

Awareness and Behavioral Indicators of Maratabat among Maranao-Muslim Children

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Abstract

This study aims to identify some of the factors related to the acquisition and understanding of Maranao children's *maratabat*. Gaining insights into the Maranao children's *maratabat* may deepen understanding of their family values and eventually bring out satisfactory adjustment within their family.

The study is significant inasmuch as it provides insights and rationale on why *maratabat* is considered a culture value by the Maranaos. This will enable other people, particularly non-Muslims, to understand Maranao behavior to foster mutual trust, respect, and cooperation among communities of differing beliefs and religion.

In order to better understand the concept of *maratabat* among Maranao Muslim children, an exploratory survey-type study was conducted to investigate the factors that contribute to the understanding and practice of *maratabat* among Maranao Muslim children. The respondents consisted of 239 Maranao children in Marawi City. A self-administered questionnaire was the main instrument used to facilitate the gathering of data. Focused Group Discussion comprising the Maranao-Muslim children was used to further substantiate and clarify the information derived from the questionnaire.

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Maratabat is likewise behaviorally expressed or manifested through the following: showing strong family solidarity and cooperation, *rido* (family feud), sharing of expenses during ceremonies and defending family honor.

Keywords: *maratabat*, culture value, social rank, self-image, honor, prestige, shame

The Maranao people are a Philippine Muslim groups living predominantly around Lake Lanao in the northwestern portion of the island of Mindanao. They are said to be traditional people identified as a distinct linguistic group possessing a culture preserved through centuries. One of the distinguishing features of their culture is their practice of the *maratabat* - a mark of distinction which makes them unique among all the other ethnic groups. It is in fact one of their dominant cultural traits.

It is interesting to note how the term originated and how it has undergone transformations in meaning when adopted by the Maranaos. The term *maratabat* is an Arab loan word which connotes rank, status and respect ascribed to a particular rank or status. According to Carlton Reimer (1976), the Maranaos have carried the concept beyond its Arabic sense and have expanded the meaning "rank" to sensitivity about rank; from "prestige" to seeking after prestige; from "status" to status honor and status enhancement. Often *maratabat* is translated as *amor propio*. But *Maratabat* is more than this, for it serves as a driving force in the Maranao life. As a driving force, *Maratabat* serves as a cohesive element that brings members of a family together not only in time of peace but most evidently, in time of trouble. The work of Saber, Tamano and Wariner (1961) speaks on this:

Maratabat feelings and duties are shared by those with common membership in the major positional defining structures of the society. Insults are shared throughout the family, brothers, cousins, uncles, grandson and even some distant kin. Similarly, prestige-giving events redound not only to the perpetrators of these acts, but to his relatives, his community and his sultanate.

Thus, Llorca (1986) contended that *maratabat* may be basically a phenomenon arising from family relationship among the Maranaos. Those who write about the Maranao generally agree among themselves that Maranao society is essentially family-centered; that is, the family basically animates and directs its members to appropriate actions.

It must be emphasized that when one speaks of the Maranao family, one does not refer only to the immediate members who, for Maranao reasons are usually fairly numerous to begin with (Dinoro and Magdalena, 1979). The Maranao family may also be conceived in terms of its being a fairly large and extended group that includes a crowd of cousins, uncles, aunts and other relatives of a variety of degrees of consanguinity, often living under one roof. In short, the Maranao family cannot be conceived as independent of the clan.

The family is therefore the place of origin and the best training ground for the development of a humanized and personalized society. Being the basic unit of society, it is through the family that children learn and understand the concept of *maratabat*. In fact, according to Saber, Tamano, and Warriner (1961), all children are taught the responsibilities and judgements connected with *maratabat*. Children are continually told to display *maratabat* in his behavior, to carry in his mind and on his back the self-esteem of his family and to demonstrate as soon as possible the proper, socially accepted reaction to insult and injury. As such, when older children leave their family and home to visit other places, the family gives them this parting advise: "Remember your *maratabat*". For the Maranaos, *maratabat* is a cultural value which Maranao children learn from the elders. They learn it gradually through observation from the old Maranaos, as in the example of a family group which shares the insult of the achievement of an individual member. And so, cultural values like working together, being a cooperative society and giving mutual assistance develop. Thus *maratabat* affects all phases and aspects of life and becomes a way of life and code of honor, because it establishes a harmonious and stable pattern of human relation. Obviously the concept is valued highly by the Maranaos because it is an important part of the socialization process.

