

A Case Study: Women in Highway Patrol Group in Ilocos Norte

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“In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths”- Proverbs 3:6

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The Researchers

DEDICATIONS

To our Almighty God: Thank you Lord, for blessing us abundantly, for giving us strength and courage to face life's new challenges, and for protecting and guiding us to finish our thesis.

To our supportive parents: You are our inspiration to study well and to strive hard in life. Thank you for providing us our daily needs. Thank you for the countless times that you cheer us up, for your patience, and understanding. Someday, we will be able to repay all your sacrifices.

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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to examine the life experiences of female police officers in the Philippine National Police (PNP) under the Highway Patrol Group of Ilocos Norte. It aimed to determine the challenges encountered by female police officers, including the effects and the coping mechanisms to overcome these challenges associated with their role.

This qualitative research method utilized the descriptive case study where personal and online interviews were conducted with three (3) participants working at the Philippine Highway Patrol Team of Laoag City, Abra and Ilocos Sur. Purposive sampling method was used in choosing the participants of the study.

Findings showed that the participants of the study encountered challenges in the Highway Patrol Group as revealed in their answers to questions that revolved around nine (9) themes: (a) challenges encountered by women in the PNP Highway Patrol Group, (b) effects of the challenges faced in their job performance and (c) coping mechanisms used to overcome the challenges encountered. Themes that emerged based on these questions are: “shortlisted recruitment opportunity,” “financial inadequacy,” “doubt in competence,” “feeling of discouragement,” “burnout,” “destruction of family connection,” “self-growth,” “coping through faith,” and “mind over body.” On the bases of the data gathered and analyzed, this study revealed that the challenges experienced by women in the Highway Patrol Group include not only organizational challenges but also personal problems which both positively and negatively affect their life and job performances. Moreover, after experiencing these challenges, it was revealed that the participants resorted to practices of spirituality through faith by praying as a way to deal with feelings of anxiety, stress and exhaustion. Also, they focused on thoughts of mind rather than the body to cope or manage challenges and help them to do more than they are capable of.

Keywords:- Highway Patrol Group, Female Police Officers, Challenges Encountered, Effects of the Challenges in Job Performance, Coping Mechanisms.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

➤ *Introduction*

The law enforcement profession is gendered in terms of socially-prescribed norms that develop as a result of everyday social interactions. It has always been perceived as violent, physically-demanding, and dangerous, and is therefore considered by many as an occupation fit only for men. These cultural expectations and behavioral norms place women entering law enforcement at a considerable disadvantage, making full integration difficult and stressful. However, in a field predominated by men, women in law enforcement still tend to stand out. And though the percentage of women in law enforcement is small, there are strong examples of women in the ranks in every aspect of law enforcement – from municipal to country, state and corrections that would have a great contribution to highway patrols and the enforcing of the law as a whole.

In the Philippines, when Filipino women started to join the male-dominated Philippine National Police (PNP), they were only given assignments that were administrative in nature and jobs that could be classified and described as "desk duties" (Yap 2013). Within the first thirty years after the establishment of the PNP in the early period of the 1990s, female Filipino police officers have been able to participate in other police activities and functions, including risky PNP operations (Manila Bulletin 2013). They have also become commanders in the field of police work. Among the Filipino policewomen who excelled in the PNP were Lina Sarmiento and Lorlie Arroyo and female generals like Yolanda Tanigue, Lorlie Arroyo, Angelina Vidal, Liza Sabong and Lina.

Sarmiento, who was the only female general to reach the two-star rank in 2012. Also, according to Berg and Budnick (1986), the increasing numbers of female police officers is associated with the increasing struggle by female police officers to be accepted in law enforcement parallels and, at the same time, represent an exacerbation of the difficulties experienced by women as they have made their way into the labor force in general. As of October 16, 2022, there are only 37,157 policewomen, or 17.94 percent of the PNP's strength of 169,955 compared to men who comprise 82.06 percent, hence, policewomen continue to be outnumbered by male counterparts across all ranks.

The Province of Ilocos Norte had the number of women police personnel increased by 6.4 percent from 2005-2007, higher than the 3.4 percent increase of men police personnel. The increase was attributed to the 7.2 percent increase of women PNCOs for the said period. Meanwhile, majority of the police commissioned and non-commissioned officers were men. In 2007, the ratio of men to women were 25:1 and 12:1; respectively. Acceptance of women in men-related jobs, specifically in ensuring peace and security in the country, but still remained outnumbered led to the misconception of women being the "weaker sex" (Women & Men Statistical Handbook, 2008).

