

Reintegration Adjustment of Victim of Circumstances in Maguindanao: A Peace Building Framework

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Abstract

This study explored how victims of circumstances in Maguindanao adjusted after returning to civilian life and used these findings to propose a peacebuilding framework. An explanatory sequential mixed methods design guided the inquiry.

In the first phase, survey data were gathered from 238 respondents to measure adjustment across five areas: purpose and connection, help-seeking, beliefs about civilians, resentment and regret, and regimentation. Results showed that respondents generally felt a strong sense of belonging and maintained positive views toward civilians. Other areas reflected moderate yet stable adjustment, suggesting ongoing adaptation rather than difficulty. Multivariate analysis indicated that age, educational attainment, and the combined influence of marital status and education shaped selected aspects of adjustment. The second phase involved in-depth interviews that described personal transitions, family influences, emotional reflections, and community experiences during reintegration. Participants shared varied pathways, showing that adjustment was shaped by both personal effort and surrounding support. Bringing together these findings, the study developed a peacebuilding framework that highlights personal restoration, relational reintegration, and structural support as interconnected elements.

The study concludes that reintegration is not a single event but a continuing process that requires coordinated psychosocial, community, and institutional responses in post-conflict settings.

Keywords: reintegration adjustments, former violence extremist, maguindanao, mixed methods, peace building

1. Introduction

The belief of a certain group that there is a better system of governance is one of the many reasons why internal conflicts inside a nation might escalate into war. This viewpoint is referred to as ideology, and it is only one of the causes in the Philippines. If a group has the means, including troops, weapons, and even money, they can openly declare war against the present government with the goal of replacing it with their own system (Calipay, 2020).

There are other factors as well, such the fact that most people face injustice, especially Indigenous people, which might lead to civil war. Some ethnic groups have experienced discrimination and abuse at the hands of other ethnic groups, especially the country's main ethnic groupings (Macdonald & Kerali, 2020). A minority faction may so rebel and declare their independence, which might spark a civil war. However, a minority ethnic community usually negotiates with the ruling government and offers to submit with

conditions when they recognize that they are outnumbered and that their lives are more important than their ideals (Pedlar, Thompson, & Castro, 2019).

Globally, Rebels are a group of people who are unhappy with the current government and think their own form of government is far better than what is being used. This was the case in Afghanistan in the past, where the Taliban thought Sharia law was more advanced than the previous system of governance until they took over the government. Once the Americans withdrew, the Taliban returned to their previous beliefs since their former colleagues were now in control and liberated rebel returnees and those who had been detained and were undergoing reintegration (Edrolin, 2021).

Moreover, a third party is often needed to mediate between both sides at a hidden and neutral location because the warring parties remain suspicious of one another. As a result, mistrust persists between communist rebels who seek surrender and the government and its troops. In certain cases, community engagement in rebel integration becomes challenging, although external assistance can provide necessary funding and supervision during the implementation of peace agreements. Rebel integration initiatives are frequently incorporated into peace deals to promote peace and prevent the recurrence of civil war (Meernik & Mendoza, 2021).

A comprehensive Philippine transformation program has been designed to address the needs of former rebels and their families to sustain government gains against insurgency and support their reintegration into society. This approach emphasizes four key elements—security, socioeconomic assistance, confidence-building, and community healing and reconciliation—to facilitate holistic change. The participation of former rebels and their families in this concentrated effort to address reintegration requirements has been acknowledged with gratitude. For the program to be successful and for a peaceful, cohesive society to be realized, communities, local organizations, and the government must continue to be committed as implementation moves forward (Cotejar, 2024). These elements mirror both current administration initiatives and earlier programs such as the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (ECLIP) (Barcelo, 2018).

There seemed to be a dearth of data that sheds light on the rebels' view on reintegration adjustment. serving as the gap of the study that needs to be addressed, particularly in the area of blending with the community, the stigma they are facing, livelihood and employment, and support from the family, community, and government. Understanding how returning rebels face their new life and how they have overcome the difficulty of reintegration adjustment is an essential part of advancing the field of rehabilitation and providing interventions that promote both individual and community development. In terms of risks, it might be there but not as high with their former life, wherein they constantly shoot it out with the government forces.

Although there might be threats to their life because of turning their backs from their former group, the government is protecting them in a daily basis. Furthermore, the reintegration adjustment as viewed by rebels was scrutinized by the media reporters but not to the extent of conducting a research study, which leads to the assessment of the proponent that it has not been closely studied yet as revealed by the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Authorities. With these scenarios, this study attempts to measure and explore the reintegration adjustment of victims of circumstances in Maguindanao, which is a peace building framework.

2. Method

This study employed a mixed method research, particularly explanatory sequential design. Teddie & Tash-

kkori (2009) elucidated that mixed methods design advanced the systematic integration referred to being new methodology of research; or it could be described as the mixing of both the qualitative and quantitative data in a single research study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Creswell (2003) added that it was a form of inquiry that integrated both quantitative and qualitative data.

Similarly, mixed methods were procedure for collecting, analyzing, and mixing or integrating both quantitative and qualitative data at some stage of the research process in a single study to understand the research problem better. The reason behind mixing both types of data in a single study was due to the fact that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods alone were sufficient to capture trends and details of the situation (Ivankova et al., 2006).

