

Assessing Posttraumatic-Stress Disorder Symptoms among Former Rebels: Basis for Mental Health Care Intervention

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Abstract

The study investigates the socio-demographic characteristics and psychosocial health profile of the former rebels in terms of posttraumatic-stress symptomatology. It also aimed to identify the psychopathological risks as bases of its proposed mental health treatment. This study utilized a sequential explanatory mixed methods design which employed the Posttraumatic Diagnostic Scale-Self Report for the DSM5 in assessing the participants' psychosocial health condition. A semi-structured, in-depth individual interview was also conducted to gather qualitative data. There were 30 respondents in the quantitative phase of the study, they were the beneficiaries of the Philippine Enhanced Comprehensive Livelihood Integrated Program, based in a local government unit. Upon determining the psychopathological risks of the respondents, five were identified to have suffered the highest severity symptoms of PTSD, who were then the participants in the qualitative phase. Results reveal that all former rebels who participated in the study suffer from Posttraumatic Stress Disorder which necessitates proper psychological treatment to restore and rebuild their quality of life. The findings show that the former rebels' mental health needs have to be properly addressed during their rehabilitation period before they are being mainstreamed in the society. Relevant policy and programs need not to overlook the former rebels' psychosocial well-being.

Keywords : Mental Health, Psychosocial Well-being, Rehabilitation

JEL Classification Code: I120, I380, I140, I150, I180

1. Introduction

The Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) seeks to overthrow the Philippine government in favor of a new state led by the working class and to expel United States influence from the Philippines. It has historically focused on building support among the rural peasantry, although it has operated throughout the country and is still engages in significant levels of violence and is the world's oldest existing Communist insurgency. The NPA, the armed wing of the CPP, has been waging its so-called 'revolutionary war' against the government of the Philippines since 1969, and more than 50 years after the CPP was founded, its armed faction remains most active in Mindanao, the southern part of the Philippines

Over the years, some disillusioned fighters from NPA had

left the communist movement. With this, the government of the Republic of the Philippines initiated various campaign programs to win back the rebels into the folds of the law. These include the Balik Baril Program (BBP); the Social Integration Program (SIP); the Comprehensive Local Integration Program (CLIP); the PAyapa at MASaganang PAMayanan (PAMANA); and the most recent Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP), (AO, 2018).

Many authors in the trauma literature state that being exposed to dreadful violence may lead to psychological trauma. As described by Eck and Hultman (2007), warfare and battles often stage incidents of brutal forms of violence, such as mutilation, genocide, rape, and more. These are not isolated, however, as they often constitute the various corollaries of inhuman aggression. Former rebels often suffer

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from Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), forcing them to relive the traumas they experienced during the war. PTSD negatively affects the ability of former rebels to become functioning members of society as they suffer from anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, hostility, despair, and destroyed capacity for social trust.

Half-way house clientele (former rebels) often bear tremendous psychological burdens associated with their violent experiences. Manifestations of trauma suffered by them may include psychological disturbances rooted in their previous participation in warfare, unresolved psychological issues brought about by difficult upbringings and the like. In particular, they may experience nightmares, anxiety, impulse control problems, and other symptoms that impair normal functioning in everyday life.

The Philippine government through Republic Act 6972, otherwise known as the Local Government Code of 1991 mandates the Local Government Units provide social welfare services which include programs and projects for former rebels. Executive Order 3, series of 2001, calls for the pursuit of a comprehensive, integrated and holistic peace process to address the internal armed conflicts and the root causes involving, among others, the implementation of programs to address the legal status and security of former rebels (FRs), as well as community-based assistance to respond to their economic, social, and psychological rehabilitation needs. This proactive move of the government entices more former rebels to a fresh start for a peaceful life. Such unique initiative of rendering psychological rehabilitation services address the psychosocial health needs of the former rebels, helping them to become productive citizens in mainstream society with improved quality life.

