator Loading Range	Interpretation
ADR Awareness	0.912	0.918	0.931	0.601	0.721 to 0.846	Reliable and valid
ADR Accessibility	0.895	0.904	0.917	0.578	0.694 to 0.831	Reliable and valid
ADR Utilization	0.927	0.932	0.939	0.608	0.708 to 0.865	Reliable and valid
Whole Instrument	0.947	0.951	0.958	0.596	0.694 to 0.865	Highly reliable

The measurement model showed acceptable reliability and convergent validity for all constructs used in the study. The Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.895 to 0.927, while the whole instrument obtained a Cronbach's alpha of 0.947. These results indicated that the items under ADR awareness, ADR accessibility, and ADR utilization consistently measured their respective domains. The reliability values also suggested that the survey items were internally coherent, meaning that the indicators under each construct worked together as a unified measure rather than as unrelated statements.

The composite reliability values were also strong, ranging from 0.917 to 0.939. This confirmed that the constructs were dependable for structural analysis. The average variance extracted values exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.50, with ADR awareness recording 0.601, ADR accessibility recording 0.578, and ADR utilization recording 0.608. These values showed that each construct explained more than half of the variance of its indicators. In practical terms, the survey items were not only reliable but also sufficiently representative of the concepts being measured.

The indicator loading ranges further supported the quality of the measurement model. Although a few indicators under accessibility had comparatively lower loadings, none of them fell to a level that required removal. This was expected because accessibility is usually affected by several external conditions, such as office location, clarity of referral, availability of trained personnel, and the ability of parties to understand procedures. The overall result confirmed that the instrument was statistically suitable for examining the relationship among awareness, accessibility, and utilization of ADR among justice stakeholders in Quirino Province.

Table 2. *Discriminant Validity Using HTMT Criterion*

Construct Pair	HTMT Value	Interpretation
ADR Awareness and ADR Accessibility	0.724	Discriminant validity established
ADR Awareness and ADR Utilization	0.683	Discriminant validity established
ADR Accessibility and ADR Utilization	0.746	Discriminant validity established

The HTMT results confirmed that the three constructs were related but still distinct from one another. ADR awareness and ADR accessibility obtained an HTMT value of 0.724, which indicated that stakeholders who had better knowledge of ADR also tended to perceive ADR services as more accessible. However, the value did not suggest that the two constructs were identical. Awareness referred mainly to knowledge, understanding, and recognition of ADR processes, while accessibility referred to the actual reachability of ADR services and procedures.

The HTMT value between ADR awareness and ADR utilization was 0.683. This result showed that awareness had a meaningful connection with utilization, but knowledge alone did not completely explain actual use. A justice stakeholder may understand ADR but may not always refer, recommend, or apply it if there are procedural barriers, lack of confidence, unclear coordination, or limited follow-through mechanisms. This

distinction was important because the study did not assume that knowing ADR automatically led to regular utilization.

The relationship between ADR accessibility and ADR utilization obtained the highest HTMT value at 0.746, but it remained within the acceptable range. This indicated that accessibility and utilization were strongly connected but still separate constructs. The finding was reasonable because stakeholders were more likely to use or recommend ADR when the process was easy to access, clear, affordable, and institutionally supported. Overall, the discriminant validity results strengthened the credibility of the measurement model and supported the continuation of the analysis using PLS-SEM.

Table 3. *Level of ADR Awareness among Justice Stakeholders*

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Median	IQR	Interpretation
Understanding of ADR as a lawful option for dispute settlement	4.44	4.00	1.00	Very High
Familiarity with mediation, conciliation, and arbitration	4.31	4.00	1.00	Very High
Awareness of disputes that may be referred to ADR	4.23	4.00	1.00	Very High
Knowledge of the role of neutral facilitators	4.29	4.00	1.00	Very High
Awareness of confidentiality in ADR proceedings	4.25	4.00	1.00	Very High
Understanding of voluntary participation in ADR	4.33	4.00	1.00	Very High
Awareness of the limits of ADR in disputes requiring formal adjudication	4.12	4.00	1.00	High
Understanding of settlement documentation and enforceability	4.09	4.00	1.00	High
Overall	4.26	4.00	1.00	Very High

The findings showed that ADR awareness among justice stakeholders in Quirino Province was generally very high, with an overall weighted mean of 4.26. This result suggested that the participants had strong recognition of ADR as a legitimate and useful mechanism for resolving disputes. The highest mean was recorded for understanding ADR as a lawful option for dispute settlement. This indicated that ADR was not viewed merely as an informal arrangement or a casual compromise, but as a recognized process within the broader justice system.

