

# Examining Rebel Returnees' Life Transition: Deviance to Reintegration

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the life transition process of twenty rebel returnees as they abandoned insurgency to reintegrate themselves in society through government's Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP). Process refers to a way of examining the situations of rebel returnees as they involved in insurgency but sought abandonment to regain new life direction relying on their strengths, resources and relationships. A qualitative study utilizing life course approach as lens, it examined data obtained through in-depth interview. While it discusses conditions drawing individuals toward communist insurgency, it limits its scope on former rebels' reasons of returning to mainstream society. Before conducting data collection, researchers sought approval from the university's Research Integrity and Compliance Office for ethical requirements. Findings reveal the life situation of rebel returnees prior to recruitment, compelling factors to engage in insurgency and turning points to abandon the movement. In their youth, these individuals were initiated into insurgent organization through acquaintances, friends and even relatives. Venues were the community, school and neighborhood. Some were students while others out-of-school youth. Poverty and land problems were common experience. The promise of economic solutions and delivery of justice attracted them to join rebel forces. For certain period while constantly experiencing adversities in fighting government troops, their life was at stake. Realizing greater risks ahead, the informants came to life's turning point and made decisions to abandon their perilous engagement. Through the assistance of government's Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP) E-CLIP, their re-integration into the mainstream social life was facilitated.

**Keywords:** rebel returnees, life course, deviance, mainstream society, reintegration

## INTRODUCTION

The insurgency movement in the Philippines has gone more than five decades involving groups in conflict with the government authority. The communist insurgency is recognized as the longest running in the world and presently continuing [1]. Literature defines insurgency as struggle between a non-ruling group and the ruling authorities where the former employs political resources and instruments of violence to establish legitimacy for aspects of the political system it considers illegitimate [2], a social conflict having politico-economic dimensions and web of interlocking factors making it complex [3], violence aimed at establishing bases that are secure from control of the central government and which would enable establishment of what amounts to a counter-government [4]. Insurgents can also be considered "non-state armed groups that use force to achieve their political or quasi-political objectives and are opposed to or autonomous from the state" [5].

Insurgency has challenged Philippine society since many years, but it toned down in 1950s, regaining momentum in 1960s upon revival of the communist organization, the renamed Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) with its New People's Army (NPA) and National Democratic Front (NDF). It waged armed rebellion against government's military forces. The communist movement set camps nationwide, conducted

clandestine recruitment particularly in rural communities where poverty remains high. However, this movement's influence and impact on government's destabilization declined, its presence is feeble [6].

In Mindanao, communist insurgency persists, but its activities are scant. Clashes between military and communist insurgents occur mostly in remote, mountainous, agricultural areas in the northern part of Mindanao [7]. Insurgents' presence remains in agrarian areas known for land conflicts, taking these issues of discussion in peasant recruitment.

The national government has been cognizant of the root causes of insurgency tied with long-standing economic issues. Past administrations have implemented programs to address insurgency. The Task Force Balik-Loob (TFBL) in 2018 provided former rebels with pathway to return to civilian life. Mandated through Administrative Order No. 10 on April 3, 2018, this body supervised reintegration of the members of CPP-NPA-NDF and their immediate families [8]. It employed integrated approach for rebels to rejoin society and enjoy the benefits through livelihood assistance, education, legal aid, and other essential services [9]. This Task Force Balik Loob (TFBL) encouraged rebel returnees through Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP) incentive package of financial support, housing, and educational opportunities. The National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) was established in December, 2018 through Executive Order 70 providing long-term integrated program as Whole-of-Nation Approach. It promotes development in grassroot level through Barangay Development Program (BDP), a flagship program of NTF-ELCAC. The E-CLIP is one of the twelve clusters in the NTF-ELCAC and renamed Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration and Amnesty Program. In the Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR) of Administrative Order No. 10, E-CLIP is designed for former rebels who surrendered since April 3, 2018 that include members of the Communist Party of the Philippines, New People's Army and National Democratic Front, "Militia ng Bayan". Included in their beneficiaries are their spouses, children and parents as well. Support covers immediate cash assistance, legal assistance, government services, housing, employment, loans and market access, children study grants, and PAMANA livelihood projects (DSWD, 2024).