Whiting and Child (1953) guided by Freud's psychoanalytic theory claim that child-rearing practices have certain effects on a child's

personality. Consequently, the family plays a significant role in the personality development of the child.

In a study on the socialization of the Maranaos, Pada (1974) noted that the Maranaos have their own indigenous culture such as values, beliefs and practices which are worthy, and need to be preserved.

It is the primary purpose of this paper to identify and describe specific aspects of the Maranao child's upbringing related to the acquisition and understanding of the Maranao value of *maratabat*.

Statement of the Problem

This study attempts to identify some factors that contribute to the understanding and practice of *maratabat* among Maranao children. It also tries to determine the extent of influence of variables such as gender and traditional titles of parents of respondents. It seeks to describe the nature of *maratabat* as the core of the Maranao's personality. Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions:

1. What do children understand about the concept of *maratabat*?
2. At what age in life did they first become aware of *maratabat* as a cultural value among their people and when did they first understand and practice *maratabat*?
3. How did they become aware of *maratabat* as a cultural value among their people?
4. What are the behavioral indicators of *maratabat* among children?
5. What strategies/techniques were used by their parents and relatives in instilling *maratabat*?
6. What is the extent of relationship between gender and traditional titles of parents of respondents to variables, namely, concept of *maratabat*, age, and sources of *maratabat* awareness, behavioral practices indicating understanding of *maratabat* strategies/techniques, and child-rearing practices employed by the parents and relatives in instilling *maratabat*?

Significance of Study

This study hopes to help Maranao families identify some of the factors related to the acquisition and understanding of their children's *maratabat*. Though there had been studies made in *maratabat*, these studies focus more on adult and elderly informants. This is the first exploratory study on *maratabat* which focuses on a selected group of Maranao children. Gaining insights into the Maranao children's *maratabat* may deepen understanding of their family values and eventually bring about satisfactory adjustment within their family,

The study is significant inasmuch as it provides insights and rationale on why *maratabat* is considered a cultural value by the Maranaos. This will enable other people, particularly non-Muslims, to understand Maranao behavior to foster mutual trust, respect and cooperation among communities of differing beliefs and religion.

It is hoped that the findings of the study shall provide the school administrators and educators insightful and useful information in understanding the Maranao *maratabat*. A well-informed administrator or educator is in a better position to handle and deal with behaviors of Maranao children enrolled in non-Muslim schools particularly, when these behaviors are manifestations of *maratabat*.

Furthermore, the identification of some factors related to the acquisition and understanding of *maratabat* among the Maranao children may help others understand the Maranao family. Through this study, the Maranao children will be better understood in terms of how they have been nurtured and reared by their parents and how intricately linked their behaviors are to *maratabat*.

Lastly, it is hoped that the results of this study shall serve to encourage others to conduct further research on this topic, exploring other areas which could add to the understanding of *maratabat*.

Conceptual Framework

In the Maranao society, Disoma (1990) contends that the Maranaos believe in obligation of every parent to see to it their children will be socialized in accordance with the ideals of their society. To the Maranaos, the misbehavior of a child is seen as a reflection of his parent's

personality. It is therefore the duty of parents to teach their child the values of good manners and chastity. A smear in the child's character would injure the reputation of the parents and lower the prestige of the family (Sumagayan, 1982).

Corollary to this belief is the statement of Javier (1980) which holds that a good parent is one whose interest is to make his children better than anybody else in the community. Out of this conviction, children are compelled to obey their parents. In view of the Maranaos' family, Saber, Tamano and Warriner (1962) have indicated that the Maranao moves for, and because of, the family, and that the family animates and directs him to appropriate actions. Thus, according to Catapusan (1963) the feeling of "oneness?" and "fellow feeling" of the Maranao family, the love among the members of the family, are the family's *maratabat* which compels one even to give his life for its sake. Llorca (1986) elucidates that *maratabat* appears to be the culmination of the system of family relationship, upbringing practices, attitudes and self-esteem in Maranao society.

It should be added that this view of Maranao family reflects the societal approach to socialization. The basic premise is that most of what is learned from socialization in childhood, and indeed throughout life, is a series of complex interpersonal relationships. In the life of every person, there are a number of people directly involved in socialization. They have great influence because of their frequency of contact, their primacy, and their control over rewards and punishment. These persons, and the expectations they have for the child's behavior, are of high salience to him for continuing periods. Throughout the person's life these people continue to influence the development of his character, even as new significant persons are added, and the older ones are displaced (Brim, 1980). These concepts are likewise adhering to Freud's psychoanalytic theory which claims that child-rearing practices have certain effects on the child's personality (Whiting and child, 1953). As a result, the family is considered as a basic societal unit playing a significant role in the proper personality development of the child.

