

# The Forgotten Victims: Exploring the Impact of War on Residents in Conflict Zones

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to look into the impact of war on residents in conflict zones, using a qualitative method. Data was collected from 10 respondents in a selected barangay of Sergio Osmeña, Zamboanga del Norte. The findings reveal high levels of anxiety, trauma, and persistent psychological suffering stemming from the constant threat of violence. Physical displacement caused by conflict disrupts lives, leading to long-term challenges, including the loss of homes and limited access to basic services. Economic livelihoods and community networks have been severely impacted, pushing residents into a survival mode. The study recommends that the LGU implement mental health programs, strengthen peacekeeping efforts, and provide livelihood training to help residents recover from the impacts of conflict. Ensuring access to essential services, such as healthcare and education, and building temporary shelters in conflict-affected areas are also crucial to support displaced and vulnerable populations.

**Keywords:** war impact on civilians, conflict zones, residents' experience, coping mechanisms, aspirations.

## INTRODUCTION

War and armed conflict shape civilian life far beyond the battlefield, producing long-term psychological distress, social disruption, and economic insecurity among populations who are not combatants. In the Philippine setting, particularly in parts of Mindanao where cycles of armed encounters, displacement, and militarized insecurity have persisted, civilians often experience chronic fear, interrupted livelihoods, restricted mobility, and weakened community networks. In Zamboanga del Norte, conflict-related disturbances are not merely isolated "events" but recurring threats that reshape everyday life, forcing families to recalibrate routines, shelter practices, farming access, and social interaction based on perceived danger. These experiences reflect the broader reality that civilian populations in conflict zones face multidimensional vulnerability, including trauma exposure, livelihood instability, and uncertainty regarding safety and future well-being. Despite this, civilian experiences remain underrepresented in scholarship and policy discourse, where emphasis is frequently placed on military operations, insurgent dynamics, or displacement statistics rather than the lived psychosocial and socio-economic consequences experienced by ordinary households in rural conflict-affected barangays.

To provide a deeper analytical understanding of these experiences, this study is anchored in Resilience Theory, which conceptualizes resilience as a dynamic process through which individuals and families adapt to adversity by mobilizing internal capacities and external resources. Resilience theory shifts the analytical focus from viewing civilians solely as passive victims of war to recognizing them as active agents who employ adaptive strategies to maintain psychological stability, family functioning, and livelihood continuity despite ongoing threats. Within conflict environments, resilience manifests through emotional regulation, meaning-making, reliance on family and cultural support systems, and adaptive livelihood adjustments. This theoretical lens enables the study to interpret civilian experiences not only in terms of trauma and disruption but also in terms of coping processes, resource mobilization, and future-oriented aspirations that sustain survival and recovery. The resilience framework further provides a conceptual pathway linking war exposure to psychosocial impact, adaptive coping mechanisms, and recovery aspirations, thereby allowing for a more comprehensive and integrated understanding of civilian responses to conflict.

Guided by this theoretical perspective, this study examines the lived experiences of conflict-affected residents in a selected barangay of Sergio Osmeña, Zamboanga del Norte, focusing specifically on how war exposure is experienced, interpreted, and managed at the household level. The study investigates three interconnected dimensions: (1) civilians' direct experiences during armed encounters and conditions of insecurity, (2) coping strategies and resilience resources used to manage fear, livelihood disruption, and uncertainty, and (3) aspirations that reflect residents' goals for recovery, stability, and peace. By situating civilian narratives within a resilience-based analytical framework, the study contributes to conflict and civilian harm scholarship by demonstrating how rural households experience war as a combined psychosocial and livelihood crisis while simultaneously engaging in adaptive processes that sustain survival. These findings provide locally grounded evidence to inform local government unit (LGU) programming, particularly in the areas of psychosocial support, livelihood restoration, and community-based peacebuilding, thereby strengthening policy responses that address both the immediate and long-term needs of conflict-affected populations.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of civilians affected by armed conflict in a selected barangay of Sergio Osmeña, Zamboanga del Norte. As mentioned by Alipoyo (2022) in his study, phenomenology was appropriate because the inquiry sought to understand how residents interpret and assign meaning to fear, displacement, livelihood disruption, coping strategies, and aspirations within a conflict environment. Participants consisted of ten (10) parents, both mothers and fathers, who had direct exposure to conflict-related incidents and were able to describe their effects on family functioning and economic stability. A purposive sampling strategy was used to ensure participants met specific inclusion criteria: (a) residency in the barangay during conflict incidents, (b) parental or guardian responsibility for household dependents, and (c) direct experience of conflict-related disruption such as restricted mobility, evacuation, or livelihood interruption. Recruitment was conducted through community coordination and local referrals, ensuring voluntary participation and avoiding coercion. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was achieved, indicated by the recurrence of similar meanings, coping patterns, and experiences across interviews, and the absence of substantially new codes. Saturation was monitored through ongoing memo-writing and refinement of the coding framework.

