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**FLOWERS AMONG THORNS: LIFE NARRATIVES OF OUTSTANDING FEMALE
CADETS IN THE PHILIPPINES**

A Thesis
Presented to the Faculty of
College of Graduate Studies and Teacher Education Research
Philippine Normal University
Taft Avenue, Manila

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Bachelor of Science-
Master of Arts in Psychology and Counseling

MA. GELENE S. GALINDEZ

December 2020

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis entitled “**FLOWERS AMONG THORNS: LIFE NARRATIVES OF OUTSTANDING FEMALE CADETS IN THE PHILIPPINES**” prepared and submitted by **MA. GELENE S. GALINDEZ** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Bachelor of Science-Master of Arts in Psychology and Counseling Straight Program** is hereby recommended for approval and acceptance.



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DEDICATION

This humble piece of work is dedicated to my parents, Pedito and Helen Galindez, who have always been my source of strength and inspiration. Without them, none of my success would be possible.

May all the glory be ascribed to God!

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ABSTRACT

Name : Ma. Gelene S. Galindez

Title of the Study : Flowers Among Thorns: Life Narratives of Outstanding Female Cadets in the Philippines

Key Concepts : Outstanding female cadets; military; male- dominated profession; life narratives

Degree : Bachelor of Science-Master of Arts

Specialization : Psychology and Guidance Counseling

Adviser : Dr. Armina B. Mangaoil

Military is identified to be masculine out of all other professions. This study aimed to describe the significant stories of outstanding female cadets who graduated as part of their batch's top ten (10) in a military academy. The present study utilized the life narratives research method to explore the life journey and stories of outstanding female cadets in a male-dominated profession. Interviews either in person or via phone call and video conference were used to gather data from the participants. Findings displayed the significant stories of outstanding female cadets towards success. The present study also dwells on the motivations of outstanding female cadets, as well as the challenges they encountered in entering the military academy. The coping processes of outstanding female cadets in dealing with their challenges also emerged. Future researches may further highlight the experiences of women in other professions identified to be dominated by men.

CHAPTER I

The Problem and Literature Review

Background of the Study

The soaring involvement of women in law enforcement challenges the notion of the military force as a job intended only for men. Historically, work has been defined by gender. According to a report done by Asian Development Bank (2013), the gender stereotyping of professions generated barriers to women's entry, which resulted in occupational separation by sex. The presence of physical risks supports a culture of masculinity, expecting male military officers to display a dominant image over women. Women in the military in the earlier times supported total war efforts by carrying out non-combat responsibilities (Santiago, 2008) which enabled combat soldiers to stay healthy on the front lines. However, Women's Rights movement continued to persist and fought for equality in the workplace which carved out openings for women in the political arena, higher education, and finally, in military services. These changes in the role of women in the military granted women access to the service academies, also considered monumental, for they could achieve officer status, positions of leadership, and authority to branches of the military.

Outstanding female cadets refer to the women in military academies who have managed to graduate with flying colors; as part of their batch top 10 graduates. Deliberately, the success of women into greater access for military service academies and education also required them to have undergone training and development programs. These activities have necessitated women to perform drills and exercises that were usually designed for and done by males in the military academies. Even though challenged by the presence of physical risks and

an environment evidently known as being dominated by males, these women have managed to enter military academies and graduate as part of their batch's outstanding cadets. This journey of women aims to showcase a breakthrough, of how military service is not a matter of gender, and that physical strength is not a disadvantage for women to finish with favorable and successful outcomes.

Lately, stories and discussions about the empowerment of women have invaded a lot of countries all around the world. It has become one of the hottest and relevant trends that has encouraged a massive number of people to become involved. As mentioned by Mehta and Sharma (2014), the notion of empowerment has been of equal prominence and standing to both men and women. The concept of partaking power is not an area that is considered unique to men or women only but rather, it is a concept that is flaunted by all. However, despite all these facts that have surrounded the realm of society, the position of empowerment in most aspects has been defined by gender, issues and studies on gender stereotypes still has continued to trail, especially to women.

Gender roles stereotypes were not established overnight (Tarrayo, 2014). Gender roles have been considered to be significantly part of every individual's life starting at birth (Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000). Parents tend to raise their children and conform them to normalized functions and roles based on their respective genders. For example, girls have been incorporated with toys such as dolls, cooking sets, while boys are with toy cars, guns, etc. With these, as children grow up, they also tend to incorporate their chosen disciplines only intended for their gender as influenced by the society, presence of media, and culture. Therefore, as a result, women who enter career paths and workplaces which have been considered to be male-

dominated over the years have become an issue to many and a challenge to the existing stigma of gender stereotyping.

Nowadays, the majority of women have existing and decent jobs in the same environment where men do. Despite working together with the opposite gender, the underlying and undying stigma and differences still occur between men and women wherein, most of the time, women experienced violence and discrimination with regards to their gender (Deguma, Peteros, Case, & Igot, 2018). As an example, according to a report done by Albert, David and Vizmanos (2017), in the Philippines, the evidence of equality in the promotion of women in leadership positions in industry has been limited to supporting roles. The proportion of men and women has fallen when it comes to corporate and management positions, where men have the upperhand. There has also been a gap in wages. Occupations with a higher proportion of male workers provide better compensation to men than women (Albert & Vizmanos, 2017). As a result, numbers of organizations and advocates have done a series of movements to fight for empowerment. Some of the organizations include Association for Women's Right in the Development, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Women's International Zionist Organization, International Women's Health Coalition, and in the Philippines, gender advocates have unceasingly lobbied and pushed for the passage of laws concerning women (Dator-Bercilla, n.d.) such as Philippine Commission on Women (PCM), GABRIELA National Alliance of Women's Organizations in the Philippines, Coalition against Trafficking in Women-Asia Pacific, and many more. The Philippines, as one of many countries which have also been striving to empower women, has implemented the Republic Act No. 9710 also known as Magna Carta of Women. The Republic Act of 9710 or Magna Carta of Women is a comprehensive law which seeks to eliminate discrimination against women by

recognizing and uplifting their rights, especially to those who are in a marginalized sector as stated in the 1986 Philippine Constitution.

Inopportunately, even though these movements have continued to pursue and fight for the recognition of women, the existence of gender roles since time immemorial still, has prohibited the total evolution of gender-biased expectations towards women in the society; especially in workplaces. Several studies have shown issues wherein women, often, have not been able to ascent the hierarchical ladder (Katila & Eriksson, 2013). What has been happening for most is that women cannot break through the glass ceiling; an unseen yet unreachable barrier which restrains women towards advancement and promotions. According to Eagly et al. (2000), the definition of gender based on biological or sexual differences influenced the employers to have different and distinct expectations for men and women. Therefore, if workplaces insist on structure this way, women will continue to be confronted with gender stereotypes and various expectations to their roles.

It has been of great interest for the researcher to explore the life narratives of female cadets who graduated as part of their batch's top ten (10) in a military academy for the past five (5) years. Several studies have recommended to conduct comprehensive research exploring the success of women in the military and the effect of military training and programs to them. To fill these gaps, the utmost concern and curiosity of the researcher to dwell on this area has been rooted on the excellent performance of these female cadets to successfully rule the military ground despite the existing issues and nuances that challenge the notion of women to showcase their potentials in a male-dominated discipline such as military force. This is also

to fill the gap on the absence of research that explores the life stories of outstanding female cadets using the qualitative research method.

The present study provides innovative and new information about women in the military service for they will reveal first-hand experience of how it is like to be in a profession dominated by men. Moreover, the pursuit for comprehensive knowledge and information change from time to time and so as the experiences and current status of women. Although several studies have shown achievements of women in career before, this study on the other hand, will deal with the recent challenges and adaptive mechanisms of the present generation of female cadets and the current system of military training. The present study will not only contribute to the knowledge of the participants and other subjects who are directly involved, but also to the whole community whereas, this study would embark stories of outstanding female cadets in a culture where some professions are believed to be excelled only by males.

Furthermore, it has been identified that the area of research lacks data on the experiences and perceptions of women in an environment that has been expected to be reigned by the opposite gender. Most of the research has been concerned on the experiences and development of a specific gender in settings that are determined also by the same gender. While there has been an increase and expansion in the representation of women in terms of culture and social identity, it has also been discovered that there is a lack of representation that extends to the area of research; facts and data themselves (Dator-Bercilla, n.d.). Therefore, the present study would provide a deeper understanding of the stories depicting the motivation, struggles, and significant experiences of outstanding female cadets who spent their years of learning in a male dominated space.

This study, emphasizing the outstanding female cadets of the country, which will become members of the military force entrenched in Courage, Integrity, and Loyalty, will pioneer the conduct of the topic in the Philippines, especially in the area of Psychology and Counseling. This will be relevant and unique because it targets female cadets who managed to graduate as part of their batch's honor roll considering that military academies has been enrolling a larger percentage of male cadets. The significance of conducting this study in Psychology and Counseling is to envision a new path of counseling and related programs that support and concentrate on the field concerning women. The present study will stimulate changes and improvements on the standing of women in the society, may it be in the workplace or in the academe.

This study utilizes an empirical process of data accumulation and analysis. The study has employed the right ethical conduct in research from the Publication Ethics Guidelines and follows the Code of Ethics Framework which includes respect, beneficence, justice, and intellectual property rights in accordance to the welfare of the participants and to articulate recognition for the previous researchers that have been used in the study. The study has exercised standards of objectivity, participants' right to informed consent, appropriate and ethical process of interview, debriefing, and data analysis.

The present study aimed to contribute to the practice of guidance counseling in the country. This study will strengthen the goals of guidance counselors to describe another side of women manifested by these female cadets so they could further provide help to a larger number of women who have issues that threaten their mental health caused by factors relating to their gender; stereotype, oppression, bias, discrimination, etc. The present study would also

contribute insights in Psychology and Guidance and Counseling which would support female students to pursue careers and disciplines that are also socially expected to be conquered by the opposite gender.

Literature Review

These studies provide an overview of the previous researches and studies that support and strengthen the present study. The succeeding literature are collections of research that describe career gender roles, women in the military, and how these variables are related to each other. The researcher also provided a synthesis of the included studies and literature to emphasize direction of knowledge and to yield rigorous understanding of the study.

Gender Roles

Culturally, sex, gender, or gender identity shape the way people learn, thrive, work and function in a society. However, sex and gender are identified as different concepts. Sex is a biological concept, primarily based on different sex characteristics while gender, on the other hand, is determined with reference to cultural and social differences. According to Blackstone (2003), gender roles were identified based on the variety of expectations which people and societies based on an individual's sex and each society's beliefs and expectations about different genders.

Gender roles may vary in different settings based on the culture and tradition they lived in. According to American Psychological Association (2012), gender pertains to the attitudes, feelings and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex; male or female. It was also added that behavior that is attuned with cultural expectations is denoted to

as gender-normative; behaviors that are viewed as discordant with these expectations establish gender non-conformity. Therefore, gender is a concept that individuals in the society develop through interaction and adaptation to their different environments. Gender roles were not only determined by the physical and biological factors but rather sociological and in a way, psychological.

Gender roles are also believed to be influenced starting from the point where children are born up to the peak where individuals already build their own understanding of gender identity. The inculcation of determined gender roles vary based on how a specific household perceived the difference within the roles of different genders. Gender roles and stereotypes in early childhood were influenced and reinforced by various parental attitudes and behaviors (Leaper, 2014). According to the study he conducted to explore parents' socialization of gender in children, such reinforcements slope down into five distinctive themes named language, expectations, task encouragements, types of play and materials, and role modelling among parents. He also identified that the involvement of fathers in childcare minimizes the plausibility of gender stereotypes among children for this type of role modelling teaches young children that roles for an adult male may encompass nurturing. The ascendancy of parents to hold influence on their children are different across various countries. The variation of parental beliefs and aspirations for males and females emerged into handling their children differently. A study conducted by Cabaero and Tabuga (2019) stated that at younger ages of women, compared to men, their labor force participation rate was lower. Women have a higher tendency of not engaging in education and employment which could be attributed to the traditional roles which limited them to pursue studies and develop their capabilities for employment.

According to a synthesis report governed by Plan International (2017), young girls and young boys aspired to different gender roles and attributions. Young girls were expected to spend more time at home because of domestic responsibilities directed to women, and as indicated by culture, such as learning household chores and roles as a maternal figure, and also for safety concerns. On the other hand, young boys were engaged to more activities done outdoors as their future was centered more on their role as economy provider. In a summary of research done in six countries, it was concluded that young boys are being prepared to become men with tapered, and culturally determined gender roles. It was mentioned by Kilsby (2014) that men were regarded as leaders and father-figures with protective responsibilities and were inclined to decision-making accountabilities. He also added that women were primarily identified as wives and mothers with caregiving duties which was consistent in the synthesis report done by Plan International.

A strong foundation on culturally bound gender roles were evident primarily on young children. Wherefore, although changes in gender roles were being considered all around the world, studies showed that the primary knowledge of every child regarding gender differences were determined by the culture and attitudes followed by their parents. However, as individuals grow up, their ideals of gender roles, the stereotypes and the norms could be influenced by added factors aside from parental attitudes. A study was conducted to 97 adolescents in Berlin to explore their reasoning on gender roles. It was found out that even in a hierarchical community, judgements about gender roles were considered to be conventions that can be judged based on the existing situation (Conry-Murray, 2009). This phenomenon indicated that an individual's perception of gender roles may be greatly influenced by parental factors

however, as an individual learned how to interact and impart the value of socialization, his/her ideals of gender roles may be changed.

As mentioned by Eagly (2009), gender roles can be both descriptive and prescriptive. The descriptive aspect dictated men and women to act based on what was typical to their sex characteristics, however, prescriptive aspect is more on what was likely desired or anticipated (Rudman & Glick, 2001). The stereotypic anticipation that women should be soft and warm was paired with a prescriptive evaluation that they should act warm and soft. Therefore, distinct sex characteristics of a specific gender should be parallel to how people should expect him/her to behave in a particular situation. However, gender roles and related attitudes turned out to be more fluid, changing dynamically over the life course in the context of concealing boundaries of family and work life (Oláh, Richter, & Kotowska, 2014). Such changes include the involvement of women in duties and responsibilities that were ought for men such as working and encroachments on career pathing that were also considered to be relevant only for men.

Although gender roles were shaped by different parental attitudes and cultural determination starting from childhood, and by the environment and peers in adolescents, such beliefs and anticipation about gender roles, attitudes and stereotypes continued to change. This change managed to pursue not just to modify social perspectives but also to wider facets such as occupational opportunities. This change also gave an opening to both genders to enter professions that were considered to be dominated by the opposite. In line with this, the Republic of the Philippines has mandated policies and standards in gender and development that are concerned with how the society ascribe roles and expectations to both men and women. A 30-year perspective plan called the Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development

(1995) pursues a society where full equality and development are acquired by both men and women. This framework also recognizes women as a disadvantaged group in the society and as a response, it has put a greater emphasis on women regarding opportunities in different sectors of the government even in electoral positions. Certain tools were also established to measure the gender-responsiveness of government agencies toward gender and development. Agencies may use Harmonized Gender and Development Guidelines (HGDG), established in 2004, which consists checklists for variety of agencies' major projects, and Gender Mainstreaming Evaluation Framework (GMEF) to assess the structural mechanisms in efforts to mainstreaming Gender and Development in the country. Gender and Development policies that seek to give equal opportunities to both men and women are present in different sectors including education, politics, justice, etc. However, despite the existing mandates to promote equality, some were still highly influenced by culture norms, limiting them to career opportunities inclined to their gender.

Career Decision-Making

In a life course of an individual, career choice is one of the most significant and hardest decisions for students especially to those who belong in the stage of adolescence. According to Ghuangpeng (2011), career decision-making could be identified as a process which explained the choices a person did when selecting a particular career or route of discipline. Career decision-making was based on two theoretical perspectives namely psychological and sociological perspectives. Psychological perspectives aimed to explain the process in which individuals make career choices based on their interests, attributions, personality, or the factors which influence how they respond to career decision-making. On the other hand, sociological

perspectives were career choice factors which are divided in two aspects; demographics and environment. Demographic aspects included socioeconomic status, nationality, and gender while environmental aspects include influences that result from the social interaction made by individuals. For example, in psychological perspective, an individual chose to enter a course related to teaching because it is his/her passion to teach and aid students in learning. Otherwise, an individual may choose to enter an institution which offers a lower tuition fee and other expenses compared to other universities or institutions.

Recent researches concluded relationships between psychological factors such as personality constructs and interest (Wright, Reardon, Peterson, & Osborn, 2000). Gottfredson, Jones, and Holland (1993) concluded that extraversion was supplementary with social and inventive interests, while investigative and artistic interests were associated with openness, and conscientiousness is associated with conventional interests. Such findings proposed that individuals' interest type are more likely to predict their career decision-making.

Moreover, career decision-making can also be approached through sociological perspective as mentioned by the previous research. Holland (1997) sustained the perspective as he mentioned in his theory that in order to make an operational career decision, other factors influence career choice, including age, gender, socioeconomic status, and family and educational background. For example, a study on the relationship between self-efficacy and career aspirations and trajectories among children with specific socioeconomic status discovered that children had a tendency to create career choices based on their perceived occupational self-efficacy rather than on their academic performance (Bandura et. al, 2001).

It was also found out that socioeconomic status makes a great contribution in children's career choices since it also influences parents' attributions toward their children thus making children choose a career path in which they consider as equal to their socioeconomic environment. Gender also plays an important factor in the career selection process. Career development was believed to begin during the childhood period and extends across the life course of an individual. This development continued to unfold as an individual was able to establish a sense of self at work, also known as establishing a vocational identity (Lee & Porfeli, 2012). These stereotypic notions led men and women to pursue careers that were believed to be appropriate for their gender; domestic duties for females and economic leadership for men. If the existence of gender-stereotypic notions continues to be unopposed as children reach their maturity, such notions make a remarkable influence on the career selection process of the individuals. Such researches proved that various factors influence an individual in terms of career decision-making process, may it be psychological or sociological. Career possibilities are infinite for the standards and requirements existing in the world change over time.

Military

The military forces or also known as armed forces are fundamentals established by the state with the sole purpose of national defense against external threats and internal conflicts as mentioned by the SSR Backgrounder. An individual in the military service comprised exposure in an inimitable culture with distinguishing social and behavioral norms (Burgo-Black, Brown, Boyce, & Hunt, 2016). It is a type of service which furnishes the life experience of an individual, personal growth, and social and self-development. A study was conducted to

determine how military service affects the life course of an individual. According to Settersten (2006), military experiences were shared by staggering proportions of individuals who were deployed to combat thus influencing their physical and psychological state in a long-term process. Engaging in military training does not only require an individual to be physically fit and ready but the process of training and development programs also encourages the individual to become emotionally and psychologically ready also.