This paper argued that adequate training, effective evaluation, assessment and intervention approaches are paramount to success of the rehabilitation, restoration, and reintegration process. This is to effectively address the former rebels' psychological burdens, as emphasized by Maedl et al., (2010), that former rebels struggle to cope with experienced war stressors, find it difficult to manage daily survival in a harsh environment, and have wounds that often do not heal under the thin surface of "normality". With the established gap, this study posited the need for psychological assessment of trauma-related symptoms, effective response to psychosocial needs, and designed treatment plans for the rehabilitation or treatment of the half-way house clientele. In the long run, this would hopefully lead to the full integration of the client to mainstream society.

2. Literature Review

Many nation-states all over the globe have experienced and are experiencing rebellions and internal wars where civilians took up arms against the government, to mention a few, these include Rwanda, India, Vietnam, Somaliland and the Philippines.

2.1 Rebellion

In the Republic of the Philippines, the Communist Party of the Philippines–New People's Army (CPP-NPA) seeks to overthrow the government in favor of a new state led by the working class and to expel U.S. influence from the Philippines. The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) was founded in 1968, and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), was founded in the following year. Because the party and its armed wing are so closely intertwined, they are often referred to together as the CPP-NPA. The CPP-NPA was originally based in the city of Capas on the Philippines' largest island, Luzon, and it began with sixty combatants and thirty-five rifles. Although it clashed with government forces, the CPP-NPA initially concentrated on its own growth and strengthening its support among the peasantry, with party activists working to rally peasants to its cause. In 1973, a commission created by the CPP-NPA founded the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDF or NDFP). Attempting to unify and coordinate various leftist groups, the NDF served as an umbrella organization for the CPP-NPA and other mass revolutionary organizations.

It has been 50 years since the CPP was founded, and its armed faction remains most active in Mindanao. The CPP-NPA has been waging its so-called "revolutionary war" against the government of the Republic of the Philippines. The NPA is capable of conducting terrorist actions which are both selective and discriminate, such as murder, assassination, bombings, kidnapping, intimidation and coercion of elected officials, arson, and extortion. All activities are conducted in order to gain control over people and their areas of operation. The NPA is also able to conduct many other activities including harassment, raids, and ambushes against government forces and military targets. Guerilla operations such as these are inevitably aimed at weakening the government's security forces in order to eventually destroy them and with them, the political will of the people (Osleson, 2007).

There are different intensities to the conflict in different areas. In parts of Davao, in the eastern Mindanao, a key factor is the government's negligence of indigenous communities and the organization's ties to small-scale local miners who resist on the operation of larger mining companies. In north-eastern Mindanao, abusive behavior by tribal militias and hired goons makes the NPA seem

reasonable and orderly. In Negros, the failure to reform the hacienda system, under which planters own huge swathes of land, which means that its expression to agrarian reform still echoes (Crisis Group Asia Report N202, 2011).

2.2 State-sponsored Reintegration Programs

With the government's utmost support in the reintegration of the former rebels in the mainstream society, an inter-agency (National Defense, Department of Interior and Local Government, Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, Office of the President and the National Housing Authority) task force was created which is commonly known as the Task Force Balik-Loob which is given the authority to implement the E-CLIP. As indicated in the recent reports of the Task Force Balik-Loob, there were 189 rebel returnees presented to the Office of the President on January 10, 2019, in Masbate, and on December 21, 2018, 50 were also presented in Bukidnon, 33 of them were members of the CCP/NPA and 17 served as Militia ng Bayan, all were able to avail the E-CLIP.

2.3 Local Support Mechanism

A half-way house which is a processing center and civilian facility jointly undertaken by the Provincial Government through its Social Welfare and Development Office (PSWDO) in cooperation with the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) is intended to former rebels who have expressed the desire to return into the folds of the law and disengaged in armed violence. This is also considered to be a rehabilitation center intended to facilitate the systematic, assessment, processing, delivery of immediate interventions, and development of individual reintegration plans of former rebels, as well as to secure their safety in a short term. It takes into special consideration the provision of adequate facilities for women and children including those with family members whose welfare are shown to be imminent risk.

A former rebel who is eligible for admission in the certain half-way house is male or female regardless of age and status that voluntarily surrendered and has undergone Custodial Debriefing and de-radicalization Program at Ugnayan Center ran by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). He/she was a former New People's Army (NPA) who surfaced from January 2011 onwards, as well as those who have been processed but did not receive the full assistance and members of Militia ng Bayan (MB), who surfaced starting 2015. The Joint AFP-PNP Intelligence Committee (JAPIC) shall assist the Former Rebel in complying all necessary documents needed, as well as secure their safety and security (Happy Home Manual, 2013).