The stakeholders also showed very high familiarity with mediation, conciliation, and arbitration. This finding was encouraging because these are among the most common ADR modes that justice stakeholders may encounter in barangay, administrative, court-annexed, community, labor, commercial, and institutional settings. Their high level of familiarity suggested that justice-related personnel and community actors had a working understanding of how disputes may be resolved outside full adversarial proceedings. This is important in a provincial setting where many disputes may be handled first through community-based or office-based interventions before reaching formal litigation.

However, two indicators received slightly lower, although still positive, results. These were awareness of the limits of ADR in disputes requiring formal adjudication and understanding of settlement documentation and enforceability. This pattern showed a small but important concern. Stakeholders appeared to understand the general nature and benefits of ADR, but they were slightly less confident in determining when ADR should not be used or how settlement outcomes should be documented and enforced. This matters because inappropriate referral to ADR may weaken the rights of parties, especially in disputes involving serious legal violations, power imbalance, coercion, or matters that require formal court determination.

The findings therefore presented a positive but realistic picture. Awareness was already strong, but it was not perfectly complete. The areas needing refinement were not basic knowledge areas, but more technical aspects of practice. These included case suitability, legal limits, documentation, and enforceability. For Quirino Province, this suggests that future ADR training should move beyond general orientation and focus more on practical decision-making. Stakeholders may benefit from case-screening guides, referral checklists, settlement documentation templates, and short training modules on disputes that should be excluded from ADR or referred directly to formal justice channels.

Table 4. *Level of ADR Accessibility among Justice Stakeholders*

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Median	IQR	Interpretation
ADR services were reachable through known offices or community channels	4.18	4.00	1.00	High
Stakeholders could identify where parties should be referred for ADR	4.11	4.00	1.00	High
Information about ADR procedures was available to concerned parties	3.92	4.00	1.00	High
ADR procedures were explained in a manner understandable to ordinary citizens	3.98	4.00	1.00	High
Cost and transportation concerns did not heavily discourage ADR participation	3.86	4.00	1.00	High
Referral steps between offices were clear and convenient	3.79	4.00	1.00	High
Trained personnel were available to assist parties in ADR-related concerns	4.02	4.00	1.00	High
Parties could access ADR without fear of bias or intimidation	4.03	4.00	1.00	High
Overall	3.99	4.00	1.00	High

The accessibility of ADR services was rated high, with an overall weighted mean of 3.99. This indicated that justice stakeholders perceived ADR mechanisms in Quirino Province as generally reachable and available to parties who needed them. The result was positive because accessibility is a necessary link between awareness and actual use. Even when stakeholders know ADR, it cannot become a practical justice pathway if offices, referral channels, information materials, and trained personnel are not accessible to the public.

The highest mean was observed in the indicator stating that ADR services were reachable through known offices or community channels. This suggested that the justice environment in the province had identifiable entry points where parties could ask for assistance. These entry points may include barangay offices, law enforcement stations, local government offices, court-related desks, legal assistance offices, or other public service channels connected to dispute handling. The result implied that the presence of local institutions helped make ADR visible and reachable.

Nevertheless, the lowest mean was recorded for the clarity and convenience of referral steps between offices. Although still interpreted as high, this indicator showed that referral coordination remained a practical weakness. Stakeholders may have known that ADR was available, but the actual movement of a dispute from one office to another may not always have been smooth. Parties could still experience uncertainty about which office to approach first, what documents to prepare, whether the matter should go to barangay conciliation, mediation, court-annexed processes, or another dispute resolution body, and who should follow up the referral.

Another area that required attention was the availability of information about ADR procedures. The score remained positive, but it was lower than the strongest indicators. This suggested that information may have been available through personal explanation, but less consistently through visible, written, or standardized materials. In practice, accessibility improves when the public does not depend only on verbal instructions. Posters, flowcharts, brochures, referral guides, online posts, and simple local-language explanations can reduce confusion and prevent parties from abandoning settlement options.

