



The Experiences and Coping Mechanisms of Sama Dilaut Survivors: A Post-Conflict Assessment on the 2013 Zamboanga Siege

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Abstract

This qualitative research study explores the experiences and coping mechanisms of Sama Dilaut survivors of the Zamboanga Siege in the Philippines. The study also examines the programs and services provided to improve the socio-economic well-being of the survivors. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with 20 participants and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that the survivors experienced various challenges, including displacement, loss of livelihood, and trauma. Coping mechanisms included reliance on social support, faith, and cultural practices. The study also highlights the importance of community-based programs and services that address the unique needs of the survivors. Furthermore, the findings of the study have implications for community development, particularly in providing much-needed intervention to Sama Dilaut communities in difficult situations and crafting interventions based on tested theories and approaches. The study recommends the involvement of the survivors in the planning and implementation of the programs and services, as well as the promotion of their cultural identity and rights. The study also highlights the importance of policy review of relevant laws and ordinances in place to ensure that the programs and services provided to the survivors are effective and sustainable. Overall, the study contributes to the growing studies on the situation of Sama Dilaut in general, not only in this city but also in other areas where people are displaced due to armed conflict and other humanitarian crises.

Subject Areas

Anthropology, Demography, Public Policy, Sociology

Keywords

Sama Dilaut Survivors, Zamboanga Siege, Philippines, Experiences,

Coping Mechanisms, Programs, and Services

1. Introduction

The Sama Dilaut, also known as the Badjao, are an indigenous group of people who have lived in the coastal areas of the Philippines for centuries. They are known for their seafaring skills and their unique way of life, which revolves around the sea. However, in recent years, they have faced numerous challenges, including displacement due to armed conflict and other humanitarian crises. Their community has often been caught in the crossfire of armed conflicts in regions where they reside. For instance, in Mindanao, Philippines, where many Sama Dilaut communities are situated, clashes between government forces and insurgent groups like Abu Sayyaf have resulted in significant displacement. According to a report by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), armed conflict in Mindanao has led to the displacement of thousands of people, including the Sama Dilaut, who have been forced to flee their homes to seek safety in other areas. Natural disasters, such as typhoons and flooding, have also posed significant challenges to the Sama Dilaut. For example, Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda), one of the strongest tropical cyclones ever recorded, devastated coastal communities in the Philippines, including those inhabited by the Sama Dilaut. Events as such resulted in the disproportionate impact of disasters on marginalized coastal communities like them, who often lack adequate infrastructure and resources to withstand such events. Therefore, Socioeconomic marginalization exacerbates the vulnerabilities of the community. Moreover, limited access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities further restricts their ability to cope with and recover from various challenges they face. A report by the International Labor Organization (ILO) underscores the economic hardships experienced by the Sama Dilaut, who rely heavily on precarious livelihoods such as fishing and small-scale trading [1]. Furthermore, the displacement and disruption caused by armed conflict and natural disasters also threaten the traditional maritime practices and cultural identity of the Sama Dilaut. This study emphasizes the interconnectedness of Sama Dilaut's culture with the marine environment and highlights the risks posed by environmental degradation and forced migration to their cultural heritage [2].

In September 2013, a siege in Zamboanga City resulted in the displacement of thousands of families, including the Sama Dilaut. This event prompted the government and non-government organizations to provide programs and services to improve the socio-economic well-being of the survivors. This qualitative study aims to shed light on the experiences and coping mechanisms of Sama Dilaut survivors of the siege in Zamboanga City, as well as the programs and services provided by various individuals, groups, and organizations. The study seeks to identify the changes in the lives of the survivors in terms of so-

cio-economic, health, education, and shelter, as well as their perceptions of the programs and services provided. The study also aims to contribute to the growing studies on the situation of Sama Dilaut in general, not only in this city but also in other areas where people are displaced due to armed conflict and other humanitarian crises. The study is guided by the following research questions: What are the changes in the lives of Sama Dilaut survivors of the siege in Zamboanga City? What are their coping mechanisms? What programs and services are provided by various individuals, groups, and organizations to improve their socio-economic well-being? What are the perceptions of the survivors regarding the programs and services provided? What are the recommendations to improve the services and programs for the Sama Dilaut families?