In the quantitative phase, the study employed the descriptive correlation survey research design. Descriptive correlation survey research design described and observed the variable as well as to know if there was an existing difference between and among the assessment of the respondents concerning the variables involved. It was an empirical investigation; it had three parts, the observing and explaining occurrences; collection of information; and, analyzed the data collected. This was done with statistics (Klazema, 2014).

In the qualitative phase, it employed phenomenological qualitative research design. Creswell (2007) clarified that the purpose of phenomenological approach was to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they were perceived by the actors in a situation. Phenomenology was concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual, ‘bracketing’ taken-for-granted assumptions and usual ways of perceiving. Epistemologically, phenomenological approaches were based in a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity, and emphasized the importance of personal perspective and interpretation. As such they were powerful for understanding subjective experience, gaining insights into people’s motivations and actions, and cutting through the clutter of taken-for-granted assumptions and conventional wisdom.

Furthermore, explanatory sequential design was a mixed methods approach in which the researcher first collected and analyzed the quantitative data. After this, qualitative data were collected and analyzed to help explain or elaborate on the quantitative results obtained in the quantitative phase. The qualitative phase built on the first, quantitative phase, and the two phases were connected in the intermediate stage in the study (Creswell, 2007). The reason for this approach was that the quantitative data and their subsequent analysis provided a general understanding of the research problem. The qualitative data and their analysis refined and explained those statistical results by exploring participants’ views in more depth (Wipulanusat et al., 2020).

The combination of both quantitative and qualitative data provided the researcher a deeper understanding of the study at hand and at the same time discarded the weaknesses of both studies strengthening the facts through triangulation of the data. It was of great advantage of conducting mixed method research because of the triangulation of data. Careful analysis of the gathered information from each of the method utilized disclosed successful triangulation of the data rendering accurate result, exposing both strengths and weaknesses of the research study.

3. Results and Discussion

Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents (N = 238). The age distribution indicates that most participants were within the 26–33 age group (38.2%), followed by those aged 34–41

years (32.4%). Individuals aged 42 years and above accounted for 19.3% of the sample, while respondents aged 18–25 represented 9.7%. Only one respondent (0.4%) was below 18 years old. Overall, the distribution suggests that the majority of respondents were situated within early to middle adulthood, reflecting a population likely engaged in family responsibilities, livelihood activities, and community participation during their reintegration period.

In terms of marital status, the majority of respondents were married (81.5%), indicating that most returnees were embedded within family systems during their reintegration experiences. Single individuals comprised 15.5% of the sample, whereas widowed or separated respondents represented a smaller proportion (2.9%). This pattern highlights the presence of family contexts as a common social environment surrounding the reintegration process among respondents.

Educational attainment revealed that most respondents had completed elementary education (68.1%), followed by high school graduates (18.1%). A limited number reported college-level education (1.7%), while 12.2% indicated having no formal schooling. The distribution reflects varied educational backgrounds, with a concentration at lower levels of formal schooling among respondents.

Almost half of the respondents (44.5%) had been reintegrated for three to four years, according to the duration of reintegration. Of the sample, 34.5% had been reintegrated for one to two years, and 14.7% had been reintegrated for five to six years. Only 6.3% of the group had been reintegrated for at least seven years. These numbers show that respondents had a variety of adjustment lengths within the sample, representing both very recent and longer-term reintegration experiences.

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Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents (N = 238)

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age	18–Below	1	0.4
	18–25	23	9.7
	26–33	91	38.2
	34–41	77	32.4
	42–Above	46	19.3
Marital Status	Single	37	15.5

	Married	194	81.5
	Separated/Widower	7	2.9
Educational Attainment	None	29	12.2
	Elementary	162	68.1
	High School	43	18.1
	College	4	1.7
Number of Years as Reintegrated Returnee	1–2 years	82	34.5
	3–4 years	106	44.5
	5–6 years	35	14.7
	7 years and above	15	6.3

Note. Percentages are based on valid responses.

On the Level of Reintegration Adjustment in Terms of Purpose and Connection

The respondents' degree of reintegration adjustment in terms of connection and purpose is shown in Table 2. An overall high degree of adjustment within this area was indicated by the composite mean score of 4.37 (SD = 0.45), which was verbally evaluated as Agree.

Among the indicators, the statement “I believe the reintegration process has helped shape me into a productive member of society” obtained the highest mean score (M = 4.62, SD = 0.69). This was followed by “I feel very much like I belong in my community” (M = 4.50, SD = 0.71), suggesting that respondents largely perceived themselves as socially integrated and engaged within their communities.

The remaining indicators also reflected positive responses, with mean scores ranging from 4.15 to 4.54. These included items associated with maintaining meaningful relationships, participating in community activities, and perceiving one’s role as purposeful following reintegration. Collectively, the results indicate that respondents experienced favorable levels of belonging, connection, and perceived societal contribution after returning to civilian life.

