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Research Article

The Decommissioning of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front Combatants in Camp Darul Arham, Butig Lanao Del Sur and It's Implication to Peace

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ABSTRACT

Alongside the roadmap toward the creation of the Bangsamoro is an implementation of Normalization Process by both the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) which mandates among others the decommissioning of MILF forces and weaponry. As a critical part of the similarly critical normalization process, decommissioning shall be a process of putting the weapons of the MILF beyond use and a process of allowing a smooth transition for MILF combatants to productive civilian life. In line with this, this paper aims to: (a) track the socio-demographic profiles of the combatants; (b) examine the perceptions of the combatants in the decommissioning; (c) describe the role of the Independent Decommissioning Body (IDB) in the decommissioning process and challenges encounter; (d) draw implication from the findings of the study to peace building.

The study utilized the explorative-evaluative research design that employed the qualitative descriptive approach in the interpretation of data to one hundred (100) combatants of Darul Arham and IDB staff. A researcher-designed survey questionnaire was used to elicit necessary information.

Results show that the combatants highly perceived socio-economic assistance specifically financial, social development, and economic and sustainable livelihood assistance to be extended to them as they are being decommissioned. The study recommends for the strengthening of measures for the both parties, the GPH and the MILF, to promote and guarantee free movement of IDB and create an environment free of fear and of intimidation so it can fulfill its part in the normalization process.

Keywords: Peace study, Decommissioning, MILF combatants, Independent Decommissioning Body

Introduction

The Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) have been part of developing multi-level and dimensional approaches to build peace and development to the Bangsamoro community. The recent developments have

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seen an historic breakthrough in the form of Comprehensive Peace Agreements after more than 40 decades of conflict making it the second longest conflict in the world. The ratification of Bangsamoro Organic Law became the instrument for the establishment of the ever sought-after Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). This is a major milestone for settling decades of armed conflict and hopes to facilitate the final conclusion of the conflict which at the heart of it lies deep-rooted prejudice against minority and indigenous population.

One of the important components of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) signed in 2014 by the government and the MILF is the decommissioning of MILF weaponry and combatants—every critical part of the similarly critical normalization process. The bigger and broader normalization arrangement, in which decommissioning is under, seeks to return normalcy to communities affected by the decades-long armed conflict in Mindanao. Crucial in its success is sincerity on the part of the government and a voluntary and a commitment on the part of the MILF and as for some of the MILF combatants who were great dependent on their weapons for more than 40 years of struggle, giving up their firearms would surely be difficult for them. Here, the working relationship of the Independent Decommissioning Body (IDB), the mechanism of body who will oversee the decommissioning process, with that of the MILF is vital. In relation to this, the researchers though of conducting an empirical research about the decommissioning of the MILF combatants in Camp Darul Arham in Butig, Lanao del sur and its implication to peace. Despite the sensitivity of the topic, the researchers were motivated to investigate the perceptions of the combatants toward decommissioning and the observable and significance contribution of the Independent Decommissioning Body in the normalization process. The researchers pursued it as the central focus of this study.

Muslim (1994) stated in his book that grant of real autonomy to the Moros is the only alternative that has great potential to make them stop their armed Struggle. As previously explained, the Philippine government can never

end the struggle for as long as it continues to evade the Moro problem by pursuing its misplaced “peace-making” approach. To end the killing, the government needs to sincerely address the problem. Moro autonomy seems to be the only alternative available. In fact, autonomy is not just the only nonviolent alternative available, but the only alternative available. But the only alternative to the currently precarious conflict situation in Mindanao. It addresses both the government’s goal of ensuring its territorial integrity and sovereignty and the need to address the floundering Moro Problem. It seems to be the golden mean that has great potential to address the problematic conditions of the Moros for which some of them thought secession and armed struggle are indispensable.

Autonomy is appropriate to the Mindanao conflict not only because of its demonstrated acceptability to the great majority of the Moros, including the Mujahedeen’s, but also because of its logical compatibility with the archipelagic nature and the plural and diverse composition of the Philippines, aside from the historical fact that Mindanao was originally a separate political unit. These features, among others, suggest the unresponsiveness of the unitary system of government (which is characterized by a high degree of decentralization of political power to the Philippine Situation. This means that effective and responsive public governance in the country entails a political structure where a region like Mindanao is given a substantial amount of autonomy from the distant center of political power in Manila, thereby enabling it to play the role of being an active partner of the central government in the development process. And the required decentralized political system should include not only decentralization of administration (decentralization or administrative decentralization of administration) but most importantly decentralization of political power (devolution or Political Decentralization).

Hence, this study aimed to investigate the decommissioning of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front Combatant in Camp Darul Arham, Butig Lanao del sur and its implication to peace. The study was concerned with hope to give people an overview on what are the roles of independent decommissioning body in creating

peace in Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and now the Bangsamoro Autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao.

Research Methodology

This study about the decommissioning of the selected Moro Islamic Liberation Front Combatant in Camp Darul Arham, Butig Lanao del Sur and Its Implication To Peace was subjected to a proper research design and methodology for the completion of this study. It includes the research design, locale of the study, the respondents of the study, the research instruments, data gathering procedure, and the statistical tools used in analysing and interpreting the data.

Research Design

The study made use of explorative-evaluative research design that utilized the qualitative descriptive approach in the interpretation of data. The Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) defines a descriptive study as "any study that is not truly experimental." In human research, a descriptive study can provide information about the naturally occurring health status, behaviour, attitudes or other characteristics of a particular group. Bickman and Rog (1998) define it as making analysis to answer questions such as "what is" or "what was." It involves describing people and their answers to a given questions who take part in the study.

Also, a qualitative approach was employed as qualitative data were obtained from the analysis of the responses from the questionnaire provided to the respondents and interviews from the Key Informants of the study. Sandelowski (2004) defines qualitative approach as an umbrella term for an array of attitudes towards and strategies for conducting inquiry that are aimed at discovering how human beings understand, experience, interpret and produce the social world.