Former rebels often come from marginalized or conflict-affected communities [10], hence providing targeted interventions is essential to prevent recidivism and facilitate smooth life transition. The programs also emphasize psycho-social support, skills development, and community reintegration efforts. The Duterte administration enabled many rebels to return to the fold of law and live mainstream life. Under the current Marcos administration, NTF-ELCAC continues its programs facilitating former rebels' social reintegration through 10-day deradicalization method comprising psycho-social activities. Under the E-CLIP, they receive cash assistance for their livelihood and immediate needs [11].

The national government's efforts align with United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly SDG 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions and SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals. NTF-ELCAC's campaign promotes peace and sustainable development. This is pursued through partnership of government agencies, private institutions, barangay and community organizations.

This study describes the process of life transition of former rebels with assistance of the government. Life transition process refers to a way of examining the situations of rebel returnees who seek reintegration in normal social life. Scholars have studied insurgency as phenomenon. Rebel returnees' transition to mainstream society still needs to be explored utilizing sociological approach. This research attempts to examine local context of Northern Mindanao and generate data useful to government and concerned institutions.

This study takes its framework from Life Course Theory elaborated by American sociologist [9]. Life Course Theory advances five principles covering first, the life-span development of individuals as agents in which transitions can happen during their life's course. Secondly, the human agency of individuals is essential as they construct their own lives through their choices and actions within the constraints of historical and social circumstances. Third is time and place indicating individuals' historical period of life and certain geographical conditions where they live. Fourth is the timing of lives emphasizing that meaning and impact of life transition is contingent on when it occurs. Historical time refers to societal or large-scale changes or events and how these affect individuals. These changes can be political, economic, or technological in nature [12] that may

determine a sequence of societal events affecting peoples' transition enacted over historical periods. These can pose as situational factors pertaining to external events, reasons for transition, and external resources made available to persons involved. The fifth principle is described by [9] as linked lives through social relationships. Maintaining ties with other people is important since individuals who are determined and receive social support may be able to glide through transition and experience benefits.

In this study, the life course of rebel returnees follows a non-normative path considering that they deviated from socially acceptable legal and ethical standards. By joining rebel groups, they have made a choice to engage in deviance. The sociological theory of deviance provides lens in analyzing their experiences. Deviance refers to human actions that violate societal norms. Such behaviors contradict general rules of a dominant society [13]. Rebellion in the Philippines is characterized by groups that seek to overthrow the government in complete violation of the constitution. The CPP/NPA/NDF armed resistance is a lingering case of social deviance representing complex predicament affecting social institutions. The Differential Association Theory of Edwin H. Sutherland [14] informs that this crisis-laden situation indicates a normative conflict because of society's long term competitions encouraging coercion instead of harmony, conflict rather than consensus. As society is segmented into groups having conflict on the appropriateness of the law, the growing tensions between those following and not following the law could prompt delinquent actions and criminality. This normative conflict can translate into individual criminal acts in a social and psychological process of differential association. Through intimate communication with groups involved in rebellion, individuals can learn the acts of committing crime from a range of simple, complicated and specialized skills or techniques. Communication process also allows definitions favorable or unfavorable to crimes including motives, verbalization and rationalization that make crimes justified or unjustified. In the informants' case when recruited by rebel organizers, they were confronted with varying meanings of armed revolution, frequency of presentation, duration, priority and intensity. Their decisions depended on whether the options were important, presented oftentimes, within a length of time, as priority in initial stage and presented by persons whom they have intensive relationships with as friends, neighbors, relatives and parents. This process of differential association occurs in a structured social organization, which on the part of the informants were embedded in their families, neighborhood, schools, markets and communities.

As rebels realized the very difficult, life-threatening circumstances in their encounters against the government, their fading motivation, disillusionment and urgent need for life support compelled them to abandon the movement and return to mainstream society. Life transitions are complex and multidimensional. Individuals experience transitions differently depending on situational factors and personal characteristics. Personal factors constitute the agentic experience of the transition – whether the agents will hold on to the transition and advance for good or give up and return to the old state. Such factors serve as coping skills signifying behaviors and strategies to manage and adapt to the transitions. Individuals' problem-solving skills, help seeking behavior, and emotional regulations will impact their experience with life transitions. These factors cover resilience, self-esteem, determination, and social support. Positive perception of the impact of transitions on their identity, values, beliefs, and status can keep them stable in their new life direction.