The overall result showed that ADR accessibility in Quirino Province was functional but not yet fully optimized. The problem was not absence of access, but uneven ease of access. Justice stakeholders seemed able to guide parties, but the system still needed clearer pathways, better public information, and stronger coordination among offices. Small administrative improvements could therefore produce meaningful gains. These may include a provincial ADR referral map, unified intake guide, directory of ADR contact points, and orientation sessions for frontline staff who often receive public inquiries.

Table 5. *Level of ADR Utilization among Justice Stakeholders*

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Median	IQR	Interpretation
Stakeholders encouraged ADR when the dispute was suitable for settlement	4.09	4.00	1.00	High
ADR was recommended before resorting to formal adversarial proceedings when proper	4.02	4.00	1.00	High
Parties were referred to appropriate ADR or settlement channels	3.96	4.00	1.00	High
ADR was used to reduce unnecessary escalation of community or institutional disputes	3.94	4.00	1.00	High
Stakeholders assisted parties in understanding settlement options	3.91	4.00	1.00	High
Settlement discussions were documented when required	3.74	4.00	1.00	High
Follow-through was conducted after settlement or referral	3.62	4.00	1.00	High
Stakeholders monitored whether parties complied with settlement terms	3.55	4.00	1.00	High
Overall	3.85	4.00	1.00	High

The level of ADR utilization was high, with an overall weighted mean of 3.85. This finding indicated that justice stakeholders in Quirino Province did not only know ADR but also used, recommended, or supported it in appropriate situations. The highest indicator was the encouragement of ADR when the dispute was suitable for settlement. This suggested that stakeholders generally recognized the value of non-adversarial dispute resolution and were willing to promote peaceful settlement when the circumstances allowed it.

The high rating for recommending ADR before resorting to formal adversarial proceedings also reflected a positive practice. This is important because many disputes may be resolved more efficiently when parties are given a fair opportunity to communicate, clarify concerns, and reach an agreement. In a provincial justice setting, this can reduce unnecessary escalation, lessen emotional strain among disputing parties, and help preserve relationships within communities. It may also reduce pressure on formal justice institutions by filtering disputes that can be settled through appropriate alternative channels.

However, the utilization results were lower than the awareness results. This pattern revealed the central issue of the study. Stakeholders were knowledgeable about ADR, and they perceived it as accessible, but actual use was slightly less consistent. The lower scores were found in settlement documentation, follow-through, and monitoring of compliance. These indicators pointed to a practical gap between recommending ADR and ensuring that the outcome was properly completed. In many justice processes, the success of ADR does not end when parties agree. It also requires clear documentation, proper recording, communication of responsibilities, and follow-up when needed.

The lowest mean was recorded for monitoring whether parties complied with settlement terms. Although the result was still high, it suggested that post-settlement follow-up was not always systematic. This is a realistic challenge because justice stakeholders may have limited time, office resources, or authority to monitor every agreement after settlement. Some offices may also consider a case resolved once the parties sign or verbally accept an agreement. However, weak monitoring may allow unresolved tensions to return, especially when one party fails to comply with the settlement terms.

Overall, the utilization results were positive but showed that ADR practice in Quirino Province still needed small but important improvements. The issue was not resistance to ADR. Rather, the issue concerned consistency, documentation, follow-through, and compliance monitoring. These are operational concerns that can be addressed through standardized forms, referral logs, settlement tracking, inter-office reporting, and periodic review of unresolved or recurring disputes. Strengthening these areas can help transform ADR from an available option into a more dependable justice pathway.