Locale of the Study

Butig is one of the 25 municipalities' districts of Lanao del sur or one of the total number of 29 municipal districts of the recently divided Lanao del sur. The criteria for its rural and isolated characteristics are based upon

physical and cultural factors. It is about 56 kilometers from Marawi city, the principal center of acculturation in Lanao del sur. Its all-maranao population of 3,437 live in villages and scattered houses over an area of about 344 square kilometres beyond the southeastern shores of lake Lanao. It is only accessible by trails of varying distances from different points of contact on the lake shores.

Camp Darul Arham is the political and administrative camp of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front located in the Municipality of butig in the province of Lanao del sur. It has a very historical significance. It was also the first shelter area of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front under the Leadership of former Joint Normalization Chairman Muhammad Nassif a J3 operation Commander of Moro Islamic Liberation Front.



Figure 1. Map of the Study Site

Respondents of the Study

The combatants of Moro Islamic Liberation Front in Camp Darul Arham, Butig Lanao del Sur served as the respondents of the study. Purposive sampling was employed in selecting and limiting respondents into 100. Since this study is explorative, IDB staff were taken as key informants of the study to achieve a more empirical result. IDB staff themselves who oversee the decommissioning process of the MILF were interviewed with an interview schedule. The answers provided by the key informants were used in further supplementation and understanding of the current study.

These respondents were believed to have good representation of the research population.

Sampling Procedure

The selected respondents were the Moro Islamic Liberation Front Combatants of Camp Darul Arham, Butig, Lanao del Sur and staff of Independent Decommissioning Body. The purposive sampling method was utilized to select samples of the respondents with the limit of 100 respondents only. Purposive sampling, also referred to as judgment, selective or subjective sampling is a non-probability sampling method that is characterized by a deliberate effort to gain representative samples by including groups or typical areas in a sample.

Research Instruments

The researchers in their quest of providing answers to the statement of the problems used instruments to help them in arriving such answers. These two identified instruments are the following:

Survey Questionnaire

The researchers employed a structured questionnaire as the instrument to gather the needed data. The questionnaire was consisted of three parts namely: (1) the socio-demographic profile of the respondents; (2) perceptions of the respondents in the decommissioning; and (3) the roles of IDB in the decommissioning process and challenges encounter. This was in the form of a check list for the respondents to easily answer the questions provided. The questions were measured through likert scale indicating the level of conformity of the respondents to the given statement indicators. Scaling of the responses are the following:

- (4) Strongly Agree
- (3) Agree
- (2) Disagree
- (1) Strongly Disagree

Data Gathering Procedure

Protocols governing data gathering were religiously observed. A formal request letter was prepared and addressed to the head of the camp asking the camp to allow the researchers

to distribute questionnaire to the sampled respondents, and gain necessary data from the camp. In the same manner, a letter was sent to the respondents. Upon the approval of all these requests, the researchers finally fielded the questionnaire.

The primary data needed in the study were through the use of survey questionnaire and interview from the respondents and key informants. The respondents were approached by the researcher in a humble manner asking them to be her respondents by means of answering the questionnaire provided. The survey questionnaire was even translated in Meranao by the researchers as they waited for their respondents to finish answering the questionnaire as most of the respondents cannot understand English. The researchers patiently waited for other respondents to give their questionnaire as it was personally delivered by the respondents themselves.

As a follow-up to the survey questionnaire, personal interviews were conducted by the researchers to their key informants who are knowledgeable enough about the current study.

Method of Data Analysis

To accomplish the objective of the study, descriptive analysis was used to summarize the socio-demographic data into a simpler summary to make it easier to understand and interpret and investigate the respondents' answers on the decommissioning of the MILF Combatants in Camp Darul Arham, Butig. With the use of a self-made questionnaire the numbers of questions were integrated by the researcher the questionnaire was also checked and validated by the Professor Eduardo R. Casas, the answers of the respondents were tabulated and analyzed using the statistical tools such as: frequency and percentage for the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of their age, sex, educational attainment, work affiliation, and monthly income. Also, Corresponding mean and weighted mean were applied to treat data relative to the responses of the respondents as it deemed applicable.

The following are the statistical tools used to compute for the main results of this study:

Weighted mean

$$\bar{x}_w = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n x_i w_i}{\sum_{i=1}^n w_i}$$

Where:

x_i is the i^{th} object

w_i is the i^{th} weight

n is the sample size

Relative frequency (percentage)

$$RF = \frac{\text{frequency}}{\text{total}} \times 100\%$$

Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the results of the data gatherings which was conducted by the researchers. Along with the survey questionnaire being distributed to identified

respondents, an interview schedule was also conducted for the key informants of the study. In this chapter, the data gathered from the field are presented, analyzed and interpreted according to their arrangement in the statements of the Problem.

Socio-Demographic Profile of the Respondents

This aspect of the study includes the respondents' age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, ethnic affiliation, occupation and monthly income.

Age

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of distribution of the respondents according to age.

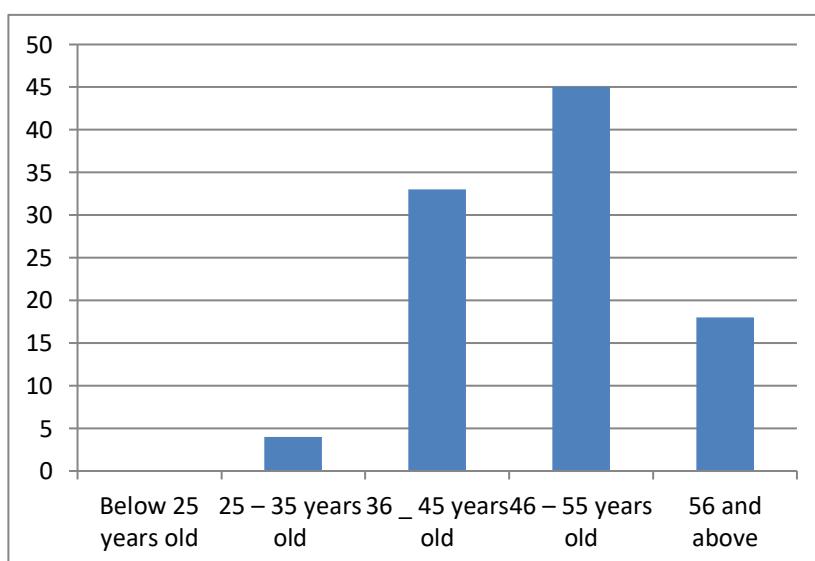


Figure 2. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents According to Age