## METHODOLOGY

This study utilized qualitative approach aligned with constructionism using interpretative and naturalistic methods [15]. It also considered informants' personal accounts thus, taking the emic point of view focusing attention on dynamic context of informants' experiences being recruited into insurgency, engaging in combat and making transitions toward mainstream society. Purposive sampling was used to select informants who experienced the investigated phenomenon [16]. Selection criteria included rebel returnees' location, which must be within Misamis Oriental; those who abandoned insurgency, availed of and remained under the government's program E-CLIP; and spent not less than three years in the rebel movement. The last criterion was necessary for life transition may take its course over a period. The study excludes discussion on effectiveness of government's programs in helping rebel returnees' life transition. Participants involved 20 rebel returnees, only one was female. Their names were registered in the government's E-CLIP list obtained from the AFP's Camp Evangelista, Barangay Patag, Cagayan de Oro City.

Data were collected through semi-structured individual face-to-face in-depth interview. This was most appropriate based on these considerations: (1) sensitivity of topic (2) difficulty to gather multiple participants (3) importance of building rapport with limited participants to ensure comfortable conversation, unbothered presentation of participants' views and credibility of data and (4) flexibility of interview format [17],[18], allowing interviewer's adaptability of questions to participants' perspectives.

Before data collection, researchers sought ethics approval from MSU-IIT's Research Integrity and Compliance Office (RICO). A letter request to conduct data collection was formally submitted to the designated office at AFP's Camp Evangelista, Patag, Cagayan de Oro. The personnel in-charge of matters on rebel returnees facilitated the granting of approval. Letter to individual rebel returnees with consent form was given personally. Their preferred schedule and place for interview were considered. Conduct of individual face-to-face in-depth interview using vernacular was done properly with interviewees' permission for audio recording, treating each interviewee fairly and impartially, and protecting confidentiality of interviewee's personal identity. Recorded interview transcript was coded and analyzed. Core ideas were extracted to compose themes as basis for interpretation based on Life Course Theory.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Life Course of Rebel Returnees

Utilizing the Life Course Theory [9] as framework, informants' responses were categorized and situated based on five principles.

#### Informants' Life-span Development: Adolescence Experiences:

The first principle of Life Course Theory deals with life-span development of individuals in which transitions happen during life's course. Adolescence is a stage within this life-span development marked with profound changes in physical, biological, cognitive, psychosocial and emotional characteristics [19]. Recalling their adolescence during interview, the 20 informants mentioned views about their youth experiences before they joined rebel movement. They lived and grew in agricultural environments. Mostly, they believed that 'they enjoyed a lot of freedom'. They had independence as they freely moved around their community, being carefree and at peace, enjoying tranquility and pleasant life, with unhindered relaxation. Four individuals emphasized that life was 'kind of wonderful while they were once students.' One claimed to be relaxed and unfettered in being a farmer and student. The others described themselves as just poor farmers, free and unhindered, just like the regular and ordinary person living a simple life who can eat three times daily. Yet, this youthful life was also perceived as messy and difficult. It was challenging for them to know local issues such as thievery in their surroundings. In the Life Course Approach, the informants' adolescent experiences basically shape their dispositions, interests and choices in adulthood. Their socio-economic conditions and biological-physiological health they grew up with can have impact on the opportunities they choose to pursue later in life (Carr, 2019).

#### Informants' Choices and Actions within the Constraints of Historical and Social Circumstances: Compelling Reasons to Join the Rebel Movement:

Taking the second principle in the Life Course Theory, informants in their human agency construct their own lives through choices and actions within the constraints of historical and social circumstances. Since individuals' life course is embedded in the historical times and places they inhabit, their motivations can be influenced by their circumstances. In their context, whoever are the persons related with them can also be a source of influences (Carr, 2018). Their responses to the interview represent the way they became connected with those persons within their immediate surroundings and developed social ties with those identified as rebel forces. While interviewed, they explained how they became connected to individuals in the rebel movement. Their recruitment was initial stage that elicited personal reactions of curiosity, awareness, self-motivation, and socio-political circumstances. They recalled their thoughts when they were recruited. These are presented in Table 1 summary.