Table 6. *Structural Model Results on the Pathways among ADR Awareness, Accessibility, and Utilization*

Path	Beta	Standard Error	t-value	p-value	95% Confidence Interval	Effect Size f^2	Interpretation
ADR Awareness to ADR Accessibility	0.626	0.061	10.262	<0.001	0.507 to 0.739	0.645	Large positive effect
ADR Awareness to ADR Utilization	0.312	0.064	4.875	<0.001	0.188 to 0.431	0.127	Small to moderate positive effect
ADR Accessibility to ADR Utilization	0.482	0.066	7.303	<0.001	0.355 to 0.606	0.302	Moderate positive effect
ADR Awareness to ADR Utilization through ADR Accessibility	0.302	0.052	5.808	<0.001	0.207 to 0.408	Not applicable	Significant indirect effect

The structural model confirmed that ADR awareness, accessibility, and utilization were meaningfully connected. ADR awareness had a large positive effect on ADR accessibility, with a beta coefficient of 0.626. This finding indicated that stakeholders who had stronger understanding of ADR were also more likely to perceive ADR processes as accessible. This may be because knowledgeable stakeholders can identify appropriate offices, explain procedures more clearly, and guide parties toward the proper dispute resolution channel. In other words, awareness did not only improve personal understanding. It also strengthened the ability of stakeholders to make ADR more reachable to others.

ADR awareness also had a direct positive effect on ADR utilization, with a beta coefficient of 0.312. This showed that stakeholders who understood ADR were more likely to use, recommend, or refer parties to ADR mechanisms. However, the effect size was only small to moderate. This is an important result because it showed that awareness alone was not enough to produce the highest level of utilization. A stakeholder may understand ADR well, but if referral pathways are unclear, trained personnel are limited, information is not readily available, or post-settlement processes are weak, actual utilization may still remain lower than expected.

ADR accessibility had a stronger direct effect on ADR utilization, with a beta coefficient of 0.482. This was one of the most important findings of the study. It suggested that utilization was more strongly influenced by whether ADR was practical and reachable than by awareness alone. When stakeholders perceived the process as accessible, understandable, affordable, coordinated, and safe, they were more likely to use or recommend ADR. This finding showed that ADR promotion should not be limited to information campaigns. It should also improve the working conditions that allow ADR to be used in real disputes.

The indirect effect of ADR awareness on ADR utilization through ADR accessibility was also significant, with a beta coefficient of 0.302. This indicated partial mediation. In practical terms, awareness improved utilization partly because it improved accessibility. Stakeholders who understood ADR were better positioned to explain it, refer parties properly, and reduce barriers to participation. However, because the direct effect of awareness on utilization remained significant, awareness still had its own independent contribution.

These results provided a realistic explanation of ADR practice in Quirino Province. The province appeared to have knowledgeable justice stakeholders, but actual utilization depended heavily on how accessible and convenient the process was. The findings suggested that improving utilization requires a two-level approach. The first level is strengthening knowledge, especially technical knowledge on case suitability, documentation, and enforceability. The second level is improving access conditions, including referral clarity, trained personnel, public information, and post-settlement support. The stronger role of accessibility also explained why utilization was positive but slightly lower than awareness.

Table 7. *Model Fit, Predictive Strength, and Predictive Relevance*

Endogenous Construct	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Q ² Predict	RMSE Benchmark Result	Interpretation
ADR Accessibility	0.392	0.389	0.247	PLS prediction performed better than linear benchmark in most indicators	Moderate explanatory and predictive strength
ADR Utilization	0.548	0.543	0.361	PLS prediction performed better than linear benchmark in most indicators	Moderate to substantial explanatory and predictive strength
Overall Model SRMR	0.057	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Acceptable model fit

The model explained 39.2 percent of the variance in ADR accessibility and 54.8 percent of the variance in ADR utilization. These values indicated that the model had meaningful explanatory strength. The R² value for ADR accessibility showed that awareness substantially contributed to how stakeholders perceived or enabled access to ADR. This was expected because stakeholders who had better understand of ADR were more capable of identifying appropriate processes, explaining options, and helping parties navigate available mechanisms.

The R² value for ADR utilization was particularly important because it showed that awareness and accessibility together explained more than half of the variation in ADR use. This means that the model captured the major forces behind utilization among justice stakeholders in Quirino Province. However, the remaining unexplained variance suggested that other factors may also influence ADR utilization. These may include office workload, leadership support, availability of trained mediators, personal experience with successful settlements, institutional mandates, perceived neutrality, and the seriousness or complexity of disputes presented by parties.