Figure 2 shows the frequency and percentage of distribution of the respondents according to age. As shown below, almost half of the respondents are within the age cohort of 46-55 years old. This corresponds to forty-five (45) respondents of the sample. Following the highest number of respondents is the thirty-three (33) from the age cohort 36-45 years old while eighteen (18) respondents are within 56 years old and above. The youngest respondents of the study are consisting of four (4) whose age are within the age group 25-35 years old.

The prevalence of middle-aged to old-aged respondents is contrary to the expected ages of the MILF combatants at the locale of the study. Nevertheless, it implies that the MILF combatants remain in the group despite aging.

Sex

Figure 3 shows the frequency and percentage of distribution of the respondents according to sex.

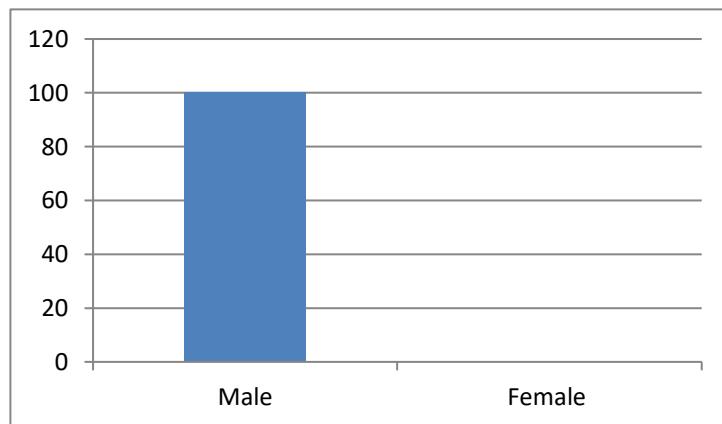


Figure 3. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Sex

Figure 3 shows that most of the respondents are Male. This corresponds to 100% of the total number of respondents. This implies that all of the one hundred (100) combatant respondents are male as shown in Table 2. An explanation to this is the general view that MILF is a 'man thing'. Although there are female

combatants, occasion like this are usually attended by male combatants.

Civil Status

Figure 4 shows the frequency and percentage of distribution of the respondents according to civil status.

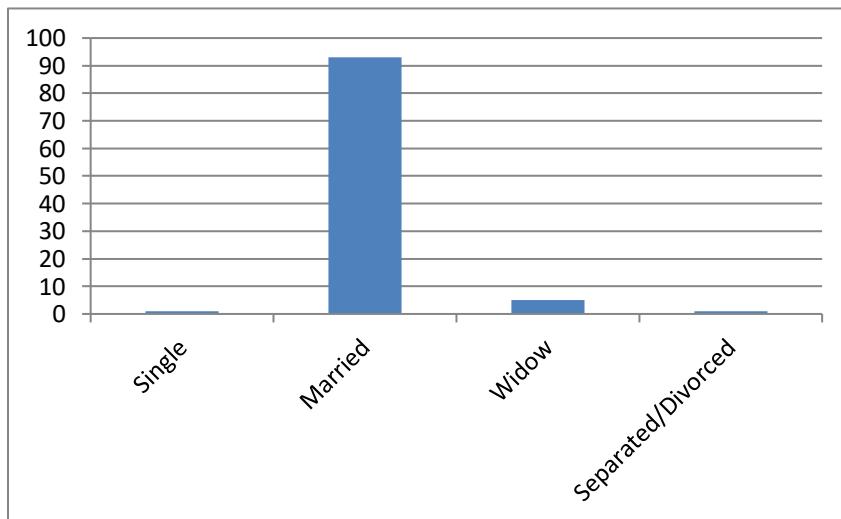


Figure 4. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents According to Civil Status

Figure 4 shows that most of the respondents are married. This corresponds to 93 of the sample. There are 5 of them who are widow, 1 who are single and 1 who are separated or divorced.

This implies that that majority of the respondents numbering to ninety-three (93) are married. There were five (5) widows, one (1) separated or divorced, and another one (1) single respondent. This result is analogous to their age that because most of them are middle-aged

and none is below 25 years old, they are expected to have spouse. This could also imply that the respondents are family-oriented persons as indicated by very low number of divorced.

Educational Attainment

Figure 5 shows the frequency and percentage of distribution of the respondents according to educational attainment.

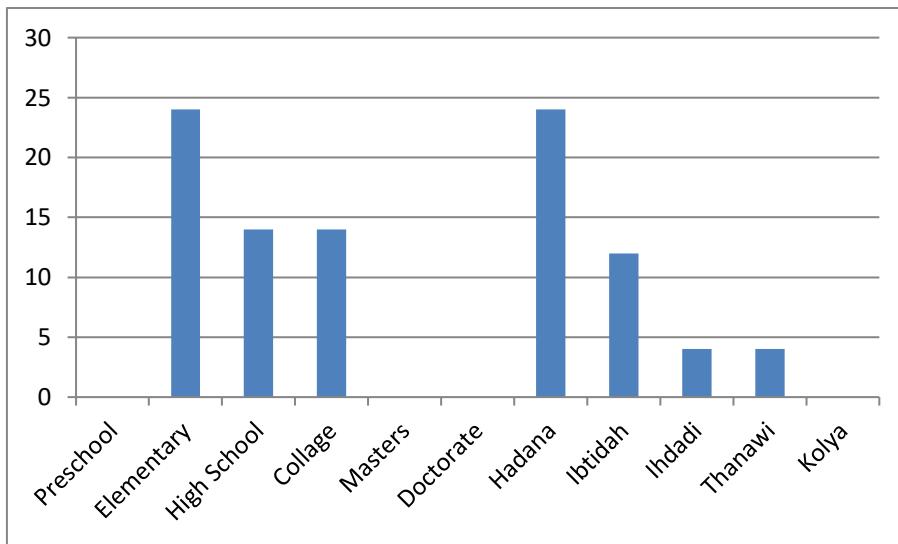


Figure 5. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents According to Highest Educational Attainment

