Life Stories of Former Rebels in the Second District of Bohol

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the life stories of former rebels in the second district of Bohol. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: the experiences of the informants as former rebels, the impact of the program of the government on the rebel returnees and the aspirations of the informants to improve their quality of life.

Utilized the qualitative method of research employing the descriptive phenomenological approach using an interview guide with an open-ended questions for both individual and focus group discussion in exploring the life stories of the informants as former rebels. There were ten selected former rebels in the second district of Bohol, four of them had been interviewed individually and the remaining six participated in the focus group discussion. I used an interview guide aided with the audio recorder for the basis of transcribing the responses of the participants utilizing the Colaizzi's method or phenomenological analysis procedure in analyzing the responses of the informants during the conduct of interview.

For the positive experiences of the informants as former rebels, emergent themes were created: Freedom and Liberation, Happiness and Contentment. For the negative experiences of the informants as former rebels, themes were created: The Erosion of Educational Integrity, Exploitation and Unfulfilled Promises. For the impact of the program of the government on the rebel returnees the created themes were: Financial Assistance, Family Unity, and Empowerment through Skills and Resources. Lastly, on the aspirations of the informants to improve the quality of their lives, themes were created as follows: Hope for Better Future and Economic Stability, Inclusive Government Support, and Unity and Cooperation for Peace.

Keywords: Reintegration, Former Rebels, Community Support, Government Programs, Phenomenological Research, Criminal Justice, Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

Rebels are individuals or groups who engage in armed conflict against a government or established authority. The motivations for rebellion vary widely, influenced by a region's historical, social, economic, and political contexts. Common factors that contribute to the emergence of rebel movements include socio-economic disparities, political exclusion, and cultural grievances. These underlying causes often drive individuals or groups to resort to armed struggle as a means of seeking change or asserting their rights. Understanding these factors is essential for addressing the complexities of conflict and developing effective peacebuilding strategies.

Conflicts and insurgencies are significant challenges faced by many countries around the world, resulting in substantial human and economic costs. The Global Peace Index indicates that ongoing armed conflicts displace millions and undermine global stability. Rebel movements often arise from a combination of socio-economic disparities, political exclusion, and cultural grievances. Understanding the life stories of former rebels can provide valuable insights into the complex interplay of these factors globally, allowing for the development of more effective conflict resolution and peacebuilding strategies (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2021).

In the Philippines, the government has persistently grappled with the challenge of rebellion. For decades, it has led efforts to negotiate peaceful agreements aimed at ending armed confrontations and persuading members of communist organizations to lay down their arms. While some insurgents have chosen to surrender, many remain steadfast in their commitment to their ideologies and resist governmental authority. This struggle underscores the complexities of addressing the root causes of insurgency and the need for comprehensive approaches to peacebuilding and reintegration (Abinales & Amoroso, 2020).

However, Bohol has historically been one of Region 7's most rebellious provinces due to the violent actions of communist insurgent groups. The insurgency stemmed from high poverty levels, inadequate security, limited access to public services, and pervasive social inequities. The province experienced a significant shift through a holistic approach led by Team Bohol, which included various stakeholders committed to counterinsurgency and peacebuilding efforts. This collaborative strategy contributed to the successful surrender of numerous insurgents, highlighting the effectiveness of inclusive governance in addressing the root causes of conflict (Bacani, 2018).

The varied experiences of the former rebels reflect the complexities of their journey toward reintegration, influenced by factors such as the nature of the conflict, their level of involvement, motivations for surrendering, and the socio-political environments they re-enter. While many face challenges such as community rejection, trauma, psychological distress, stigmatization, and legal barriers, there is also significant support from government initiatives and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that help facilitate their transition back into society. These interventions aim to provide stability, fostering resilience and a sense of belonging among returnees.

This multifaceted exploration offers valuable insights into the realities faced by these individuals, providing a basis for shaping policies and practices that promote reconciliation, justice, and sustainable peace. By better understanding the struggles and aspirations of former rebels, the study can contribute to creating a more inclusive and stable society, where the narratives of those who once took up arms are heard and respected.

As a Criminology Instructor, I recognized the significance of understanding the life stories of former rebels in Bohol, particularly in how these narratives inform the broader context of criminal justice and peacebuilding. This exploration is crucial, as it sheds light on the motivations, challenges, and aspirations of individuals who have re-joined society after years of conflict. Understanding their experiences can guide the development of more effective reintegration programs and community-based interventions. It is vital for fostering social cohesion and reducing recidivism, ultimately contributing to sustainable peace in the region.

In light of this context, the study aimed to explore the life stories of former rebels in the second district of Bohol, particularly in the Municipality of Danao, employing a qualitative phenomenological approach. Danao serves as a resettlement area for former rebels who formally surrendered to the government, receiving housing projects and livelihood programs designed to facilitate their reintegration into society.

Theoretical Background

This study is anchored mainly on General Strain Theory by Robert Agnew (1992) and supported by the Theory of Change of Carol Weiss et al. (1995) and the Disillusionment Theory of Paul Watzlawick (1974).

General Strain Theory (GST) by Robert Agnew is based on the concept that certain people react to the multiple stresses they face in life as dysfunctional coping techniques that lead to crime (Agnew, 2013).

GST explains that there are four features of strains that are most likely to result in crime: 1) strains are perceived as unfair; 2) strains are perceived as large in scale; 3) strains are connected with insufficient social control; and 4) strains generate some pressure or incentive to participate in criminal coping (Agnew, 2015).

The GST has three basic reasons why deviances cause strain: (1) failure to attain a goal, (2) the elimination of good impulses, and (3) the presence of negative impulses. Strain can occur in all strata of the population and is not a well-defined phenomenon. However, Agnew demonstrates how "strain" leads to criminal activity. He

argues that stress causes negative emotional states such as rage or despair, which promote various forms of delinquent conduct in the absence of suitable coping abilities (Agnew, 2022).

Some people respond to psychological stress with norm-compliant conduct, while others engage in criminal activity due to a lack of coping qualities such as intellect, creativity, problem-solving abilities, and others. Furthermore, negative elements such as criminal surroundings or criminal character qualities have a detrimental impact on dealing with stress (Agnew and Brezina, 2019).

The Theory of Change (ToC) of Carol Weiss et al. (1995) is a methodology or criterion for planning, participation, adaptive management, and evaluation that is used in companies, philanthropy, not-for-profit, international development, research, and government sectors to promote social change (Tudjman et al., 2010). ToC defines long-term goals and then maps backward to identify necessary preconditions (Duffy, 2017).

The theory explains the change process by outlining causal linkages in an initiative, i.e., its shorter-term, intermediate, and longer-term outcomes (Munisi & Adam, 2022). The discovered changes are represented as the "outcomes pathway," which shows each outcome in logical relationship to the others, as well as chronological flow and feedback loops (Mansell et al., 2021). The links between outcomes are explained by "rationales," or statements of why one outcome is considered a pre-requisite for another.

ToC's originality rests in (1) distinguishing between intended and actual outcomes, and (2) asking stakeholders to model their desired objectives before deciding on types of intervention to attain those outcomes (Vakulenko, 2022).

The theory of change is a rigorous yet participative method in which organizations and stakeholders in a planning process describe their long-term goals and specify the circumstances that they feel must occur for these goals to be achieved. These circumstances are represented as the intended outcome averaged in a casual framework (Shirey, 2013).

The Disillusionment Theory of Paul Watzlawick (1974) suggests that some rebel returnees may have joined the militant group due to a sense of injustice but later became disillusioned with the group's tactics, ideology, or leadership (Leone, 2004). They may leave the group and return to society for a better way to address their grievances (Asuni, 2009).

The ability to accept disillusionment is both a developmental requirement and a continuing problem. Disillusionment penetrates the zone of illusion and encourages the person to engage in a more expansive engagement with common reality. However, when disillusionment becomes chronic and persistent or is accompanied by extreme psychological suffering, some people view suicide as an urgent alternative for denying or escaping their pain (Tillman, 2018).

Although disillusioned people seek answers and explanations, the resulting damage to key epistemic frameworks impedes efforts to absorb or adapt new knowledge (Park, 2019). Indeed, the urge to seek meaning and knowledge modulates the relationship between disillusionment and violent inclinations (Van Tilburg et al., 2019). Disillusioned people are more likely to engage in repeated and ruminative thinking (Park et al., 2018).

The Philippine government has established several legal bases to support the reintegration of former rebels into society. These legal bases demonstrate the Philippine government's commitment to supporting the reintegration of former rebels into society and addressing the root causes of insurgency such as Republic Act No. 10591, or the Comprehensive Firearms and Ammunition Regulation Act, Executive Order No. 70, series of 2018 or the Whole-of-Nation Approach to End Local Communist Armed Conflict, Republic Act No. 11188, or the "Balik-Loob" Program Act, and Joint Resolution No. 3, series of 2018 ır the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP).

Republic Act No. 10591, or the Comprehensive Firearms and Ammunition Regulation Act, allows for the legal possession of firearms by former rebels who have undergone the government's reintegration program.

It is the policy of the State to maintain peace and order and protect the people from violence. The State also recognizes its qualified citizens' right to self-defense through firearms when it is a reasonable means to repel unlawful aggression under the circumstances. Towards this end, the State shall provide for a comprehensive law regulating the ownership, possession, carrying, manufacture, dealing in, and importation of firearms, ammunition, or parts thereof in order to provide legal support to law enforcement agencies in their campaign against crime, stop the proliferation of illegal firearms or weapons and the illegal manufacture of firearms or weapons, ammunition and parts thereof.

Executive Order No. 70, series of 2018, or the Whole-of-Nation Approach to End Local Communist Armed Conflict, established a task force to coordinate government efforts to address the root causes of insurgency and support the reintegration of former rebels.

Republic Act No. 11188, or the "Balik-Loob" Program Act, mandates establishing a program to facilitate the reintegration of former rebels into mainstream society. The program provides various forms of assistance, such as financial support, livelihood training, and medical and legal services.

Joint Resolution No. 3, series of 2018, or the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP), provides a comprehensive package of benefits and services to former rebels who surrender to the government. The benefits include financial assistance, livelihood support, and medical and legal services.

The E-CLIP is one facet of many strategies of the government to obtain just and lasting peace, social transformation, and inclusive development.

Catering to individuals who surfaced and wanted to return to the folds of the law and become productive citizens of society, E-CLIP is an encouraging scheme that promotes reconciliation in a non-violent manner. This process aims to provide a DILG-administered package of assistance to former rebels and former violent extremists, such as Immediate Assistance, Livelihood Assistance, Reintegration Assistance, and Firearms Remuneration.

The financial package covers immediate assistance, provision of a reintegration process, a starting capital for livelihood, and remunerating surrendered firearms.

The revolt is recognized as one of the country's most pressing social issues. They are seeking to intimidate and steal the current administration. However, due to the hardships and troubles that the NPA rebels endured, they ultimately decided to return home and follow the government and its laws. They may have taken the wrong path at times due to the NPA's unrelenting manipulation, but they were able to regain hope and live a new peaceful life with the government's assistance (Cubero et al., 2022). However, the rebels prioritize physical safety over economic sources. Rebels surrender only when they are confident that they can disarm without dying (Sen, 2021).