The society's policing transformation indicates that the law enforcement world must improve and change the "good old boy" culture into more encouraging momentum toward creating a world fuelled by growing appreciation of women. Challenges among females under the law enforcement profession continue to emerge, that is why, understanding and addressing these provides better control and awareness to the public with the life of female police officers under the Highway Patrol Group.

➤ *Background of the Study*

In the male dominated profession of law enforcement, women are vulnerable to be underrepresented, undermined, or underutilized. This has led the women of society to become confined by the parameters of a masculinized institution causing female officers to face external and internal adversities resulting struggles among women in the police workforce and at the same time many feats or issues remain not yet fully addressed (Robert Brym, 2018).

The Law Enforcement field has long been known as "an all-boys club," leading to the mistaken assumption that law enforcement is a male-dominated field (Rabe-Hemp, 2018). As a matter of fact, the role of women in policing went from exclusively social work functions to present-day patrol and administrative positions. Yet, it appears as though many of the views held in the early 20th century remain today, such as, women are unable to endure the physical rigors encountered on patrol and do not have the emotional stability to deal appropriately with the tragedies and negative experiences faced by police officers (DeLong, 1997). Relatively, according to Methereg (2008), there is seemingly a shortage of women involved in law enforcement wherein they comprise only a token proportion of female officers representing approximately 10% of all sworn personnel. While strides were made to make policing a more gender representative entity, there are still a number of obstacles women need to overcome to be able to pursue a career in policing (Batton & Wright, 2018; Graziano, 2019; Schuck, 2014). Even though some research has started to look into factors that influence the likelihood of women pursuing a career in policing (Cambareri & Kuhns, 2018), people's understanding of these factors is minimal and so is the understanding of ways in which to ameliorate these obstacles.

Although the proportion of female police officers has increased, their population are still not enough. (Zverzhanovski & Balon, 2012). Therefore, this study aims determine the challenges encountered by female police officers, including the effects of the challenges faced and the coping mechanisms utilized to overcome these challenges associated with their role in the Highway Patrol Group.

➤ *Statement of the Problem*

The study focused on the experiences of women under the Philippine National Police (PNP) Highway Patrol Group of the Province of Ilocos Norte which specifically aimed to answer the following:

- What are the challenges encountered by women in PNP Highway Patrol Group?
- What are the effects of the challenges faced by the female police officers in their job performance?
- What are the coping mechanisms used by women in the PNP Highway Patrol Group in overcoming the challenges they encountered?
- What is/are the proposed action plan to address the challenges faced by the women in PNP Highway Patrol Group?

➤ *Theoretical Framework*

The theoretical framework introduces and describes the theory that explains why the research problem under study exists. The data content of this study were analyzed and justified using particular theories such as the Self-efficacy Theory by Albert Bandura and the Expectancy Theory by Victor Harold Vroom.

• *Self- Efficacy Theory*

According to Albert Bandura (1977), this theory explains that having people’s beliefs about their abilities have profound effect on those abilities. This means having the belief that one can do something increases his chances of doing it successfully. Conversely, it also means having the belief that can’t do something increases his chances of failure.

Relative to the study, through a variety of shifts and duty assignments, officers are exposed to a vast array of situations where they must conduct order-maintenance, patrol service, and other law enforcement tasks. These situations require great effort and complex skills which place officers into difficulty, however, through the concept of self-efficacy wherein by thinking that they can do it increases the belief that they can really do it, thus motivated them in the pursuit of goal and achievement of success.

• *Expectancy Theory*

Based on the study conducted by Victor Vroom (1964), this theory holds that challenge stressors can affect job performance through affective strain such as anxiety, stress and exhaustion and work motivation such as perseverance, sense of challenge and learning motivation.

In the present study, challenges or stressors and performance have a connection towards each other. For police officers, the completion of challenge stressors has a promoting effect on personal growth which can stimulate officers positively such as in working harder. On the other hand, if challenge stressors are deemed negatively, this could result to pressures that hinder personal growth and even lead to adverse effects such as stress, exhaustion and decreased level of job performance.

