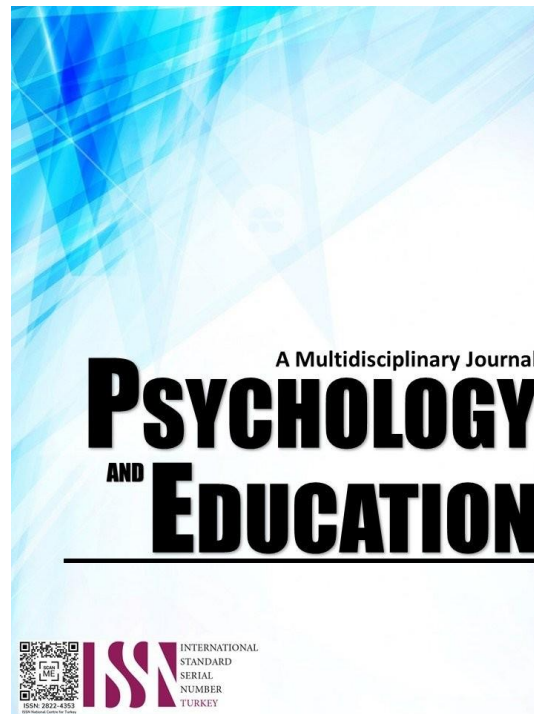


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The Detrimental Effects and Fear of Armed Conflict in Trinidad: A Phenomenology

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Abstract

This study purports to knuckle down the lived experiences of the participants on a certain phenomenon which gives the researcher the idea to dig deeper to look for the equally important data to be used and analyzed in the discussions and explanations of the detrimental effects and fear of the armed conflict to Trinidad National High School teachers and students wherein the said barangay is known to be affected of local armed conflict. Participants of this study are the teachers who are assigned in Trinidad National High School. Qualitative research is being conducted. The context of the study is basically focused on the teachers assigned in Trinidad National High School situated at Barangay Trinidad, Guihulngan City, Negros Oriental and gather their ideas of the effects and their fears during armed conflict that transpires in the said Barangay. Importantly, this research seeks to find and recommend solutions that would help the teachers, students, and the community during the crisis. The general objective of this study is to know the effects and fear of local armed conflict experienced by teachers assigned in the area where armed conflict is present and to find solutions of the problem affecting the teachers. The study aimed to gain insight into the phenomenon of the effects and fear of local armed conflict and is conducted at Trinidad National High School to teachers assigned. The lived experiences of the researchers which are residents of the said Barangay is the basis in choosing the location of this study. Other than that, based on the reliable source of information, the barangay is known to be one of the hotspots of rebels in Guihulngan City. Researchers used non-probability sampling as their technique in gathering the participants of the research particularly the convenience sampling in which samples are chosen from the population on the basis of their accessibility to the researchers. The tool used in analysis is a survey. The themes used in the study are unscathed environment, unaltered cultural heritage, stronghold borders and security, and light at the end of the tunnel. The effects and fear of local armed conflict affecting the teachers emotional and mental health resulting to trauma.

Keywords: *armed conflict, trauma, fear, safety, security*

Introduction

Armed conflicts are categorized into two: International & Domestic. International armed conflict it is an armed conflict that occurs in one or more countries involved while the domestic armed conflict it occurs if a conflict happened within the state with different armed groups in different idealism. Philippines is experiencing a domestic armed conflict more than a decade of years when their group of people organized by a person such as the CPP – NPA – NDF founded by Jose Maria Sison in the year 1968. This group seeks in overthrowing their ideology that the Philippine government will be governed by a communist government (Wolford et al., 2009).

Trinidad is a barangay in the city of Guihulngan, in the province of Negros Oriental. Its population as determined by the 2020 Census was 6,318 with 1,325 households. It has different organized groups recognized that are more advantage of receiving government programs & projects (Brillantes & Tiusongco, 2005). Institutional and politico-administrative responses on armed conflicts such as Kapunungan ng mga Mag-uuma sa Trinidad (KMMT), Trinidad United Farmers Association (TRUFA), Trinidad United Irregators & Farmers Association

(TUFIA), Indigenous People (IPs), Senior Citizens, Persons with Disability (PWDs), Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) beneficiaries, and others. It has five (5) Elementary Schools and one (1) Secondary school. Also, the government provided the barangay a well-constructed covered court & it is accessible to transportation since a provincial road is fully concreted due to the Farm-to-Market Road project. The barangay has a police station to maintain the peace and order of the place & an Armed Forces detachment to secure the security of the folks (Rousset, 2005). The CPP-NPA-NDF ‘Hit List’—a preliminary report.