The period of former rebel to stay in the facility is minimum of one (1) month and maximum of three (3) months (case to case basis) until they completely availed the services in the facility. Such half-way house is expected to provide comprehensive programs and services for the healing and recovery process of former rebels in order to restore their psychosocial functioning using interdisciplinary approach through collective efforts of men in uniformed, social workers, agriculturists, medical practitioners, psychologist/therapists, spiritual counselors, teachers, legal officers and other field of profession who are involved for the de-radicalization and improved the total rehabilitation of former rebels to attain a peaceful environment and improved quality of life.

2.4 Posttraumatic Symptoms

The findings of the study conducted by Maynard (1997) claim that PTSD is commonly associated with comorbidity. Nearly 50% to 90% of individuals with PTSD show psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, substance abuse, difficulty in interpersonal relationships, physical symptoms, and cognitive impairments (Joseph et al., 1997). Other authors (Freedy & Donkervoet, 1995) found substance abuse (73%), depression (26%), phobias, and panic disorders to be very prevalent. As Ilagan (2010) states that there is a strong indication that the experience of combat stress could leave a traumatic imprint on a person's psyche. In reintegration programs, ex-combatants with PTSD are considered as especially problematic group, because they have difficulty in concentrating, are easily hyper-aroused and aggressive, and are unable to establish and maintain social and intimate relationships (Mogapi, 2004).

2.5 Mental Health Care among Former Rebels

Active participation in war and the challenge of reintegration into civilian life can seriously impact former rebels' psychosocial wellbeing. This study is intended to find ways of improving psychosocial health care for former rebels, which at is present deficient.

The study intends to explore the psychosocial health profile of the former rebels. Based on the literature, common psychosocial health issues experienced by former rebels include post-traumatic symptoms. Upon understanding the psychosocial health profile of the research participants who are the former rebels, and employing for the Post-traumatic Diagnostic Scale for the DSM-5, psychopathological risks among the respondents were specifically determined and these became the basis for coming up with a treatment plan. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the study.

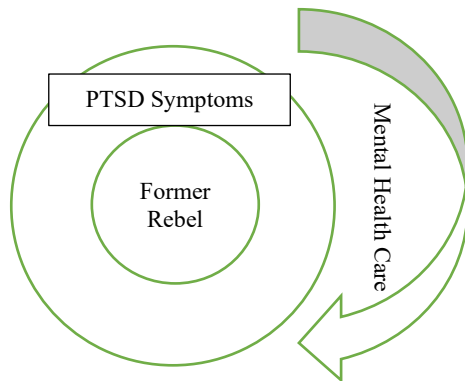


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Method

3.1 Participants

There were 30 respondents of the study, who were the beneficiaries of the Enhanced Comprehensive Livelihood Integrated Program (E-CLIP) and were admitted to the half-way house from August to November 2019. Non-probability sampling method was done in identifying the respondents as it was dependent on the former rebels surrendered in the folds of the law and were into the rehabilitation program at the time the study was conducted.

3.2 Instruments

This study utilized a sequential explanatory mixed methods design. It involved a two-phase venture in which the researcher collected quantitative data in the first phase, analyzed the results, and then used the results to plan the second, qualitative phase. The quantitative results typically inform the types of participants to be purposefully selected for the qualitative phase and the types of questions that will be asked to the participants.

The study employed the Posttraumatic Stress Diagnostic Scale for DSM-5. The scale is a self-report measure of DSM-5 PTSD criteria authored by Foa and Tolin (2000). The PDS-5 has been found to have excellent internal consistency for total symptom severity (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.94$) as well as for the re-experiencing cluster ($\alpha = 0.89$), avoidance and numbing cluster ($\alpha = 0.70$), negative alterations in cognitions and mood cluster ($\alpha = 0.88$), and arousal cluster ($\alpha = 0.79$). Test-retest reliability for PDS is rated as excellent: 0.88. The PTSD checklist for DSM-5 demonstrated high concurrent validity with the PCL-5, $r = 0.85$, $p < 0.01$. It was designed to offer an estimate of the severity of a respondent's PTSD symptoms. Participants were asked to rate the frequency and

distress associated with each of the PTSD symptoms on a scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 4 (6 or more times a week/severe).