Data were generated through semi-structured interviews conducted in participants' preferred language to ensure accurate expression of their lived experiences. The interview guide covered four key domains: conflict exposure and experiences, psychosocial and livelihood impacts, coping mechanisms and support systems, and aspirations and perceived needs for recovery and peace. Interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent, transcribed verbatim, and translated into English while preserving culturally embedded meanings and contextual nuances. Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis as cited in Aranjuez (2025), involving systematic phases of familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, identification and review of themes, refinement and definition of thematic categories, and synthesis into an interpretive narrative. Coding and theme development were guided by a resilience-informed analytical framework that examined the progression from war exposure and disruption to coping mechanisms, adaptive resources, and recovery-oriented aspirations, ensuring interpretive depth beyond descriptive categorization.

To ensure methodological rigor and trustworthiness, the study applied established qualitative quality criteria. Credibility was strengthened through iterative coding, peer debriefing among the research team, and selective member validation to confirm the accuracy of interpreted meanings. Transferability was enhanced through detailed descriptions of the research setting, participant characteristics, and conflict context, enabling readers to assess applicability to similar environments. Dependability was ensured by maintaining a clear audit trail documenting interview procedures, coding decisions, and analytical development, while confirmability was supported through reflexive journaling to minimize researcher bias and maintain analytic transparency. The researchers also acknowledged their positionality as academic investigators affiliated with JRMSU and the College of Criminal Justice Education, recognizing the potential influence of prior knowledge of local governance and security conditions. To mitigate interpretive bias, reflexive notes were maintained throughout the research process, and findings were grounded in participants' narratives rather than external assumptions, ensuring that the analysis accurately reflected the lived realities of civilians affected by conflict.

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## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Phenomenology was applied for this research study in the direct observation method. In order to develop an overall idea of the study's complete content, every informant's transcript was read and reread. The important transcript passages that elaborated on the real-life experiences of the participants were pulled out, recorded, and line numbers and informant codes are mentioned.

Each informant was allowed to speak in their mother tongue to verbally describe their experiences to explicitly connect the study's coverage. For ease of understanding and general legibility, these were translated. Similarly, all of the informant statements were chosen from the transcript of the interview. Each significant statement that was extracted had its formulated meanings created and coded to reflect a complete account of the informant's experience. The formulated core meanings that seemed to be grouped together and reflected distinct structural elements were organized into cluster themes. (See Appendix F-2 for development cluster themes). Finally, emergent themes were created by rearranging cluster themes. (See Appendix G for a diagram of common themes).

### Experiences of civilians during times of war

It was a great privilege for me to hear such a story during my investigation into the actual experiences of the residents' war victims through interviews. The informants had not shared this experience with anyone in their earlier life until they were interviewed by me; they were interested in sharing experiences that remained buried in their minds, and knew about my research study. Therefore, came up with three (3) emergent themes that were actually centered on the experiences of the informants. The themes are:

**Life Under Siege.** The first theme illustrated that the overwhelming fear and panic individuals experience during violent conflicts. Participants described being startled awake by the sounds of gunfire, leading to a state of alarm and the need to seek safety. Their decision to stay hidden indoors reflects their instinct to avoid harm, illustrating the constant threat and anxiety of living in an environment fraught with danger. Informant 5 said that: We fell asleep, and then we woke up to the sound of gunfire. We were all very scared and panicking. We stayed inside the house and didn't go out; we stayed up here to avoid being caught in the fighting (P5:SS17).

