

Life After Retirement: Soldiers in Focus

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Abstract— This phenomenological study focused on the challenges and experiences of soldiers during their transition to civilian life after years in service. The study utilized a qualitative research design with 15 participants who had experienced encounters and far-deployment during their service life and are now retired. The study participants were chosen using purposive sampling. Validated researcher-made questionnaires were used and were analyzed using thematic analysis. Results revealed that most retired personnel enjoy the luxury of having their own time which they have not experienced as an in-service soldier. Some of them had difficulty adjusting to their new environment, given that they had mostly spent their years tied in military life. To cope with their experiences, especially the financial constraints, the need to look for employment has been their priority to provide financial support still and accept the reality of transitioning life. Throughout their experiences, they embodied the values and virtues they had learned. The dedication to stay committed to the service and continue to serve the people despite being retired was one thing that they would choose for a lifetime. Above all, their resiliency to adapt to changes.

Keywords— Criminal justice, retirement, phenomenology, retired soldier, Philippines

I. INTRODUCTION

Military retirement is a difficult transition that can significantly impact one's sense of self and identity. Despite this, research on and understanding the lived experiences of transition to retirement is limited (Williams et al., 2018). Transitions that military veterans have experienced during the war and the types of pressures veterans would face when attempting to shed that identity end up suggesting how an expanded study program on veteran transition might progress which most veterans face high levels of difficulties during their transition to civilian life, however, little attention has been paid to this issue (Mobb & Bonano, 2018).

The problematic issue in this study is that planning and implementing efforts to help retired military commanders and soldiers find work and be employed in the civilian labor market need a systematic view (Ward, 2020). Every year, around 18,000 veterans return to civilian life, which entails moving into different employment, dealing with concerns about life satisfaction, and navigating contrasts between military and civilian work arrangements (Krigbaum et al., 2020). Moreover, the transition to retirement is an individual experience and affects the whole family's lives (Vinick & Ekerdt, 2020).

In the Lithuanian government, retired military officers acknowledged several factors discouraging people from seeking work and developing their skills, denying the right for military officers to hold jobs in the private sector while serving is one issue with legal regulation

(Tütlys et al., 2018). Moreover, early planning demonstrates anticipatory socialization for new civilian employment and is linked to better post-military results, however, early planning is either hampered by a strong military identity or assisted by a weak army identity (Kleykamp et al., 2021).

The Philippine Armed Forces, as the people's protectors, play a critical role in maintaining peace and harmony by protecting the country from terrorism and other forms of threats, both civilian and military. Based on the military-to-civilian transition statistics, more than 200,000 men and women leave the military each year. Only a few of these numbers retire and receive full civilian retirement benefits, while the others are discharged (Castaneda, 2020). One Marine claimed that practicing for battle made his depression worse and gave him more nightmares. He sought civilian services because he intended to quit the military (Howard et al., 2018). The reality is that when military personnel move out from their careers, they are not provided with the same amount of support they received from the time that they were in service (Shue et al., 2021).

The study was anchored to the theory of Nancy K Schlossberg's Transition Theory (Schlossberg et al., 1981). According to Schlossberg, a transition is any occurrence or lack thereof that alters relationships, practices, presumptions, or positions. It is important to remember that perception is crucial in transitions since an event—or non-event—meets the definition of a transition only if the person experiencing it does. According to Moen and Fields (2002), meaningful

involvement of retired individuals is required as a part of one's psychological portfolio. This explanation lent credibility to the idea. They concluded that volunteering or part-time work after retirement is an excellent approach to increasing social capital.

The main theory is supported by Norman Garmenzy's Resilience Theory from 1991. According to Shean's (2015) study, stress might occasionally invalidate the application of resilience theory. Rather, resilience is meant to stand for the capacity to recover and carry on with adaptive behavior following a period of withdrawal or incapacity to deal with a difficult circumstance. Depending on how older workers view this new phase of life and the tools available to support positive attitudes (benefits) and help face negative attitudes (losses), retirement can have a good or negative impact (Amorim & França, 2019). As a result, resilience can be thought of as positively and negatively reinforcing retirement attitudes.