The conduct of the test was by means of a structured interview to achieve a valid assessment of the participants' responses. The test instrument was translated from English to Cebuano version, a local language to be able to capture the genuine response of the participants. The data was processed and analyzed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

A semi-structured, in-depth, individual interview was utilized in which an intake interview guide was used, then open-ended and non-directive questions were followed to capture more meaningful data from the participants. Data driven from the interview include the socio-demographic profile, history in the armed movement, security assessment and immediate psychosocial needs of the respondents.

3.3 Procedure

The following procedures were done in the collection of data:

A letter of introduction and request was given to the office of the governor, though the office of the provincial social welfare, and the office of the 701st Infantry Brigade to provide them with the background of the study and how it will be of beneficial to their respective offices and to secure permission for the conduct of the study.

The researcher established rapport with the research participants by giving them enough orientation about the study and ensured informed consent;

The data collection was in the half-way house, with the assurance of confidentiality and respect;

An audio recorder was not allowed to utilize during the interviews for security reasons, hence, note taking was done;

The researcher conducted a paper-pencil assessment by using the PTSD Symptom Scale taken by the former rebels;

An interview guide was used semi-structured intake-interview;

Interview notes were encoded and coded to capture broad themes and understand the condition of the psychosocial health of the former rebels;

Severity scores were clustered and those with psychopathological risks were identified based on the Post-traumatic Diagnostic Scale for the DSM 5.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

The researcher ensured that the participants were fully informed about the research procedure and through a written consent.

There was no deception of participants. The researcher ensured that the participants were free to withdraw their

participation in the study without hesitations and fear of being penalized.

The researcher maintained complete confidentiality regarding any information about the participants acquired during the research process. The raw data were stored in a password-protected laptop and computer, while the research journals, answered test questionnaires and other materials collected for research purposes were stored in a locked steel cabinet with restricted access.

The participants were protected from any harm or loss and their psychological well-being and dignity were preserved at all times.

After data collection, the participants were ensured that they can freely access to the findings the study they took part in.

4. Results

Data in Table 1 show that 70 percent of the former rebels who participated in the study identify themselves as Mandaya, 17 percent identify as Cebuano social group, while 13 percent identify as either Dibabawnon, Surigaonon, and Dabawenyo. Data reveal that they commonly belong to the indigenous group. As to the civil status of the former rebels, there were 67 percent of them who were single, 27 percent were with common law partners, while 7 percent were married. Regarding their age, 37 percent of the former rebels belong to the bracket of 18 to 23 years old, 33 percent of them belong to the 24 to 29 years old group, 13 percent in the 41 to 45 years old group, 10 percent in the 30 to 35 years old group, and seven percent to the 36 to 40 bracket. Pertaining to the sex of the participants, 77 percent of the former rebels were male, while 23 percent of the 30 former rebels were females. Half of them had been in the armed movement for 1 to 4 years, 23 percent who were there for less than a year, 10 percent for both 5 to 8 and 9 to 12 years, and 7 percent had been there for as long as 13 to 16 years.

Table 1: Former Rebels' Socio-demographic Profile

Sample Profile	Frequency (n = 30)	%
Ethnicity		
Mandaya	21	70
Cebuano	5	17
Surigaonon	2	7
Dibabawnon	1	3
Dabawenyo	1	3
Civil Status		
Single	20	67
Common Law	8	27
Married	2	7
Age Group		
18-23	11	37

Sample Profile	Frequency (n = 30)	%
24-29	10	33
30-35	3	10
41-45	4	13
36-40	2	7
Sex		
Male	23	77
Female	7	23
Tenure		
1 to 4 years	15	50
Less than a year	7	23
5 years - 8 years	3	10
9 years – 12 years	3	10
13 years – 16 years	2	7

Data in Table 2 below show the severity of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptom manifested by the 30 former rebels as measured using the Post-Traumatic Diagnostic Scale- Self Report for the DSM5. There were 33 percent of them manifested minimal symptoms, 33 percent presented a mild symptoms, 23 percent had moderate and 11 percent had severe PTSD symptoms, while none measured at very severe level.