Informant 7 revealed the fear and helplessness experienced when armed outsiders entered their community. They described hiding to avoid violence, emphasizing the vulnerability of civilians simply trying to survive amidst conflict: There are people here who are different from us, and they come with weapons. When they started shooting, we hid out of fear because those people are not from here, and we're just farmers trying to survive (P7:SS26). Informant 9 added the idea of informants 5 and 7, described witnessing a violent exchange between two groups, with gunfire directed at each other. The danger intensified as the bullets flew in their direction, illustrating the immediate threat to their safety during the conflict: I saw them down below, and they were shooting at each other. The ones up top were also retaliating, and the bullets were coming our way (P9: SS40).

Civilians in war zones face unparalleled hardships due to constant exposure to violence and instability. Life under siege disrupts every aspect of daily living, from access to food and water to healthcare and education. In conflict-affected areas like Ukraine, residents have reported long periods without electricity, clean water, and heating, especially during harsh winters, which exacerbates the already precarious living conditions. Limited access to medical services further intensifies their suffering, with hospitals often destroyed or inaccessible due to ongoing shelling (Kurapov et al., 2023; UNU-WIDER, 2024). The psychological toll of enduring these conditions is profound, with families constantly fearing for their safety and experiencing significant trauma.

**Trauma and Turmoil.** The second theme dealt with the psychological toll on civilians manifests in conditions like PTSD, depression, and anxiety as experienced by the victims in the conflict zones. Informant 3 stated in this way: I was very scared during that time, I was trembling with fear around seven o'clock. That incident was traumatic, and it keeps coming back to my mind (P3:SS11). Informant 6 shared his experience of fear and trauma in this manner: We were really scared because we were just here at home and didn't go out, fearing we might encounter rebels. We hid here because they are close by, right there in the war below (P6:SS22).

The statement of the informant 6 was supported by experience of fear by informant 8 as she stated this way: We were really scared back then. We stayed inside the house and didn't go out at all(P8: SS34). The psychological impact of war on civilians often manifests through Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety. War-torn regions like Syria provide poignant examples, where exposure to violence, displacement, and loss leaves deep emotional scars. Research highlights that approximately 19.6% of Syrian civilians exhibit PTSD symptoms, with displaced individuals and refugees reporting particularly high rates of trauma. In Idlib, where active conflict continues, nearly 99% of internally displaced persons (IDPs) experienced at least one PTSD symptom due to the unrelenting exposure to violence and instability. Survivors also face challenges such as "survivor's guilt" and persistent nightmares, further complicating reintegration into society (Losservatorio, 2023; Syria Relief, 2024).

**Displacement and Loss.** The third theme a family was forced to leave their home due to the dangers of conflict nearby. The act of moving to a different house, even one close to their original home, reflects both the physical and emotional impact of being uprooted. Informant 3 said that: We also moved from our house to another house nearby (P3:SS12). Many families were forced to leave their home due to conflict, disrupting their sense of security and stability. As noted by Informant 7: We evacuated from our home, and we couldn't use our garden anymore(P7:SS28).

This statement underscores the ripple effects of conflict on rural livelihoods. The informant expresses how their crops essential for sustenance and income were unintentionally damaged as a result of military or rebel movement through their land. Informant 5 said that: Then our crops got affected too because they were trampled(P5:SS18). This statement supports the previous one by highlighting the profound impact of displacement and conflict on food security. Due to the inability to work and the fear of returning to their fields, the informants were unable to access their crops, leading to severe food shortages. Their struggles reflect the broader challenges faced by displaced individuals, where loss of livelihood and safety prevents them from fulfilling basic needs, deepening their sense of insecurity and hardship. Informant 7 said that: We really struggled with food; we had nothing left to eat because we couldn't work anymore. Life became very difficult for us because we were scared to go to that mountain(P7:SS29).