1.1. Sama-Dilaut in the Philippines

The status of Sama Dilaut in the Philippines is that they are an indigenous group of people who have lived in the coastal areas of the country for centuries. They are known for their seafaring skills and their unique way of life, which revolves around the sea. However, they have faced numerous challenges in recent years, including displacement due to armed conflict and other humanitarian crises. The Sama Dilaut have also faced socio-economic challenges, such as lack of access to education and healthcare, and discrimination. The Philippine government and non-government organizations have provided programs and services to improve the socio-economic well-being of the Sama Dilaut, but there is still much work to be done to address their pressing needs and situations.

1.2. The People of Sama Dilaut

The Sama Dilaut, also known as the Badjao, constitute an indigenous community deeply rooted in the coastal regions of the Philippines, where they have thrived for centuries [3]. Renowned for their adeptness in seafaring and their symbiotic relationship with the ocean, the Sama Dilaut have historically maintained a distinct identity marked by their maritime lifestyle and a relatively lower degree of Islamisation compared to other Sama groups. While contemporary demographics show a significant shift towards mainstream Islam among the Sama Dilaut populace, particularly with increased settlement, the communities in Tawi-Tawi islands upheld their traditional faith and customs until the 1970s.

Physically, the Sama Dilaut exhibit distinct features characterized by sturdy builds and dark bronze skin tones, attributes largely influenced by their environment and maritime activities [3]. Their social fabric is tightly woven, emphasizing peace, unity, and reverence for leadership, traits that underscore their resilience amidst adversity.

Nevertheless, the Sama Dilaut grapple with multifaceted challenges, ranging from displacement due to armed conflicts to socioeconomic hardships, including limited access to essential services like education and healthcare, compounded by pervasive discrimination. Despite aspirations for integration into

modern society, many face barriers such as technological constraints and economic marginalization, hindering their ability to improve their livelihoods and provide adequate education for their offspring [3].

In the face of these adversities, the Sama Dilaut have developed adaptive mechanisms to navigate socio-economic and health-related hurdles, with parents taking proactive roles in supporting their children amidst the challenges. However, the existing support mechanisms provided by NGOs like the CFSI only partially alleviate their plight, leaving a substantial gap in meeting their comprehensive needs.

Their journey embodies resilience and adaptation amid adversity, yet their quest for sustainable livelihoods and equitable opportunities remains an ongoing struggle, underscoring the need for holistic interventions to address their complex challenges and foster inclusive development [3].

Several agencies and organizations have offered programs and services to the Sama Dilaut survivors in Zamboanga City, including the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the City Social Welfare and Development Office, and the Children's Fund for Social Progress, Inc. These programs and services aim to address the socio-economic and health-related needs of the Sama Dilaut survivors, such as livelihood assistance, education, and healthcare. However, the effectiveness of these programs and services is still a matter of debate and requires further evaluation.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and local government agencies like the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) often provide livelihood assistance programs aimed at supporting Sama Dilaut survivors in rebuilding their economic stability. These programs may include skills training, microfinance initiatives, and the provision of livelihood starter kits. For example, the DSWD's Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) has been implemented in Zamboanga City to empower marginalized communities, including the Sama Dilaut, by providing them with livelihood opportunities [4]. Furthermore, organizations like the Children's Fund for Social Progress, Inc. (CFSP) may offer education support programs targeting Sama Dilaut children and youth. These programs often include scholarships, school supplies distribution, and educational workshops aimed at improving access to quality education. The CFSP, as a non-governmental organization (NGO), may collaborate with local schools and educational institutions to ensure the effective implementation of these initiatives [5].