Rebel returnees joined the New People's Army not because they wanted to, but because of the communist group's tough methods, notably its recent anti-government campaign. The main reasons for the rebel returnees' surrender are the difficulties of life in the mountains and the well-being of their families, especially those who are already married. The majority of rebel returnees have legitimately surrendered to the government, and those who have openly surrendered have been granted amnesty and financial help. Furthermore, the rebel returnees are deemed free since they may walk freely across the area, but they are still concerned about their safety from former comrades who may do something bad to them. A survey on their lives indicated how many tough experiences they had in the mountains, and they did not want to return or remember the difficulties they had. Despite the difficulties they endure during the transition period following the surrender, they believe their lives have changed in comparison to before. They are also asking for regular government assistance in resolving the challenges they have now encountered as a result of their surrender, notably assurances of their safety from the threat posed by their former companion (Lodangco, 2022).

Some people joined the New People's Army for personal reasons, or worse, to handle weaponry and keep themselves busy as out-of-school youth. The rebel returnees surrendered mostly due to the hardships of

survival in the highlands. Most rebel returns publicly surrender to government officials, while others discreetly leave the group and return to their normal lives. Those who formally surrendered received amnesty and financial help. The returnees feel fully reintegrated into the community, without bias (Martinez, 2018).

Some rebel returnees may face rejection or suspicion from community members due to their past involvement in a conflict or their association with a particular rebel group (Annan et al., 2009). This can make it difficult for them to reintegrate into their communities and may lead to social isolation and exclusion.

Many rebel returnees have experienced trauma, violence, and other forms of psychological distress due to their involvement in a conflict (Mohammed & Neuner, 2022). These experiences can have long-lasting effects on their mental health and well-being and may require specialized support and treatment.

Rebel returnees may also face stigmatization and discrimination from employers, landlords, and other members of society, making it difficult to find employment, housing, and other basic necessities (Lipsitz, 2011).

In some cases, rebel returnees may face legal challenges or even criminal charges for their past involvement in a conflict. This can make it difficult for them to rebuild their lives and reintegrate into society (Carvin & Urquhart, 2018).

Some rebel returnees may receive support from the government or NGOs that work on peacebuilding and post-conflict reintegration. This support may include access to education, job training, and psychosocial support (International Organization for Migration, 2020).

The reintegration of rebels into government structures has been extensively examined in recent studies and policy reports, focusing on key aspects of post-conflict peacebuilding. A crucial framework in this area is Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR), which aims to transition ex-combatants into civilian life and governmental roles. The United Nations provides updated guidelines, emphasizing the structured reintegration of ex-combatants into peacekeeping environments (United Nations).

Giustozzi (2018) offers insights into the challenges of DDR in Afghanistan, noting the complex nature of reintegrating armed groups in conflict-prone areas. His work underscores the importance of adapting DDR strategies to the local context to achieve effective reintegration of former combatants. This study highlights the need for tailored approaches that address specific political and social dynamics within post-conflict societies.

The transition from rebel movements to political actors is also a critical aspect of reintegration, as discussed by Zeeuw (2017). His analysis focuses on cases where former rebels have successfully transformed into political figures, navigating the complexities of governance after civil war. Such transitions emphasize the importance of political inclusion and adaptation, helping former combatants integrate into formal government structures.

Moreover, studies on the challenges of integration stress the need for inclusive governance, particularly through power-sharing arrangements. Hartzell and Hoddie (2019) explore how power-sharing mechanisms can support democratic peacebuilding, providing former rebels with a stake in governance and ensuring a smoother transition to stability. These arrangements are often necessary to balance power and foster long-term peace in post-conflict states.

Case studies like Colombia's peace process with the FARC illustrate practical examples of how former rebel groups can integrate into political life. Sánchez-Garzoli (2020) details the strategies used in Colombia to support the reintegration of FARC members into society, emphasizing the importance of inclusive policies and community-based support for a successful transition. This example highlights the broader challenges and successes of reintegration, demonstrating the importance of adapting approaches to each country's unique context.

The study of Alejandria and Gervacio (2020) found that the social integration and livelihood programs implemented by the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) have been effective in

supporting the reintegration of former combatants into society. The study concludes that a comprehensive approach that addresses former combatants' social, economic, and psychological needs is necessary to support their successful reintegration.

Esmilla's (2019) study on the social and economic reintegration program of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) found that while the program provided training and livelihood assistance, it needed to address the psychosocial needs of former combatants adequately. The study also identified issues related to stigma and discrimination, limited access to resources, and inadequate institutional support.

Agnes' (2016) study on the experiences of former child soldiers found that the reintegration process was challenging due to the trauma and stigmatization associated with their involvement in armed conflict. The study recommended comprehensive psychosocial support and specialized education and skills training programs to promote their successful reintegration.

Aboga's (2019) study on the role of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) in the reintegration of former combatants found that the provisions of CARHRIHL helped promote the reintegration of former combatants through the provision of legal and institutional frameworks. However, the study also identified gaps in the implementation of CARHRIHL, particularly in terms of its relevance to the needs of former combatants in the reintegration process.

Finin (2016) examines the reintegration of former communist rebels in the Philippines. The study found that the lack of trust between the government and the former rebels made reintegration difficult. The study also found that the effectiveness of the reintegration programs depended on the level of coordination between different government agencies and the availability of resources.

The study of Atienza and Gaborro (2019) examines the experiences of former captives of the Communist New People's Army (NPA) in the Philippines. The study found that the reintegration process for former prisoners was challenging due to the trauma and stigma associated with captivity and the lack of support from the government in addressing their needs.

The study of Miralao and Leaño (2021) analyzes the role of social capital in the reintegration of former combatants in the Philippines. The study found that social capital played a critical role in reintegration, particularly in providing social support and facilitating access to resources. The study also found that social capital formation was influenced by factors such as trust, reciprocity, and the level of community involvement in the reintegration process.

The study by Franco (2018) found that the Philippine government's efforts to reintegrate former communist rebels have been largely ineffective due to the lack of resources and support. The study concludes that a more comprehensive and coordinated approach is needed to address the challenges of reintegrating former rebels into society.

The study by Curato (2013) found that the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) program in the Philippines faced challenges in implementing its objectives due to the limited resources and the need for coordination among stakeholders. The study concludes that a more collaborative approach is needed to address the challenges of reintegrating former rebels into society.

Serrano (2016) found that civil society organizations are crucial in supporting the reintegration of former combatants in the Philippines. The study concludes that a community-based approach involving collaboration between the government and civil society organizations can effectively support reintegration.

Oreta (2016) examines the role of social capital in reintegrating former combatants in the Philippines. The study found that social capital, particularly trust, and reciprocity, can facilitate reintegration and improve ex-combatants well-being.

The study of Mendoza and Rondina (2018) identifies the barriers to the reintegration of former combatants in the Philippines from a multi-stakeholder perspective. The study found that the lack of sustainable livelihood opportunities, limited access to education and health services, and stigma and discrimination are significant barriers to the successful reintegration of ex-combatants.

The study of Lacaste and Porio (2013) analyzes the challenges and opportunities in the economic reintegration of former combatants in the Philippines. The study found that the lack of access to education and skills training, limited job opportunities, and the absence of social protection measures are significant challenges to the economic reintegration of ex-combatants.

Morales (2019) examines the narratives of former communist rebels in the Philippines regarding their reintegration experiences. The study found that the successful reintegration of ex-combatants requires not only the provision of economic and social support but also the recognition of their experiences and contributions.

The study of Fajardo and Vitan (2016) provides insights into the reintegration of former rebels in the Philippines from the perspectives of the youth and women sectors. The study found that gender-sensitive and youth-focused approaches are essential in addressing female and young ex-combatants specific needs and challenges.

Almedora and Ferrer (2020) found that social capital, explicitly bonding and bridging social capital, plays a crucial role in reintegrating former rebels in the Philippines. The study concludes that government and civil society organizations should develop programs that promote social capital formation among former insurgents.

Pineda-Ofreneo (2015) evaluates the Philippine government's social integration and livelihood programs to rebel returnees. The study finds that the programs have had limited success due to inadequate funding, lack of coordination among government agencies, and the absence of a comprehensive strategy for reintegration.

The study of Capuno and Crisostomo (2018) assesses the effectiveness of the Comprehensive Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program (CLEEP) in supporting the reintegration of former combatants. The study finds that while the program has helped provide short-term employment opportunities, it still needs to fully address the underlying social and economic issues contributing to the insurgency.

Estorninos (2018) analyzes the social and economic reintegration of former rebels in the Philippines. The study found that the reintegration of former rebels is complex and multidimensional and requires a comprehensive and sustainable approach. The study also identified the need to address reintegration's psychological and emotional aspects.

The study of Beñosa and Alcantara (2019) examines the challenges faced by former child soldiers in the Philippines during reintegration. The study found that the reintegration of former child soldiers is challenging and requires specialized interventions to address their unique needs.

Guevara (2017) examines the stigma former NPA rebels face in the Philippines during the reintegration process. The study found that the stigma attached to being a former rebel affected their social and economic opportunities and emphasized the need for addressing this issue in the reintegration programs.

The study of Maglipon and Buendia (2019) aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Philippine government's social integration program for rebel returnees, providing benefits and services to former rebels who have surrendered or defected. The study found that while the government's social integration program has provided significant benefits to rebel returnees, challenges and limitations still need to be addressed. These include the need for coordination and integration among government agencies and civil society organizations, inadequate funding and resources for the program, and the difficulty in addressing the complex social, economic, and political issues that led to rebellion in the first place.

Also, the study found that rebel returnees face stigmatization and discrimination from their communities, making it difficult for them to reintegrate into mainstream society. The authors suggest that community-based

approaches to reintegration, which involve the participation of local leaders and organizations, could be more effective in addressing these challenges.

In conclusion, the study highlights the importance of ongoing support and assistance for rebel returnees, including access to education, livelihood opportunities, and psychosocial services. It also emphasizes the need for a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to reintegration, which involves the participation of multiple stakeholders and addresses the root causes of rebellion.

The study of Diamante (2021) aimed to understand the reintegration process of rebel returnees, including the factors that affect their social, economic, and psychological adjustment, as well as the role of local communities in supporting their transition back to civilian life.

The study found that rebel returnees face significant challenges in reintegrating into society, including stigmatization, lack of employment opportunities, and limited access to social services. However, the study also identified several factors that could facilitate their reintegration, including family support, access to education and skills training, and participation in community activities.

The study also highlighted the critical role of local communities in supporting rebel returnees' reintegration, including providing social support, creating economic opportunities, and fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment. However, the study noted that there is still a need to address the stigma and discrimination faced by rebel returnees to ensure their successful reintegration into society.

It was concluded that the successful reintegration of rebel returnees requires a multifaceted approach that addresses their social, economic, and psychological needs and involves various stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, and local communities. The study recommended implementing more comprehensive and sustainable reintegration programs prioritizing the participation and empowerment of rebel returnees and their families.

Albert and Cruz (2020) evaluated the effectiveness of the Bohol Local Integration Program (BLIP) in reintegrating rebel returnees into mainstream society. The study found that the BLIP effectively provided social and economic support to rebel returnees, including access to education, health services, and livelihood opportunities. Many returnees could successfully reintegrate into their communities and contribute to local development.