The idea above is relevant to the study since it informs soldiers who have experienced life transition from military to civilian life. While many transitioning military personnel effectively navigate military-to-civilian transition (MCT) difficulties and successfully reintegrate into civilian life, a sizeable number still experience significant adjustment problems. It is well acknowledged that MCT is a significant turning point in the lives of military members, one that presents a variety of opportunities and difficulties and has effects on well-being in many facets of Life after service (Pedlar, Thompson, & Castro, 2019).

Transitioning out of the military is commonly described as problematic for soldiers due to the numerous and diverse hurdles encountered along the way. Soldiers must learn and adapt to post-military life, including obtaining civilian work, establishing a new purpose, and adjusting to family responsibilities (Pedlar, Thompson, & Castro, 2019). Veterans face a variety of obstacles, including cultural adjustment, identity uncertainty, hierarchical instability, skill mistranslations, post-military unemployment and underemployment, civilian stigmas, and a loss of purpose (Stull, Kirchner, & Herd, 2020)

Before focusing on occupational and self-awareness, veterans must prepare to make employment selections. Existing programs often hurry veterans through the transition process without providing opportunities for self-reflection and critical analysis. Some veterans may

not take appropriate safeguards throughout their transition to everyday life (Vick, 2019). As mentioned in the study by Williams et al. (2018), military career leavers face various difficulties, including shifting family dynamics, loss of status, financial difficulties, competition with younger generations, and civilian indifference in service personnel. Many experienced a loss of prestige, as seen by the forced return or removal of 'official identification' like military watches, equipment, and badges.

While research on post-deployment life has primarily focused on mental health problems, it is important to note that other distressing conditions, although not expressly categorized as behavioral health disorders, nonetheless provide significant challenges for returning troops (Peck & Parcell, 2021). These hurdles encompass reestablishing connections with spouses and family members, managing family finances and legal issues, properly parenting children within the family, and transitioning back to civilian jobs for reservists (Keeling et al., 2020).

The primary aim of this study was to investigate Life after enlistment, which focuses on the soldiers. Specifically, it also aims to answer the following questions: 1) What are the lived experiences of military soldiers who retired from service? 2) How do they cope with life transition experiences? 3) What are the insights they have learned throughout their lived experiences as retired soldiers?

This research study on the post-retirement life of soldiers has the potential to significantly contribute to the global discourse on the intersection of military service and post-service challenges. This study may provide valuable insights applicable across various nations, thereby aligning with the overarching goal of fostering resilient and inclusive societies by ensuring adequate support for veterans. This, in turn, can promote peace, justice, and strong institutions. Furthermore, the outcomes of this research could potentially influence policy reforms, bolster support systems, and enhance the overall well-being of retired soldiers on a global scale, thereby reinforcing the principles of Sustainable Development Goal 16.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Participants

The researcher decided to have a minimum of 15 participants: 7 participants for Focus Group Discussion and 8 participants for an in-depth interview, with no

specific locality were gathered and subjected to an interview based on the context of the study. Moreover, the selection of participants was supported by Creswell (2013), who stated that a phenomenological study should have a maximum of 15 individuals. The nature of selecting the study participants was purely voluntary. Thus, participants had the right to withdraw from the study anytime if they sensed an information imbalance or discomfort or were embarrassed to answer questions being asked.

The participants of this study were selected and identified through purposive sampling. It was used to choose respondents who were most likely to provide accurate and meaningful information. It includes identifying and choosing an individual who is exceptionally knowledgeable about or has undergone the experience this study focuses on. In this study, a purposive sampling technique was applied, and the participants were retired soldiers who were intentionally selected with predetermined criteria of events and experiences that are suitable to the purpose of the study. The willingness of these participants will be acquired first before the interview proper.

Furthermore, the inclusion criteria for the participants of this study were as follows: First, soldiers who are former members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, ages 56 years old and above. Second, those who were retired from service. Third, those who have experience deployed in far-flung areas while in service. Each participant signed an informed consent form before the researcher conducted the interview. Exclusion criteria include 1) those soldiers who are 56 years old but still in service; 2) soldiers who do not have crucial or combat experiences; and 3) those who are not members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

B. Material and Instrument

This study utilized a qualitative interview in which the researcher created an interview guide for the In-depth interview (IDI) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) which was submitted to the validators for the validity and reliability of the study. Qualitative interviews allow researchers to delve deeply into issues that are specific to the respondents' experiences, providing insights into how various phenomena of interest are experienced and interpreted. Given the interaction between participants and researchers and the emphasis on the examination of human phenomena, interviews have traditionally been a data-collection method related with qualitative research

and the naturalistic paradigm (McGrath, Palmgren, & Liljedahl, 2019).