Table 2: Former Rebel's Posttraumatic Stress Symptom Severity

Raw Score	PTSD Symptom Severity	Frequency (n=30)	Percentage
0-10	Minimal	10	33
11-23	Mild	10	33
24-42	Moderate	7	23
43-59	Severe	3	11
60-80	Very Severe	0	0

With the presented PTSD severity symptoms, data in Table 3 show the different traumatic events experienced, witnessed or repeatedly confronted by the former rebels. Data show that 50 percent of the 30 former rebels encountered traumatic events related to military combat or living in a war zone, 33 percent to natural disaster, and 27 percent to physical assault. It was noted that the respondents came from the far-flung areas where super typhoon Bopha swept all light shelters, farm lands and agricultural sources of livelihood which their immediate families were dependent on.

Table 3: Traumatic Events Experienced, Witnessed or Repeatedly Confronted by the Former Rebels

Traumatic Events	Frequency (n=30)	Percentage
Military Combat or lived in a war zone	15	50
Natural Disaster	10	33
Accident	9	30
Physical Assault	8	27
Child abuse	4	13
Sexual Assault	2	7

*Multiple answers accepted

5. Discussion

There were 30 former rebels in this study. Most of them belong to the indigenous group or “lumad”. Lumad is a Filipino-Bisaya term meaning native and is the collective identity of the non-Islamized people who are said to be the original inhabitants of the island of Mindanao. These indigenous groups include Mandaya, and Dibabawnon, while the rest belong to the Mindanao ethnic groups such as Cebuano, Surigaonon, and Dawenyo. More than half of them were single, and more than a quarter were with common-law partners and the rest were married. In the Philippine social welfare services, marriage as defined in the constitution could pave a way for the Filipinos to freely access the government services such as cash grants under the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program or 4Ps. The reason of having had a hard time for the former rebels of availing such government services, due to lack of civil documents like identification cards, marriage and birth certificates.

The former rebels who participated belong to the adulthood stage of human development - early adulthood, adulthood, and middle age. They have their respective psychosocial issues needed to be addressed such as emotional challenges- “trial of independence” for the young adults, and “mid-life crisis” for the mature ones. The latter is a period of profound change, which could only culminate reappraisal, or perhaps reaffirmation of goals, commitments and previous choices – a time of taking stock and recalibrating what was important in life. As described by Virgilio G. Enriquez, the father of Filipino Psychology, the sense of cultural orientation among matured Filipinos is manifested by having “kamalayan” or consciousness, which include both emotive and cognitive experiences and “ulirat” or awareness of one’s immediate surroundings (Yacat, 2013). This implies that the former rebels involved in this study who belong to the mature age have a sense of “kapwa” or the capacity to recognize shared identity which means the inner self shared with others. They have the ability to connect with others and to recognize sharedness with another, as it is commonly uttered by Filipinos as “hindi ako iba sa aking kapwa” (I am no different from others) which significantly contribute to their “kaluluwa” or psyche that translates to soul of a person.

On the other hand, those former rebels who belong to the young adulthood stage is in the period of “trial of independence” within a sudden liberation and a process of adjustment which most young people abuse this increased latitude of choice by acting unwisely that is indulging in excess, giving venue to distraction, seeking escape and taking undue risks. This implies that the former rebels who belong in the younger age have “diwa” or habits and behaviors that necessitate parental guidance because of their limited “isip” or knowledge and understanding of the “ako”

or self and “iba sa akin” or others. With the context of Filipino Psychology (Yacat, 2013) one’s deficiency of recognizing the self and others could significantly affects the sense of “pakikiramdam” or active senses and feelings out of the situation and the other person in a social interaction to carefully come up with an appropriate behavior.