However, the study also identified areas for improvement, including the need for more targeted and personalized support for returnees based on their specific needs and circumstances. The study also highlighted the importance of addressing the root causes of rebellion, such as poverty and lack of opportunities, to prevent further recruitment of rebel forces.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive and context-specific approach to rebel returnee reintegration, which considers each individual's unique needs and circumstances. The study highlights the BLIP's effectiveness in supporting rebel returnees in Bohol but also underscores the need for continued efforts to address the underlying causes of rebellion and promote sustainable development in conflict-affected areas.

The study of Buendia and Maglipon (2020) aimed to identify the challenges and opportunities in the reintegration process of armed rebel returnees in Bohol. It was found that the significant challenges in the reintegration process were poverty, lack of job opportunities, and stigma and discrimination from local communities. The study also found that many returnees needed more primary education and skills necessary for employment.

Despite these challenges, the study identified opportunities for successful reintegration, including implementing government programs and initiatives, supporting local communities, and involving civil society organizations. The study also found that the positive attitudes of community members towards rebel returnees played a crucial role in the success of the reintegration process.

The study concluded the importance of a multi-sectoral approach to the reintegration of rebel returnees in Bohol, including providing education and skills training, job opportunities, and support from local communities. The study also emphasizes the need for government programs and policies that address the root causes of rebellion, such as poverty and inequality, to prevent further recruitment of rebel forces.

Legarda Jr. and Realubit (2023) explored the experiences of rebel returnees in Bohol after their surrender or released from the New People's Army (NPA), a communist insurgency group. The study found that rebel returnees in Bohol faced several challenges in reintegrating into society, including stigma, discrimination, and financial difficulties. Many returnees also struggled with guilt, shame, and uncertainty about their future after years of involvement in armed struggle.

The study also identified coping mechanisms rebel returnees use to adjust to civilian life. These included seeking the support of family and friends, engaging in religious activities, and participating in community activities and livelihood programs.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the importance of supporting and assisting rebel returnees in their transition back to civilian life. This includes addressing their stigma and discrimination, providing access to education and job opportunities, and promoting social cohesion and community acceptance. The study also highlights the need to address the root causes of the insurgency, such as poverty and inequality, to prevent further recruitment of rebel forces.

Regner (2018) examined the challenges and prospects of the reintegration of rebel returnees in Bohol, a province in the Central Visayas region of the Philippines. The study found that the reintegration of rebel returnees in Bohol faced several challenges, including the lack of access to livelihood opportunities, limited social support, and inadequate government programs. Returnees also faced social stigma and discrimination from their communities, which hindered their reintegration efforts.

However, the study also identified several prospects for successful reintegration, including the support of the government, private sector, and civil society organizations. The study suggested that partnerships among these stakeholders could help provide livelihood opportunities, access to education, and social support to rebel returnees. The study also highlighted the importance of community-based approaches to reintegration, which would promote social cohesion and acceptance of returnees.

The study emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach to the reintegration of rebel returnees in Bohol, which addresses the social, economic, and psychological factors affecting their successful transition to civilian life. The study recommends establishing livelihood programs, access to education, and social support to help rebel returnees reintegrate successfully into their communities. The study also emphasizes the importance of community-based approaches and partnerships among various stakeholders in ensuring the success of reintegration efforts.

Batongbacal and Breede (2017) examined the reintegration experiences of former rebels in Bohol and the factors that contribute to successful or unsuccessful reintegration. The study found that rebel returnees in Bohol face similar challenges to those in other parts of the country, including social stigma and limited access to education and job opportunities. However, the study also identified several factors that contribute to successful reintegration, including the support of families and local communities, the availability of social services and livelihood programs, and the willingness of returnees to participate in the reintegration process.

The study also highlighted the role of local government units and civil society organizations in supporting the successful reintegration of rebel returnees. It found that partnerships between these organizations were essential in providing access to education, job opportunities, and other social services that help returnees transition to civilian life.

It was concluded that there is a need for a community-based approach to rebel returnee reintegration that addresses the social, economic, and psychological factors that contribute to successful reintegration. This includes promoting community acceptance and reducing stigma, providing access to education and job

opportunities, and addressing the root causes of rebellion. The study also underscores the importance of partnerships between local government units and civil society organizations in supporting the successful reintegration of rebel returnees.

These theories, legal bases, related literature, and studies are crucial components in any research study related to rebel returnees to better understand the life stories of rebel returnees in the second district of Bohol. Theories provide a conceptual framework for understanding the experiences of rebel returnees. Legal bases provide a legal context for understanding their experiences. Related literature offers a comprehensive understanding of the existing literature on the research topic. Studies provide valuable insights into the experiences of rebel returnees and the factors that contribute to their successful reintegration into society.

Incorporating these components into a research study related to rebel returnees can help researchers better understand their experiences, challenges, and practical strategies for supporting their successful reintegration.

The Problem

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to explore the life stories of former rebels in the second district of Bohol, Philippines.

Specifically, the study sought answers to the following sub-problems:

1. What are the experiences of the informants as former rebels?

2. What is the impact of the governments' program on the informants?

3. What are the aspirations of the informants to improve the quality of their lives?

Significance of the Study

The results of the study would be beneficial to the following stakeholders in society:

Rebel Returnees. The research aims to enhance rebel returnees' awareness of government initiatives, particularly the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP), helping them rebuild trust in governmental support for their reintegration.

Families of Rebel Returnees. Understanding the experiences of returnees can empower their families to provide effective support, fostering a conducive environment for adaptation and positive change.

Government. Insights from the study can aid the Philippine government in formulating effective strategies to address the root causes of insurgency, such as poverty and inequality, thereby promoting peace and social cohesion.

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). The findings will inform the AFP about the motivations behind joining insurgent groups, enhancing their community engagement efforts and military strategies.

The Philippine National Police (PNP). The research will assist the PNP in understanding the dynamics of insurgency, thereby improving law enforcement practices and community relations.

Office of the Civil Defense (OCD). The study will provide the OCD with insights into the experiences and motivations of former insurgents, informing their disaster management and community resilience strategies.

National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA). The findings will help NICA understand insurgency dynamics better and develop more effective intelligence strategies for addressing security concerns.

The Community. By presenting the perspectives of rebel returnees, the research fosters understanding within communities about the complexities of insurgency and reintegration, promoting trust and cooperation with authorities.

The Local Government Unit (LGU). The study aids LGUs in understanding the factors driving individuals to join insurgencies and the challenges of reintegration, helping them create supportive policies for affected communities.

Researcher. This study offers researchers an opportunity to delve into the motivations and experiences of former insurgents, informing policies and programs that support their reintegration into society.

Future Researchers. The study expands the body of knowledge on rebel returnees, serving as a foundation for future research and guiding similar studies aimed at enhancing reintegration strategies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research employed a qualitative method utilizing phenomenology as its approach. The qualitative phenomenological design was identified as the most appropriate method for gaining rich, in-depth insights into the life stories of rebel returnees in the second district of Bohol. This method elicited feedback, experiences, ideas, opinions, and feelings from informants regarding their life stories as former rebels. Both in-depth individual interviews and focused group discussions were utilized to gather comprehensive data.

According to Shosha (2012), phenomenology is a philosophy and research approach that seeks to investigate and comprehend people's everyday life experiences. This methodology provided a thorough understanding of the phenomena as perceived by several individuals. Through exploring these everyday experiences, the study proved beneficial to various stakeholders, including therapists, teachers, rebels, and lawmakers. This understanding of lived experiences enriched the study's findings and contextualized the participants' narratives.

Furthermore, phenomenology facilitated a more efficient method of data collection by conducting one or more interviews with individuals. Polkinghorne (1989) suggested that researchers should interview between 5 and 25 people who have all encountered the phenomena. Open-ended questions were employed during the interviews, allowing for conversational flexibility and encouraging participants to share their stories in their own words. This approach enhanced the richness of the data collected and ensured that the voices of the informants were accurately represented (Creswell et al., 2007).

On the other hand, transcendental phenomenology focused on examining lived experiences to uncover essential meanings beyond individual interpretation. Researchers used "bracketing" to set aside personal biases, allowing them to capture the core essence of participants' experiences. This approach provided a structured yet flexible framework, making it effective for exploring transformative personal changes and insights into human consciousness (Moustakas, 1994).

Overall, the qualitative phenomenological design proved to be an appropriate methodology for exploring the life stories of rebel returnees. This approach enabled a deep understanding of their experiences, motivations, emotions, and psychological well-being. Additionally, it provided insights into the social and political contexts from which rebel movements emerged, which could inform policies and interventions to support the reintegration of these individuals into society.

Research Environment

This study was conducted in the second district of Bohol, particularly in the Municipality of Danao. The second district, located in the Central Visayas Region of the Philippines, was known for its vibrant and diverse landscape, rich cultural heritage, and strong sense of community. The district covered fourteen municipalities:

Danao, Bien Unido, Buenavista, Clarin, Dagohoy, Getafe, Inabanga, Pres. Carlos P. Garcia of Sagbayan, San Isidro, San Miguel, Talibon, Trinidad, and Ubay, each possessing unique characteristics and attractions.

The second district of Bohol presented a captivating blend of cultural heritage and natural attractions that drew visitors from around the world. Its unique mix of history, culture, and nature made it an ideal destination for travelers seeking an authentic Philippine experience.

Danao, a landlocked municipality in the province of Bohol, had a total land area of 162.76 square kilometers, equivalent to 62.84 square miles, and comprised 17 barangays. According to the 2020 Census, its population was 20,245, accounting for 1.45% of Bohol's inhabitants and 0.25% of the Central Visayas Region's total population. Additionally, Danao served as one of the resettlement areas for former rebels in the second district of Bohol, where thirty (30) rebel surrenderers were provided with housing projects by the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Danao, including livelihood programs (See Appendix E – Location Map).

Research Informants

In this study, the researcher selected ten (10) rebel returnees as informants. Six (6) of these individuals participated in focused group discussions, while four (4) engaged in individual interviews. All informants were rebel returnees who had availed themselves of the government's reintegration programs.

The researcher employed the purposive sampling technique to choose the informants. This technique, characterized as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, is a non-probability sampling method that relies on the researcher's judgment in selecting the appropriate units to study. This approach ensured that the chosen informants had relevant experiences and insights to contribute to the research.

Research Instrument

This research utilized a researcher-designed interview guide that contained open-ended questions addressing the three (3) parts of sub-problems. Part one (1) of interview guide deals with the life stories of the rebel returnees; part two (2) deals with the impact of government programs, and the part three (3) deals with the aspirations to improve their quality of life. The interview guide was validated by the panel expert. Refer to Appendix C for the interview guide.

Additionally, the researcher employed a journal and voice recorder to capture the informants' verbatim responses during the interviews. After the interviews were completed, transcripts of the recorded sessions were prepared to facilitate the analysis and interpretation of the qualitative data. This structured approach ensured that the rich experiences and insights of the rebel returnees were accurately documented and thoroughly examined.

Research Procedures

After the research proposal, the researcher submitted the requirements to the ethics committee for research protocol. Then he prepared for data collection, analysis, ethical considerations, and trustworthiness of research.