A service member must adapt to preliminary training and program engrossed in the military lifestyle and culture as identified by Halvorson (2010). A person in the military service must learn the primary military courtesies and customs, policies on uniform, function of military chain command, and the values and ethics of the military that are important in the service process. Education and training programs were where military forces banked on to prepare service members (Fletcher, 2009) in executing challenging responsibilities; training to learn skills and knowledge desired to perform military tasks and education to learn apposite application of what was acquired through training (Kiszely, 2007). The preliminary training programs were standard programs. These programs were instituted regardless of the number of men or women who enrolled in the program. Fletcher (2009) also added that the Department of Defense of the United States substantially utilized Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI) and Simulation-Based Instruction for military training.

Evidently, military training requires good physique, body composition, and stamina to perform several difficult duty tasks. In a study piloted by Wilmoth, London, and Parker (2010), through exploring the health trajectories of men in military training, the former concluded that there was a relationship between military experience and good health. A service member's

physical fitness and capacity were precarious attributes for employment within military and public safety institutions and organizations (Jamnik, Gumienak, & Gledhill, 2013). Several researches showed various techniques in which physical strength between cadets can be enhanced. A study conducted by Drain et al. (2015) proved that basic military training can improve muscular strengths of recruits of Australian Army. He explored on Box Lift and Place as a baseline training program to improve muscular strength and endurance. Also, low muscular endurance was associated with increased risk in military training and military training often produced musculoskeletal training injury (Kaufman, 2000).

According to the study made by Molloy, Feltwell, Scott, and Niebuhr (2012), training-related injury risk affected the military force depressingly. It was also indicated in the former study that Physical Readiness Training was discussed to be helping military recruits in addressing training-related injuries however, it was also discovered that such injuries were more prone to recruits who have low fitness level regardless of the effectiveness of the fitness or building program. Military training did not only affect the physical composition of service members but it also influenced their psychological aspect. In a study made by Gold & Friedman (2000), he explored the effects of Cadet Basic Training (CBT) on the stress and coping mechanisms of new cadets and several upperclassmen of the U.S Military Academy. It was concluded that the military training they experienced brought stressors which included time management issues, anticipatory stress, sleep deprivation, incapacity to leadership role and issues with social interaction.

Another study by Jackson, Thoemmes, Jonkmann, Lüdtkke, and Trautwein (2012) was also conducted to determine whether military training affects the personality trait of the service

members. The Big Five Personality Traits were the focus of the study. The researcher utilized NEO Five-Factor Inventory to measure the performances of the participants. It was concluded that after the military training, personality traits of the participants developed into greater maturity. The difficulty and extremity of military training offered to service recruits are part of their prior knowledge. However, despite the adversity of training, duty, tasks, and responsibilities within the military service, a lot of individuals still choose to enter and join and undergo extensive training and education. A study conducted by Oh (1998) showed the common reasons of individuals in the United States on why they joined the military forces. For individuals without educational incentives entered military forces to boost their morale; they eyed only for skills and training program. On the other hand, financial benefit came first for individuals who eyed for educational incentives since there was a presence of Enlistment Fund to support them.

Furthermore, educational benefits, patriotism, and opportunity to travel (Vogelsang, 2013) were other motivations determined for military enlistment according to a separate study. It was indicated that motivations were divided into two; individual and institutional motivation. According to Griffith (2008), institutional motivation was more likely to occur in military enlistment however, only one, patriotism, out of two came out to be institutional and the others were considered to be individual, educational benefits and opportunity to travel. The individuals' choice to enlist can be determined by their tendencies and intention to enter. Bachman, Segal, Freedman-Doan, and O'Malley (2000) mentioned in their study that compared to men, women had a weaker relationship of propensity or tendencies and enlistment. However, through changing time, culture and society women also began to enter

military service with the same probable motivation as anyone else, the number of women in the military is undeniably increasing.

Gender and Career Decision-Making

The career decision-making process of an individual, as defined by Correll (2001) occurs throughout the life cycle as one makes a chain of decisions that have occupational consequences. An individual throughout his lifetime must undergo this process for it will take part in determining one's life track. Since career decision-making is considered a major turning point in every individual's life course, individuals, therefore, are encouraged to choose a career path that suits their interests as well as their skills and capabilities. This will be possible with the assistance and help provided through career pathing programs designed by the institution. Career guidance was widely acknowledged as an influential and operative method of linking the gap between education and the world of work (Ibrahim, et al., 2014; Ajufo, 2013). Career guidance counselors allow students to gain insight on what career path they want to pursue. They provide students a wide range of opportunities and body of knowledge for the students to further understand the significance of selecting a career that fits their interests and capabilities.

According to Correll (2001), in order for a person to continue a path towards a pursued career, he or she must learn a personal conception of herself or himself as competent at the tasks believed to be necessary for that career path. He also argued that these expectations for competence can be a component of cultural beliefs that deals with gender, gender beliefs that also result in gender stereotypes. Furthermore, Ridgeway & Correll (2000) also distinguished competence as a component which presents issues and misconceptions on gender equality. It

is assumed that different genders may execute varying levels of competency based on the distinguished characteristics inclined to differentiate and separate them from each other. Therefore, perceived differences in the competency of men and women were also believed to be contributing to the existence of discrimination and stereotyping not just in workplace but in many aspects of life. Since gender is utilized to identify between males and females, it can be denoted that there were a number of attributes that went with gender as defined by society. According to Jamabo et al. (2012), through interactions with different people starting from birth, interaction in childhood, peer pressure in adolescence, and gendered work and roles influenced by family, men and women were socially constructed to be different in behavior, attitude and emotions. In addition to that, sociologists progressively comprehended that gender can be a multilevel system that consisted not only of roles and identities at the individual level, but also comprised ways of behaving in relation to one another in interaction and cultural beliefs and dispersals of resources at the macro level.

Therefore, these attributes relating to the difference in gender can be considered to be of great influence when it comes to deciding which career path to take. Career decision-making does not only require the ability to apply acquired skills and knowledge but also interests which play an important role in building relationships with other people and the work and work environment themselves. On the other hand, Corrigan and Konrad (2007) stated that traditionally, American individuals believed that a woman's role was to be a homemaker and that a man's role was a breadwinner. Women were considered to be in-charge in housewife duties and that only men were considered to be responsible for jobs and financial support to the family. This difference also proved that difference in work expectations for both genders can be dated back and was already pre-existing.

Moreover, career opportunities and descriptions were also considered to be different in both genders. In Nigeria, female students aimed for careers that were feminist in nature while their male counterparts opted for careers that were masculine in nature (Durosaro & Adebanye, 2012; Akinbode & Fagbohunge, 2011). Career-decision making of individuals in Nigeria were highly influenced by their culture and how people perceived careers whether it is only applicable to either men or women. Meanwhile, in China, Chow & Ngo (2002) mentioned that gender differences were inclined to sex role interaction which developed a clear identification between sex roles, prejudice and discrimination which affect the status of women in the economy thus creating jobs that were expected to be not suitable in the capabilities of women. The major part of people's life was spent in occupational activities and these searches did more than simply provide income for livelihood (Bandura, 2002). This only means that the pursuit for a stable career in the future plays a significant role in every individual's life. An individual's pursuit to career isn't only done because of the desire to earn money and provide for the family but because an individual would also like to pursue a career where he/she can showcase his/her skills and abilities. Career decision-making requires great knowledge and motivation so an individual can decide on a specific career path where he/she can maximize her potential as time goes by. Career decision-making ideally requires guidance from professionals such as career counselors so individuals will be able to choose a career that could maximize their skills, knowledge, motivations ground by interests. And dwelling in this matter, such as the process of career selection and distinctions between genders are highly influential.

Women in the Military

The military force was considered to be prototypically masculine out of all any other professions (Heineken, 2002). This profession required its members to be physically fit to

perform all the significant tasks desired to protect and serve the country. Equality was seen to exist between men and women when both gender share fair distribution of power and influence, equal opportunities in life, unhindered by and independent of their sex. However, there were instances in the history of social and cultural aspect wherein women strived to claim their position, specifically in careers dominated by men.

As stated by Pinch (2006), women in the military throughout the olden times were relegated to support and nursing roles. They were allowed to enter military academy and studies however, their roles were limited to tasks which were believed to be associated only to the capabilities of women such as, office and administrative works, and supporting roles. Even though the number of women enlisting in the military were increasing, little was known as to why these women chose to join the military service (Mankowski, et al. 2015). However, there were numbers of studies which indicated that the motivations of men in joining military training were also present in women.

According to the study conducted by Van Breda (2016), patriotism and the desire to serve and protect the country featured in the common motivations of women in joining the military. It was also mentioned that these motivations were considered as a way for women to claim their space. Women were believed to be not satisfied with remaining subordinate positions to male commanders. Therefore, this toughened women to pursue military positions assertively. Other motivations also included new life experience, the desire to experience a man's world, some claimed military to be their childhood dream, and some were aiming for new opportunities such as skill development (Mankowski, et al. 2015). Since military service was culturally determined as a profession primarily dominated by men, it claimed standards that are commonly associated with the capabilities of men.

Military training required combinations of socialization processes that display an ideal environment in which personality changes took place (Roberts, et al. 2008) and that are most likely designed for men. Given that, a study also conducted by Van Breda (2016) showed several challenges faced by women in the military service. It was mentioned in her study that when it comes to leadership, men tend to become passive aggressive, disrespectful, or directly dismissive. Female authorities tend to experience disobedience from men for they were used to male commanders or males in position. Gender mainstreaming was also stated to be existing in military academies wherein facilities and services were found to be inadequate to the needs, especially associated to women (e.g. sanitary napkins for menstruation).

It was also reported that 10 out of 89 women reported sexual harassment during deployment by senior ranks or authorities with higher positions. A number of programs and mandates were published and implemented to maintain and protect the rights of women to access professions that were seen to be dominated by men. However, such challenges and struggles faced by women in this kind of service proved the existence of equality washing. This can be seen as closely related to the concept of image management, whereas organizations practice the implementation of equality-work to make them appear more gender equal than they really were (Heywood, 2012). This situation was not aligned to the standard mandate in the military where all training and programs should be open to the expectations of both genders. Such organizations proclaim to be open to all gender; however, it was revealed that the actual designation of tasks were distinct to a specific gender and that other opportunities were not present to the opposite gender.

In the Philippines, the Republic Act 9710 also known as the Magna Carta for Women (2009) stated that appropriate measures must be applied to eradicate discrimination towards

women in military, police, and other related services. However, a study conducted by De Guzman (2004) revealed that although women in police offices did not face major problems when it comes to promotion, they still encountered difficulties in terms of undervaluing their physical capabilities and opportunities to job designation only limited to administrative and less challenging loads. This situation displayed that although a lot of professions, which were identified to be dominated by men, opened opportunities for women, such pre-existing perceptions and expectations about the limitations of women still influence how society perceives them to be different from the skills and capabilities of men.

Synthesis

Men and women play a significant role in society. They may share the same values, beliefs, and aspirations; conversely, gender differences also influence the way they adapt to and perceive the society. In recent times, the impact of gender roles bound by culture has decreased in the career decision-making of individuals. Whereas, different genders enter a profession although it is believed to be dominated by a specific gender. In the present study, women entered a discipline that requires physical strength and endurance perceived to be found in males. Literatures found that the factors that motivated women to enter a male-dominated profession do not significantly differ from the reasons of men. Despite the differences in gender, men and women share the same motivation and aspiration on why they pursue a line of work that requires full dedication and patriotism. Military force, throughout the years, is one of the most valued and respected professions in the country. This profession upholds the right of every member of the society to experience safety and peace within the neighborhood and the entire nation. Military officers keep the country in order, bound by the law and policies mandated to preserve coordination and moral living of the people. In a military training, both

male and female cadets share equal exercises and development programs to strengthen their capacity as service members. Training and development programs done in the military are known to be physically exhausting and require strong physique to perform the tasks. Various researches have proven this aspect as one of the main challenges that women face when they enter military service. However, it has been identified that even though training and exercises evidently favors the body composition and physique of a male, achievements of women showcased that they could also do what men could do. These women who enter the military profession play a unique and distinct role in completing the strength and competence of the nation's armed forces.

Women are known to have traits and personality factors that men do not have. There are characteristics, may it be physical, social, and other aspects that are only applicable to a specific gender. The compassion and mother figure found in women are proven to be necessary and effective in handling cases that require nurture and understanding that only women can do. Women in the military also help in rebuilding harmonious relationships with the citizens for cases that require sensitivity are often taken care of by women. Therefore, a lot of women in police districts for example have been designated to cases regarding violence against women and children. However, although women are given tasks and designations in the workplace, unlike men, they have certain limitations and grounding expectations about their capabilities. A lot of women are not allowed to join combats and are placed behind men in public encounters. Another issue found is the existence of gender discrimination in the workplace. This contrasts the idea that gender equality has been accepted by most of the countries in the world. It can be assumed that problems in gender differences may just be tolerated but not fully accepted. Various researches have shown evidences and data that women who enter a male-

dominated professions have been experiencing stereotyping and discrimination from their workmates and the environment where they function. Women who enter professions related to law enforcement were often designated in functions that only demand administrative work and designations believed to fit only to the capabilities of women.

They experience the same training and development programs however, it is claimed that more women are needed to work on administrative functions and office works. This situation does not reflect the official mandate wherein women are entitled to all the functions existing in the military service. This also does not reflect that women are also allowed to participate in actual combat or physical encounters. Furthermore, there is a lack of research that explores entirely the experiences of women in a male-dominated environment. Such researches are mostly focused on the quantitative data which explore on the perceptions of discrimination, training programs, and their relationship with their workmates. There is also lack of information and data about women who succeeded in a male-dominated profession.

Therefore, this study aimed to describe the significant life stories of outstanding female cadets in the Philippines. Although a larger percentage of men were allowed to join military academies, these women proved their skills and capabilities to succeed despite the pre-existing challenges and barriers that hinder women to excel in a profession dominated by the opposite gender. This would look into the unique stories and experiences of female cadets on what motivated them to enter a male-dominated profession, what were the challenges they encountered and how were they able to cope the existing barriers and strive to the top. This study would provide evidence on the success of women to battle the existing glass ceiling in a profession perceived to be dominated by men.

Research Problem

As culture and tradition suggest, military services were said to be pre-dominated by men. Males are perceived by the society as strong, and physically capable to execute the nature of work expected when becoming a military officer. However, due to persistent movements done by women, it led to a breakthrough which granted them access to higher education, and most especially, military academies. Therefore, in the most recent times, military forces all around the world were not just composed of men but also of women who thrive to fight for the peacekeeping of the country. In response to this, the study proposed investigating the life narratives of female cadets who graduated as part of their batch's top ten (10). This study sought to explore, construct, and capture the stories of these outstanding women who managed to showcase excellence and success in an environment that was socially perceived to be dominated by men. Specifically, the present study attempted to examine the following problems:

1. Explore the motivations, challenges encountered, and coping processes of outstanding female cadets in a male-dominated profession;
2. Describe the significant stories of outstanding female cadets who entered a male-dominated profession.

Conceptual Framework

As mentioned by Mankowski et al. (2015), the gender stereotype attached to the identity of women hinders them to become an ideal military officer, expecting their military journey to be rough and difficult. In that sense, outstanding female cadets who pursue a male-dominated profession such as military service, experience several factors contributing to their

motivation and coping strategies as to why they succeed in battling such challenges in their chosen field. The researcher came up with this framework to represent the relationship of the variables in the study as illustrated in Figure 1.

Outstanding Female Cadets are women who entered the military academy and managed to finish as part of their batch's top students. As they strive to survive the military grounds, there are three key aspects which cultivated the entirety and depths of their journey, Motivations; factors or reasons that inspired these women to enter the military, Challenges; difficulties and barriers that they encountered inside a male-dominated profession, and Coping Processes; strategies that these women utilized to deal with the challenges encountered. These factors foster the life stories of outstanding female cadets towards becoming a military officer imbued with military professionalism and to successfully rule the military grounds despite the existing issues and nuances that challenge their potential as females in a male-dominated profession. Thus, the present study aimed to provide insights in the area of Guidance and Counseling and Psychology.

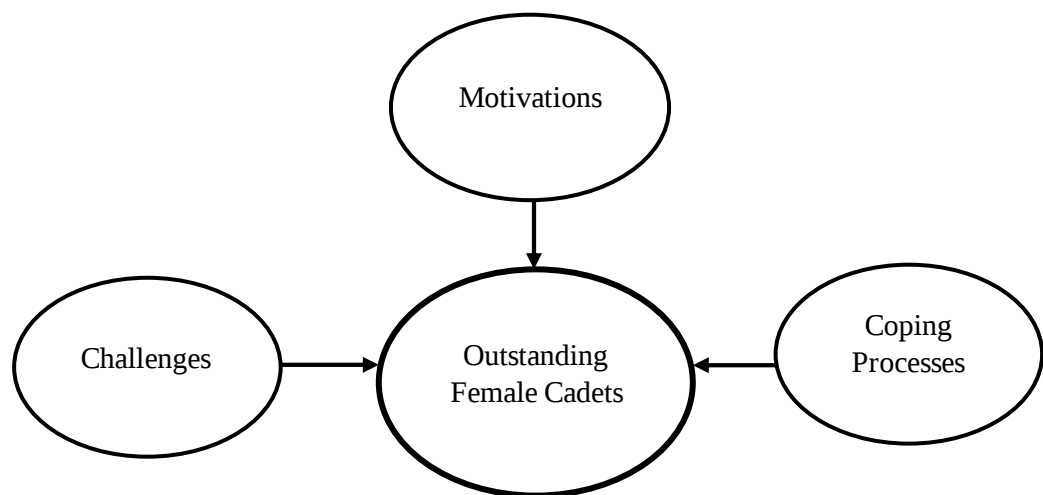


Figure 1. A Framework of Flowers among Thorns: Life Narratives of Outstanding Female Cadets in the Philippines

Significance of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore the life stories of female cadets who ventured to acquire success in the military academy. The present study examined how these outstanding female cadets faced the restraints and impediments which had challenged them to exhibit their abilities and potentials in a male-dominated discipline. This would also serve as an evidence of how these outstanding female cadets lived their lives in a gender stereotyped profession, what influences their enthusiasm and motivation despite the hindrances within their journey. Throughout the years, the military has been a well-respected profession recognized to be dominated by males. Military forces indulged themselves into combats which require physical strength, skills, and abilities that will enable them to survive. Therefore, a long-standing concern has been debated as to whether these women carry equal strength necessary to keep up with men in terms of physical battles and training.