C. Design and Procedure

This study utilized a descriptive phenomenological research design to investigate the lived experiences of retired soldiers, specifically focusing on their lives post-military service. The qualitative approach facilitated an in-depth exploration of the participants' personal experiences, providing insights into the unique challenges they encountered. The data collection process involved obtaining relevant permissions, formally inviting participants, and ensuring their voluntary and comfortable involvement in the study.

Data collection methods included conducting in-depth interviews at participants' residences and organizing focus group discussions at specified venues. To safeguard confidentiality, participant responses were anonymized, and the use of recordings was strictly contingent on participants' consent. The interview process emphasized that responses were based on personal perspectives, fostering an environment of trust and openness by emphasizing the absence of right or wrong answers.

The researcher fulfilled multiple roles, including interviewer, transcriber, and translator. After data collection, interviews were transcribed and translated into Standard English, and thematic analysis was employed to identify key themes. The study underscored the significance of maintaining trustworthiness and adhering to ethical considerations to ensure credibility, transferability, and dependability. Ethical guidelines were strictly followed to safeguard participants' well-being, prioritizing confidentiality and informed consent throughout the research process.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and discussion from data analysis extracted from the in-depth interviews and focus group discussion.

Lived experiences of military soldiers who retired from service.

The interviews with the chosen participants went well for the In-depth interview and the Focus Group Discussion. All the retired military participants are currently enjoying the fruits of their labor from serving the military service which was their lifelong dream as in-service soldiers. The participants mentioned specific experiences that they are currently savoring as a civilian citizen and the themes that arise from their responses

are: Adapting to the daily activities and routine; Enjoying enough personal time with family; and Spending retirement money/pension wisely.

Adapting to the daily activities and routine.

As the first theme, the experiences of retired military personnel can vary widely based on factors such as individual circumstances, career paths, and the branch of the military they served in. With all these, as retired personnel, most of them experienced the struggle in adapting to the changes that retirement or separation from service has brought them.

For one, many of them have been used to waking up early in the morning as they are accustomed to doing daily morning exercises, endurance activities, and the like. They express their answers as:

“pagkatapos sa akong retirement is yung habit ko na mumata lang gyapon ug sayo, then go on sa akong work pero not necessary nga mapugos gyud ko mata kay mutrabaho”. IDI 1 RQ 1

After retirement is my habit of still waking up early then go on with my work. But it is not that you are obliged to wake up early anymore just to work.

“Ako sa akong experience, nakakapanibago, kasi minsan babangon ako kasi akala ko mag duduty na ako. Yun pala naka retire na ako. Naka adjust siguro ako dili lang 3 months hapit ko isa ka tuig nag adjust.” FGD 5 RQ 1

In my experience, it's quite an adjustment because there are times when I wake up thinking I have a duty, only to realize that I have already retired. I probably adjusted in around three months, almost a year to fully adapt.

IDI 2 shares the significant change in his life as:

“Mga pagbabago syempre unang una, malaking pagbabago kasi Nawala na ako sa pokus sa pagiging ah military andun na ako sa buhay ng pagka sibilyan at hindi na ako masyadong obligado mag report kung saan palagi nalang nasa sariling tahanan.” IDI 2 PQ 1

First and foremost, it's a significant change because I've shifted my focus from being in the military to civilian life. I'm no longer obligated to report constantly; I'm mostly at home.

Other participants expressed their answers as being happy with how they adapt to their new environment. Many military personnel strongly identify with their military service, and retiring from the military can lead

to a sense of loss of identity and purpose. Finding new goals and a sense of meaning in civilian life is an important aspect of the transition. This theme is supported by Lee (2022) agreeing that life through the transition from the military environment to civilian life may face different changes including adjusting to various roles and social statuses and changing lifestyles.