Data Collection. The researcher obtained permission from the office of the Municipal Mayor, the Philippine National Police (PNP), and barangay officials of the ten rebel returnees, with endorsements from the Dean of the University of Cebu Graduate School, prior to conducting in-depth interviews using a constructed interview guide. Data was collected through in-depth interviews (IDI) held at the homes of the rebel returnees, accompanied by an introductory letter outlining the study's purpose, significance, and informed consent form (ICF) detailing confidentiality measures.

The decision to participate in this research study was voluntary, and the informants were informed that they could refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. Each informant received a copy of the Informed Consent Form to read prior to the interview, which required confirmation of their legal age. The study's purpose was explained in general terms, emphasizing the anonymity of the informants and

guaranteeing the safety and security of their responses. Candidness was encouraged, with assurances that the informants' records would be kept private and would not be released without their consent, except as required by law.

To maintain confidentiality, informants' identities were anonymized with assigned codes, and all data was stored securely in a locked file cabinet, accessible only to the researcher and the research adviser. The interviews were recorded using a voice recorder, and the data was subsequently transcribed without any identifying information. Following transcription, the responses were translated and analyzed. Furthermore, all recorded responses were securely stored and scheduled for deletion or disposal five years after the finalization of the study reports.

Data Analysis. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, a widely recognized method in qualitative research that allowed for the exploration of commonalities within the interviews conducted with rebel returnees. The analysis process involved several key steps: transcribing the interviews verbatim to ensure accuracy, familiarizing the researcher with the content through repeated reviews of the transcripts, and developing a coding framework to systematically organize the data. The researcher applied this framework to tag relevant segments with appropriate codes, subsequently reviewing and refining them to enhance consistency and clarity.

Following the coding process, the researcher grouped related codes into broader themes that represented significant patterns in the data. These themes captured the essence of the participants' shared experiences and were interpreted in relation to the research question, providing deeper insights into the life stories of rebel returnees. Ultimately, the findings were reported in a coherent narrative, effectively illustrating key insights and patterns revealed during the analysis. This structured approach enabled the study to successfully capture the complex experiences of rebel returnees, highlighting their challenges, motivations, and the impact of reintegration programs on their lives.

Ethical Considerations

Before conducting this study, the researcher personally provided the informants with a copy of the informed consent form (ICF), outlining the request for their participation and the purpose of the study. The informants were given ample time to consider their involvement and consult with anyone they felt comfortable with before deciding whether to participate. They were also given the freedom to ask questions about the study's objectives if they needed clarification. The researcher emphasized that their participation was entirely voluntary and invited the informants to share their perspectives on their life stories as rebel returnees.

Additionally, conducting research on the lives of former rebels carried intrinsic ethical responsibilities, focusing on preventing harm while maximizing benefits. Ethical conduct was crucial in exploring the experiences of former rebels. This section outlines how the study adhered to the four main ethical principles: beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, and autonomy.

Beneficence. The research aimed to promote the well-being and welfare of the participants by ensuring their safety, confidentiality, and privacy. The study sought to shed light on the experiences of former rebels, which could lead to a better understanding of their needs and inform interventions or support programs that facilitate their reintegration into society.

Non-maleficence. Avoiding harm and minimizing potential risks to the participants was a primary priority. The study ensured that participants were not subjected to any physical, psychological, or emotional harm as a result of their involvement. Measures were taken to protect their privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity, especially in cases where sharing their life stories might present potential risks.

Justice. Ensuring fairness, equality, and respect for all participants was central to this study. The research focused on treating all informants equitably and providing equal opportunities for participation. It considered the diversity of perspectives among former rebels, ensuring that their voices were heard and represented in the

research findings. Moreover, the researcher remained mindful of power dynamics, taking care to avoid exploiting or marginalizing participants.

Autonomy. Respect for participants' right to make informed decisions and maintain control over their lives was upheld throughout the study. Participants were given the freedom to choose whether or not to participate and were provided with clear, comprehensive information about the research's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits. Informed consent was obtained, and participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without facing any negative consequences.

Trustworthiness of Research

Research involving rebel returnees is an essential field of study as it provides insight into the experiences of individuals engaged in armed conflict and the challenges they face upon returning to civilian life. However, the trustworthiness of such research is a critical issue that must be carefully considered. This section discusses the factors that influence the reliability of research involving rebel returnees and the methods used to ensure that such research remains reliable. Specifically, it describes the tactics used to maintain the five important criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and reflexivity.

Credibility. Building trust and rapport with former rebels assured the validity of this study. This involved developing a respectful and empathetic connection with the participants, dedicating sufficient time to listening to their stories, and verifying their experiences through active engagement. By employing multiple data collection methods, such as in-depth interviews and document analysis, the researcher ensured a comprehensive understanding of the life stories while also enhancing the authenticity and quality of the results.

Transferability. To improve transferability, the researcher provided a detailed explanation of the research context and the setting in the Second District of Bohol. This included the historical, social, and cultural contexts that shaped the former rebels' experiences. By offering this contextual information, readers could assess the applicability and relevance of the findings to other similar regions or groups. Additionally, the researcher described the backgrounds and experiences of the individuals, allowing readers to evaluate the transferability of the findings.

Dependability. A clear and well-documented research process ensured the dependability of this study. The researcher thoroughly outlined the research design, data collection techniques, and data analysis procedures, enabling other researchers to replicate and verify the findings. Any modifications or changes made during the study were recorded and justified, maintaining the integrity of the research process. The researcher further ensured the reliability of the results by using rigorous data analysis methods and maintaining consistency throughout the study.

Confirmability. Acknowledging the potential biases and influence of the researcher improved confirmability. Reflexivity was key in this aspect, as the researcher critically assessed their own positionality, assumptions, and possible impact on the study. By documenting reflective thoughts, decisions, and potential sources of bias, the researcher provided transparency, allowing for a thorough evaluation of the findings' validity. Additionally, involving a second researcher or an external reviewer to assess the study's methodology and findings offered an additional layer of confirmability.

Bracketing and Reflexivity

Throughout the study, the researcher practiced reflexivity by remaining self-aware and critically examining their role and potential biases. Moreover, reflecting on their personal background, viewpoints, and biases, the researcher minimized their influence on the research process and outcomes. This self-reflection and critical analysis enhanced the overall credibility and reliability of the study, contributing to the trustworthiness of the research findings.

Definition Of Terms

For a better understanding of the study, the following are operationally defined:

Aspirations of the Informants to Improve the Quality of their Lives. These refer to their desires, hopes, and goals to attain a better standard of living after leaving a rebel group or armed conflict. These aspirations include various aspects of life, such as economic stability, education, employment, social integration, and mental health. However, the aspirations of rebel returnees to improve their quality of life reflect their unique needs and circumstances and may require support and resources from various sectors to achieve their goals.

Experiences of the Informants as Former Rebels. These refer to the personal encounters and circumstances they faced during part of a rebel group or movement. These experiences could be diverse and complex, ranging from the reasons for joining the rebel group, the nature of their involvement, and the events leading to their departure. However, understanding these experiences can help inform policies and programs to support the reintegration and rehabilitation of former rebels into their communities.

Impact of the Government's Program on the Rebel Returnees. This study refers to the effect of government's policies, interventions, and support services on the social, economic, and political reintegration of former rebels into their communities. Some support services would include financial assistance, education and training programs, healthcare services, and support for social integration. However, the impact of the government's program on rebel returnees depends on the quality of the interventions and their alignment with the needs and aspirations of former rebels.

Presentation And Analysis Of Data

This section presents the data and themes developed from the life stories of former rebels in the second district of Bohol. The data is based on the verbatim narratives of the target informants that were subjected to thematic analysis.

There are three (3) parts presented in this chapter. The first part is about the experiences of the informants as former rebels. The second part related to the impact of the government's program on the rebel returnees. The last part pertains to the aspirations of the informants to improve their quality of life.

Presentation of Data

Presented below are the four (4) cluster themes in which nine (9) emergent themes were determined. Two (2) emergent themes described the positive experiences and one (1) for the informants' negative experiences. There are three (3) emergent themes developed on the impact of the government's program on the rebel returnees. While three (3) themes pertains to the aspirations of the informants to improve their quality of life.

The following are the emergent themes, to wit:

I. Experiences of the Informants as Former Rebels

A. Positive Experiences

1. Freedom and Liberation

2. Happiness and Contentment

B. Negative Experiences

1. Exploitation and Unfulfilled Promises

II. Impact of the Program of the Government on the Rebel Returnees

1. Financial Assistance

2. Family Unity

3. Empowerment through Skills and Resources

III. Aspirations of the Informants to Improve their Quality of Life

1. Hope for Better Future and Economic Stability

2. Inclusive Government Support

3. Unity and Cooperation for Peace

I. Experiences of the Informants as Former Rebels

A. Positive Experiences

This section presents the two (2) emergent themes developed from narratives of the informants about their positive experiences as former rebels.

1. Freedom and Liberation. The research informants expressed a profound sense of freedom and liberation following their surrender to the government, which has strengthened family ties and provided crucial support. They contrasted the instability of their previous lives in the mountains with the security offered by government protection, enabling them to care for livestock and prioritize their children's education. Ultimately, true freedom encompasses not only safety but also the opportunity for a fulfilling life.

Informant 8 shared her positive experience of finding freedom in society and reuniting with her family. She stated that:

Ang akoang positibong kasinatian isip usa ka surrenderee kay nahimo na nga gawasnon sa katilingban ug nagkahiusa na pagbalik ang akoang pamilya. Ug makatabang na pud ko sa unsay problema sa akong pamilya kay naduol naman ko nila (IDI2:SS1). (My positive experience as a surrenderer is that I have become free in society and my family has united again. I can now help with the problems in my family because I am closer to them).

Likewise, Informant 9 further articulated her sense of freedom after returning to the government, emphasizing the positive changes in her life. She shared that:

Mas lahi gyud kay murag gawasnon man gud ta nga naa na ta sa gobyerno, pero ug adto ta sa kabukiran, murag dili jud gawasnon. Karun nga naa na ta dinhi, gawasnon na kay nisurender naman ta sa gobyerno (IDI3:SS1). (It's really different now because we feel free since we are with the government, but when we go to the mountains, it feels like we are not free at all. Now that we are here, we are free because we have surrendered to the government).

Returning to civilian life brings freedom and the opportunity to serve his family for the rest of his life. Informant 6 positively expressed his feelings by sharing that:

Gawas sa gawasnon na, nalipay pud ko nga nabuhi ko sa yuta diri. Nana koy mga hayop tungod diri sa organisasyon nga daan ba. Akong mga bata naka-skwela, akong mga panginabuhian naa diri, maong nalipay ko kay ako pud mga pag-umangkon ug igsoon, nabalik na sa gobyerno (FGD6:SS1). (Aside from feeling free, I am also happy that I can live on this land. I now have animals because of this organization. My children are able to go to school, and my livelihoods are here, which makes me happy because my siblings and relatives have also returned to the government).

2. Happiness and Contentment. This section highlights individuals' transformative experiences after returning to government support, marked by relief from fear and anxiety. The newfound security allows them to engage freely in daily activities and strengthen family connections. With legal recognition, they can resume farming and provide for their families, significantly enhancing their quality of life. Ultimately, true happiness arises from safety and the ability to pursue a stable livelihood.