Table I Compelling Reasons and Motivation Upon Recruitment

Verbalized Reasons	Motivation	Implication
observing the movement, be it or not	Showing curiosity	Uncertain but trying to observe
I joined the NPA to stop the thieves in our area.	eliminate delinquency	Dismayed of thieves' presence in the surroundings
because of the poor approach of the government to the common man	Protest government's inadequacy	Disappointment of government's service
self-willed to get involved	Willingness to get involved	Readiness in engagement
Unintentional	No intention	Lack awareness
assured that NPA will help the poor	Poverty alleviation	Belief in a promise
They convinced me that the rich and the poor should be equal.	Convinced about social equality	Aspiring for social equality
convinced when recruited	attracted to join	Belief in the goals
I was forced to join the NPA.	Feeling pushed to join	No choice to refuse
recruited from the community	Social connections	Presence of rebel forces in the community
recruited in the school	influence as a student	Exposure to student activism
want because there are arms provided	Interest to take up arms	Opportunity to use weapons
because of the commitment to help everyone	desire to help others	Concern for others
because of the commitment to help us but everything seems to be a trick	Desire to help but doubtful	Felt betrayed
brought by cousins and friends	Influenced by peers and relatives	Friendly insinuation
deceived by commitment	Committed to the movement	Regret over commitment
want to support the need	Desire to help others	Concern for others
because of the difficulty	Moved by the difficult situation	Empathy for those in difficulty
My parents did not have the ability for me to go to secondary level school.	Cope with frustration of being out-of-school	Inability to seek better options
My parents arranged my being recruited.	Parental influence	Obedience to parents

Their responses in the interview suggest choices ranging from voluntary, convinced, to unintentional. Voluntary membership was expressed by those curious about rebel groups. This curiosity prompted them to uncover their difficult situations through people they knew as friends, relatives and even parents. Other informants were motivated due to economic deprivation. Some were moved by their grievances against local criminality and to protect the community from thieves. Others were disappointed of the government. There were those expressing own willingness thus, convinced especially by the opportunity to use weapons. It was perceived as solution to address their grievances.

Others were unintentional expressing they were caught up in their circumstances such as being recruited in school, or neighborhood. Unable to get out of this situation, they unintentionally became rebels influenced by other people and their own relatives.

### Time and Place Indicating Informants' Historical Period of Life and Geographical Conditions

The third principle of Life Course Theory emphasizes the informants' time and place indicating the historical period of life and certain geographical conditions of the locality that contribute to shape their choices. In their youth, the informants lived in agricultural communities characterized by poverty with presence of insurgents in the surroundings. Such geographical conditions predisposed them to rebels' underground activities. This was a time of interaction that gradually motivated them to learn the rebel cause. These local circumstances indicate the disruptive social situation in many Philippine provinces at larger scale brought about by the longest CPP/NPA/NDF insurgency [20]-[23], [5], [3], .

Persuaded by rebel organizers, the informants developed expectations related to their self-perceptions, own socio-economic conditions and community problems. The agenda were promising to them as economic benefit, family future, support for children's schooling, and social equity among many, drawing them to the rebel cause. These are clustered in Table 2.

Table II Promise and Expectation Cluster

Promise Clusters	Verbalized Expectations	Concerns and Aspirations in Life
Personal/Voluntary Choice	I joined voluntarily.	Personally convinced
Ample Promises	There are many promises and promises.	Unspecified
Economic Benefit	They promised to protect the land heritage. They said they will support our land. support our land so that others do not take it to help and solve the problem especially on land	Solution to land problem
Future of the Family	guaranteed to help the family's livelihood They will help the family's need. They promised to help the family's difficulty.	Livelihood and family welfare
Support for Children's Schooling	and send the children to school They promised to send the children to school. schooling of the children	Children's education
Social Equality	They said there is fairness in living.	equity
Service to People	help the tribe to live to serve the people in the NPA struggle	Tribe's survival Service delivery
Freedom and Emancipation	convinced, there is a victory for the many people joined with the wish that victory will be achieved There is democracy and everything is free in the NPA. by participating in the armed movement, women will be freed They promised to solve the problems of the country.	Freedom Conflict resolution Women emancipation Solution to national problems
Power and Strength	They promised that the NPA is equal to the law of the government. joined the army of the poor, compelled to go with them	Equality in the law Empowering the poor

Their expectations are shaped by their concerns for economic progress, family welfare, children's education and long-term attainment of freedom and emancipation. They had ambitions of getting employment however, such became elusive as their life direction had been deviated towards participation in the CPP/NPA armed resistance movement. Dwelling in locations with rebels in the vicinity, their casual acquaintances eventually led them to illegal activities. The informants' decision was influenced by their economic deprivation intersecting with promises by rebel organizers. Carr (2018) referred this situation to the role of history and geography as factors which affect the individuals' interpersonal relations and life trajectories.