Sherman and Larsen (2018) discussed every veteran's great challenge during the transition. Moreover, there is a process for social adaptation for retired military personnel to be able not to lose their sense of identity. These phases include preparation, entry, adaptation, and development (Terziev, 2018). However, a new study suggests the difficulty military men experience the moment they leave the service, most of them struggle to find their identity and most of the time feel lost. This explains that the more someone identifies themselves as being in the military, the tougher the transition may seem (Binks & Cambridge, 2018).

Enjoying enough personal time with family.

The second theme that emerged from the responses of the participants is the experience of having enough quality time spent with family. The retired military personnel report a notable change in their day-to-day experiences, characterized by a lack of ongoing stress. One person expressed relief, saying they are no longer under pressure to perform daily, indicating a good transition in their way of life.

FGD 2 expressed his experiences of spending time with his family, his answer is:

“Ang ikaduha, syempre nalipay ko kay focus na pud sa imuhang pamilya. Ug maasikaso na pud nimu ang wala nimu naasikaso atong naa pa sa duty.” RQ1 FGD 2

Secondly, of course, I'm happy because I can now focus on my family. And you can attend to things that you haven't been able to when you were still on duty.

Also, FGD 6 answer similarly as:

“So pag retire na nako concentrate na ko sa akong pamilya, hatod sundo sa akong asawa kay nag trabaho man sad siya, tapos akong mga anak nanarbaho naman pud. Taong bahay ko kay retire na man.” RQ1 FGD 6

Now that I am retired, I am concentrating on my family. I am supporting my wife, who also works, and my children who are employed. I am a homemaker now because I am retired.

IDI 2 shows great joy now that he can spend time with his family, he said:

“Tungkol sa pangungumusta sa aking buhay simula noong pagkatapos ng pag reretiro ay ahh unang una ay masaya dahil nakapiling ko na ang aking buong pamilya, nakasama ko at ah na enjoy ko ang buhay ah ang buhay ng isang sibilyan.” RQ 1 IDI 2

Regarding how my life has been since retirement, first and foremost, it has been joyful because I am with my entire family. I have spent time with them and have enjoyed the life of a civilian.

Their ability to focus on their family has been made possible by the relief from work-related stress. This has been supported by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2019) highlighted occurrences perceived during their military life, such as combat exposure, deployments, temporary separation from the family of home, and mental and physical exposure, have helped military personnel to express their enjoyment with family in their transitioned life. Their newfound relaxation from the demands of their working lives has not only boosted their joy and satisfaction but also reinforced the bonds among their families.

Furthermore, another study suggests that veterans recognize cultural awareness as an obstacle to having a positive transition, but enhancing their understanding regarding this may help them with the transition process and may prepare them for more civilian employment and family reintegration which includes their decision to choose their residences and addressing their family's needs (Stull, Kirchner, & Herd, 2020).

Spending retirement money/pension wisely.

The third theme emphasized how important budgeting is. The significance of thrift, resourcefulness, and wise spending was stressed in responses by the participants.

IDI 1 expresses his answer with changes in his life system, he said:

“Una is ang kuan giingon nako ang gitawag na ang imo bitawng system sa imong ah panginabuhì kay wala naman kay kuan wala naman kay gitawag nato nga ah gitawag nato nga ah regular na kuan no sahod.” IDI 1 PQ1

The life system changes especially since we need to cut expenses and we need to manage everything from our little income.

Most of IDI 6's pension was spent on the students' education. He uttered:

“Hmm ah ano ah puro budget lahat kasi meron pa akong mga studyante nuon eh kailangan talagang ah mag tipid, gastusin ang pera sa tamang gastusan para sa ah ikabubuti ng mga bata na nag aaral at ang buong pamilya “ IDI 6 PQ2

Hmm, well, everything is about budgeting because I still had students back then. It's necessary to be frugal and spend money on the right things for the benefit of the children studying, and the whole family.

FGD 2 talks about controlling the finances, he stated:

“Pag approve nang retirement ko after a month nakatanagap na ako pension ko. Tapos ako yung nag control ng pinansyal.” FGD 2 PQ2

After my retirement was approved, I received my pension after a month. Now, I am the one in control of the finances.