Both government agencies and NGOs may collaborate to provide healthcare services to Sama Dilaut survivors in Zamboanga City. This may involve medical missions, mobile health clinics, and access to healthcare facilities for primary healthcare services. The Department of Health (DOH) and local health offices, in coordination with NGOs specializing in healthcare, may conduct outreach programs targeting marginalized communities, including the Sama Dilaut, to address their health-related needs [6].

These programs and services collectively aim to address the socio-economic and health-related needs of Sama Dilaut survivors in Zamboanga City, thereby contributing to their overall well-being and empowerment.

1.3. Sama-Dilaut after 2013 Zamboanga Siege

The survivors faced numerous challenges, including displacement, lack of access to education and healthcare, and discrimination. The siege also resulted in the breakdown of their homes, leaving them without shelter. However, despite these challenges, the Sama Dilaut survivors managed to cope through various mechanisms, such as proper medication, herbal healing, and participation in livelihood activities. Several programs and services were implemented by various agencies and organizations, such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the City Social Welfare and Development Office, and the Children's Fund for Social Progress, Inc. These programs and services aimed to address the socio-economic and health-related needs of the Sama Dilaut survivors, such as livelihood assistance, education, and healthcare. However, the effectiveness of these programs and services is still a matter of debate and requires further evaluation. The Sama Dilaut survivors developed various coping mechanisms to deal with the challenges brought about by the siege. These mechanisms included proper medication, herbal healing, and participation in livelihood activities. Parents also acted to help their children cope with the situation. Despite the challenges, the Sama Dilaut survivors remained resilient and were able to recover from the diseases they contracted due to overcrowding in relocation sites. The paper by Jose, Colleen titled "Philippines the Bajau of Zamboanga: Victims of war and relocation" sheds light on the plight of the Bajau people in Zamboanga, particularly focusing on the impacts of war and forced relocation on their community (Jose, 2014). This paper aligns with the discussion provided earlier regarding the challenges faced by the Bajau and Sama Dilaut communities, especially in recent years. Similar to the broader context discussed previously, Jose's paper likely highlights the socio-economic and cultural disruptions experienced by the Bajau population in Zamboanga due to conflicts and government policies. The forced relocation of the Bajau people from their traditional coastal areas to inland settlements could have significant implications for their way of life, livelihoods, and overall well-being.

2. Method

The methodology employed in this paper adopts a qualitative descriptive analysis approach, aligning with the principles of a qualitative study [7]. Data collection involved conducting face-to-face interviews with 20 Sama Dilaut families residing in Zamboanga City. The interview protocol consisted of structured open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed narratives concerning the experiences of displacement and its multifaceted impacts on various aspects of their lives, including socioeconomic status, livelihood opportunities, access to educa-

tion, and shelter conditions. Additionally, triangulation of data was ensured through documentation, field observation, and document reviews.

Subsequently, a narrative style was employed to analyze the collected data, focusing on exploring diverse dimensions, meanings, and implications of the changes experienced by Sama Dilaut families post-displacement. Specifically, the analysis delved into the socioeconomic, livelihood, education, and shelter dimensions of their lives, drawing connections between the gathered data and the existing literature and theoretical framework outlined in the preceding chapter. The contextual details provided by the interviews were crucial for comprehending the shifts experienced by the Sama Dilaut families and their relevance to addressing the research questions.

Throughout the data analysis process, careful attention was paid to identifying broader patterns and theoretical debates emerging in comparison to existing literature. Moreover, the findings were presented and discussed in a narrative style, highlighting the diverse perspectives and implications of the displacement experience on the lives of Sama Dilaut families. This approach not only enhances the richness of the analysis but also provides a deeper understanding of the nuanced dynamics underlying the impact of displacement on vulnerable communities.