Figure 5 reveals the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents according to their highest educational attainment. The distribution is as follows: twenty-four (24) respondents have attained elementary level; another twenty-four (24) have only attained hadana or the Arabic education equivalent to preschool; fourteen (14) of them have finished high school; twelve (12) have earned ibtidah or the equivalence of elementary in Arabic education; fourteen (14) have graduated four-year courses; four (4) finished ihadadi; another four (4) finished thanawi or what is high school in secular education; none (0) of the respondents

has attained PhD and master's degree nor preschool.

Accordingly, outlook and reservation of their parents to secular education when they were young and family economic status prevented them from earning higher degrees in secular education while early admission to MILF hindered them to pursue higher Arabic education.

Ethnic Affiliation

Figure 6 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents according to ethnic affiliation.

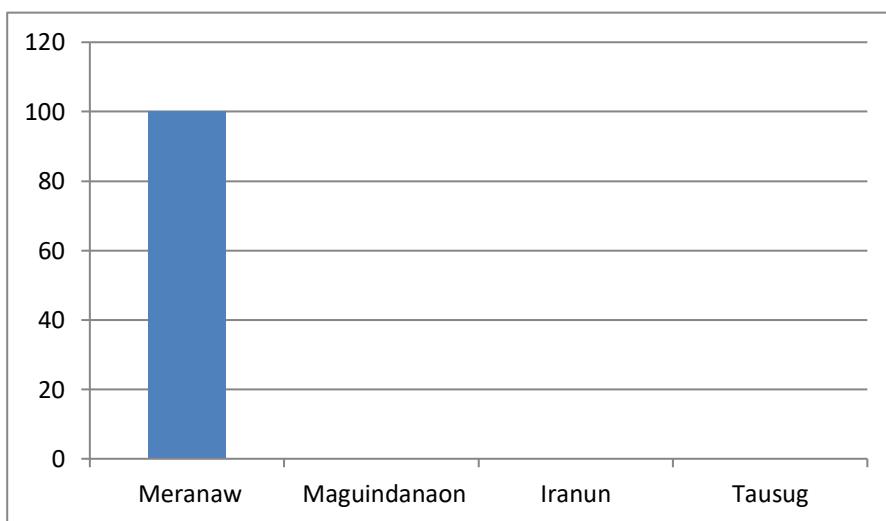


Figure 6. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents According to Ethnic Affiliation

Occupation

Figure 7 shows the frequency and percent-

age distribution of the respondents according to their monthly income.

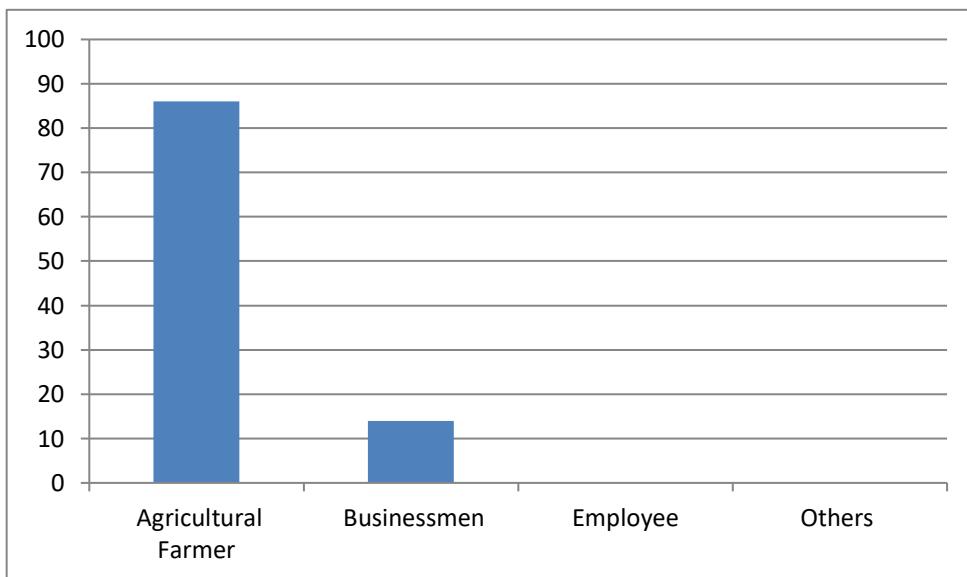


Figure 7. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents According to Occupation

Figure 7 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents in terms of occupation. As illustrated therein, eighty-four (86) out of one hundred (100) were farmers of different agricultural crops; the rest were businessmen with a frequency of fourteen (14). Hence, most of the respondents were farmers. This could be attributed to the topography and nature of research site. Municipality of Butig is remote enough from the nearest

city—Marawi. Nevertheless, it has a fertile land conducive for the farmers to cultivate many agricultural crops.

Monthly Income

Figure 8 shows frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents according to their monthly income.