The participants describe taking certain steps to guarantee financial stability, such as planning the pension they got and properly handling a lump sum payout. This implies that financial planning should be done properly and that making financial decisions should always be done with caution. Studies show that those who have misunderstandings about the increase of their savings often delay making retirement decisions, which leads to difficulties with retirement planning and shows evidence of inadequate financial understanding. Notwithstanding, people still recognize the significance of participating in retirement planning and acknowledge that it is a fundamental financial plan (Efendić, Brügggen, & Graus, 2021).

Hence, some retired military personnel may have a hard time with their new finances, so the need to budget is necessary. Stull, Kirchner, and Herd (2020) mentioned in their study that retired military personnel have an unrealistic perception of finances especially now that they have different earnings in their transitioned life, and the need to extend their income to cover all their expenses. Posit that they have underestimated the expenses of their retirement.

Coping mechanism of Retired Soldiers after service.

This section highlights the varied coping methods participants use during the transition from military to civilian life. It centers on essential themes like spending quality time with family and friends, doing jobs not related to military service, and accepting the reality of transition. The table offers a thorough summary of these coping strategies, intending to illuminate the difficulties in life after their successful transitions to post-military service.

Spending quality time with family and friends.

The first theme explores the impact of prioritizing family time on individuals' lives. Participants express a sense of independence in their interactions with loved ones, highlighting the importance of unrestrained freedom and being present at any social gatherings. Some participants also appreciate the freedom to attend outings and events without financial constraints, fostering openness and connectivity.

The participants expressed this as:

“ako naman eh napupuntahan ko na yung mga lugar na gusto kong puntahan.” FGD 6 PQ 1

Now, I can visit the places I've always wanted to go

FGD 7, on the other hand, enjoy his time with his family, he said:

“para sa akin eh nagkaron na ako ng time para sa pamilya ko at na eenjoy ko na yung buhay ko.” FGD 7 PQ1

For me, I now have time for my family, and I am enjoying my life.

IDI 2 expresses his answer as:

“Ang naenjoy ko sa pagiging sibilyan na wala ko naenjoy sa pagiging active pa nuon ay yung ah libre kung may pupuntahan sa mga outing, sa may mga pupuntahan na mga ano imbitasyon, yun lang.” IDI 2 PQ 1

What I enjoy about being a civilian, which I didn't enjoy when I was still active, is the freedom to go to outings and invitations without any cost. That's it.

Spending quality time with family and friends from the retired soldiers' point of view is one of the greatest feelings they could have ever felt. Many retired personnel show the great benefit of life after enlistment

as they now enjoy life as civilians and show comfort with their transitioned life. The life spent with family and friends is indeed a great coping mechanism for them to deviate themselves from their experiences as military personnel.

Free time provides opportunities for relaxation, recreation, amusement, social relationships, and self-fulfillment depending on one's own needs, interests, and ideas (Michal et al., 2020). It was found that many of us do not make our own time management decisions. Instead, we make them at least partially in collaboration with our partner, other family members, or friends (Hamermesh, 2019). Besides, it is said that Quality of Life is a significant predictor of contentment and fulfillment (Hall, 2019).

Doing jobs not related to military service.

The second theme discusses the importance of job hunting and doing unfamiliar work that is not related to previous military work. The participants emphasize that farming and other work related to farming is their way of coping with their transitioned life.

The participants express this as:

“Unang una nag panning ako ng free gold, pangalawa yung nag tanim ako ng mga saging, niyog dun sa farm namin pagkatapos tinawagan ako nung mga kasama ko na nag security sa APEX isa ako dun sa security.” IDI 4 PQ2

First, I tried panning for free gold, then I planted bananas and coconuts on our farm. Afterward, my colleagues who were providing security at APEX called me, and I became part of the security team.”

“ako eh nag kusinero nalang ako sa karenderia ko.” FGD 6 PQ2

I became a cook in our carinderia.

“meron kasi akong karenderya at internet café.” FGD 1 PQ2

I attend our carinderia and an internet café.

Veterans with a variety of vocations demonstrate how they adjusted to life after service. They attempt farming, managing internet cafés, and operating restaurants. These responses demonstrate how veterans look for new possibilities. They come up with other ways to make money by utilizing their abilities. Some of them were trying to seek jobs that would fit them, and they have

landed not just one but more than 2 jobs after their retirement.