Half of the 30 former rebels were actively involved in the rebel group movement for 1 year to 4 years and there were some who were into the rebel group that lasted 13 to 16 years until the time they have surrendered. The former rebels commonly said that they joined the armed movement because of the promises they offered them such as financial support, housing assistance, education, and justice. The armed group used the personal weaknesses of the people as their recruitment strategy by providing them with a sense of identity, belongingness, and cohesiveness. This is in conformity with what Gates (2014) and his colleagues said that people can easily be recruited to join the armed group and engage in armed conflict by emphasizing to them the future benefits they will gain. They were further indoctrinated that they experience such hardships because of the negligence of the government among its people especially those who belong to a community that are very poor and innocent like them. This is supported by Prasad (2015) that the common reason of the indigenous people in joining the revolutionary movement was not about the Maoist agrarian ideology but because of the NPA’s convincing propaganda of helping them with issues on oppression executed by the government. For instance, the former rebels disclosed that upon their recruitment to the movement, they were offered with promises like providing them with monthly salaries, helping them alleviate from poverty, providing them security and protection against the people who physically and psychologically harassed them. This has been proven by the International Crisis Group, that the common rationalization among the armed group and its sympathizers is the government’s neglect to address the needs of the people. This implies that the former rebels’ stay in the revolutionary movement accessed their confrontative surface values as described by Filipino Psychology (Yacat, 2013) which include “bahala na” or determination, “pakikibaka” or shared identity and “lakas ng loob” or guts to have a sense of life survival for themselves and their family and in asserting their individual rights. These cultural values are evident to the former rebels which made them endure in the revolutionary movement despite hardships, sufferings and sacrifices they experienced.

However, with their tenure and loyalty in the movement that lasted up to 16 years, their expectations were not met which led them to disappointment. They became the disillusioned fighters, who eventually realized that they were fighting for nowhere. They have been hiding in the forest, rain or shine, there was extreme starvation, and were

detached from their family. They got tired of waiting for the rebel group's promises to come into reality. They eventually yearned "kalayaan" or freedom.

Former rebels commonly suffer from so-called Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), forcing them to relive the trauma experienced in their life. More than a half of the participants of this study had minimal to mild severity level of Posttraumatic Stress symptoms and some experienced moderate to severe symptom severity. Although PTSD negatively affects the ability of the former rebels to become functioning members of society as they suffer from anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, hostility, despair, and destroyed capacity for social trust, it is also important to take into account that most of them manifested minimal to mild PTSD symptoms and none of them suffered very severe symptoms. This implies that their Filipino fighting spirit through confrontative surface values of "bahala na" or determination, "pakikibaka" or shared identity and "lakas ng loob" or guts helped them develop an attitude of perseverance to continue with life amidst adversities. They are motivated to endure not for their own selves but for the entire family. This has been supported by Ladrado-Ignacio (2011) by emphasizing Filipino resiliency during disaster which include collectivist orientation and strong sense of family. However, based on the interview, some of the former rebels' coping mechanisms did not effectively worked for resilience which made them develop moderate to severe PTSD symptoms. This has been attested by Carandang (1996), who reported that there are negative coping behaviors manifested by Filipinos which resulted them to develop PTSD, these include withdrawal and suppression of feelings.

The 30 former rebels involved in this study were exposed to a broad range of life-threatening experiences and reported having experienced, witnessed or repeatedly confronted with traumatic events. Physical assault, like the use of force and arms during encounters, severe injuries from the fights, and life-threatening moments like being held at gunpoint were reported to be the most traumatic events they have had suffered while they were in the movement. Witnessing their comrades being brutally shot to death also marked a trauma. On the other hand, child abuse such as severe beatings, verbal provocation, and emotional exploitation were experienced and witnessed by them when they were younger. Marital discord that led to physical and psychological harm was also mentioned as traumatic event. They have had also experienced natural disaster as they were geographically situated to the greatly stricken area of typhoon Bopha, a super typhoon happened in the Philippines in the year 2012. This is consistent with what Neuner et al. (2004) argue that dose-effect relationship of cumulative exposure makes former rebels and other persons living in areas of ongoing conflict or instability a highly vulnerable group, as they are

exposed to a high number and remarkable diversity of traumatic stressors.