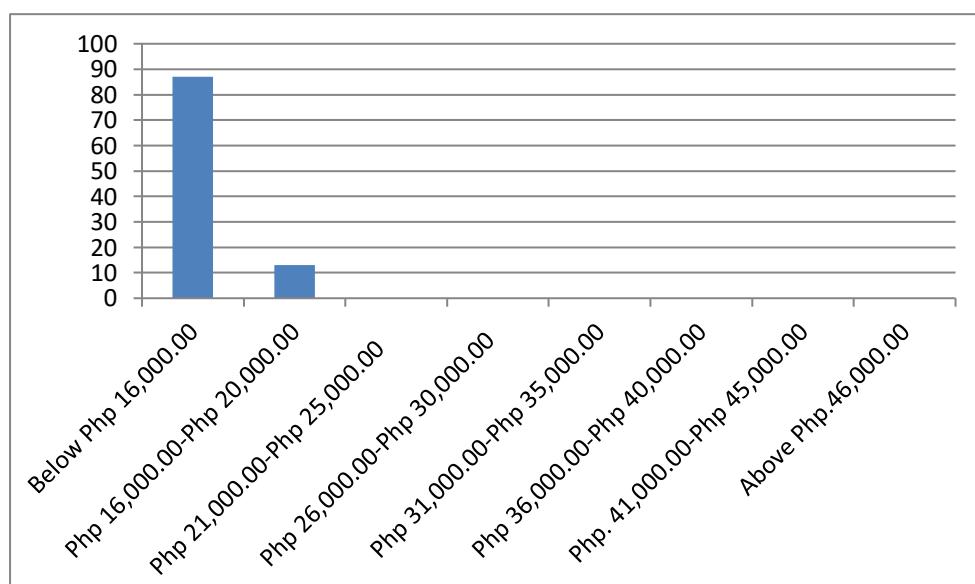


Figure 9. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents According to Monthly Income

Figure 8 shows that Monthly income being earned by the respondents from their above occupation is presented in Table 7. Out of one hundred (100) combatant respondents, eighty-seven (87) of them are earning lower than Php 16,000.00 as the highest monthly income. The remaining thirteen (13) respondents are earning ranging from sixteen thousand (Php 16,000.00 as the lowest up to twenty thousand (20,000.00) as the highest monthly net income. This reflects the economic conditions and well-being of the respondents under agricultural endeavor. Hence, this variable can influence in one way or another the respondents' perceptions and expectations toward their decommissioning.

Perceptions of the MILF Combatants in the Decommissioning

This portion addresses the perceptions of the sampled MILF combatants in the decommissioning. This is designed to examine the combatants' discernment and insights as they are being decommissioned. Furthermore, their perceptions were drawn in an attempt to gauge its implications the peace building in Mindanao. The researchers then formulated questions for a survey addressed to the one hundred (100) sampled combatants from the one hundred twenty nine (129) sample population of MILF combatants of Butig, Lanao del Sur. The following is the result of the survey.

The Implementation of Decommissioning Process by Independet Decommissioning Body (IDB)

IDB has functions to carry out throughout the decommissioning process. These observable functions are stipulated in the Protocol on the Implementation of the Terms of Reference (TOR) of the Independent Decommissioning Body (IDB) (Official Gazette, 2015). Table 1 in the next page shows the perceptions of the respondents on the implementation of decommissioning by IDB vis-à-vis their functions. It presents the results of weighted mean, standard deviation and ranking of the five indicators of decommissioning process.

Based on the responses of the study's participants, the order of five indicators are as follows: *Inventory, verification and validation of MILF members, arms and weapons are conducted very well*, with mean = 3.32, qualitatively described as *Strongly Agree*, ranked 1st; *Implementation of decommissioning of MILF members is conducted as scheduled* mean = 3.29, qualitatively described as *Strongly Agree*, ranked 2nd; *The on-site storage of the decommissioned weapons is supervised*, with mean = 3.22, read as *Agree*, ranked 3rd; *Techniques and technologies for weapons collection or retrieval, transport, and storage and putting weapons beyond use are planned, designed, and implemented in accordance with the agreements of the Parties*, with mean = 3.18, read as *Agree*, ranked 4th; *All the necessary steps and processes for decommissioning are complied with by the Parties*, with mean = 3.14 qualitatively equivalent to *Agree*, ranked 5th.

Table 1. Mean Ratings of the Respondents Perceptions on the Implementation of Decommissioning process

Indicator	WM	SD	Descriptive Rating	Rank
Inventory, verification and validation of MILF members, arms and weapons are conducted very well	3.32	.47	Strongly Agree	1
Implementation of decommissioning of MILF members is conducted as scheduled	3.29	.48	Strongly Agree	2
The on-site storage of the decommissioned weapons is supervised	3.22	.52	Agree	3
Techniques and technologies for weapons collection or retrieval, transport, and storage and putting weapons beyond use are planned, designed, and implemented in accordance with the agreements of the Parties	3.18	.56	Agree	4

Indicator	WM	SD	Descriptive Rating	Rank
All the necessary steps and processes for de-commissioning are complied with by the Parties	3.14	.60	Agree	5

Scaling: 3.28-4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.52-3.27 = Agree; 1.76-2.51 = Disagree; 1.00-1.75 = Strongly Disagree

The result in which the inventory, verification and validation of MILF members, arms and weapons are conducted as the IDB function that is thoroughly implemented can be attributed to the fact that it is the most observed of all its functions. Besides, the MILF itself conducted internal validation and registration of the combatants and the MILF weapons. Interestingly, third indicator that has a weighted mean 3.18 which is lower than other indicators infers an intriguing implication. It may imply reservation of the combatants in the decommissioning. Presumably, the traditional Disarmament, Demobilization, and Rehabilitation (DDR) program for former combatants has proved problematic. First, aside from reintegration of former combatants into society, the emphasis of DDR is on the collection and destruction of weapons, breaking down of the command structure of the armed groups. Besides, knowing that gun ownership appears to be connected to notions of masculinity and social status among combatants in the BARMM, gun culture is deeply entrenched (Simbulan, 2014). This concern is one thing the IDB is addressing. As stipulated in the signed Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) and Annex on Normalization committed and in a sequence agreed upon between the MILF and the IDB, the MILF combatants and their weapons shall be confined within designated APA sites for registration, verification and decommissioning of forces and weapons. The APA shall be based on comprehensive planning and preparation before implementation. The GPH shall provide services to the combatants in the APA. To ensure implementation there shall be good communication and available supplies and logistics. The IDB shall have access to any and all APA sites for the purposes of verification and monitoring. To ensure the safety of both monitors and MILF forces, no improvised explosive devices or crude bombs shall be brought inside the APA sites.