Deviance is elaborated in Sutherland's Differential Association Theory [14] stating that normative conflict within society can translate into individual criminal acts in a social and psychological process of differential association. In the informants' case, being in association with rebel groups and having communication on rebel agenda facilitated their own process of imbibing insurgent acts ranging from simple, complicated to specialized skills and techniques. In the informants' particular period and place, they made personal definition, verbalization and rationalization of the acts of rebellion whether making them justified or unjustified as the given alternative to solve their miserable condition. The manner of importance, frequency of presentation, duration, priority and intensity of the informants' association with rebel groups determine the depth of their engagement. Such differential association takes place within the informants' given social structure, in their communities characterized by divisiveness and conflict.

The study of Nagai [24] in selected countries stated similar situation of youth associated with non-state armed groups (YANSAG) being exposed to environmental vulnerabilities making their pathways into violent extremist involvement. Persuasion was the most common tactic done by rebel organizers to entice recruits with rewards, access to weapons, altruistic and nationalistic narratives. Forced recruitment was also done by close friends, relatives and even parents. Deception was found out later as the promised rewards were never realized. Among the factors influencing the youth to join the non-state armed groups (NSAG) were insecurity, economic necessity, and desire to leave a dysfunctional family and community conditions.

## Timing of Lives

This period of informants' life also represents the fourth principle of Life Course Theory, referring to the timing of lives. (Carr, 2018). The informants were young when recruited into the rebel organization. The time they spent as youth growing in the peasant communities were moments living in poverty, lack of access to basic social services and transportation difficulties. Those periods of contact with rebel organizers left them grappling with insurgency, when their decisions initially gave meaning to a commitment which eventually made them participants in the country's longest armed resistance movement disrupting the very foundations of society.

In relation to the national situation, such timing also covers the more than five decades historical period when insurgency in the country persisted until at present, though dipping toward the end of 2022 [7]. Noted in the study of Francisco [25], those young people who joined rebel movements were driven by combined grievances including poverty, lack of access to education and perceived injustice in the community. Case studies conducted in NPA affected regions in Mindanao explained that poverty has a critical role in recruitment of young people to the rebel movement considering that NPAs target the poor with a message of economic liberation and promise of financial support without much conviction for radicalization and adherence to extremist ideology [26]. Timing also represents the informants' number of years in rebellion. The length of time varied as revealed: one spent more than 20 years, another one had 12 to 16 years, four of them were rebels for 7 to 11 years, a majority of thirteen spent 2 to 6 years, while only one was a rebel for at least 1 year. When asked on what was life during the years with the NPA organization, their verbalized descriptions are reflected in Table 3.

Table III Descriptions of Life in the Rebel Movement

Verbalized Description	Thoughts/Feelings Evoked	Implication
The goal is good but dangerous.	Uncertainty	Positive outlook yet found the movement dangerous
It's not easy because day and night wherever we go, keep an eye on the area.	regularly disturbed	Keeping on watch anytime, everyday
It's not easy, because day and night, we go anywhere" ... "difficulty, anxiety, limited movement.	anxiety, restlessness	Alertness and calculated move
Fear, nervousness, I know that the fate is death.	fear of dying	awareness of grave danger
fear, always hiding	fear of being caught	deeply bothered
loneliness, difficulty, no proper sleep, always ready for the elusive life	lonely, sleepless, hurried	Preparing for any risk
danger, bitterness, hunger within the revolution	Bitterness, hungry, emptiness	state of helplessness
difficult, dangerous, missing family	fear, miss loved ones	desire to reconnect with family
hard, and without proper sleep	Disturbed	stressed
There is no peace of mind.	Anxious	In a state of restlessness
sad, difficult, and hungry	Burdened	weary life
hardship, hunger, fatigue, family loneliness	helpless and lonely	losing support
difficulty, tiredness of the situation	losing hope, desperate	life uncertainty

hiding, and living conditions are becoming difficult	Insecure	life uncertainty
Difficult	Insecure	weary life
fatigue, difficulty, hunger, and fear	Burdened	weary life
spend more time to the organization than family	miss loved ones	Desire to reconnect with family
Personal needs are not taken care of, because of the bitter situation, busy with the revolution.	deprived, neglected	Lacking support for personal needs