While this military force has been culturally determined by gender, these female cadets have proven capability to withstand the problems and issues that challenge their competence as military enforcers. Alongside with this, these outstanding women have not just graduated and finished their military school but rather stepped onto their finish line and passed through with flying colors.

As a result, it is significant to look into the life stories of these outstanding female cadets and explore their distinctive accounts as to how they have been able to persist and outlive despite the growing concerns pertaining to women joining the military forces. This study will be beneficial to the female cadets, aspiring female cadets, area of psychology and counseling, parents, teachers, and to other researchers.

Female Cadets

This would be beneficial to the participants, for it would provide them new learning and insights regarding the life stories of women in a male-dominated profession. The present study would give the participants a better understanding of their journey and how this journey has influenced their being after entering a profession dominated by men. The present study would also enable the participants to share their inspiring stories on how they were able to cope with the challenges of entering a profession dominated by men. This would also encourage current female cadets in military academies to learn and understand the challenges faced by these outstanding women and how they were able to cope and succeed with flying colors despite the existence of challenges and barriers that may have hindered women in their journey.

Aspiring Female Cadets

This study would be of great benefit to the aspiring female cadets for they were also one of the recipients of the learning and development in the education system. The present study will serve as an awakening for both female and male students that professions which were believed to be dominated by a specific gender have the potential to advocate and promote equality.

For the present study, this would be more useful to female students who aspired to enter a discipline that are bound to be dominated by males. The present study would serve as an evidence and stepping-stone to such female students to gain courage to enter military force despite the restraints and issues bound by culture and tradition. This would make a contribution as a groundwork for their awareness of themselves to enter careers and disciplines without predicaments and drawbacks regarding their gender.

Counselors and Psychologists

The guidance counselors, for they were proven essential in fostering growth and holistic development to the students. Guidance counselors were considered as vital affiliates of the education system. Along with the other support staff and school personnel, guidance counselors carried equal responsibility in promoting holistic development among students. Guidance counselors provided assistance in students' academic achievement, social and emotional development, career development and mapping, as to ensure their potentials as productive citizens of tomorrow. Guidance counselors aided in providing a safe environment for the development of the students in the educational setting, as well as guiding students in making decisions about their career choice. Through the study, guidance counselors would gain awareness on how they were going to refine the process of career counseling to the students, considering that military force; often believed to be pre-dominated by men could now be seen as a career path prolific and safe to the development and learning of women.

Other Researchers

The present study would serve as a groundwork for future researchers who are interested in the study of feminism in the Philippines; the current status and condition of women in the society, workforce, politics, and other areas of development. This study would also strengthen feminist counseling by providing an evidence of success to women. This would provide stories and experiences of women and how they are able to break the glass ceiling set by tradition and culture when it comes to social roles based on gender. The information and data gathered would also provide a sturdy framework to enhance the career guidance program and career counseling process implemented in the Philippine education system.

Teachers

The teachers, for they have the power and responsibility to guide the students upon making decisions towards their career path. The role of teachers was not only limited to the academic growth and development of the students but they were also entitled to illuminate the students with proper information and practical evaluation of the conditions they should consider when making career decisions. Providing teachers the knowledge about the status of females in professions and certain career disciplines that were culturally determined by gender will be of great help to uplift their understanding on how to guide students in career decision-making.

Parents

The parents, for they were probably the most instrumental people to the students' lives. Parents are the first people to build the environment and standards for the students. They were the ones responsible for the development and growth of their children. Good career choice was not just determined by the students but it also carries equal responsibility and consideration with the parents. Therefore, this study would be beneficial, for it would provide relief for the parents of the female students who want to enter a profession such as military force which is pre-dominated by the opposite gender.

Scope and Delimitations

The researcher would use a Life Narratives Research Design to explore on the significant stories and experiences of female cadets as members of the society who aspired to enter a work environment where males were perceived to be dominant by the society. The

present study would only be limited in exploring the life stories of outstanding female cadets in the Philippines. The study would be applied to four (4) female cadets who graduated in a military academy as part of their batch's top ten (10). Other than the gender and academic achievement, social status and any other demographic information will not be a basis for the selection of participants for these were not part of the study and presumed to not affect the entirety of the present study. The participants would be restricted only to four (4) outstanding female cadets who are considered fit and correspond to the selection criteria.

Furthermore, the present study will be conducted to the target participants without limits to their nature of work or unit and office designation. The researcher would be using a non-probability sampling method called purposive sampling. Participants would be selected based on their specifications and characteristics that best fit in the study. The source of data was delimited to the information gathered upon interviewing the targeted participants therefore, other factors that may be brought up by the participants in the interview might be considered. To ensure greater access to the data gathered, the researcher would be using a recording tool to secure mechanical representation of the interview session done with the participants.

This interview proper would only be recorded with the awareness of the participants therefore, participants will be given an informed consent beforehand. The participants were also given a personal information sheet where basic information about the subjects are indicated, which are believed to be necessary in maximizing the results of the present study. The interview was a semi-structured type, thus would not be only limited to the set of questions validated by the experts, follow-up questions would be assumed to be connected and relevant

to the present study anyhow. The data gathered will be analyzed using a thematic analysis. The data gathering procedure, and the entirety of this paper were bound with ethical considerations and standardized research procedures mandated by the code of ethics in research and publication ethics guidelines advocating sustainable research culture. The compass of the present study was limited to the expertise and abilities of the researcher on the study.

Definition of Terms

The following terminologies provided conceptual and operational definition of the terms and concepts used in the study. The succeeding definitions would give a better and common understanding of the key concepts and terminologies that were often utilized in the study.

Military – refers to a male-dominated profession established by the state with the sole purpose of national defense against external threats and internal conflicts

Outstanding Female Cadets – refers to the female students who entered military service training and graduated as part of their batch's top students.

Motivation – refers to the reasons that encouraged women to enter a male-dominated profession.

Challenges – refers to the difficulties and hindrances that the outstanding female cadets encountered in a male-dominated profession.

Coping Process – refers to the adapting strategies that the female cadets employed in dealing with the challenges and barriers of being in a male-dominated profession.

CHAPTER II

Methodology

This chapter comprised an outline of research methods that were utilized in the study. It provides necessary information about the site of the study, participants, and the entire process. The researcher described the research design that is accurate for the purpose of this study and the reasons for this choice. The forms and set of questions were used for data collection are explored and the procedures to be followed to execute the study were also included. Lastly, the process of analyzing the responses and all the data gathered in the study was also tackled.

Research Design

The present study was a qualitative research defined by Mason (2002) as a broadly interpretivist philosophical position grounded with how the social world was understood, experienced, and interpreted. The use of qualitative research as a method enables the researcher to conduct an in-depth analysis of people's lives under real world conditions (Yin, 2011). This method also covered contextual situations that may influence the ability of people to represent their views and perspectives such as institutional, social, and environmental. The personal stories and experiences of outstanding female cadets in the present study were covered by interviews, providing data in which meanings and the manner in which the data were presented by the participants are analyzed. This study could give a deeper and greater understanding on the aspects of stories and experiences of outstanding female cadets by incorporating Life Narratives as a method.

Life Narratives, as defined by McAdams (2001) were biographical facts that pursue considerably beyond for people selectively appropriate aspects of their personal meanings and experiences that make sense to them and their audience. These life stories were comprehensible within the cultural frame of female cadets who were recognized as top students of their batch, yet it also analyzed what made them different and unique from each other. The present study explored on how these outstanding female cadets perceived their life stories upon entering the military academy; their motivations or reasons for entering a male-dominated professions, the challenges and barriers they encountered, their coping mechanisms and how did their journey influence their lives in general.

Research Setting

The researcher interviewed outstanding female cadets who graduated from a military school. Therefore, the research opted for a military academy as the primary institution for the selection of the participants. The present study targeted the one and only premier and most prestigious training school for the future military officers of the Philippines which throughout the years has been producing skilled and competent military officers who are bound to serve and protect the country. The site of the study was selected based on a location that was considered to be expedient and practical to the participants. Since the participants were already graduates of a military school, the researcher envisaged the participants to be widely designated in different specializations and acquired professions. Moreover, the site where the study was conducted ensured to be conducive to the needs and safety of the participants. The selection of location where the study will be conducted may also vary, for the other participants might be located onto places that were beyond the capacity of the researcher's reach. As a

result, the researcher maximized the potential of communication; doing interviews through phone call and video call.

Research Population and Sampling

Research population referred to a group of individuals, with at least one common characteristic which differentiates and distinguishes that group from the others (Best & Kahn, 2006). In order to gather participants, the researcher used a non-probability sampling. Unlike any other methods, non-probability sampling methods did not give the participants an equal opportunity to be selected. Specifically, a type of non-probability sampling method called purposive sampling was utilized in the study.

This sampling technique was used considering that the participants will be selected based on the objectives, and specifications and characteristics set by the researcher that best fit in the study, the target participants were four (4) female cadets and military officers who are graduates of a military academy for the past five (5) years. These five (5) years ensure the variation of participants' field experiences may it be the fresh graduates or those who adjusted already to the nature and system of their work. The researcher propounded a group of female cadets and military officers who were not just regular graduates of the academy but were part of their batch's top ten (10).

Military service was culturally determined as a profession to be dominated by men. It involved training and programs that require skills and capabilities designed for men. Therefore, the researcher targeted these women who achieved an exemplary academic performance to serve as an evidence of women's capability to thrive successfully in a male-dominated profession.

The researcher also discussed the nature and intentions of the present study, and interested participants self-select themselves and willingly approach the interviewer to participate in the interview.

Research Instrument

Prior to the set of interview questions, the researcher developed a personal information sheet (Appendix C) to identify the demographics of the participant, to also verify their fitness to participate in the study, and to maximize the data and results gathered as well. This personal information sheet was validated by a set of experts and further improved following the suggestions of the said validators.

The qualitative research interview was an interactive process of consultation where the researcher aimed to explore an issue in the perspective of the individual being asked (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). This method also aimed to cover both factual and the perceived meaning of the subjects to their experiences and life stories. The present study utilized a semi-structured interview to gather data from the participants. In contrast to a structured interview, the insights and responses garnered from the participants were not limited to the fixed set of questions, but it came along with various follow-up questions and additional information voluntarily relayed by the participants.

Furthermore, the researcher developed a set of interview questions (Appendix E), validated by a set of experts, such as licensed professionals in the field of Psychology and Counseling, which were relevant in the present study. This was to ensure that the set of interview questions were appropriate and accurate to the nature and purpose of the study.

Research Process

After the colloquium, the interview questions has undergone a validation process. This validation process was done by the experts who were relevant and related to the present study. The panel of experts comprised of registered guidance counselors, licensed professional teachers, registered psychometricians, and other professionals affiliated with the study. A letter (Appendix D) was sent to the set of validators and the validation scale (Appendix E) was divided into five (5) columns. The first column consist of the question items. The next three columns consist of Retain, Revise, and Remove boxes which will be checked by the experts, and the last column was reserved for their possible comments and suggestions. The researcher also sent out letter of intent to the participants via their social media accounts beforehand to ensure the participants' willingness to cooperate in the study, which happened simultaneously with the validation process for the purpose of time conservation. The researcher followed an ethical and standard procedure of qualitative interview among the selected participants.

Data Gathering Process

The researcher sent out a letter of intent to acquire the participants' approval to participate in the study. After the participants approved to partake in the study, the researcher and the participant decided on the possible time and place convenient as to when and where the interview process would happen. At the decided time and venue, the interview proper was conducted. The participants answered an informed consent form (Appendix B) to safeguard the participants' willingness to cooperate in the study and the confidentiality and ethical practice of data gathering procedure. The researcher, again, mentioned the nature of the study, the rights of the participant, as well as the confidentiality of the entire data gathered in the

research. The researcher handed out a personal information sheet (Appendix C) to be answered by the participants. This form required the participants to fill in their basic information which was needed in maximizing the necessary information provided in the study.

In the interview questions, the researcher asked the participants their motivations in entering a male-dominated profession. In line with this, the researcher also explored the challenges and barriers encountered by the female cadets and their respective coping mechanisms. Despite the smaller percentage of women in the military academy, how they were able to strive to the top, battling such hindrance was also explored. The stories gathered from the participants provided insight on the experiences of women in a male-dominated environment. The researcher followed an ethical and standard procedure of qualitative interview among the selected participants. The entire qualitative interview was recorded with the awareness of the participant. The participants were asked first if they would allow the researcher to record the whole interview properly using an audio recording tool. If the participant refused to give her consent, their right to autonomy will be respected therefore, the whole conversation would not be recorded. Two (2) participants were interviewed face to face while the other two (2) were interviewed using phone calls. After the interview, the participants were then debriefed and received a token of appreciation from the researcher to recognize the participants' time and effort in partaking with the study.

Data Analysis

After the data gathering procedure, the researcher proceeded to the process of data analysis. Adopting the recommendations of Yin (2011), the analytic phase of this study underwent through five phases; compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and

concluding. The first phase, compiling, involved sorting of field notes and all the data gathered during the interview process; a database. This process was followed by disassembling wherein the researcher breaks down the data gathered into smaller fragments and assigning them into new labels or codes. The second phase was then followed by reassembling using substantive themes. The disassembled fragments during the second phase could be rearranged into different groups and in order to depict a significant data. These first three phases were followed by the interpretation and discussion of reassembled data with accompanying relevant graphics, lists, or tables. Then, drawing conclusions.

In line with Life Narratives Research Design utilized in the study, the transcription of stories were based on significant events that the participants experienced in a chronological order. A section for Individual Life Stories was provided which included significant stories of outstanding female cadets involving significant people, setting, problems and existing actions and resolutions. The reassembled fragments of significant stories embodied and uncovered underlying patterns and themes that represent the data and linked to the research problem it corresponded to.

Role of Researcher

The role of the researcher was to attempt to obtain the life stories of the outstanding female cadets who entered a male-dominated profession. It was a prime responsibility of the researcher to preserve and protect the personal information and significant data collected from the participants through the interview. The researcher was also responsible to articulate the process of safeguarding the data gathered to the participants and must undergo approval through research ethics review. Indeed, the researcher was also the one responsible for

analyzing the data collected. Such individuals who contributed in other substantive aspects of the present study were acknowledged as contributors.

Methods of Validation

In the present study, the researcher developed interview questions to be administered on the four (4) selected participants (Appendix A). The present study utilized a semi-structured interview for the data gathering process. After the colloquium, these interview questions have undergone a validation process. This validation process was done by the experts who were relevant and related to the present study. The panel of experts consisted of registered guidance counselors, licensed professional teachers, registered psychometricians, and other professionals affiliated with the study. The validation scale (Appendix E) was divided into five (5) columns. The first column consisted of the question items. The next three columns included Accept, Reject, and Revise boxes which would be checked by the experts, and the last column was reserved for their possible comments and suggestions.

After the analysis of data done by the researcher, the themes that emerged were then reviewed by the set of experts who are relevant to the present study (Appendix G). The panel of experts who validated the themes consisted of a professor in Psychology and the director of a university research department. This was to ensure the themes' credibility and validity to the research purpose.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are critical in research. Ethical considerations in research are established for the protection of dignity among the subjects and the publication of information. Philippine

Normal University as the National Center for Teacher Education, and as an educational institution that adhered to innovative production of knowledge and information is devoted in publishing ethical research that enhances teacher and teacher training. The researcher employed archival data directed from the voice recorder and other interview materials. The present study was based solely on secondary data and review of literary works for the data and information gathered came from the participants. However, such secondary data and related literature were used to support the claims and findings of the study. The present study involved human participants such as female cadets who graduated as part of their batch's honor roll.

The set of interview questions did not solely deal with sensitive issues and topics however, other factors and information were brought up during the interview process. The data gathering process may give rise to potential or actual risks; participants may experience discomfort in answering some interview questions for it would tackle some of the significant events and experiences they encountered. In line with this, such inconvenience and risk to the psychological safety of the participants were addressed by incorporating a debriefing process in the present study.

Respect for Participants

The researcher ensured to protect the participants' right to autonomy. This ethical consideration prevented assault to participants' integrity and right to secure personal liberty. The participants were entitled to be aware of essential possible risks and benefits that invades their privacy and a form of threat to their dignity. The researcher acknowledged the participants' right to make choices, to hold personal views and actions based on their values and beliefs. The participants have the right to be informed of the actual process and nature of

the study provided with full disclosure about their role and participation in the actual conduct of the study. This also involved the possible risks of the research process. The participants could withdraw from the study anytime; before or during the data gathering procedure. The researcher guaranteed that all the information provided by the participants will be held with utmost confidentiality and will not be accessible to those who have no involvement in the study.

The researcher also ensured the physical and psychological safety of the participants, whereas community situations and conditions that may expose the participants to physical and psychological risks as a consequence of their participation were circumvented. Moreover, the researcher safeguarded accurate documentation and description of the research process and procedures implemented.

Beneficence

The researcher considered all the possible consequences of the study and balanced the risks with equal benefit to the participants. Beneficence stipulated both prevention of intentional harm and minimization of potential harm. The output of this study was much resided with learning and development of the students and the institution. The need for protection for vulnerable groups was considered by the researcher. This group of individuals who took part in the study was given enough respect and sensitivity.

The entire data gathering procedure followed standardized procedure that adhered to less potential harm proportionate to benefits of the participants. The actual practice of the present study observed generally accepted scientific principles of fairness, equality, and merit.

Justice

The researcher ensured a fair and equitable selection of participants in the study. This study encompassed the aspects of who benefited and who bore the risks of the research. The research included the specific criteria needed for selecting the participants. Participants in the study were not merely included for they are easy to access or seen as vulnerable and less able to decline their participation (children, minority group, etc.). Any substantive conflict of interest that might affect the results and interpretation of the study is avoided. Authorship was limited to the researcher of the present study, the development of the research, interpretation and analysis of the study were all done by the researcher. Others who have participated in the certain aspects of the study will be acknowledged as contributors. The researcher also ensured proper citation and acknowledgement of the researches and literatures that are used in the study. No information from other authors and researchers were owned by this study to secure their right on their own knowledge, ideas, and intangible assets. The study exercised authenticity for it was shaped to contribute to the innovation of the education system, and learning and development of the participants.