Table 2. Level of Reintegration Adjustment of Victims of Circumstances in Maguindanao in Terms of Purpose and Connection

Item No.	Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	I feel a strong sense of purpose in my current role within my community.	4.47	0.70	Agree
2	I have been able to rebuild meaningful relationships since reintegration.	4.39	0.59	Agree
3	I believe the reintegration process has helped shape me into a productive member of society.	4.62	0.69	Strongly Agree
4	I actively participate in community activities that promote peace and social harmony.	4.54	0.63	Strongly Agree
5	I feel accepted by my community despite my past experiences.	4.46	0.65	Agree
6	I believe in a peaceful future for myself and my family.	4.20	0.83	Agree

7	I feel a sense of justice and fairness in how I am treated by society.	4.23	0.63	Agree
8	I can express my thoughts and emotions without fear of discrimination.	4.16	0.70	Agree
9	I am hopeful about the opportunities available to me.	4.15	0.71	Agree
10	I have a strong sense of belonging in my community.	4.50	0.71	Strongly Agree
Composite Mean		4.37	0.45	Agree

On the Level of Reintegration Adjustment in Terms of Help-Seeking

Table 3 presents the respondents’ level of reintegration adjustment in terms of help-seeking. The composite mean score of 3.91 (SD = 0.47) was verbally interpreted as Agree, indicating generally positive perceptions toward accessing support and assistance during reintegration.

"I know where to go if I need help with personal or community issues" had the highest mean score (M = 4.42, SD = 0.62). Strong agreement was also seen among respondents regarding knowledge of existing reintegration programs (M = 4.16, SD = 0.78) and encouragement to use medical and mental health services (M = 4.20, SD = 0.80).

Table 3. Level of Reintegration Adjustment of Victims of Circumstances in Maguindanao in Terms of Help Seeking

Item No.	Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1	I actively seek support from government and non-government organizations when needed.	3.19	1.00	Moderately Agree
2	I am aware of available programs for reintegration and personal development.	4.16	0.78	Agree
3	I feel comfortable seeking psychological or emotional support.	3.88	0.97	Moderately Agree
4	I receive adequate assistance from local government initiatives.	3.78	0.86	Moderately Agree
5	I have sought help for job opportunities or livelihood programs.	3.66	1.17	Moderately Agree
6	I feel encouraged to access healthcare and mental health services.	4.20	0.80	Agree
7	I am aware of the process in seeking legal aid or mediation when necessary.	3.79	0.98	Moderately Agree
8	I feel empowered to ask for help without fear of judgment.	3.84	0.96	Moderately Agree
9	I have mentors or role models who support my reintegration.	4.21	0.81	Agree
10	I know where to go if I need help with personal or community issues.	4.42	0.62	Agree
Composite Mean		3.91	0.47	Agree

In contrast, the statement “I actively seek support from government and non-government organizations when needed” obtained the lowest mean score ($M = 3.19, SD = 1.00$). The remaining indicators yielded mean scores ranging from 3.66 to 4.21, suggesting varying degrees of engagement across different help-seeking behaviors. Overall, the findings indicate that while respondents demonstrated awareness of support systems, levels of proactive utilization differed among individuals.

On the Level of Reintegration Adjustment in Terms of Beliefs about Civilians

The respondents' degree of reintegration adjustment in terms of their perceptions of civilians is shown in Table 4. Verbally interpreted as Agree, the composite mean score of 4.32 ($SD = 0.34$) showed that respondents had generally positive opinions of civilian communities.

The highest mean score was observed for the statement “I believe civilians and former combatants should work together to sustain peace” ($M = 4.49, SD = 0.61$). High mean values were likewise recorded for items reflecting confidence in civilian intentions ($M = 4.42, SD = 0.57$) and perceptions that communities are open to accepting returning members ($M = 4.45, SD = 0.61$).

There was consistent agreement across measures assessing trust, acceptance, and cooperative outlooks toward civilian populations, with all indicators in this category registering mean scores above 4.00. These results suggest that respondents generally held positive beliefs about their relationships with civilians following reintegration.

Table 4. Level of Reintegration Adjustment of Victims of Circumstances in Maguindanao in Terms of Beliefs about Civilians

Item No.	Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1	I believe civilians understand the challenges experienced by former combatants as they reintegrated into society.	4.36	0.64	Agree
2	I trust the intentions of civilians in supporting my reintegration.	4.42	0.57	Agree
3	I believe that civilians and former combatants can co-exist peacefully.	4.38	0.77	Agree
4	Civilians treat me with respect regardless of my past.	4.26	0.62	Agree
5	I feel that civilians welcome me in social and economic spaces.	4.28	0.80	Agree
6	I am comfortable engaging in discussions with people who have different backgrounds from mine.	4.08	0.86	Agree
7	I believe civilians and former combatants should work together to sustain peace.	4.49	0.61	Agree
8	I have personally experienced kindness and support from civilians.	4.32	0.61	Agree
9	I believe that communities are willing to accept returning members.	4.45	0.61	Agree
10	I feel respected by people who were not directly involved in the conflict.	4.22	0.53	Agree

Composite Mean	4.32	0.34	Agree
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On the Level of Reintegration Adjustment in Terms of Resentment and Regret

Table 5 presents the respondents’ level of reintegration adjustment in terms of resentment and regret. The composite mean score of 3.89 (SD = 0.52) was verbally interpreted as Moderately Agree, indicating moderate levels of emotional adjustment among respondents.

Higher mean scores were observed for items associated with healing and forward movement. Notably, the statement “I believe that healing from past trauma is possible” obtained a mean score of 4.44 (SD = 0.83), while “I am actively working on overcoming negative emotions about my past” recorded a mean of 4.36 (SD = 0.75). These responses reflect positive orientations toward emotional recovery following reintegration.

