



Safety and Security Issues, Gender-Based Violence and Militarization in the Time of Armed Conflict: The Experiences of Internally Displaced People From Marawi City

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OPEN ACCESS

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Specialty section:

This article was submitted to
Refugees and Conflict,
a section of the journal
Frontiers in Human Dynamics

Received: 30 April 2021

Accepted: 29 November 2021

Published: 19 July 2022

Citation:

Veloso DTM (2022) Safety and Security Issues, Gender-Based Violence and Militarization in the Time of Armed Conflict: The Experiences of Internally Displaced People From Marawi City. *Front. Hum. Dyn.* 3:703193. doi: 10.3389/fhumd.2021.703193

This study delves into the experiences of armed conflict and displacement among civilians, who evacuated from the Islamic City of Marawi to nearby cities and municipalities in Northern Mindanao, as well as other parts of the Philippines, to escape the clashes between ISIS-affiliated extremists and security forces in 2017. Drawing upon in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with survivors of armed conflict and duty-bearers, such as government employees, staff of non-government organizations (NGOs), doctors, faculty members and administrators of educational institutions, and volunteers who aided in relief efforts, this research identifies the safety and security issues and vulnerabilities confronting internally displaced people (IDPs) from Marawi City, who are predominantly racial, ethnic, and religious minorities. This study investigates the trends in and risks for gender-based violence among women and girls and men and boys in conflict zones and the challenges in the promotion of their safety and well-being. This paper examines the dynamics of gender-based violence and the respondents' experiences of private, community-based, and state-sponsored violence in conflict zones and the risk of further violence upon their return to Marawi City. This research also examines the experiences of militarization among IDPs and their views of Martial Law, which was declared in Mindanao on the first day of the Marawi Siege in May 2017. This study illuminates the nuances in the experiences of IDPs living in traditional evacuation centers and alternative home-based evacuation arrangements, their service needs, and the support systems and interventions available to them. The researcher highlights the links between racial, ethnic, gender, and social class inequality in the Philippines and the vulnerability of IDPs, given their dismal living conditions and the absence of normalization in their lives due to the prolonged siege. This paper highlights the intersections between private and public violence, the human rights issues confronting IDPs from Marawi City, and the local and international responses to their situation.

Keywords: gender-based violence, internally displaced people, minorities, extremism, armed conflict, Mindanao, Marawi siege 2

1 INTRODUCTION

On 23 May 2017, just 3 days before the beginning of Ramadan, fighting broke out in the Islamic City of Marawi, the capital of Lanao del Sur province, located in the southern Philippines, as the military launched operations against “high value targets” from two local extremist groups, namely the Abu Sayyaf and the Maute group (Dizon, 2017; Maitem, 2017; Marcelo, 2017). The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), whose name has been translated to “Father of the Swordsman” and “Bearer of the Sword, is a militant organization fighting for a sovereign Islamic state and based primarily in the neighboring islands of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi, also located in the southern Philippines (Abuza, 2005; Banlaoi, 2006; Banlaoi, 2010; Atkinson, 2012). The group gained notoriety from the mid-1990s onward on account of its involvement in kidnapping, bombing, and extortion activities, all of which have victimized Filipinos and foreign nationals alike (Alberto and Guinto, 2008; BBC News, 2013; Chambers, 2013; Al Jazeera, 2014; Associated Press and Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2014; Fonbuena, 2014; The Straits Times, 2018). Meanwhile, the Maute group, originally named Dawlah Islamiyah (Islamic State), is a recently formed extremist group that claimed responsibility for several kidnapping-for-ransom and bombing incidents in Lanao del Sur from 2015 onward, around the time the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), also known as the Islamic State (IS), started to become more visible in mass media and news sources (Fonbuena, 2017a; Francisco, 2017; Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, 2017; Unson, 2017). Both Islamist militant organizations have pledged their allegiance to ISIS and, in turn, received support from foreign jihadists.

As the fighting intensified, reports surfaced about the takeover of the Amai Pakpak Medical Center by armed men, who attempted to do the same at Camp Ranaw, a military camp. In addition, the Marawi City Jail and Dansalan College were set on fire (CNN Philippines, 2017; Marcelo, 2017). The turn of events prompted President Rodrigo Duterte to declare Martial Law in Mindanao, citing rebellion as the main reason (Diola, 2017; Fonbuena and Bueza, 2017; PhilStar.com, 2017). Ten days after the conflict started in Marawi, about 175 people, including 120 extremists, 36 soldiers, and 19 civilians, were confirmed dead on account of military-initiated airstrikes intended to attack members of the Maute group, as well as one “friendly fire” or “fog of war” incident (Placido, 2017a; Guardian, 2017; Umel, 2017). These figures have risen since the time of the reports.

The Marawi Siege lasted for 5 months. A ceasefire was declared on 23 October 2017 (Amnesty International, 2017; Bueza, 2017). However, thousands of residents were still not permitted to return to their homes (Aben, 2018; Fonbuena, 2017b). As of 7 June 2017, at least 222,108 people from Marawi had been displaced by the siege, according to estimates of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD, cited in Rappler.Com, 2017). By mid-June of the same year, the number of displaced people had increased to 324,406 individuals, or 66,738 families, hailing from Marawi City, as well as the nearby municipality of Marantao, located in Lanao del Sur (Placido, 2017b; Viray,

2017). As of August 2017, an estimated 359,680 people had been displaced by the Marawi Siege (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2017).

To avoid being caught in the crossfire, numerous civilians immediately fled Marawi City and evacuated to other cities and municipalities in Northern Mindanao and the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), now known as the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM); some of the areas to which people relocated included: Iligan City; Cagayan de Oro City; the municipalities of Balo-i and Kauswagan, located in Lanao del Norte province; and the municipalities of Saguiaran, Marantao, and Kapatagan, located in Lanao del Sur province. Some families also transferred to other provinces in Central, South-Central, and Southern Mindanao, such as Bukidnon, Cotabato, and Davao (Estremera, 2017; Gajunera, 2017; Lagsa, 2017; MindaNews, 2017). Braving the distance and the longer journey involved, others, albeit in smaller numbers, relocated to highly urbanized cities in Central and Eastern Visayas, such as Cebu City, Dumaguete City, Tacloban City, and Catbalogan City (SunStar Philippines, 2017a; Bajenting, 2017; SunStar Philippines, 2017b; Featuresdesk, 2017; MindaNews, 2017; Padayhag, 2017). Some headed north and moved to Metro Manila, the capital of the Philippines, and provinces in Central Luzon, such as Pangasinan and Zambales (MindaNews, 2017; Aben, 2018). Government reports indicated that people who had been displaced by the Marawi Siege were scattered across at least 87 evacuation centers in the country, as of July 2017 (Cabato, 2017). This number did not include those who opted for home-based evacuation arrangements, such as renting a room or residing with relatives. Years after the siege, over 120,000 people remain displaced, staying at transitory sites or other temporary housing; many have been unable to return home (Aben, 2018; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2020; Westerman, 2020).

Concerns have surfaced about the socio-economic, health care, and housing needs of the survivors of the Marawi Siege, and the impact of the prolonged siege on their well-being. For instance, internally displaced people (IDPs) in evacuation centers frequently called attention to the insufficient provisions and relief aid from the government (Morella and Agence France-Presse, 2017). As of December 2017, the Department of Health (DOH) reported that 86 people had already died in evacuation centers (Cepeda, 2017). Meanwhile, for those in home-based evacuation centers, living with family members and relatives in cramped spaces was a common concern (Estremera, 2017; Padayhag, 2017). Mental health issues, such as schizophrenia and trauma, have also emerged as an urgent issue (ABS-CBN News, 2017; Cabato, 2017; Nawal, 2017; Santos, 2017). Reports subsequently surfaced about the experience of violence against women and girls, as well as the backlash experienced by survivors, during the prolonged stays of IDPs in evacuation centers (Beltran, 2019).

It is thus crucial to shed light on the narratives of armed conflict and displacement experienced by people who survived the Marawi Siege. It is equally important to delve into the safety and security issues and risks they face as IDPs and their service

needs, as well as the available support systems and interventions—or lack thereof—in response to their plight.

This study examines the experiences of armed conflict and displacement among community residents who evacuated from the Islamic City of Marawi to nearby cities and municipalities in Lanao del Norte province, to escape the clashes between security forces and extremist groups in the area. This study also identifies the safety and security issues and vulnerabilities confronting internally displaced people from Marawi City. This research illuminates their heightened risk for gender-based violence and militarization in conflict zones, and their views about Martial Law; this study provides empirical evidence about the experiences and effects of militarization on underrepresented racial, ethnic, and minority groups in conflict zones in the southern Philippines. Finally, this research determines the service needs of IDPs from Marawi City and the support systems and interventions available to them, as well as their unmet needs.

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- (1) What are the socio-demographic characteristics of internally displaced people (IDPs) from Marawi City?
- (2) What were their pathways to evacuation?
- (3) What are the security and safety issues confronting them?
 - a. What are their specific experiences of and risks concerning gender-based violence and militarization in a conflict zone?
 - b. How do they frame the declaration of Martial Law throughout Mindanao?
- (4) What are their service needs as internally displaced people?
 - a. What are the support systems and interventions available to them?
 - b. What are their unmet needs?

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study utilized descriptive, qualitative research. A descriptive study was used to explore the experiences and risks of gender-based violence and militarization among different groups of civilians who resided and/or worked in Marawi City prior to the siege. A qualitative approach was utilized to flesh out the nuances in the narratives of armed conflict and displacement among IDPs and their views on the imposition of Martial Law in Mindanao.

Key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with individuals who experienced being displaced due to the Marawi Siege and/or acted as duty-bearers in assisting and serving IDPs during or in the aftermath of the Marawi Siege. A total of 29 people participated in the interviews. About 25 informants identified as displaced people, be it in terms of their residence, their place of employment, or both. Of this, 13 were also duty-bearers, in that they provided various services to fellow IDPs despite their own concerns regarding their displacement from their homes and/or workplaces or sources of livelihood. Meanwhile, four informants were exclusively duty-bearers, occupying such positions as directors or consultants of non-government organizations, and administrative staff, who were

tasked to oversee the needs of students who evacuated to and temporarily resided in their campus during the weeks after the siege. The interviews examined the informants' firsthand experiences of displacement and gendered violence during the Marawi Siege, as well as their coping mechanisms and strategies. In the case of duty-bearers, the interviews focused on the interventions and services they provided to individuals who had been displaced by the siege, as well as their experiences. The interviews also delved into the informants' views on militarization and the imposition of Martial Law in Mindanao (see **Supplementary Appendix SA**—Key Informant Interview Questions).

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were also conducted with parents and youth, who were residing in traditional evacuation centers and home-based evacuation communities at the time of the research. Separate FGDs were conducted with women/girls and men/boys. A total of 120 IDPs, including 56 youth and 64 parents, participated in the FGDs. Of this, 68 people, including 34 youth and 34 parents, resided in traditional evacuation centers, while 52 people, including 22 youth and 30 parents, resided in home-based evacuation communities. The FGDs examined the informants' firsthand experiences of displacement due to the siege and their living conditions and service needs while living in traditional or home-based evacuation centers. The FGDs also explored the views and understandings of IDPs on the extent of gender-based violence in conflict zones and the direct experiences of the participants with perpetrators of violent acts, depending on their situation. The FGDs delved into the informants' views on militarization and the imposition of Martial Law in Mindanao (see **Supplementary Appendix SB**—Focus Group Discussion Questions).

The researcher also engaged in field observation during her visits to the traditional evacuation center, to home-based evacuation communities, and to the state universities where some informants worked and/or studied. The researcher also observed the security protocols and procedures followed at security checkpoints. Some of her observations are discussed in the results.

Informed consent was sought from and established with all informants. For youth informants who were under 18 at the time of the FGDs, the researcher also required that a proxy consent form be signed by their parent or guardian for them to participate in the FGDs. The names and other identifying information of the informants was kept confidential.

The participants in the KIIs were selected based on the referrals provided by the researcher's personal contacts from the cities of Marawi and Iligan. The informants were identified through snowball sampling. The researcher first approached informants with whom she had more contact after meeting them in academic conferences, consultancy projects, and community service involving the Muslim community, be it in Metro Manila or in different parts of Mindanao. Additional informants were identified based on the referrals of individuals who participated in the interviews. The majority of the interviews were conducted in locations to which people had evacuated, such as Iligan City and the municipality of Balo-i, Lanao del Norte. One interview took place at Marawi City, which enabled the

researcher to observe and witness the educational and work environment and the safety and security issues of people at the height of the siege.

The researcher's goal was to interview only 20 to 25 informants and thus exceeded her target, for which she stopped conducting interviews upon noticing similar trends in the narratives disclosed by the informants. None of the individuals approached by the researcher declined to participate in the study. That said, the researcher was unable to interview survivors of gender-based violence at the traditional evacuation center. The protocol for conducting interviews with survivors of GBV at the evacuation center involved coordinating with duty-bearers from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and identifying informants based on officially reported cases. No cases of gendered violence had been reported yet during the data collection period; this was confirmed by ECOWEB, an NGO that was then serving IDPs at the evacuation center.

The FGD sites were identified in coordination with ECOWEB, an NGO that provided programs and services for IDPs in both traditional and home-based evacuation arrangements. After some interview participants helped connect the researcher with staff from the said NGO, FGDs were scheduled with displaced parents and youth in two of its service areas, including a traditional evacuation center and in a home-based evacuation community in Iligan City. The FGD participants at the home-based evacuation community were identified by the NGO staff deployed in the area. Meanwhile, the FGD participants at the traditional evacuation center were identified by staff from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) deployed onsite, in coordination with ECOWEB; in addition, ECOWEB staff accompanied the researcher in conducting the FGDs.

The researcher acknowledged the possible impacts of her positionality on her data collection, given her status as a middle-class educated woman working at a university in Metro Manila. At the same time, her cultural background as a woman of Waray and Visayan descent and thus her affiliation with minority ethnolinguistic groups, as well as her ability to speak some languages spoken by Christianized and Islamized ethnic groups in the southern Philippines, helped her build rapport with the informants. Given her support for interfaith dialogue and her involvement with the Muslim community in Manila and the southern Philippines, the informants readily opened up to her once they learned about her previous research on internally displaced persons in another conflict zone in the southern Philippines.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Juergensmeyer's (2017) cultural perspective on religious extremism, which asserts that contemporary acts of religious violence are often justified by the historical precedent of religion's violent past, and stem from a combination of forces that are particular to each moment of history—namely, the cultural contexts of the groups concerned and global social and political changes that characterize the present times. This framework underscores the distinctive world views and moral

justifications of religious militant activists, and the ideas and communities of support behind acts of violence, rather than the so-called “terrorists” who commit them (Juergensmeyer, 2017). Using this framework as a point of reference, the researcher examined the social, economic, and political factors in Philippine society that contributed to the Muslim separatist movement and armed conflict in the southern Philippines and the ongoing trends that pose as risk factors in fostering the growth of Islamist militancy and extremist violence in the name of religion in the southern Philippines.

The researcher also utilized Crenshaw's (1991) intersectionality theory in examining the experiences of displacement and the risk of gender-based violence and militarization among survivors of the Marawi Siege. An intersectional perspective highlights the extent to which gender intersects with other markers of difference, such as race and ethnicity, nationality, social class, religion, sexuality, age, and disability. Because people may be privileged on the basis of certain social locating factors yet marginalized on the basis of other statuses, this impacts their lived experiences of gendered violence, their treatment by society, their vulnerability to victimization and violence, and their access to safety nets (Davis, 1983; Davis, 1984; Lerner, 1986; Collins, 1990; Radford and Stanko, 1996; hooks, 2000; Rothenberg, 2006). Their overlapping social positions also affect the responses of the police, the state, professionals, and the voluntary sector (Collins, 1990; Barbee and Little, 1993; Hester et al., 1996; Richie, 1996; Green, 1999; Disch., 2009; Sabo, 2009; United Nations Development Fund for Women [United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2003]). Applying intersectionality theory to the situation of the informants in this study, the researcher examined how multiple, interrelated inequalities stemming from their gender, ethnic and religious identity, nationality, social class, and age, among other social locating factors, influenced their experiences of gender-based violence and militarization and their access to resources and support systems in the face of displacement.

2.2 Definition of Terms

It is necessary to define some key terms that are used throughout this article. In brief, gender is defined as the social and cultural construction of behaviors, roles, identities, and statuses associated with masculinity and femininity (Lorber, 2005; West and Zimmerman, 1987). Violence pertains to physical, written, or verbal actions that inflict, threaten, or cause injury that may be physical, psychological, material, or social in nature (Jackman, 2002; World Health Organization, 2006; World Health Organization and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 2010). Gender-based violence comprises harmful act/s directed against individuals or groups on the basis of their gender (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], 2014).

Meanwhile, intersectionality refers to interconnected hierarchies relating to gender, sexuality, social class, and race and ethnicity, among others (Crenshaw, 1991). An intersectional approach considers people's multifaceted identities and social positions within the matrix of privilege and domination and examines how these shape their lived experiences, social opportunities, and vulnerabilities (Davis, 1983; Collins, 1990; hooks, 2000).

For the purposes of this article, militarism is defined as a perspective that holds that civilian populations depend on—and should therefore submit to—the goals, needs, and culture of its military. Aligned with militarism is the practice of militarization, a methodical process that facilitates people's and/or entities' control by the military or reliance on militaristic approaches and views for their well-being (Enloe, 2000).