Employment is critical to health, well-being, and the transition from military to civilian life (Maclean et al., 2019). Accordingly, there are three primary concerns among veterans regarding the civilian employment process: civilian employer's military job knowledge is lacking, veteran employees may experience anxiety due to unclear new-hire processes with civilian firms, and civilian employers may misinterpret veteran wages, benefits, and family participation requirements (Dexter, 2020).

Veterans face difficulties when seeking employment in their transitioned life, as they attempt to express and adapt their military qualifications, skills, and experiences to align with the civilian job requirements (Keeling, Kintzle, & Castro, 2018). In addition, studies indicate that agricultural programs offer veterans experiencing challenges in transitioning from military to civilian life both physical and behavioral health advantages (Besterman-Dahan et al., 2023).

Accepting the reality of transition.

The third theme discusses the coping mechanism through acceptance. Participants emphasize the reality of transition that revolves around the challenges individuals face when leaving the military and becoming civilians. This transition made the participants feel lost as they must find meaning in their lives and find a balance between their military responsibilities and personal lives. The participants convey their answers as:

“Tapos from sibilyan to military hindi ko pa naalis sa isipan ko yung parang sundalo parin ako maski sibilyan na. so nahirapan akong makaadjust.” IDI 6 PQ 4

Transitioning from civilian to military, I still haven't removed from my mind that I'm still like a soldier even though I'm already a civilian. So, I had a hard time adjusting.

“sa akin dati mataas yung tingin sa akin, mataas yung respeto. Pero kalaunan wala na. kung dati sir yung tawag sa akin, nung nag retire na dodong nalang.” FGD 1 PQ4

For me, there used to be a high regard and respect. However, over time, it diminished. People used to call me 'sir,' now that I've retired, it's just 'dodong.’

“nung una eh di ako sanay sa buhay sibilyan, yung bang feeling mo na kahit nakakapagot maging sundalo eh

hinahanap hanap mo yung pagod na yun. Hindi ka sanay na walang ginagawa eh.” FGD 5 PQ4

I wasn't used to civilian life. That feeling, even though being a soldier is tiring, you miss that exhaustion. You're not used to having nothing to do.

Some participants embrace the transition as a fact that highlights the complexity of the process of adjusting to life after the military. Most of them deal with adjustments, financial relapse, and psychological difficulties. Acceptance indeed will help participants to be more resilient and successfully adjust to civilian roles and identities.

A transition is a passage from one stage, condition, or circumstance to another that involves complex interactions between people and their surroundings (Bridges, & Bridges, 2019). After retirement, there was a heightened focus not only on financial considerations but also on psychosocial adaptation and time utilization, with the transition into retirement and subsequent stages of life seen as a chance for newfound freedom and choices (Sullivan, & Al Ariss, 2019).

Furthermore, retirement for most older individuals signifies not just the transition from middle to late adulthood but also brings about significant psychological and interpersonal adjustments that can influence their self-esteem and overall well-being (Bleidorn, & Schwaba, 2018). In certain instances, retirees might experience increased vitality and contentment as they engage in other activities and try various roles. For some, retirees consider retirement to alleviate their work-related stress and time constraints which could prove more advantageous and elevate morale during their transition (Olds et al., 2018).

Insights/lessons they have learned throughout their experiences.

This section explores the profound insights and lessons learned by the participants as they traverse through their transitioned lives and experiences and emphasizes their insights by keeping the disciplined mindset they have acquired from military service. The participants shared these lessons and insights into three core themes: embody real-life values and virtues for a lifetime, appreciate time, blessings, and abundance enjoyed by the family, and change is constant in life.

Embody real-life values and virtues for a lifetime.

The first theme discussed values and virtues learned by the participants from their experiences even when they

were in service continuing until they retired from service. Some participants highlighted the importance of maintaining attitudes and qualities even after post-service. They also highlighted their commitment to continuing self-improvement and learning but maintaining the ongoing dedication to still serve and support the community. Participants express their answers as:

“sa military na obserbahan ko yung disiplina okay gyud. Mausab gyud ang tao labi na ug muagig ka sundalo, madisiplina gyud ug ayo. Ug kinahanglan dalahon gyapon nimu maski retire ka na, magpabilin gyapon ang disiplina maski sibilyan na.” FGD 2 RQ 3

Observing discipline in the military is indeed impressive. People, especially if they undergo military training, become disciplined and well-regulated. It's something that you need to carry with you even after retirement, maintaining that discipline even as a civilian.