Conversely, lower mean scores were noted for items reflecting perceptions of unfair treatment. The statement “I feel that I have been unfairly treated by society” registered the lowest mean (M = 2.63, SD = 1.30). Other indicators produced moderate mean values, suggesting that respondents experienced varying degrees of reflection, acceptance, and emotional processing related to past experiences. Collectively, the findings indicate an ongoing but generally progressive pattern of emotional adjustment among participants.

Table 5. Level of Reintegration Adjustment of Victims of Circumstances in Maguindanao in Terms of Resentment and Regret

Item No.	Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1	I sometimes feel resentment about the actions I was involved during the conflict.	3.79	0.88	Moderately Agree
2	I have regrets about decisions I made during the conflict.	4.02	0.90	Agree
3	I struggle with feelings of guilt regarding my past actions.	4.09	1.05	Agree
4	I feel that I have been unfairly treated by society.	2.63	1.30	Disagree
5	I believe my past experiences limit my ability to succeed in life.	3.79	1.76	Moderately Agree
6	I find it difficult to forgive those who contributed to my suffering.	3.71	0.94	Moderately Agree
7	I often think about what could have been if my life had been different.	3.81	0.96	Moderately Agree
8	I have fully accepted my past and have moved forward.	4.28	0.74	Agree
9	I believe that healing from past trauma is possible.	4.44	0.83	Agree
10	I am actively working on overcoming negative emotions about my past.	4.36	0.75	Agree
Composite Mean		3.89	0.52	Moderately Agree

On the Level of Reintegration Adjustment in Terms of Regimentation

The respondents' degree of regimentation-related reintegration adjustment is shown in Table 6. Verbally interpreted as Agree, the composite mean score of 3.87 (SD = 0.40) showed a generally positive adaption to organized routines after reintegration.

The highest mean score was recorded for the statement “I have successfully adapted to civilian life while maintaining discipline” (M = 4.65, SD = 0.60). This suggests that respondents perceived discipline as a retained and functional aspect of their transition to civilian environments.

Other indicators likewise reflected moderate to high agreement, particularly those related to comfort with organized activities, adherence to routines, and the perceived usefulness of structure in daily life. Lower mean values were observed for items describing difficulty adjusting to less structured or unpredictable civilian settings, indicating some variability in how respondents experienced changes in routine.

Overall, the findings show that respondents generally demonstrated positive adjustment when it came to upholding discipline and modifying regimented behaviors in civilian settings.

Table 6. Level of Reintegration Adjustment of Victims of Circumstances in Maguindanao in Terms of Regimentation

Item No.	Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1	I find it difficult to adjust to civilian life after living in a structured environment.	3.18	1.10	Moderately Agree
2	I sometimes long for the strict routines and regimentation I experienced in my former role.	3.21	1.10	Moderately Agree
3	I feel that strict routines help me cope with my new circumstances.	4.11	0.68	Agree
4	I sometimes struggle with decision-making without a clear hierarchy.	3.89	0.72	Agree
5	I prefer structured environments over unstructured civilian life.	4.23	0.67	Agree
6	I believe structure and discipline should be incorporated into reintegration programs.	4.56	0.65	Agree
7	I feel more comfortable following orders than making independent choices.	3.99	0.93	Agree
8	I sometimes apply military or structured discipline in my daily life.	3.33	0.98	Moderately Agree
9	I find it hard to adjust to flexible or unpredictable situations.	3.61	0.93	Moderately Agree
10	I have successfully adapted to civilian life while maintaining discipline.	4.65	0.60	Strongly Agree
Composite Mean		3.87	0.40	Agree

On the Effects of Demographic Variables on Reintegration Adjustment

Table 7 presents the main and interaction effects of demographic variables on the level of reintegration adjustment across domains. The analysis revealed that age significantly influenced help-seeking (p = .022)

and regimentation ($p = .039$). However, no significant effects of age were observed for purpose and connection, beliefs about civilians, or resentment and regret.

Educational attainment demonstrated broader influence across several adjustment domains. Significant effects were identified for purpose and connection ($p = .039$), help-seeking ($p = .016$), and resentment and regret ($p < .001$), indicating differences in these aspects of reintegration adjustment when respondents were grouped according to educational background. In contrast, educational attainment did not produce significant effects on beliefs about civilians and regimentation.

With respect to years as returnee, a significant effect was observed only for resentment and regret ($p = .019$), while other domains did not show statistically significant differences based on duration of reintegration. This suggests that emotional adjustment may vary across reintegration timelines more than other adjustment dimensions.

Interaction analysis further revealed significant combined effects of marital status and educational attainment on multiple domains. Specifically, significant interaction effects were found for purpose and connection ($p = .047$), help-seeking ($p < .001$), resentment and regret ($p = .002$), and regimentation ($p = .00$). These findings indicate that reintegration adjustment is shaped not only by individual demographic characteristics but also by the interplay between social roles and educational background.