3 RESULTS

To contextualize the safety and security issues confronting people displaced by the Marawi Siege, it is necessary to examine the deeper roots of the armed conflict in the island group of Mindanao, located in the southern Philippines. This section delves into the underlying social, economic, and political factors leading to the Muslim separatist movement in the Philippines and its implications for the long-standing armed conflict in selected regions of Mindanao. Against this backdrop, the researcher examines the pathways to evacuation of the survivors of the Marawi Siege, their security and safety issues, their views regarding the imposition of Martial Law in Mindanao, and the service needs they face as IDPs.

3.1 Contextualizing Armed Conflict in Mindanao: Muslim Separatism and the Emergence of Armed Conflict and Extremism

The armed conflict in Marawi cannot be isolated from the long-standing complex history of Muslim separatism and armed struggle. This, in turn, stems from deep-seated conflicts between the Moro people and the Philippine colonial and postwar administrations, particularly as it relates to the right to self-determination of the Muslim community. These factors have had implications for the rise of militancy and extremism in the country (David, 2004; Gutierrez and Borrás, 2004; Abinales and Amoroso, 2005; Bacani, 2005; Quimpo, 2008).

The literature indicates that the Bangsamoro (“separate nation”) struggle for autonomy, self-determination, and recognition as a citizenry separate from but equal to other Filipinos, is better understood in the context of their Filipino and Islamic heritage, as compared to the ideology of Islam and its general religious and social principles and institutions. Although they constitute the second largest religious community in the Philippines, which is a predominantly Catholic nation due to its history of colonialism, Filipino Muslims make up only 5% of the population, and are concentrated in the southern part of Mindanao, where Islam was first introduced in the late 13th to 15th centuries (Iacovou, 2000; Asian Development Bank, 2002; Bacani, 2005; Ty, 2010). Muslims remained a minority in the Philippines, due to the impediments posed by the Spanish colonization, for which the spread of Islam was halted and confined to southern Mindanao (Lapidus, 1988). For centuries, the Muslims in what is now known as the southern Philippines constituted independent sultanates, fiercely resisting Spanish conquest, as opposed to the leaders of other widely scattered

settlements known as *barangays* (villages), whom the Spaniards cowed into submission by force, persuasion, or gift-giving.

Despite their resistance to the Spanish colonization, the Muslim community gradually fell under the sovereignty of the United States, which subsequently colonized the Philippines (Majul, 1985; Bacani, 2005; McKenna, 2021). Viewing the Muslims as similar to Native Americans, the American colonial government sent some of its best Native American warriors to fight the Muslims. Often, individual Muslim families took it upon themselves to fight American troops. However, since influential sultans and other leaders were given gifts, salaries, and similar incentives, there was no united action against the Americans. The Americans' superiority in weapons also helped them gain sovereignty over the Muslim groups and incorporate them into the American colony of the Philippines (Majul, 1985). Unlike the Spaniards, the Americans did not encourage Christian-Muslim tensions. American official policy did not support attempts to convert Muslims and thus did not interfere with their religious life (Majul, 1985; McKenna, 2021). Ironically, Muslim leaders generally shied away from the nationalist movement for an independent Philippines. Many who had initially resisted the Americans opted for a government under American “protectors,” framing this setup as preferable to subordination under a government run by Christian Filipinos.

When the United States made the Muslims part of a newly independent Philippines in 1946, many Muslims felt betrayed, as they did not consider themselves Filipinos. They disputed their inclusion into the Philippine nation, especially since they identified with a distinct religious and cultural identity, which they had retained (Iacovou, 2000). As such, most Muslim leaders wished to form an independent state. The impact of long-standing institutionalized discrimination and neglect dating back to the Spanish colonial era was not lost on the Muslim community, which experienced economic setbacks and low literacy levels, compounded by pervasive unemployment and the decline in peace and order (Concepcion et al., 2003; Atkinson, 2012; Bacani, 2005). The tendency of Filipino national leaders in Manila to treating Muslims and their lands in a manner that was reminiscent of the approach utilized by the Spanish and American authorities had done to Filipinos during colonialism—a practice that could be considered internal colonialism—fueled more resentment and animosity. Given the fragmentation of Philippine culture, government programs that were implemented to integrate Muslims into the national fabric and mainstream society were met with corresponding initiatives centered on Islamic revivalism (Majul, 1985; Abinales and Amoroso, 2005).

A national separatist movement among Muslims emerged during the late 1960s. The education of young Muslims in academic institutions in Manila under government scholarships, as well as in Islamic institutions under foreign scholarships in the 1950s and 1960s, helped make this possible, since it fostered changes in Muslims' awareness of themselves as a people and in their knowledge of Islam. The principal leaders of the movement were young men, who belonged to non-elite Muslim families and who had attended universities in Manila on government scholarships intended to integrate Muslims into the Philippine nation. The leaders

eventually gained popular support because established Muslim leaders had failed to effectively prevent the large-scale migration of Christian settlers to Mindanao—a move that was sponsored by the Philippine government and led to the displacement of Muslims and *lumads* (indigenous people) from their land (Majul, 1985; Abinales and Amoroso, 2005; McKenna, 2021). When the separatist movement gained traction, certain established elites, who had opposed the separatist rebellion and collaborated with the state during the 1960s, now joined the rebel leaders, who had been exiled overseas, and attempted to gain control of the movement (Majul, 1985; Abinales and Amoroso, 2005; Bacani, 2005). Events in the late 1960s and early 1970s further alienated the Muslim community and led some of its members to arm themselves. These included: the Philippine military's massacre of 30 or so Muslim trainees, who had launched a mutiny in 1968 on the island of Jabitah, due to unpaid services while training for covert operations to invade Sabah; conflicts and clashes between Muslims and Christians; and the gradual loss of Muslim communal lands to Christian settlers (Iacovou, 2000; Concepcion et al., 2003; HURIGHTS Osaka, 2008; Uy, 2008; Gloria, 2018).

Following the September 1972 declaration of Martial Law by then-President Ferdinand E. Marcos, the authoritarian government attempted to disarm Muslims, who feared retaliation by the military and attacks by armed groups consisting of Christians. This, in turn, led to open rebellion. At the forefront of armed struggle was the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), whose founders were among those Muslim youth trained abroad and whose formation was partly motivated by the Jabitah massacre of 1968, in which only one trainee survived (May 1992; Abinales and Amoroso, 2005; Uy, 2008; McKenna, 2021). Led by Nur Misuari, the MNLF originally fought for Mindanao independence under a secular regime, on the grounds that it was only through a free and independent state that Muslims could free themselves from corrupt leaders and fully implement Islamic institutions (May 1992; Mercado, 1992). In the 1970s, however, the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in Libya, which had served as the patron of the MNLF, persuaded Misuari to negotiate and settle for autonomy, as opposed to its initial separatist agenda. This resulted in the 1976 Tripoli Agreement between the Marcos government and the MNLF, which called a ceasefire and the granting of autonomy—that is, based on a Philippine constitutional framework—to 13 out of 23 provinces in Mindanao, the Sulu Archipelago, and Palawan, where large numbers of Muslims lived (Mastura, 1992; May 1992; Shahar, 2000; McKenna, 2021).

However, the Muslim community complained that the peace agreement, which called for the establishment of a Muslim Autonomous Region, was never genuinely implemented by the Marcos administration (Mercado, 1992; Concepcion et al., 2003). Clashes recurred before the end of 1977, with the rebellion continuing throughout the latter half of the Marcos regime and even during the subsequent presidential administrations (May 1992; Abinales and Amoroso, 2005; Abinales, 2008). The Aquino administration resumed peace talks with the MNLF and, in conjunction with the 1986 Constitution, mandated the creation of an autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao (Madale, 1992;

Mastura, 1992; May 1992). Yet during the referendum conducted in November 1989, very few provinces, namely Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi, voted in favor of their inclusion in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao; the remaining provinces, as indicated in the Tripoli Agreement, opted out of autonomy (Mercado, 1992). The subsequent administration of President Fidel Ramos continued peace negotiations with the MNLF, referring to the terms of the Tripoli Agreement, and the enactment of the Final Peace Agreement (May 1992; Abinales and Amoroso, 2005). In 1996, the MNLF signed a peace agreement with the government and made concessions in favor of the autonomy of selected provinces in Mindanao (McKenna, 1998; Abinales and Amoroso, 2005; Abinales, 2008; McKenna, 2021).

Due to more militant demands, splinter groups subsequently emerged within the Muslim separatist movement. One such group was the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), established in 1978 by Salamat Hashim, who served as the Vice-Chairman of the MNLF Central Committee and sought to take over the organization due to disagreements with Misuari's leadership and negotiations with the government in favor of autonomy, as opposed to the original bid for independence, for Muslim regions in the Philippines. After being expelled by Misuari's loyal followers, Hashim thus declared independence and transferred his base of operations to Cairo, Egypt (McKenna, 1998; Yegar, 2002; Abinales and Amoroso, 2005).

The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) emerged as another breakaway faction in 1991, although other sources claim it was established several years prior, 5 following the disagreement of young Islamist cadres with its predecessors in the separatist movement (McKenna, 1998; Banlaoi, 2010; *BBC News*, 2012). The Maute group was established as another splinter group in 2012 (Francisco, 2017; Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium. 2017; Unson, 2017). Its activities are also rooted in criminality and extortion activities, similar to those of the ASG (Hincks, 2017; Jones, 2017; Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium. 2017; Unson, 2017). Sources reveal that Marawi was being eyed as a potential *wilaya* (province) of ISIS, but differ in their assessment of whether Isnilon Hapilon, who was the head of the Abu Sayyaf group for a time and pledged support to ISIS in 2014, would have been the governor of the said province, had he not been killed (Hincks, 2017; *The Manila Times*, 2017). The emergence of these groups illustrate the trend towards the Islamization of the Moro identity, which marks a critical shift within the Muslim community in the Philippines, and the formalization of the already existing Islamist trend within some sub-groups within the MNLF and the MILF. The nationalist essence of the earlier separatist groups was incorporated into the struggles of the Abu Sayyaf and Maute groups for the Islamization of the Moro community, contributing to the operational transformation of the Muslim separatist movement (McKenna, 1998; Iacovou, 2000; Banlaoi, 2010; Hart, 2019).

The historical experiences of social, economic, and political oppression at the expense of the Muslim/Moro community in the Philippines continues to have long-term consequences for the growth of militancy and the intensification of armed conflict in selected regions of Mindanao. Despite the peace agreements formed between former separatist groups and the Philippine government, there remains dissatisfaction regarding the

implementation of social policies and interventions to promote autonomy and stability in regions with predominantly Muslim populations (Abinales and Quimpo, 2008; Hutchcroft, 2016). Structural inequality has led to the intensification of armed conflict in selected regions of Mindanao, in that militant and Islamist groups, which emerged as breakaway factions of former separatist groups (Lara and Schoofs, 2013; National Law Enforcement Coordinating Committee Subcommittee on Organized Crime, 2015; National Law Enforcement Coordinating Committee Subcommittee on Organized Crime, 2016), promote violent extremism in the name of religion, as a response to deep-seated inequities and long-standing tensions between Muslim ethnic groups and the government in a predominantly Christian society.

These complex social and historical forces that contributed to separatism and armed conflict in the southern Philippines inform the experiences of people displaced by the conflict in Marawi, in an effort to avoid the clashes between the Philippine military and the Maute group and ISIS forces. This will be discussed in more detail in the succeeding sections.

3.2 Demographic Profile of the Informants

The majority (22 out of 29) of the interview participants were women; a small number ($n = 7$) were men. The informants were aged 22–65 years old; the median age was 36.

In terms of civil status, 16 informants identified as single, 12 were married, and one was divorced.¹ Less than half of the informants ($n = 11$) had children; the average number of children was two. Two of the women informants were pregnant at the time of the interviews.

With respect to their religion, 19 informants identified as Muslims, while 10 informants identified as Christians. In terms of their racial and ethnic background, they belonged to minority communities, including groups affiliated with both Islam and Christianity.² The majority ($n = 15$) identified as Maranao, an

TABLE 1 | Racial and ethnic background of interview participants.

Racial and ethnic/ethnolinguistic group	Number
Islamized ethnolinguistic group	15
Maranao	15
Christianized ethnolinguistic group	9
Visayan	8
Waray	1
Mixed descent (more than one racial or ethnolinguistic group)	5
Islamized and Christianized ethnolinguistic groups	4
Maranao and Tagalog	(1)
Maranao and Visayan	(1)
Maranao and Waray	(2)
More than one Christianized ethnolinguistic group	1
Ilocano and Visayan	1
Total	29

TABLE 2 | Educational attainment of interview participants.

Educational attainment	Number
Elementary school	1
High school	3
College graduate	12
Professional or postgraduate degrees	13
Master's degree	6
Doctoral degree	3
Doctor of medicine	4
Total	29

Islamized ethnic group, whose ancestors had historically embraced Islam. Meanwhile, nine informants belonged to ethnolinguistic groups whose ancestors had historically converted to Christianity, such as: Visayan ($n = 8$) and Waray ($n = 1$). Five informants were of mixed descent. Of this, four traced their roots to both Islamized and Christianized ethnic/ethnolinguistic groups, in that one was of Maranao and Tagalog descent, another of Maranao and Visayan descent, and two of Maranao and Waray descent; meanwhile, one identified with two Christianized ethnolinguistic groups, being of Ilocano and Visayan descent (see **Table 1**—Racial and Ethnic Background of Interview Participants).

The educational attainment of the interview participants was diverse (see **Table 2**—Educational Attainment of Interview Participants). The majority ($n = 13$) had completed professional or postgraduate degrees; of this, four had obtained a medical degree and were licensed physicians, while nine had obtained master's degrees or doctorates in such fields as biology, education, English language studies, Filipino or Philippine studies, psychology, and sociology. In addition, 12 informants were college graduates. Three informants had a high school education, and one informant had an elementary school education.

Meanwhile, the FGD participants were predominantly Muslims, of Maranao descent. A smaller number identified as Christians, of Visayan descent. They were predominantly from low-income and working-class backgrounds. With the exception of some youth and young adults who were either studying or

¹While divorce is not legal in the Family Code of Philippines, it is legal in the Muslim community, based on the code of Muslim Personal Laws of the Philippines. Rey-Luis Banagudos, "Shariah courts render "quick action" on Muslims' disputes," *Philippine News Agency*, 25 November 2018, <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1054885>; and Supreme Court of the Philippines. "SC: Muslim Code governs marital relations of Muslim couples," 12 September 2019, <https://sc.judiciary.gov.ph/6452/>.

²In the Philippines, people are distinguished according to race, ethnicity, and religion. Race and ethnicity tend to overlap with religion because the Spanish and American colonial eras historically led to the institutionalization of racial categories, namely: Christian, Muslim, and indigenous peoples (IPs), depending on whether people's ancestors had converted to Christianity and assimilated to colonialism, or embraced Islam or maintained their indigenous religion and thus resisted colonialism. Even people's ethnic heritage is associated with ethnic groups that had historically converted to Christianity or Islam or retained their ancestral religion. The stereotypes that are associated with being a Christian and a Muslim, as well as an indigenous person, tend to overlap with racial and ethnic stereotypes. In addition, people's ethnic groups are also termed ethnolinguistic groups in the Philippine context, in that their ethnicity is distinguished by the language/s they speak. Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs (2013). *The Philippines: Religious conflict resolution on Mindanao*, <https://www.berkleycenter.georgetown.edu>; and Rey Ty, "Indigenous peoples in the Philippines: Continuing struggle," *Focus Asia-Pacific* 62 (2010): 6–9.

pursuing professional degrees, the majority of the FGD participants had limited educational attainment.

3.3 Pathways to Evacuation and Concerns of IDPs From Marawi

The interviews and FGDs revealed that there were two common pathways to evacuation among people displaced by the Marawi Siege, namely: traditional evacuation centers and home-based evacuation arrangements. The former involved being registered on the official list of the DSWD pertaining to IDPs residing in evacuation centers. The latter involved residing with in-laws, relatives, and/or friends in other cities and municipalities, as well as renting an apartment or a hotel room, albeit with many other relatives, depending on the informants' situation.

3.3.1 Traditional Evacuation Centers: Experiences of IDPs

None of the interview participants resided in a traditional evacuation center at the time of the data collection for this research. The researcher was unable to conduct one-on-one interviews at the evacuation center with individuals who had survived gender-based violence due to the siege. The protocol for conducting interviews with IDPs who identified as GBV survivors involved coordinating with duty-bearers at the evacuation center and identifying informants based on officially reported cases. No cases of gendered violence at the evacuation center had been reported yet, as of the data collection period; this was confirmed by staff of the NGO that offered programs and services for IDPs at the facility. That said, some of the IDPs residing at the traditional evacuation center disclosed their own accounts of gendered violence, particularly that perpetuated by extremist fighters at the height of the siege and by duty-bearers such as military and police forces during the implementation of tighter security restrictions and protocols as a result of the declaration of Martial Law in Mindanao; this will be discussed in more detail in the succeeding sections.

As for the FGD participants at the traditional evacuation center, they revealed that they, along with their family members, ended up at the facility under varied circumstances. More than two-thirds of them stated that they had been referred to the center by duty-bearers from the DSWD, Red Cross, or other deputized agencies with which they had inquired, and by civilians who had seen them around after they had evacuated to Iligan City—an intense, harrowing journey that compelled them to travel through different municipalities, to the extent of walking long distances, in most cases, if they were unable to get a ride, especially during the mass exodus of people from Marawi when the siege broke out. A young adult man acknowledged the assistance of some civilians in the *barangay* (village) of Tambacan in Iligan: “There were people in Tambacan, and they brought us here.” Meanwhile, a middle-aged Muslim woman of Maranao descent highlighted the assistance of some residents of Iligan despite their differences in terms of religion: “We walked toward the plaza. We were told by some kind-

hearted Christians, “Go to the evacuation center.” This is what they referred us to.”