“Para sa akoo ang pag retire kay mura na siyag continuous learning ba. Nakakat-on naman kog mga lesson atong nag serbisyo pa ko, kinahanglan lang kay dili nako to kalimtan imbes mag tuon gyapon.” FGD 3 RQ 3

For me, retirement is like continuous learning. I have learned lessons during my years of service, and the key is not to forget them but rather to continue learning.

“Syempre although retired ka na wala pa man matapos ang kuan nimu eh wala matapos ang imong serbisyo sa bayan nato. Committed gyapon.” IDI 1 PQ 1

Of course, even though you're retired, your commitment to our community through your service is ongoing. You remain dedicated, especially to your duties within the organization.

Many participants hold on to the notion that keeping values and life qualities will leave an impact on people. This gives importance to the beliefs and behaviors they have learned throughout their time serving the country. Participants also stressed the value of discipline, always trying to learn more, and staying involved in their communities even after they've left the military determines who they are and how they live their transition life.

As mentioned in the book of Lee (2018), military duty imbues active-duty personnel with its values, many of which persist considerably even after discharge.

Furthermore, lifelong learning is deemed essential for cognitive development as it holds significant importance for the accumulation of knowledge through experiential learning during training sessions (Parisi et al., 2017). Just like these soldiers, their experiences throughout their service are their lifelong learnings that even when they have retired their learnings remain.

Another virtue that remains in the life of retired personnel is discipline. It has been exercised since they were still in service. It made them carry out their lives as it was one of the most vital characteristics one must have. Additionally, discipline has been important for military personnel as it posits motivation especially when they need to carry out their missions (Amarasinghe, 2023).

Commitment and duty.

The second theme highlighted the participants' dedication to being a public servant, their commitment to serving again for the country, and their duty even after their retirement. They convey their answers as:

“Ahh oo syempre kaming mga enlisted retirees babalik at babalik kami kasi unang una reservist parin kami kung kinakailangan kami ng gobyerno para bumalik para idepensa ang bayang pilpinas. Wala kaming magagawa kundi babalik at babalik kami.” IDI 2 PQ 1

Ah, yes, of course, we enlisted retirees will keep coming back because first and foremost, we are still reservists. If the government needs us to return to defend the Philippines, we have no choice but to come back again and again.

“reservist na kami kaya babalik talaga sa serbisyo kung saka-sakaling tawagin ng gobyerno.” FGD 6 PQ 1

We are reservists, so we will return to service if the government calls.

One participant responded with the famous quote as a soldier which highlighted the theme, FGD 2 answered as:

“ganun talaga kasi once a soldier, always a soldier.” FGD 2 PQ 1

That's how it is because once a soldier, always a soldier.

This has been supported by Taylor (2018), who stated in his book that soldiers' duty is so heavy that their obligation is so essential as it requires them to pledge an oath of “always obey the orders” the moment they

choose the military path despite knowing that they will put their lives at risk.

Many soldiers show a great sense of duty and the readiness to be called anytime when the country needs their service. It indicates a strong sense of patriotism – the love they showed for their country. Commitment and duty were mentioned in the study by Op den Buijs et al. (2019), as important core values in military culture that military members uphold.

It was explained that organizational commitment is the degree to which an employee identifies with a particular organization and its goals and wishes to maintain membership in the organization. Furthermore, it describes organizational commitment as the degree to which a person feels a sense of power and involvement in a specific organization which is simplified into the following psychological factors: first is the strong appeal to stay as a member of the grown organization; and the other one is the acceptance of the organization's values and objectives and self-confidence (Kawiana et al., 2018).

Change is constant in life.

The third theme discusses the participants' ability to recognize changes in their transitioned life, particularly from in-service to civilian life. They acknowledged the adjustment that happened in life and accepted the role of becoming a civilian and highlighted the importance of preparing for the future.