Displacement caused by war disrupts lives profoundly, leaving civilians uprooted and struggling to survive in precarious conditions. In Yemen, the ongoing conflict has forced millions into makeshift camps, where overcrowding, inadequate healthcare, and lack of education have created a dire humanitarian crisis. Women and children make up the majority of displaced populations, often facing unique vulnerabilities such as limited mobility and harassment near conflict zones. This displacement also leads to disrupted family units, with members separated in their attempts to secure safety or livelihoods. Children, like 12-year-old Fatima in Marib camp, face early responsibilities, forgoing education and enduring harsh environments to care for ailing relatives (ICRC, 2023; UNHCR, 2024).

### **Coping mechanism employed by the residents**

In managing the challenges they have faced, the residents employed a range of coping mechanisms. Three primary themes emerged:

**Adapting to Adversity.** Civilians display remarkable resilience, using creativity and resourcefulness to navigate crises. Informant 1 said that: Our livelihood was really affected because we were restricted here and couldn't get close to our crops. This significantly impacted our way of life, but we managed to endure and still fought to survive, living here in the mountains (P1:SS4). Informant 3 stated how their livelihood was severely impacted because they couldn't access their crops due to restrictions. They were left with only vegetables to sell, and despite the challenges, they persevered, working hard to survive in the mountains, he said: Our livelihood was really affected because we were restricted here and couldn't get close to our crops. This significantly impacted our way of life, but we managed to endure and still fought to survive, living here in the mountains(P3:SS13). Informant 4 stated the resilience and determination in the face of adversity. Despite the challenges they faced, the individual and their family continued to work and adapt by growing vegetables to meet their daily needs, showing their efforts to survive and sustain themselves even during tough times, Participant 4 stated: Despite

the hardships, we continued working and found ways to survive. Even though it was difficult, we still planted vegetables and worked hard to ensure we had food every day(P4:SS16).

Civilians living in war-torn areas often exhibit exceptional resilience by creatively adapting to extreme conditions. In Syria, underground networks emerged as vital lifelines for accessing food, medical supplies, and basic necessities during sieges. Communities leveraged local expertise and cooperation to establish makeshift markets and clandestine health clinics, effectively bypassing blockades and governmental restrictions. These strategies, driven by social connectedness and trust, highlight the importance of local adaptation in navigating the immediate challenges of conflict (Howe, 2023; Barnett, 2023).

**Faith, Culture and Tradition.** The second theme relying on faith and divine strength highlights how, in times of hardship, the individual found strength through their belief in God. Despite the challenges they faced, their trust in God provided them with the resilience and courage needed to endure the difficult situation, reflecting the deep connection between faith and survival. Informant 5 said that: We really relied on God, it was from Him that we drew our strength (P5:SS20).

Informant 7 statement emphasizes the role of cultural identity and community in providing strength. The individual highlights how, as members of the Subanen tribe, they draw strength from their cultural roots and the support of their respective tribes, suggesting that their sense of belonging and shared heritage plays a crucial role in their resilience during tough times, he said that: This is really how it is here with us we are almost all Subanen, and we draw strength from our individual tribes (P7:SS31). This perspective reflects the strong cultural value of family as a primary source of strength and resilience in times of adversity. The statement highlights the belief that, in difficult circumstances, the family unit is the foundation from which individuals draw the strength needed to endure and overcome hardships. Informant 8 said that: Well, that's a Filipino way of thinking when you face trials, especially something like a war, you really turn to your family. It's from your family that you draw strength(P8: SS35).