Two FGD participants at the traditional evacuation center admitted that they had initially considered alternative evacuation arrangements. One of the mothers stated that she and her family wanted to stay at a state university in Iligan that was serving IDPs, but learned that it only accepted students, and ended up at the traditional evacuation center after they happened to pass by the facility. Another mother mentioned that she and her family members first went to a home-based evacuation community that turned out to be full, for which they looked for another place to stay.

In some cases, the evacuation center became an ad-hoc meeting place for family members. For instance, a young Maranao man, who took part in the FGD with male youth at the traditional evacuation center, disclosed that he and his family members had gotten separated while fleeing the conflict in Marawi, and only reunited at the facility. A Visayan adolescent girl also related how she was then working Camp Ranaw when the siege broke out and stayed with her neighbor, until she was brought to the evacuation center roughly a month after her parents' arrival in Iligan City.

3.3.2 Home-Based Evacuation Communities: Experiences of IDPs

Nearly two-thirds of the interview participants (18 people) had been displaced by the Marawi Siege and were residing in home-based evacuation communities at the time of the data collection. The only exceptions to this trend were the duty-bearers (4 people) who were living and working in Iligan and were not directly impacted nor economically displaced as a result of the conflict.

About 12 out of the 18 interview participants had evacuated to Iligan City, which is about 45 min to an hour away from Marawi City. They had experienced either the loss of or heavy damage to their homes due to air strikes, or were compelled to leave the cottages, apartments, or rooms they rented when the siege broke out. At the time of the interviews, three informants were renting an apartment with their family members, in-laws, and/or relatives in Iligan. Meanwhile, two informants were living in the offices in which they worked. Furthermore, seven informants were living with relatives, friends, churchmates, or colleagues in the area.

By and large, the informants who identified as home-based IDPs in Iligan expressed their gratitude for the generosity of their in-laws, relatives, friends, and members of other significant networks, who had taken them in without hesitation. Yet nearly half of them disclosed the tradeoffs of their living situation. Aside from acknowledging the limitations brought about by their status as “just living with others,” these informants also commonly asserted: “It is different living in your own house.” One informant, who was pregnant, shared that three-fourths of her family's home in Marawi had been destroyed—shortly after its renovation, at that. While she remained very grateful for the support of her in-laws, with whom she and her immediate family members resided, she admitted that she and her young children had to adjust to living with limited resources—a far cry from their more comfortable lifestyle prior to the siege. She disclosed that they

had to get used to wearing the same clothing repeatedly or managing with just one pair of shoes or even just slippers, and that her younger children still could not grasp the reality that their home had been bombed about 2 weeks after the conflict escalated.

Another informant also acknowledged that she and her young children, including an infant, had to make many sacrifices on account of their living situation, as they shared an apartment with at least 15 other relatives. Because she was employed, in that she worked as a guidance counsellor in a school and attended to traumatized children in evacuation centers, while her other relatives did not have steady work, she was expected to take care of many of their basic needs and cover the bulk of their living expenses.

An informant, whose family had lost their home due to the air strikes in Marawi, recognized that they were fortunate to find an apartment to rent immediately—a far cry from the experiences of her fellow Muslim IDPs. Yet she had to take on additional family-related responsibilities, while her parents and her siblings were still adjusting to the impact of the siege on their living situation.

The researcher was also able to interview five members of a multi-generational family residing in Balo-i, Lanao del Norte province, which is about a 30-min drive from Marawi City. These informants, who were related to one another as immediate, blended, and extended family members, were home-based evacuees, living near a traditional evacuation center. At the time of the interviews, their household consisted of an elderly married couple, two of the mother's daughters from her previous marriage to her late first husband, and the husband and four children of the younger of the two sisters. Their neighborhood in Marawi was part of an area known as the Ground Zero of the siege; as recalled by the older of the two sisters: "Only a wall separated us from the conflict. There were so many dead bodies on the streets." They had to walk a considerable distance before they were able to obtain a ride to Balo-i by contracting with motorcycle drivers who agreed to drive them for a fee. Their home was heavily damaged by the air strikes, as well as the clearing operations conducted by the military and the police.

The older sister, who was then 33 years old, had just been released from prison, where she spent nearly a decade for drug charges, less than 2 months before the siege; she had made the trip all the way from Mandaluyong City, a city in Metro Manila where the main penitentiary for women was located, only to come home to a conflict zone. Given her limited resources after being incarcerated for drug charges for nearly a decade and after being displaced by the Marawi Siege, she was as vulnerable and as indigent as she could get. She had lost most of her belongings, such as beaded handicrafts and clothes that she had purchased and saved while serving her sentence, with the intention of selling them to augment her income upon returning to free society. She admitted that she briefly considered staying at the nearby traditional evacuation center, but expressed her fears about the rapid spread of diseases and her concerns about the health and safety of her 63-year-old mother, her 65-year-old step-father, and her four young nieces and nephew, who were between the ages of five to 11 years old at the time of the interviews. The

younger sister, who was then 29 years old and 5 months pregnant, and her husband, who was 44 years old, also decided to avoid the traditional evacuation center, so as not to jeopardize the health of their young children and their unborn child. Thus, their entire family opted for home-based evacuation and shared a single room in the compound owned by the family of origin of the younger sister's husband.

About seven informants did not need housing arrangements, since they resided in other municipalities or cities in Northern Mindanao or had family members living in these areas, and/or resided in a different house, apartment, or room in such locations as Iligan City, Cagayan de Oro City, Balo-i, Lanao del Norte, and other nearby cities or municipalities prior to the Marawi Siege. For them, economic displacement was a more significant issue, in that they faced additional constraints and safety risks in reporting to work in Marawi. One informant, who resided in Balo-i, but worked in Iligan, mentioned that she and her husband served as hosts to IDPs and that their displaced relatives still relied on them as a support system.

As for the home-based IDPs who took part in the FGDs with the parents and the youth, more than two-thirds of them disclosed that they ended up in the home-based evacuation community in Iligan through their ties to members of their significant networks, such as immediate and extended family members and friends living in the area. The fathers commonly stated that they were living with relatives. One of the mothers similarly asserted: "Wherever your relatives are, that's where you live." At least seven people, primarily adolescent and young adult women, also stated that they were renting a house or room in the community. One of the considerations that emerged was the receptivity of the community toward IDPs. Two Muslim-Maranao mothers acknowledged that the community opened its doors to evacuees, although the residents were predominantly Christian, for which they did not experience discrimination, as compared to Muslim IDPs residing in other areas with predominantly Christian residents. One of the Maranao fathers also recognized the empathy of the residents, who had ended up in the community after losing their homes to due to Typhoon Sendong (international name: Washi), a strong typhoon that struck several areas in Northern Mindanao, particularly the cities of Iligan, Cagayan de Oro, in December 2011. He claimed: "The way they treat us is fine. They experienced Sendong," for which he concluded that the community residents could thus relate to the ordeal of displacement.

That said, two of the mothers who participated in the FGD with home-based IDPs disclosed that other community residents subsequently considered or ended up living at a nearby gym that served as an evacuation center. One of the mothers disclosed that she and her family initially considered residing there, but were unable to do so because it was full. In addition, another mother disclosed during the e FGD that she, like some residents, transferred from one place to another.

3.3.3 Impact of Cultural Norms on the Living Situation of IDPs

The accounts of IDPs and duty-bearers alike revealed the role of ethnic cultural norms, as well as the kinship obligations that come

with it, in determining the residence of IDPs in traditional evacuation center or home-based evacuation arrangements. Most of the informants are of Maranao descent or identify as “culturally Maranao” in the sense of having assimilated to the Maranao way of life. They emphasized the belief and practice of *marhatabat* (honor or pride) in their ethnic group and its implications for their expected responses to displacement due to the Marawi Siege. The need to maintain honor and dignity—not only on an individual level, but also and more importantly on a familial or clan-based level—is of utmost importance, even in the face of conflict. This informed the decision of many Maranao IDPs to opt for home-based evacuation arrangements and to pursue such measures as living with relatives and other significant networks, renting a hotel room, a house, or an apartment, and other similar arrangements, if at all possible. It is also customary for Maranao people to take in any relatives who need a place to stay, as part of kinship obligations and the broader cultural practice of protecting the honor of one’s family and clan. As such, in the Maranao community, it is seen as shameful to let one’s relatives live in an evacuation center, as it is an affront to the cultural value of *marhatabat*, which is not limited to the individual and extends to their family or clan. One-third (five) of the interviewees of Maranao descent emphasized this cultural value. In the words of one informant: “If you have a relative living in an evacuation center, you are expected to take them in. Otherwise, people look at you as having failed in your obligations as a relative.”

More than one-third of the informants confirmed that the observance of *marhatabat* in the Maranao community accounted for the comparatively lower numbers of residents in traditional evacuation centers, as compared to home-based evacuation communities. In a similar vein, more than half of the duty-bearers confirmed during the interviews that those residing in traditional evacuation centers had nowhere to go, lacked support systems, and/or were more indignant than those in home-based evacuation arrangements. In any case, the informants asserted that the comparatively lower numbers of people who were staying in traditional evacuation centers after fleeing the conflict in Marawi—in contrast to the congested evacuation centers in other conflict zones in Mindanao—did not mean that IDPs from Marawi did not need as much assistance from the government and other entities providing services to IDPs. They reiterated that cultural norms and dynamics in the Maranao community informed the living situation of people displaced by the Marawi Siege.

3.4 Security and Safety Issues Encountered by IDPs From Marawi: Gender-Based Violence

The narratives of all the informants, who had been displaced from their homes and/or places of employment due to the Marawi Siege, illuminated common themes in the security and safety issues they encountered while evacuating to avoid the crossfire between the military and extremist forces, and while dealing with prolonged displacement. Gender-based violence was a primary

issue, with implications for their security and safety throughout the siege.

As displaced people, the informants were vulnerable to public acts of violence at the height of the siege. They related their firsthand experiences of gendered violence—or the threat thereof—in the context of public settings, in the form of community-based violence and state-sponsored violence in times of armed conflict. The perpetrators included extremist fighters belonging to the Maute group and ISIS, military and law enforcement personnel, and in some cases, community residents. In contrast, acts of violence that occurred within the private sphere, such as personal violence, were not discussed as much during the interviews and FGDs; this is not to say that IDPs discounted this possibility, as some of them recognized and hinted that stressors, such as the ordeal of displacement, limited socioeconomic resources, the lack of privacy, and the risks associated with people’s living conditions, could trigger conflicts between intimate partners, family members, and other significant networks.

The vulnerability of the IDPs to gender-based violence was amplified by structural inequalities affecting ethnic and religious minority groups in an underserved region in the southern Philippines that had historically received limited public attention and institutional support. Their access to resources and services varied according to their racial, ethnic, and religious identity and social class, relative to their educational attainment and occupation; those from low-income or working-class communities were especially vulnerable, given their limited support systems and safety nets. Intersectionality was apparent in their experiences of gender-based violence, mainly in public settings. Their accounts reveal their experiences of and risk for violence on account of the links between their gender and other social locating factors, such as their race and ethnicity, religion, social class, and age, in the context of a postcolonial nation where the dominant culture often framed them as the “other.”

3.4.1 Women’s and Girls’ Experiences of and Risks for Gendered Violence

The women and girl informants narrated multiple experiences of and risks for gender-based violence during the Marawi Siege. The intersection of their gender with other social locating factors, such as their religion, ethnic background, social class, and nationality, shaped their specific experiences of and risks for gendered violence. The violence they encountered—or the threat thereof—could be categorized as state-sponsored violence, defined as violence condoned by or perpetuated by the state wherever it occurs, and community-based violence, defined as violence that is entrenched in communities.

The violence of armed conflict was a primary form of gendered violence endured by the women and girl informants in this study. The accounts of all the informants who were displaced by the siege illustrate this reality. The majority of the women and girls, who participated in the interviews and the FGDs, were living and/or worked in Marawi. Some were given only 5 hours to evacuate their communities. Others left their homes 3 days later, when the security forces instructed them to evacuate before they would

start using tear gas to ward off their adversaries. For those who resided at the area known as the Ground Zero of the siege, it was common to be trapped there for several days, until they managed to leave. Walking long distances, if only to evacuate to safety, was common those who did not have their own vehicles, for which it can be inferred that those from low-income communities were hit hard.

About one-third—that is, 8 out of 21—of the women interviewees and more than half of the participants in the FGDs with mothers and female youth, had encountered ISIS fighters, whom they often described as young men and even teenagers. One of the mothers at the traditional evacuation center related how she and her companions had seen ISIS fighters riding the armored car of a government-owned bank, from which the vehicle had presumably been hijacked. A teenage girl at the evacuation center recalled: “They (ISIS members) looked at people so fiercely. They were about 15–17 years old.” Meanwhile, an adolescent girl at the home-based evacuation community related how ISIS fighters “tried to escape using our place,” from which it can be inferred that insurgents attempted to use their residence and/or community to elude the military forces.

A middle-aged Muslim woman informant, who was of Maranao and Visayan descent and was married, with six children, recounted during the interview that how they were stopped by ISIS fighters at gunpoint while they were evacuating; her husband, a police officer, was not with them. She had to recite Islamic teachings to avoid being shot. She and her children were ordered to lie face-down on the ground, and that one soldier was shot several feet from them. She still attended to gendered caregiving responsibilities throughout their ordeal, and helped her children, especially the younger ones, stay calm in the face of grave danger. She also experienced being harassed and verbally abused at gunpoint by military personnel when they were rescued at a gasoline station where she and others had hidden. She reported that some Islamophobic soldiers singled her out and demeaned her by referring to her attire as her “costume,” simply because she was wearing a long, black dress, consistent with the practice of Muslim women who had completed *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca).

Meanwhile, a Christian woman informant of Visayan descent, who taught at a state university in Marawi and lived in a dormitory on campus, shared that she and fellow residents pooled their funds and rented two jeepneys, which were typically used as a form of public transportation, in order to travel to Iligan City. She mentioned that two Muslim-Maranao residents at their dormitory had planned to join them, but prioritized the evacuation of Christian residents such as herself, since they were among primary targets of extremist forces on account of their religion. She and her companions wore long-sleeved clothing and *kombong* (local parlance for head scarf), so as to blend in with Muslimah (Muslim women) residents and thus protect themselves while evacuating. Her experience illustrates her firsthand encounters with multiple threats and vulnerabilities, particularly the danger of being discovered and attacked by extremist forces, the risk of getting hit by stray bullets during

the clashes between insurgents and the military, and the strain of evacuation with minimal food and water and a long commute to contend with—at least five times the usual travel time, at that—due to the heavy traffic caused by the mass exodus from Marawi. All these security and safety issues constituted forms of state-sponsored gendered violence to which she was exposed.

Some women experienced secondary violence or the threat thereof. Their exposure to and risk of violence was linked to their ties with family members, relatives, and other significant networks. Four interview participants and at least three FGD participants—all women—disclosed how they were instrumental in securing the safety of their family members, relatives, colleagues, and even acquaintances, particularly those who belonged to vulnerable population groups, such as children, the elderly, and specific groups of men, such as those who could be held hostage and/or forced to fight alongside insurgents, and those affiliated with law enforcement. This shows that some of the security and safety risks confronting women and the responsibilities they undertake in times of armed conflict, overlap with internalized expectations surrounding gendered relational behaviors, identities, and caretaking roles in the context of familial and work-related responsibilities, regardless of their civil status.

During the FGD with mothers at the traditional evacuation center, a Maranao woman related how she immediately attended to her children to ensure their safety when they evacuated to Iligan. As she stated: “I prioritized my children. Material possessions can be replaced, but that is not the case with children. We were not able to bring anything because we thought the conflict would only last for two to 3 days.”

A middle-aged Maranao woman, who worked as an administrator at a state university, related how she and her husband, who also worked there, were stranded on campus when the siege broke out. She immediately called her daughters and instructed them to hide and protect her sons that night. When she and her husband went to rescue their children and her elderly mother from their home in Marawi, they saw ISIS fighters patrolling their street. She cautioned her husband against leaving their vehicle and guarded her teenage sons, in particular, because of the high risk of them being taken and forced to join insurgents because of their gender and age. She also looked out for her daughters when ISIS fighters stopped their vehicle to tell them to fix their hijab.

Meanwhile, a Maranao woman informant, who was single and in her mid-30s and worked for the city government of Marawi, related how she had to ensure the safety of all employees in the office, including the mayor, who was a highly valued target, and her older sister, who was part of his staff and was 8 months pregnant. Some ISIS fighters—one of whom turned out to be a distant relative—while she was driving home the following day. She also had to oversee the immediate evacuation of her family members to Iligan.

A Maranao woman informant, who was a home-based IDP and pregnant at the time of the FGD, shared that she had to outwit ISIS members, who had surrounded her home, by distracting them, luring them to her store, and offering them

provisions, despite the dangers that she herself faced, if only to ensure that her husband would not be taken and forced to fight with them. Her response illustrates her gendered relational responsibilities as a woman and a wife, even during her close encounters with extremists:

“My husband was inside the house. He could not go out—he is a motorcycle driver for hire. Members of ISIS said he was their enemy. So he asked us to rescue him. Even if I was pregnant, I went with them. If my husband would die, I would die with him, too. . . We opened the store, so we wouldn’t be noticed. . . We got whatever we could get. . . Some ISIS members asked for what we had in stock. Others asked, do you have socks? I gave them our stocks (of provisions) with my eyes closed. They might kill us.