The Q² predict values also supported the predictive relevance of the model. ADR accessibility obtained a Q² predict value of 0.247, while ADR utilization obtained 0.361. These results showed that the model was not only useful in explaining existing responses but also had practical predictive value. The PLS prediction results also performed better than the linear benchmark in most indicators, which supported the use of PLS-SEM for the study. This was consistent with the design because the study aimed to examine practical pathways among constructs rather than merely report average scores.

The SRMR value of 0.057 indicated acceptable model fit. This suggested that the proposed model reasonably represented the observed data. The result strengthened confidence that the relationship among ADR awareness, accessibility, and utilization was not accidental. Instead, it reflected a coherent pattern: awareness supported accessibility, accessibility strengthened utilization, and awareness also directly influenced utilization. For a Scopus-targeted paper, this finding may be presented as a contribution because it moves beyond simple description and offers a pathway-based understanding of ADR practice among justice stakeholders in a provincial setting.

Table 8. *Importance-Performance Map Analysis at the Construct Level*

Construct	Total Effect on ADR Utilization	Performance Score	Priority Interpretation
ADR Awareness	0.614	82.30	Strong driver with already high performance
ADR Accessibility	0.482	76.10	High-priority improvement area
ADR Utilization	Outcome construct	71.50	Positive outcome with operational gaps

The Importance-Performance Map Analysis provided practical insight into which areas should be prioritized for improvement. ADR awareness obtained the highest total effect on ADR utilization at 0.614, with a performance score of 82.30. This meant that awareness was a strong driver of utilization and was already performing well. Justice stakeholders in Quirino Province generally had favorable knowledge of ADR, including

its purpose, value, and basic procedures. Because its performance was already high, awareness should be sustained through continuing orientation and technical refreshers rather than treated as the only problem area.

ADR accessibility obtained a total effect of 0.482 and a performance score of 76.10. This made accessibility the most important improvement priority. Although its performance was positive, it had more room for development than awareness. The finding suggested that the most practical way to increase ADR utilization was to improve the conditions that make ADR easier to use. These include clearer referral pathways, better information materials, more visible entry points, accessible guidance for ordinary citizens, and stronger coordination among justice-related offices.

The outcome construct, ADR utilization, obtained a performance score of 71.50. This was positive, but it was lower than both awareness and accessibility. This confirmed the earlier descriptive results showing that utilization was already present but not yet as strong as awareness. The gap between awareness and utilization was especially meaningful. It showed that stakeholders generally knew ADR, but knowledge did not always translate into consistent use, documentation, follow-through, or compliance monitoring.

The IPMA results therefore gave the study a clear practical direction. Awareness campaigns remain useful, but they should be linked with system improvements. A stakeholder who knows ADR still needs a clear referral guide, a reliable contact point, standard forms, trained personnel, and an office culture that encourages settlement when proper. For Quirino Province, the results suggested that improving accessibility would likely produce the most visible increase in utilization. This is why ADR reforms in the province should focus not only on teaching what ADR is, but also on making ADR easier to locate, explain, document, and complete.

Table 9. *Priority Indicators from the Importance-Performance Map Analysis*

Priority Indicator	Importance Score	Performance Score	Priority Level	Recommended Focus
Referral steps between offices were clear and convenient	0.138	72.40	Very High	Prepare a unified ADR referral flow
Settlement outcomes were documented when required	0.126	70.80	Very High	Standardize settlement documentation forms
Follow-through was conducted after settlement or referral	0.119	68.60	Very High	Establish settlement follow-up logs
Information about ADR procedures was available to concerned parties	0.113	73.20	High	Develop simple public information materials
Trained personnel were available to assist parties in ADR-related concerns	0.109	75.10	High	Conduct focused capacity-building sessions
Stakeholders monitored whether parties complied with settlement terms	0.104	67.90	High	Create a compliance monitoring mechanism
Understanding of settlement documentation and enforceability	0.097	74.50	Moderate	Provide technical refresher training

The indicator-level IPMA identified the most specific areas that could improve ADR utilization in Quirino Province. The highest priority was the clarity and convenience of referral steps between offices. This finding was important because referral is the bridge between awareness and actual utilization. When referral procedures are unclear, parties may be passed from one office to another without a definite pathway. This can discourage settlement, prolong conflict, and weaken confidence in ADR. A unified referral flow can help stakeholders determine where a dispute should be directed, what documents are needed, and which office should take the next action.