CHAPTER III

Results and Discussion

In the present study, four (4) outstanding female cadets who graduated from the most prestigious military academy in the Philippines shared their significant journey of entering a male-dominated profession. The life stories showcased the personal experiences and insights gained by each outstanding female cadet who participated in the study. The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings which corresponded to the research problems; explore their motivations, challenges encountered, and coping processes and to describe the life stories of the selected outstanding female cadets. Narratives of these outstanding female cadets inside the military academy unfolded significant stories of transformation, turning points, and relevant experiences that accompanied them towards success.

Profile of the Participants

There are four (4) female cadets who are the products of the most prestigious military academy in the country and participated in the present study. These female cadets are identified to be part of their batch's honor roll. Each participant participated in an hour of interview session and answered a personal information sheet to provide necessary demographic backgrounds. The interview session prompted an in-depth story of their experiences, background, and critical viewpoints. On the other hand, the personal information sheet provided short details of their ages, birthplaces, academic rank received, civil status, date of employment, and current employment status. All the participants are born Filipinos, single and have ages between the range of 20-25 years old. Two (2) out of four (4) participants are bom

on the island of Luzon, one (1) in Visayas, and the other one (1) in Mindanao. One (1) participant graduated in 2017 while the remaining three (3) graduated in 2019.

Table 1

Demographic Information of the Participants through Personal Information Sheet

Name	Age	Birthplace	Year Graduated	Honor	Civil Status	Current Employment Status	Date of Employment
Amy	21	Iloilo	2019	Top 7	Single	^{2nd} Lieutenant – Philippine Air Force	May 26, 2019
Angel	21	Pasig	2019	Top 9	Single	^{2nd} Lieutenant – Philippine Air Force	May 26, 2019
Maria	22	Ilocos Sur	2019	Top 1	Single	Navy Ensign – Philippine Navy	May 26, 2019
Mae	25	Zamboanga	2017	Top 10	Single	^{2nd} Lieutenant – Philippine Air Force	March 13, 2017

Individual Profiles

Amy

Amy is 21 years old and the eldest among her siblings. She studied Political Science for a year before she entered the military academy. Amy graduated seventh in her batch. She was an Alfa Company Commander and 1st Battalion Adjutant in her batch. Currently, she is a

2nd Lieutenant in the Philippine Air Force and in the process of training to become a military pilot.

Angel

Angel is 22 years old and the eldest among her three siblings. Angel loved Psychology. Before she entered the military academy, she studied Psychology for a year in Manila. She then realized that her ultimate goal was to become a military psychologist so she viewed her cadetship as an opportunity to achieve her dream. Angel graduated ninth in her batch. She was also a Bravo Company academic officer, Third Platoon Leader and class treasurer. Angel, now is a 2nd Lieutenant in the Philippine Air Force and undergoes training to become a military pilot.

Maria

Maria, from the mountain town of Ilocos Sur graduated from the military academy as the class valedictorian of batch 2019. She is 22 years old and the youngest among her three brothers. Before she entered the military, she studied BS Education for two years. Aside from finishing her military journey as a class valedictorian, she also received the Distinguished Cadet Award (Starman), Association of Generals and Flag Officers Award (Agfo), and other leadership plaques. Maria is now a Navy Ensign and the academic secretary of Philippine Navy Officer Candidate School.

Mae

Mae hails from Zamboanga and graduated tenth from the military class batch 2017. She is 25 years old and the oldest among her siblings. Before she entered the military, she

studied three (3) courses. She took BS Biology, Secondary Education, and General Engineering, each for one (1) semester. Mae is currently a military officer, 2nd Lieutenant in the Philippine Air Force.

Key Themes

The following themes were derived from the interview transcripts of four (4) outstanding female cadets based on the research questions (1) Explore the motivations, challenges encountered and coping processes of outstanding female cadets in a male-dominated profession; and (2) Describe the significant stories of outstanding female cadets who entered a male-dominated profession. Varied themes were identified in the participants' motivation, challenges encountered, and coping processes. Three (3) key themes arose in the participants' motivation in entering the military academy: *a promise for security, a promise of support and a personality match*. For the challenges encountered, there were three (3) key themes: *facing ambivalence, proving oneself's worth and battling physical limitations*. Lastly, three (3) key themes were determined as their coping process: *enabling environment, rising above the situation and overcoming one's limits*. Moreover,

Four (4) key themes emerged as responses to the significant life stories of the participants who entered the military academy: *a challenging experience, a life-changing experience, an unforgettable experience and an empowering experience*.

Research Question 1: Explore the motivations, challenges encountered and coping processes of outstanding female cadets.

The outstanding female cadets are driven with several motivations that pushed them to enter the military academy. They also experienced different challenges and developed coping processes that helped them deal with such barriers. Three (3) themes emerged in the motivations of the participants, three (3) themes in challenges encountered and another three (3) for their coping processes.

Participants Stories

Amy

Encouraged by her father who is a soldier, Amy entered the military academy. Her father suggested her to try so she could avail free education and access a secured job in the future. When she entered the military program, she faced challenges that questioned her capabilities. She became uncertain if she would be able to completely adjust herself in a military environment and lived with the routines which were new to her system. Driven by her goals and motivations, Amy overcame her challenges by surrounding herself with the people who support her. When she was lost, she always reminded herself of the reasons why she entered the academy. “Start with the end in mind” she always said to herself. Learning how to focus her goals helped her defy the hardships inside the academy.

Angel

Angel entered the military academy driven by her objective to have a stable life and job in the future. Aside from that, she’s also encouraged by her mother. Inside the academy, Angel battled the challenge of living by herself inside the academy. And with her father gone due to a heart attack while she’s inside the academy, she had to be stronger so she could go back to

her family and give them a good life. In order for her to survive, she learned that she had to develop herself in different aspects because the military academy is focused on providing them holistic education and training.

She valued how to live her life with a goal in mind and maximizing her experiences at the same time. She also strove to overcome her physical limitations. She acquired the courage to push herself to the limits and disregard the gender stereotypes that may hinder her to excel in what she does.

Maria

Despite being the only girl in the family of four siblings, her mother encouraged her to try entering the military academy. Aside from the free tuition and job security of job in the future that the academy could provide, the academy was much nearer to their house in Ilocos Sur. Maria had a total dilemma whether to continue what she's already started as an education student or to start her journey all over again as a female cadet in the military academy. In the end, she chose to enter the academy because she loved her mother so much not to obey her one and only request. Inside the military academy, Maria thought of quitting. She faced the difficulty of adjusting herself to the fundamental military skills she has to acquire and to overcome her physical limitations because of her weight.

In the process, she learned how to satisfy the pillars of the military academy. She had to expose herself to the military and physical training so she could be physically fit and healthy. She also learned how to appreciate the support from her family and friends inside the academy. Maria was also motivated to strive for more so she could bring pride to her family.

Mae

She entered the military academy to lessen the burden of her family regarding their finances. She arrived in the academy without any military background, so it was difficult for her to understand what was happening around her and performed strenuous activities because she was not used to it. The process was emotionally stressful to the point that she had to question herself, and her purpose as to why she decided to gamble her future in the military grounds. However, Mae worked hard and thought of her family as an inspiration, so she could move forward. She took the physical exercises seriously. She may not be able to match how men performed in the exercises at least, she had to grow nearer to their level. If they trained hard, she must also train harder. She believed that the hardships that she experienced will bring out the best in her. She believed in the training principles of the institution. She believed in the training principles of the institution.

Table 2

Themes for the Motivations of Outstanding Female Cadets who entered the Military Academy

Theme	Description	Participant	Sample Response
A Personality Match	This theme describes how becoming a military officer complements their personality and on how the military academy will develop them.	Amy Angel	“...I think I am capable because of my personality...that’s why I thought I would fit here.”

A Promise of Security	This theme pertains to how the participants value secured job and future opportunities in choosing a career.	Amy Angel Mae Maria	“...of course, when you graduate, you’ll have a secured life. You already have a salary, you can live independently.”
A Promise of Support	This theme discusses how their decisions to enter the military academy were greatly influenced by the support from their parents or their family backgrounds	Amy Angel Maria	“I guess it was my mom’s constant encouragement that really made me shift. My mom is the kind of person who doesn’t ask a lot of things. It was the only time that she wanted me to have a more secured future. I could see it in her eyes that she really wanted me to choose it without saying it to me.”

Theme 1: A Personality Match

A distinct theme that emerged in the participants’ motivation to enter the military academy is their personal interest to become a military officer. They believed that becoming a military officer matches their skills and ability and that they are interested in how the military academy will develop them. Amy and Angel’s answers are as follows:

“...sa tingin ko kaya ko naman kasi sa personality ko...kaya sa tingin ko bagay na bagay talaga ako dito.”

Amy described herself as the adventurous type. She also mentioned that unlike any other females, she’s a bit boyish and enjoys challenging tasks.

(“...I think I am capable because of my personality...that’s why I think I would fit here.”)

“Tapos ano din... gusto ko rin kasing mas mag-improve as person.”

(“Also...I wanted to improve as a person.”)

In accordance with the study made by Mankowski et al. (2015), the need for skill development encourages women to join the military service. Women believed that joining the military service and exposing themselves to the rigorous training implemented inside the academy would develop their character and shape them into an individual far from the civilian identity. Furthermore, joining the military service was also discovered as means to another end (Mankowski et al. 2015). Angel, prior to her cadetship, took a Psychology course for a year in Manila. She also mentioned that being a military psychologist is her dream profession. She then realized that entering the military academy could be a better way so she could achieve her dream. She also added that the experience she gained inside the academy would give her an in-depth knowledge and understanding about individuals in military service.

Theme 2: A Promise for Security

Occupational motivations are defined by self-interested determination to exert high levels of effort toward motivations found within the marketplace. According to a study developed by Helmus et al. (2018) in the United States of America, the desire of soldiers to advance their present and future situations encouraged them to join the military. These soldiers aimed to acquire the benefits offered by the military. These motivations include salary, job stability, and other opportunities. Findings of the present study showed that occupational motivations indeed, have a strong influence on why the participants decided to enter the military academy.

Maria chose to study in the military academy, so she could have a stable job and secured future when she graduates. She said,

“...syempre pagkagraduate mo kasi doon secured na yung life mo. May salary ka na, kaya mo nang mabuhay mag-isa.”

“...of course, when you graduate, you’ll have a secured life. You already have a salary, you can live independently.”

Meanwhile, aside from the stability of job that cadetship could offer, Amy, Angel, and Mae considered pursuing the military because it is free. Mae explained,

“Kasi sabay-sabay kaming nag-aaral eh (mga kapatid). Parang yun nga, ang ano ko diba is to lessen the burden. In terms of parang financial sa parents ko para yung pera is nakafocus na lang sa mga kapatid ko, hindi na ako sasama ba sa paggagastusan nila.”

(“We (siblings) all go to school at the same time. Like that's its, my goal is to lessen the burden. In terms of finances of my parents, their money will be focused on my siblings, like I am already not part of what they need to spend money on.”)

In entering the military academy, all expenses will be covered by the government, cadets are also provided with allowance. The participants see this opportunity, so they could study with ease in terms of financial issues. Lesser expenses mean lesser burden to their family.

Theme 3: A Promise of Support

Findings revealed that family has a strong bearing in determining the career-related choices of the participants. The participants’ decisions to enter the military academy were greatly influenced by their parents or their family backgrounds. The value of parent-child relationships could influence the career aspirations and future plans of an individual (Palos & Drobot, 2010).

One of the participants, Amy, developed a clear understanding of which career path to take because of her father. She unveiled that her father is a military officer and has a huge background regarding the system of entering the military academy. Knowing that one of her family members has a first-hand experience of what is it like inside the military academy, she gathered the courage to pursue cadetship. A study by Helmus et al. (2018) confirmed that family history is a critical factor which influences an individual to join military service. Familial ties offer ideas and detailed background of a career path through experience. Whereas Amy got the idea that education in military academies is free through her father.

On the other hand, Angel and Maria are greatly influenced by the encouragement of their mothers to enter the military academy. Angel's mother is an Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW). Her mother suggested that she should try taking the entrance exam. Maria had no intention of entering the military academy. However, her mother consistently encouraged her to take the exam so she could have a secured life in the future. At the same time, the military academy is much nearer to their home compared to her previous school. Maria also mentioned that that's the only time her mother requested something to her therefore, she tried her best to enter the academy.

"Siguro 'yung constant encouragement na lang talaga ng mama ako ang nag-udyok sa akin to shift. Kasi parang si mama hindi siya ma-request na tao parang ganun. And that's just one time na gusto niya akong mapalapit and magkaroon ako ng secured na future...Pero you can see it talaga, in her eyes, na sana ito yung piliin mo parang ganun parang kahit hindi niya sabihin."

("I guess it was my mom's constant encouragement that really made me shift. My mom is the kind of person who doesn't ask a lot of things. It was the only time that she wanted me to have a more secured future. I could see it in her eyes that she really wanted me to choose it without saying it to me.")

Family influence is a vital feature in career-decision making of an individual (Fouad et al., 2015). Amidst the participants' feeling of uncertainty in whether to pursue or not the military profession, the influence of the people around them and their family backgrounds subsidize the finality of their decision to try and enter the military grounds. Having one of their family members to have the same career path as they gave them another level of support and courage.

In addition, the participants' motivations to enter the military academy were affected by their aspiration to follow the footsteps of their parents and/or considering their family environment and situation and utilize these realizations and choose a career path that would better their lives.

Table 3

Themes for the Challenges Encountered by the Outstanding Female Cadets who entered the Military Academy

Theme	Description	Participant	Sample Response
Facing Ambivalence	This theme describes the dilemma of outstanding female cadets on whether to pursue their career or resign.	Amy Angel Maria Mae	“In the first week, I wanted to resign. I was totally shocked by everything that was going on. I just wanted to resign so I wouldn't suffer. I just wanted to be outside. I couldn't take what was going on.”

Proving Oneself's Worth	This theme pertains to how the participants strived to prove themselves beyond the doubts of being a female in a male-dominated space.	Amy Angel	"The stereotype was always there like what I mentioned earlier. I told myself, "This is enough." If we didn't do well, we were depreciated. We were told it's because we were females. That's the reason why we were weak."
Battling Physical Limitations	This theme describes how the participants considered the physique of women as a limitation to perform physical tasks inside the academy.	Mae Angel Maria	"It was just the physical limitations of the women. We had a different physique compared to men. Even if we said, "We were physically strong," it was still different."

Theme 1: Facing Ambivalence

Findings showed evidence that the participants are facing ambivalence inside the military academy. Their lack of military background, feeling of difficulty in adjustment period, and doubting one's abilities cause them continual fluctuations toward their goals. Two (2) participants claimed that entering the military academy without further background or information about how the system works inside will eventually lead to a problem involving their adaptation and adjustment skills.

Angel had no military background at all. None of her family members were former military officers or have an idea of what was going to happen inside the academy. Having no background has limited her on setting her main goals.

“Ako, ang goal ko lang mag-survive. Pero yung mga specific goals talaga na kailangan mag-air force ako, na kailangan magtop 10 ako, hindi ko...kasi nga pumasok nga ako nang hindi ko alam yung pinasok ko. ‘Yun ‘yung problem ko.”

(“Me, my only goal is to survive. But the specific goals that I need to join the air force, that I need to be part of the top 10, I did not...because I entered the military academy without knowing what’s inside. That’s my problem.”)

In relation to Angel’s experience, Mae’s lack of background also led her to feel confused. Her lack of military background contributed to her dilemma into finding out how she would be able to live her life inside the academy. She added, “It took me a week to digest what’s happening around me.”

Witnessing and experiencing the military training and how the system worked inside the military academy, the participants had trouble in handling situations and deriving possible decisions. Military training was designed to prepare the individuals to execute physically and mentally challenging tasks at the highest degree of proficiency (Fletcher & Chatelier, 2000). It provides a simulated-based environment to immerse the participants into a military identity. With that, participants who lived their lives as a civilian for many years experienced an utmost blow in conditioning themselves inside the academy.

Two (2) participants disclosed how they were close to quitting upon exposing themselves to the real culture inside the academy. During her first week inside the academy, Mae thought of resigning. She revealed,

“At yung first week kasi gusto ko magresign. War shock ako sa mga nangyari hindi ko alam kung gusto ko na magresign yung di na ako maghirap. Parang sa labas na lang ako. Hindi ko pa nadadigest yung mga nangyari.”

(“In the first week, I wanted to resign. I was totally shocked by everything that was going on. I just wanted to resign so I wouldn’t suffer. I just wanted to be outside. I couldn’t take what was going on.”)

Maria had a similar experience. Due to the toughness of training inside the academy, she had a hard time handling her mental stability, she also thought of quitting. She quoted *“Yung first day ko don talagang feeling ko resigning na ako kasi rigorous training tapos hindi kasi ako sanay din na nauutusan o nasisigawan. Kaya, talagang nahirapan ako, physically and mentally.” (I could remember my first day and I thought of giving up because of the rigorous training. I was not used to taking orders or being yelled at so it was really hard both physically and mentally.)* The extreme process of inculcating the military identity contested the impending cognitive growth of an individual and may incapacitate one’s awareness of a wider perspective (Iverson et al. 2016) thus, making them consider resigning as an option.

Another ambivalent experience that the outstanding female cadets encountered inside the military academy is their period of adjustment. The participants experienced a hard time to adjust themselves in an institution where civilian lifestyle is removed. Three (3) participants considered their first year in the academy as the most difficult phase of their journey. Angel had a realization of how different it is to live inside the military academy compared to the civilian world. Amy had a similar viewpoint with Angel. She perceived her first few weeks to be stressful because she had to familiarize herself to the new routines inside the academy.

“Ganito ba talaga to? Kaya ko ba to? Grabe talaga parang mga ano pa lang...yung first 2 months kasi yung familiarization ba pero doon na talaga ipapafeel sayo na wala ka na sa civilian world.”

(“Is it really like this? Can I do this? The first two months were intense because we were made to feel like we were not in the civilian world.”)

“Talagang ano, mahirap siya. Yun yung pinakamahirap na phase, physically, emotionally, mentally, talagang naaano ka, mastress ka. Kasi magiging ka ng maaga, magpeprepare ka ng gamit mo. Maglilinis ka rin ng barracks kasi nga yun ang trabaho

niyo. May rules and regulations pa tapos nag-aaral ka pa. Tapos may physical pa na training.”