Maranao children think and behave in the manner they are taught by their parents and relatives. This concept reinforces the belief that parents and kin exercise considerable influence on the behavior of the children. It appears from many researches, that parents who employed usually exercise enormous influence on children's understanding of

maratabat. Apparently, they are more conscious of the strict observance of *maratabat* among young members in their families compared to non-employed parents. Employed parents strictly monitor the behavior of their children in the family circle not only within the clan but also within the community.

They are more careful so as not to tarnish their reputation. They aspire to elevate their honor and dignity through their children. This is usually manifested among parents who hold traditional titles. They want their teenage children to be models to others in order not to degrade their social status or honor. Children imitate the idealism of their parents and expect such modeling and support from them.

Maratabat for the Maranao parents is a matter of social corrosion (Disoma, 1990). According to Disoma, Maranaos are "coerced into conformity by their fear of being talked about unfavorably" (1995:15). The common social setting for gossips are the rural Maranao communities since these are the places where social coercion is most strongly exerted. Thus, it is expected that Maranao parents will encourage their children to uphold their family *maratabat* by urging their children to conform to socially acceptable behaviors befitting their parents' rank or status in the Maranao society.

This is most apparent in parents who hold traditional titles such as Sultan, Bai-alabi, Ulama, etc. since they have greater obligation to protect their family honor and reputation as respected members in the Maranao society. The society monitors how those with traditional titles meet the challenge when their *maratabat* is at stake and how well they meet such challenge will depend the evaluation of whether the said high-ranking Maranao members have *maratabat* or not. An appraisal signifying the latter would be a cause of deep shame, and would be a stain on the family's reputation and thus, it becomes necessary that *maratabat* is upheld at all cost.

The role of parents with traditional title is therefore seen as important in exerting influence upon their children when it comes to the protection or upholding of the family *maratabat*. Children with parents who have traditional titles will be more readily subjected to family pressures to defend the family's *maratabat* when this is attacked or challenged. This is so since their parents hold greater stakes in terms of losing honor, integrity and self-esteem, than parents who have no traditional titles to speak of.

Moreover, it is felt that the children's gender and parents's traditional title are significant variables influencing the adolescent's understanding of *maratabat*. This arises from the fact that men and women in the Maranao society have well-prescribed social roles and expectations to perform and to meet. The needed training to enable both sexes to meet society's expectations usually begins in the home.

The diagram serves as an aid for conceptualizing the relationships among salient variables. The researcher in this study merely looks into the relationships or associations among the variables and provides an analysis of the significance of these relationships in the understanding of *maratabat*.

The arrows are unidirectional because the Maranao children are compelled to obey their parents, otherwise, the consequences are frightening. They must get out from the Maranao society or earn a derogatory rank "without *maratabat*". The pressures come from the parents and these are exerted on their children; hence, the indicated line proceeds from the variables involving parents then going to the children's understanding of *maratabat* and finally ending at the indicators of *maratabat*. The line is unidirectional and the symbol of pointing arrow is not used since this study was not concerned with casual relationship which would have involved interactive process. Instead, this study was merely exploratory in nature, examining the factors that influence *maratabat* and how the children understand this concept and how they show ultimately their understanding of this concept through their own behavioral practices.

The research paradigm is based on the view that the children's understanding of *maratabat*, expressed through their behavioral practices result from there factors, namely: a) the children's gender; b) parent's traditional titles; and c) parental strategies/techniques and child-rearing practices in instilling *maratabat*. As can be seen, the arrow linking all the variables is unidirectional. This means that the three identified factors influencing *maratabat* are linked directly to the children's understanding of the concept of *maratabat*, which is the adoption of behavioral practices. These serve as indicators that the children have internalized the concept of *maratabat* in his/her life.