➤ *Conceptual Framework*

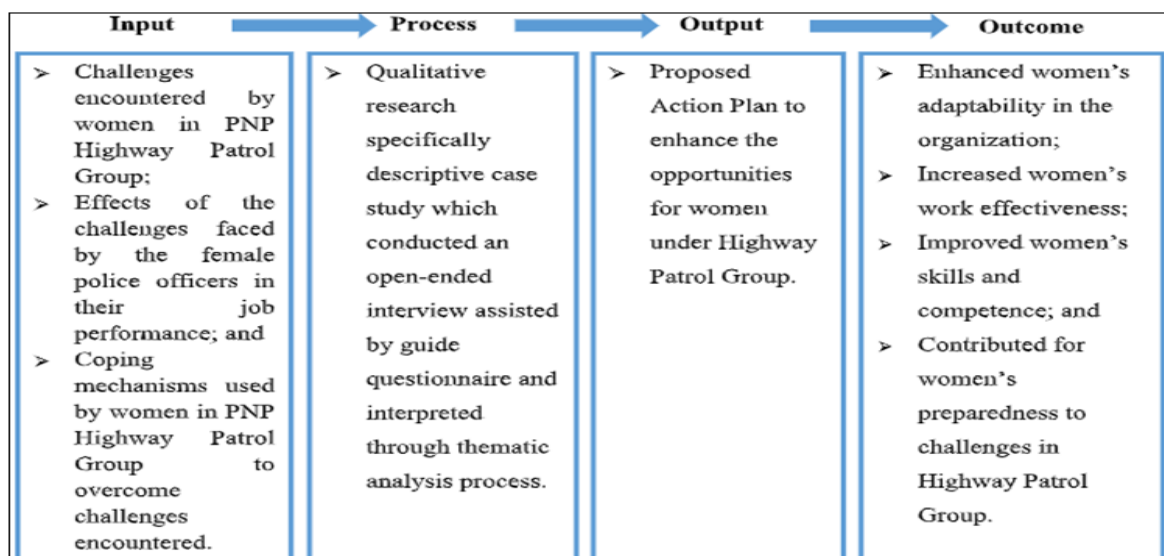


Fig 1 Paradigm of the Study

The researcher adopted the Input Process Output Outcome (IPOO) Model proposed by Joseph Edward McGrath (1964). It includes all of the materials and the information that are required in process and the specific details of the process itself in A Case Study: Women in Highway Patrol Group in Ilocos Norte. The input are the raw materials that contain pieces of information required in the study consisting of the challenges encountered, effects of the challenges faced in job performance and coping mechanisms used to overcome challenges encountered by women in Highway Patrol Group. The process includes the steps involved in order to create the outputs from the inputs such as the design, instrument and treatment that were used in conducting the research. The output was/were the activities or actions that was expected to take place from the process while the outcome was the effect of the action or activity done providing possible results of the study.

➤ *Significance of the Study*

This study aimed to understand the life experiences of female police officers under the Highway Patrol Group. The results of the study would be beneficial to the following:

- *Philippine National Police.*

The results of the study made them realize the situations of women, thus provide help to improve the recruitment and enhance opportunities for women in Philippine National Police most especially under the Highway Patrol Group.

- *Academe.*

This study may serve as an additional reference material for college and expose the students to enhance their interest and skills in research, this may also serve as a guide to those who plan to conduct a research relevant to the study.

- *Female Police Officers.*

This may serve as an eye-opener for them to become more effective and confident to face any challenges in the workplace.

- *Criminology Students.*

This study will also be beneficial to the female students who aspire to join the law enforcement field specifically PNP Highway Patrol Group, for them to have an understanding and be equipped with needed knowledge in their future endeavours.

- *Future Researchers.*

The findings of the study may serve as a source of information and will further open doors for future researchers to refine and expand studies related to women in the PNP Highway Patrol Group.

➤ *Scope and Delimitation of the Study*

This research covered the experiences of women in Philippine National Police under the Highway Patrol Group in Ilocos Norte including the identification of the challenges faced by them, the effects of such and the coping mechanisms utilized in addressing struggles associated to their role. As to the limitations, this study only sought out information about the life experiences of the female PNP Highway Patrol Group and did not touch any concept other than those mentioned. This research conducted during the second semester of SY 2022-2023.

➤ *Definition of Terms*

For the purpose of clarification, the important terms used in this study have been defined:

- *Burnout.*

This is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged or repeated stress. It occurs when you feel overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet constant demands because of the pile of works in the job. Hence, people experiencing such could lead to change in their behaviour and relationship to other people.

- *Challenges.*

These are problems and struggles faced by female officers in the Highway Patrol Group inside and outside the workplace. These are circumstances that people have undergone which requires effort and determination in order to be overcome. With such, these may motivate or hinder one's life for continuing to pursue.

- *Competence.*

This refers to the ability to work under pressure, to maintain composure, to have sound judgment and decision-making skills. It is manifested by having the adequate knowledge to deal with a certain job given and perform it in the best of his capabilities. Therefore, it is being able to act effectively and efficiently in various situations faced.