Faith, culture, and tradition play vital roles in providing solace and strength during times of conflict. In Afghanistan, religion has served as a critical coping mechanism for individuals and communities affected by decades of war. Prayer gatherings and religious rituals not only provide spiritual relief but also create a sense of normalcy amidst chaos. These practices, deeply embedded in Afghan culture, foster solidarity and serve as psychological anchors for displaced and traumatized individuals. For many, faith acts as a guiding force, helping them navigate their struggles and maintain hope (USIP, 2023). Cultural traditions, such as wedding ceremonies and festivals, are equally significant in maintaining communal ties and identity during crises. These events allow communities to come together and reaffirm their cultural heritage despite the surrounding challenges. In Afghanistan, traditional celebrations and attire have been used as forms of resistance, preserving cultural identity against forces of disintegration. These traditions also provide moments of joy and connection, counterbalancing the pervasive grief and instability brought by war (RJ Travel Agency, 2024).

**Silent Battles.** The third theme described how people endure hidden emotional struggles despite appearing fine on the outside. They smile and act like everything is okay, but inside, they are battling fear, uncertainty, and the weight of their challenges. Informant 1 said that: Even though we didn't show it, every day felt like a battle. We smiled through our hardships, pretending everything was okay, but deep inside, we were struggling with the weight of the war and the fear of losing everything. It was a silent fight that no one could see, but it was real to us(P1:SS5). Informant stated the internal struggles people face that are not visible to others. Despite appearing fine on the outside, they may be dealing with emotional battles like fear, loss, and uncertainty. These hidden struggles influence how they perceive and respond to the world around them every day. Informant 7 said that: Sometimes, the hardest battles are the ones we fight within ourselves. We may look fine on the outside, but inside, we're dealing with fear, loss, and uncertainty. These struggles aren't always visible to others, but they shape how we face the world every day(P7:SS33). This statement reflects how people may appear happy on the outside, but they often face personal struggles and hardships that others don't see. Despite their efforts to keep going, they endure silent battles that remain hidden from view. Informant 8 said that: Behind the smiles and happiness, there are stories of pain and hardship that others don't see. Despite our efforts, we still face quiet battles that remain unnoticed by others(P8:SS37).

Residents in war-torn areas silently endure severe mental health challenges, often with limited access to professional care. The stigma surrounding mental illness and the lack of infrastructure make formal support systems difficult to access. As a result, civilians rely on informal peer networks for emotional support and trauma processing. Peer-led group discussions and sharing experiences help foster a sense of solidarity and mutual understanding, offering relief from isolation and the burden of mental distress (Shoib et al., 2022; africamindsmatter.org, 2023). Despite limited resources, informal therapy sessions organized by local leaders or nongovernmental organizations have proven effective in addressing mental health issues. In some cases, creative therapies like art, music, and storytelling are used to provide emotional outlets and build resilience. These community-based interventions enable survivors to regain a sense of agency and begin to heal emotionally. For example, in regions affected by ongoing conflict, mobile support networks and digital counseling platforms have emerged, offering accessible and scalable solutions to reach those in remote or insecure locations (Bruhn et al., 2022).

## Aspirations

**Dreams and Peace.** The first theme war-affected communities harbor aspirations for a return to normalcy and expresses a strong desire for peace, highlighting that the family simply wants to live peacefully in the mountains without the disruptions of conflict. Informant 6 said that: What we really want is to be given peace here, since we're just living in the mountains(P6:SS25). The statement expresses a desire for peace, unity, and a better future, focusing on living harmoniously, supporting one another, and building a brighter future for their children. Informant 9 said that: Our dream is simply to live peacefully, to be good and supportive to one another, and to build a better future for our children(P9:SS42). Informant 10 added the idea of informant 6 and 9, they hoping the conflict doesn't happen again, as it has caused significant stress and turmoil within their family, leading to confusion and discord, stated in this way: I hope it doesn't happen again because it really affects our family; it's just too chaotic(P10:SS50).