With the traumatic experiences that the former rebels had throughout their life existence, they reported to have had confronted with intrusive recollection symptoms like unwanted memories in the form of stressful thoughts such as flashbacks and nightmares as well as they tend to avoid reminders of the traumatic events such as places and people. Hyper-arousal such as sleeping difficulties, being alert or always on guard knowing that their former comrades will attack them anytime as they are being considered as traitors, and now their enemies. They also experienced being suspicious to others for their security and safety as they have surrendered in the folds of the law, and tend to be detached with people. They have feelings of anger and wrath toward the people who oppressed and abused them since their childhood years. Such thoughts and feelings experienced by the former rebels are supported by Neuner et al. (2004) who claim that cumulative exposure to traumatic stress is associated with the prevalence of posttraumatic stress problems. On the other hand, Mortland et al. (2007) affirms that ex-combatants from a para-military group who suffer posttraumatic stress struggles are more likely to show symptoms of anger and aggression like what the former rebels exhibited. Such condition greatly affects their quality of life.

The mental health condition exhibited by the former rebels is reinforced by Janoff-Bulman and Berg (1998) and his colleagues emphasizing that traumatic experiences significantly affect the cognition of individuals especially on the most fundamental beliefs about safety, trust and self-esteem which could lead to a belief that the world is unsafe, frightening and malevolent. With this, they tend to feel inadequate, dependent and without a sense of agency which are vital to resilience.

Moreover, the results of the study related to the former rebels' posttraumatic stress symptoms are supported by Mogapi (2004) which emphasized that the ex-combatants as participants in the reintegration programs and who suffer with PTSD exhibit psychological and behavioral problems such as difficulty in concentrating, hyper-arousal, aggressiveness, inability to establish and maintain social and intimate relationships. Basoglu et al. (2005) also affirm that symptoms of traumatic stress severely impede the process of reconciliation and reintegration.

Some of the former rebels tend to display strong emotional responses to perceived freedom from those held responsible for the experienced trauma, including anger, rage, distress, and desire for revenge. They perceive violent acts as appealing especially done to people who used to oppress and abuse them and their loved ones as persons. Such psychological behavior is clearly defined by Elbert et al. (2010) as appetitive aggression which is being motivated by

intrinsic reward and thus describes human potential to perceive perpetrated violence as fascinating and exciting. Based on the data, the former rebels do not care about their safety as long as they have satisfied their craving to fight. This is elaborated by MacManus et al. (2013), that violent outbursts are often associated with hypervigilance or impulsiveness which is a common symptom of posttraumatic stress disorder.

The former rebels' psychosocial health condition hamper their ability to become more resourceful and productive because they were consumed by their distorted beliefs based on the bombarding discourses from their own families, and community. Their psychosocial functioning were adversely affected due to their different horrible experiences that resulted to problem saturation which brought them to feel personally inadequate, and dependent. With this, the former rebels' psychosocial well-being is at stake which is a very important factor for their successful assimilation as they are being prepared in the mainstream society.

Based on the psychosocial profile of the former rebels in terms of symptom severity of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, psychopathological risks were determined through their individual narratives. Re-experiencing symptoms, avoidance, change in cognition and mood, as well as increased arousal and reactivity were identified to be the major themes related to psychopathological risks incurred by the former rebels. These psychological problems disrupted their personal lives as well as their relational and broader live circumstance such as the community.

The former rebels who exhibited moderate and severe PTSD symptoms revealed that they suffered from re-experiencing symptoms or intrusive recollection which was manifested by nightmares and bad dreams which made them suffer from restless sleep or sleeping difficulties. Physical discomfort such as heart racing, muscle tension, high blood pressure, and stomach upset were also experienced which made them having trouble with their appetite for food. On the other hand, undesirable train of thoughts such as flashbacks of the brutal and violent exposures they encountered including the images and sounds of pleas and cries were vividly stored in their brain's memory system. With these, physical and mental discomforts were experienced and affected the former rebels in their personal and relational functioning. They become the victims of their own circumstances brought by personal upbringing and sociocultural beliefs. These mental tensions experienced by the former rebels are confirmed by Maedl et al. (2010) who explained that years after the end of the war, a large proportion of ex-combatants are impaired in their daily functioning due to war-related psychological disorders.

