

# Problems Encountered, Coping Mechanism and Behavioral Changes of Selected Internally Displaced Meranaw High School Students

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**Abstract:** Marawi siege brought major challenges to the educators of Lanao del Sur. Educators are said to provide light to the life of the learners. Thus, this study aims to determine the lived experiences of respondents after the siege in the aspects of their academic performance, problems encountered, coping mechanisms, and behavioural changes as observed by their teachers and parents. There were 50 students participated in the study, 10 of them were residents of the most affected area of the city who were purposely selected for an interview, while 7 teachers and 6 parents were also interviewed. A mixed-method research design utilizing survey questionnaires, naturalistic observation and interview were employed. The findings revealed that majority of the respondents obtained a satisfactory performance in their 1<sup>st</sup> grading period; common problems encountered were emotional and financial problems; active coping strategy was applied like talking to their friends as their common coping mechanism. In the aspects of respondents' behaviour, the teachers observed that the respondents lack focus in their studies, reduce class participation, and become anxious of their surroundings. While their parents observed that their children become anxious of the situation, minimize going out with friends and frequently watch news programs. In conclusion, the experiences of the respondents during the siege have significant impact in their lives particularly their school performance. Thus, it is recommended that school should provide an educational guidance intervention programs to lessen or possibly eliminate the psychological impact of the siege which affects their studies and their well-being in general.

**Keywords:** education, Meranaw, students, behavioral change, siege

## I. INTRODUCTION

The world is challenge to various phenomenal conditions such as man-made disaster particularly armed conflict or internal strife brought by different groups or revolutionary groups advocating peace with the presence of arm which severely affects the lives of massive people that would take them years to recover not just economically but both psychological and social. Marawi City for instance, is one of the victims of this disaster. The said city is the capital city in the province of Lanao Del Sur where Meranaw people suffered extensively. These people were unjustly forced to move out from their homes and lands including women, children, elderly and persons with disabilities.

In legal consideration, all people including those who have been internally displaced have the right to education. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) stated the right to education in Articles 28 and 29, asserting that states must, among other duties, make primary education compulsory, available and free to all, and make secondary school available and accessible to every child. Further, education should be directed towards "the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society". This right cannot be suspended even in emergencies. Yet in reality, many internally displaced children struggle to go to school (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2011).

Moreover, Education can help to reduce the children's exposure to chaos and threats including sexual exploitation, physical attack and even guerillas group recruitment. Classrooms can also be effective forums for conveying life-saving information for these children not only their educational development denied but they are deprived of other important benefits as well. Many research shows that going to school are known and one way to provide a degree of stability and

normalcy in the traumatized lives of internally displaced children, and can be a critical source of psychosocial support (Mooney and French, 2011).

Against the backdrop depicted above, the researcher was driven to investigate whether Marawi Siege has its effect to the lives of the students. The inquiry is anchored on the assumption that behavioral changes of students are caused by the impact of the siege. Hence, the findings of this study may serve as basis in developing an appropriate educational guidance intervention programs and may eventually contribute to the meaningful change of their lives.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was anchored on some theories which were relevant to the study. First is the Educational Productivity Theory of Walberg's (1981) as cited by McGrew (2008). Walberg had identified key variables that affect student outcomes: student ability/prior achievement, motivation, age/developmental level, quantity of instruction, quality of instruction, classroom climate, home environment, peer group, and exposure to mass media outside of school. In the current context, the first three variables (ability, motivation, and age) reflect characteristics of the student. The fourth and fifth variables reflects instruction (quantity and quality), and the final four variables (classroom climate, home environment, peer group and exposure to media represent aspects of the psychological environment (DiPerna et al., 2002). Clearly student characteristics are important for school learning, but they only comprise a portion of the learning equation.

Second theory is the Behaviorist Learning Theory that focuses on objectively observable behaviors and discounts any independent activities of the mind. Behavior theorists define learning as nothing

more than acquisition of new behavior based on environmental conditions. It also emphasized that learning is measured in terms of changes in behavior of observable responses which are formed, strengthened, or weakened through either reinforcement or non reinforcement.