(“It was really difficult. It was the most challenging phase. We were tested physically, emotionally, mentally, etc. We were really stressed because we had to get up so early and prepare our things. We would clean the barracks because it’s one of our tasks. There were a lot of rules and regulations. We had to study as well plus the physical training.”)

Maria is not used to people shouting at her and ordering her around. That’s why she had a hard time to condition herself in an environment where her actions are limited and there are instructors who are extremely strict.

“So pagdating ko doon parang na-war shock ako ganyan kasi parang lahat ng salita puro sigaw, tapos hindi ka...parang very minimal na makapagsabi ka ng “No” dapat “Yes, sir! Yes, ma’am!” lahat.”

(“So when I arrived there, I was really shocked because everyone was yelling. There were few chances of refusal. Everything was “Yes, Sir” or “Yes, Ma’am.”)

Military organization is sometimes considered as a “greedy institution,” opted to demand a high level of commitment from those who enter the service (Helmus et al., 2018). According to a study conducted by Patten & Parker (2009), female veterans found readjusting to civilian life after their military service was very tough. This finding displayed a significant gap between life as a civilian and as a military officer.

Theme 2: Proving Oneself’s Worth

The participants recognized the military as a male-dominated profession. The presence of physical risks supported the culture of masculinity limiting women to certain gender norms and biases; gender stereotyping. As mentioned by Avery & McKay (2005), gender stereotyping enables the minority employees, in this case, women to have a lower perception of their competence which affected their opportunity to advance within the organization.

In line with this, the participants in the present study noticed several situations where their opportunities were limited because of their gender. Amy mentioned that several individuals in their hometown questioned her decision to enter the military academy. She said, *“Yung mga tao doon sa amin, iniisip nila na hindi ko kaya kasi nga raw babae ako.”* (The people in our neighborhood thought that I could not survive because I am a woman.) Similar to Amy, Angel also added that as females, there are standards that they need to meet and maintain.

“Hindi pa rin talaga maaalis yung ano eh pagstereotype sa babae na yun nga kagayunung kwinento ko na (sasabihin ng mga lalaki) “Sige na, tama na yan!” o di kaya kapag ano ikaw yung mahina “Mahina naman kasi talaga kayong females kasi kaya ganto ganyan eh..” “Kaya nahihirapan females kasi...”

(“The stereotype was always there like what I mentioned earlier. I told myself, “This is enough.” If we didn’t do well, we were depreciated. We were told it’s because we were females. That’s the reason why we were weak.”)

She also mentioned that during their physical fitness tests, for example, one of her female classmates would outrun one of her male classmates, male cadets would really try their very best to catch up because they take pride in the military. Men who are seen as firm masculine archetypes for example, soldiers often feel a burden to live up to it, whatever the cost (Connell, 2000). This attempt of attaining a definite image of a real man most likely produces a discriminating behavior towards the opposite gender. As a result, men often take pride in excelling to male-dominated environments such as the military ground.

Theme 3: Battling Physical Limitations

The last theme that emerged in the challenges faced by the outstanding female cadets is the presence of physical limitations. Mae, Angel, and Maria believed that the females’ body

make-up is different from males. This difference elicits a significant gap between the capabilities of men and women when it comes to physical fitness activities. Participants are aware that the presence of physical limitations is a huge hindrance for them to excel in strenuous activities.

According to Fenner (2001), this self-awareness was noticeable in physical training programs where the gap between female and male cadets was emphasized by the gender norming of fitness standards. Mae mentioned that strenuous activities were not easy to perform especially when you are not used to it. She explained,

“Sa babae yung ano physical limitations ng babae, yun ang pinakauna. Iba yung physique natin sa ano talaga ng lalaki eh.”

(“It was just the physical limitations of the women. We had a different physique compared to men. Even if we said, “We were physically strong,” it was still different.”)

According to Angel, the presence of physical limitations attributed to women’s physique sometimes affect their physical training activities;

“Alam naman kasi talaga nila na physically mahina ‘yung babae sa mga lalaki. So, kunwari tatakbo kami ng 10 km tapos ikaw...talagang ‘yung babae talaga ‘yung nagpapabagal.”

(“They knew women were physically weak like when we ran for 10 km. They would really say women were ones making it slow.”)

Aside from the physical limitations due to the body build-up of females, Maria revealed that she was overweight when she entered the military academy. Her body mass upon entering the military academy limits her to perform several tasks and makes it hard for her to execute strenuous activities.

“Sabi ko nga yung physical aspect dahil medyo overweight ako nung pumasok kaya nahirapan din ako doon.”

(“I blamed my physique since I started a little overweight. It was really hard for me.)

According to Drain et al. (2015), the physical capacity of an individual is a critical attribute for employment in military service and other public safety organizations. This requirement is utilized to secure the competence and capability of employees when it comes to heavy and skill-related tasks. Females can also be receptive like males when it comes to muscle development (Kraemer et al. 2001).

However, military institutions are consistent towards the improvement of cardiorespiratory and muscle endurance in training programs which could be a large fall back to women, considering their physique, thus giving them a challenging experience.

Table 4

Themes for the Coping Processes of the Outstanding Female Cadets in dealing with the Challenges

Theme	Description	Participant	Sample Response
Enabling Environment	This theme pertains to the supportive resources that provided them a buffer against their adverse life encounters as female cadets.	Amy Angel Maria	“I share my stories with my roommates then, we cry with each other. Because you could feel that we’re experiencing the same thing. I am not alone.”

Rising above the situation	This theme refers to the personal strategies developed by the participants to deal with their challenges and barriers.	Amy Angel Mae	“...maybe because I have a goal. For me, if you have a goal, it is clear in my mind that these are the things that I need to do in order to achieve my goals.”
Overcoming one’s limits	This theme describes how the participants exerted effort in overcoming their physical limitations.	Amy Angel Mae	“If I couldn’t keep up because of my physical limitations, at least, I tried to be on par with them. I didn’t think I needed to be strong because I am a woman. I thought I had to be strong because they were all strong.”

Theme 1: Enabling Environment

Results showed that the participants’ environment plays a significant role in assisting them towards their goals. It helped them deal with the challenges they encountered inside the military academy. These supportive resources provided them a buffer against their adverse life encounters as female cadets. Both Amy and Angel are thankful to their families’ support. Amy said that the support she receives from her family encouraged her to work harder.

“Binibigay lang nila yung suporta nila sa kin. Syempre, bilang balik lang din, suklian yung efforts nila, syempre gagalingan mo din talaga.”

(“They gave their support to me. For me, it’s giving the favor back to them, and I did my best for that. I saw how much they supported me so I just made them feel that their support was worth it.”)

Amy added that she met her boyfriend inside the military academy. She also emphasized that having her significant other beside her and throughout her journey inspired

her to strive more and survive the everyday challenges of being a female cadet. Correspondingly, Angel's family had a great impact on her coping process because they always reassure her that she can do it. She said,

“Pero thankful din ako sa parents ko na lagi nila ako nireremind na kaya ko. Na hindi mawawala yung takot pero kung ganyan lang, matatakot ka lang, hindi mo malalaman yung naghihintay sayo.”

(“But, I was very thankful for my parents for always reminding me. The fear was always there, but I told myself nothing would happen if I was just scared and do nothing.”)

Meanwhile, aside from family, Maria found emotional support from her classmates. She was able to build friendship inside the military academy which also served a major part in her support system. She explained,

“Shinashare ko yung ano ko kwento ko sa mga roommates ko, then we cry with each other. Kasi parang feeling mo ganito rin pala yung pinagdadaanan nila, parehas lang pala kami. Hindi lang pala ako nag-iisa.”

(“It was when I shared my stories with my friends. Then, we cried because we had the same sentiments. I thought they also went through the same things. We were the same so I didn't feel alone.”)

According to a study conducted by Vojvodic & Dedic (2019), social support was one of the key factors that protect military personnel against emotional distress. Social support was said to be a significant factor in helping military personnel against anxiety and depression brought by adverse working environments. Moreover, as mentioned by Helmus et al. (2018), camaraderie and unit leadership could improve the retention and recruitment rate of military officers; which are also forms of social support.

It is also important to consider family as a crucial factor for they played a huge impact on the success of outstanding female cadets to rule the military grounds, which could also be

rooted to the value of family-centeredness shared by many Filipinos (Capuno & Morillo, 2013). In line with these, to battle the challenges of outstanding female cadets, adjusting themselves to the military environment, conquer their physical limitations, and to keep their mental stability, they surround themselves with the people who support them and give them companionship.

Theme 2: Rising Above the Situation

Depending on how the participants perceived their experiences, they develop different strategies on how to deal with it. This varies on the factor or situations which challenge the participants the most. These attitudes and characteristics that they nourished inside the academy helped them to rise above their situations. Amy learned that in order to handle her shortcomings inside the academy, she has to start with end in mind. She stated, *“Mag-set ka ng goal sa isip mo kung ano yung gusto mong mangyari sa buhay mo and start with the end in mind.”* (Set a goal in your mind, what you want to happen in your life. Start with the end in mind.) Likewise, Mae also viewed goal setting as a significant strategy so she could overcome the barriers and finish the race.

“..siguro dahil may goal ako... Para sa akin, dahil may goal ka, parang clear sa mind ko na ito yung mga dapat kong gawin para maachieve ko yon.”

(“..maybe because I have a goal. For me, because you have a goal, it's clear in my mind that these are the things that I need to do in order to achieve my goals.”)

Mae also explained the value of being goal-oriented when you are inside the military academy. She added,

“Dahil may goal ako. Kasi para sa kin yun yung tingin ko na naneneglect ng iba na pag naglakad ka kasi o kunwari bumyahe ka kung hindi mo tinignan, kung wala kang goal from point A to point B, pupunta ka pa...pag wala kang goal dadaan ka ng maraming

points bago makarating don. Pero ikaw pag may goal ka, pwede kang pumunta doon using a straight line. Para sa akin, dahil may goal ka, parang clear sa mind ko na ito yung mga dapat kong gawin para maachieve ko yon. Siguro dahil may goal ako at ginawa ko yung mga bagay na nararapat para maachieve yung goals na yon tapos consistent. Kasi pag sinabi mong gagalingan mo ngayong araw tapos bukas maglalie low na ako, di mo maaacheive yon. Gawin mo siyang system. Maging consistent ka na ginagawa mo yung everything para maachieve yon. Being hardworking, being consistent and most importantly faith with God.”

(“Because I have a goal. For me, I think what other people neglect is when you walk or travel without looking ahead, if you do not set a goal from point A to point B, and then you move forward, you will encounter many points before you reach where you are heading. But, if you gave a goal, you can walk straight from it. For me, because I have a goal, it is evident in my mind the things that I need to do to achieve it and be consistent. Because if you said that you would do your best today, then tomorrow, you would lie low, you will not make it. Let it be a system. Be consistent by doing everything to achieve it. Being hardworking, being consistent, and, most importantly, faith with God.”)

Although Angel also learned the importance of setting a goal in mind, she emphasized that her goals should not be a hindrance on how she’s going to live her life inside the academy, *“May goal ako pero hindi ko hahayaan na ipressure ko yung sarili ko para sa goal na yon. To the point na hindi ko maeenjoy yung moments, yung process ba. May goal ako pero at the same time alam ko naman kung paano ibalance na maging masaya.”* *(I have my goals, but I don’t want to pressure myself. I also want to enjoy the process of achieving them. I have goals, but I also want to balance my life and have fun.)* She cleared out that her goals should not be the reason to stress herself out. Despite her having goals, still, she should learn how to maximize and enjoy her moments as a female cadet. To her, is important to take into consideration the value of learning how to balance her life inside and outside the military grounds.

The participants emphasized the role of goal setting in increasing their opportunities for success and survival inside the military academy. To become a well-rounded cadet, they have to satisfy the four pillars of education and training of the military academy branded by

CAMP (Character, Academics, Military Skills, and Physical Fitness). They must excel not only in one aspect but be balanced to all. In order to fulfill the duties aligned with this acronym, they need to set specific goals in mind. “Take one day at a time”, as Mae said.

She emphasized that their everyday life inside the academy was really exhausting. Choosing to always look far ahead, waiting for your life to begin without maximizing most of the moment you are in and figuring out how to survive that particular day won’t make your life easier as a female cadet.

With that, the participants added that having a definite goal in mind is what others most likely to neglect as a cadet. Being able to start with the end in mind enables them to acquire a lucid understanding of which actions they must take, paths they must advance, and risks they may attempt.

Theme 3: Overcoming one’s limits

One of the main challenges in the journey of outstanding female cadets in the military academy is their physical limitations. Despite the participants’ knowledge of their situation, they learned that in order to overcome this barrier, they must also exert efforts in overcoming their limitations. Amy claimed, “...*you should really push yourself to the limits.*” Considering her physique, as a female, she should not let herself become a burden to other people. She understood that she had to keep moving forward. Angel talked about how female cadets should not let the stereotype about women get into their system. She should not let what other people say about women define her.

“Syempre kahit naman sabihin mong di pare-parehas ng lakas, kahit na sabihin mong wala na yun na talaga yung limit pero ano talaga eh...maaano ka na dapat pilitin mo

kasi yung babae ka hindi mo kumbaga, hindi mo dapat pang diba meron na ngang inaano yung mga tao iniistereotype nila na yung babae mahina, dapat hindi mo na kumbaga, patunayan pa.”

(“Of course, the comparison was there. The stereotype will never go away. Yet, we have to prove it wrong. We know there is a difference in physical strength, but we don’t have to condone that idea.”)

Likewise, Mae argued that in order to overcome her limitations, her physical limitations as a female should not limit her drive to strive for more. Since males are strong physically, she has to become strong physically, too. She explained,

“Kung hindi ko masasabayan kasi nga may physical limitations atleast lumapit or if they train hard, magtatrain hard ka din. Parang wag mong isipin na, hindi ko inisip na, ay babae kasi ako hindi na ako magsisikap magpalakas. Kailangan kong magpalakas kasi malakas sila.”

(“If I couldn’t keep up because of my physical limitations, at least, I tried to be on par with them. I didn’t think I needed to be strong because I am a woman. I thought I had to be strong because they were all strong.”)

As mentioned earlier, the existence of gender norming in the fitness standards emphasizes the gap between the physical capabilities of men and women. While women felt empowered, that they could confront the traditional norms inclined to women, they were open to accept that the gap between men and women in physical attributes is biological and fixed (Silva, 2008). She also added that many women believed that overpassing the institutional standards; men’s abilities as superior, was important to gain respect from their male colleagues. Participants in the present study saw that the opportunity to overcome their limits is not just an accessory to achieve recognition from males but to also prove themselves as females.

Their decision to push through their limits despite the existing barriers that challenge their physical limitations was to defy gender norming standards and to prove that women do

also accelerate in a male-dominated world. One participant also mentioned that she may not be able to exceed the performance of males, at least she should not get tired of trying. If males are strong, women are and should be strong also.

Research Question 2: Describe the significant stories of outstanding female cadets who entered a male-dominated profession.

There are four (4) themes that emerged in the significant stories of outstanding female cadets inside the military academy. These themes include their perception of experience, unforgettable experiences, significant turning points, and how their success inside the military academy affected them.

Participants Stories

Amy

Upon entering the military academy, she considered her first year as the most critical phase of her cadetship. What she experienced at the beginning of her journey was physically, mentally, and emotionally stressful. In her last year of cadetship, she was given an opportunity to become one of the company commanders of their batch. She considered this opportunity as a challenge to prove her capabilities as a woman. She needed to be strong so she could be a great example to her underclass. Amy finished seventh in her batch.

Through her journey inside the military academy, she's able to learn how to become more understanding to other people. She learned how to value others upon making a decision and to always be humble. Her achievement, graduating as part of their batch's honor roll has given her pressure. Other people have subjected her to certain standards and expectations;

however, she has focused herself on achieving her goals; to handle her job properly and to become a military pilot. On top of that, she also viewed her achievement as an uplift to the morale of women. Her journey could be an inspiration to the youth that despite the hardships she experienced inside the academy, she had done it. “We, as females, could prove to others that we are strong, unique and someone worthy of respect and recognition.”

Angel

Angel described her experience inside the academy to be difficult. It was tough for her to make a lot of adjustments mentally and physically. Since she grew dependent on her family, she had a hard time living by herself and became responsible for her actions. When she's a plebe, her father died due to a heart attack. She experienced a major dilemma whether to continue her cadetship or to just quit and live with her family. Due to persistence and motivation to be of help to her family, she's able to transform herself into a female cadet with the embodiment of military identity. She learned how to be considerate of others and she learned how to make the most out of her experience. She chose to look at the brighter side and fight for her dreams. Amy graduated ninth in her batch. Her journey inside the academy is not just her achievement alone but of all women, in general. Women could thrive and survive in a male-dominated world.

Maria

When she entered the military academy, she thought of resigning a lot of time. She was not physically prepared, and she found it difficult to completely adapt and adjust herself to the system inside the academy. Apart from that, they were not allowed to communicate to their loved ones outside for one (1) year. She had to battle homesickness. Defying the challenges,

she encountered in her cadetship, she learned the essence of discipline. She also learned how to overcome her fears and battle her own limitations. Learning how to balance the four (4) cores of the military academy; character, academic thinking, military training, and physical, she graduated as the class valedictorian of her batch. Her achievement is a statement that women are not on a disadvantage when it comes to leadership.

Mae

Mae struggled in her first week when she entered the military academy. Everyday, she had to satisfy the goals of CAMP; character, academics, military skills and physical fitness. She had to think of her actions based on the academy's rules and regulations, excel in her academics, fulfill the military training and balance her physical fitness. However, as she persevered to satisfy the CAMP, the success rate of her opportunity to graduate increased which made her overall journey hard but fulfilling. The military academy transformed her into an individual driven by her goals. Her experiences inside the academy taught her to always live with a goal in mind and do things to achieve this goal, and to always live with integrity. Mae graduated tenth in her batch.

Considering her achievement, Mae did not think of it as a determinant to her future. She believed that this kind of achievement is just accessories in life but the lesson she gained in her journey throughout time will remain in her forever. However, still, she sees her achievement as an education to people of both genders. She believed that her journey is evidence that men and women could live in an environment without underestimating each other. In a male-dominated world, it is alright to have women. It is better to have women to improve the system.