Ethical Consideration

Moreover, in accordance with Republic Act 10,173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012, the respondents were provided with a consent form, stating any data they provided would be solely used for the purpose of this research, and confidentiality shall be maintained [8]. The researcher also ensured that the form would be fully explained along with the purpose of the conduct of the study, and the respondents were given sufficient time to go through the form before affixing their signatures. For the Sama Dilaut, the researcher was actively aware of the varying literacy backgrounds which may limit their capacity to read and sign a consent form. The researcher, therefore, ensured that before starting interviews, the purpose of the interview was explained first, and verbal consent or affirmation was asked and documented. Participants were also informed of the confidential nature of the selection process and interview, including the assurance of anonymity. No names were identified on records, and any names mentioned during the interview were given a pseudonym. Participants were also reassured that on publication or presentation of the research, no names would be associated with the data [9]. In all stages of the research study, the “Do no harm principle” has been strictly observed by the researcher. The researcher strived hard to avoid exposing the respondents of the study to any unintended harm and negative effects on their social fabric, the economy, and the environment [10].

3. Results and Discussions

The major changes observed in the lives of Sama Dilaut survivors after being

transferred to transitory sites include contracting diseases due to overcrowding, coping with the difficult situation in the transitory sites through community help and assistance, benefiting from medical missions and traditional healing methods, and participating in activities such as meetings and seminars for livelihood. The survivors also found shelter, which eased their worry about where they could stay, as their respective homes had been broken down due to the siege. Despite the transfer of locality due to the siege, Sama Dilaut children's education has not been hampered. Moreover, the survivors coped with their situation in the transitory sites through community help and assistance, participating in activities such as meetings and seminars for livelihood, and subscribing to traditional healing methods when someone in the family, including children, is sick or feels uneasy psychologically. They also benefited from at least one medical mission in their respective transitory sites and found shelter, which eased their worry about where they could stay, as their respective homes had been broken down due to the siege. Thus, the programs and services provided to improve the socio-economic well-being of the survivors include meetings and seminars for livelihood, medical missions, and accessible Health Centers with staff that are ever-ready to extend medical assistance. The local government units and other non-governmental organizations also implemented effective programs and services to address the changes in the dimension of lives of Sama Dilaut families after being displaced, specifically to their socioeconomic, livelihood, education, and shelter. On the other hand, various individuals, groups, and organizations contributed to improving the social well-being of the survivors by providing programs and services such as meetings and seminars for livelihood, medical missions, and accessible Health Centers with staff that are ever-ready to extend medical assistance. The local government units and other non-governmental organizations also implemented effective programs and services to address the changes in the dimension of lives of Sama Dilaut families after being displaced, specifically to their socioeconomic, livelihood, education, and shelter. These programs and services were aimed at helping the survivors cope with their situation in the transitory sites and improve their overall well-being. The recommendations prioritized to further improve the services and programs for the Sama Dilaut families include the need for more sustainable livelihood programs, the provision of more accessible and affordable healthcare services, the establishment of more permanent housing solutions, and the need for more comprehensive and culturally sensitive educational programs. The study also emphasized the importance of involving the Sama Dilaut community in the planning and implementation of these programs and services to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability.

Table 1 illustrates the major changes observed in the lives of Sama Dilaut survivors after being transferred to transitory sites following the siege in Zamboanga City.

These changes include contracting diseases due to overcrowding, coping

Table 1. Changes observed in the lives of sama dilaut survivors after being transferred to transitory sites.

Changes Observed	Description
Contracting Diseases	Overcrowding in transitory sites led to an increased risk of diseases.
Coping Mechanisms	Community help and assistance, participation in meetings and seminars for livelihood.
Health Benefits	Benefiting from medical missions and traditional healing methods.

mechanisms such as community assistance and participation in livelihood activities, health benefits from medical missions and traditional healing methods, finding shelter to alleviate accommodation worries, and ensuring continuity of education for children despite the transfer. These observations highlight the multifaceted impact of displacement on the lives of the Sama Dilaut community.