Table 7. Summary of Main and Interaction Effects of Demographic Variables on Level of Reintegration Adjustment

Independent Variable (IV)	Dependent Variable (DV)	F value	df	p value	Interpretation
Age	Purpose/Connection	0.95	4, 176	.439	Not Significant
	Help-seeking	2.94	4, 176	.022	Significant
	Beliefs about Civilians	1.98	4, 176	.100	Not Significant
	Resentment/Regret	1.91	4, 176	.111	Not Significant
	Regimentation	2.58	4, 176	.039	Significant
Marital Status	Purpose/Connection	2.47	2, 176	.087	Not Significant
	Help-seeking	2.44	2, 176	.090	Not Significant
	Beliefs about Civilians	2.55	2, 176	.081	Not Significant
	Resentment/Regret	2.77	2, 176	.066	Not Significant
	Regimentation	2.34	2, 176	.100	Not Significant
Educational Attainment	Purpose/Connection	2.84	3, 176	.039	Significant
	Help-seeking	3.53	3, 176	.016	Significant
	Beliefs about Civilians	0.76	3, 176	.516	Not Significant
	Resentment/Regret	7.82	3, 176	< .001	Significant
	Regimentation	1.69	3, 176	.172	Not Significant
Years as Returnee	Purpose/Connection	0.96	3, 176	.414	Not Significant
	Help-seeking	0.91	3, 176	.436	Not Significant
	Beliefs about Civilians	2.32	3, 176	.077	Not Significant
	Resentment/Regret	3.41	3, 176	.019	Significant
	Regimentation	0.86	3, 176	.461	Not Significant
	Purpose/Connection	3.11	2, 176	.047	Significant

Marital Status × Educational Attainment (interaction)	Help-seeking	8.73	2, 176	< .001	Significant
	Resentment/Regret	6.69	2, 176	.002	Significant
	Regimentation	5.10	2, 176	.00	Significant

On the "victims personally process their reintegration adjustments"

Analysis of the participants’ narratives showed that reintegration adjustments were processed through personal reflection, family-centered decisions, formal procedural steps, experienced challenges, and coping responses. The accounts reflect varied but overlapping experiences among the ten participants.

Personal Reflection and Decision-Making

Before beginning reintegration, a number of individuals talked of coming to a personal epiphany. Living in hiding was often described as emotionally and physically taxing. One participant expressed his desire to “live freely, work openly, and feel safe” because he was “tired of always looking over my shoulder.” Another said that living in hiding made it “impossible to live a normal life.”

For some, the filing of legal cases influenced their decision. A participant reported becoming worried after learning that his name appeared in a case, stating that continuing that path “would only bring more danger” to his family. Others mentioned fear of arrest and the desire to regularize their legal status.

Spiritual reflection was also present in certain accounts. One participant narrated performing late-night prayer before finalizing his decision to return, expressing that he sought guidance before proceeding with reintegration.

Family as a Primary Consideration

Family responsibility was consistently mentioned across participants. Many referred to their roles as husbands and fathers. One participant stated that he realized he was no longer fulfilling his responsibilities to his family. Another explained that he wanted to accompany his children freely without fear.

Concerns about age and health were raised by older individuals. One participant said that he decided to legalize his status because he was "getting old and my health is weak." Others talked about wanting to give their kids a steady income and an education.

Formal Reintegration Procedures

After deciding to return, participants described approaching intermediaries such as barangay officials, commanders, negotiators, or trusted relatives. These individuals facilitated contact with military units and law enforcement authorities.

Participants reported undergoing interviews at military camps, taking oaths, and securing documentation from authorities. Several emphasized the importance of obtaining certificates and clearances to prove their legal status.

The surrender of firearms was identified as a required step. Some participants no longer possessed firearms and needed to acquire one to comply with requirements. One participant stated that borrowing money to purchase a firearm was “financially difficult,” but he proceeded in order to complete the process.

Problems Encountered During Reintegration

Participants reported various challenges during reintegration. Suspicion from former associates was frequently mentioned. Some described being accused of being informants, which caused fear and caution in their movements.

Economic difficulty was another concern. Participants described challenges in securing stable work after surrender. Financial strain was also reported due to expenses related to documentation and firearm requirements.

Older participants reported health-related challenges. One participant reported that his physical capacity was impacted during the process due to a stroke that necessitated hospitalization both before and after surrender.

Coping Strategies and Adjustment

Participants described different ways of coping with these challenges. Some avoided confrontation with former associates and relied on authorities to clarify accusations. Others emphasized patience and careful behavior during the transition period.

Family support was commonly cited. Participants mentioned encouragement from spouses and children, which strengthened their decision to continue reintegration.

Faith and prayer were also referenced as sources of strength. Several participants expressed gratitude and reliance on religious belief during difficult periods.

Over time, participants reported gradual adjustment. They described being able to move more freely, work legally, and interact openly within their communities after completing the reintegration process.

On the "Reintegration adjustments vary among the victims"

Disparities in the timing, processes, difficulties, emotional reactions, and post-reintegration circumstances encountered during the participants' adjustment process were discovered by an analysis of their testimonies. Although all individuals were reintegrated, there were differences in the way and degree of their adaptations.

Variation in Timing and Duration of Reintegration

Participants differed in the length of time between their decision to reintegrate and the completion of formal procedures. Some described a relatively direct process after approaching authorities, completing interviews, and securing documentation within a shorter period. Others experienced delays due to pending cases, documentation requirements, or coordination with intermediaries.