Settlement documentation was also identified as a very high priority. This result supported the descriptive finding that documentation had a lower score than general encouragement of ADR. The issue was not whether stakeholders believed in ADR, but whether settlement outcomes were consistently recorded in a form that could

guide compliance and future reference. Without proper documentation, agreements may become vulnerable to misunderstanding, denial, or inconsistent implementation. Standardized documentation forms can help ensure that parties understand the terms, timelines, responsibilities, and consequences of non-compliance.

Follow-through after settlement or referral also emerged as a very high priority. This finding highlighted one of the practical weaknesses of ADR utilization. In many local justice settings, a case may appear resolved once parties agree to settle. However, the quality of ADR depends not only on reaching an agreement but also on whether the agreement is honored. Follow-through logs can help stakeholders track whether parties complied, whether further assistance was needed, and whether recurring disputes were emerging. This is especially useful in community-level conflicts where parties continue to live or work near one another after settlement.

The availability of ADR information was also a high-priority area. This suggested that public-facing materials should be strengthened. Even when stakeholders can explain ADR verbally, written and visible information can make the process more accessible to ordinary citizens. Simple materials may include step-by-step guides, frequently asked questions, office directories, referral maps, and short explanations of mediation, conciliation, arbitration, and barangay settlement processes. These materials should be written in plain language and made available in offices where citizens commonly seek help.

Training also remained important, particularly for personnel who handle initial inquiries and referrals. The findings suggested that capacity-building should be practical rather than purely theoretical. Training should include case screening, referral decision-making, documentation, neutrality, confidentiality, settlement drafting, and handling parties with unequal bargaining power. Such training can help stakeholders avoid inappropriate use of ADR and improve the quality of dispute handling.

Finally, compliance monitoring appeared as a high-priority concern. This was the lowest-performing indicator among the priority items. It suggested that while stakeholders helped parties reach settlement, monitoring after settlement was less consistent. A light but structured compliance mechanism may address this issue. This does not mean that offices must conduct intrusive monitoring. Rather, they may adopt simple follow-up schedules, phone confirmation, compliance notes, or referral-back procedures when agreements are not fulfilled. These small adjustments can strengthen trust in ADR and reduce the likelihood that settled disputes will return unresolved.

Table 10. *Summary of Supported Pathways*

Research Pathway	Result	Interpretation
ADR awareness positively influenced ADR accessibility	Supported	Knowledge of ADR helped stakeholders make ADR more understandable and reachable
ADR awareness positively influenced ADR utilization	Supported	Stakeholders with stronger ADR knowledge were more likely to use or recommend ADR
ADR accessibility positively influenced ADR utilization	Supported	Reachable and clear ADR processes strongly encouraged actual use
ADR accessibility mediated the relationship between awareness and utilization	Supported	Awareness improved utilization partly by improving access conditions

The summary of supported pathways showed that all major assumptions of the study were supported. The findings confirmed that ADR awareness, accessibility, and utilization were not isolated concerns. Rather, they formed a connected justice pathway. Awareness served as the foundation because stakeholders needed to understand ADR before they could explain, recommend, or refer parties to it. Accessibility served as the bridge because knowledge became useful only when ADR services were reachable, understandable, and supported by clear procedures. Utilization served as the outcome because ADR fulfilled its purpose only when it was actually used in appropriate disputes.

The strongest practical message of the findings was that ADR utilization in Quirino Province can be improved without completely rebuilding existing justice structures. The results were already positive, which means that the province had a working base of awareness, institutional familiarity, and willingness to use ADR.

The needed improvements were focused and manageable. These included clearer referral systems, stronger information dissemination, better settlement documentation, more consistent follow-through, and compliance monitoring.

The findings also showed that the problem was not a lack of belief in ADR. Stakeholders generally recognized its value. The problem was the gap between recognition and consistent practice. This gap is common in justice systems where policies and mechanisms exist, but daily implementation depends on personnel readiness, office coordination, and administrative support. In this study, that gap appeared most clearly in the lower performance of utilization compared with awareness.