“Ah ang maipapayo ko sa mga sundalo na nasa serbisyo pa yung mag savings sila at pagdating ng ano nila ah pagdating ng pag retire nila nakapundar na sila, sitting pretty na sila. Hindi parehas ng nadaanan namin na inom dito, inom doon, loan dito, loan doon. Yung sinasabi ko sa kanila parehas sa anak ko sundalo mag ipon ipon ka para pagdating ng panahon wala ka nmag problema.” IDI 4 PQ 2

What I can advise to soldiers still in service is to save their money. By the time they retire, they will have investments and be sitting pretty. Unlike the path we've been through, where we spent here and there drinking and vices, and took loans here and there. What I'm telling them is the same as what I always tell my son, who is a soldier – save up, so when the time comes, you won't have any problems

“mag invest sila para sa future nila, wag masyadong mag aksaya sa pera. Mag ipon gyud.” FGD 7 PQ 2

They should invest for their future, avoid unnecessary spending, and really save money.

“Sa kabila ng lahat ng iyong mga karanasan, talagang kailangan mong mag-enjoy sa buhay. Isipin mo ito bilang bagong kabanata ng iyong buhay - ang iyong bagong buhay bilang isang sibilyan.” FGD 7 PQ 4

Despite all your experiences, you really need to enjoy life. Think of it as the new chapter of life – your new journey as a civilian.

Many retired personnel recognized their transitioned life and the importance of adaptability, preparedness, and having the mindset of always looking forward and the willingness to always look for new opportunities and having a positive outlook in life. Moreover, as mentioned in the study of Costello (2018), the life of an individual is a continuous process of change, shaped by their own emotions and dispositions, which might vary greatly in the military to civilian life.

Accordingly, the life course perspective of human activity is not only repeated cycles or a linear march through time. Instead, the life course journey is a dynamic spiral with both continuity and change, distinguished by twists and turns that may be both anticipated and unforeseen. It is impacted by modifications to the social and physical surroundings in addition to adjustments to the biological, psychological, spiritual, and personal dimensions (Hutchison, 2018).

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

It has been enlightening and humble to conclude this study on the life experiences of retired military personnel. A series of information has been collected by investigating their everyday routines, relationships with family, and retirement financial decisions. The most startling insight was how crucial resilience and flexibility were to surviving life's difficulties. Some soldiers showed difficulties in adjusting to civilian life, but they also highlighted the strength of character that comes through in their ability to establish routines and treasure time spent with loved ones. These stories highlighted how important it is to hold onto a feeling of connection and purpose even in the face of sudden life transitions.

Furthermore, exploring the coping strategies used by retired soldiers has provided important insights into the practice of acceptance and resilience. These people exhibited an unrelenting dedication to face life's

difficulties with grace and dignity, whether through accepting change, exploring new career opportunities, or finding comfort in relationships with loved ones. These observations are a reminder of the importance of confronting life's journey with an open heart and unwavering commitment.

Recommendation

For criminologists, understanding the dynamics of life after retirement is crucial, especially when it comes to the well-being of soldiers and other government employees who have dedicated their lives to public service. Theoretical frameworks in law enforcement administration and organization studies emphasize the importance of retirement benefits in ensuring a smooth transition post-service, but it is essential for the government to continually strengthen its support systems to bring about significant life changes for soldiers as they move into civilian life.

Government initiatives that help both serving and retired soldiers are critical to ease the challenges associated with retirement. To help members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and other uniformed personnel with this transition, it is important to conduct a pre-retirement orientation seminar for all soldiers about to retire. This is to ensure they know what life is ahead of them after their service. This is to address the financial constraints and to supervise the financial budget among those retired personnel. Another thing is to conduct non-monetary benefit programs including healthcare services and skill development opportunities are essential. It is crucial to extend the focus beyond financial gains to include the soldiers and their families' overall needs as well as possibilities that could go unnoticed. Even though the Department of Budget and Management has made great progress in supporting retired military and uniformed personnel with their pensions, there are still important issues that need to be addressed. While providing significant financial resources is an essential first step, it is also critical to address any other demands or difficulties that retirees could have. By prioritizing a comprehensive approach that encompasses financial stability, healthcare, skills development, and familial support, we can ensure a more robust system that empowers soldiers in their transition to civilian life.

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