Informant 1 expressed his feelings of contentment after returning to government support, noting that he is no longer afraid to engage in daily activities, especially at night. He shared that:

Oh, kuntento ko tungud kay ang kinabuhi nako normal na. Dili nako mobati ug kahadlok sa tanan paglihok-lihok nako, ilabi na sa kagabihion. Mag-usig ang mga iro sa palibot, di na ko mobati ug kahadlok kay sauna wa pa ko mobalik sa sabakan sa gobyerno. Ug naa gani usig sa iro, mahadlok nako kay basig army na. Run, unsay ilang toyo? Naa tay pagpanagana sa atong mga lihok, labi na ug magsakay tag motor, wa ta kahibaw kung tombahon ta. Mao nang lisod. Unya karun, wala nakoy yamo nga katahaan pa maglakaw-lakaw ug unsay akong mga lihok kay nisalig ko nga nibalik nako sa gobyerno. Manginabuhi nako nga gawasnon (FGD1:SS3). (Oh, I am contented because my life is normal now. I am no longer feel afraid in all my movements, especially at night. When the dogs bark around, I no longer feel scared because before, I hadn't returned to the government's support. If a dog barked, I would be afraid because it might be the army. Now, what are their intentions? We had to be cautious in our actions, especially when riding a motorcycle, because we didn't know if we would be targeted. That was difficult. But now, I no longer have to worry about where I'm going or what I'm doing because I trust that I have returned to the government. I can live freely now).

Informant 8 expressed immense happiness and relief at no longer feeling fear or worry after surrendering to the government. She emphasized the security she feels under the government's democratic support, stating that:

Malipayon na jud ko kaau karun tungod kay di na ko mobati ug kahadlok ug kabalaka tungod kay naa ko sa akong pamilya kay usa naman ko ka surrenderee. Wa na koy kabalak-an nga naa pay daotan nga mahitabo sa akong kinabuhi kay sa unang panahon, naa jud tao nga himatikdan nako nga buot moduol nako kay pasurenderon ko, mobati ko ug kahadlok. Karun nga nahimo na ko nga surrenderee, di na ko mabati ug kabalaka kay isip nana ko sa sabakan sa gobyerno nga demokrasya (IDI2:SS2). (I am very happy now because I am no longer worried since I am with my family and I am a surrenderer. I have no more concerns about bad things happening in my life because in the past, there were people I noticed who wanted to approach me to surrender, and I felt afraid. Now that I have become a surrenderer, I no longer feel anxious because I am under the government's support, which is democracy).

Informant 10 expressed his joy in returning to government support, emphasizing the legality it brings. He appreciated the opportunity to continue farming and support his family, noting a significant positive change in his life compared to the past. He shared that:

Ah, nalipay pud ko nga niana ko nibalik sa sabakan sa gobyerno kay usa diha, legal na ta. Makapadayon na ta sa panginabuhi sa pag-uma ug pagbuhi sa pamilya. Mao na ang usa pud nga nalipay ko kay dakog kalahian sa akong nakita karun kaysa sauna (IDI4:SS1). (Ah, I am also happy that I have returned to the government's support because now we are officially out of the organization. We can continue our livelihood in farming and can support our family. That's one of the things that makes me happy because I see a big difference now compared before).

B. Negative Experiences

This section also presents the one (1) emergent theme on informants' negatives experiences as former rebels.

1. Exploitation and Unfulfilled Promises. This underscores the struggles of surrendered individuals facing unfulfilled government promises during their reintegration. Many feel disillusioned and isolated, relegated to menial tasks and facing wrongful accusations, which deepens their sense of betrayal. This reality fosters a desire to return to their former lives, highlighting the risk of perpetuating a cycle of hardship without genuine support.

Informant 8 felt disheartened by her current role as a farmer or gardener within the camp after returning to government support, feeling that it contradicts the promise of peace and development in Bohol. She expressed this by saying that:

Ang dili maayo nga kasinatian sa akong kinabuhi karun isip usa ka surrenderee kay gihimo ko nga mag-uuma o hardener sulod sa campo. Dili maoy akong gipanum-paan sa akong pagsurrender kay ang akong gisaad sa akong pagsurrender sa gobyerno nga motabang ko sa atong gobyerno para sa kalinaw, kahusay, ug dugang kalambuan alang sa probinsya sa Bohol. Unya unsang hitabo nga gihimo naman nuon kong mag-uuma sulod ug hardener sa mga garden sa kabulakan sa campo. Mura siya ug wala na silay pagtagad sa akoa kay nagtuo sila nga ako tiguwang na, wala nay mahimo (IDI2:SS3). (My negative experience in my life now as a surrenderer is that I am made to be a farmer or gardener inside the camp. This is not what I envisioned when I surrender because my promise to the government is to help for peace, order, and further development in the province of Bohol. But what happened is that I was being made to be on farm and work as a gardener in the flower gardens of the camp. It feels like they no longer pay attention to me because they think I am old and incapable).

Informant 9 expressed her frustrations over unfulfilled government promises, leading her to contemplate returning to her previous situation. She also recounted a troubling incident where she was wrongfully suspected during a raid and accused of being a government informant. She divulged that:

Naay panahon, sir, nga makahuna-huna tag mobalik na lang sauna kay wa moabot ang mga saad sa goberno, ilabi na katung housing nila nga dugay na kaayo. Diha pud kausa nga naay gi-raid diri; ako maoy gipasuminglan nila. Giari ko nila sa balay kay diha kuno, asset ko sa goberno, ako daw nagsumbong sa mga pulis (IDI3:SS3). (There are times, sir, when I think about just going back because the promises of the government have not been fulfilled, especially regarding their housing, which has taken so long. There was also an instance when there was a raid here; they suspected me. They brought me to their house because they said that I was an asset to the government and that I was the one who reported to the police).

Informant 3 shared his negative experiences following his surrender, as he ended up imprisoned. He emphasized the emotional toll of being away from his child during significant milestones, such as his second birthday. Additionally, he expressed frustration over the government's contradictory promises of support while facing imprisonment, leading him to contemplate returning to his previous life and activities. He narrated that:

Sa akong bahin pud, mao ra to akong bati nga kasinatian gikan sa pagsurrender, ang pagkapriso. Graveh jud paeta, oy, kay nakaingon man jud ko didto nga hapit nako duha ka tuig ba unya ikaduha nga birthday sa akong bata. Marso 30 ko nilaya sa prisohan 2023, unya napriso ko 2021. Kaingon ko sa akong bahin nga kung mao man diay ning hitabo, di ay moingon tag tabangan unya prisohon di ay una ta, busa tabangan. Makaingon pud ko nga didto pako sulod sa prisohan nga ug di ko makatambong sa ikaduhang birthday sa akong bata, mas maayo pa mobalik na lang ko sa kalihokan, mobalik na lang ko ug gunit ug armas kung mao naman lang gani ning hitabo (FGD3:SS3). (In my case, my worst experience since surrendering was imprisonment. It was really tough because I realized that I was almost two years in prison, and my child's second birthday was approaching. I was released from prison on March 30, 2023, and I was imprisoned in 2021. I thought to myself that if this is what happened, why would they say they would help us and then imprison us first? If this is the case, I might as well return to my old activities and take up arms again because, if that's the case, it's better to do that than to miss my child's second birthday in prison).

II. Impact of the Program of the Government on the Rebel Returnees

This part of the manuscript displays the verbatim statements of the rebel returnees during the interview about the impact of the governments' program. There were Three (3) themes developed.

1. Financial Assistance. Government programs play a vital role in helping former combatants transition to civilian life by addressing immediate needs such as healthcare and education. This support fosters gratitude and hope, reinforcing their commitment to positive change and successful reintegration into their communities.

Informant 1 expressed his satisfaction with his return to the government, noting that he received financial assistance that made a difference in his life. He also appreciated the governor's recognition of the significant number of surrenderers. He shared by saying:

Sa akoa nga bahin sa pagbalik nako sa sabakan sa gobyerno, ato pa man ko niadtong Oktubre 18, 2024, nabalik. "Ah, nalipay man pud ko sa akoang pagbalik sa sabakan sa gobyerno kay ilang pasalig lage kay tagaan ug hinabang kadtong kanhi nga nagalihok sa pikas." Gani, gitagaan nami ug tag PHP 10,000 kada usa niadtong Oktubre 18, 2024. Mga 60 kami kapin nga nanunrender, ug gipasalamat pud ni Gov tungod sa kadaghanon sa mga nanunrender (FGD1:SS1). (In my case, regarding my return to government support, I returned on October 18, 2024. 'Ah, I am also happy about my return to government support because they promised to provide assistance to those who previously worked. In fact, we were given PHP 10,000 each on October 18, 2024. There were more than 60 of us who surrendered, and the governor also expressed gratitude for the large number of surrenderers).

Likewise, Informant 3 revealed the assistance he received from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and financial support from the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (ECLIP), which he found beneficial for his family, especially for his young child. He shared that:

Katong nakadawat ko ug cash assistance gikan sa Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) nga PHP 20,000 ug katong financial assistance gikan sa Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (ECLIP), pero kana lage'ng tanan pag-release, wa jud ko diha, didto man ko sa prisohan." Pag-uli nako, "wa na pud kay unsaon, mao man paninguhaan sa tanan kay ang akong bata sige man kasakit, maoy mabira tanan mao jud tawon nahabilin." Pero sa pikas bahin, "nakatabang man gihapon kay didto man sa akong pamilya kay ang akong bata tulo pa man ka buwan (FGD3:SS6). (I received cash assistance from Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) amounting to PHP 20,000 and financial assistance from Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (ECLIP), but when I was released, I wasn't there to receive it. I was in prison. When I returned, there was nothing left to do because my child was always sick; that's what really weighed on me. But on the other hand, it helped because, it was for my family since my child was only three months old).

Informant 10 shared his experience of receiving cash assistance from the government, noting its positive impact on his family by helping to cover educational expenses for his children. He disclosed that:

Nakadawat ko ug cash assistance, silbi tabang lage pud sa mga Kauban sa Reporma (KR) nga naa pud sila'y mapanginabuhian. Nakadawat ko niadto ug PHP 20,000 kapin, ug dihay nagsunod nga PHP 7,000 pud. Ug katong last nga baka gipang-release sa gobyerno, nahatagan pud ko. Usa pud to nga nakalipay kay nakasukad akong pamilya sa paggasto sa eskwela sa mga bata (IDI 4:SS1). (I received cash assistance, which also helped the Kauban sa Reporma (KR) who have their own means of livelihood. I received over PHP 20,000 at that time, and there was also a subsequent PHP 7,000. And when the last batch was released by the government, I also received assistance. That was one thing that made me happy because it helped my family with the expenses for the children's education).

2. Family Unity. Returning to government support has significantly strengthened family bonds, enabling informants to reconnect and spend quality time together without fear. This newfound stability fosters open communication and cooperation, creating a peaceful environment where they can thrive and support one another.