Behind these benefits that the government allocated the barangay, still Trinidad is known to be under of local armed conflict between the government troops & the New People’s Army. Numerous crossfires and encounters were recorded in the area of concern. Way back March 23, 2021 about 30-minute firefight happened at one of the Sitios of the said barangay where ten (10) NPA rebels died. The incident causes a traumatic experience of the civilians especially the children that led some residents to evacuate for their safety (Oglethorpe et al., 2004). Parks in the crossfire: strategies for effective conservation in areas of armed conflict. Be it known that some of the identified 10

rebels who died in the encounter are youth & some are drop-out students.

These armed conflicts happening in the said place has affected the civilians in brutality and grief like abuse, undernutrition, and mental illness that may result to PTSD or the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Harrison et al., 2022). Afar from the outcomes in the way of living in an armed conflict situation like the damage of properties, disturbance of their daily living that may cause a poor living situation in which the people who are victims of the armed conflict that happens may experience shortage of water, food supplies and a difficulty in accessing medical assistance (Omar, A. (2020). Understanding and preventing attacks on health facilities during armed conflict in Syria. The surroundings may experience an unstable security and an erratic living (Clutterbuck et al., 2013).

In this study, the focus targets on the individual realities of the participants experiencing the effects and fear of armed conflict in Trinidad and on how they cope with their anxiety in times of this disaster. Researchers also want to look forward for the development of the barangay in getting away from armed conflict as to how the participants manage their fear. Knowing that this study is extensive that may give pressure to the researchers for having armed conflict in an area is not easy.

During the time of the pandemic, as the fear continues, delivery of quality education continues as well. Modular instruction was used. Parents help their children in guiding them with the different academic activities (Abocejo et al., 2022; Ando et al., 2022). Teachers (Riconalla et al., 2022) and learners took advantage of seeking for knowledge through internet and some were able to have education (Olleras et al., 2022) continued because of online classes (Bahinting et al., 2022; Cabello et al., 2021). Different strategies were employed especially gamification in education (Cabello et al., 2022), simulation (Mangubat et al., 2022; Yamon et al., 2022), video (Pableo et al., 2022; Ugabamen et al., 2022), and instructional strategy (Segarino et al., 2022) in order to sustain the interest of the learners instead of fear and the aftermath of the pandemic. The pre-service teachers (Emia et al., 2022) and teachers assigned in the research environment feel the gravity of the need to adjust especially in accomplishing various tasks in the new normal modality (Villar et al., 2022) on top of the current situation of the school where fear and anxiety are propagating. This study captured the concept of fright of intimidation as a pessimistic response towards the scenario. The fright of ferocity as a form of tension may be like a component that result to psychological disturbance and instability

during and after an armed conflict which includes PTSD, misery, and/or worry. Moreover, fear may influence mental health that may cause non-developmental behaviors and relationships among the community would be distracted.

Literature Review

Armed conflict can have a profound and lasting impact on individuals and communities, particularly in barangay Trinidad, Guihulngan City, Negros Oriental, where crime and violence have been persistent problems. The purpose of this review of related literature is to examine the detrimental effects and fear of armed conflict in Trinidad, Guihulngan City, Negros Oriental from a phenomenological perspective. This research determined detrimental effects and fear that people may experience during the armed conflict in Barangay Trinidad. To ease the more complete feature of this phenomenological research approach, a review of related literature and studies include the following:

Studies have shown that exposure to armed conflict can lead to a range of psychological and emotional effects, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Coker et al., 2002). Individuals who have experienced violence or crime are at risk of developing symptoms of PTSD, which can have long-lasting effects on their mental health and overall well-being (Baboolal et al., 2013). As cited by Williams et al. (2018), fear of violence defined detrimental emotional reaction to a circumstance regarded as dangerous. Fear of violence takes the form of feelings of unease and threat in armed conflicts cases, that may persist a long period of time. Because it has varieties of negative effects on quality of life, fear of violence is a significant outcome in and of itself. Fear of violence, a form of chronic stress, may also play a significant role in developing PTSD, depression, and anxiety during and after the war. The impact of armed conflict on communities is also a major concern. Communities that are affected by crime and violence may experience a loss of trust and social cohesion, as well as a decline in the sense of safety and security (Lloyd & Griffiths, 2009). Crime and violence can lead to displacement of individuals and families, and can also have a negative impact on local businesses and the economy (Gopaul-McNicol & Alleyne, 2003).