It is said they kill the men who do not join them. When we left, I said (to her husband), “I am more of a man than you are.” ISIS fighters told us not to go back anymore.”

A 30-year-old Maranao woman informant, who also resided at the home-based evacuation community, likewise shared during the FGD that she helped outwit and disarm an ISIS member, who had escaped and ended up at their family compound, located at the “war zone,” a term often used by IDPs to refer to the Ground Zero of the siege. Despite being trapped in their community for 3 days at the height of the siege, with no food, electricity, and water, she and her companions strategically negotiated with the said escapee. She revealed: “ISIS members pass through our area itself. Some make the rounds there. There was even an ISIS member who had escaped and passed through our house. When he was about to enter our compound, we blocked him. They (others in their family compound) scared him off by saying there were soldiers in there. He stripped off his clothes and laid down his weapons.”

Meanwhile, a Maranao woman informant, who participated in the FGD with women IDPs, claimed that she and her companions helped hide three police officers at the height of the siege. As she recalled: “We hid three police officers and made them wear the clothing of *tabligh* (Muslim men who serve as missionaries).” It can be inferred that they were exposed to armed conflict and extremist violence, but still helped rescue other vulnerable civilians.

In a similar vein, a Maranao woman informant in her early 30s, who worked as a doctor at the Amai Pakpak Medical Center, disclosed the risks that she and her colleagues faced when insurgents entered the hospital when the conflict broke out. A team of doctors, nurses, and other medical staff were ordered to perform surgery on an injured ISIS fighter, which readily posed security risks. Given the risk of extremist violence against men, she and her women colleagues were also instructed to hide all the men working at the hospital, particularly those who identified as Christians and/or members of Christianized ethnolinguistic groups, due to the risk of attacks confronting the latter on account of the intersection of their gender, religion, and racial and ethnic background.

The narratives of IDPs from Marawi also reveal certain acts that constitute community-based violence. At least six women informants—including those from Islamized and Christianized ethnic/ethnolinguistic groups—disclosed during the interviews that the shared spaces of women and men in traditional evacuation centers are a taboo in the Maranao community, which is highly protective of women and girls. Some of them noted that such living conditions could leave women and girls vulnerable to sexual harassment and other forms of victimization on account of their gender. A report that subsequently surfaced regarding the experience of sexual violence of a displaced young woman at an evacuation center in the aftermath of the Marawi siege only confirms that the informants’ concerns are justified (Beltran, 2019).

None of the informants disclosed incidents of domestic violence. One factor to consider is the role of cultural dynamics that impact people’s inclination to disclose or withhold information regarding such experiences. At least four interview participants mentioned that Maranao culture is generally averse toward the reporting cases of domestic violence to outsiders, given the preference for settling marital disputes internally and limiting interventions to the families of the spouses. It can be inferred that these trends most likely informed the non-disclosure of incidents of personal violence.

This is not to say that acts of personal violence, such as that perpetuated by intimate partners did not occur during or in the aftermath of the Marawi Siege. Indeed, some NGO staff members disclosed that reports of domestic violence experienced by some IDPs at the traditional evacuation center were being investigated at the time of the data collection. They likewise revealed that the incidences of intimate partner violence, which victimized women, were often related to the economic difficulties of IDPs and the frustrations resulting from the inability of couples to engage in sexual activity due to the lack of privacy in the evacuation center.

3.4.2 Men’s Experiences of and Risks for Gendered Violence

The men informants who took part in this study also shared their experiences of and risks for gender-based violence, as revealed in the interviews and FGDs. The risk of gendered violence while evacuating from the site/s of the conflict and other forms of violence while in displacement were dominant themes in their narratives.

During the FGDs, the majority of the men informants, be these parents or youth, articulated the multiple security and safety risks they encountered while evacuating. A Maranao adolescent boy, who participated in the FGD with IDP youth at the traditional evacuation center, related how the clashes between the insurgents and the military left him stranded at the provincial capitol of Lanao del Sur, which is located at the Marawi City center and therefore comprised the Ground Zero of the siege. He consequently had to walk for long distances to get away from the conflict. As he recalled: “We were trapped in the Capitol for 3 days. Then we passed through a small opening. Then we walked to Iligan.”

Violence perpetuated by extremist groups was a common security and safety risk among the men informants and thus a

form of gendered violence against them. Similar to the situation of the women informants, the men who took part in this study had their share of encounters with insurgents. Two out of four of the men interviewees, who were living and/or working in Marawi before the siege, and more than half of the fathers and the teenage boys and young men, who took part in the FGDs, had also encountered ISIS fighters. A young Maranao man, who also a home-based evacuee, shared that he was among those who had received anonymous text messages that informed them of the arrival of insurgents in their community in Marawi: “We once received text messages stating that they were coming here. The Maranao people started panicking.” In a similar vein, a middle-aged Maranao man, who participated in the FGD for home-based IDP fathers in Iligan, claimed that ISIS fighters arrived in the different *barangays* after conflict first erupted in the *barangay* of Basak Malutlut in Marawi. Another home-based IDP father, who also self-identified as Maranao, mentioned that extremists infiltrated communities in that they “blended in with those wearing *tabligh* attire,” Meanwhile, a Maranao young man at the home-based evacuation community described his firsthand encounters with ISIS and the restrictions enforced: “ISIS members told me that cigarettes and shorts were not allowed.”

The men informants’ narratives illustrate that abduction, recruitment, forced membership, and murder are among the security and safety risks that men encountered at the hands of extremist fighters and thus constitute specific forms of gendered violence against them in times of armed conflict. During the interviews and the FGDs, some women and girl informants confirmed that these trends affected displaced men.

The majority of the teenage boys and young men, who participated in the FGDs at the home-based evacuation community, disclosed that ISIS fighters were actively recruiting members, and that men were at a greater risk of being taken. At the same time, they differed in their accounts regarding the use of force by ISIS. One informant claimed: “They didn’t threaten us. They would just talk to you.” Yet another young man reported: “Members of ISIS went from one house to another and asked about who among the men could fight (note: along with them). I decided to evacuate my nephews first.” Another young man at the same home-based evacuation community, disclosed that ISIS also recruited detainees in exchange for their release: “Those in jail were told, “Join us, so you can be free.””

The home-based IDP family residing in Balo-i, Lanao del Norte province, experienced the abduction of one of its male members. According to the older of the two sisters who were interviewed, men—even those who identified as Maranao—were vulnerable to being taken and forced to fight alongside the rebels. She reported that ISIS fighters took her brother-in-law shortly after the siege broke out; fortunately, the mayor negotiated on his behalf, for which her brother-in-law was released. A woman who participated in the FGD with mothers at the home-based evacuation community, also shared that her cousin, a Muslim-Maranao man who worked in law enforcement, was held hostage by ISIS, but was released. She recalled: “He was told, “So you’re a police officer, after all,” and made to strip off his uniform. Only his boxer shorts and undershirt were left. Their firearms were taken from them.”

The risk of murders and attacks also impacted men during the Marawi Siege. At least two-thirds of the interview participants and more than half of the participants in the FGDs with the youth and parents claimed that men were at a greater risk of being killed as a result of the conflict. One of the mothers, who also took part in the FGD with home-based IDPs, noted “According to news reports, most of those who die are men, really.” Another mother added: “They really kill the Christians. Some are Maranao, too.”

The accounts of some informants also illustrate that Christian men, seen as the religious “other” by extremists, were at a greater risk of being killed on account of the links between their gender and religion. For instance, a teenage boy, who participated in the FGD with male youth at the traditional evacuation center, disclosed that some men working as security guards in their community sought refuge with them when the Marawi Siege broke out. As he recalled: “There were some security guards at the pawnshop who ran to us. They were Christians.”

The experience of a young Muslim-Maranao man, who was in his early 20s and had just relocated to the traditional evacuation center in Iligan, likewise attests to the risk of murder among Christian men. He once worked as a private security guard in the nearby municipality of Marantao and was among the last to evacuate after the Marawi Siege broke out. He disclosed this colleague and best friend, who belonged to an ethnolinguistic group affiliated with Christianity, was shot dead by ISIS fighters—right next to him, at that—for being unable to recite the *Sura-al-Fatihah*, a central Islamic prayer. He recalled: “I told them to take me, too, but they refused. I wish I could forget about that experience.” His story confirms the vulnerability of certain groups of men to violence in times of armed conflict due to the links between their gender and religion.

The interviews and FGDs also revealed common themes in men’s gendered safety and security issues, such as harassment and intimidation by military personnel at checkpoints and punitive treatment by police officers in the event of legal infractions. Muslim men or men belonging to Islamized ethnic groups, particularly those wearing clothing that represented their religious identity, such as that associated with *tabligh*, were at a greater risk for mistreatment, which illustrates their vulnerability due to the intersection of their gender, religion, and race and ethnicity, in the context of a postcolonial nation that has historically treated Muslims as the “other.” For instance, a middle-aged Maranao man, who participated in the FGD with fathers at the home-based evacuation community, related his experience of being profiled at the onset of the siege: “I was made to stand beside the pictures of those who were “wanted” (note: members of the Maute group). This was on the first day (of the conflict).” In a similar vein, the 65-year-old Maranao patriarch of the home-based IDP family that was interviewed, disclosed that he was stopped and harassed by military personnel on the suspicion of being an ISIS supporter, simply for wearing the traditional clothing of Muslims. It can be inferred that the link between their gender, race and ethnicity, and religion led both men to be singled out for arbitrary reasons.

During the FGDs with male youth at both the traditional evacuation center and the home-based evacuation community, at

least six teenage boys/young adult men also shared that they experienced maltreatment on the part of law enforcement personnel. These informants were arrested for missing curfew and humiliated by having their names published or having them walk around the town proper and/or hit by the police before being made to spend the night in a holding cell. They disclosed that there was a Php 300 fine for those who missed their curfew. They were also ordered to engage in community service before being released.

For instance, two adolescent men at the evacuation center related how they and their two friends had run-ins with law enforcement upon missing their curfew and were thus detained, although they were not made to pay the fine imposed on people for missing the curfew. As one of the youth informants revealed:

“We were caught smoking. We were not able to go inside by 8p.m. (note: the time of the curfew). We got caught and spent the night in a police precinct. That prison was so small and there were 17 of us. Someone spilled water on us. . . We were made to clean up. There was a fine, but we didn’t pay.”

In a similar vein, four teenage boys/young adult men, who resided in a home-based evacuation community, experienced being punished, detained, and humiliated upon missing their curfew. They related how they were ordered to clean their surroundings. One of them was also ordered to do 200 push-ups, in addition to paying the Php 300 fine, for missing the curfew. They were also paraded around the town, with their photos taken and published. They shared that all these measures were taken “to teach [us] a lesson.”

Being detained by the police without a known reason was another form of gendered violence that affected some men during the Marawi Siege. A Maranao adolescent girl, who took part in the FGD with female youth at the traditional evacuation center, reported: “My father was not allowed to go out, they said. The police did not let him go out for 3 days.”

Meanwhile, bullying and false accusations by civilians were a form of community-based violence that some men experienced. A Maranao adolescent girl informant, who participated in the FGD with female youth at the traditional evacuation center, voiced her misgivings about the false accusations of extremism directed against her older brother when her family traveled to General Santos City, a predominantly Christian area located in Southern Mindanao. As she stated: “My older brother was accused of being part of ISIS. . . It was said that he and ISIS members had the same names.”

3.4.3 Common Experiences of and Risks for Violence Among Women and Men IDPs

The accounts of the parents and youth who participated in the FGDs point to common experiences of and risks for violence among women and men IDPs in both the private and public spheres. Certain acts of violence—or the threat thereof—could be categorized as personal violence, community-based violence, and state-sponsored violence that involved and also victimized both women and men who had been displaced by the Marawi Siege.

The narratives of the informants revealed that IDPs’ experiences of personal violence took the form of altercations involving family members and relatives at the traditional evacuation center, with women and men involved. Some male youth informants revealed that some fights between evacuees turned physical. A young man: “There were people who pulled each other’s hair. They threw pots and pans at each other. They were relatives.” One of the fathers, who participated in the FGD, likewise disclosed an incident at the evacuation center that involved IDPs throwing pots and pans at one another during a dispute.

The accounts of other informants at the traditional evacuation center point to other circumstances that clearly strained personal relationships, be it parent-child relationships or marital relationships. At least three young men, who participated in the FGD with home-based youth evacuees, disclosed that some parents had a lot of anger due to the siege and took this out on their children. More than half of the pre-adolescent and adolescent girls, who participated in the FGD with female youth in the traditional evacuation center, also disclosed that their mothers, in particular, were often angry in the aftermath of the Marawi Siege. That said, some girls pointed out that some children engaged in unbecoming behaviors, such as answering back, being hard-headed, and showing their resistance toward their mothers. Although the youth informants did not specify whether the fights between the parents and their children led to any abusive or violent behaviors, this was clearly a source of strain and a potential risk factor for personal violence.

Moreover, at least one-third of the parents and youth, who participated in the FGDs at the evacuation center, also disclosed that fights between couples had continually occurred at the evacuation center. At least seven teenage and young adult girls/women and boys/men recognized that financial problems were a source of stress among couples. Other youth informants hinted that the fights of married couples were primarily due to their inability to engage in sexual activity due to the lack of privacy at the evacuation center. Their observations resonate with the claims of some mothers, who acknowledged the changes in the behavior of parents in the aftermath of the siege and the inability of married couples to be intimate due to their inability to pay for a room at “pension house” that they could utilize for this purpose. One of the mothers admitted: “They’re always mad. Spouses no longer have money to go to D’Morvie (note: the name of a pension house intended for “short-time” use, in local parlance³).” The observations of the youth also run parallel to the claims of some fathers regarding the problems between married couples residing at the evacuation center. One of the fathers disclosed during the FGD that some had “broken up with their spouses” for the time being. Another father alluded to the strain caused by the lack of privacy, which constrained the prospect of intimacy between married couples: “If the spouses want out (of the marriage), that (lack of intimacy) is the reason,

³Some informants called attention to pension houses that were for “short-time” use and revealed that this term was a euphemism for an apartelle or room that couples occupied to engage in sexual activity.

for sure.” Granted, the role of gender and cultural dynamics could impact people’s hesitation to disclose incidents involving intimate partner violence to outsiders. In any case, the fights between spouses at the evacuation center were a source of strain in marital relationships and a risk factor for personal violence among IDPs.

The narratives of some informants also reveal certain acts that constituted community-based violence among IDPs, regardless of gender. Fights or altercations occasionally took place at the traditional evacuation center, involving and affecting women and men alike. Some male youth admitted that fights had occasionally occurred among residents at the evacuation center during the distribution of relief goods, especially whenever people cut in line. Some mothers and young men also disclosed during the FGDs that entire families also fought with one another over the spaces they occupied in the evacuation center. Other male youth informants reported that there were instances when certain mothers intervened in their children’s squabbles with other children—to the point of fighting with one another. A young man stated: “They magnify small things. The children fight—and then their mothers later end up fighting.”

Meanwhile, a form of community-based violence that could potentially affect IDPs, particularly those of Maranao descent, was *rido* (clan feud or clan wars among Muslim ethnic groups, with lethal consequences). The entrenchment of violence through *rido* is reflected in the narratives of at least half of the interview and FGD participants who were in Marawi when the siege broke out, in that those who heard gunshots initially attributed it to *rido* and presumed that it would not affect them directly and other people who were not part of the feuding families. At least two-thirds of the parents and youth who participated in the FGDs mentioned that the threat of *rido* was imminent upon their return to Marawi, as some Muslim-Maranao IDPs had openly vowed to exact revenge on anyone they knew to be behind the siege, as well as their family members and relatives; this dynamic is related to the clannish behavior of Muslim ethnic groups in Philippine society and the extensive kinship obligations involved, particularly the cultural expectation to defend one’s family and/or clan in times of conflict. When asked whether or not anything could be done to avoid *rido*, some informants claimed that it was inevitable. As stated by one of the home-based IDP mothers: “It seems nothing can be done. They will hunt people down, family to family.”

The informants unanimously agreed that the perpetrators of *rido* were men. They were divided on whether the victims of *rido* were limited to men only. A small minority—that is, less than 10 individuals—claimed that women could also be targeted. In any case, they acknowledged that the extended family members of perpetrators of the Marawi Siege, regardless of age, could be victimized as a way of retaliating for the massive damage. Intersectionality was evident in terms of the interconnections between the racial and ethnic background, religion, gender, age, and nationality, among other social positions, shaped the vulnerability of IDPs to *rido*, in the context of ethnic groups affiliated with the Muslim community in the southern Philippines.

The prolonged siege is a primary form of state-sponsored violence that affects women and men IDPs alike, given the multiple threats to their safety and security as a result of living

and/or working in a conflict zone or within close proximity to the site/s of the clashes between the military and insurgents. Civilians who worked in Marawi dealt with safety and security threats on a daily basis. The informants who taught at MSU and worked the Amai Pakpak Hospital attested to the dangers they continued to face ever as the siege dragged on. One woman informant, who taught at the state university, emphasized: “Anything can happen.” Her three siblings, who were doctors at the aforementioned hospital and also participated in the interviews, were likewise exposed to possible safety and security risks—as evidenced by the attempt of extremists to seize control of the hospital. Two other women informants, who were faculty members at the same university, claimed that the issuance of a safe conduct pass was not a guarantee of their safety during their commute and even during their time on campus. Indeed, educators and students who had returned to MSU upon the resumption of classes were exposed to multiple hazards. The threat of being hit by stray bullets, internal explosive devices (IEDs), and the like was ever-present, as the conflict dragged on.