The informants gave varied versions of their experiences. They described harrowing life situation of being haunted as fugitives. At the start, one had held on to a positive outlook although a great danger was perceived. Most of them stated narratives expressing difficulty of living, fear, fatigue, hunger, loneliness of being away from their families, sleeplessness, restlessness, bitterness, insecurity of movement and anxieties of being arrested or killed. Complicating this situation was their disconnection from their families as source of life support. Hence, their personal needs were neglected. Throughout their years of involvement, they were caught up in helpless condition where they faced risk of dying, in extreme pursuit of safety, but had to survive. Studies on rebel returnees in the Philippines mention similar hardships [20]-[23].

The informants realized the stark differences of life situation before joining the NPA and being active regular NPA. Before joining the NPA despite difficult economic life, they enjoyed greater freedom in their movements, peace of mind, clarity, tranquility, a pleasant life, unhindered rest, and having three meals a day. The years spent as NPA were totally in contrast because life was dangerous. They were in constant fear and moving around was difficult. There was no permanent place to stay. Oftentimes, they lacked proper sleep and were tormented with homesickness. Their days were filled with hardship, fatigue, and hunger.

Direct armed encounter against government soldiers was inevitably tough consequence of their choice and it had been a dreadful experience. Although not all of them engaged in combat depending on their assigned tasks. Nine of them had gone through fierce battle against the government military forces. They recalled their combat experience as difficult and life-threatening. Their statements show details in Table 4.

Table IV Combat Participation

Frequency of Engagement	Number of Informants
I cannot count how many times.	1
Three times	2
Four times	1
Yes, six times.	1
I have participated twice.	1
Yes, but just swift.	1
Yes, once.	2

Their harrowing experiences are commonly described as difficult in varying degrees, conditions and coping acts as summarized in Table 5.

Table V Combat Participation

Emotions of Difficulty	Conditions of Difficulty	Coping Acts
Fear, hunger	Always on the run and hide	Hide in the area
Anxiety	To fight the military	Continued with training to use arms
Beyond description	To face death	Planned to surrender
Fear	Seeing wounded comrades carried fellow comrades	Safety to myself first to avoid being hit

Informants' timing of lives included moments after life-threatening episodes when they felt their revolutionary motivation was fading, disillusionment of the rebel cause caught themselves, and abandonment became an



option.

### Linked Lives Through Social Relationships: Reconnecting with Families:

All informants had afterthoughts of life as rebel and considered returning to normalcy. Analyzing this stage based on Life Course Theory, this refers to seeking reconnection with others, the fifth principle described as linked lives through social relationships (Carr, 2018). This comes as disillusionment after experiences of life threats, hunger, and dissatisfaction of NPA ideology. Seeking to live in the mainstream society, the informants found it urgent to regain ties with family, neighborhood, government and institutions.

According to Tangging and Yeo [27], combatants would surrender based on pocketbook maximization hypothesis explaining that they are rational actors who would evaluate costs and benefits of staying or leaving. The informants' option favored abandonment of combat life. Nine informants recalled their decisions without further narratives. The others explained briefly their situational evaluation summarized in Table 6.

Table VI Informants' Situational Evaluation

Family-Oriented	Life Safety Matters	Very Difficult Condition	Having Second Thought
<p>"Yes because my family was not taken care of."</p> <p>"Yes I deeply regretted because my family is destroyed when I joined the NPA."</p> <p>"Yes because I was not with my family."</p> <p>"Yes specially upon learning that they have already graduated."</p>	<p>"Yes because our life is in danger."</p> <p>"deeply regretted because there I realized my belief about CPP-NPA is wrong."</p>	<p>"Yes because of hardships and hunger."</p> <p>"I regretted many times because of hardships there."</p> <p>"Yes because of crisis."</p>	<p>"Yes but I preferred the NPA."</p> <p>"Yes but they also provide, I do not regret."</p>

The informants' reasons for abandoning the rebel movement cluster on two priorities such as family and life safety. They believe that family is the most important connection in life thus, giving attention and spending life with their loved ones constitute a fundamental commitment. This becomes urgent especially after their experience of life-threatening conditions. They realized that they still want to live normally and meaningfully with their families. These are their statements presented in Table 7.