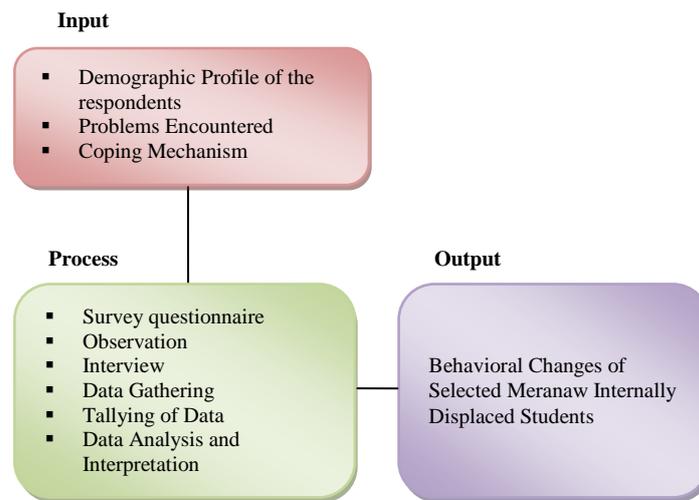
Third theory is the Psychosocial Theory of Erik Erikson that emphasizes the sociocultural determinants of development and presents them as eight stages of psychosocial conflicts (often known as Erikson's stages of psychosocial development) that all individuals must overcome or resolve successfully in order to adjust well to the environment. According to this theory, people encounter a certain crisis that contributes to the psychosocial growth at each of Erikson's stages of psychosocial development. Whenever people experience such crisis, they are left with no choice but to face it and think of ways to resolve it. Failure to overcome such crisis may lead to significant impact on their psychosocial development (Acero et al., 2004)

Fourth theory is the Crisis Theory of James (2008) as cited by Macdonald (2016) According to him "people are in a state of crisis when they face an obstacle to important life goals-an obstacle that is, for a time, insurmountable by the use of customary methods of problem solving. A period of disorganization ensues,

a period of upset, during which many abortive attempts at a solutions are made". In addition, if an individual in crisis is able to muster their coping skills, supports, and resources, they will find themselves able to come through the crisis and be more prepared to work through future crises. On the other hand, if they don't seek that support their functioning will decline further and they will find it harder to deal with things.

**III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

This study focused on the problems encountered, coping mechanism and behavioral changes of selected internally displaced Meranaw high school students of Mindanao State University-University Training Center. As shown in Figure 1 of the schematic diagram, there are variables involved in the study. The input variables are the demographic profile of the respondents, problems encountered during the siege, and their coping mechanism. In process, the researcher utilized survey questionnaire, observation and interview. After data gathering was tallying of data and lastly is the analysis and interpretation of data. The expected output of the study was to determine whether there were changes of behavior among the selected Meranaw Internally Displaced Students.



**Figure 1**  
**Schematic Diagram of the Conceptual Framework**

**IV. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

This study was designed as an attempt to determine the experiences of selected internally displaced Meranaw high school students for the School Year 2017-2018. It sought to identify their behavioral changes before, during and after the siege. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
  - 1.1. Age;
  - 1.2. Gender;
  - 1.3. Family Monthly Income
  - 1.4. Parents' Highest Educational Attainment;
  - 1.5. Parents' Occupations;
  - 1.6. Household size;

- 1.7. Type of Evacuation Area; and
- 1.8. Latest General Percentage Average.
2. What are the common problems encountered by the respondents?
3. What are the stress coping mechanisms of the respondents in terms of:
  - 3.1 Active Coping
  - 3.2 Emotional Social Support
  - 3.3 Instrumental Social Support
  - 3.4 Mental Disengagement
  - 3.5 Planning
4. What are the behavioral changes of the respondents as observed by their selected teachers and parents?

## V. METHODS

### Research Design

This study employed a mixed-method research design where both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed. The quantitative data were obtained through survey questionnaire which were distributed to the respondents to find out their problems encountered and their coping mechanism. On the other hand, the qualitative data were obtained from observation and interviews. The researcher observed the respondents in the classroom and in school without intervention to determine their behaviour and a semi-structured interview was conducted to explore their feelings and experiences during the siege as well as the teachers and parents observation of the respondents' behavior. Thematic Analysis then was utilized to interpret the gathered data.

### Locale of the Study

This study was conducted at Mindanao State University – University Training Center located at Sarimanok, Marawi City. This school is one of the first and few public schools in Marawi City who open and propagated the back to school program during the on-going peak of the armed-conflict in the city and it also became the haven of the Internally Displaced Students (IDS) especially those under privileged who wish to continue their education even in the midst of a crisis.

### Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were the Grade 9 Meranaw high school students who are officially enrolled this School Year 2017-2018 and Internally Displaced Students due to the siege. The researcher limited the sample population into fifty (50) students who were selected through purposive sampling. In order to reach a deeper understanding of the study, the researcher collected qualitative data through an interview to verify the answers of the participants, ten (10) of them were from the Most Affected Area (MAA) of the city, seven (7) selected teachers and six (6) parents were also interviewed.

### Research Instruments

The instruments utilized in the study were survey questionnaires, observation, and interview guide questions. The instruments used were structured questions describing the demographic profile of the respondents, problems encountered and the Stress Coping Mechanism Questionnaire adopted from Guevarra and Cimanés (2017). However, some modifications were made like contextualizing some of the items.

The respondents were required to indicate their response for each items on five-point Likert Scale (5 = strongly agree; 4 = agree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree). For the observation part, the researcher describes the behavior observed from the respondents. When the behavior observed more than once then it is recorded. Lastly, a semi-structured interview was conducted to further

understand the behavior of the respondents based from the observations of the selected teachers and parents.

### Data Gathering Procedure

To accumulate the necessary data and information needed for the study, the following procedures were done: First the researcher sought permission to the school principal to allow the study. When it was approved, the researcher selected the participants based on the given criteria with the help of the principal. This was followed by setting of the schedule of observations. The researcher observed 2-3 times a week for more than a month. For the last part of the study, the researcher asked some selected teachers and parents to participate in conducting the semi-structured interview. During the interview, an audio recorder was used. Follow-up questions were raised to clarify issues or misunderstandings. It was a face-to-face interview done during their preferred time and was lasted for 15-20 minutes only.

### Statistical Tools

To analyze the data gathered, the following statistical tools were used:

1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution. This tool was used to describe the profile distribution of the respondents.
2. Mean. This was used to represent the average of a given data.
3. Standard Deviation. This was used to compare two or more sets of data having the same units of measurements and approximately the same mean.

### Data Analysis Procedures

After every observation, the researcher reviewed the written recorded data from the observation notes and shared it to the assigned teacher whether the observations of respondents' behavior were the same. As for the interview, the responses were transcribed and each questions answered were given an interpretation based on their responses. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the respondents' problems, behavioral changes and the responses of selected teachers and parents on the behavior of the respondents.

## VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the statistical analyses performed on the gathered data, the following findings were generated:

1. More than half (52%) of the respondents are 15 years old;
2. Majority (70%) are females;
3. Respondents' family monthly income is within the range of P10,000.00 to P20,000.00 a month;
4. Majority (56%) of the respondents' parents were high school graduate;
5. Many (44%) of the respondents' fathers occupation were businessmen;
6. Few (26%) of the respondents' mothers were government employees, businesswomen and self-employed;

7. Few (14%) of the respondents' household size were composed of seven family members;
8. Majority (58%) of the respondents stayed with their relatives' homes as Home- Based Evacuees;
9. Few (24%) of the respondents' GPA in the 1<sup>st</sup> Grading Period is within the range of 75-76 percent which means they obtained a Satisfactory/ Passing Rate. As they mentioned that they feel afraid and cannot concentrate because of what happened. It means that they need proper treatment to address their negative emotions.

*"Honestly, I could not concentrate in my studies every time I remember of what happened to me on Tuesday, May 23, 2017". - Aima, 16 years old.*

10. As to the common problems encountered by the respondents during the siege, it revealed that emotional problems ranked first; academic-related problems ranked second; and third in ranked was financial problems. Table 1 illustrates the summary of their problems and experiences.

In the aspects of emotional problem, 24 out of 50 or 48% of the respondents felt that they were scared of the present situation which implies that the respondents need to be treated by experts. They became anxious of their environment as an effect of the Marawi siege. It can be seen that this is one of their common behavioral change that might develop as undesirable attitude. Thus, proper assistance is highly essential from the professionals. According to Agunbiade (2013), teachers can help reduce the anxiety of the students inside the classroom through giving emphasis on learning and understanding their learning materials like conducting classroom activities and practise mindfulness or meditation for the students so that the teachers can assist them in overcoming their anxieties. Below are the following samples of responses of the respondents gathered from the transcribed interview data:

*"I am scared every time I heard rumors about an ISIS attack again." - Rahima, 15 years old.*  
*"I could hardly sleep during night time." - Aisa, 14 years old.*

The coping mechanism of the respondents when they were asked about their coping mechanism in this situation, "taking to friends" was theme derived from their common answers. According to them this is to enlighten their feelings and thoughts. It conforms that the respondents strongly agree to the indicator "I talk to someone about how I feel" with a mean of 4.25 under emotional social support type of coping mechanism.