Additionally, a fear of violence might affect crucial health-related behaviors like community movement, the formation of positive social connections, the use of healthcare, marriage, parenthood, and migration. Meanwhile, terror is connected to anxiety, according

to study, and may be both advantageous and detrimental effects on encouraging beneficial or security assurance activities acting as psychological protection.

Long after hostilities have ended, being exposed to an armed conflict can have social and psychological effects. Post-conflict mental health is influenced by a variety of variables, including pre-conflict mental health, the nature of dispute, vulnerability of pains, and the societal and locale conditions. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), sorrow, apprehension, physiological and stress-related concerns are commonly suffered by children who experienced combat. The pervasiveness of PTSD is 47%, while depression is 43%, and fear is 27%, according to merge approximation by a methodical study approximately there were a thousand youngster that are put at risk of combat, but rates are lesser in youngsters in isolated manifestation. Conflict-affected youngster's mental health is significantly influenced by parental mental health, especially in young children. It has also been discovered that adolescents who have experienced many instances of conflict and those who have PTSD as a result of such experiences have much greater rates of substance usage (Kadir et al., 2018)

Most of the affected ones are children. Youngsters that are explicitly or inexplicitly exposed in armed conflict agonize anguish that lasts throughout their whole existence on earth even affects cohort that ingenerate after the fighting is over. A little preventive and sanitation research on the collision of dispute to youngster's fitness physically and mentally despite its anecdotal accounts this effect in news stories and literature. Even the number of kids harmed by conflict, either directly or indirectly, is unknown (Kadir et al., 2018). Injury, disease, psychological anguish, and even death are possible direct effects of war on children's health. Children are indirectly impacted by a wide range of political, social, economic, and environmental problems that arise from conflicts. Children are at risk for avoidable and treatable infections and injuries due to insufficient livelihood circumstances, dangers in environmentally-safety as for example the destructions of homes with its structures, explosive material or even the shortage of potable water and sanitary facilities. By limiting access to care and its quality, the loss of public preventive health infrastructure makes them challenging in treating afflicted youngsters (Goldson, 1996).

Dispute oblige youngsters with their household in leaving the place and look for a safer shelter for them

to live in. Children may be taken from their families during the flight, making them more susceptible to illnesses, psychological damage, and exploitation. Traumatic events have an effect on both the intellectual of youngsters and the adults who care for them. Youngster's tangible and comfort, and also their school success in life chances, may all suffer from caregivers' poor mental health (Myles et al., 2018). In response to the problem of crime and violence in Trinidad, the government has implemented a number of law enforcement efforts, community policing initiatives, and social programs aimed at reducing crime and violence. However, the effectiveness of these efforts has been a subject of debate, and many challenges remain in addressing the problem of armed conflict in the barangay (Huggins & James, 2012).

Based on the related literature reviews and studies presented, there are effects or contributions that an armed conflict has brought. Children and even women are the ones who are commonly affected by it. This review shows the support that armed conflict can cause detrimental effects and fear to the people. In conclusion, this review of related literature has provided a comprehensive examination of the detrimental effects and fear of armed conflict in Trinidad from a phenomenological perspective. Future research could focus on exploring the psychological and emotional effects of exposure to armed conflict in greater detail, as well as the impact of government efforts to reduce crime and violence.

Methodology

Research Design

Interpretative Phenomenological Approach was used by this study which was popularized by Moustakas and modified by Van Kaam. This Phenomenological research design purports to knuckle down the lived experiences of the participants on a certain phenomenon which gives the researcher the idea to dig deeper to look for the equally important data to be used and analyzed in the discussions and explanations of the detrimental effects and fear of the armed conflict to Trinidad National High School teachers and students.

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was utilized in this study where selected teachers of Trinidad National High School voluntarily shared their experiences and grudges during armed conflict situations. The researcher's

restriction was embedded in the criterion made for perusal.

Inclusion Criteria

1. Participants must be a teacher Trinidad National High School.
2. Participants must be serving the said school for 3-10 years either a resident or living outside the said barangay.