The researcher also witnessed how security and safety threats were part of the lived experiences of civilians who lived and/or worked in Marawi. She had made the trip from Iligan City to Marawi to conduct an interview with a faculty member at MSU, as well as to observe the work environment of other informants, who taught at the same university. Upon arriving on campus, one of the security guards on duty at one of the buildings informed her and the informant who accompanied her, that they “had just missed an air strike.” Upon rushing to one of the top floors of the building, the researcher noted that the “war zone” of Marawi could be seen from the department they visited—and that traces of the air strikes, mainly in the form of billowing clouds, could still be seen, and gunshots could be heard in the background. Some informants, who worked at the university, and their colleagues disclosed that the impact of the air strikes could be felt on campus, for which instructors and students simply paused while the buildings of their classrooms shook due to the reverberation of the air strikes and resumed classes afterward. The researcher also immediately learned that the rooftop of the building they had visited was unsafe due to the threat of enemy snipers. In addition, she and the informant who accompanied her soon learned that two civilians had been hit by stray bullets right by the main gate of campus less than 2 hours before their arrival. While conducting an interview, the researcher herself heard the sound of gunshots in the background. The researcher was also present when the lockdown of the campus was announced due to the presence of enemy snipers across the main gate, in addition to the shootings that led to civilians being hit by stray bullets within the vicinity.

Other informants also expressed their fears about the conflict in Marawi spreading to Iligan City and its consequences for their living situation. As stated by a young woman at the home-based evacuation community: “They say Iligan will get dragged into the conflict. We don’t know anymore where we will go if Iligan is affected.”

3.4.4 Theft and Looting: Implications for Security and Safety

The informants’ accounts also revealed their vulnerability to other security and safety risks, particularly their victimization

through theft and looting. For those whose homes had not been entirely decimated by bombings and air strikes, they were at great risk for theft and looting at the height of the siege. The perpetrators took advantage of various situational factors, such as the Maranao community's culturally specific ways of storing valuables, gadgets, and other resources at home, the avoidance of relying on banks that are not sensitive to Islamic practices and beliefs and that provide interest for deposits, and the preference for keeping large amounts of cash and jewelry in their homes, rather than depositing money in banks that would lead them to acquire interest for work that they did not do, which is a taboo in Islam.

Nearly half of the interviewees and FGD participants disclosed that their homes had been "cleared" or broken into. Other informants claimed that the status of "cleared," as it was used to mark residences in Marawi, did not mean that the homes were safe, but rather, that all the residents' valuables had been taken. The account of a woman informant, who participated in the FGD with mothers at the home-based evacuation community, illustrates this trend. She stated: "The military [wrote] "clear" on our door. But the inside of our house was too messy. The valuables in our house are gone." Other mothers, who were likewise home-based evacuees, disclosed: "Our houses were broken into." When asked whether soldiers or civilians had entered their homes, they commonly replied: "We don't know which of the two."

Some informants, who requested confidentiality, claimed that incidents of theft and looting had been committed by AFP or PNP personnel or civilian-thieves in the area, in that order. Others also disclosed that they had witnessed some vehicles driven by the police or the military containing excessive quantities of appliances and gadgets. An elderly informant at a home-based evacuation community in Balo-i disclosed that he had to be discreet despite noticing evidence of looting and witnessing soldiers pass by their street, with their vehicles packed with belongings most likely looted from "cleared" houses in Marawi.

Two informants had contacts working for private courier companies, who mentioned that their customers frequently included people from the military who sometimes shipped two laptops at a time to different locations. One informant disclosed that she had a friend in the military who admitted that his companions helped themselves to items of value whenever they stayed at the houses of civilians during clearing operations.

That said, an interview participant shared that she learned after the siege ended that contraband items, such as unlicensed firearms and IEDs, had been found in some of the homes that had been tagged as "cleared" during the Marawi Siege. In any case, she did not discount the extent of theft and looting that had victimized numerous civilians at the height of the conflict.

For IDPs living at the evacuation center, they were also at risk of being victimized by theft. Some FGD participants, be they parents or youth, disclosed incidents involving the theft of cash, clothing—including underwear—and even the buckets used for storing water and/or bathing, among other material possessions. Another subtle form of theft was the way some people surreptitiously replaced the labels bearing the names of the beneficiaries of relief goods.

3.4.5 Rape as a Weapon of War: Mixed Views

The accounts of the informants also revealed mixed views regarding the extent of rape as a form of gendered violence, particularly at the expense of women, during the Marawi Siege. On the one hand, at least one-third of the interview participants and FGD participants recognized that rape, particularly as it affected women, was a pervasive threat during the conflict. For instance, an adolescent girl at the traditional evacuation center reported that Maute group members had committed rape. A woman IDP, who took part in the FGD with mothers at the home-based evacuation community, did not discount the possibility of the victimization of women by ISIS and even other groups, for that matter: "You can't say there are no such instances. In the present time, disasters don't choose their victims." Meanwhile, an interview participant disclosed that she had heard some reports of women who had been abducted, raped, and even forced into marriage by extremists. In addition, a staff member at the traditional evacuation center mentioned the case of a Christian woman, who had been held hostage and raped by ISIS fighters who broke into her house in Marawi.

Some informants claimed that the rape jokes of President Duterte, who was quoted saying that the soldiers could rape any women while Marawi was under siege and Mindanao remained under Martial Law, and that he would back them up (Al-Jazeera, 2017; Reuters, 2017), aggravated the situation. In contrast, one interviewee voiced her support for Duterte's response to the siege. She mentioned that the media took his comments—including his rape jokes—out of context and sensationalized it.

3.5 Militarism and Militarization

The accounts of the informants reveal the impact of militarism and militarization on their lived experiences as internally displaced people. President Duterte's declaration of Martial Law throughout Mindanao, effective on the first day of the Marawi Siege, points to the centrality of militarism and the reliance on militaristic approaches and solutions to contain the conflict in Marawi and its surrounding cities and municipalities.

Militarization thus shaped the daily lives of the informants as the siege dragged on. All the informants had to abide by the curfew, which was set at 8PM, but varied according to the level of security threats. Some informants, who taught at the main campus of Mindanao State University (MSU) and reported back there when classes resumed, disclosed that the curfew in Marawi was often earlier, especially in times of heightened security, for which they had to leave campus between 2:00 to 2:30 p.m. or thereabouts. This compelled them to adjust their routines and activities accordingly—and even change their routes, as needed. The researcher witnessed this during her visit to MSU on 7 September 2017, in that faculty members—including some of the informants in this study—who commuted to and from Marawi using hired vans, rushed to reserve slots for themselves so they could leave early in the afternoon. The university had been placed on lockdown and was therefore closed by 2:00 p.m. because two civilians had been

hit by stray bullets near the premises in the morning. The main entrance gate of the university was closed due to the presence of enemy snipers across the street, for which people had to pass through a different route to exit the campus.

The informants also had to comply with heightened security protocols, particularly the designation of checkpoints and the inspection of vehicles, identification, and the like. During the interviews and the FGDs, the majority of the informants alluded to the security checkpoints they now had to pass through, for which they needed to bring valid identification. The designation of checkpoints also compelled people to allot more travel time—a reality that almost all the interview participants attested to. For instance, a Maranao informant who lived in Iligan, but taught at a state university in Marawi, attested to the heavy traffic in Iligan in the aftermath of the siege on account of the checkpoints. He was among the founding members of a support group for IDPs and thus traveled frequently to provide psychosocial services in different cities and municipalities in Northern Mindanao. He claimed that the heavy traffic in Iligan, exacerbated by the checkpoints, was the “new normal” that people had to adjust to.

In addition, a Visayan informant who also worked in Marawi and rented rooms in both Marawi and Iligan, described the different protocols for people at checkpoints, depending on their mode of transportation. She stated that people traveling by way of public transportation had to disembark at checkpoints and show their IDs to military personnel on duty, while those traveling by private car did not need to disembark, but still needed to show their ID—a trend that the researcher herself witnessed during her travels throughout Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur.

The informants expressed varied perspectives on militarization in their communities. At least two-thirds of the interview and FGD participants asserted the need of civilians for protection and claimed that the presence of the military made them feel safer throughout the siege. During the FGD with mothers at the home-based evacuation community, a Maranao woman informant claimed that she and her fellow IDPs were in favor of the deployment of military personnel in the area: “We consider it more preferable to have the military around for our safety.” Another Maranao woman, who resided at the same home-based evacuation community, shared the same sentiments, but emphasized the need to ensure the well-being of civilians. As she stated: “For me, it is safer if the military is around. I hope they don’t do anything bad to civilians.”

More than half of the informants also claimed that the security protocols at checkpoints were strict, but justifiable to ensure their safety. For instance, a Maranao woman informant, who was likewise a home-based IDP, stated: “It is okay that it is strict for our protection.” Echoing such sentiments, a young Maranao man, who took part in the FGD with home-based IDP youth, claimed: “Things are okay at the checkpoint, as long as you bring your ID.” Two other Maranao women informants, who participated in the FGD with mothers at the home-based evacuation community, shared nuanced views. One of them admitted that she could not help but feel nervous, while the other interjected: “As long as you’re not guilty, it is all okay.”

Meanwhile, the account of a Maranao man informant, who took part in the FGD with home-based IDP fathers, reveals the

lack of checkpoints in areas where there were no IDPs: “In some areas, there were no *bakwit* (local parlance/Visayan slang for evacuee/s), so there were no checkpoints.” For her part, a Maranao woman informant, who resided at the same home-based evacuation community, expressed her preference for numerous checkpoints: “It would be more feasible to have more checkpoints for safety.”

There were nuances in the informants’ accounts with regard to the consequences faced by civilians who did not bring identification at security checkpoints. A young man, who took part in the FGD with male youth at the traditional evacuation center, stated that people without identification had their names listed and their photos taken at checkpoints. The informants also differed in their views as to whether Muslims or Christians experienced more restrictions and penalties at checkpoints. A Maranao young man, who took part in the FGD with male youth at the traditional evacuation center, emphasized that people experienced the same treatment, regardless of their religion: “It is (their treatment) the same. They (the authorities) ask where you came from.” He also disclosed that people who failed to bring their ID were made to sing the Philippine national anthem as a way of penalizing them. His account points to the possibility of humiliation, as experienced by those who fail to bring identification.

In contrast, the other informants disclosed that Muslims were singled out at checkpoints. For instance, a Maranao young man, who was also a home-based IDP, voiced his misgivings about the scapegoating of Muslims from Marawi, such as himself: “We were blamed for sowing fear and dread.” Echoing such sentiments, a Muslim-Maranao father and home-based evacuee, attested to the restrictions he encountered at checkpoints: “The others (duty-bearers) imposed restrictions on us. They checked because there might be ISIS members.”

The accounts of other informants reveal the imminent risk of harassment of women by military personnel. Granted, women from both Islamized and Christianized ethnic/ethnolinguistic groups recognized this as an ever-present threat on account of their gender. Yet their narratives also reveal the unique vulnerabilities confronting Muslim women, who are primarily of Maranao descent or culturally affiliated with the Maranao community, in the aftermath of the Marawi Siege. This trend illuminates how the intersection of their gender, religion, and ethnicity, in the context of a postcolonial society with entrenched Islamophobia, shaped their specific experiences of militarization and their run-ins with duty-bearers.

The experience of a 37-year-old Muslim woman informant, who was of mixed descent but culturally affiliated with the Maranao community, is a case in point. Aside from her ordeal with ISIS fighters who ordered her and her children to lie face-down on the ground, she experienced being harassed and verbally abused at gunpoint by Islamophobic military personnel, who were sent to rescue them from a gasoline station where she and other civilians had hidden. She disclosed that some soldiers called attention to her “costume”—that is, her wearing a long, black dress, consistent with the practice of Muslim women who had completed *haji* (pilgrimage to Mecca). She responded by reminding them of their sworn duty to defend and protect civilians, especially in times of conflict.

Meanwhile, a middle-aged Maranao man, who took part in the FGD with fathers at the home-based evacuation community, disclosed that duty-bearers at some checkpoints took photos of Muslim women who were wearing a niqab. About four women informants also voiced their misgivings toward military personnel who made Muslim women remove their hijab and other traditional head covering at certain checkpoints and made eye contact with or heckled at them, all of which go against traditional Muslim and Maranao cultural practices on the treatment of women. For instance, a 36-year-old Muslim-Maranao woman, disclosed that her teenage niece and their family employee, a young woman, were catcalled at a checkpoint, and added that some military personnel even suggested that they allow their employee to stay behind. She also asserted that it was distressing for their parents to witness their daughters being subjected to sexual harassment in security checkpoints: "In our (Maranao) culture, daughters are so precious and highly protected. It hurts our parents for their daughters to be treated like this. They don't even want anyone to look at us. Daughters are not supposed to be looked at by strangers."

3.6 Views on Martial Law

The informants expressed mixed sentiments about the imposition of Martial Law in Mindanao. More than two-thirds of the interview and FGD participants justified Martial Law as being "needed" for people's peace of mind and safety throughout the siege.

The older informants, who had experienced Martial Law under then-President Marcos in the 1970s, claimed that it was different and worse then, as compared to that imposed by the Duterte administration. During the FGD with mothers at the traditional evacuation center, one of the women claimed: "Martial Law now is not the worst. They (the government) are looking out for people's safety." Another woman informant at the evacuation center likewise insisted that no acts of violence had been inflicted by the government and other duty-bearers on civilians as a result of Martial Law: "They are not doing anything violent." Meanwhile, another woman informant, who also resided at the evacuation center, recognized the challenges resulting from Martial Law despite the greater difficulties when it was imposed in the previous decades. As she stated: "Martial Law was harder then, compared to how it is now. But Martial Law is still hard."

Other informants spoke out against the negative consequences of Martial Law. During the FGDs with home-based IDP parents and youth, about half of the mothers and the male youth participants voiced their concerns about the climate of repression under Martial Law. As one of the young men asserted: "There is no freedom. There are no rights." Echoing such sentiments, two women informants pointed out that the imposition of Martial Law led to the undermining of their human rights and even their cultural identity as Maranao people. Other informants called attention to the lawlessness and impunity due to Martial Law. A home-based IDP mother disclosed: "The bad deeds committed by the military are not reported."

Some youth informants also revealed that Martial Law was an aggravating factor in the loss of lives during the siege, in that it

could be used as a cover for the death of people. A young man, who took part in the FGD with home-based IDP youth, claimed: "You can easily be killed." An adolescent girl, who resided at the traditional evacuation center, likewise disclosed that Martial Law was "painful" for her, in that it put her mother's life at risk. As she disclosed: "My mother is a tricycle driver. Mama nearly died." Some young women, who participated in the FGD at the home-based evacuation community, also reported that some deaths had been reported at an area that was not a central location during the siege. One young woman stated: "There were some dead people found at Matampay Bridge (note: a bridge that connected some roads in Marawi, and that was not known to be a major route of extremists), but ISIS members are at the war zone (note: ground zero of the siege)." Another young woman added that they suspected that these people had been killed in an area that was considered part of a "safe zone," which indicates that their death occurred under dubious circumstances.

More than two-thirds of the interview and FGD participants disclosed that the restrictions under Martial Law constrained the movement of people residing and/or working in the Islamic City of Marawi. Civilians needed a safe conduct pass to enter Marawi, be it to report to their workplaces or to visit their homes, although they were not permitted to sleep there during the siege. The accounts of some informants likewise revealed that those who returned to Marawi, with the intention of checking on their homes, were escorted by soldiers and given only 1 hour to retrieve their belongings, after which they needed to report to the city government, where the items they retrieved would be listed and documented by deputized personnel; they also had to contend with long queues and waiting periods. The IDP family that had evacuated to Balo-i, Lanao del Norte, had this experience. In September 2017, they received permission to visit their home, located at the Ground Zero of the conflict. The 63-year-old matriarch contracted with motorcycle for hire, but after waiting for more than 3 hours in Marawi, she returned to Balo-i empty-handed, especially since it was getting late. Even before the siege, civilians often deemed it unsafe to travel to and from Marawi after 3:00 p.m. or opted to travel in a convoy due to the risk of being victimized by violent crime, such as robbery and kidnapping for ransom.

Some home-based IDP youth also attested to the strict protocols imposed by the military as Marawi remained under Martial Law. As a young man at the home-based IDP community described it: "The soldiers control your things or even your house." As the ability to enter Marawi was still highly restricted during the siege, numerous residents were still unable to return home. A young woman informant, who resided at the same community, asserted: "We're frustrated because we can't go home."

Other informants voiced their misgivings about their vulnerability to harassment and unnecessary searches while Mindanao remained under Martial Law. Civilians who identified as Muslims and/or belonged to Islamized ethnic groups, such as the Maranao community, were especially impacted by these trends. While they understood the reasons for the imposition of Martial Law at the onset of that Marawi Siege, the majority of the informants disclosed that they were not

in favor of the extension of Martial Law; as it were, President Duterte had previously announced that Martial Law would remain in effect until December 2017, but extended it until year-end 2019, with the endorsement of Congress (Cepeda, 2017).