Informant 1 expressed immense joy in being reunited with his family after returning to government support, emphasizing the daily connections he now enjoys with his siblings. He shared that:

Ang dako nako kalipay nga ningbalik ko sa sabakan sa gobyerno tungod kay ako ng gikauban akong pamilya sa tibuok panahon. Naghiusa me akong pamilya, ilabi na nga magkita me halos kada adlaw sa akong mga igsoon. Lahi atung naa sa bukid kay murag mingawon jud ta, ug mouli gani ta, ato rang pamilya maoy atong makita. Dili ta magpakita sa atung igsoon ug mga pag-umangkon kay mahadlok lage tawon ta ug manulti laen, sikop unya ta (FGD1:SS2). (My great happiness in returning to government support is that I have been with my family the entire time. My family was united, especially since we can see each other almost every day. It

was different when we were in the mountains because we really missed each other, and when we was home, we could only see our family. We didn't show ourselves to our siblings and relatives because we were afraid of being caught and arrested).

Informant 3 revealed the significant positive effects of the government's program on his family, allowing them to live together openly without fear. He expressed his contentment with their newfound stability and the peacefulness of their daily activities, stating that:

Dako kaayo ug epekto ang programa sa goberno diri sa among pamilya. Gawas sa kanunay na kaming mag-uban, dili na kawang among panimuyo tungod kay di me magtago. Makadayon na me sa unsay may gusto namo nga hapsay ug linaw ang paglihok-lihok (FGD3:SS12). (The government's program has a huge impact on our family. Aside from always being together, our living situation is no longer difficult because we don't have to hide. We can continue with what we want, and our actions are now peaceful and orderly).

Likewise, Informant 6 highlighted the positive impact of the government's program on his family, emphasizing more frequent reunions and openness with relatives. He noted the transition from a fearful, hidden existence to a supportive and peaceful environment where they can collaborate on beneficial activities together. He shared that:

Dako ug impact ang programa sa goberno kay nakauban na namo pagbalik among pamilya sa makadaghang higayon. Ug sa among mga kaparentihan, di na sila mataha nga modulo ug makig-storya kanamo. Nabalik ug nakahiusa na among pamilya. Magkatinabangay na me sa unsay mga buluhaton nga maayo. Lahi ra sauna nga ang pares ra jud intawon kay nagtago-tago pa man lage; mahadlok pa ug naay mousig nga iro kay diha basin army na. Hapsay na kaayo among panimuyo karun (FGD6:SS5). (The government's program has a significant impact because we are now able to be with our family many times. Our relatives are no longer hesitant to approach and talk to us. Our family was reunited and we can help each other with good activities. It's very different from before when we could only hide; we were afraid if a dog barked, thinking it might be the army. Our living situation is now very peaceful).

3. Empowerment through Skills and Resources. Access to government resources, such as agricultural machinery, significantly enhances livelihoods within the community. Additionally, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) programs equip informants with essential skills, enabling them to generate income and support their families. This empowerment fosters self-sufficiency and contributes to economic stability.

Informant 2 expressed his gratitude for the government's substantial assistance, especially the provision of agricultural machinery like harvesters and tractors. He highlighted that additional equipment is on the way to further support the community's needs, stating:

Gawas sa dakong katabang sa gobyerno sa amoa karun, naapay makinaryas nga gihatag sa gobyerno sama sa harvester, trucktor, nana mana diri. Naapay umaabot nga laen trucktor para kuno ug unsa pay kinahanglan sa mga tao diri masulosyonan (FGD2:SS7). (Apart from the significant help from the government, we have also received machinery like harvesters and tractors. There are already some here, and another tractor is expected to arrive to address the needs of the people).

However, Informant 8 shared her educational journey through Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), where she learned skills such as cooking. She also mentioned how the government programs support her children, significantly improving their quality of life. She expressed this by saying:

Ako gipa-skwela ko sa Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). Gitudloan ko ug pagpangluto pareha anang naa sa restaurant. Gawas ana, akong pamilya, akong anak ilang gipasulod ug CAA (Cafgu Auxiliary Active), unya ang usa gipaskwela ug electrician. Kanang wilder pud sa ikaduha nako nga bata, unya mao nay gigamit niya run nga panginabuhian sa construction (IDI2:SS6). (I enrolled in Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). I was taught cooking, similar to what is done in restaurants. Aside from that, my family has also enrolled my children in Cafgu Auxiliary Active (CAA), and

one of them is studying to become an electrician. My second child is also learning skills that they now use for work in construction).

Likewise, Informant 9 highlighted her education at Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), where she graduated from a bread and pastry course. She applied these skills to provide services to others and generate income. She shared:

Gitudloan me sa Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) pareha anang cookery, pero ang premero ana nakagraduate ko sa bread and pastry, kanang sa pan, didto me nagkuan sa Carmen. Nagamit ko ni karun kay naa may mokuha nako ug paluto (IDI3:SS4). (We were taught at Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) in cookery, but first, I graduated in bread and pastry, specifically in baking bread. We were there in Carmen. I am currently using what I learned because people are hiring me to cook for them).

III. Aspirations of the Informants to Improve their Quality of Life

This section presents the three (3) emerging themes pertaining to the aspirations of the informants to improve their quality of life.

1. Hope for Better Future and Economic Stability. The informants emphasized the importance of self-reliance in conjunction with government support. They expressed aspirations for peaceful living, job opportunities, and educational assistance for their children, demonstrating their commitment to improving their circumstances through hard work and external aid.

Informant 3 emphasized the importance of self-reliance and hard work, even as a beneficiary of government programs. He is dedicated to working hard for his family, valuing the opportunity to be present with them and aspiring to achieve their shared goals for a better future. He disclosed this by saying:

Pangandoy jud nako para sa akong pamilya, inubanan sa pagpaningkamot kay kita, bisan tuod nga surrenderee ta anang mga programa, di jud na ingon nga maoy masaligan nato sa tanan natong panginahanglan. Importante jud nga kita jud mismo maningkamot. Maong sa akong bahin, ako naningkamot jud ko kay karun naa naman ko, di na man ko himulag para sa akong pamilya. Pangandoy nako pud nga matuman nako unsa may akong pangandoy para sa akong pamilya (FGD3:SS13). (My dream for my family, alongside my hard work, is that even though we are beneficiaries of these programs as surrenderers, we cannot fully rely on them for all our needs. It's important that we put in our own efforts. That's why, for my part, I am working hard because now I am here, and I am no longer separated from my family. My dream is to fulfill whatever dreams I have for my family).

However, Informant 8 expressed her desire for the government to offer her the opportunity for a peaceful life and stable livelihood. She shared that:

Pangandoy nako nga unta matagaan ko sa atong goberno nga makapuyo nako nga mahimong malinawon ug lig-on nga panginabuhian (IDI2:SS8). (My hope is that the government will grant me the opportunity to live peacefully and have a stable livelihood).

Likewise, Informant 10 hopes for employment opportunities for himself and seeks government support for his children's education, as they are currently in college and high school. He shared that:

Ang akong pangandoy lage nga naa untay trabaho. Sa mga bata kay naa man lage nagpadayon man sila sa pag-eskwela. Ahong pangandoy nga tabangan unta sa goberno kay college ug high school naman na sila (IDI4:SS8). (My hope is to have a job. For my children, since they are continuing their studies, I hope that the government can support them, especially since they are now in college and high school).

2. Inclusive Government Support. This theme highlights the critical need for inclusive assistance for both former rebels and civilians, emphasizing that sustained support fosters reintegration and community harmony.

Ongoing programs for surrenderers, combined with the inclusion of civilians, help prevent feelings of favoritism and potential conflict, thereby promoting equality and stability within the community.

Informant 1 emphasized the crucial role of ongoing government programs for former rebels, stating that consistent support is vital for encouraging reintegration and enabling individuals to return to normal family lives. He warned that without this sustained assistance, fewer people may choose to return. He shared that:

Ang ako lang nga ang programa sa gobyerno, labi na sa kanhing naglihok sa bukid nga naa karun sa kapatagan. Unsa man gani nga programa, angay ipadayon kay kung dili ni siya mapadayon, unya dili makadawat tong individual nga nibalik sa sabakan sa gobyerno, ang posibilidad nga wala na'y mobalik. Pero kung tumanon man gali ang gisaad sa gobyerno, may posibilidad nga napay mobalik jud. Daghan ang mobalik gikan sa bukid para mobalik sa ilang pamilya para manginabuhi nga normal (FGD1:SS8). (My hope is that the government's program, especially for those who once operated in the mountains and are now in the lowlands, will continue. Whatever the program is, it should be sustained because if it is not, and those who returned to the government do not receive the promised support, the possibility of others returning might diminish. But if the government fulfills its promises, there is a possibility that more will return. Many would come down from the mountains to reunite with their families and live a normal life).

Informant 4 highlighted the need for civilian inclusion in government programs to prevent perceptions of favoritism and to mitigate potential conflicts. He believed that fostering inclusivity is essential for maintaining peace and harmony within the community. He shared that:

Mas maayo gyud nga apelon jud ang mga sibilyan sa unsa may programa sa gobyerno. Kay kun dili apelon ang sibilyan, ang uban niana maoy mointriga, moisyu moingon nga 'pinalabi di ay mo ana,' maong mahug nga maoy magda napud ug kagubot (FGD4:SS5). (It would be much better if civilians are included in whatever programs the government has. Because if civilians are not included, some might raise issues or intrigues, saying 'you are favoring them,' which could lead to further conflicts).

Informant 5 expressed his hope that the government will meet the needs of both surrenderers and non-surrenderers to prevent feelings of inequality. He emphasized that inclusive support is crucial in discouraging individuals from joining rebel movements. He shared that:

Sa ako lang pud nga bahin, manghinaot lang pud ko nga sa matag usa nga gipasalig sa goberno nga tubagon kung unsa may problema sa mga tao nga sama namo nga surrendere ug dili surendere. Kay kundili nato iapel ng dili surrendere, mas mosaka pa na sila sa bukid kay moingun na nga mas maau pa nga mossurender ta kay mas matagan pata ug benipisyo sa goberno. Maau ng tanan tao makabenipisyo kaya run dili sila mosaka sa bukid (FGD5:SS7). (In my view, I hope that the government will fulfill its promises to address the concerns of people like us, both those who have surrendered and those who have not. If the non-surrenderers are not included, they might choose to go up to the mountains, thinking it's better to surrender and receive benefits from the government. It would be better if all people could benefit, so they don't feel the need to go up to the mountains).

3. Unity and Cooperation for Peace. The theme highlighted the crucial role of former rebels returning to the government and collaborating to build a stable society. Informants convey that working together with the government facilitates progress and reassures those hesitant to surrender that they will receive ongoing support and acceptance. This collective commitment to peace is vital for fostering a harmonious community and ensuring a brighter future for everyone involved.

Informant 7 emphasized the necessity of collaboration for peace, urging those still in rebellion to return to the government's side, as ongoing opposition only escalates conflict. He stated that:

Magtinabangay aron sa kalinaw, ug katung napa sa bukid, kung mahimo, mobalik na lang sa sabakan sa goberno. Kaysa sige nila ug ingon nga rebolusyon para sa kagawasan, mas mosamot man jud nuon kay gobyerno man ang kontra; gukdon man jud sila (IDI1:SS10). (Let's work together for peace, and for those still in the mountains, if possible, they should return to the government's side. Rather than continuing to claim that

the revolution is for freedom, it will only make things worse because they opposed the government, and they will inevitably be pursued).