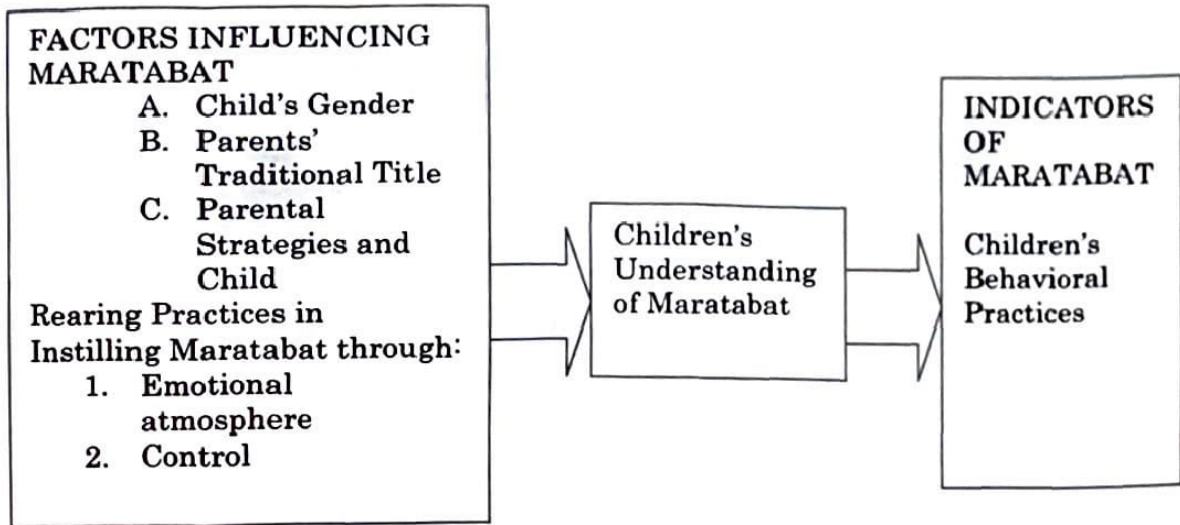


Figure 1.0. Schematic Presentation of the Conceptual Framework

Methodology

This study used descriptive survey with the questionnaire/opinionaire and focused group discussion as the basic tools for data gathering.

Setting of the Study

This study was conducted in Marawi City, the capital of Lanao del Sur. It is the only chartered city in the Philippines with a predominantly Muslim population, of which majority of the people are Maranaos. This Muslim group is mostly concentrated near Lanao lake and along Agus river. Maranaos means "of the lake" and it is used to refer not only to the people, but also to the language spoken by them. Lake Lanao is approximately 2,300 feet above sea level. It empties into the Agus river which feeds Maria Cristina Falls about thirty kilometers north of it. Thus,

the Maranaos are a non-coastal inland group who have been relatively isolated in the mountainous terrain between the coast and the lake.

Selection of the Sample

The sample for this study consisted of two types of respondents. One comprised the children participants who answered the questionnaire being interpreted by the researcher while the other were the participants of the Focused Group Discussion comprising children not involved in the survey and their respective parents.

The respondents of this study were 80 Maranao children of Mindanao State University employees in Marawi City, aged 10 to 16 years old. Respondents were further stratified according to gender, of which 40 were females, and 40 males. The respondents were chosen according to the willingness, interest, and availability of the children and consent of the parents.

The interviews were designed to correct oversights and to validate the data elicited from the questionnaire and to enable the researcher to make necessary corrections or revisions.

Instrument Used

The questionnaire used in this study consists of three main parts. Part I deals with the personal factors, particularly on gender and traditional titles. Part II deals with the respondents' concept of *maratabat*, reported age and sources of *maratabat* awareness, behavioral indicators which show that *maratabat* is understood.

Included in Part II are the strategies/techniques used by parents in instilling *maratabat*. This portion of the questionnaire was designed to elaborate on the concept of *maratabat* among Maranao children. Part III deals with the child-rearing practices, particularly on the aspects of emotional atmosphere and parental control used by the respondents' parents.

The questionnaire method was used in this study since it was interested in the number of variables to provide elaboration on the concept of *maratabat*. A structured questionnaire would enable the researcher to handle questions which yield the expected response, and the

items included in the questionnaire are within the control of the researcher. Elaboration and provision of more details were handled through the Focused Group Discussion.

Selection of items in the questionnaire was based on the related studies, interviews made with Maranao parents and children, and the researcher's knowledge and understanding of Maranao patterns of bringing up adolescents related to the practice of *maratabat*. Smith (1981) explains that participant observation should be characterized by the researcher's intense immersion the social setting. This researcher, being married to a Maranao, blended easily with the ceremonies of crowning of a sultan/ba-I, community meeting, graduation programs, religious activities, and other community activities which had enabled her to observe closely the situations where *maratabat* operates.