- *Discouragement.*

This is the state of losing confidence or enthusiasm to go after something or someone. It is the unwillingness to pursue of an individual because of being afraid of the consequences it might result. This could instill a doubt and fear to oneself that could cause them to lost focus and steal their peace, hope and joy.

- *Effects.*

These are the results and consequences of the organizational and personal challenges encountered by women in the Highway Patrol Group. Could positively affect or might ruin the life of an individual by providing a change. So, it is something inevitable whenever there is an act done or a decision that have been made.

- *Faith.*

This is the strong belief in God through spiritual practices such as praying and church doctrines. It is completely relying into something or someone without any hint of doubt or tangible proof presented. Thus, it is a powerful force that pushes a person to go beyond limit and have trust in times of hardships.

- *Family Connection.*

This refers to the association or relationship between members of the family bound by love, trust and care. It is not felt biologically but is sometimes found outside home in the absence of love ones. The connection brings joy, comfort and support necessary to influence an individual.

- *Financial Inadequacy.*

This is the poor capacity of individual to provide financial resources to achieve a particular purpose. It is a challenge that limits an individual from accessing what they need and want because of not having enough means.

- *Highway Patrol Group (HPG).*

This is a unit in the Philippine National Police (PNP) tasked with enforcing traffic safety rules and providing general supervision to local police forces in terms of traffic law enforcement. They are national in scope which also monitors highways, conduct investigations with incidents on the roads and serve as a venue for safe transportation of all.

- *Mechanisms.*

These are the means used by women in the Highway Patrol Group to overcome challenges. Also, provides strategies to be performed in order to deal something or someone and accomplish a certain goal. It is set up personally or is adapted from other people who have undergone the same thing you have experienced.

- *Mind Over Body.*

This refers to a technique of focusing into the mental fortitude rather than the physical endurance. It is an effort done by an individual to motivate oneself to do unachievable achievable. With such, it became a factor that contribute to the reaching of success

- *Recruitment.*

This is the act of seeking for the organization to recruit, select and maintain possible officers. It is a way for a certain company or agency to discover and contact individuals willing to work and provide necessary services associated with the job they are applying for. It plays a vital role in order to come up with a set of deserving employees of the organization.

- *Self-Growth.*

This is the improvement or development of oneself including skills and capabilities which are obtained through challenges and experiences. It is pushing oneself to reach highest potential and to strive to get out from the comfort zone. This make an individual realize that they are more than what they are, that they can walk to greater heights.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

The literature and studies cited in this chapter discuss the different concepts, understanding, and ideas, generalization or conclusions and different developments related to women's place in the police force, particularly in the Highway Patrol Group. These serve as the researchers' guide in developing the study.

➤ *Related Literature*

Careers considered to be single-gender dominated have deep roots. Historically, males were labeled as the primary breadwinner, and females were responsible for household duties and taking care of the children. These perceptions created labels that became attached to genders and formed identities of acceptable gender roles. Likewise, policing has been traditionally viewed as a male-dominated field (Horne, 1980; Sherman, 1975). Women are mostly relegated to perform clerical roles or jobs as dispatchers until the women's liberation movement of the 1970s when popular television shows suddenly dramatized the new breed of women cops and detectives. Civil rights and affirmative action laws paved the way for women to assume law enforcement jobs traditionally held by men. Originally women are called "matrons" when they were first hired by the police department before the turn of the 20th century, female officers really did not achieve full recognition for a very long time. In the mid- 1970s despite the popularity of television shows like "Cagney and Lacy" and "Charlie's Angels", women only made up small percent of the total police work force. By the 1980s, the male dominated profession of law enforcement began to acknowledge women's presence in the field. As women began to gain more respect in their work, they were also given more powers. Women account for a small but growing percentage of police officers. The national average for sworn women police officers is approximately 13%, up from just 3% in the 1970s. Fortunately, the benefits of recruiting, training and promoting more female officers are now being recognized by agencies and law enforcement associations across the country. This was the first time in policing that women were given an equal amount of responsibility and tasks to that of men. Although the number of women assigned to traditional police roles such as patrolling increased, the number of women in policing did not substantially increase. Paradoxically, the number of women employed as police officers quickly began to slow down in the 1990s and became slower in the 2000s (Cordner & Cordner, 2011). Hence, females are continuing to fight to be accepted into an occupation that often fails to respect or value them. When Filipino women started to join the male-dominated Philippine National Police (PNP), they were only given assignments that were administrative in nature and jobs that could be classified and described as "desk duties" (Yap 2013). Within the following thirty years - after the establishment of the PNP in the early period of the 1990s, (Manila Bulletin 2013), female Filipino police officers have been able to participate in other police activities and functions, including risky PNP operations. They have also become commanders in the field of police work. Among the Filipino policewomen who excelled in the PNP were Lina Sarmiento and Lorlie Arroyo. According to Berg and Budnick (1986), women in policing have increased steadily in the past 15 to 20 years, however, the struggle by female police officers to be accepted in law enforcement parallels and, at the same time, represents an exacerbation of the difficulties experienced by women as they have made their way into the labor force in general.