Likewise, Informant 8 encouraged her fellow former rebels to continue supporting the government to achieve peace, order, and progress in Bohol. She expressed that:

Akong ika awhag sa akong mga kaubang mga Kauban sa Reporma (KR) nga unta padayon ta sa pagtabang sa atung goberno arun atong maangkon ang kalinaw ug kahusay labe na sa kalamboan sa atong provinsiya sa Bohol (IDI2:SS10). (I encourage my fellow former rebels to continue supporting our government so that we can achieve peace and order, especially for the progress of the province of Bohol).

"Happiness lies in the hands of the government," Informant 10 emphasized that unity among surrenderers fosters progress and reassures those hesitant to surrender that the government will offer support and not abandon them after their return. He stated that:

Ah, kaming mga surrendere, magtinabangay mi alang sa kalamboon ug sa maayong ugma. Ug sa katung wala pa, ayaw mo kahadlok sa pag-surrender kay di mo pasagdan sa goberno. Malipayon ta ug ari nata diri sa sabakan sa goberno (IDI4:SS10). (We, the surrenderers, will work together for progress and a better future. For those who have not yet surrendered, do not be afraid to do so because the government will not abandon you. We are happy, and we are now here with the government).

Analysis of Data

This study employs a qualitative phenomenological research method to explore the life stories of former rebels in the second district of Bohol. This method is well-suited for capturing the depth of participants' lived experiences, allowing the researcher to understand how they perceive their transition from armed conflict to reintegration into society. Through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, the study gathers detailed narratives, enabling a deep understanding of their motivations, struggles, and aspirations as they navigate this transition. The phenomenological approach focuses on describing the essence of these experiences, which helps to reveal the complex emotional and psychological processes involved (Smith, 2019).

The use of a qualitative phenomenological approach allows for the identification of themes related to the challenges and successes of reintegration. By engaging participants in open-ended conversations, the study elicits rich, contextualized insights into their experiences. This method ensures that each participant's voice is heard, offering a comprehensive view of the difficulties and successes encountered during their reintegration. Additionally, it helps to uncover the impact of government programs on their lives and how they perceive the support they receive during their transition to civilian life (Moustakas, 2015).

General Strain Theory (GST) serves as a foundational framework by providing a bird's eye view of the social and economic pressures that often drive individuals toward rebellion. In the context of former rebels in Bohol, this perspective reveals that many experienced significant stressors such as poverty, marginalization, and a lack of opportunities. These strains not only contributed to their initial decisions to join insurgent groups but also influenced their emotional states during reintegration. By recognizing these underlying stressors, we can better appreciate the psychological barriers that returnees face in adapting to civilian life. The GST emphasizes the need for effective interventions that address these strains, making it essential for programs aimed at supporting former rebels to incorporate strategies that alleviate economic and social pressures (Agnew, 2016).

The Theory of Change (ToC) provides a structured approach to understanding the reintegration of former rebels. It focuses on identifying the necessary conditions and actions that can lead to long-term social change, such as successful reintegration into society. ToC helps to explain how programs like the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP) can create pathways for sustainable change by addressing the immediate needs of returnees, such as livelihood support and skills training. It also emphasizes the importance of community acceptance and ongoing support in ensuring the stability of former rebels in their new civilian roles (Anderson, 2019).

The Disillusionment Theory offers additional insights into the internal changes that drive former rebels to abandon their previous militant roles. This theory suggests that disillusionment with the ideologies, leadership, or promises of insurgent groups can lead individuals to reassess their involvement and seek a new path. The theory is relevant in explaining how emotional and psychological shifts influence their openness to reintegration efforts. Understanding this internal transformation is key to recognizing why some former rebels choose to embrace reintegration programs and aspire to build a new life (Adams, 2018).

I. Experiences of the Informants as Former Rebels

A. Positive Experiences

1. Freedom and Liberation.   The informants described their transition from the isolated and dangerous conditions of life in the mountains to a newfound sense of security and freedom in civilian life. This transition allowed them to reunite with their families and rebuild relationships that had been strained or severed during their time as insurgents. The feeling of liberation is not merely about physical freedom; it extends to psychological relief from constant fear and the ability to engage in community activities without the stigma of being part of a rebel group.

This aligns with the Theory of Change, which suggests that for true transformation to occur, individuals need to see a tangible difference in their environment and relationships (Weiss, 2015).

In addition to safety, this freedom allows for a reconnection with family, an essential aspect of the returnees' sense of liberation. Reuniting with their loved ones after years of isolation or conflict enables them to re-establish their roles within their families and communities. This sense of belonging and renewed relationships is vital for their reintegration.

Moreover, the reintegration of former combatants highlights that social ties and family connections are crucial for the emotional recovery of returnees, as they provide the support needed to navigate the complexities of civilian life (Esmilla, 2019).

Furthermore, General Strain Theory by Agnew (1992) emphasizes that reducing stressors, such as the fear of persecution or violence, can significantly impact an individual's emotional well-being, thereby reducing the likelihood of engaging in deviant behavior. This theory underscores how the stability provided by the government helps former rebels focus on building a peaceful future rather than returning to conflict.

2. Happiness and Contentment.   The informants expressed relief and satisfaction with their new lives, contrasting sharply with the constant fear and uncertainty they faced while in conflict. This sense of happiness is often derived from the safety and stability provided by their newfound status within the community and the ability to live without fear of persecution. Furthermore, the opportunity to engage in peaceful, productive activities such as farming and community participation contributes significantly to this sense of well-being.

In addition, a study by Santos et al. (2022) highlights the importance of family connections and social support in the reintegration of former combatants. This research demonstrates that strong familial ties help combatants adjust to their new roles, fostering a sense of belonging and happiness. This finding aligns with the experiences of returnees, who find joy in reuniting with their families and rebuilding relationships that were lost during their time in conflict.

A study by Esmilla (2019) highlights the importance of family connections and social support in the reintegration of former combatants. It finds that strong familial ties help combatants adjust to their new roles, fostering a sense of belonging and happiness. This aligns with the experiences of returnees who find joy in reuniting with their families and rebuilding relationships, which they had lost during their time in conflict.

Moreover, the Theory of Change by Weiss et al. (1995) explains that creating positive conditions for returnees, such as stable living environments and social support, is essential for their successful reintegration. The

happiness and contentment experienced by former rebels can be seen as an outcome of the positive changes brought about by the government's reintegration programs, which provide the foundation for a more secure and peaceful life.

B. Negative Experiences

1. Exploitation and Unfulfilled Promises. Informants expressed disappointments regarding the support they were promised during the reintegration process. They feel that the government's promises of housing, financial aid, or other forms of support have not been fully realized. This discrepancy between expectation and reality can create a sense of betrayal, as returnees perceive that their commitment to peace has not been reciprocated with the necessary support to rebuild their lives.

The Disillusionment Theory by Watzlawick (1974) offers insight into how unmet expectations can foster feelings of disillusionment and frustration. When former rebels do not receive the support they were promised, it leads to a sense of abandonment, as they feel their sacrifices have not been recognized or rewarded by the state.

Furthermore, Miralao and Leaño (2021) studied the impact of broken promises on the reintegration of former combatants, noting that inconsistent delivery of support services can erode trust between returnees and government institutions. Their study highlights that when promises go unfulfilled, it can exacerbate feelings of isolation among former rebels, making it more challenging for them to adapt to civilian life.

Additionally, Agnew's General Strain Theory (1992) can explain the negative emotions that arise when former rebels perceive that they have been treated unjustly by the government. When promised benefits, such as financial aid or housing, are not provided, the resulting strain can lead to feelings of anger or despair, increasing the risk of disengagement from the reintegration process. Therefore, addressing these unmet promises is essential for ensuring that returnees do not revert to conflict as a coping mechanism.

II. Impact of the Program of the Government on the Rebel Returnees

1. Financial Assistance. Economic support plays a critical role in the reintegration of the informants into civilian life. Financial aid is often the first tangible form of support that returnees receive, helping them address immediate needs such as housing, food, and education for their children. This assistance acts as a foundation for rebuilding their lives and fostering stability.

According to Agnew's General Strain Theory (1992), alleviating economic strain through financial assistance can reduce the likelihood of engaging in deviant behaviors, as it provides individuals with a means to meet their needs in a lawful manner. In the context of former rebels, timely financial support can lessen the pressures that might otherwise push them back toward conflict.

Additionally, Esmilla (2019) found that financial assistance programs significantly impact the successful reintegration of former combatants, as they help returnees cover basic expenses and reduce the economic burden on their families. The study highlighted that consistent support enables former rebels to focus on long-term goals like securing stable employment and building livelihoods.

Moreover, the Theory of Change by Weiss (2015) emphasizes the importance of economic interventions in achieving lasting social change. Financial assistance serves as a crucial initial step in the transition process, enabling former rebels to meet their basic needs and begin the journey toward self-sufficiency. This aligns with the experiences of returnees who often cite the importance of receiving economic support in their transition to civilian life.

2. Family Unity. The reintegration of former rebels has a profound impact on re-establishing family bonds. Reconnecting with family members offers emotional stability and support, which are essential for adapting to a new life. For many returnees, being with their loved ones helps them regain a sense of purpose and belonging,

as family members often play a pivotal role in providing moral and emotional guidance during the transition. Moreover, the ability to support and be present for their families fosters a sense of pride and accomplishment among returnees.

According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the need for love and belonging is a fundamental human motivation crucial for psychological well-being. When former rebels are able to reunite with their families, they fulfill this need, which helps them build a more positive outlook on their new lives outside of conflict.

In addition, Miralao and Leaño (2021) found that the support of family members is a critical factor in the successful reintegration of former combatants. Their study showed that individuals who maintain strong family ties are more likely to adjust positively to civilian life, as the support they receive can help mitigate the challenges of reintegration and provide a reliable social network.

Furthermore, the Theory of Change emphasizes that strengthening family connections can lead to more successful reintegration outcomes. By re-establishing bonds with their families, returnees create a support system that encourages positive behavior changes and offers stability in times of uncertainty. This framework underscores the importance of considering family dynamics in the design of reintegration programs.

3. Empowerment through Skills and Resources. The importance of equipping former rebels with the knowledge and tools they need to build sustainable livelihoods cannot be overstated. Training programs and access to resources enable returnees to become self-sufficient, reducing their dependence on government aid and helping them contribute positively to their communities. This empowerment is essential for restoring their sense of agency and control over their lives, which can be particularly meaningful after years of involvement in conflict.

The Self-Efficacy Theory by Bandura (1977) suggests that individuals who believe in their ability to succeed are more likely to engage in positive behaviors and persevere in the face of challenges. For former rebels, gaining new skills and access to resources enhances their self-confidence and enables them to envision a future beyond their past activities, making them more resilient in their transition.

Moreover, a study by Santos and Reyes (2020) highlighted that livelihood training and skills development programs play a crucial role in the reintegration process. Their research found that when former combatants are equipped with practical skills, such as agricultural training or small business management, they are better able to secure stable incomes and integrate more fully into their communities.

Furthermore, the Theory of Change framework indicates that empowering individuals with skills and resources is a key factor in achieving long-term reintegration success. By providing training and economic opportunities, reintegration programs can address the root causes of marginalization and equip former rebels with the tools they need to thrive in a peaceful society.

III. Aspirations of the Informants to Improve their Quality of Life

1. Hope for Better Future and Economic Stability. The aspirations of former rebels to achieve long-term security and well-being are significant. After years of instability and hardship, many returnees view their reintegration as an opportunity to secure a stable livelihood and improve their quality of life. This hope serves as a driving force in their willingness to embrace change and seek opportunities that were previously unavailable to them. Thus, the transition from a life of uncertainty to one with clear prospects for growth and economic improvement is central to their aspirations.