Table 5

Themes for the Significant Life Stories of Outstanding Female Cadets

Theme	Description	Participant	Sample Response
A Challenging Experience	This theme describes how the participants view their experience inside the military academy.	Angel, Maria Mae	“Well like any other people who entered the academy, life in PMA is really hard. It was really tough. I could remember my first day and I thought of giving up because of the rigorous training. I was not used to taking orders or being yelled at so it was really hard both physically and mentally.”
An Unforgettable Experience	This theme pertains to the unforgettable experiences of the participants which enabled them to gain perspectives in life.	Amy Angel Maria Mae	“When I became a company commander because that’s a very rare opportunity. They believed in my capabilities therefore, I believed in myself. And eventually, I was able to manage.”
A Life-Changing Experience	This theme talks about how the participants developed their character or attitudes inside the military academy.	Amy Angel Maria Mae	“In the academy, I would say it will really chance your identity. It was like you were to be melted and molded into a whole new being. I used to short-tempered. Now, I don’t argue with my siblings. I learned how to care for them and understand them. I also considered the welfare of other people, not just myself. There will always be someone greater or lesser than me.”
An Empowering Experience	This theme discusses how the achievement	Amy, Angel	“We, as females could raise our pride. We were so proud because

of outstanding female cadets (graduating as part of their batch's honor roll) uplifted their pride as women.

Maria
Mae

“We, as females could raise our pride. We were so proud because we became inspiration to the youth since they would think it was difficult living in the academy, yet we conquered it as women. Because of that, we were able to encourage others to do what we accomplished by showing who we are now. We, as females can prove to others that we are strong, unique, worth of respect and recognition. We could prove that we shouldn't be taken lightly.”

Theme 1: A Challenging Experience

The data gathered show similarities on how the participants viewed their journey and experiences inside the military academy. Military has a distinct system with an established organization of work bound by rules and regulations that need to be attained by an individual. Their lives while inside the military academy were solely based on four components; character development, academic thinking, military training, and the physical aspect. These four components are what they call CAMP. Experiencing such different aspects, three (3) participants perceived their journey to be difficult and challenging. Maria and Amy described their experiences to be tough and that affect two different aspects of their lives, physically and mentally. Maria mentioned that even during her first day inside the academy, she already felt the rough road she's about to take.

“Well like any other people who entered the academy, life in PMA is really hard. Talagang sobrang hirap niya. Yung first day ko don talagang feeling ko resigning na ako kasi rigorous training tapos hindi kasi ako sanay din na nauutusan o nasigawan

kaya talagang nahirapan ako, physically and mentally ganun.”

(“Well like any other people who entered the academy, life in PMA is really hard. It was really tough. I could remember my first day and I thought of giving up because of the rigorous training. I was not used to taking orders or being yelled at so it was really hard both physically and mentally.”)

The life that Maria lived outside the military academy was far different to what she had to experience inside the academy. Maria also explained that the toughness of training limited her opportunities for setting her goals:

“Actually, sa sobrang hirap ng pinagdaanan ko doon, parang hindi ko naisip yan. Ang gusto ko na lang matapos yung araw ganun. Parang mga short-term goals lang. Pagkagraduate ko tsaka ko na lang naisip na ay ito na pala ‘yung tatahakin kong daan, ganun.”

(“Actually, after all the severe challenges I experienced there, I’ve never thought about that. I just wanted the day to pass. It was just a small wish. After graduation, that was the only time I realized this is the path that I need to take.”)

Similar to Maria, Amy also described her adventure inside the military to be difficult due to the rigorous training. Amy also mentioned that the population of female cadets inside are lesser compared to males. Considering the presence of females in the military academy, training and physical tests are adjusted considering their physique however, this is not a reason for them to not push through their limits.

“Tapos yon, sa loob naman ng academy, syempre konti lang kayong mga babae. Mahirap talaga kasi yung mga adjustment, yung mga ano, mga exercises, mga gawain, kumbaga meron siyang leeway na binibigay pero hindi gaano. kumbaga andoon yung pride mo bilang babae. So ang kailangan tapatan ko to, ang kailangan ipakita ko sa inyo na kung kaya ko, kaya nga ng babae eh, paano na lang kayo?”

(“Just like that, in the academy there were few women. It was hard to make the adjustments for the exercises and daily routine. We had free time but not that much. So I really had to keep up with everyone and show my pride as a woman that I can do everything and to make people realize that if I am capable of doing these things, everybody can.”)

Mae, on the other hand, described her experience to be self-fulfilling despite the hardships and challenges that she encountered. Satisfying the four major aspects (CAMP) established inside the academy exposes the participants to punctilious activities which help them grow thus, giving them self-fulfillment. She explained,

“Hard but fulfilling. Irerelate ko na lang siguro everyday mahirap yung ginagawa namin kasi may ano kami eh may kailangan namin magperform physically. Bale, may tinatawag kasi kaming CAMP sa academy. Ibubuild yung character mo, academic thinking, military yung M tapos physical yung P, CAMP yon. Tapos yung everyday life sa academy bale, kailangan namin i-satisfy yon...pero dahil everyday na nasasatisfy ‘yung mga ‘yon, tumataas yung success rate mo para makagraduate sa academy.”

(“It was hard but fulfilling. I could relate this to our daily routine. We have to perform daily physical activities. Here, we have to fulfill CAMP, which is character building, academic thinking, and for M that is for military, and P for physical. We need to satisfy CAMP. As CAMP is satisfied every single day, your success rate to graduate also rises.”)

Maria, Amy and Mae also emphasized that the hardest phase they consider the most is during their first year. According to Gold & Friedman (2000), the newness of experience and the incapability of a new cadet to take control of the situation were ones of the major contributors of their stress. Aside from the exhausting training that is new to them and that they need to face, this is also the phase where they need to learn how to adapt and adjust themselves to the new environment and people they had to live with in the military academy. Just like Maria, who’s not used to taking orders or being yelled at, she had a tough time to take a grasp of the situation. Individuals who entered the military were subjected to a social system with different physical and social conditions (Dar & Kimhi, 2004) compared to the civilian world. Inside the military, individuals were subjected to a principle of command (Vojvodic &

Dedic, 2019) thus, making it hard for them to let go of the things they used to do outside the academy without being hindered by the people around them.

Theme 2: An Unforgettable Experience

Critical reflection occurs when an individual construe their experiences into relative realizations. This involves the social context of reflection. Critical reflections comprise the conscious understanding of why an individual attach meaning of what he/she does, roles and relationships, into reality (Hoyrup, 2004) which could imply transformational learning. Unforgettable experiences of the participants enable them to gain critical reflections that'd changed their perspectives and viewpoints inside the academy. Amy and Mae both considered their designation as company commander inside their academy as their most unforgettable memory. This experience of theirs taught them how to value their worth as females inside a male-dominated environment. Amy learned how to challenge her limits as a female so that she could perform excellently as a female leader and become an admirable model to her underclassmen. She argued,

“Yun nga ‘yung mga challenge ko rin sa pagiging babae na kailangan patunayan mo na standard ka. Kaya kailangan malakas ka para pwede mo sabihan yung underclass mo na magpalakas kayo. Kumbaga, ichallenge mo sila na talunin mo yung ganito ko. Kumbaga, ikaw dapat yung ano isang tao na pwede nilang maging standard.”

(“Those were my challenges as a woman. There’s the demand that I needed to meet the standard. I had to be strong so I could encourage my underclass. I had to make myself as their standard. I wanted them to reach my level and become stronger. I made myself the line they need to cross.”)

On the other hand, although Mae also considered her task as a company commander to be her biggest turning point, she learned differently compared to Amy. What Mae realized in

that experience, as the only female in her batch to become a company commander, is how to learn from her mistakes and that there is always an opportunity to improve herself.

“I was overwhelmed with the designation given to me. Proud of myself during my term but as I look back to the past, I always thought that I could have done a lot of things to make my company better.”

Maria gained knowledge from overcoming the training she experienced inside the academy. She was able to experience a lot of ‘first time’ which made her understand the importance of trying to achieve self-fulfillment.

“First time kong magrope climbing, tumalon sa helicopter, magrappelling ganyan. So lahat ng yon, very unforgettable siya. And doon ko narealize na, fulfilling pala kapag natapos mo kasi nakikita mo yung iba takot din sa heights ganyan tapos ikaw though takot ka parang naovercome ka. Nagkaroon siya ng impact sa growth ko.”

(“It was my first time to do rope climbing, jump off a helicopter, and do rappelling. With all of that, it was very unforgettable. There, I realized that it’s fulfilling when you’ve done it because you would see others who were also scared in heights too but you, though you’re scared, it’s like you overcame it. It did have an impact on my growth.”)

Overcoming her fears contributed a significant improvement to her character growth. Meanwhile, Angel experienced a tragic incident concerning her father. She mentioned that while her father and her younger sibling were on their way to visit her, her father had a heart attack. She lost her father while she was inside the academy. This incident triggered a dilemma which pushed her to question herself,

“Edi inisip ko magresign na kaya ako? Hindi ko na ipagpatuloy ‘to. Pero, I realized na kung gaano ko sinupport ni Papa, ng parents ko, tapos kung magreresign ako, ano nang mangyayari sa akin? Mas lalo lang din akong magiging pabigat kay Mama.”

(“I was thinking of resigning, but I realized how much I was supported by my dad, my parents. Then, I thought if I resign, what will happen to me? I might just be a burden to my parents. I thought like that.”)

Growing up, Angel is dependent on her parents. Angel's shortcoming encouraged her to learn how to stand for herself and become responsible for her decisions so that she could be of help to her mother and siblings. According to a study conducted by Komolthiti (2016) to describe the meaning making process of female superintendents, the occurrence of critical incidents helped the participants learn and acquire leadership skills. Relative to the present study, participants encountered a major turning point in their journey which made them learn and develop new viewpoints which helped them to overcome their existing dilemmas. Such participants' unforgettable experiences contributed to their understanding and application of the purpose and value of their journey inside the military academy.

Theme 3: A Life-Changing Experience

Findings showed evidence that the outstanding female cadets who entered the military academy elicited significant changes and development in their character. Development in the personality of each participant varies; however, they had similar understanding on how the training and experiences inside the academy helped them grow. These changes in the participants include learning military professionalism, discipline, understanding people and becoming selfless. Amy recalled how the academy has helped her to overcome her weaknesses. Through her experiences, she developed a deeper understanding of the people around her which enabled her to improve her relationship with her younger sibling. She said,

“Doon sa academy, masasabi ko talaga na babaguhin talaga yung pagkatao mo. Kumbaga, para kang tutunawin tapos imomold ka nila sa ibang bagay. Kaya nga kung dati, mainitin ang ulo ko, ngayon hindi na kami nag-aaway ng kapatid ko. Na-learn ko na i-care yung tao...intindihin siya. Iniisip mo rin yung kapakanan ng iba, hindi yung ikaw lang. There will always be greater tsaka lesser person than you are.”

(“In the academy, I would say it will really change your identity. It was like you were to be melted and molded into a whole new being. I used to be short-tempered. Now, I

don't argue with my siblings. I learned how to care for them and understand them. I also considered the welfare of other people, not just myself. There will always be someone greater or lesser than you are.”)

Likewise, Angel also developed her interpersonal skills. She said, “Before I began my cadetship, when I don't like the person, I don't like him at all.” The people she interacted with inside the academy came from different places and different backgrounds. This realization taught her how to be considerate of the people around her.

“Pero doon sa military academy talaga ano...dahil nga iba-iba kami ng background, galing kami sa iba't ibang lugar tapos makakasama mo sa room 'yung taong hindi mo naman kilala....So isa yon sa mga nadevelop sa akin, kung paano mo...kung paano ka makipag-interact sa ibang tao. To be more understanding and considerate sa feelings ng tao.”

(“But there in the military academy, because we have different backgrounds, we came from different places, and then we'll live with the people we don't know of. So that's one of the things that developed in me, how to interact with other people. To be more understanding and considerate to the feelings of others.”)

Furthermore, Maria and Mae emphasized their character changes towards becoming more disciplined and optimistic in life. Maria mentioned military professionalism in a form of becoming more mature when it comes to decision-making. She explained,

“Compared to the previous me, siguro nandoon na yung nacarry out mo na yung military professionalism na disciplined and mature mag-isip, hindi padalos-dalos.”

(“Compared to my previous self, I have carried out military professionalism. I feel more disciplined and mature. I try not to act carelessly.”)

Although Maria gained a change in character and attitude, she cleared out that these developments are just additions to who she is. She was still able to retain the positive characters she has possessed before and incorporated it to her newly learned ones. She said, “..but at the same time, your previous characters such as being bubbly, sociable never fade. They just improved because you became organized, disciplined and cautious.” Similarly, Mae also

talked about how the academy influenced her to develop discipline. She also learned how to consider other people when she makes a decision. She stated, *“You were trained to not only decide reactively but you have to decide...like before when I’m asked a question, my response would only be a ‘yes’ or a ‘no.’ Now, there are things that I must consider before giving an answer.”*

Relatively, these changes that the participants acquired inside the academy are patterned to the four components they need to establish; character, academic, military, and physical (CAMP). As stated by Roberts et al. (2008), military training integrates socialization processes, establishing an environment in which development of personality transpires. Confirming this premise, participants are able to distinguish significant changes and development in their personality; comparing it to who they are before they entered the military academy and who they are today. Cadets are immersed in tremendous training and activities wherein civilian status is worn out and military identity is applied (Jackson et. al., 2012). Mae explained,

“The academy will take away some of your civilian attitudes in order to fully transform you into a military person... But, this is very effective because when you go outside the academy, you will have a broader perspective about things because of the transformation in character you have experienced inside the academy.”

Theme 4: An Empowering Experience

Another theme emerged from the participants’ narratives of their journey inside the military academy. Findings showed that the success of these outstanding female cadets to withstand the challenges of entering the military academy embolden them to take pride of their achievement. The participants claimed that their achievement, graduating as part of their

batch's honor roll, considering the lesser population of women inside the academy, serves as an evidence that women, too, could also excel and execute tasks in a male-dominated environment. Amy thinks of her achievement as an inspiration to women, to encourage them to also try entering the military academy. She indicated that in the military academy, women are at par with men, sometimes women can even surpass them.

"We, as females, kaya ihayag yung bandera ng kababaihan. Sobrang proud kami noon kasi syempre inspiration na rin sa iba yung mga youth na syempre iisipin nila, mahirap diyan sa loob tapos nakaya ng mga babae. Ibig sabihin, pwede kaming maka-encourage or itry na pumasok kayo dito kasi ito kami, ito kami ngayon. We, as females can prove to others that we are strong, unique, and someone worthy of respect tsaka recognition. Kumbaga, hindi kami basta-basta."

("We, as females could raise our pride. We were so proud because we became an inspiration to the youth since they would think it was difficult living in the academy, yet we conquered it as women. Because of that, we were able to encourage others to do what we accomplished by showing who we are now. We, as females can prove to others that we are strong, unique, worthy of respect and recognition. We could prove that we shouldn't be taken lightly.")

Similar to Amy, Angel and Maria also view their success in the military academy as evidence that women could thrive in a male-dominated environment. Angel argued that women could break stereotypes. Bearing in mind of their achievement, women should learn how to stand up for themselves. Maria also mentioned that nowadays, a lot of women could demonstrate good leadership skills. Angel and Maria's statement are as follows:

"...pero dapat iano natin sa sarili natin na kasi hindi lang naman tayo nag-stand up sa sarili natin kumbaga para rin sa mga babae na kahit sa ibang profession na nakakaexperience ng discrimination. Kasi ito yung success namin hindi lang naman siya sa females sa batch namin pero sa females as a whole. Kaya natin mag-thrive, mag-survive, mag-rise sa isang male-dominated world."

("..but we have to think that we did this not just for ourselves but to all women who experience discrimination in all professions. This success is not dedicated to just ourselves but to all women as a whole. We want to show that we can thrive, survive, and rise in a male-dominated world.")

“Ang masasabi ko lang you erase that kind of thinking na kasi as of this generation, marami nang females ang umaangat at kayang-kaya na rin natin. Hindi na tayo papahuli sa paglead sa iba nating kasamahan.”

(“All I can I say is get rid of that mentality. Because in this generation, there are many women who rise in the society, and we don’t want to be left behind.”)

On the other hand, Mae viewed this achievement slightly different. Although she also considered this as an uplift to the morale of women, the necessary message here is that people should educate themselves that both men and women could work in harmony.

“...siguro educating ‘yung males pati females na kaya nating magtraining, mabuhay, sa isang environment na hindi minamaliit yung isa’t isa. Hand in hand both male and female. ‘Yun siguro yung education na ganun na dati ang tingin siguro ay ano maliit tayo sa sistema, maliit tayo, hindi ganun yung contribution natin, siguro yung education na okay lang may female. Mas magandang may female para umunlad yung sistema.”

(“It could be educating men that women can do training and live in the environment without being belittled. We should help each other. That was the idealism that was taught in the past. We were seen as a small part of society. We didn’t have many contributions. It was okay that we had to maintain our level. Yet, I think women should also take part to develop the system.”)

Being able to rule the military ground despite the big difference between the number of men and women gave the outstanding female cadets a great sense of authentic pride and a moment to recognize their development despite the challenges that hindered them with regards to their gender. The participants also perceived that even in a male-dominated profession, to better its system, women are also needed.

Flowers Among Thorns: Reliving the Stories

Women who entered a profession dominated by men is already a story, but women who entered a profession dominated by men and managed to finish with flying colors is another story yet to tell. Military was considered to be the most masculine out of all other professions

(Heineken, 2002). Despite this existing barrier inclined to their gender, these outstanding women bravely finished their cadetship and managed to rule the military grounds by graduating as part of their batch's top students. Their journey inside the military academy was full of in-between. They entered the military academy with the hopes of refining themselves owing to the fact that they saw this profession as a personality match, and with the hopes of securing their future as they viewed a lot of opportunities inclined with joining the military forces. More than these, they were also fueled with the encouragement and support from their families and loved ones.