Data Collection

A semi-structured guide question was made before the conduct of the interview. After the instrument was created, it was validated by an expert to measure its validity and reliability. The participants gave their consent to conduct the interview. The researcher provided a schedule to refrain from uncontrollable situations and to stabilize the classes of participants that would affect the flow of the research. The interview was administered physically. The sessions were recorded for the purpose of the consistency of the data and establishing the rigor of the study. The data collected was treated with highest degree of confidentiality and anonymity to protect the participants from any forms of harm (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

Research Rigor

To maintain the rigor of the research in conducting the study, the researchers utilized Whittemore et al (2001)'s criterion for quality. This criterion for quality focused in the (1) Integrity and Genuineness; and (2) Importance and Uprightness (Cabello & Bonotan, 2021).

Data Analysis

In this research, the researchers used IPA to give an overview of ways in which relevant to teachers and learners affected by armed conflict to be developed. Methodology and technical challenges involved are discussed (Pedersen & Sommerfelt, 2007). Data were collected from the 25 teachers assigned in Trinidad National High School. Their responses reflect the effects of armed conflict in the Barangay where the school is situated that may affect the teaching & learning in education.

Table 1. *The Analysis*

<i>Horizon</i>	<i>Textual Languages</i>	<i>Theme</i>
Researchers discovered that the struggles and challenges faced in the presence of insurgency in the area by the participants is the fear for the safety of the students in going to school and home.	Safety	Borders and Security
Learners' consecutive absences is a challenge hence, the students are afraid of going to school anymore and the parents of these students advise them not to go to school for they are afraid of crossfires when their children are on its way.	Habitual absences	Environment
Researchers discovered that participants overcome their struggles by encouraging their students not to trust people easily.	Words of encouragements	Environment
Praying to God and trust the government forces in securing the areas is part of overcoming their struggles.	Trust	Light at the end of the tunnel.
Think positively and hope for safety of every person is their coping mechanism to the challenges.	Positivity	Light at the end of the tunnel.
Undergone seminars in line with their psychological state and emotional state after the insurgency.	Psychological and emotional state	Cultural Heritage
Wait for the instruction and announcement from authorities and keep themselves safe.	Authorities	Borders and Security

Results and Discussion

The challenges and struggles of teachers and learners during armed conflict are in common, that is the fear and safety of everyone. That may cause trauma, it may affect mental and psychological health. Overcoming the struggles is not easy for each individual it needs more effort mentally, emotionally, and physically. In this study, there are four themes followed by the researchers in the data examination. The first theme is Borders and Security; secondly Environment; third Cultural Heritage, and fourth is Light at the end of the tunnel (hope). These themes cascade the effects and fear during the local armed conflict.

Theme 1: Stronghold Security

A classroom teacher has immense struggles in facing the challenges he encountered in the presence of insurgency in the area. The fear and effects of armed conflict both teachers and students. The stronghold safety and security of each individual is everyone's first priority. Teachers must secure their students in a safety and comfortable environment.

Participant 1 states that, "As a classroom teacher, the presence of insurgency around our area poses a great risk and danger for both the students and the faculty. Some of the struggles I faced are students' absences and emotional instability due to fear. The greatest challenge I faced is the safety of the students coming and going here."

More importantly, teachers should secure the safety of their students. The absences of students and their emotional instability due to fear is quite a challenge of how to cope these challenges. Students tend to skip classes more often when there is a clash between the communist and the government troops to protect their selves from harm.

Participant 2 says, "As a classroom teacher assigned in an area where there is a presence of armed conflict, there are times that I cannot focus on my class discussions because of the situation. I am also afraid and worried for the safety of my students."

However, no matter what teacher must go on with their classes but the concentration during class discussion cannot be focus because of the situation especially if there is no advisory from the higher authority to suspend classes. Only the worries of the teachers on the safety of the students on their way home is a struggle to overcome.

Participant 3 mentioned, "As a teacher is both a blessing and a challenge. As a teacher assigned in Trinidad, it is quite challenging specially in times of armed conflicts, there are times that I am afraid to travel and come to school but because teaching is my passion, I have to be in school to cater the needs of my students."

A teacher is a blessing, yes for not all are given the chance to teach. But assigned in an area where insurgency is present is a challenge, the travel to and from is risky you'd never know when or where the crossfire will appear. Since teaching is passion then teachers need to move on no matter what and secure their safety and security.

Theme 2: Unscathed Environment

The teaching and learning process is greatly affected when armed conflict transpires in the area may it be near or far from the school. Since this problem is uncontrollable, teachers must find ways to motivate themselves and strive to be composed anytime and anywhere for students to feel at ease and comfortable.

Participant 4 says, "I always put in my mind that my students are waiting for me; this is how I motivate myself for me to cope with the challenges I face in the said area."