In the aspects of academic-related problems, 14 out of 50 respondents or 28% of them cannot concentrate in their studies. This is probably because of their experiences that they have difficulty in studying. As shown in table 1, they spend less time in studying their lesson as common changes of their behavior. However, the theme "asking from their classmates" to

cope with their lesson was their common coping mechanism. This is similar to the active coping mechanism that they agree (m=3.70) on the indicator "I take additional action to try to get rid of the problem". Below are some of the responses of the respondents gathered from the transcribed interview data:

*"I ask help from my other classmates to catch up my lesson." - Hisham, 16 years old.*  
*"I ask assistance from my sister wherever I have difficulty." - Aisa 14 years old.*

In the aspects of financial problem, 13 or 26% of the respondents' parents livelihood were gone because of the siege. This implies that their parents may have difficulty in providing sufficient financial support to their children's school needs that may lead them to lessen their interest in school.

According to Mirsa et al., (2010) that children from low socioeconomic status (SES) households and community develop their academic skills lower than children from higher socioeconomic status groups. Below are some of the responses of respondents gathered from transcribed interview data:

*"Sometimes I have no snacks in school; I only have money for my transportation." - Jalil, 16 years old.*  
*"I usually don't spend much to save money." - Haima, 15 years old.*

Since the respondents understand their financial situations, they tried to help their parents to save and earn money for their family daily expenses. "Saving money" was the theme derived from the gathered interview data as their common coping mechanism. It shows in the indicator "I think about how I might best handle the problem" where the respondents agree with the mean of 3.92 in the planning type of coping mechanism. This implies that respondents possess desirable values like being "matulongin" (helpful) to the family. Hence, becoming thrifty develops as their new behavior. It further means that the siege somehow triggers some positive values of the respondents.

*"I learn to save money" - Fawas, 14 years old.*  
*"I don't buy unnecessary things to save money" - Mia, 16 years old.*  
*"I help my parents selling chicken cue." - Camar, 14 years old.*  
*"After school, I help my mother in our sari-sari store." - Normila, 15 years old.*

11. As to the coping mechanism of the respondents, table 2 shows the summary of coping mechanism of the respondents, its mean, qualitative interpretation and rank.

Based from the findings of the study, it revealed that the coping mechanism indicators according to emotional supports ranked first with the mean of 4.89 and a qualitative interpretation of strongly agree has highest influence to the respondents

followed by the active coping with the mean of 4.87 and a qualitative interpretation of strongly agree which ranked second. Instrumental social support ranked third with the mean of 3.88 and a qualitative interpretation of agree; mental disengagement ranked fourth with the mean of 3.86 and a qualitative interpretation of agree; and lastly planning ranked fifth with the mean of 3.84 and a qualitative interpretation of agree.

On the average, the findings revealed that the respondents strongly agree (am=4.27) that they have

their own coping mechanism and somehow can manage their stress, anxiety and etc. despite of lack of professional help from the experts. Indeed, their faith and support from another has a great contribution to their psychosocial recovery. According to Rogers and Yassin (2003) as cited by Guevarra and Cimanés (2017) that it is important for students to develop different coping strategies in order to encounter and manage stressful conditions.

**Table 1**  
**Experiences of the Respondents**

Experiences of the Respondents		
Problems	Coping Mechanism	Behavioral Changes
Emotional problem  24 or 48% of the respondents felt that they were scared of the situation.	Theme: "talking to friends"  Emotional Social Support:  I talk to someone about how I feel. (m=4.25, strongly agree)	Anxious of the environment
Academic- related Problems  14 or 28% of the respondents cannot concentrate in their studies.	Theme: "asking from classmates"  Active Coping:  I take additional action to try to get rid of the problem (m=3.70, agree)	Less time to study
Financial problem  13 or 26% of the respondents' parents livelihood were gone because of the siege.	Theme: "saving money"  Planning  I think about how I might best handle the problem. (m=3.92, agree)	Became thrifty

**Scaling:** 4.21-5.00 Strongly Agree  
3.41-4.20 Agree  
2.61-3.40 Neither Agree nor Disagree  
1.81-2.60 Disagree  
1.00-1.80 Strongly Disagree

**Table 2**  
**Summary of Coping Mechanism of the Respondents**

Summary of Coping Mechanism of the Respondents			
Coping Mechanism	Mean	Qualitative Interpretation	Rank
Emotional Social Support	4.89	Strongly Agree	1
Active Coping	4.87	Strongly Agree	2
Instrumental Social Support	3.88	Agree	3
Mental Disengagement	3.86	Agree	4
Planning	3.84	Agree	5
Average	4.27	Strongly Agree	

12. As to the behavioral changes of the respondents as observed by their selected teachers and parents, table 3 presents the themes derived from the data collected from teachers and parents- respondents.