War-affected communities harbor profound aspirations for peace, often dreaming of a return to normalcy and the restoration of their pre-conflict way of life. For many, the end of conflict is not just the cessation of violence but the beginning of rebuilding their livelihoods, homes, and social fabric. In countries like Ukraine, where communities have endured protracted conflict, residents have expressed a collective yearning for peace that extends beyond mere security to encompass social stability and economic revival (World Bank, 2021). These aspirations for peace are integral to community resilience, as they offer a glimmer of hope amid the destruction and suffering, driving individuals to overcome the scars of war. The pursuit of peace in war-torn areas is deeply intertwined with the desire for justice and reconciliation. A study on the aftermath of the Syrian Civil War highlighted that many survivors and displaced persons yearn not only for the end of hostilities but for a society that fosters social harmony, where former enemies can coexist peacefully. This dream of a peaceful future is often rooted in the belief that sustainable peace can only be achieved through the restoration of social justice, the acknowledgment of past wrongs, and the rebuilding of trust among communities (AlSharmani, 2020). The aspirations for peace also involve tangible actions such as initiating peace talks, community dialogues, and supporting reintegration programs that facilitate the healing of both physical and psychological wounds.

**The Rebuilding Vision.** The first theme reflected a desire for peace, unity, and a brighter future. It emphasizes restoring safety, cooperation, and hope within the community, ensuring that families can live happily and securely while working together to build a better future. Informant 2 said that: Our vision for rebuilding is to restore peace and cooperation in the community to build a better future. We want families to live safely and be happy with the opportunities that bring hope to everyone(P2:SS6). This statement focuses on rebuilding through mutual support, aiming to restore peace and create opportunities for progress in every family. Informant 4 said that: Our vision for rebuilding is to help each other restore peace and create opportunities that will bring progress to every family, including ours. We want the communities to be happy through unity and mutual support here(P4:SS14). This statement emphasized the importance of overcoming challenges, restoring peace, and supporting each other. The goal is for the community to unite, ensuring progress and a better life for every family. Informant 10 said that: What can save us here is to rise above the challenges and restore peace. We hope this does not happen again, and we support one another to build a better life for everyone. We want the community to unite for the progress of each family(P10:SS49).

The process of rebuilding after conflict involves not only the physical restoration of infrastructure but also the healing of social fabrics and communities. As evidenced by the reconstruction efforts in cities like Sarajevo and Mostar, a key component of post-conflict recovery is recognizing the cultural and social significance of structures and institutions. In Sarajevo, for instance, the rebuilding process emphasized the importance of local engagement, where residents actively participated in planning, ensuring the rebuilt city reflected their collective needs and aspirations (UNESCO, 2020; World Bank, 2021). This participatory approach fosters both physical restoration and the revival of community bonds that are essential for long-term peace and resilience. An integrated approach to rebuilding, as suggested in recent frameworks, stresses the importance of addressing both the tangible and intangible aspects of recovery. In cities like Medellín and Mogadishu, investments in public spaces and infrastructure were seen as vital to connect diverse communities and address the social inequalities exacerbated by conflict (Bauwens, 2022; UNHabitat, 2023). By focusing on shared cultural values and community-driven decisions, these cities were able to not only rebuild but also transform their social dynamics, laying the groundwork for a more inclusive and resilient future. Such strategies highlight how restoration efforts, when guided by local cultural context and community involvement, can facilitate both economic recovery and social cohesion.

**Voices for Change.** This first theme stated how the war deeply impacted their lives, but despite this, they are determined to recover. It emphasizes the importance of working together to restore peace and create a better future for all. Informant 2 said that the war has affected our lives, but we will continue to rise. We helped each other during that time to restore peace and build a better future (P2:SS10). This statement expresses the community's strength and determination despite facing challenges. It highlighted how they continue moving forward with the support of one another and their commitment to creating a better future. Informant 7 said that: We really struggled here, but we continue with each other's help, and we will build a better future (P7:SS30). This statement expressed the community's desire for government attention and support in improving their lives. Informant 9 said that: We hope the government will hear our voices, so that we can be given opportunities and support for our livelihood (P9:SS44).