At the back of this story of success, there were copious hindrances and difficulties that challenged their day to day lives. Welcomed with rigorous military training and physical exercises, they were faced with ambivalent feelings whether to continue or to resign. Some also questioned their worth and physical capabilities because they were females in a male-dominated environment. Indeed, a challenging experience. Although filled with situations that confronted their determination, these experiences that shaped them became unforgettable memories that enriched their journey towards military professionalism. Holding on, some might have belittled them, but some continued to linger, cheered and supported them along the way. Instead of letting themselves be eaten by the circumstances that hindered their journey, the outstanding female cadets chose to surround themselves by the people that would bring out the best in them and were willing to walk with them regardless of how rough the path was. They also learned how to overcome their fears and limitations, they gave extra efforts to push themselves to the limits and prove that they were worthy of becoming a female military officer. These women have also put emphasis on giving importance to goal orientation. This character of them, always starting with the end in mind, greatly helped them to survive the everyday

battles of being inside the military academy. And even though they saw this journey as tough and challenging, the military training and the expectations of the people around them as a difficulty, the transformation that this expedition has brought them was life changing. Satisfying the four pillars; CAMP (Character, Academics, Military Training and Physical Fitness) successfully changed their negative civilian attitudes and turned them into a military person that's worthy to be called a leader. Women encountered a lot of difficulties when trying to succeed in points of leadership due to their gender (Merchant, 2012). She also added that roles of leadership required a goal-oriented approach which were more prominent to men. However, this journey of outstanding female cadets proved how roles of leadership could be attained by women, as well as being goal-oriented as the key approach to their success achievement of women to rule the military grounds; a male-dominated profession, gave them a sense of empowerment, a call to continue to battle the existing gender stereotypes, and an inspiration to all the women who experience discrimination, that they can thrive and survive in a male-dominated space.

As stated by Dator-Bercilla (n.d.), gender advocates in the Philippines had unceasingly fought and lobbied for the passage of valuable laws and built organizations to address the issues concerning women. Eliminating poverty and diminishing the gaps between social classes is equal with representing the issues encountered by women (Sobritchea, 2005) therefore, women's rights and interests should be consistently pushed at the structural level. And addressing this challenge through education and other channels, counselors also play a vital role. In counseling women in the military, counselors need to consider that the perplexity women experience does not entirely rely on themselves but also in situational and cultural aspects that inhibit their development and limit their opportunities. In a male-dominated

environment such as the military, it is crucial for the counselors to maintain and support an environment where women could grow without pre-existing biases. And to aid other women in the military and other male-dominated spaces, it is also significant to gain valuable insights to the practices and processes that led women towards success in various employment settings (Bimrose, 2001) showcased by the present study. Breaking the stereotype is not just about the equal proportion of men and women in an institution, but rather ensuring a gender-sensitive environment wherein women are given available opportunities that are not limited to their gender.

CHAPTER IV

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter presents the summary of the study, findings, conclusions drawn from the findings and corresponding recommendations for application and further research.

Summary of the Study

Military has been identified to be prototypically masculine out of all other professions. The presence of physical risks has supported a culture of masculinity, expecting male military officers to display a dominant image over women. With that, the present study is rooted on the excellent performance of female cadets to successfully rule the military academy; to graduate as part of their batch's honor roll despite the existing issues and nuances of entering a male-dominated profession. In response to this, this study sought to explore the motivations, challenges encountered and coping processes towards success and describe the significant stories of the outstanding female cadets. The present study utilized a Life Narratives Research Design to develop a comprehensible frame of outstanding female cadets in their significant stories of success in the military academy. The researcher interviewed four (4) female cadets who graduated as part of their batch's top ten (10) within the range of batch 2014 to batch 2019. To gather data from the participants, the researcher conducted the interview session either in person or via phone call and video conference. The present study aimed to describe the significant life stories of outstanding female cadets who entered a male-dominated profession and explore their motivations, challenges encountered, and coping processes to deal with the barriers inside the military academy.

Summary of Results

Outstanding female cadets who entered a male-dominated profession faced different experiences that challenged and encouraged them to aim for success. Three (3) themes emerged in the motivations of women in entering the military academy, A Promise for Security; one of the main factors that encouraged women to thrive in a male-dominated environment is to lessen the burden of their families and to secure the stability of their future, A Promise of Support; the constant encouragement and support from their families also motivated them to pursue their cadetship and A Personality Match wherein the outstanding female cadets view military service as an opportunity to develop and improve themselves parallel to their skills and personality. Although the outstanding female cadets vision their cadetship as a positive professional opportunity, they still faced several challenges that swoon their determination and motivation. The participants, upon entering the military academy, faced ambivalence and such uncertainty as to which decision they must approach. The presence of rigorous military training and change of environment challenged their drive whether to continue their journey inside the academy or just resign and go back to their civilian lives. Since the military is culturally determined as a male-dominated profession and identified to be prototypically masculine out of all other professions (Heineken, 2002), the outstanding female cadets also struggled to battle the stereotypes relating to their gender. Some of their colleagues would label them with assumptions pertaining to the limitations of their gender; especially in their physical attributions.

There are three (3) key themes that emerged in the coping processes of outstanding female cadets in a male-dominated profession. First, these female cadets surrounded

themselves with the social support from their families, friends, and significant others. They encircled themselves in an enabling environment where they were provided with reassurance to their capabilities and a buffer against their adverse life encounters. Another one is their drive to rise above the situation. The outstanding female cadets developed certain techniques such as setting a goal in mind, lowering their hubristic pride and making the most out of their experiences. Lastly, despite the physical limitations attributed to the physique of women, these outstanding female cadets decided to overcome their limits; they strive to level themselves to the endurance displayed by men or sometimes exceed their level. Furthermore, four (4) key themes emerged describing their significant stories; A Challenging One; outstanding female cadets described their experiences as tough and difficult. It involved tasks and activities that were new to their system and that challenged their motivations to strive or defy their limitations. An Unforgettable One; the participants encountered exceptional experiences that shaped their character inside the academy, A Life-Changing One; as they thrive for more, these challenging experiences turned their civilian attitudes into military professionalism, and An Empowering One; as women who hustled their future in a male-dominated profession, their achievement (graduating as part of their batch's honor roll) provided them a sense of empowerment, being able to withstand the challenges of entering the military academy embolden them to take pride of their capabilities as women.

Limitations of the Study

The outstanding female cadets who participated in the interview are only limited to two (2) batches; batch 2017 and batch 2019. One (1) participant is from batch 2017 and the other three (3) participants all came from the batch of 2019. Such limitation prohibits a wider pool

of experiences from the participants. The participation of outstanding female cadets from other batches could elicit a great variation of life stories towards success in a male-dominated profession.

Conclusion

Relative to the data that emerged in the present study, these are the conclusions drawn. Even though women have long been a part of military service, they are still faced with challenges relating to their gender. Primarily, the physical training and strenuous exercises cause the people around them to build certain expectations that defy their performance because of their physical attributes as women. In addition, family plays a big part in the journey of outstanding female cadets inside the military academy. They play a fundamental role in motivating the participants to enter a male-dominated profession and while inside the academy, they also serve as an inspiration to the outstanding female cadets to thrive for success despite the challenges. The journey of outstanding female cadets is not just a battle against the military environment but also an inner struggle to confront their shortcomings. As a result, they established the value of being goal-oriented and learning how to overcome their limits. And lastly, the success of outstanding female cadets to rise in a male-dominated profession is not just an attest to bring empowerment to women alone but rather, an education that despite the pre-existing gender biases in a workplace such as military service, women and men could work in harmony and in the same environment.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. The researcher encourages the military academy to strengthen gender sensitive programs and existing policies in order to address the challenges encountered by the participants and other female cadets.
2. In developing counseling intervention programs for the female cadets, it is suggested to include the families in the counseling process for they play a significant role towards their journey inside the military academy.
3. In guiding the female students toward career decision-making, school counselors are encouraged to widen the options by not limiting them to career choices inclined only to their gender.
4. Further qualitative studies focused on the common gender stereotypes experienced by women in the context of the Philippines must be conducted. This might include other workplaces that are considered male-dominated aside from military service.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A

Sample Interview Guide Questions

1. Can you tell me about your experiences as a female cadet in the military academy?
2. What made you choose military as a profession?
3. How did the people around you (e.g. parents, siblings, peers, etc.) react when you entered the military academy?
4. Describe yourself before you entered the military academy.
5. What are your goals or expectations upon entering military?
6. Will you please describe the challenges and barriers you encountered *before* you entered the military academy?
7. How did you deal with the challenges and barriers you encountered?
8. How did you feel when you finally entered the military academy?
9. How was your relationship with the people (friends, teachers, etc.) inside the military academy?
10. Will you tell me about the challenges and barriers you encountered *while you were inside* the military academy?
11. How did you deal with the challenges and barriers you encountered inside the military academy?
12. Despite the existing challenges and barriers you encountered inside the military academy, what motivated you to keep going?
13. Please describe yourself *while you were inside* the military academy. (Were there any changes? Improvement?)
14. Please describe the *advantages* of being a female cadet inside the military academy.
15. On the other hand, please describe the *disadvantages* of being a female cadet inside the military academy.
16. Describe your difference and similarities from the *male cadets* inside the academy.
17. Describe your difference and similarities from the *female cadets* inside the academy.
18. Describe your most unforgettable experience as a female cadet inside the military academy.
19. What are your characteristics which supported your achievements?

20. How does your achievement (graduating as part of your batch's honor roll) affect your life?
21. Overall, if you would give your journey in a male-dominated profession; military a title, what would it be and why?

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

Please read this form carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Purpose of the research study:

The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of outstanding female cadets who entered a male-dominated profession such as military.

Procedures:

The researcher will utilize a semi-structured interview. The researcher will be presenting several questions about your experiences inside the military academy. There is no time limit to answer each questions. You may freely discuss/ narrate whatever you want to share regarding the question being addressed.

Risk and benefits:

There are no foreseeable and apparent risks present in the study. The potential benefit of your participation includes awareness and deeper understanding on your life journey as an outstanding female cadet.

Incentive or compensation:

You will be given a simple token of gratitude as an acknowledgement of your voluntary participation in the study.

Confidentiality:

Under RA 10173, also known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012, the researchers will guarantee the regard for ethical considerations, and such will be performed conspicuously at all times. It is rest assured that confidentiality will be highly observed in terms of any personal information we may be retrieving and the test results. No harm will be tolerated during the data gathering process, and debriefing procedures will be done after the test administration. The researchers may provide the test results to the respondents through e-mail or personal messages.

Right to withdraw from the study:

You have all the right to refuse or discontinue from the study at any time, without any due consequence. The researcher, Ma. Gelene S. Galindez may address your concerns and inquiries through e-mail and personal messages. Kindly contact 09970662657/galindez.mgs@pnu.edu.ph, respectively.

Researcher:

GALINDEZ, MA. GELENE S.
V-1 BSMA Psychology

Agreement:

If you wish to participate in the study, we request you to sign this form over your printed name. Your signature will indicate your agreement on the mentioned conditions above.

Signature over printed name

Date

APPENDIX C

Personal Information Sheet

NAME: _____ AGE: _____ BIRTHDATE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CONTACT NO.: _____ E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

YEAR GRADUATED: _____ HONOR: _____

CIVIL STATUS: _____ CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS: _____

APPENDIX D



PHILIPPINE NORMAL UNIVERSITY
The National Center for Teacher Education
Taft Avenue, Manila
COLLEGE OF TEACHER DEVELOPMENT
COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND TEACHER
EDUCATION RESEARCH

_____,
Good Day!

I, Ma. Gelene S. Galindez, currently up taking Bachelor of Science - Master of Arts in Psychology and Counseling at Philippine Normal University is working on my graduate thesis entitled ***“Flowers Among Thorns: Life Narratives of Outstanding Female Cadets in the Philippines”***

In line with this, I would like to request your expertise in reviewing the survey form and interview questionnaire that I developed in order to ensure its reliability and validity. Given your experience on the field, I believe that your cooperation will help me develop a credible scale. Attached are the rationale of the study, personal information sheet, and interview questionnaire.

I am hoping for your favorable response.
Thank you and God bless!

Sincerely yours,

Ma. Gelene S. Galindez
Researcher
BS/MA Psychology and Counseling

NOTED BY:

Dr. Armina Mangaoil
Thesis Adviser

APPENDIX E

Validation of Interview Questions

Please check the box that corresponds to your evaluation on the following items with regards to their relevance to the study.

Questions	Retain	Revise	Remove	Comment/s
1. Will you please describe your experiences in entering a military service, a male-dominated profession?				
1.1 What is your most unforgettable experience inside the military academy? Of being a female cadet?				
1.2 Describe yourself before, during and after you entered a male-dominated profession.				
1.3 What are the advantages of being a female in a male-dominated profession?				
1.4 On the other hand, what are the disadvantages of being a female in male-dominated profession?				
1.5 Based on your experiences, what made you different from other male cadets? Female cadets?				
1.6 What do you think are the characteristics that you possess which led you to your achievement?				
1.7 How does your achievement, graduating as part of your				

batch's honor roll, affect your life?				
1.8 Considering your achievement, what are your plans in the future?				
1.9 What advice will you give to those women who also aspire to enter a male-dominated profession?				
1.10 Overall, if you would give your journey in a male-dominated profession a title, what would it be and why?				
2. What are your motivations, challenges encountered, and coping process in entering a military academy?				
2.1 What are the factors that you considered in choosing a career path?				
2.2 How did these factors affect your decision?				
2.3 What made you choose military service as a profession?				
2.4 How did the people around you (e.g. family, peers, etc.) react when you entered a male-dominated profession?				
2.5 What are your goals or expectations upon entering the military academy?				
2.6 Will you please describe the challenges and barriers you encountered before you				

entered the military academy?				
2.7 How did you deal with the challenges or issues you encountered?				
2.8 How did you feel when you finally entered the military academy?				
2.9 Will you tell me about the challenges and barriers you encountered when you were inside the military academy?				
2.10 How did you deal with the challenges and barriers you encountered inside the military academy?				
2.11 Despite the existing challenges and barriers you encountered inside the military academy, what motivated you to keep going?				

SUGGESTIONS:

APPENDIX F



PHILIPPINE NORMAL UNIVERSITY
The National Center for Teacher Education
Taft Avenue, Manila
COLLEGE OF TEACHER DEVELOPMENT
COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND TEACHER
EDUCATION RESEARCH

Good Day!

I, Ma. Gelene S. Galindez, currently up taking Bachelor of Science - Master of Arts in Psychology and Counseling at Philippine Normal University is working on my graduate thesis entitled “***Flowers Among Thorns: Life Narratives of Outstanding Female Cadets in the Philippines***”

In line with this, I would like to request your expertise in reviewing my themes in order to ensure its validity. Given your experience on the field, I believe that your cooperation will help me develop a credible feedback to my research study. Attached are the summary of themes and validation sheet.

I am hoping for your favorable response.
Thank you and God bless!

Sincerely yours,

Ma. Gelene S. Galindez
Researcher
BS/MA Psychology and Counseling

APPENDIX G

Validation of Categories, Concepts and Themes

Flowers Among Thorns: Life Narratives of Outstanding Female Cadets in the Philippines

Instructions: Please read and evaluate the suitability of the concepts to the themes and vice versa. Check any of the applicable column at the right. Mark “Agree”, if you agree that the concepts are suitable to the themes, and “Disagree”, if not. If you do not agree, kindly mark “Revise” and state your comments on the last column (ex. Delete, move to __, add to ____). Thank you.

1. Describe the significant stories of outstanding female cadets who entered a male-dominated profession.

Participant's Indicative Statements	Agree	Disagree	Revise	Comments
1. Describe the significant stories of outstanding female cadets who entered a male-dominated profession.				
• Perception of Experience Description: This theme describes how the participants view their experience inside the military academy. Angel - “<i>Yon, yung cadetship ko sa PMA, mahirap talaga siya. Sobra-sobrang adjustment talaga na physically, mentally.</i>” Maria - “<i>Well like any other people who entered the academy, life in PMA is really hard. Talagang sobrang hirap niya... talagang nahirapan ako, physically and mentally ganun.</i>” Mae - “<i>Hard but fulfilling. Irerelate ko na lang siguro everyday mahirap yung</i>				

<i>ginagawa namin kasi may ano kami eh may kailangan namin magperform physically.”</i>				
• Personality Development Description: This theme talks about how the participants developed their character or attitudes inside the military academy. <i>Amy - “Doon sa academy, masasabi ko talaga na babaguhin talaga yung pagkatao mo. Kumbaga, para kang tutunawin tapos imomold ka nila sa ibang bagay.”</i> <i>Angel - “Tapos, isa siguro sa greatest lessons ko pa sa PMA na kapag kinompare ko yung sarili ko...sa pag-intindi ng ibang tao...”</i> <i>Maria - “Compared to the previous me, siguro nandoon na yung ano...nacarry out mo na yung military professionalism na disciplined and mature mag-isip...”</i> <i>Mae - “I am disciplined and optimistic. Yes, there are a lot of improvements in terms of the physical aspect and the emotional aspect of my life.”</i>				
• Critical Reflections Description: This theme pertains to the unforgettable experiences of the participants which enabled them to gain perspectives in life.				

Amy – “Yung nagcompany commander ako kasi very rare na ano yun eh...rare opportunity yon na maging CO...kumbaga, ano sila, naniniwala sila na kaya ko. So, pinaniwalaan ko rin yung sarili ko na kaya ko...” Angel - “Na-heart attack yung tatay ko tapos namatay siya so hindi na talaga kami nagkita... Edi inisip ko magresign na kaya ako? Di ko na ipagpatuloy to. Pero, I realized na kung gaano ko sinupport ni Papa, ng parents ko tapos kung magresign ako, ano nang mangyayari sa akin?” Maria - “First time kong magrope climbing, tumalon sa helicopter, magrapelling ganyan. So lahat ng yon, very unforgettable siya. And doon ko narealize na, fulfilling pala kapag natapos mo kasi nakikita mo yung iba takot din sa heights ganyan tapos ikaw though takot ka parang naovercome mo. Yun nga, nagkaroon siya ng impact sa growth ko... ’yon.” Mae - “Noong nag-company commander ako kasi lahat ng company commanders noon ay mga lalaki at ako lang yung babae at that time...Siguro hindi pa ganun kamature yung leadership ko at that time kaya naiisip ko yung mga ganung bagay. Siguro maganda siya kasi may experience ka na				
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<i>tapos narerealize mo yung pagkakamali mo para maimprove yourself."</i>				
Women's Pride Description: This theme discusses how the achievement of outstanding female cadets (graduating as part of their batch's honor roll) uplifted their pride as women. Amy - <i>"Syempre nakakaproud sa aming part ng pagkakabae syempre parang ano' to eh.. "Oh diba nakaya namin dapat kayo din."</i> Angel - <i>"Kasi ito yung success namin, hindi lang naman siya sa females sa batch namin pero sa females as a whole. Kaya natin mag-thrive, mag-survive, mag-rise sa isang male-dominated world."</i> Maria - <i>"Ang masasabi ko lang, erase that kind of thinking na kasi as of this generation, marami nang females ang umaangat at kayang-kaya na rin natin. Hindi na tayo papahuli sa paglead sa iba nating kasamahan."</i> Mae - <i>"Yun siguro yung education na ganun na dati ang tingin siguro ay ano maliit tayo sa sistema, maliit tayo, hindi ganun yung contribution natin, siguro yung education na okay lang may female. Mas magandang may female para umunlad yung sistema."</i>				

APPENDIX H

Validated Themes

1. Describe the significant stories of outstanding female cadets who entered a male-dominated profession.

Significant Life Stories	
Theme	Description
A Challenging Experience	This theme describes how the participants view their experience inside the military academy.
An Unforgettable Experience	This theme pertains to the unforgettable experiences of the participants which enabled them to gain perspectives in life.
A Life-Changing Experience	This theme talks about how the participants developed their character or attitudes inside the military academy.
An Empowering Experience	This theme discusses how the achievement of outstanding female cadets (graduating as part of their batch's honor roll) uplifted their pride as women.