Socio-Economic Development Program for De-commissioned Combatants

Both Philippine government and MIL have agreed to intensify development efforts for the rehabilitation, reconstruction, and development of the Bangsamoro, and Institute programs to address the needs of BIAF Members, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and poverty-stricken communities. However, these socio-economic community-based programs will be implemented by other mechanism other than IDB. It is the Task Force for Decommissioned Combatants and their Communities (TFDCC) who is mandated to undertake efforts related to socio-economic and development programs for MILF combatants and their communities, aimed at helping them transition to productive civilian life. Hence, at the phase when the decommissioned combatants were registered, the Verification and Monitoring Assistance Team Assistance (VMAT) will turn them over to TFDCC. By this time, a decommissioned combatant can access his initial socio-economic assistance after submitting some sort of information to TFDCC (IDB, 2019).

For the purpose of this study, the socio-economic programs were segregated into social development, economic and sustainable livelihood, and financial assistance to have an organized presentation of the said programs.

Social Development

Table 2 presents the results of weighted mean, standard deviation and ranking of the ten indicators of the respondents' social development. Based on the responses of the study's participants, the top five indicators are ranked as follows: *Access to civil registry services or to the justice system (e.g. birth and marriage certificates) to establish the combatants' identity as Moro and to claim rights*, with mean = 3.67, qualitatively described as *Strongly Agree*, ranked 1st; *Issuance of Certificate of Ancestral Domain Titles (CADTs)*, with mean = 3.64; and

Programs to expand the professional opportunities for young ulama, imam, and ustaz teaching in traditional schools (madaris) and mosques (masajid), with mean =3.64, both ranked 2nd; Access to scholarships for the combatants and/or their children, with mean =3.58, read as strongly Agree, ranked 3rd; another ranking 3rd is the Support to the ulama, their activities, and

the madrasah, with mean = 3.58; Access to basic health services (e.g. PhilHealth) and the visibility of health service providers read as always, with mean = 3.55, ranked 4th; Opportunities for complete education (secular, with mean = 3.55, ranked 5th. All mean values are qualitatively equivalent to Strongly Agree.

Table 2. Mean Ratings of the Respondents Perceptions on Socio-Economic Development Program for Decommissioned Combatants in terms of Social Development

Indicator	WM	SD	Descriptive Rating	Rank
Access to civil registry services or to the justice system (e.g. birth and marriage certificates) to establish the combatants' identity as Moro and to claim rights	3.67	.53	Strongly Agree	1
Issuance of Certificate of Ancestral Domain Titles (CADTs)	3.64	.48 ₂	Strongly Agree	2
Programs to expand the professional opportunities for young ulama, imam, and ustaz teaching in traditional schools (madaris) and mosques (masajid)	3.64	.49	Strongly Agree	2
Access to scholarships for the combatants and/or their children	3.58	.59	Strongly Agree	3
Support for the ulama, their activities, and the madrasah	3.58	.57	Strongly Agree	3
Access to basic health services (e.g. PhilHealth) and the visibility of health service providers	3.55	.59	Strongly Agree	4
Opportunities for complete education (secular)	3.53	.56	Strongly Agree	5
Access to basic services and social welfare programs such as 4Ps, PAMANA, IPs, etc.	3.48	.58	Strongly Agree	6
Rebuilding community infrastructures	3.48	.61	Strongly Agree	7
<u>Opportunity to pursue productive life as civilian</u>	3.47	.56	Strongly Agree	8

Scaling: 3.28-4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.52-3.27 = Agree; 1.76-2.51 = Disagree; 1.00-1.75 = Strongly Disagree

The order is followed by indicator sixth *Access to basic services and social welfare programs such as 4Ps, PAMANA, IPs, etc.* (M= 3.48; SD= .58); seventh, *Rebuilding community infrastructures* (M= 3.48; SD= .61); eight, *Opportunity to pursue productive life as civilian* (M= 3.47; SD= .56).

Interestingly, on top statement indicator embodies self-identity. Preservation of identity has always been a theme of Moro grievances. To preserve their faith Islam as an aspect of their identity and live on it to the maximum extent possible appears somewhat constrained despite freedom of religion being guaranteed

by the Philippine constitutions (Macapado, 2017).

Two indicators both ranking second among the top has to do with preservation of ancestral domain or rights to claims and value extended for ulamas, imams and ustadij. These are somehow related with the findings of Macapado (2017) on his dissertation in Hawaii wherein Moros are concern about their shrinking basis of their physical existence due to influx of migrants from north to Mindanao homeland. Their lack of Certificate of Ancestral Domain Titles (CADTs) makes their land vulnerable under the strong support of the government on

northern Filipinos massive migration. His study match with the finding in which Moros wanted to be allowed and assisted by the government to develop the capacity to support and enhance the education of their youths in Islamic and Arabic studies aside from their desire to be allowed to adopt shariah in their legal relations as Muslims.

The survey respondents believe that access to scholarships will be made available to them suggesting the provision of opportunities for complete education. Alongside is the support for intensification of the teaching of Islam and Islamic values by the ulamas, and the madrasah.

Respondents' perception that *Access to basic health services (e.g. PhilHealth) and the visibility of health service providers* will be materialized is out of their positive sight that health condition will be given attention. It can be noted that Moro populace of BARMM has a very low quality life indicators as manifested by high crude death rate, high infant mortality rate, low life expectancy comparing to other regions of the country (Mindanao Focus, 1988). This is evidently attributed to their economic condition. This proved that there are certain social and health indicators of economic backwardness. These show the effects of poverty in

poor regions. Life expectancy at birth is low, but rate of infant mortality is high. The percentage of illiterate people in total population is high. Educational attainment by most people is modest, reflecting low levels of investment in human capital.