Survivors of war often become the strongest advocates for systemic reforms that can prevent future conflicts. Their experiences with loss, trauma, and the destruction of their communities give them a unique perspective on the importance of building peace. In post-conflict societies such as Rwanda and Colombia, survivors have led the charge in pushing for legal and political reforms aimed at preventing the recurrence of violence. They advocate for policies that promote social justice, equality, and accountability, arguing that addressing the root causes of conflict, such as political exclusion, economic disparity, and ethnic tensions, is crucial for long-term peace (Sommers, 2020; Uvin, 2019). Their voices often call for the establishment of truth and reconciliation commissions, the recognition of victims' rights, and the promotion of democratic governance, all of which are seen as vital for breaking the cycle of violence.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the impact of war on civilians in conflict areas, focusing on their experiences, coping strategies, and future aspirations. Data collection was conducted ethically with consent from informants, involving one-on-one interviews with residents directly affected by conflict. Transcriptions of these interviews were analyzed to identify key recurring themes that best captured the lived realities of these individuals. Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, the study identified primary themes, such as the psychological toll of conflict, including anxiety, trauma, and fear from the ongoing threat of violence and displacement. Despite these challenges, many residents demonstrated resilience, largely supported by family and community solidarity. Some maintained small-scale livelihoods, such as selling vegetables, to retain a sense of normalcy.

The research reveals the significant psychological, social, and economic impact that war inflicts on the inhabitants of Osmeña, Zamboanga del Norte. Persistent threats of violence and relocation have resulted in individuals contending with worry, trauma, and emotional turmoil, exacerbated by the loss of livelihoods and communal solidarity. Notwithstanding these challenges, the impacted inhabitants have demonstrated exceptional resilience, adjusting to continual changes, cultivating strength via familial cohesion, and utilizing innovative survival tactics. Their ambitions for safety, family stability, and sustainable livelihoods underline their desire to

reconstruct their lives amidst continuous difficulties. Given the limitations faced, the findings underline the urgent need for comprehensive, community-driven solutions. Residents want safeguarding, mental health assistance, and resources to restore economic and social stability.

The following recommendations are offered to support the recovery and well-being of conflict-affected residents. The local government unit (LGU) may establish comprehensive mental health programs, including counseling services, community-based therapy sessions, and mobile mental health clinics, to address the psychological impact of war on affected individuals. To enhance safety and restore public confidence, the LGU may strengthen local peacekeeping efforts by increasing the presence of security personnel and organizing community watch groups. Economic recovery may also be supported through the implementation of livelihood training programs and the provision of microfinance opportunities to help residents regain financial stability and independence. Furthermore, the LGU may ensure the continuous availability of essential services such as healthcare, education, and access to clean water to meet the urgent needs of displaced and vulnerable populations. Finally, priority may be given to the construction of temporary shelters and the establishment of accessible service centers within conflict-affected areas to provide immediate protection and facilitate access to government assistance and support services.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

This study strictly adhered to established institutional and international ethical standards to ensure the protection, dignity, rights, and welfare of all participants. Prior to data collection, ethical clearance was obtained from the authorized Institutional Research Ethics Committee, confirming that the research complied with ethical principles governing studies involving human participants. Formal permission was also secured from the concerned institutional authorities to conduct the study within the academic setting.

All respondents were fully informed about the nature, purpose, objectives, and procedures of the study, including their roles as voluntary participants. Written informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to the administration of the research instrument, ensuring that participation was based on free and informed decision-making. Participants were explicitly informed of their right to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty, coercion, or adverse consequences.

Strict measures were implemented to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. No personally identifiable information was collected, recorded, or disclosed, and all responses were treated with the highest level of confidentiality. Data were used solely for academic and research purposes. All collected data were securely stored in password-protected digital files and safeguarded physical records, accessible only to the researchers. Data handling procedures complied with ethical data protection standards to ensure integrity, confidentiality, and responsible use of information throughout the research process.

Furthermore, the study ensured that no physical, psychological, social, or emotional harm was inflicted upon the participants. Ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice were strictly observed. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout all stages of the investigation, including data collection, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of findings.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no financial, personal, institutional, or professional conflicts of interest that could have influenced the design, implementation, analysis, interpretation, or reporting of this study. The research was conducted independently and objectively, without any external funding, sponsorship, or influence that could compromise its integrity. The findings and conclusions presented in this study reflect the authors' unbiased academic judgment and are based solely on the empirical data collected and analyzed.

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