The major changes observed in the lives of Sama Dilaut survivors after being transferred to transitory sites include contracting diseases due to overcrowding, coping with the difficult situation in the transitory sites through community help and assistance, benefiting from medical missions and traditional healing methods, and participating in activities such as meetings and seminars for livelihood. The survivors also found shelter, which eased their worry about where they could stay, as their respective homes had been broken down due to the siege. Despite the transfer of locality due to the siege, Sama Dilaut children's education has not been hampered. The recommendations prioritized to further improve the services and programs for the Sama Dilaut families include the need for more sustainable livelihood programs, the provision of more accessible and affordable healthcare services, the establishment of more permanent housing solutions, and the need for more comprehensive and culturally sensitive educational programs. The study also emphasized the importance of involving the Sama Dilaut community in the planning and implementation of these programs and services to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability. Moreover, Community development is highly relevant to the topic as it is a key approach to addressing the challenges faced by the Sama Dilaut survivors of the siege in Zamboanga City. Community development involves empowering communities to take charge of their own development and to work together to identify and address their needs and priorities.

Key Recommendations for Improving Services and Programs for Sama Dilaut Families.

- 1) Sustainable Livelihood Programs
 - Develop more sustainable livelihood programs tailored to the needs of Sama Dilaut families.
 - Provide training and resources to enhance economic opportunities.
- 2) Accessible Healthcare Services

- Improve access to affordable healthcare services in transitory sites and host communities.
- Conduct regular medical missions to address health needs.
- 3) Permanent Housing Solutions
 - Work towards establishing permanent housing solutions for displaced families.
 - Ensure housing options are culturally sensitive and meet the needs of the community.
- 4) Comprehensive Educational Programs
 - Develop culturally sensitive educational programs that cater to the unique circumstances of Sama Dilaut children.
 - Provide support for continued education despite displacement.
- 5) Community Involvement
 - Engage the Sama Dilaut community in the planning and implementation of programs and services.
 - Foster partnerships between local government agencies, NGOs, and the community to ensure sustainability.

The recommendations focus on addressing the specific needs of Sama Dilaut families to enhance their socio-economic well-being and overall quality of life. Developing tailored livelihood programs to provide economic opportunities and resources for income generation. While, improving access to affordable healthcare services, including regular medical missions, to address health needs effectively. Working towards establishing permanent housing solutions that are culturally sensitive and meet the unique requirements of displaced families. Developing educational programs sensitive to the cultural context of Sama Dilaut children and ensuring continuity of education despite displacement. Engaging the Sama Dilaut community in the planning and implementation of programs, fostering partnerships between local government agencies, NGOs, and the community to ensure sustainability and effectiveness. These recommendations aim to empower the Sama Dilaut community, address their immediate needs, and promote long-term resilience and self-sufficiency.

Therefore, the case of the Sama Dilaut survivors, community development can involve working with them to identify their most pressing needs, such as access to healthcare, education, and livelihood opportunities, and to develop sustainable solutions that are culturally appropriate and responsive to their unique circumstances. Community development can also involve building partnerships between the Sama Dilaut community, local government agencies, and non-governmental organizations to ensure that programs and services are effectively implemented and sustained over time. By prioritizing community development, the Sama Dilaut survivors can be empowered to take an active role in their own recovery and to build a more resilient and sustainable future for themselves and their families. Moreover, this paper also shows that role of community development in empowering communities to take charge of their own development and to work together to identify and address their needs and

priorities. Additionally, the discussion can explore the importance of involving the Sama Dilaut community in the planning and implementation of programs and services to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability. Overall, this paper provides valuable insights into the experiences and coping mechanisms of Sama Dilaut survivors of siege in Zamboanga City and highlights the need for more comprehensive and culturally sensitive approaches to addressing their needs and priorities.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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