Economic and Sustainable Livelihood

In terms of perceived economic and sustainable livelihood which was measured through programs and initiatives of the government in uplifting the economic well-being of the combatants, the table illustration below (table 10) shows the order of mean rating as follows: first, *Agricultural machineries and seedlings supply* (WM=3.62, SD=0.49); second, *Job openings and access to employment to the decommissioned combatants* (WM=3.60, SD=0.49). Closely following are *Livelihood projects such as providing carabaos, cows, poultry and other livestock and farm animals* (WM=3.57, SD=0.50) and which rank third. Ranking in the fourth place is: *Free community-based TESDA vocational training for the combatants* WM=3.54, SD=0.50); Fifth, *Employment for local and overseas madrasah graduates* (WM=3.51, SD=0.58); and sixth, *Complete start-up kits after the livelihood training graduates* (WM=3.51, SD=0.50);

Table 3. Mean Ratings of the Respondents Perceptions on Socio-Economic Development Program for Decommissioned Combatants in terms of Economic and Sustainable Livelihood

Indicator	WM	SD	Descriptive Rating	Rank
Agricultural machineries and seedlings supply	3.62	0.49	Strongly Agree	1
Job openings and access to employment to the decommissioned combatants	3.60	0.49	Strongly Agree	2
Livelihood projects such as providing carabaos, cows, poultry and other livestock and farm animals	3.57	0.50	Strongly Agree	3
Free community-based TESDA vocational training for the combatants	3.54	0.50	Strongly Agree	4
Employment for local and overseas madrasah graduates	3.51	0.58	Strongly Agree	5
Complete start-up kits after the livelihood training	3.51	0.50	Strongly Agree	6

Scaling: 3.28-4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.52-3.27 = Agree; 1.76-2.51 = Disagree; 1.00-1.75 = Strongly Disagree

The finding reveals that *Agricultural machineries and seedlings supply* is the prime need of the combatants as most of them are farmers. As the economy of the province is

highly dependent on agriculture, and the greater majority of its people derive income from farming (Durante, et al, 2017), this implies that combatants as farmers see this

assistance as sure help to yield higher produce. This is supported by the respondents' high conformity on *Livelihood projects such as providing carabaos, cows, poultry and other livestock and farm animals* which may be extended to them. Similarly, respondents perceive that there will be job openings and opportunities to employment for them. This perception maybe attributed to the fact that most of them are earning lower the 16,000 pesos a month. This meager income from agriculture and few from small and medium business enterprises makes

them want to find an avenue to earn more that would meet their family sustenance.

As a whole, the relatively homogeneous strong accord of the respondents infers their robust optimism that these programs will be extended to them upon their decommissioning.

Financial assistance

The combatants are in agreement that financial assistance will be extended to them above anything else.

Table 4. Mean Ratings of the Respondents Perceptions on Socio-Economic Development Program for Decommissioned Combatants in terms of Financial Assistance

Indicator	WM	SD	Descriptive Rating	Rank
Financial capital assistance and subsidy to livelihood programs	3.75	.458	Strongly Agree	1
Access to pension schemes	3.63	.506	Strongly Agree	2
Remuneration for the combatant's damaged properties during the war	3.58	.516	Strongly Agree	3
Access to low interest loans	3.56	.538	Strongly Agree	4
Rebuilding community infrastructure	3.56	.538	Strongly Agree	4

Scaling: 3.28-4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.52-3.27 = Agree; 1.76-2.51 = Disagree; 1.00-1.75 = Strongly Disagree

As shown in Table 4, the response given by the respondents were ranked in the following order: first, *Financial capital assistance and subsidy to livelihood programs* ($M=3.75$; $SD=.458$); second, *Access to pension schemes* ($M=3.63$; $SD=.506$); third, *Remuneration for the combatant's damaged properties during the war* ($M=3.58$; $SD=.516$); With equal weighted mean and standard deviation are *Access to low interest loans* ($M=3.56$; $SD=.538$), and *Rebuilding community infrastructure* ($M=3.56$; $SD=.538$).

The results reveal the extent to which financial assistance is anticipated to be implemented to the respondents as they are being decommissioned. Their hope for financial capital assistance and subsidy to livelihood programs and access to pension schemes are consistent with their monthly income and age respectively. The respondents earn a very meager income as stipulated in Figure 8. This makes them yearn for cash financial assistance that would probably aid in their livelihood. Second, the respondents' crave for access to pension schemes could be attributed to the fact

that most respondents are on their middle-aged onward as can be seen in Figure 2.

The Roles of Independent Decommissioning Body in the Decommissioning Process and Challenges Encounter

This section is direct to the third statement of the problem of this study that is to explore the role of Independent Decommissioning Body in the decommissioning process and challenges encounter along the process. This means to determine their contribution in the whole normalization process as stipulated on Annex on Normalization of the Comprehensive agreement on the Bangsamoro which was signed on 25 January 2014. It highlights their role as an instrument in achieving desired quality of life of the communities of Bangsamoro people including of course the combatants to be decommissioned and the majority civilians. Moreover, this section identifies the challenges being encountered by the decommissioning body. More specifically, it points out the circumstances in the identification and verification process

during collecting the identity of combatants; how does it respond to the combatants' distrust in the credibility, integrity of the body from the past experiences. In line of this track, the implications from the findings of the study are drawn.

The statistical tests used under section III are in general, designed to outline the role and functions of IDB in the decommissioning process and challenges encounter in the normalization process as a whole.