A few participants reported that legal complications prolonged their adjustment. In contrast, others indicated that once communication with authorities was established, their processing moved more quickly.

Differences in Legal and Procedural Experiences

Not all participants underwent identical procedural steps. While most reported interviews and oath-taking ceremonies, some described additional verification processes involving multiple agencies. Certain participants emphasized obtaining certifications and clearances from different authorities to confirm their legal status.

The impact of the firearm surrender requirement also differed. Some participants directly turned in their firearms, which they still owned. Others had to get a firearm to meet the requirements because they were no longer in possession of one. While some participants did not report similar financial pressure associated with this requirement, one person described borrowing money to buy a pistol as "financially difficult."

Variation in Social Reactions and Security Concerns

Experiences with former associates and community members differed among participants. Some reported being accused of being informants, which caused fear and required cautious behavior. Others did not describe direct accusations but mentioned general uncertainty during the early stage of reintegration.

There were differences in living circumstances as well. In order to feel safe, some participants moved temporarily close to military bases, while others stayed in their hometowns. The degree of perceived threat was not the same for all respondents.

Differences in Economic Adjustment

Economic conditions after reintegration were not consistent across participants. Some were able to resume

farming, small business activities, or employment shortly after completing formal procedures. Others described ongoing difficulty in securing stable livelihood.

Financial burden during the reintegration process also varied. Certain participants mentioned expenses related to documentation or firearm compliance, while others focused more on challenges in supporting their families after surrender.

Variation in Emotional and Psychological Adjustment

Emotional responses to reintegration were also diverse. Some participants expressed immediate relief after completing surrender procedures, describing increased freedom of movement and reduced fear. Others indicated that fear and caution continued for some time due to suspicion from former associates.

Age and health status contributed to differences in adjustment. Older participants with medical conditions described additional physical challenges during the process, while younger participants did not report similar health-related limitations.

All of the subjects talked about going through a transitional phase before feeling more stable, despite these variations. Depending on the specific situation, this transition's length and severity varied.

On the Proposed Peacebuilding Framework for the Reintegration Adjustment of Victims of Circumstances Based on the quantitative and qualitative findings of the study, a contextualized peacebuilding framework is proposed to guide the reintegration adjustment of victims of circumstances in Maguindanao.

The five measurable dimensions of reintegration adjustment—purpose and connection, help-seeking, views about civilians, resentment and regret, and regimentation—form the foundation of the framework. Additionally, it takes into account the individuals' actual experiences and demographic variables.

The proposed framework is anchored on the concept of positive peace as articulated by Johan Galtung, which emphasizes not only the absence of direct violence but also the removal of structural and relational barriers that hinder long-term stability.

It also resonates John Paul Lederach's conflict transformation approach, which sees peacebuilding as an ongoing process of societal and relational reconstruction.

Structure of the Proposed Framework

The Peacebuilding Framework for Reintegration Adjustment is composed of three interrelated levels: (1) Personal Restoration, (2) Relational Reintegration, and (3) Structural Support. These levels collectively lead to Sustainable Reintegration Adjustment.

1. Personal Restoration Level

The first level focuses on the internal adjustment of the individual. Findings on resentment and regret ($M = 3.89$) indicate that while respondents experience emotional reflection, guilt, and moderate levels of regret, they also demonstrate strong belief in healing and forward movement. High mean scores on items related to acceptance and overcoming negative emotions suggest that emotional recovery is ongoing but progressing positively.

Results in regimentation ($M = 3.87$) further show that respondents retain structured habits and discipline as adaptive mechanisms in civilian life. Rather than completely abandoning structured routines, participants appear to integrate discipline into their new roles, indicating behavioral adjustment rather than resistance.

This level is supported by qualitative narratives, where participants talked about internal decision-making, spiritual reflection, and personal introspection before reintegration. These results suggest that individual trauma processing, identity reconstruction, and adaptive coping mechanisms must be supported in peacebuilding.

2. Relational Reintegration Level

The second level emphasizes family and community relationships. The domain of purpose and connection yielded a high composite mean ($M = 4.37$), indicating strong feelings of belonging, productivity, and meaningful participation in community life. Similarly, beliefs about civilians were highly positive ($M = 4.32$), reflecting trust, perceived acceptance, and willingness to coexist peacefully.

Narrative findings reinforce the importance of family as a primary motivation for reintegration. Participants frequently cited responsibilities as husbands and fathers, desire for safety, and concern for children's future as central to their decision to return. Experiences of kindness and acceptance from civilians further facilitated adjustment.

These findings suggest that reintegration is relational in nature. Sustainable peacebuilding therefore requires strengthening family systems, promoting community acceptance, and encouraging civilian-returnee collaboration in peace-sustaining activities.

3. Structural Support Level

The third level addresses institutional and demographic influences. Statistical analysis revealed that age significantly influenced help-seeking ($p = .022$) and regimentation ($p = .039$), indicating that adjustment behaviors vary across life stages. Educational attainment significantly affected purpose and connection ($p = .039$), help-seeking ($p = .016$), and resentment and regret ($p < .001$), demonstrating that educational background shapes psychosocial and behavioral adjustment.