The questionnaire was translated by five (5) Maranao researchers from Dansalan College and the Mindanao State University Research Center. These five researchers have the expertise in giving English-Maranao translations. Each one individually translated the statements after which all five sat together with the researcher to finalize the translation of all items using their individual work as reference. The English-Maranao translation was done to elicit valid response from Maranao-speaking children. Back translation was undertaken by the same translators/ experts to ensure equivalence of the Maranao version.

The questionnaire was subjected to a critique by a panel of selected Social Science Maranao professors of the Mindanao State University (MSU) before it was pre-tested. Likewise, before the questionnaire was distributed to the respondents, the researcher explained the following to them:

1. There was a need for respondents to answer the questions honestly. They were assured that their identities would be held in strictest confidence.
2. There was sufficient time given in explaining the instructions found in the questionnaire.
3. The respondents have the relative freedom to answer the questions as they see it.
4. The schedule which would enable the researcher to retrieve the questionnaire within two days was agreed upon.

The draft of the questionnaire was pre-tested on a group of 10 Maranao college children from Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology, Iligan City. The objectives of the pre-test were to test the relevance, readability, and comprehensibility of the items. As a result of the pre-test, some words were changed for clarity; i.e. the phrase "committing suicide" was improved to "defending honor to the extent of giving up one's life." There was an effort on the part of the researcher to improve on the clarity of the questions by revising some words and terms. Finally, a revised questionnaire, based on the modifications as called for by the pre-test, was prepared.

Data Gathering Procedure

1. Administration of Questionnaires

To ensure accuracy and speedy retrieval of data for the study, the researcher administered the instruments with the aid of three (3) assistants. This enabled the researcher to answer clarifications the respondents might have sought. These assistants were briefed on what to expect from the questionnaire and to be keenly alert to questions for clarifications that would be raised by the respondents. As much as possible, the respondents were assisted as they attempted to provide their answers to the items in the questionnaire in the form of explanations, clarifications, etc.

2. Conduct of the Focused Group Discussion

To further substantiate and clarify the information derived from the questionnaire, the focused group discussions with parents and children were conducted. The parent groups involved the parents of the respondents. All the sessions with the parents and respondents were audio-taped.

A discussion guide was used to facilitate smooth flow of the discussions. This guide covered topics such as concept of *maratabat*, awareness on the part of children regarding this cultural trait, the child-rearing practices of parents related to instilling *maratabat* in their children, and the actual behaviors

of children which demonstrate the influence of *maratabat* on the *maratabat* on the children behavior.

Organization and Analysis of Data

1. Questionnaire

The data from the questionnaire were encoded by the researcher herself, after consulting with a research statistician. Raw and recorded data were entered as inputs by two college students who were requested by the researcher to assist her. They were trained for the task by instructing them to be careful in entering the data since errors will distort the results of the survey. They were likewise briefly trained in the use of computer for statistical purposes, under close supervision of the researcher, and these assistants tabulated the results which were entered as inputs in the computer through the statistical package, microstatistics (MICROSTAT). Editing of encoded data was done twice to ensure correctness of data entered.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics consisting of frequency, percentages, and rank distribution. Analysis was limited to deriving percentages with respect to items asked in the questionnaire; rank distributions in which priorities as to degree of importance of items; and presenting the figures arrived at in tables. Chi-square analysis was further used to measure the respondent's understanding and practice of *maratabat* were influenced by their gender and parent's traditional titles.

Results and Discussions

The data analyzed in this section were drawn from the results yielded from the survey questionnaire as well as from the Focused Group Discussion. Initial analysis drawn from raw data was used to describe a cross tabulation of the variables according to respondents' gender, age, traditional titles and occupations of their parents. However, upon closer examination, most of the items concerning respondent's age and parent's occupations had very small frequencies, negligible result and almost the same interpretation with the respondent's gender and parent's traditional titles. Hence, it was suggested that respondent's age and parent's occupations would be deleted. Presentation of analysis would be according to gender and traditional titles to have a clear presentation and meaningful results.

In each major subdivision, the following were analyzed: the concept of *maratabat*, reported age and sources of *maratabat* awareness and understanding; parental strategies/techniques and child-rearing practices related to *maratabat* and behavioral indicators of children's understanding of *maratabat*.