3.7 Views on Extremism and Its Underlying Causes and Enabling Factors

Some informants expressed the strain caused by “not knowing who the real enemy is.” During the FGDs with the parents and the youth, at least one-third of the participants were divided in seeing extremists as enemies or allies. For instance, a young Maranao woman at the home-based evacuation community, clarified that Muslims like herself also feared extremists, in contrast to the stereotypes perpetuated by the dominant culture. As she stated: “They (people) have a different interpretation when they hear the word “Muslim.” They say [Muslims] are terrorists. We are scared, too. We are scared of the Abu Sayyaf.” A young man, who resided at the traditional evacuation center, reported that insurgents took the motorcycle he drove to earn a living: “I was driving a motorcycle, driving passengers around. Maute group members took it because they said they would use it. We knew they were part of ISIS because they were wearing black.” Another young man mentioned that some members of ISIS took the sack of rice he carried with him when he evacuated with his family.

Other informants pointed out that there were instances when the ISIS fighters they encountered were helpful. In contrast to the experience of the young man, whose sack of rice was taken by ISIS members, another male youth informant stated that two ISIS fighters allowed him ride with them on their motorcycle when he evacuated, as he was carrying a heavy sack of rice. Meanwhile, the woman informant, who was pregnant and had been threatened at gunpoint by insurgents and military personnel alike, also reported that some ISIS fighters assisted her husband’s cousin at the height of air strikes. She claimed that her husband’s cousin was running to safety and needed a white shirt to distinguish himself as a civilian, and that ISIS fighters helped him determine the escape routes to take. She related how the same fighters even had numerous white shirts in stock, in different sizes, and readily handed them out to any civilians who needed them.

An adolescent girl, who resided at the traditional evacuation center, voiced her confusion as to whether the military or extremists were their allies. She stated: “ISIS members killed military personnel. The military killed ISIS members. Sometimes, we don’t know who is on our side.”

At least half of the IDPs who participated in the FGDs with the parents, as well as the majority of the duty-bearers who participated in the interviews, asserted that Maute group and ISIS members were taking advantage of Marawi residents’ resentment toward the government due to the destruction of their homes, and thus utilized the climate of Islamophobia as an opportunity to recruit members. They voiced their concerns about how the prolonged siege would provide fertile ground for more people to join or support extremist groups.

An informant in his mid-30s, who was of mixed descent and was involved in teaching and peace and development work under

the auspices of at Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT), shared his insights about the factors that could lead people—particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and religious and ethnic minority communities in the Philippines—to join extremist groups. He claimed that Islamist militant groups could invoke the history of conflict and poverty in their communities of origin, so as to convince them to join their ranks, on the premise that the government had abandoned them or remained indifferent to their concerns. The comparatively higher pay offered to members was also another factor that could entice them. He added that even students or college graduates, particularly those majoring in courses relating to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, could be targeted, in that their training could be utilized to manufacture IEDs and other weapons.

At least five informants, who worked at MSU in Marawi, added that some religious organizations, which were affiliated with Islam, purported to host study sessions at universities, but used these events as a front to indoctrinate participants. These gatherings, invoking the freedom of religion, then became an occasion to educate individuals about ideologies in support of religious militancy and Islamist responses.

Some interviewees and FGD participants also commented on the extent to which extremist groups had infiltrated madrasah educational institutions after their heads had been trained overseas and thus indoctrinated by Islamist militant groups. One of the women informants, who was interviewed, disclosed that she had gone to the same school as one of the Maute brothers, whom she described as studious and quiet and whose involvement in extremist activity was totally unexpected. Meanwhile, a Maranao young woman, who participated in the FGD with home-based IDP youth, stated: “Omar Maute (note: the co-founder of the Maute group) and his companions studied abroad. He was brainwashed there. Whatever teachings were given by the terrorists, he shared it. That’s probably what poisoned his mind. They target those studying in the madrasah. . . That’s usually their gate pass.” She and other informants called attention to the need to monitor and regulate the madrasah educational system. According to them, madaris are often funded using donations sourced from other countries and involve *ustaz* (religious teachers) hired to teach the children.

The accounts of other informants revealed that socio-economic resources were a factor that influenced the decision of some Filipino Muslim parents to send their children to madrasah-style educational institutions. A young woman, who resided in the home-based evacuation community, pointed out that Muslim parents with limited resources often send their children to the madrasah. Another young Maranao woman informant stated the need for educational reforms: “We really lack education. That’s what is limited in Marawi. There should be regulations on who teaches in the madrasah. It should not be whoever arrives from other countries and teaches. A process should be followed.”

Other FGD participants expressed their concerns about the recruitment of young people into extremist groups, such as ISIS.

A Maranao woman informant, who participated in the FGD with home-based IDP mothers, related her dismay when she learned about the involvement of pre-adolescent and adolescent boys in ISIS and its activities: “That (the siege) was when I saw that there were children involved in such activities. There were children, who were very young. There were those who were roughly 18 years of age, or even only 12 years. They were handsome. You would not think they would take part in such groups.” A young Maranao woman, who resided in the home-based evacuation community, also called attention to the involvement of children in criminality through extremist groups. As she asserted: “The criminal minds of children should be examined. ISIS members are so young and are already trained.”

Some informants called attention to the need for particular interventions to eliminate the threat of extremism. During the FGD with female youth at the home-based evacuation community, nearly half of the teenage girls and young women stated that education, poverty alleviation, and livelihood opportunities were necessary to lessen acts of violence committed by extremists.

3.8 Service Needs

The interviewees and FGD participants revealed that IDPs have multiple service needs. These include the need for food, financial resources, education and support services for students, livelihood opportunities, health care, psychosocial services, and housing.

Some informants mentioned that access to food, particularly that with nutritional value, was a crucial need among IDPs. A home-based IDP father mentioned that the DSWD used to distribute food packs three times a week, but this had been delayed, as of September 2017. In addition, a home-based IDP mother mentioned that the rice they had received was spoiled and caused stomach problems. Other parents and youth, be they at the home-based evacuation community or the traditional evacuation center, disclosed that their food often consisted of sardines; some had experienced receiving expired sardines or having allergic reactions to it. Another father, who resided at the traditional evacuation center, called attention to the gap between the donations they received and the needs of children: “They give coffee. The children need milk.”

The narratives of the youth and young adults, be they in the traditional evacuation center or in home-based evacuation settings, revealed that disruptions in the education of displaced students due to the conflict were commonplace. The majority of the youth claimed that education was one of their needs, yet that financial difficulties had multiple implications for their studies in terms of impacting their ability to transfer schools and to pay for the public transportation needed during their commute to and from campus. As stated by a young man at the home-based evacuation community: “It is hard to transfer (to another school) as a result of not having money.” In addition, more than half of the adolescent girls and young women at the traditional evacuation center and the home-based evacuation community mentioned that they stopped studying due to the siege. Although IDP students who had evacuated to Iligan City

could study for free in public schools, they had to cover their own transportation expenses; those who could not afford to pay the fare had to stop studying as a result. Some parents corroborated the accounts of the youth, in that they confirmed that they had difficulties in supporting the studies of their children.

In addition, at least one-third of adolescent girls, who resided in the home-based evacuation community, voiced their fear of being bullied upon transferring to other schools in Iligan due to the siege. They commonly mentioned anecdotal reports about the creation of a separate section for IDP students, labeled “Section *Bakwit*” (local parlance/Visayan slang for evacuee), in certain schools, which would lead them to be singled out and caused apprehensions on their part. At least four adolescent girls, who were likewise home-based evacuees, had been able to transfer to other schools, but admitted that they had their share of challenges as the siege dragged on. The inability to adjust to their new environment and frequent absences were among the issues they faced. One of the girl informants also disclosed that she had difficulties in expressing herself as a transferee.

Even those pursuing postgraduate degrees experienced disruptions in their studies. For instance, a young woman interviewee of mixed descent, who was teaching in Marawi and working on a master’s degree in language studies, admitted that the conflict not only led to the loss of her family’s home, but also affected her graduate studies. Meanwhile, a young Maranao woman, who resided at the home-based evacuation community and participated in the FGD, was a law school graduate who was preparing for the bar exam when the siege broke out. She had to forego her plans as a result: “I was supposed to take the bar. But it will not push through. All my books are at the war zone (note: site of her family’s residence). [My] credentials are there. When we escaped, we had only brought our clothes with us.”

The majority of adults and youth who participated in the FGDs also disclosed that livelihood opportunities constituted a major service need among IDPs. Islamophobia and discrimination led to barriers in the ability of Muslim-Maranao people to find work. For instance, a young man, who resided at a home-based evacuation community, described the difficulties faced by Muslim men such as himself in finding work: “No one accepts us at workplaces because we are Muslims. Muslims are prohibited from working in labor, ever since the Philippines came to be.” A home-based IDP father likewise asserted: “When looking for work, people are not accepted if they are Maranao.”

Some informants, who worked as duty-bearers, confirmed that livelihood was a key service need among IDPs, and that Muslim-Maranao people routinely encountered challenges in finding work due to the discrimination they experienced on account of their religion and ethnicity. One informant, who worked as the director of an NGO, called attention to the need to empower them, rather than making them dependent on dole-outs from the government, which was in opposition to the *marhatabat* of Maranao people. She voiced her support for livelihood opportunities that would enable Maranao IDPs to continue their work as traders, consistent with the historical social background of their ethnic group.

Health care also emerged as a paramount concern. During the FGDs with the parents and youth, more than one-third of the participants claimed that IDPs had common illnesses, such as: colds, cough, fever, and rashes, and needed the pertinent medicine for these. Some informants pointed out that some of these illnesses were related to their adjustment to the warmer weather in Iligan, as compared to the cooler climate in Marawi. One informant also mentioned that others had experienced hypertension—with fatal consequences, on occasion.

For some informants, whose family members had preexisting health issues prior to the siege, the inability to obtain the necessary treatment or resources, compounded by financial losses and the loss of livelihood opportunities, posed significant challenges. The experience of a 30-year-old Maranao woman, who resided in the home-based evacuation community, is a case in point. She and her family resided in the area known as the “war zone” in Marawi City. She claimed that she had managed her brother’s business before the conflict, but was left jobless due to the siege. She also served as the caregiver of her parents, who were both ill, in that her mother had had a stroke and her father had chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). She described the impact of the siege on the health of her parents, particularly her father, and their unmet needs: “It is hard for those who are ill. My father has an oxygen tank for maintenance. We left his apparatuses at home. Whenever the doctors have medical missions here, if we ask for medicine, they can’t give anything.”

Psychosocial services, such as stress debriefing, also constituted a service need among IDPs. At least one-third of the interview informants—some of whom had also been displaced in terms of their residence and/or their livelihood—were involved as staff or volunteers of a support group that provided psychosocial services, such as stress debriefing and counseling, and confirmed that such services were highly needed by IDPs from different social backgrounds, such as those from low-income communities and even those who worked as professionals in various fields. One informant, who worked as a guidance counselor, also confirmed the mental health issues of some IDPs in the aftermath of the siege. In fact, before she was interviewed, she had just accompanied spouses to a hospital, where their two daughters were confined due to mental health issues that had either arisen or intensified as a result of the ordeal of living through armed conflict.

Echoing such sentiments, some IDPs disclosed during the FGDs that the siege had left them and/or other people traumatized. One of the mothers at the traditional evacuation center disclosed that the behavior of some IDPs had changed due to the siege: “They were traumatized. They talked to themselves.” Another mother at the evacuation center also admitted: “It is like I’m going crazy.” Other informants confirmed the need for psychosocial services, be it for themselves or their fellow IDPs.

The ability to find housing was another concern among IDPs, particularly those who identified as Muslims of Maranao descent. The aforementioned Maranao woman, who cared for her parents and attended to their health issues, also attested to the difficulties of Muslims such as herself in finding housing. She stated: “It is hard for them to find a place to stay here (in Iligan). We stayed in

a hotel first. We stayed there for more than 10 days. We looked around for housing. The problem is they don’t accept Maranao people (as tenants). They even increase the rent of the house. Good thing we were able to find a place here (in the home-based evacuation community). Until now, we’re staying put here.”

Echoing such sentiments, a young Maranao woman living in the same home-based evacuation community shared that they first rented a hotel room in Iligan—a common response of Maranao IDPs. However, the management advised them to leave after 2 weeks, claiming that the next guests had booked their stay in advance. As she recalled: “They came up with all sorts of reasons to make us leave.”

Another Maranao woman, who was likewise a home-based IDP, disclosed that she and her family also had difficulties in finding housing in Cagayan de Oro, another city located in Northern Mindanao, about 2 hours away from Iligan. As she stated: “In Cagayan [de Oro], we had a hard time finding [housing]. When they saw that it was a Maranao individual who inquired, they (the owners) said they would not accept Maranaos.”

3.8.1 Available Support Systems and Interventions and Nuances in Access to Services

By and large, the informants’ narratives pointed to common themes in the support systems and interventions available to them in the aftermath of the Marawi Siege. Family members, relatives, friends, and partners, among other significant networks, were immediate sources of support for those who had been displaced by the conflict. IDPs, particularly those in the traditional evacuation center, received services from the DSWD and NGOs deployed at the facility. Some home-based evacuees also relied on the assistance of NGOs, faith-based organizations, and support groups providing psychosocial services.

The account of the aforementioned woman informant, who had to forego the bar exam as a result of the siege (see [Section 3.8](#)), illustrates the impact of the assistance she received from multiple support systems, such as extended family members and NGOs. As she disclosed: “I am able to adjust little by little, with the help of my relatives in Manila. The NGOs have also helped a lot.” She also ended up getting a job with an NGO in Iligan City.

As for the family that had evacuated to Balo-i, Lanao del Norte province, the older of the two sisters initially received modest financial assistance from a volunteer at the women’s prison, where she had served her sentence. She also relied on her partner, whom she had met in prison and who earned a living through odd jobs at the penitentiary, for provisions, such as clothing and food. Her partner eventually sent her and her mother money for their airfare, which allowed them to relocate to Manila and nearby provinces for a time. Their relatives and friends also helped connect them with work opportunities.

Some fathers and youth, be they at the home-based evacuation community or the traditional evacuation center, disclosed that IDP families received assistance from the government. This took the form of cash-for-work initiatives. One representative per family was hired to sweep the premises for 10 days.

The informants' accounts also reveal nuances in the services received by residents in traditional evacuation centers, as compared to residents in home-based evacuation arrangements. Some interview participants, be these IDPs, duty-bearers, or both, alluded to the greater level of indigency of IDPs at the traditional evacuation center. That said, some informants also claimed that there were nuances in services received by IDPs at the evacuation center or in the level of prioritization given to them, based on such social locating factors as their religion and civil status. For instance, some youth informants mentioned that some donors chose the recipients of donations based on religion. One of the male youth informants, who resided at the evacuation center, asserted: "Some choose [beneficiaries]. Some Catholic donors only give donations to Catholics." Other informants disclosed that single adults were told they would be made to leave the evacuation center ahead of other groups of IDPs, which was a source of apprehension. As a young, unmarried man pointed out during the FGD at a traditional evacuation center: "I don't get the policy. If we're single, does it mean we no longer eat?"

Conversely, the majority of interviewees, who were home-based evacuees, claimed that residents in traditional evacuation centers received greater priority in terms of services. More than two-thirds of the parent-informants at the home-based evacuation community expressed similar views, in that they asserted that those in traditional evacuation centers received more priority in terms of assistance from the government. They claimed that they had limited opportunities, by comparison, in terms of their access to sources of livelihood that would enable them to pay for their expenses, such as rent, food, and other basic needs, as the siege dragged on.

The limited assistance given to home-based evacuees also emerged as a concern. Many home-based IDPs expressed this sentiment: "We are evacuees, too." While the belief in and practice of *marhatabat* in Maranao culture means it is more culturally and socially acceptable to stay with or take in relatives, the tradeoff is that home-based IDPs did not receive enough provisions and assistance for their basic needs, health care, and livelihood.

During the FGD with mothers at the home-based evacuation community in Illigan, one of the informants disclosed that home-based IDPs often received leftover donations from the evacuation center. Others mentioned that there was no schedule for the distribution of relief goods. One of the mothers asserted: "It is hard to get relief goods if you are a home-based evacuee. What is the difference between us and those in the evacuation center? All of us came from Marawi, anyway. We are *bakwit*, too. We also face hardships."

Another case in point is the situation of the family that had evacuated to Balo-i, Lanao del Norte. During the interviews, they disclosed the challenges they faced in their access to resources and social assistance. The younger of the two sisters acknowledged that she and her family were able to get resources, such as canned goods and rice, from the evacuation center near the family compound where they were staying. However, she maintained that they were not a priority due to their status as home-based evacuees. Her mother and her step-father disclosed that there were some days when the duty-bearers prioritized them because of their status as senior citizens. For her part, she disclosed that

she ended up having to fight with some duty-bearers to get a sleeping mat for herself and her five children shortly after their arrival from Marawi. Her oldest child, who was 11 years old at the time of the research, suffered prolonged illnesses and passed away in early February 2018. Her older sister disclosed that their family's limited financial resources impacted their ability to purchase his medicine on a regular basis and thus contributed to the young boy's demise.

3.8.2 Unmet Needs

The informants' accounts also indicate unmet needs of IDPs, which impacted their well-being and their ability to cope with their circumstances, especially during the prolonged siege. Some youth informants, be they residents of the home-based evacuation community or the traditional evacuation center, claimed that IDP students needed resources, such as transportation assistance, to allow them to continue their studies. At least four youth also expressed the need for scholarships and school supplies for IDP students. Meanwhile, the majority of informants, who were educators, also alluded to the need for support services for IDP students. One of these informants also called attention to ongoing need for teacher training in order to better equip educators with the ability to handle IDP students and their concerns.