Furthermore, significant interaction effects between marital status and educational attainment were observed across multiple domains, suggesting that reintegration outcomes are shaped by overlapping social roles and responsibilities. Qualitative findings also revealed procedural and economic challenges, including documentation requirements, firearm surrender compliance, and financial burdens.

These structural realities show that peacebuilding needs to address systemic impediments that impact the sustainability of reintegration, not only emotional support.

Central Outcome: Sustainable Reintegration Adjustment

The integration of personal restoration, relational reintegration, and structural support leads to Sustainable Reintegration Adjustment. This outcome is characterized by:

- Stable civilian identity
- Emotional healing and forward orientation
- Active community participation
- Positive civilian relationships

Access to institutional and livelihood support

The findings demonstrate that reintegration adjustment among victims of circumstances in Maguindanao is not solely an individual psychological process but a multidimensional peacebuilding process shaped by emotional, relational, and structural factors.

As a result, the suggested framework offers a regional and empirically supported strategy for bolstering reintegration efforts in areas that have experienced war.

Discussion

The demographic composition of the respondents indicates that reintegration in Maguindanao is predominantly experienced by individuals who remain within economically productive and socially active life stages. This positioning carries implications beyond descriptive profiling. Individuals in these age groups often navigate expectations associated with family provision, community engagement, and

livelihood stability, thereby situating reintegration within a context of responsibility rather than mere transition.

These expectations may exacerbate adjustment pressures in settings influenced by prior exposure to conflict, especially while job possibilities and institutional trust are still changing. Therefore, rather than existing as a singular occurrence, reintegration becomes ingrained into larger life-course demands.

Reintegration is more accurately understood as a gradual process characterized by identity renegotiation and social repositioning. Individuals disengaging from conflict-related roles encounter the challenge of redefining personal purpose, reconstructing social legitimacy, and establishing predictable routines within civilian settings. This interpretation aligns with Romaniuk et al. (2020), who emphasize that reintegration encompasses psychological and relational recalibration extending beyond procedural completion. Interaction with community members, participation in everyday activities, and exposure to institutional structures collectively contribute to this transformation, highlighting the relational dimension of adjustment.

Family structures emerged as particularly influential in shaping reintegration trajectories. The high proportion of married respondents suggests that adjustment unfolds within relational networks that both support and constrain behavior. Familial expectations related to caregiving, financial provision, and moral accountability may encourage disengagement from past affiliations while simultaneously generating emotional and economic demands. From the perspective of Family Systems Theory (Bowen, 1978), individual adaptation cannot be disentangled from family dynamics, as behavioral change frequently occurs within reciprocal relational patterns. In the Bangsamoro context, where collectivist orientations remain salient, family environments may function as stabilizing anchors that facilitate behavioral continuity and reinforce reintegration commitments.

Respondents' educational patterns are indicative of structural disturbances brought on by exposure to conflict, displacement, and restricted educational opportunities. These results shouldn't be taken as indicators of reintegration failure, even while lower levels of formal education may make it more difficult to navigate bureaucratic processes and limit access to regulated employment sectors. According to research, livelihood possibilities, skill-development programs, and encouraging community settings can make up for educational gaps (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2021). Therefore, it may be more accurate to view educational attainment as a measure of structural inequality rather than personal shortcomings, highlighting the significance of inclusive economic programming.

Strong levels of purpose and connection suggest that respondents have begun to reconstruct socially meaningful identities following reintegration. Feelings of belonging, participation in community activities, and perceptions of productivity point to emerging psychosocial stability. Identity reconstruction has been identified as a central element of post-conflict recovery, as individual's transition from conflict-defined roles to socially recognized civilian identities (Meernik & Mendoza, 2021). Engagement in communal spaces, restoration of interpersonal relationships, and development of future-oriented outlooks collectively signal the consolidation of new identity frameworks that support sustained adjustment.

Patterns related to help-seeking behavior reveal a more complex picture. While awareness of available services appears relatively high, active utilization remains uneven. Such discrepancies may reflect lingering mistrust, perceived stigma, or uncertainty regarding institutional responsiveness. Reintegration initiatives that rely solely on information dissemination may therefore fall short without parallel efforts to cultivate relational trust and culturally attuned outreach strategies. Observations that institutional credibility and relational accessibility are precondition for effective support use are echoed by the

necessity for persistent encouragement and confidence-building procedures (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2021).

Respondents' perceptions of civilians were generally positive, indicating a social climate conducive to coexistence and interaction. Experiences of acceptance, respect, and collaborative engagement suggest that community environments may be gradually shifting from suspicion toward inclusion. Social trust, however, is not instantaneous; it develops through repeated interaction and behavioral validation over time (Pham & Saito, 2020). The findings imply that positive civilian-returnee relationships may function as protective factors that reduce social distance, counteract stigma, and reinforce reintegration commitments. A continuing internal reconciliation process is reflected in emotional reactions linked to regret and resentment. Strong manifestations of healing and forward-thinking coexist with feelings of guilt, examination of different life routes, and reflection on past choices. The comparatively narrow view of social injustice implies that emotional difficulties are frequently internalized rather than externally ascribed. This pattern corresponds with interpretations that post-conflict adjustment frequently involves moral reflection and value realignment as individuals reconstruct personal narratives consistent with civilian life (Romaniuk et al., 2020). Emotional adjustment, therefore, represents neither a linear nor uniform trajectory but an evolving process shaped by memory, meaning-making, and emerging aspirations.