Table VII Reasons to Abandon the Rebel Movement

Reasons	Verbalized Statement	Implication
Family as Priority	<p>"I want to be with my family."</p> <p>"It is better to be with the family."</p> <p>"because of my family's future"</p> <p>"because of my family"</p> <p>"because of my family"</p> <p>"My family convinced me to surrender."</p> <p>"I want to be with family even if life condition is difficulty."</p>	Need to stay closely with the family to support one another
Government Support	<p>"I surrendered because the government pledged to provide us support through E-CLIP."</p> <p>"I surrendered because the government pledged to provide support to my family."</p>	Regaining trust in government's support program
Life Threat as Factor	<p>"because of hunger, hardships, fatigues, loneliness of the family"</p> <p>"because of hunger, fatigue, and missing the</p>	Heavily burdened of stressful conditions that endanger life,

	<p>family”</p> <p>“because of hunger, fatigue, missing my parents”</p> <p>“fear, hardships and hunger”</p> <p>“because of fear, hunger, and loneliness to my family”</p> <p>“because of difficulty of our situation”</p> <p>“loneliness, fatigues, hunger, and I still want to live”</p>	Having a reason to live normal life
Personal Choice	<p>“self-will to surrender”</p> <p>“to have peace of mind”</p> <p>“I ask first if go to prison If I surrender, I finally surrendered”</p>	Willingness to abandon the rebel movement to find peace
Feeling Disillusioned	<p>“My family convinced me to surrender and I understand that my struggle with the NPA has no future.”</p> <p>“Because I cannot understand the ways anymore”</p>	Uncertainty of one’s future, Doubts and confusion

Informants give value to their family as source of motivation, support and reason to abandon the rebel movement. This is parallel to the findings of Cubero, Guliban, [21] that family longevity is important to rebel returnees. Their families are source of security and resilience that strengthen their self-worth and motivate them to find alternatives for better future.

### Reintegration to Mainstream Society: Government’s Intervention:

The informants reconnected themselves with their families through government channel particularly the barangay officials and military. It was a gradual manner of seeking help from family members to contact these government agencies. It was their deliberate act of surrender to the Armed Forces of the Philippines in five ways: 1) negotiation with barangay officials and military 2) contacting a soldier 3) contacting the family of a soldier 4) appeal to Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representative (IPMR) 5) captivity and surrender. They found it relatively less difficult to surrender than to stay with the NPA as long as there is reliable contact with the AFP. They availed of the government’s reintegration program through Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP). They were confident because of government’s assistance received as stated: “they fulfill their promise, specially to our children to go to school,” “through livelihood program,” “they were able to provide assistance”, “because of the support of the government, me and my family were settled”, “I am beyond description because I have attended schooling but I try my best with the help of the government”. They were provided with cash assistance, housing, children’s scholarship and livelihood through government agencies such as AFP, LGU, TESDA, DOLE and DSWD.

Reuniting with their families was a happy event that relieved them from atmosphere of fear and insecurity. This was opportunity to change their life course with government’s guidance. Yet, there were also challenges particularly on long-term economic sustenance as priority. Relying on government’s provision is temporary that they felt uncertain as to how they could provide for their future. Attaining self-reliance and economic sufficiency remains their basic goal. They considered their current situation a better position to fulfill a brighter future, than to stay in rebellion for their entire life.

### Implications

Findings of this study emphasized that individuals’ life course proceeds through a process in which they navigate into social conditions requiring personal choices and actions. Deviant behaviors suggest inevitability as they interact differently with groups and forces around them. In the Philippines, youth in rural communities are beset with conditions of armed conflict shaping their choices and actions. In this study, the rebel returnees in their context, time and place have dreadfully fought against government troops, faced life threats and thus abandoned the movement to return to mainstream living. Rebel returnees’ effective life transition relies on

their agentic determination, family support and government intervention to renew social connections for longevity.

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