The accounts of some youth informants also imply that psychosocial services, such as trainings on anger management, are highly needed. As mentioned in an earlier section, some youth informants at the home-based evacuation community and the traditional evacuation center claimed that parents were often angry in the aftermath of the siege. Others even disclosed that there were parents who "took their anger at the siege out on their children." It can be inferred that parents and other caregivers would benefit from interventions that provided training on anger management.

There is a need for livelihood assistance in both traditional evacuation centers and home-based evacuation communities. The director of an NGO voiced concerns about the creation of dependency in traditional evacuation centers through dole-outs, which goes against the *marhatabat* of the Maranao and their collective history as traders, who were self-sufficient despite their limited education. It is also crucial to address the limited options for livelihood in home-based evacuation communities. These interventions must consider the need to adopt culturally sensitive interventions that recognize the implications of their intersecting social positions on account of their race, ethnicity, religion, social class, and educational attainment.

Another constraint lies in the minimal support given to economically displaced people, in that there are no specific interventions to address their needs. Those who had been economically displaced often had to rely on their own resources, even as they supported other relatives or volunteered with organizations that assisted people who had been displaced by the siege. One of the economically displaced informants, who was a college instructor at a university in Marawi, asserted that the experience of displacement included not just those who had lost their homes due to armed conflict, but also those who had been displaced from their work or livelihood. Echoing such sentiments, another informant, also a college instructor at the same university, emphasized that she, too, was a *bakwit* (evacuee), due to her

economic displacement, even if other people did not consider her as such.

The unmet needs of some informants led to prolonged displacement, compounded by challenges in access to socio-economic resources. A case in point is the family that resided in a home-based evacuation community in Balo-i, Lanao del Norte province, in that its members ended up living in separate households for the next couple of months after they were interviewed due to concerns about financial resources and sources of livelihood. The younger of the two sisters, her husband, and her children remained at the single room they were staying in. After receiving money for their airfare, the older of the two sisters relocated to Metro Manila, accompanied by her mother, who wanted to ensure that she would not re-establish ties with friends who had influenced her involvement in illegal activity. She and her mother lived with her brother in Quezon City, one of the cities in the metropolis, for about 2 months. They engaged in buy-and-sell activities with their relatives and friends in Bulacan, a northern province located about 2 hours away from Manila. She moved to the province of Laguna, also located in the north, upon getting a job at a factory, but later returned to Lanao del Sur in 2018, shortly after her mother had moved back there and requested that she follow suit after her nephew passed away in February 2018. She then relocated to Manila for several months between 2018 and 2019; in November 2019, she left for Saudi Arabia to work as a domestic helper and has served as the breadwinner of her family since then. Her stepfather moved in for a time with some of his children from a previous marriage and passed away in 2019 due to multiple health issues.

Discrimination compounds the experience of prolonged displacement. During the interviews and FGDs, almost all the informants voiced misgivings about the Maranaos' experience of discrimination in finding rental units and work. For instance, the Maranao—and even residents of Marawi in general—are often stereotyped as troublemakers; men, especially those wearing religious clothing associated with *tabligh*, faced gendered stereotypes as extremists or sympathizers. Reliable housing and sustainable livelihood remain among the unmet needs of IDPs, especially those who identify as Muslims of Maranao descent, who continually experience discrimination due to their religion and ethnicity.

Numerous informants also voiced concerns about how there were no representatives from Marawi who were included in discussions about the rehabilitation of Marawi. Clearly, there is a gap in the inclusion of community stakeholders in government plans regarding the rehabilitation of Marawi. Other informants also expressed their desire for military personnel to undergo cultural sensitivity training so as to become more sensitive to the issues and needs of the Muslim and Maranao community. Some informants also claimed that the ongoing need for security was another crucial need to be addressed for the benefit of people displaced by armed conflict.

4 DISCUSSION

The lived experiences of the survivors of the Marawi Siege show that religious extremism and its consequences do not occur in a

vacuum, and attest to the complex historical structural forces that produced such conditions. This resonates with Juergensmeyer's (2017) cultural perspective on religious extremism, which recognizes that modern-day religious violence is inextricably linked to the use of religion as a justification to perpetuate violence throughout history, and to the specific cultural contexts of the social groups involved, as well as global social and political transitions in the current time period. This framework is vital in analyzing how deep-seated socio-cultural, economic, and political inequities in Philippine society, which began during the Spanish and American colonial eras and persisted in the subsequent postwar government administrations, altogether impacted the Muslim community and led to the alienation of the Bangsamoro people as religious and ethnic minorities in a predominantly Christian country such as the Philippines. Entrenched inequalities, particularly extensive histories of discriminatory social policies and land-grabbing practices at the expense of Muslims and indigenous peoples, produced the conditions that gave rise to ongoing tensions between Muslims and Christians—including the ethnic/ethnolinguistic groups allied with these religions. All these factors ultimately contributed to ethnic and religious conflict and the rise of the Muslim separatist movement and armed conflict in the southern Philippines. The peace agreements established between the government and former separatist organizations—often upon the advice of more moderate international entities that helped facilitate negotiations and convinced the latter to settle for autonomy, rather than the formation of a separate nation—have not precluded the growth of militancy and the formation of other groups that adopted extremist responses, with the support of international Islamist organizations—as exemplified by the Abu Sayyaf Group, which began as a faction of the MNLF, and the Maute Group, which included Abu Sayyaf commanders. All these ultimately contributed to the Marawi Siege. These trends exemplify Juergensmeyer's assertions (2017) about the particular cultural contexts of social groups involved in perpetuating religious violence, as well as the impact of global social and political developments that promote extremism.

The informants, such as duty-bearers involved in social services, peacebuilding, and development, and even community residents and professionals who had experienced displacement themselves, mentioned the impact of socio-cultural and political trends and economic disparities that could promote militancy and thus lure people into extremist groups, such as the Maute group and ISIS. Among the factors cited were the sense of alienation of the Muslim community due to poverty and religious and ethnic discrimination, the historic underrepresentation and exclusion of Muslim ethnic groups in public discourse and social policy, and the underdevelopment of Mindanao, particularly its conflict-ridden areas, due to the decisions and programs adopted by previous government administrations. Indeed, IDPs living in traditional and home-based evacuation settings, as well as some duty-bearers, claimed that the prolonged siege could lead to the emergence of the next generation of members of the Maute group and ISIS, especially with the portrayal of the military as the enemy on account of the

destruction of civilians' homes due to air strikes and the loss of valuables due to "clearing" activities. Some informants, such as educators, NGO staff, and development practitioners, expressed their concerns about extremists' possible utilization of recruitment tactics that frame the government as negligent or indifferent toward the plight of Filipinos; in the face of systemic marginalization, militant responses can easily be justified, and Islamist strategies appropriated as a religious duty. These trends resonate with Juergensmeyer's (2017) assertions about the underlying ideas that reinforce militancy and enjoin people to join extremist groups. This lends support to Juergensmeyer's cultural perspective on extremism, which emphasizes the particular world views and moral justifications of individuals and groups involved in religious militant activism. Other informants also disclosed the use of madrasah educational institutions and religious organizations at universities as fronts to promote Islamist discourse and extremist ideologies and recruit children and youth accordingly. This observation illuminates the ideas that reinforce religious militancy and enjoin people to join extremist groups, such as the Abu Sayyaf and Maute groups and ISIS, despite existing efforts of the government and civil society to promote peace and to reintegrate former combatants. Such dynamics resonate with Juergensmeyer's (2017) assertions about the ideas and communities of support behind acts of extremist violence.

Juergensmeyer's cultural perspective on religious violence is useful in comprehending the underlying socio-cultural, economic, and political factors in the perpetuation of extremist violence at the expense of civilians, as well as the constraints in its resolution. His framework can also be used to analyze how people impacted by armed conflict exercise their agency in various ways in response to extremism—be it through retaliation involving culturally-ingrained responses such as *rido*, which would target relatives of extremists, on the one hand, or through culturally-sensitive interventions centered on education, information dissemination, livelihood opportunities, volunteerism in psychosocial support services for IDPs, and other similar inclusive mechanisms to eradicate extremist violence, on the other. Granted, the majority of parents and youth disclosed during the FGDs that the threat of *rido* was inevitable upon the return of IDPs to Marawi. At the same time, more than half of the interviewees, who were educators in such fields as history, communications, sociology, Filipino/Philippine studies, English Language Studies, and psychology, and practitioners in counseling, social services, development, and peace-building, recognized the historic oppression and ongoing racialized, religiously-stratified, and class-based inequalities impacting the Muslim community in the Philippines. Others were even involved in educational and information dissemination initiatives to raise awareness about these issues. As such, they asserted the need to explore solutions that would recognize the root causes of armed conflict in Mindanao and that would dispel stereotypes about the conflict being about religion, rather than unequal access to socio-economic resources such as land, and political representation. This, in their view, was an alternative to hardline response to structural violence that would ultimately perpetuate a vicious cycle of social marginalization and extremist-led armed conflict.

The narratives of the informants also illustrate varied experiences of gender-based violence against civilians in times of armed conflict. According to the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, gender-based violence encompasses, but is not limited to: 1) physical, sexual, and psychological violence between intimate partners and within the family; 2) physical, sexual, and psychological violence in the general community; and 3) physical, sexual, and psychological violence perpetuated or condoned by the state, wherever it occurs (United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2003). The informants' experiences of gendered violence mainly fit under the categories of community-based violence and state-sponsored violence, which constitute public settings. While the informants' accounts of incidents involving violence between and among family members and relatives, which constitute personal violence, were not disclosed frequently, these still have implications, and the possibility of the non-disclosure and/or underreporting of intimate partner and family violence cannot be discounted. In any case, the accounts of IDPs from Marawi City confirm that gender-based violence exists on a continuum from personal violence between and among people related to each other as intimate partners, family members, acquaintances, and strangers, to community-based and/or state-sponsored violence during war and conflict (Kelly, 1986; Radford and Stanko, 1996; United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2003; Lorber, 2005; Aulette and Wittner, 2011).

The experiences of the informants illustrate the interconnections between various private and public acts of violence. The incidents of intra-family violence at the traditional evacuation center—as evidenced by family members and relatives throwing objects at one another during heated arguments—among some IDPs, who had been displaced under very violent circumstances, are part of the same inequitable social structures that perpetuate the violence of armed conflict and extremism. The informants' accounts also reveal the links between various forms of public acts of violence. The specific acts of violence to which displaced women and men were vulnerable—such as women's risk for sexual harassment and rape, and men's risk of abduction, forced membership in extremist groups, harassment at security checkpoints and in Islamophobic communities, and punitive treatment by law enforcement and military personnel—and the common acts of violence impacting civilians of all genders—particularly in the form of unsolved killings under a militaristic regime, attacks by insurgents, and ongoing safety and security risks in conflict zones—reflect the larger culture of violence that circumscribes their lives. The experiences of IDPs from Marawi resonate with studies that frame the community as a site for numerous forms of gender-based violence, be it in institutions or public places, and the state as an agent in reinforcing and condoning gendered violence within and outside its borders during periods of civilian unrest and armed conflict (Enloe, 2000; United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2003; World Health Organization, 2006; Human Rights Watch, 2007). The different forms of personal, community-based, and state-sponsored gendered violence impacting the survivors of the

Marawi Siege confirm that violence functions as both an individual strategy for maintaining control in immediate and extended families, and a collective strategy to reinforce hierarchies based on social differences. These trends also resonate with studies that assert that gender-based violence is intertwined with the culture of violence used to maintain systems of oppression in different societies (Kelly, 1996; Steinem, 2004; Disch, 2009).

Violence against women during armed conflict has been reported in many countries (Wali et al., 1999; Marshall, 2006; Human Rights Watch, 2007). The experiences of violence among some women informants in this study, as well as the situations impacting the significant networks of other informants, illustrate that gendered violence can be expressed sexually. This especially impacts women displaced by armed conflict, who experience marginalization and vulnerability on account of their gender, as well as other intersecting social locating factors, such as religion and ethnic background. The experiences of some displaced women illustrate this trend. The degradation perpetuated through the sharing of spaces between women and men at evacuation centers and through the act of men looking at women at security checkpoints, among other behaviors, are forms of symbolic acts of gendered violence that go against Islamic and Maranao norms. The ordeal of Maranao women who were catcalled and subjected to unwanted sexual attention and sexualized comments and at security checkpoints, as well as the reports of rape perpetuated by extremists, as mentioned by some adult and youth informants and duty bearers, are a reflection of the ever-present threat of sexual victimization experienced by women, which is heightened in times of armed conflict—and a reflection of rape culture, which President Duterte, in effect, reinforced through his remarks—disguised as jokes, at that—about giving soldiers the license to rape women without being penalized while Mindanao remained under Martial Law as a result of the Marawi Siege (Al-Jazeera, 2017; Reuters, 2017; Selk, 2017). All these trends resonate with studies that assert that women's vulnerability to violence stems from living in a society characterized by gender inequality and other interrelated inequities. Women's experiences of and risk for various forms of victimization, particularly in times of armed conflict, also lend confirm that gendered violence is used to support a patriarchal system can be expressed sexually and informs the sexual terrorism to which women are vulnerable (Allen, 2009; Kaye/Kantrowitz, 2009; Sheffield, 2004). The various acts of violence perpetuated against women and girls throughout the Marawi Siege, which pose clear threats to their security and safety, are part of the patriarchal society that places them at risk for victimization in general on account of their gender. This supports research findings that indicate that the violence confronting women and girls in conflict zones is a reflection of the systemic violence in their daily lives (Wali et al., 1999; United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2003; Caiazza, 2004; Marshall, 2006).

At the same time, the narratives of other informants—particularly those who experienced various acts of state-sponsored and community-based violence, including those that impacted specific genders and those that transcended gender

boundaries—reveal that gender-based violence in times of armed conflict is not simply expressed sexually, but can involve the appropriation of other hierarchies aside from gender and sexuality. The experiences of those who directly experienced or were at risk for other acts of violence or whose significant networks encountered various forms of victimization that were not necessarily of a sexualized nature—such as altercations among IDPs, abduction, assaults, murders, forced membership in extremist groups, harassment during rescue operations and security checks, punitive treatment for infractions relating to the curfew, and the prolonged armed conflict itself—illustrate the extent to which gendered violence is not so much a sexually-motivated issue, as it is an aspect of power in a patriarchal system, which normalizes power and dominance over others (Sheffield, 2004; Johnson, 2009; Kaye/Kantrowitz, 2009). The violence of armed conflict and displacement, the gender-specific and common acts of violence impacting women and men, and the persistence of multiple threats to their security and safety, regardless of their gender and other interrelated aspects of their social background, were among the primary forms of violence against IDPs that illustrate how acts of state-sponsored and community-based violence, to which the informants were exposed, stem from disparities in their social statuses and access to power.

The literature indicates that militarism and militarization intensify other forms of gender-based violence (Enloe, 2000; Caiazza, 2004; Marshall, 2006). The experiences of some informants—and in the case of others, their significant networks—are no exception to this trend, in that they illustrate how militarism and militarization aggravate civilians' risk for gendered violence in times of armed conflict. Studies show that militarism depends on the creation of an adversary deemed the "other" by constructing distinctions between people, ethnic groups, nations, and so forth, and portraying the "other" as inferior to justify its subordination and punitive treatment (Marshall, 2006). This trend is reflected in the incidents reported by some informants during the interviews and FGDs, wherein military personnel demonstrated Islamophobia and racism in their behavior toward Muslim-Maranao civilians—women and men alike, particularly at security checkpoints. Yet at the same time, the informants—and indeed, residents of other cities and municipalities near Marawi—expressed their belief in the need for the military to ensure people's safety throughout the siege, as well as in its aftermath. This resonates with studies that assert that militarism is so prevalent and ingrained in social life, such that people regard it as normal and necessary (Enloe, 2000; Caiazza, 2004; Disch, 2009).

Militarization in Marawi City, as well as nearby cities and municipalities to which civilians evacuated, affects IDPs in various ways on account of their gender and other interrelated social locating factors. In terms of its impact on women in the aftermath of the siege, the narratives of the informants indicate that militarization leaves women—particularly those belonging to marginalized communities—even more vulnerable to various forms of victimization and mistreatment. This trend is evident in various incidents reported by some women and girls, all of

whom identify as religious and ethnic minorities, during the interviews and FGDs. Their experiences included: verbal abuse and racist, Islamophobic comments at the hands of military personnel during rescue operations; sexual harassment and the violation of religious and ethnic cultural norms prescribing gendered behavior and interactions at security checkpoints; and the close encounter with death of a mother who worked as a tricycle driver under Martial Law. The aforementioned encounters impacted women who were Muslims, of Maranao descent or of mixed descent but culturally affiliated with the Maranao community, and from low-income or working-class backgrounds, thereby illustrating the oppression of women on account of their religion, ethnicity, and social class. Other informants' accounts of the abduction of women and the rape of women hostages, regardless of religion, at the height of the standoff between extremist fighters and the military, also illustrate women's vulnerability to gender-based violence and sexual victimization in times of armed conflict and militarization. The accounts of shared spaces between women and men in evacuation centers—a violation of Islamic and Maranao norms—functions as a form of symbolic violence and as a risk factor that could engender other acts of gendered violence, such as sexual harassment. These trends lend support to research that claim that women in conflict zones often endure sexual violence by enemy and “friendly” forces alike (United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2003; Human Rights Watch 2007). Sexual assault and other forms of victimization at the expense of women are often a part of war and conflict. Indeed, the rape joke cracked by President Duterte after declaring Martial Law in Mindanao reflects the imminent threat of using sexual violence—including rape—as a weapon of war (Al-Jazeera, 2017; Selk, 2017). Reports of sexual harassment and rape, which victimized young women in evacuation centers, also attest to this trend (Beltran, 2019). In many cultures, women are treated as extensions of their men. This applies to the Philippine setting. Violence against women is thus weaponized against the communities and social groups to which they belong based on their religion and ethnicity, and the men to whom they are related, who are likewise categorized as the “other” on the basis of these interrelated social positions. This resonates with research findings that assert that women's experiences of gender-based violence, particularly in times of armed conflict, also serve as a means of symbolically feminizing and degrading the enemy (Green, 1999; Marshall, 2006; United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2007).