Result of chi-square analysis for all the variables was also included. However, with regards to the relationship of selected variables to gender, only the concept of *maratabat* and reported age of *maratabat* awareness were found to be significantly related. Other variables related to gender such as source of awareness, behavioral practices, strategies/techniques and child-rearing practices employed by parents in instilling *maratabat* were not significant at 0.05 level of significance.

With regards to the relationship of selected variables to parents' traditional titles, only the father's traditional titles were found to be related to the variables concerning respondent's age of *maratabat* awareness and child-rearing practices or parental control related to *maratabat* was significant at 0.05 level of significance.

Likewise, the views of both male and female respondents on *maratabat* were compared and contrasted; those of the mothers' and fathers' views on *maratabat* and child-rearing practices were also presented one after the other. A summary is given at the end of each discussion. The summary of the results of the focused group discussion is

presented separately to further substantiate and clarify the information derived from the survey.

Summary of Findings

Based on the results of the study, some significant findings have been identified as enumerated below:

On factors influencing the Maranao adolescent's concept of *maratabat*, the children's gender is a stronger influence than parent's traditional title. Maranao female children learn earlier in life the concept of *maratabat* than their male counterparts. At ages 5-7 female children become aware of *maratabat* while the male children learn about *maratabat* between ages 7-10.

Parent's traditional title as a factor exerting influence upon the Maranao children is more strongly observed in children with parents having the titles of sultans and *kabugatans* (for fathers) and *Bai-alabi* or *Bai* (for mothers). These parents who have higher social ranks in Mindanao society are more conscious of *maratabat* and are therefore inclined to instill it in their children.

On the factor of parental strategies and techniques in instilling *maratabat* in their children, the strategies vary from one social rank to another. Those who come from religious parents learn *maratabat* through observations and imitations from elders and kin. On the other hand, those whose parents belong to higher social rank are exposed to *maratabat* strictly from their parents.

Child-rearing practices related to *maratabat* are in the areas of nurturing an emotional atmosphere of love, loyalty, cooperation among family members. On the other hand, punishments and rewards serve as control measures to discipline children regarding the *maratabat*.

The above factors influence the children's understanding of *maratabat*. Both male and female children consider pride as the most important concept of *maratabat*. They likewise associate *maratabat* with self-image, prestige and honor as well as shame.

Indicators of the extent of the understanding of *maratabat* by the Maranao children are their behavioral practices. For female children, they behave in an extra careful manner in the presence of men so as not to tarnish their *maratabat*. On the other hand, male children would defend their *maratabat* even to the extent of giving up their life for its sake.

Maratabat is likewise behaviorally expressed or manifested through the following: showing strong family solidarity and cooperation, *rido* (family feud), sharing of expenses during ceremonies, and defending family's pride in honor.

The results can be summarized aptly by saying that considering the importance of *maratabat* in the Maranao family, it can be concluded that an understanding of *maratabat* will account for a great deal of Maranao children's behavior.

On the basis of the findings and conclusions of this study, a number of recommendations seem justified. These recommendations are grouped into two areas: those related to the conduct of further research and those related to possible action.

The following recommendations are related to the conduct of further research:

1. Considering that this study is limited to the children only, further research which will include the parents, teachers, and peers, and other socializing agents is recommended to foster understanding of *maratabat*. There is likewise a need to look into the different reactions of children to *maratabat*.
2. There is a need to study if *maratabat* is not changed or influenced by education.
3. It would be interesting to duplicate the study in wider settings to better compare findings.
4. Since this research study deals only with the Maranaos in their homeland, it is recommended that Maranaos not living around Lake Lanao be studied.
5. To strengthen and improve methodology pertaining to the use of Focused Group Discussion, it is recommended that future researchers ensure that at least there is a sufficient number of participants in the discussion.

Furthermore, these participants should come from diverse economic background and geographic locations in Muslim Mindanao, not only from Marawi City.

6. Further studies can be conducted which will include the interactive process (e.g. parent-adolescent or adolescent-parent interaction) and not merely focus on a unidirectional process to find out the varying effects of these two processes.

The following recommendations are related to possible courses of action:

1. Non-Maranaos living among the Maranaos in the Maranao homeland or vice-versa should take conscious effort to understand the Maranao *maratabat* so that both groups can co-exist peacefully.
2. The practice of *maratabat* along noble, honorable profound aspects of life should be encouraged. This will motivate all concerned to engage in self-fulfilling endeavors.
3. There is the need to bring to the Philippine public as well as to the outside world to view the beautiful Maranao customs, practices and beliefs. This can be done through the inclusion of these aspects in the curriculum.