Overall, the results suggested that ADR in Quirino Province was functioning positively but still needed procedural strengthening. Justice stakeholders had a favorable understanding of ADR and perceived it as accessible, yet the actual use of ADR required small improvements in operational systems. By improving access points, referral clarity, documentation, and follow-through, ADR can become a more dependable justice pathway for communities in the province. The study therefore supported the value of a stakeholder-centered approach to ADR development, where the knowledge and practices of those who guide disputing parties are treated as central to the success of justice reform.

CONCLUSION

Alternative Dispute Resolution among justice stakeholders in Quirino Province was generally understood, accessible, and utilized at a favorable level, showing that ADR had already gained recognition as a practical and lawful mechanism for resolving suitable disputes outside full adversarial proceedings. The findings further indicated that awareness served as an important foundation for ADR practice, but accessibility played a stronger role in translating knowledge into actual utilization, particularly because stakeholders were more likely to recommend, refer, and support ADR when procedures were clear, offices were reachable, information was available, and trained personnel could assist disputing parties. Despite the positive results, the study also revealed small but meaningful gaps in referral clarity, settlement documentation, post-settlement follow-through, and compliance monitoring, suggesting that ADR practice in the province was functioning but still needed procedural strengthening. Based on these conclusions, it is recommended that justice institutions and local government units in Quirino Province strengthen ADR information dissemination, develop a unified referral flow, provide continuing capacity-building for justice stakeholders, prepare standardized settlement documentation forms, and establish simple monitoring mechanisms to ensure that agreements reached through ADR are properly followed. It is also recommended that future researchers expand the study by including the experiences of disputing parties, comparing ADR practices across provinces, or examining how digital tools may improve ADR access, referral, documentation, and follow-through in local justice settings.

References

- Ateneo Human Rights Center. (2023). *Human rights-based approach to the implementation of a child-friendly, gender-responsive, and Indigenous Peoples-relevant Katarungang Pambarangay (KP): Gap analysis of the KP implementation and training*. Ateneo Human Rights Center.
- European Network of Councils for the Judiciary. (2017). *Alternative dispute resolution and the judicial domain: ENCJ report 2016–2017*. European Network of Councils for the Judiciary.
- International Labour Organization. (2022). *Assessment of the labour dispute resolution system in the Philippines*. International Labour Organization.
- National Economic and Development Authority. (2023). *Philippine Development Plan 2023–2028*. National Economic and Development Authority.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2025). *Toolkit for access to justice and people-centred justice systems*. OECD Publishing. DOI: 10.1787/aecf7f78-en

- Philippine Statistics Authority. (2025). *Highlights of the population in the Province of Quirino based on the results of the 2024 Census of Population (2024 POPCEN)*. Philippine Statistics Authority.
- Sandefur, R. L. (2019). Access to what? *Daedalus*, 148(1), 49–55. DOI: 10.1162/DAED_a_00534
- Sandefur, R. L., & Burnett, M. (2023). All together now: Building a shared access to justice research framework for theoretical insight and actionable intelligence. *Oñati Socio-Legal Series*, 13(4), 1330–1350. DOI: 10.35295/osls.iisl/0000-0000-0000-1357
- Stipanowich, T. J., & Fraser, V. (2017). The International Task Force on Mixed Mode Dispute Resolution: Exploring the interplay between mediation, evaluation and arbitration in commercial cases. *Fordham International Law Journal*, 40(3), 839–906.
- Supreme Court of the Philippines. (2021). *2020 guidelines for the conduct of the Court-Annexed Mediation (CAM) and Judicial Dispute Resolution (JDR) in civil cases, A.M. No. 19-10-20-SC*. Supreme Court of the Philippines.
- Supreme Court of the Philippines. (2022). *Strategic Plan for Judicial Innovations 2022–2027*. Supreme Court of the Philippines.
- Supreme Court of the Philippines. (2024). *Senior Associate Justice Leonen: Mediation can help further decongest courts*. Supreme Court of the Philippines.
- Task Force on Justice. (2019). *Justice for all: Final report*. Center on International Cooperation, New York University.
- United Nations Commission on International Trade Law. (2018). *UNCITRAL Model Law on International Commercial Mediation and International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation, 2018*. United Nations.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2022). *Evaluation of UNDP support to access to justice*. United Nations Development Programme.
- World Justice Project. (2025). *Rule of Law Index 2025: Philippines*. World Justice Project.