Participant 5 states that, "As a teacher: we encouraged students to focus on their studies and just trust the government for they are doing their job in solving the armed conflict."

The government has its troops to solve the issues or concerns. Encouraging the students not to be afraid and motivating them that they are safe is the way of the teachers to overcome student's fear.

Participant 6 mentioned also that, "I believe that there's always a solution in every challenge/problem. Therefore, we must be a positive thinker and always have a contingency plan for that kind of insurgency."

Believing that there is always a solution in every problem is a way of motivating themselves to overcome negativities. Contingency plan for insurgencies is then useful for it will be a guide for everyone what to do "before", "during", and "after" an armed conflict.

Theme 3: Unaltered Cultural Heritage

The preservation of material culture – objects of art and of daily use, architecture, landscape form, and other musical and theatrical performances are so-called cultural heritage. The personal and community identities are formed tangible and intangible cultural performances. On the other hand, heritage also intertwined with identity and territory, in which individuals and communities often compete or have conflict.

Participant 7 states that, "We were given enough time and made us safe. Teachers undergone seminars in line with our psychological state and emotional state after the insurgency."

Participant 8 mentioned, "If there's any conflict happened in the neighboring area/area the DepEd will automatically suspend the classes to the areas

affected.”

By these responses, it shows that emotional instability due to fear that may affect their mental health occurs. Since there will be crossfires and uncontrollable explosives that would hit some of the equally important buildings, schools, houses, farms and most especially the Indigenous People (IP) of the area, with the help of authority and officials, it must be protected and preserved.

Theme 4. Light at the end of the tunnel

Teachers must carry on their duties and responsibilities and improve their professional growth to enhance learners' capability in learning amidst local armed conflict. The unfathomable hopes for peace is so immense that it gives light and ease to teachers and students in their day-to-day errands.

Participant 9 says, “I always pray to God for our safety and also we trust the AFP and PNP for securing the area.”

Participant 10 also mentioned, “Trying to think positively and hope for the safety of every person during times of conflict.”

Being positive thinker gives hope to every human. It is said that there is sunshine after the rain. Every difficulty being faced there has been a chance to succeed. Hope in every tribulation must be felt.

Conclusion

The lived experiences of the participants toward armed conflict deepen the understanding that the stronghold safety and security of each individual is everyone's foremost priority. The environment greatly affects the mental stability and wellbeing of the participants. With all of these, what's there to be positive at, is that there is always a solution in every problem and this is the only way of motivating themselves to overcome negativities. According to Thomas Paine, the harder the conflict, the glorious the triumph. We must learn how to smile in trouble, that gather strength from distress and grow brave by reflection. To top it all, there are certain things and happenings in our lives that we cannot control yet but all we need to do is pray, hope, and don't worry.

Fear and trauma are the effects during armed conflict that may cause the mental instability and psychological health of both teachers and students.

Teacher plays a great role in the learning process of learners. So, in times of crisis such as armed conflict teachers must secure first the safety of the students before them since students will be more affected especially when they depart from school. Possibilities of habitual absences of students will occur and that they will be left behind on their lessons during the conflict since the barangay is situated in the hinterlands, their houses are kilometers and even miles away from school. Teachers must show tremendous courage and inspiration to their students for them to be motivated that everything is under the control of the government troops and that they will secure the safety of every individual. Teachers must be composed anytime and anywhere for students to feel the same way because the researchers believe that it delineates a ripple effect: if teachers cannot and will not control their emotions and fears during and after the local armed conflict, so do with the whole class.

It is a recommendation of this study to strengthen community linkages and furnish programs and activities that will aid distress and fear brought by armed conflict such as but not limited to: consistent stress debriefing activities which involve teachers, students, and the community; distribution of complete food and bedding packages which contain rice, ready to cook viand, water, hygiene essentials, pillows, blankets, tents if there are any because this might cause another problem if not provided equally; and the most valuable above all material needs – a consistent, solemn, and dignified prayer services which will not prohibit different religious groups. We all know that the government troops have massive plans to eliminate and stop this conflict. Our counterpart for their plans is only to support and give them the most reliable and certain information that would seize the revolutionaries. As innocents and law-abiding citizens, we cannot control and drag back those who left and go against the government anymore but with endless supplications to God Almighty and understanding of the possibilities that peace is always in the hands of those who seek for it, together in the most perfect time, the residents of Barangay Trinidad Guihulngan City can surmount this adversity and become a peaceful land again.

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