They are unable to control their heightened emotions. They also become mentally distorted and paranoid which keep them hypervigilant despite being in a safe place like the

half-way house. They tend to experience pressure from social rules and values, such as being man enough to defend themselves at all times. Forman-Hoffman and collaborators posited that mental health comorbidity affects several dimensions of health related to quality of life and psychological well-being such as self-esteem, mood, and body image, as well as social relationships such as personal relationships and social support.

On the other hand, Janoff-Bulman and Berg (1998) stated that on a cognitive level, traumatic experiences devastate the most fundamental beliefs about safety, trust, and self-esteem, which lead to instability and psychological incoherence between the individual's internal and external world. As a consequence of a distorted belief system, their world is perceived as basically unsafe, frightening, and malevolent. Victims feel weak, dependent, and without the control and competence that is vital for the psychological and cognitive coping with the environment. This makes it difficult for them to be at ease in their environments, which may therefore limit their movement and interactions with society. Addressing the former rebels' sense of safety is therefore paramount to ushering them back into society as productive citizens.

6. Limitations

This study was limited to capture the psychosocial health profile of the former rebels in terms of posttraumatic stress symptoms. This study aimed to determine the psychopathological risks borne by the former rebels and proposed a psychotherapeutic intervention to improve their psychosocial health as part of their social reintegration process.

The former rebels were the participants in this study, those who were regular members of the New People's Army (NPA) surfaced from January 2011 onwards; who were regular members of the Militia ng Bayan (MB) who surfaced starting 2015; and who had expressed the desire not to engage in armed violence and to become productive unarmed members of their respective communities. This study was conducted in November 2019, when a batch of rebel returnees was sheltered in the half-way house situated in Mindanao, Philippines for rehabilitation as part of their social reintegration process.

The findings of the study are based on the psychosocial health status of the former rebels admitted in the half-way house in Davao Oriental, Eastern Mindanao Philippines, thus, cultural considerations are pivotal.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended:

1. To accurately determine the former rebel's psychological profile upon admission in the half-way house for rehabilitation, perhaps the center staff would need to undergo an orientation-workshop on how to appropriately conduct intake interviews to specifically identify psychosocial needs of the clients for appropriate mental health intervention and possible referrals;

2. Current procedures for processing former rebels are not focused on addressing trauma issues, perhaps the center staff would need to undergo training on basic trauma therapeutic intervention so that those who are at risk will be immediately addressed while in the half-way house;

3. Since this study addressed five former rebel's psychopathological risks, perhaps future similar research work needs to bring up to a higher number of respondents to further validate the impact of the intervention;

4. More aspects of former rebel's life and experiences should be studied further such as self-efficacy, optimism, social and environmental responsibility, as well as emotional control;

5. Former rebels, specifically who belong to the mature age (aging) and have been in the rebel movement for more than a decade, have to be the focus in the future studies on psychosocial well-being and gender roles;

6. Trauma not only during combat but also during their formative years of life are identified to have struggled by the former rebels, thus, the appropriate government agencies, local government units, half-way houses, as well as nongovernment organizations working with former rebels and peace process, should take active and serious interest in meeting the psychosocial health needs of the former rebels by paying attention to the emerging literature, undertaking future research, designing psychotherapeutic interventions, and actively addressing trauma symptoms especially those with high risk for the above mentioned population;

7. Clinical Psychologist to train the center staff in the management of the rebel returnees in terms of their psychosocial condition specifically on PTSD symptoms.

8. Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that the former rebels who mostly belong to the "lumad" or indigenous community are vulnerable to develop posttraumatic stress based on the reported manifestations of symptoms. Their mental health condition could be at high risk if these vulnerabilities are not appropriately addressed during their rehabilitation period before they will be assimilated in the mainstream

society. This is also true to Maedl et al. (2010) who claim that former rebels struggle to cope with experienced war stressors, in order to manage daily survival in a harsh environment, and how wounds often do not heal under the thin surface of "normality". The former rebel's psychosocial health condition is vulnerable based on their different traumatic life experiences beginning with their formative years until they were involved in the rebel movement.

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