The findings revealed that before the Marawi siege, the students were energetic and participative in the classroom discussion according to the teacher-respondents. Similar observations from parent-respondents that their children were active then and

usually hang out with their friends. Below are some of the responses of the respondents gathered from transcribed interview data:

*"They are usually active in the classroom discussion and activities."*- Sir Ben, 26 years old.

*"They are lively inside the class especially in doing their activities."*- Teacher Sarah, 32 years old.

*“My son is active in the school, he usually play basketball with his friends.”- Mrs. Ramos, 52 years old.*

*“My daughter is one of the officers in class, she usually lead their classmates.”- Mrs. Magomnang, 55 years old.*

In addition, after the siege the teacher-respondents observed that respondents lacked focus in their studies, reduce class participation, and become anxious of their surroundings. The parent-respondents also observed that their children became anxious of the situation; minimize going-out with friends; and updated to the news programs. Because of the war, the respondents truly affect their behavior and attitude both at home and in school. Below are some of their responses:

*“They tell us to come back at the main campus, in there, they fell safe.”-Teacher Ashly, 24 years old.*

*“They keep at looking at their watch, as if they want to end the class soon.”-Teacher Jash, 30 years old.*

*“Some of the students do not submit their assignments.”- Teacher Hara, 25 years old.*

*“My son obey the curfew hours hanging-out with friends is now limited.” –Mrs. Abdullah, 56 years old.*

*“Now, My son watches news programs, he wants to be updated. He doesn’t watch TV programs before only sports channel.”- Mrs. Dimalna.*

The above statements implies that respondents are still in the crisis situation that they need to muster their coping skills, resources, and supports from experts to find themselves able to come through the crisis, (James, 2008). Furthermore, their anxiety needs to be treated properly because excessive amount of anxiety can have detrimental effects on learning. It can also negatively affect classroom behavior, (Dobson, 2012) since anxiety can have a negative effect on the information processing system. In addition, people with anxiety have difficulty storing and retrieving information and some students are very difficult to formally or informally assess because of anxiety (Nelson & Harwood, 2011). Thus, both teachers and parents must help the students in order for them to become resilient and be able to have a healthy lifestyle consequently continue their aspiration in life.

**Table 3**  
**Observations of Teachers and Parents**

Observations of Teachers and Parents		
Respondents Behavior	Teachers	Parents
Before the siege	Respondents were energetic Participative in the classroom discussion	Children were active Hang-out with their friends
After the Siege	Respondents lacked focus in their studies Reduce class participation Anxious of their surroundings	Anxious of the situation Minimize going out with friends Updated to the news programs

**VII. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, Marawi siege had a great impact to the students both psychological and social which eventually affects their school performance. These students need an appropriate assistance from experts. Despite of their crisis situation they still manage to cope with their problems. Students as victims of Marawi war are still struggling to the various obstacles they meet especially in school. Since Meranaw people are known to be closely tight with their family relationship brings value of efficacy among themselves. Faith in God could also be considered as a contributory factor in recuperating ones lives.

**VIII. RECOMMENDATION**

Based from the findings of the study the following are hereby recommended:

1. Guidance Counselors must continuously provide their services and must established an Educational Guidance Intervention Programs like conducting series of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder sessions, counselling services either individual or group, follow-up services in order to monitor the performance of the students, and other necessary services.
2. School Administrators must give full support to the guidance services and students’ services in order to cater the needs of the students especially

- those victims of war and should monitor their progress.
3. Teachers should continuously encourage the students in order to help them release their anxiety and stress.
  4. Parents should continuously monitor their children in all aspects so that they can guide them properly.
  5. Local leaders should provide adequate financial assistance to programs like psychosocial intervention programs not only for the students but the community as whole.
  6. For the future researchers, they may consider other significant variable that makes the study more meaningful. Adding a large number of respondents may also makes the study more reliable and has accurate information.

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