The Roles of Independent Decommissioning Body in the Decommissioning Process

To facilitate this section of the study, a guide questionnaire was made exclusively for the IDB staff. They were specifically asked the question "What are the roles of the IDB in the decommissioning process?" a response from their planning officer Moctar B. Abubakar said in verbatim:

Basically, *si* IDB is a mechanism composed GPH and MILF. Both parties plus foreign experts oversee the decommissioning process of the weapons and forces or the combatants of the MILF, so not just the firearms but they will be decommissioned themselves.

The IDB staff emphasized that the decommissioning is a crucial process of normalization and is a very sensitive issue. First, they IDB staff themselves avoid to say "decommissioning of firearms or decommissioning of weapons" because decommissioning does not in any way equate to disarmament. Instead, IDB use the term decommissioning of the *combatants* and their firearms, or simply decommissioning to refer to the MILF combatants and the MILF firearms and not only firearms. Furthermore, the said firearms are the ones owned by the MILF and not the combatants' private firearms.

Challenges Encounter by IDB in the Decommissioning

As to the question "What are the challenges encountered by the IDB?", there is his response:

So far, *naconduct na naming ang* first phase we are now actually gearing toward the second phase. There are four phases of normalization and in each phase *may decommissioning sya*. It's a graduated program of decommissioning

process. so during the first phase actually, kakastart palang kasi ni IDB, so overall *okay lang naman*. Ang pinakastruggle kasi ng decommissioning actually is the socio-economic factor or socio-economic assistance *na ibibigay sa mga* decommissioned combatants, *yun yung isa sa mga challenges*. *Kasi* if you are being decommissioned, may assistance *na ibibigay* sayo kasi decommissioning is a transition of the combatants, from being a combatant to a productive civilian lives. *Kasi ang MILF* is a rebel group, right? Through the decommissioning, they will be transformed to civilian people. They will be living harmoniously, productively, how can they live productively if there will be no assistance available for them? So it is basically a part of decommissioning process. The decommissioning process has this component. Hindi pweding magpapadecommission ang combatant after 'nun wala siyang matatanggap. Hindi ganun ang processo. Tapos, these are rebels. Wala eto silang access to any form of social services kasi nasa kabundukan. The MILF agreed whenever nanjan ang Bangsamoro government nanjan na sila sa seat ng government. Now the MILF part of the government because of the Bangsamoro government. They agreed that will be now engaged or their combatants, their members will be now decommissioned. This decommissioning is the transitioning of the combatants from being a rebel to a productive civilian. At para mattransform mo ang isang combatant to a productive civilian, it entails assistance—socio-economic packages. So kailangan sila bigyan nun. That is part of the program. But that is not the work of IDB. That is a work of another mechanism.

Conclusion

This descriptive-correlation study was conducted with the aim of determining the decommissioning of Moro Islamic Liberation Front combatants in Butig, Lanao del Sur I. To fulfill the objectives of the study, the mixed method research, an approach to inquiry that uses qualitative and quantitative forms of research in tandem alongside exploratory, was adopted as design or strategy of inquiry. The combined use

of the qualitative and quantitative methods gives the inquiry a strength greater than either qualitative or quantitative research can achieve. Research Methodology included the use simple frequency and percentage method to determine the frequency distribution for the respondent's age, sex, ethnic affiliation, highest educational attainment, occupation and monthly income. It also includes weighted mean, standard deviation, descriptive ranking of indicators, and ranking. Moreover, an in-depth analysis of the responses from the questionnaire provided to the respondents and interviews from the Key Informants of the study were applied to arrive at empirical interpretation of the data.

One hundred combatants (100) who were in the process of decommissioning comprised the sample drawn from the population of one hundred twenty-nine combatants of Camp Darul Arham. To elicit the necessary information, a validated researcher-designed survey questionnaire was used with all the one hundred 100 respondents and another questionnaire for the IDM. The reliability in eliciting the necessary data rested on the respondents' responses.

Major Findings of the Study

The following surfaced as the findings of the study to wit:

All combatant respondents were Meranaw, male and many (40%) were middle-aged or within the age bracket of 45 to 55 years old. Many of them are married corresponding to 93% of the sample. As to their educational attainment, they respondents hold relatively low education. Many were elementary and *hadana* graduates only accounting to 24% and 28% respectively. Only 14% were college degree holders and 4% *thanawi* graduates representing the highest educational attainment from the sample. Majority (86%) of the respondents rely on farming as their source of income. From their agricultural-related jobs and some from small scale enterprise, they earn a meager income of below 16,000 pesos a month. That corresponds to 87% of the sample. The rest 13% earn 16,000 pesos to 20,000 pesos.

As to the perceptions of the respondents in relation to decommissioning, the respondents

believe the IDB is doing its functions though as to how effective and efficient, it could be noted that there are three indicators which were not strongly agreed to be really implemented. These indicators are: *The on-site storage of the decommissioned weapons is supervised; Techniques and technologies for weapons collection or retrieval, transport, and storage and putting weapons beyond use are planned, designed, and implemented in accordance with the agreements of the Parties; All the necessary steps and processes for decommissioning are complied with by the Parties*

Nevertheless, the respondents perceived that socio-economic programs will be extended to them in exchange of their decommissioning and the MILF's firearms. To be specific, they perceived that social services, economic and sustainable livelihood, and financial assistance are on their way as they undergo the process of decommissioning.

The roles of decommissioning in the peace-building and normalization process are outlines as follows: first, it brings tranquility to the people in the community; second, as facet for gradual transformation of combatants into productive civilians without neglecting the other members of the community; finally, the emergence of investors as an upshot decommissioning.

In light with the findings overall results of the critical examination of the perception of the respondents on the decommissioning, the study thereby concludes that decommissioning as a critical and sensitive stage of normalization process has to be carried out with outmost supervision and caution. IDB needs to make sure the smooth decommissioning process until the end of its phases.

The Task Force for Decommissioned and their Communities face the challenge to meet the expectations of the combatants to really make them elude from another insurgency.

The decommissioning is the initial steps to help former fighters have a new life.

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