Moreover, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs emphasizes the role of economic stability in achieving self-fulfillment. According to Maslow, individuals can focus on higher-order goals such as self-actualization only after their basic economic needs are met, making financial security a foundational step in building a hopeful future.

Additionally, in their study on the reintegration of former combatants, Alejandria and Gervacio (2020) found that economic opportunities play a significant role in shaping the future outlook of returnees. Their research highlighted that access to livelihood programs and financial support helps restore hope among former combatants by providing them with the means to support their families and invest in their futures.

Furthermore, the Theory of Change by Weiss et al. (1995) explains that creating pathways to economic stability is essential for facilitating long-term positive changes in marginalized communities. For former rebels, hope for a better future is intrinsically linked to the availability of stable economic opportunities, as this enables them to transition from dependency on aid to self-sufficiency.

2. Inclusive Government Support. The role of government programs in aiding the reintegration of informants is critical. The inclusivity of government efforts ensures that returnees receive the assistance they need, ranging from financial aid to psychosocial support. This approach not only addresses the material needs of former combatants but also fosters a sense of belonging and recognition within society. When government support is accessible and inclusive, it creates a conducive environment for returnees to rebuild their lives and trust in state institutions.

Furthermore, the Disillusionment Theory by Watzlawick (1974) suggests that a lack of support can lead to feelings of disenchantment and withdrawal. Conversely, when governments actively engage in inclusive support measures, it helps counteract these feelings and encourages returnees to participate fully in the peace process. This engagement is particularly important in post-conflict scenarios where trust between former rebels and state authorities needs to be rebuilt.

In addition, Esmilla (2019) highlighted the importance of comprehensive government programs in supporting the social and economic reintegration of former combatants. The study found that when government support is targeted and responsive to the specific needs of returnees, it significantly improves their chances of successful reintegration and long-term stability. This aligns with the experiences of former rebels who benefit from programs like E-CLIP, which provide them with the necessary resources to transition into civilian life.

Moreover, the Whole-of-Nation Approach, which is often integrated into the Theory of Change framework, underscores the importance of collective efforts between the government and local communities in addressing the needs of marginalized groups. By ensuring that government support reaches all former combatants, this approach helps create a more inclusive environment, fostering trust and cooperation between returnees and the state.

3. Unity and Cooperation for Peace. This theme emphasizes the importance of collaboration between former rebels, local communities, and government agencies in achieving lasting peace. Unity serves as a cornerstone for healing past wounds and building a cohesive society. For former rebels, active participation in community initiatives and peacebuilding efforts helps them regain a sense of agency and contributes to the broader goal of social harmony. Moreover, the willingness of both returnees and the community to work together is crucial for creating an environment where peace can thrive.

The Social Capital Theory suggests that strong networks and social ties are essential for fostering trust and cooperation within communities. Integrating former rebels into these networks can facilitate their acceptance and support from locals, which in turn promotes peaceful coexistence and reduces the risk of recidivism (Putnam, 2019).

Furthermore, a study by Miralao and Leaño (2021) found that community-based approaches to reintegration are highly effective in fostering unity and trust between former combatants and local residents. Their research highlighted that involving returnees in community activities and decision-making processes helps build mutual respect and cooperation, which are crucial for sustainable peace.

Additionally, the Theory of Change framework supports the idea that unity and collaboration are key to achieving long-term peace. By involving former rebels in community projects and fostering open dialogue

among stakeholders, reintegration efforts can address underlying grievances and build a more cohesive society. This collaborative approach ensures that former rebels feel valued and respected, which is essential for the success of peacebuilding initiatives (Weiss, 2015).

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presents the summary, findings, impliciations for practice, and implications for future studies.

Summary

This study explored the life stories of former rebels in the second district of Bohol.

Specifically, the study sought answers to the following sub-problems:

1. What are the experiences of the informants as former rebels?

2. What is the impact of the governments' program on the informants?

3. What are the aspirations of the informants to improve the quality of their lives?

This study applied the qualitative phenomenological research method to gather information about the life stories of former rebels in the second district of Bohol.

The study was conducted in the Second District of Bohol, C. Y., 2024, in Region 7 (Central Visayas). The research informants comprised ten (10) informants consisting of former rebels in the second district of Bohol, using the purposive sampling technique. This investigation used the researcher-designed interview guide containing open-ended questions concerning the experiences of the informants as former rebels; the impact of the governments' program on the informants; and the aspirations of the informants to improve the quality of their lives. The researcher-designed interview guide was subjected to content validation by a qualitative research design and criminal justice expert to ensure that the contents were valid, fitted, and appropriate to the subject being explored and the target informants. The data collected from this qualitative research emanated from the informants' responses during the in-depth face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions (FGD). Collaizis' methodological approach was applied, and the six phases of thematic analysis were applied for data analysis.

Findings

The themes created from the positive experiences of the informants as former rebels are**:** Freedom and Liberation, Happiness and Contentment. And the themes for the negative experiences of the informants as former rebels are**:** The Erosion of Educational Integrity, Exploitation and Unfulfilled Promises**.** The themes for the impact of the governments' program on the informants are: Financial Assitance, Family Unity, and Empowerment through Skills and Resources. Lastly, the themes pertaining to the aspirations of the informants to improve the quality of their lives are: Hope for Better Future and Economic Stability, Inclusive Government Support, and Unity and Cooperation for Peace.

Implications

Implications for Practice

The findings from this study hold significant implications for various stakeholders involved in the reintegration of rebel returnees in the Philippines. By understanding the dynamics of reintegration and the experiences of former insurgents, stakeholders can implement strategies that foster a supportive environment for returnees and contribute to the overall peace and stability of the nation.

For former insurgents, the study highlights the critical importance of government initiatives like the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP) in aiding their transition back to civilian life. To enhance the effectiveness of these programs, it is essential to establish regular feedback mechanisms that empower returnees to share their experiences and suggest improvements, ensuring their voices are heard. Additionally, creating support groups facilitated by trained social workers can foster a sense of belonging within communities, providing a safe space for returnees to connect with one another, share their challenges, and build a supportive network that aids in their reintegration process.

Families are pivotal in the reintegration process of rebel returnees, as they provide essential emotional and practical support during this critical transition. To enhance their ability to assist, community-based workshops should be established, focusing on mental health, communication, and conflict resolution skills. These programs would educate family members about the unique challenges faced by returnees, equipping them with effective strategies to offer support. Fostering a nurturing home environment, these initiatives can significantly contribute to the successful reintegration of former rebels, ensuring that families become strong pillars of support in this transformative journey.

The Philippine government should leverage the insights from this study to design interventions that tackle the root causes of insurgency, particularly poverty and inequality. Engaging in participatory governance, which incorporates feedback from communities impacted by insurgency, can significantly improve the effectiveness of peacebuilding initiatives. To achieve this, implementing community consultations is essential for developing targeted social programs that address local needs and aspirations. This approach ensures that reintegration efforts are aligned with community interests, fostering a more sustainable and inclusive path toward peace and stability.

Understanding the reasons individuals join insurgent groups is vital for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to refine their community engagement strategies. To enhance their effectiveness, it is recommended that AFP personnel receive training on cultural sensitivity and the socio-economic factors driving insurgency. This training will equip them to build trust and rapport with local communities, fostering positive relationships that can mitigate recruitment efforts from insurgent groups. Addressing the underlying issues and strengthening community ties allows the AFP to play a crucial role in promoting peace and stability.

The Philippine National Police (PNP) should embrace a community-oriented policing approach that integrates the experiences of rebel returnees into their strategies for maintaining peace and security. To strengthen this initiative, establishing collaborations between the PNP and local organizations is essential, creating awareness campaigns that emphasize the significance of community cooperation in combating insurgency. Leveraging the insights of returnees and fostering active community participation enhances trust between the police and local residents, ultimately contributing to more effective peacekeeping efforts and a safer environment for all.

Insights from this study can provide the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) with a deeper understanding of the motivations and strategies of insurgent groups. To enhance the effectiveness of their response to potential threats posed by remnants of these groups, it is crucial to develop intelligence-sharing platforms that facilitate better coordination among government agencies. This collaborative approach will enable timely and informed decision-making, ensuring that all relevant entities can effectively address and mitigate risks, ultimately contributing to a more secure and resilient society.

The National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA) can greatly benefit from a deeper understanding of the dynamics of insurgency, which will enhance the effectiveness of its counter-insurgency strategies. To achieve this, investing in training programs for its personnel focused on analyzing the socio-political factors that drive individuals toward insurgency is recommended. Equipping intelligence officers with the skills to assess these underlying issues allows NICA to facilitate more informed decision-making in intelligence operations, leading to more targeted and effective responses to insurgent activities.

Engaging the broader community in understanding the narratives of rebel returnees is essential for fostering trust and promoting social cohesion. Organizing community dialogues and forums where returnees can share

their stories and experiences plays a pivotal role in this process. These platforms encourage empathy and understanding among community members, helping to reduce the stigma often associated with former insurgents. Facilitating open conversations allows communities to work towards healing and reconciliation, ultimately supporting the reintegration of returnees and contributing to a more inclusive society.

Local Government Units (LGUs) should utilize the insights from this study to develop localized reintegration strategies tailored to the specific needs of their communities. To implement this effectively, it is essential to form multi-sectoral task forces within LGUs that address the social, economic, and security dimensions of reintegration. This collaborative approach will ensure a holistic strategy for community development and peacebuilding, fostering sustainable reintegration efforts that promote stability and resilience within the community while meeting the unique challenges faced by former insurgents.

This study underscores the importance of ongoing research on the reintegration of rebel returnees for academics and researchers. To enhance this effort, it is recommended to foster partnerships between universities and local governments aimed at conducting longitudinal studies that track the reintegration process and its outcomes over time. These collaborations generate valuable data that will inform future policies and programs, ensuring they are evidence-based and responsive to the needs of both returnees and their communities. Contributing to a deeper understanding of reintegration dynamics allows researchers to play a critical role in shaping effective interventions.

Implications for Future Studies

Future studies on the reintegration of rebel returnees should focus on several key areas to deepen understanding and improve intervention strategies. Firstly, longitudinal research is essential to track the long-term outcomes of reintegration programs, providing insights into the evolving needs and challenges faced by returnees over time. Secondly, studies should explore the roles of family dynamics and community engagement in the reintegration process, examining how support systems can be strengthened to enhance success rates. Additionally, comparative studies across different regions could reveal varying factors influencing reintegration, helping to tailor approaches that are culturally and contextually relevant.

Conducting such research will offer significant advantages to future researchers and institutions. It will provide a richer data set that can inform best practices and evidence-based policies, ultimately leading to more effective programs. For individual researchers, engaging in this area of study will enhance their expertise and contribute to the academic discourse surrounding insurgency and peacebuilding. Furthermore, institutions that prioritize this research will position themselves as leaders in addressing complex social issues, potentially attracting funding and partnerships aimed at promoting stability and development. Ultimately, these efforts will foster a deeper understanding of the reintegration process, benefiting communities, policymakers, and researchers alike.

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