Adjustment related to regimentation illustrates the selective retention of structured behaviors developed during prior experiences. Rather than discarding discipline altogether, respondents appear to incorporate elements of routine and organization as adaptive resources within civilian contexts. Structure may provide predictability in settings characterized by economic uncertainty and social transition, enabling individuals to maintain continuity while exercising increased autonomy. Similar observations have been reported among former combatants who adapt disciplined practices to civilian environments as coping strategies rather than indicators of resistance (Sen, 2021).

Demographic influences and interaction effects highlight the complexity of reintegration experiences. Variations associated with age and educational attainment suggest that life stage and structural positioning shape adjustment opportunities and constraints. The combined influence of marital status and education further indicates that reintegration outcomes emerge through intersecting social roles rather than isolated demographic factors. Role Strain Theory (Goode, 1960) offers a useful lens, as competing expectations and limited resources may generate tension that complicates adjustment processes. These findings point toward the necessity of differentiated reintegration strategies responsive to diverse social positions.

Qualitative accounts extend these interpretations by illuminating reintegration as an experience grounded in personal reflection and relational meaning. Before formally engaging with reintegration processes, participants often indicated internal thought, spiritual contemplation, and reevaluation of priorities. Rarely were decisions made suddenly; rather, they developed gradually as safety concerns, hopes for family stability, and wishes for a regulated everyday life were recognized. These narratives reinforce the idea that adjustment includes both procedural milestones and subjective transformation, implying that reintegration starts in the cognitive and emotional domains before manifesting through behavioral action.

Participants also depicted reintegration pathways as socially mediated. Engagement with intermediaries, interactions with authorities, and completion of documentation requirements illustrate the structured nature of formal processes. Yet these pathways were not experienced uniformly. Challenges including financial burdens, suspicion from former associates, and health limitations introduced elements of uncertainty and vulnerability. The coexistence of institutional support and contextual risk mirrors

observations within the Bangsamoro region, where reintegration unfolds amid evolving security conditions and residual conflict dynamics (International Crisis Group, 2022). Coping responses centered on family encouragement, patience, and faith-based practices reveal resilience capacities that sustain adjustment efforts despite fluctuating circumstances.

Differences across participants' experiences further underscore the heterogeneous character of reintegration. Adjustment timelines, livelihood recovery patterns, security perceptions, and emotional responses varied considerably, suggesting that reintegration cannot be conceptualized as a standardized pathway. Individuals with early access to income-generating activities often reported quicker normalization of routines, consistent with assertions that meaningful participation in work environments contributes to reintegration stability and quality of life (Edrolin, 2021).

Conversely, continued economic uncertainty or perceived security risks appeared to prolong transitional phases. These patterns support literature indicating that reintegration outcomes are shaped by contextual stressors, relational dynamics, and demographic factors that produce diverse adaptation trajectories (Hare et al., 2024).

As a whole, the results show that reintegration adjustment is a complex process that lies at the nexus of structural factors, relational integration, and personal change. Qualitative accounts of thoughtful decision-making, procedural navigation, and many adjustment paths align with quantitative measures of psychosocial recovery and community acceptability. The interplay of these dimensions suggests that sustainable reintegration emerges through coordinated processes of internal healing, social validation, and institutional responsiveness. Such convergence provides empirical grounding for the development of a contextualized peacebuilding framework in which personal restoration, relational reintegration, and structural support operate synergistically to promote enduring civilian engagement and stability among victims of circumstances in Maguindanao.

4. Conclusions and Suggestions

This study examined the reintegration adjustment of victims of circumstances in Maguindanao and demonstrated that reintegration is a multidimensional and evolving process shaped by personal transformation, relational dynamics, and structural conditions. Findings revealed that respondents generally exhibited positive adjustment in terms of purpose, connection, and beliefs about civilians, suggesting emerging social belonging and acceptance within community environments.

However, moderate patterns in emotional processing, help-seeking, and routine adaption show that adjustment is still ongoing and context-dependent. The fact that reintegration experiences vary and are influenced by life stage, educational background, and intersecting social roles was further highlighted by demographic factors. While participant differences highlighted the existence of unique adjustment pathways, qualitative insights enhanced these patterns by demonstrating that reintegration decisions are based on introspection, family duty, procedural navigation, and adaptive coping.

The convergence of these findings supported the development of a contextualized peacebuilding framework in which sustainable reintegration is understood as the interaction of personal restoration, relational reintegration, and structural support. Overall, the study affirms that reintegration among victims of circumstances in Maguindanao extends beyond formal compliance and represents a continuing peacebuilding process requiring coordinated psychosocial, community-based, and institutional efforts.

Suggestions

1. Local government units and partner agencies may incorporate structured family engagement sessions, recognizing the central role of family systems in motivating reintegration decisions and sustaining adjustment outcomes.
2. Regular civilian–returnee interaction platforms, peace education activities, and collaborative livelihood programs may help reinforce social acceptance and reduce lingering stigma, thereby promoting relational reintegration.
3. Reintegration programs may consider age, educational attainment, and livelihood capacity in designing support mechanisms, including skills training, mentorship, and simplified procedural guidance to address diverse adjustment needs.

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