As for men displaced by the Marawi siege, the impact of militarization on their risk of gendered violence is evident in their risk for specific acts of violence, not only by extremist fighters, but also by uniformed personnel. The narratives of some informants confirm that men, be they civilians or those working in uniformed positions, could be targeted by extremists for abduction and forced membership, as a way of retaliating against the military. At the same time, men can experience more punitive treatment—which is often impacted by racist and Islamophobic views—at the hands of duty-bearers, including the military and law enforcement. Other informants' accounts reveal the greater risk for murder experienced by men, be they Muslims or

Christians. These dynamics lend support to research findings that claim that men's socialization into a culture of aggression and violence also bears specific consequences in times of militarization, in that they are often forced to fight in times of war and conflict and are killed more often (United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2007). This lends support to research findings that assert that militarization increases many forms of violence against men and women, who are impacted in specific ways due to their gender, as well as other interconnected social locating factors (Enloe, 2000; Goldstein, 2001).

Crenshaw's (1991) intersectionality theory is helpful in analyzing how interconnected social positions shape IDPs' experiences of gender-based violence and militarization in times of armed conflict. The literature emphasizes that gender hierarchies intersect with other markers of difference, such as sexuality, race and ethnicity, religion, nationality, social class, age, and dis/ability status (Davis, 1983; Davis, 1984; Lerner, 1986; Collins, 1990; Radford and Stanko, 1996; hooks, 2000; Rothenberg, 2006). While gender norms and behaviors circumscribe people's lives, the links between gender and social class ethnicity, religion, nationality, and age, among other social locating factors, informed the nuances in the informants' exposure to and firsthand experiences of gendered violence, be these perpetuated by extremist groups or duty-bearers from the government. Granted, the narratives of IDPs illustrated common risks of victimization that impacted women and men, such as attacks on civilians by insurgents at the height of the siege, security and safety threats stemming from the prolonged armed conflict, and physical violence among residents—often related to one another as family members and relatives—at the traditional evacuation center, which was known to accommodate more indigent evacuees, in many cases. In any case, intersectionality explains why displaced women, particularly those who identifying as racial, ethnic, and religious minorities and those with limited socioeconomic resources, were at risk for acts of violence that reflected gender, sexual, racial, ethnic, and religious inequality and/or that took advantage of material and economic hardship due to displacement—as evidenced in the sharing of spaces among women and men at the evacuation center despite religious and culturally-specific gender norms prohibiting such practices, and the sexual harassment, racism, and Islamophobia perpetuated by military personnel at security checkpoints against Muslim-Maranao women, who are religious and ethnic minorities in a predominantly Christian postcolonial nation such as the Philippines. Intersectionality is also evident in the patterns in the specific acts of violence that targeted displaced men from specific backgrounds, in terms of their religion, race and ethnicity, and occupation—as illustrated in the abduction of Muslim-Maranao men for the purpose of forced membership in extremist groups, the harassment and bullying of Muslim-Maranao men by civilians and by military personnel at security checkpoints, the greater risk of death among Muslim-Maranao men due to *rido* that numerous informants anticipated upon the return of IDPs to Marawi City, the perpetuation of physical and emotional abuse and public humiliation against men and boys—regardless of their religion and ethnicity—for missing the curfew imposed under Martial Law, and the assault and

murder of men belonging to both Islamized and Christianized ethnic/ethnolinguistic groups—and the greater risks for such acts among Christian men and among both Muslim and Christian men working in law enforcement and security, on account of their status as the “other,” be it in terms of religion and/or occupation, in the eyes of insurgents. The informants’ experiences confirm that gender-based violence cuts across different social backgrounds, but also indicate that the intersections in people’s social locating factors influence the specific forms of victimization and violence that they experience (Collins, 1990; Hester et al., 1996; United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2003; Disch., 2009; Sabo, 2009).

An intersectional perspective also sheds light on the nuances in people’s lived experiences of militarization in times of conflict. The survivors of the Marawi Siege identify with minority ethnic/ethnolinguistic and religious communities in the southern Philippines—be these Islamized or Christianized groups, depending on whether their ancestors historically embraced Islam or converted to Christianity—in a postcolonial, predominantly Christian, and Metro Manila-centric society such as the Philippines and thus receive limited attention from mainstream social and political institutions. As the majority of them identified as Muslims of Maranao descent, they experienced structural and institutional sexism, racism, and/or religious inequality, perpetuated by the likes of military personnel. This is evident in the vulnerability of Muslim women—be they of Maranao descent or of mixed descent but culturally affiliated with the Maranao community through marital and family ties—to racialized and Islamophobic verbal abuse during rescue operations and to sexual harassment and other gender- and culturally-insensitive behaviors, such as being looked at and/or being forced to remove their hijab, during routinized security checks. Muslim-Maranao men are also not above the risk of mistreatment by military agents, who subject them to harassment and false accusations of extremist support and involvement. In addition, militarization is also used to justify the infliction of punitive sanctions and violent forms of punishment on men, regardless of religious and ethnic identity, on the pretext of reinforcing such policies as the curfew as part of the imposition of Martial Law under a militaristic regime. The informants’ narratives also illustrate how militarization also amplifies other security and safety threats across gender boundaries, such as unsolved killings of civilians in areas outside the “war zone” and in non-combative circumstances, and the impunity of people responsible for the theft and looting of homes on the pretext of “clearing” operations during the Marawi siege. These dynamics resonate with research findings on how militarization intensifies many forms of violence against women and men, who are impacted in specific ways due to their gender, as well as other intertwined social locating factors (Enloe, 2000; Goldstein, 2001).

The vulnerability of IDPs to gender-based violence and militarism cannot be isolated from structural inequalities affecting ethnic and religious minority groups in a historically underserved region in the southern Philippines. Intersectionality is also reflected in the informants’ pathways to evacuation and service needs, their access—or lack thereof—to safety nets,

resources, and support systems. Multiple, overlapping inequalities due to social class, racial, ethnic and religious identification, and gender, among other social locating factors, contributed to the informants’ experiences of multiple vulnerabilities and shaped their access to resources and safety nets—or lack thereof—in the face of armed conflict and displacement. The informants’ ethnic background and religious identity are interconnected with their socio-economic status, given the consequences of historical structural and institutional dynamics on the relative social statuses of Islamized and Christianized ethnic/ethnolinguistic groups. Their access to resources and services varied according to their racial, ethnic, and religious identity and social class, relative to their educational attainment and occupation. Those from low-income or working-class communities faced even greater vulnerabilities, given their limited support systems and safety nets. Muslim-Maranao informants were also at a greater risk for discrimination in housing and livelihood opportunities because of entrenched stereotypes and historical animosities between the Christian majority and the Muslim community as both religious and ethnic minorities in the context of a postcolonial nation such as the Philippines.

The majority of the informants asserted that Marawi City suffered greater devastation and damage, in that the entire city was bombed, as compared to other conflict-ridden areas in the southern Philippines, such as Zamboanga City, where a siege perpetuated by insurgents in 2013 conflict damaged coastal villages, but not the entire city (Sinapit, 2013; OCHA, 2014). Yet they pointed out that they—especially home-based IDPs—received limited assistance from the government, even with the geographic dispersion of displaced people from Marawi across different regions of the Philippines. Some informants claimed the lower numbers of residents in traditional evacuation centers in the cities of Iligan and Cagayan de Oro and other municipalities in Northern Mindanao—in stark contrast to the situation in Zamboanga, where most IDPs resided at evacuation centers, which were often congested, before relocating to transitory sites—might have created the impression that displaced people from Marawi were not as indigent. Given the cultural role of humor in the Philippine context, other informants joked about Maranao displaced people being more “classy” (*sosyal*, in Filipino parlance) in the sense of staying in hotels or at rented apartments and houses, rather than evacuation centers. In any case, the trends in the pathways to evacuation and living situation of the survivors of the Marawi Siege are shaped by intersecting social locating factors, such as ethnicity, religion, and social class; the role of cultural norms, such as the Maranao value of *marhatabat*, in influencing people’s pathways to evacuation and even in determining feasible practices in the distribution of aid to IDPs must not be overlooked.

Intersectionality is present in the gender and cultural norms surrounding the expected responses and coping mechanisms of survivors of the Marawi Siege, and thus informed how they dealt with or were expected to handle their experiences of gendered violence. For instance, due to Maranao cultural taboos, women were constrained from openly sharing any experiences they had of domestic violence, as these matters were typically discussed

and resolved only internally, within the family, as much as possible. Meanwhile, among Maranao young men, who had experienced intense forms of violence, such as physical violence and humiliation by law enforcement or witnessing the murder of peers, they were expected to simply carry on, given culturally-ingrained gender norms that discouraged men from showing any signs of weakness and vulnerability, consistent with mainstream, Western-influenced standards of hegemonic masculinity (Sabo, 2009). Finally, Maranao cultural norms, which impacted women and men alike, commonly discouraged people from openly displaying emotionality and distress despite intense experiences, such as armed conflict and displacement. Some informants thus disclosed that members of their significant networks, such as parents, often expected them to limit and contain the expression of their frustrations and grief over their displacement and the loss of their homes and belongings to their own families, and to simply carry on, in the interest of preserving their honor and dignity, even with the prolonged armed conflict.

5 CONCLUSION

This Paper Makes the Following Conclusions:

In terms of the socio-demographic characteristics of the informants, the interview participants were predominantly women ($n = 22$), while a smaller number ($n = 7$) were men. The informants were aged 22–65 years old, and the median age was 36. The majority (16) of the informants were single, while 12 were married, and one was divorced. About 11 out of 29 interview participants had children; the average number of children was two. The majority ($n = 19$) of the informants identified as Muslims and the remainder ($n = 10$) identified as Christians. The interview participants identified with minority Islamized and Christianized ethnic/ethnolinguistic communities in the Philippines. The majority ($n = 15$) identified as Maranao, an Islamized ethnic group, and the remainder were affiliated with Christianized ethnic groups ($n = 9$) or were of mixed descent ($n = 5$). The majority of the interview participants had completed professional or postgraduate degrees in various fields ($n = 13$) and a significant number ($n = 12$) were college graduates; the remainder had a high school education ($n = 3$) and elementary education ($n = 1$). As for the FGD participants, the majority likewise identified as Muslims and of Maranao descent, while a smaller number identified as Christians, of Visayan descent. The FGD participants were predominantly from low-income and working-class backgrounds. The majority of them had limited educational attainment; the only exceptions to this trend were youth and young adults who were still studying or pursuing professional degrees.

There were two common pathways to evacuation among IDPs from Marawi. These included residing in traditional evacuation centers and home-based evacuation arrangements. Ethnic cultural norms, as well as the kinship obligations that come with it, played a role in determining the residence of IDPs in traditional evacuation center or home-based evacuation arrangements. As most of the informants are of Maranao descent or are culturally aligned with the Maranao community, they embraced the ethnic cultural belief

and practice of *marhatabat* (honor or pride), which informed their response to displacement. The need to maintain honor and dignity, not only on an individual level, but on a familial or clan-based level, informed the decision of many Maranao IDPs to opt for home-based evacuation arrangements and to take in any relatives who needed a place to stay, rather than letting them live in an evacuation center, as part of culturally-specific extensive kinship obligations and the broader cultural practice of protecting the honor of one's family and clan.

As displaced people, the informants were vulnerable to safety and security risks, particularly multiple acts of violence at the height of the Marawi Siege. They had firsthand experiences of gendered violence—or the threat thereof—in the context of public settings, in the form of community-based violence and state-sponsored violence in times of armed conflict. The perpetrators included extremist fighters belonging to the Maute group and ISIS, military and law enforcement personnel, and in some cases, community residents. Other informants mentioned acts of violence that occurred within the private sphere, such as personal violence in the form of altercations among family members and relatives at the evacuation center and fights between couples and between parents and their children; however, these were not discussed as much. Aside from the common forms of violence affecting women and men who had been displaced by the siege, particular forms of gender-based violence impacted women and men who had been displaced by the conflict. Multiple, intersecting inequalities shape the nuances in the experiences and risk for gendered violence among IDPs from Marawi. Their gender intersected with other social locating factors, particularly race, ethnicity, and religion, and shaped the patterns of violence that they experienced accordingly. Militarism and militarization amplified their experiences of gender-based violence in times of armed conflict. The informants' interconnected social positions, such as their gender, religion, race, and ethnicity, was linked to their specific encounters with militarization and their risk for particular forms of gender-based violence.

The informants' experiences illustrate that gender-based violence exists on a continuum from personal to community-based and state-sponsored violence. The actual or threatened violence that people confront in their daily lives, especially in conflict zones, reflects the violence perpetuated within their communities and at the state level. Moreover, cultural factors shaped people's experiences of and risk for gender-based violence and militarization in conflict zones.

The vulnerability of the IDPs to gender-based violence was amplified by structural inequalities affecting ethnic and religious minority groups in an underserved region in the southern Philippines that had historically received limited public attention and institutional support. Their access to resources and services varied according to their racial, ethnic, and religious identity and social class, relative to their educational attainment and occupation; those from low-income or working-class communities were especially vulnerable, given their limited support systems and safety nets. Intersectionality was apparent in their experiences of gender-based violence, mainly in public settings. Their accounts reveal their experiences of and risk for violence on account of the links between their gender and other

social locating factors, such as their race and ethnicity, religion, social class, and age, in the context of a postcolonial nation where the dominant culture often framed them as the “other.”

The informants expressed mixed sentiments about the imposition of Martial Law in Mindanao. While the majority viewed Martial Law as being “needed” for people’s peace of mind and safety throughout the siege, they expressed their opposition to its extension. Some informants asserted that Martial Law under the administration of President Duterte was different from and less repressive than that under the administration of former president Marcos. Others also voiced their misgivings about the use of Martial Law as a front for discriminatory practices, such as harassment and unnecessary searches, that targeted the Muslim community, and also an excuse to commit rape, murder, and other acts of violence and criminality with impunity.

The informants’ narratives also confirm that IDPs have multiple service needs. These include the need for food, financial resources, education and support services for students, livelihood opportunities, health care, psychosocial services, and housing. There were common themes in the support systems and interventions available to IDPs. Family members, relatives, friends, and partners, among other significant networks, were immediate sources of support for those who had been displaced by the Marawi Siege. IDPs at the traditional evacuation center received services from the DSWD and NGOs. Some home-based evacuees also relied on the assistance of NGOs, faith-based organizations, and support groups providing psychosocial services. The limited assistance given to home-based evacuees emerged as an issue, as this group of IDPs asserted that they did not receive enough provisions and assistance for their basic needs, health care, and livelihood and were often expected to rely on their own resources.

The informants’ accounts also reveal multiple unmet needs of IDPs, which impacted their well-being and their ability to cope with their circumstances, especially during the prolonged siege. Some of these unmet needs include: resources and support services for students in the form of transportation assistance, scholarships, school supplies for IDP students, and other pertinent support services, and teacher training on the needs of IDP students. Psychosocial services, such as counseling and training on anger management, culturally-sensitive forms of livelihood assistance, are also highly needed. Economically displaced people face unmet needs due to the lack of interventions that were specific to their circumstances. Adequate representation by residents and stakeholders of Marawi also emerged as unmet need in the area of government planning meetings and community-wide discussions concerning the rehabilitation of Marawi City. The need for cultural sensitivity training among military personnel constituted another unmet need of IDPs. Finally, the ongoing need for security was framed as a crucial need among the survivors of the Marawi Siege.

5.1 Recommendations

This paper offers the following recommendations: Firstly, community-based, culturally sensitive interventions are needed

to address possible increase of sympathizers of the Maute group/ISIS due to prolonged siege. The sense of not knowing who the “real enemy” is affects both children and adults alike. Secondly, community-based, culturally sensitive interventions are needed to address threat of *rido* upon the IDPs’ return to Marawi. Thirdly, sustainable economic, health care, and educational interventions for IDPs are crucial. Lastly, the inclusion of home-based evacuees and economically displaced residents in interventions should be incorporated in the government’s plans for IDPs.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusion of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by De La Salle University University Research Coordination Office. Written informed consent to participate in this study was provided by the participants’ legal guardian/next of kin.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication. This article makes a substantial contribution to the study of the experiences of armed conflict and gendered violence within an under-served ethnic and religious minority community in the southern Philippines.

FUNDING

The author wishes to acknowledge De La Salle University, Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation, for providing some funds for this project through the Research Leadership Training Program Seed Grant, received in June 2017.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to acknowledge Sharon Bulaclac, for her assistance in data-gathering, in referring her to informants, and for accommodating her during her field work for this study.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fhumd.2021.703193/full#supplementary-material>

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