2. Explore the motivations, challenges encountered, and coping processes of outstanding female cadets in a male-dominated profession.

Motivations	
Theme	Description
A Personality Match	This theme describes how becoming a military officer matches their skills and ability and that they're interested on how the military academy will develop them.
A Promise of Security	This theme pertains to self-interested determination to exert high levels of effort toward motivations found within the marketplace.

A Promise of Support	This theme discusses how their decisions to enter the military academy were greatly influenced by the support from their parents or their family backgrounds.
Challenges Encountered	
Theme	Description
Facing Ambivalence	This theme describes the dilemma of outstanding female cadets on whether to pursue their career or resign.
Proving Oneself's Worth	This theme pertains to how the people around them reflect normative notions relating to their gender (female).
Battling Physical Limitations	This theme describes how the participants considered the physique of women as a limitation to perform heavy and physical tasks inside the academy.
Coping Processes	
Theme	Description
Enabling Environment	This theme pertains to the supportive resources that provided them a buffer against their adverse life encounters as female cadets.
Rising above the situation	This theme refers to the personal strategies developed by the participants to deal with their challenges and barriers.
Overcoming one's limits	This theme describes how the participants exert effort in overcoming their physical limitations.

APPENDIX I

Sample Transcript

R: Maaari niyo po bang ikuwento sa akin ‘yung experiences niyo po sa loob ng military academy?

P: Well like any other people who entered the academy, life in PMA is really hard. Talagang sobrang hirap niya. Yung first day ko don talagang feeling ko resigning na ako kasi rigorous training tapos hindi kasi ako sanay din na nauutusan o nasisigawan kaya talagang nahirapan ako, physically and mentally ganun.

R: Ano po ‘yung mga factors na nag-motivate sa inyo kung bakit pinili niyo pong mag-aral sa (name of school)?

P: Actually, hindi yun yung first...wala talaga akong balak mag-PMA. Kaso kasi parang inencourage ako ng mother ko, pinakiusapan niya ako na magtry lang. So, yun. Major factor siguro yung nanay ko kasi siya yung nagpalaki sa amin. Siya lang. Kaya parang naging mama’s girl ako, I can’t say no, so triny ko lang.

R: Ano po ‘yung naging reason ng mother niyo po kung bakit sinabihan niya po kayo na mag-aral sa (name of school)?

P: Hindi niya sinabi sakín pero inassume ko na syempre pagkagraduate mo kasi doon secured na yung life mo parang ganun, may salary ka na, kaya mo nang mabuhay mag-isa. And at the same time, mas mapupuntahan niya ako kasi yung previous na school is in Batangas kaya malayo sa Ilocos Sur so hindi niya ako napupuntahan kaya pag lilipat akong Baguio mas malapit at mas mapupuntahan niya ako. Ganun yung reason niya, feeling ko.

R: Pero noong umpisa po ma’am, hindi niyo po talaga choice na mag-aral po sa isang military academy po?

P: Hindi, parang triny ko lang siya to pacify my mom’s request parang ganun.

R: Maaari ko po bang malaman kung ano po ang perspective niyo sa isang military school bago po kayo makapasok po doon?

P: Mga naririnig ko lang na kwento na mahirap doon, na maraming cases ganyan, marami ding namamatay ganun. Mga usual lang na sinasabi-sabi tungkol sa military institution.

R: Ano po ‘yung naging impact po o epekto ng ganung perspective po about sa military academy?

P: Sakin kasi, siguro nagserve siya as ano...challenge kasi may pinsan ako na galing din doon. Class 2013 naman siya. Tapos parang nakita ko na kaya niya naman, siguro mas mahirap pa

yung napagdaanan niya kaysa sa generation natin ngayon ganyan. Yun, triny ko. Na-challenge ako, ganun.

R: Noong pinili niyo po na mag-try sa isang military institution po, ano po ‘yung naging reaksiyon po ng mga tao sa paligid niyo po? ‘Yung family niyo po, ‘yung friends...

P: Yung family ko syempre masaya sila kasi una, hindi na nila po problemahin yung tuition ko ganyan. Tapos, talagang buong family ko yung suportado kung ano man yung desisyon ko. And sa friends ko naman, konti lang kasi yung nakakaalam kasi hindi ko naman piang sasabi basta nalaman na lang nila nasa loob na ako ganun.

R: May mga kapatid po ba kayo, ma’am?

P: May tatlo po akong kapatid na lalaki, lahat nakakatanda sa akin.

R: Ano po ‘yung naging reaksiyon po nila?

P: ‘Yung kapatid kong panganay, yun ay graduate naman siya ng PNPA kaya tuwang-tuwa talaga siya kasi parang merong kasama sa lineage niya ganyan. Yun, support naman nila ako pati yung dalawa.

R: ‘Yung father niyo po, ma’am?

P: ‘Yung Papa ko at that time, matagal ko na siyang hindi nakikita so wala rin kaming komunikasyon kaya hindi ko alam.

R: Ahh okay po. Bale, hindi niyo po kasama sa bahay ‘yung father niyo po?

P: Oo. Matagal na silang separated ng mother ko.

R: Okay po. Ngayon naman po, maaari niyo po bang i-describe kung ano po kayo bago po kayo pumasok sa loob ng military academy?

P: Actually, bago ako pumasok, siguro pakikay din ako gaya ng iba ganyan. Mahilig din akong magbihis kasi nga before ako pumasok education student ako so kailangan ko formal manamit ganyan, nakaheels pa ako, yun.

R: Ahhh bale, nag-take pa po kayo ng ibang course bago po kayo pumasok sa (name of school)?

P: Yeah. Natapos ko yung 2nd year college ko ng education bago ako pumasok ng (name of school). Hobbies ko lang din naman is magbasa which is nadala ko pa rin hanggang sa nasa (name of school) na ako. Just an ordinary girl siguro.

R: Bago po ba kayo pumasok sa military school, mayroon po ba kayong mga certain goals or expectations na gusto niyo po ma-attain?

P: Since BS Education ako dapat by the time na mareach ko yung 25 years old dapat nakapag-masteral na ako ganyan. Gusto ko rin kasi...gusto ko din talagang mag-doctorate kaya yun. Yun yung ultimate goal ko magkaroon ng PhD. Actually, sa sobrang hirap ng pinagdaanan ko doon, parang hindi ko naisip yan. Ang gusto ko na lang matapos yung araw ganun. Parang mga short-term goals lang. Pagkagraduate ko tsaka ko na lang naisip na ay ito na pala yung tatahakin kong daan, ganun.

R: Okay po. Mayroon po ba kayong mga certain challenges na na-encounter bago po kayo pumasok sa loob ng military academy?

P: Una dyan is yung physical readiness ko kasi nga before ako pumasok masyado akong mabigat. Siguro, nasa overweight akong side and wala akong time for exercise kasi busy din ako sa mga researchers mga ganyan sa course ko. Una yon, wala akong time to be physically ready para pumasok. And may dilemma din ako kung ano, kasi nag-eeenjoy din ako sa course ko as education student so nagdadalawang-isip ako ano ba talaga ang gusto ko. Magsisimula ulit ako or itutuloy ko na lang kasi hindi naman ako pinipilit ng magulang ko eh. Parang ineencourage nila ako but they let me do the decision. Yun, dilemma. I'm comfortable...comfortable na ako sa education and yun tapos maganda rin naman yung ano parang career path ko doon kasi yung nakuhakong scholarship sa education, 4 years free tuition fee siya. Then, may free dormitory din, may stipend din, may allowance ganyan and pagkagraduate may guarantee ka na na makakapasok ka sa isang school ganyan. Kaya yun, nahirapan din akong mamili.

R: Pwede ko po bang malamang 'yung pinakaturning point niyo po or najor reason ng pagshishift niyo po since nabanggit niyo po na kumportable na po kayo sa una niyong kurso?

P: Siguro yung constant encouragement na lang talaga ng mama ako ang nag-udyok sa akin to shift. Kasi parang si mama hindi siya ma-request na tao parang ganon. And that's just one time na gusto niya akong mapalapit and magkaroon ako ng secured na future so yun. Yun, siguro. More on actions kasi siya eh. Makikita mo the way she ano she acts ganyan. Pero hindi siya verbally na sinasabi parang ang sabi niya lang ikaw anak bahala ka, ang gusto ko lang ganito. Pero you can see it talaga, in her eyes, na sana ito yung piliin mo parang ganun parang kahit hindi niya sabihin.

APPENDIX J

Life Stories

“Evolution”

Amy, as the eldest, dreams of giving her family a good life. She did not grow up in a well-off family. She considers herself lucky because she's able to support her own studies, she applied for scholarships to fund her high school and college fees. That time, it became clear to her mind that as the eldest, it is her sole responsibility to always take care of their future. She took Political Science for one semester however; she did not like it. She wasn't sure of what she'd like to do in college but not until her father encouraged her to take the exam in the military academy. Amy's father is a soldier. Her father gave her enough background on how it is like to enter the academy. Aside from the encouragement from her father, she considered the decision of taking the exam because the academy offers a free education and secured a job in the future. The process she underwent to try-out for the military academy was not easy. They had to borrow money so she could travel from her hometown onto the academy.

Nevertheless, she took the exam when she was 17 years old, she passed, and the next chapter of her life began. Inside the academy, there were only a few females. It was truly difficult for her to adjust because of the strenuous exercises. She felt the need to push herself to the limits and show others that she's capable of withstanding the challenges inside the academy despite her physical limitations. It was part of her thinking that time, as a female cadet, to beat her male colleagues and show them that females were not just like that. Amy considers her first year as the hardest phase inside the academy. She had to adjust herself to the new environment and new people she'll live with. Academics made the following year hard

for her. They were expected to master everything that they've learned in the previous year and expect them to relay these learnings on their underclass. That time, she understood the importance of balancing and time management. On the other hand, she viewed her third year in the academy as the most relaxing period. They had to take leadership tasks because they had a lot of underclassmen to take care of. In her last year, she became one of the company commanders of their batch. Being a company commander is a very rare opportunity. She didn't know why she was chosen. However, she believed that if the people around her entrusted this responsibility to her, who is she to distrust her abilities? Eventually, she was able to manage her duties well. Another significant thing that she gained inside the academy is having her first boyfriend. She considered this as one of her most unforgettable memories. She sees her boyfriend as one of her inspirations to keep moving forward and to stay inside the academy.

Despite all the challenges that Amy faced inside the academy, she's still able to finish and graduate with flying colors. Amy mentioned that her achievement brought her pressure. She felt the need to meet the expectations of the people around her because she's part of the outstanding students of her batch. But at the same time, she also viewed her achievement as an uplift to the morale of women. Their achievement, having female cadets as part of their batch's honor roll could be an inspiration to the youth and encourage them to also try.

Amy, similar to the process of evolution, underwent a transformation. From small to big, from simply acquiring knowledge and experience and up to being fully equipped, she evolved into a better version of herself. She quoted, "We, as females, can prove to others that we are strong, unique, and someone worthy of respect and recognition." Now, Amy is a 2nd Lieutenant in Philippine Air Force and is undergoing training to become a military pilot.

“Into the Unknown”

Angel is the eldest among her siblings and the only female in her family. Her cadetship served as a big challenge because she's used to the presence of her parents. She's a bit spoiled and she's treated as the princess of their family since she's the only female. She studied Psychology for a year in Manila. She really loved Psychology and she wanted to have that job when she graduates however, her mother encouraged her to take the exam for the military academy. She knew nothing about the military, but her mother and relatives encouraged her to try because in the military academy, education is free and she'll have a secured future when she graduates. Without having much background about what she's going to enter, Angel took the exam and she passed. However, there was a problem. She was only 16 years old when she passed the examination. Therefore, she waited for another year so she could eventually apply again. During that process, reflecting on the decision she's about to make, and the opportunities that she could attain when she entered the academy, Amy realized how she wanted to pursue the military.

During her first days inside the academy, she had a dilemma whether to continue or not. The military environment and the instructors really made her feel the difference between living in a civilian world and living inside the academy. She underwent a big adjustment process physically and mentally. She also thought that maybe if she chose to stay outside the military academy, she'd be happier, she'd get to enjoy the things that she couldn't as a female cadet. The education she experienced inside was not just about academics but a holistic training where academics was not just the only focus, there was physical training and character development.

She also experienced a pelvic strain, she had a hard time moving her body for weeks. She couldn't do much strenuous exercises because of the unbearable pain. Aside from that, inside the academy, they could barely get a hold of their family outside for about a year. They had minimal interaction and communication with them. During her vacation, her father and her brother planned to visit her inside the academy. On their way, her father had a heart attack. This was one of Amy's biggest challenges inside the academy. This tragedy made her consider resigning. To lose her father in the process was one of the greatest barriers of her cadetship. But then, she realized how her father supported her in her journey. If she wished to not continue her cadetship anymore, she would be a burden to her mother.

And as time went by, the military academy helped Angel to overcome her weaknesses and let her embody the attitude and character of a military officer. Angel finished ninth in her batch. Her mother was a bit skeptical about it because the news got all over the media, full name and even their whole address were revealed. On a more serious note, this could be a threat to their security. On a positive note, her family was proud of her. She also received a token of recognition from their municipality. Angel was faced with a lot of struggles during her cadetship, but she learned that she had to defeat her demons. She believes that her success is not just for females in her batch but for all women even in other professions. She trusts that women can thrive and survive in a male-dominated world.

“Beating the Odds”

Maria is the youngest and the only female in her family. She studied BS Education for two years before she entered the military academy. She was happy in the course that she took but not until her mother encouraged her to shift and pursue the military. Her mother wanted

her to study in a school that is nearer to their hometown. Aside from that, she's also aiming for free education and secured life after graduation offered by the military academy. To pacify her mother's request, she tried out for the military academy. Her family was really happy when she passed because her tuition fee and other finances would not be their problem anymore. When she first entered the academy, she was anxious. She was really nervous because suddenly someone would just yell at her, she could not appreciate the quiet atmosphere because it appeared to be scarier than how it looked like. She faced a lot of challenges during her first years in the academy. First, was to battle her homesickness. She had no communication with the outside world for a year, she missed her family so much. Another thing is Maria is not used to taking orders and to the people yelling at her. So when she entered the academy, she had no other choice but to lower down her pride and learn how to adjust herself to the new environment. Maria was a little overweight too. She struggled in performing the strenuous exercises and kept up with her colleagues in terms of physical training.

Although faced with a lot of barriers that hindered her inside the academy, Maria was able to meet and gain a lot of friends. She said that the common thing between her and her friends was that they were all determined to survive. They were never quitters. They were all competent and determined to prove that they could be successful even in a male-dominated profession. Maria finished as the class valedictorian in her batch. Aside from the academic award, she also received leadership awards that recognized her excellent performance inside the academy. She believes that she's able to strive to the top because she learned how to balance her character, academics, military training, and physical activities. She also did her best and persevered so she could bring pride to her family. As an ordinary girl who did not think of becoming a military officer and an ordinary girl who just loves her mother so

much, what are the odds that she would be the one chosen? Maria also added that as of this generation, we should remove the gender stereotype linked to females. There are a lot of females who bring pride to their chosen field of work and females are also competent when it comes to leadership. Maria is now a Navy Ensign and the academic secretary of Philippine Navy Officer Candidate School.

“I Came, I Saw, I Conquered”

Mae is the eldest among her three siblings. Before she entered the military academy, she described herself as a wanderer. She enrolled in three (3) college courses; BS Biology, Secondary Education and General Engineering. When she was in high school, she dreamed of becoming a medical doctor, so she took BS Biology the first time she reached college. After a semester, she got homesick, so she went back home and studied Secondary Education in a university near her hometown. That time, she did not know what she wanted in her life. She's easily swayed by what's popular and other people's comments about it. So when she saw a poster of the military academy on their campus, saying it's free education, she grabbed the opportunity and tried out for herself. She was motivated by the fact that she could lessen the burden of her family when it comes to finances. Her parents were really supportive of her decision. But somehow, her mother was a little in doubt because she thought Mae never had any background in the military and she was scared that her daughter would just quit and go back home.

When she entered the military academy, she experienced a great confusion. It took her a week to finally get a glimpse of what she entered. She did not have any military background, so it was tough for her to fully understand how the system worked there. She considered her

physique as one of the major barriers inside the academy. It takes discipline and time to be able to perform the physical activities required in the military academy. She also considered the process to be emotionally stressful to the point that she would question her own capabilities and even herself. She perceived these hindrances as a challenge; she took the physical exercises seriously so she could overcome her limits and show them that her gender has nothing to do with her performance as a cadet. However, there were still gloomy days where she would feel down and in doubt of her abilities to succeed. During those times, she would look up to the sky and make sure that she'd always think of the very reason why she entered the academy. Her goal was to graduate and achieve self-fulfillment by surpassing the challenges each day. On her fourth year of cadetship, she was assigned as one of the company commanders of her batch. She's the only female who was designated to perform such a leadership task during that time. She was overwhelmed with the designation given to her however, she knew she could've done a lot of things to make her company better. This experience taught her how to learn from her mistakes and become a better version of herself. Mae finished tenth in her batch. Unlike the other participants, Mae thinks that she did not deserve her achievement. She did not want to recognize her achievement as a success because it's too early. Perhaps the greatest achievement that she acquired in her journey is the experience itself that would remain in her even after she retires. The achievement she attained did not change her life but the experiences inside the academy did. On the brighter side, still, Mae is happy about her journey inside the military academy. This journey of her would serve as a reminder to all the people that both genders could work hand in hand in the same environment without underestimating each other.