In 2012, Sarmiento and Arroyo were the only two "female generals" in the Philippine National Police. They were both Chief Superintendents, with Sarmiento being the head of the Police Security and Protection Group (PSPG), while Arroyo was the head of the Crime Laboratory of the Philippine National Police. Arroyo's rank was equivalent to the rank of a brigadier general in the military. In June 2012, Sarmiento was promoted to become the "first two-star female general" of the Philippine National Police and the "first female general to be named in the Directorial Staff of the PNP" since the inception of the Philippine National Police.

As of 2021 from the PNP data, policewomen continue to be outnumbered by male counterparts having 37,157 or 17.94 percent of the PNP's strength of 169,955 which comprises of 82.06 percent males. Although it is not uncommon for males and females to work together in law enforcement, there is a dearth of women in law enforcement. While the employment of women in the police force is gradually increasing, "women are still underutilized by law enforcement agencies" (Natarajan, 1996). Ironically, while advancements have been made to eradicate barriers to employment, the literature reveals that women in the workforce continue to be discriminated against and are under-represented (Blum, Fields, & Goodman, 1994).

➤ *The Role of Gender in Law Enforcement*

The gender lines appear blurred in law enforcement, but most agencies are described as militaristic, uniformed and having hierarchical rank authority (Sever, 2008). This long tradition is associated with the hierarchal military style structure and has created an unrealistic belief that only men can understand the dangers of policing. In doing so, institutional barriers were strategically placed giving women the impression that they were not capable or welcomed.

Moreover, women are underrepresented and underutilized by law enforcement, despite a progressively rising number of them working in the police force organizations. Despite advancements, policing remains one of the most "gendered" professions in contemporary societies, with a much lower proportion of sworn female officers than the rest of the labor force. In terms of socially-mandated standards that emerge as a result of regular social encounters, policing is gendered. Police work has always been considered to be harsh, physically-demanding, and dangerous, making it a job only for men (Deans. 2015).

The women in law enforcement, at all levels, complained most frequently about widespread gender discrimination in their respective agencies (Martin & Jurick, 2006). Relatively, gender discrimination within policy and procedure also aids in the grooming of female police officers for specific roles. Because male superiors believe women cannot handle the physical exertion required to succeed at a variety of higher profile jobs, women are frequently tracked into clerical, social service, or other desk jobs rather than the patrol assignments they desire (Wu, 2015).

This grooming of placing women in clerical and other administrative roles can have long-term consequences because female officers tasked with administrative duties will never gain the hands-on experience required for promotion, leading to job satisfaction stagnation when they cannot be promoted due to a lack of experience (Price, 1999).

➤ *Policing and Its Barriers*

According to the study of Brinser (2016), challenges were faced by females in the masculine field categorizing from organizational to personal. Organizational challenges are problems or barriers that female police officers may face that stem from police organizations. Female police officers do not have control over these challenges. As noted, historically, females were not easily accepted into the field of policing. Research has shown that female police officers were not accepted by their male counterparts (Balkin et al., 1988). In connection, according to Methegreg (2008), there is seemingly a shortage of women involved in law enforcement wherein they comprise only a token proportion of female officers representing approximately 10% of all sworn personnel. Indeed, Horne (1980) found that of all challenges, acceptance by male police officers including their competencies is the biggest challenge female police officers face.

Male police officers maintained a belief that policing is a male-dominated occupation where females are neither physically nor emotionally capable of performing the job requirements and are destined to fail (Brookshire, 1980). Males perceived that females should maintain their normative gender roles since they are too lenient and do not conduct real police work (Melchionne, 1976). During this time, males still viewed females in their gender role which implied a nurturing role. Adding females to policing decreased the status and perception of the profession which was originally viewed as a strong and masculine career (Balkin, 1988). As a result of resistance in the field, research has found that discrimination is present for female police officers (Burligame et al., 2005). Gender discrimination is a form of intimidation that may be performed on purpose, especially by male police officers, to discourage females to remain in the field. Gender discrimination for female police officers can occur during the initial hiring process, with an example as extreme physical standards favorable for male recruits (Polisar et al., 1998). Martin (1980) asserts that the lack of females in management creates an obstacle for young female police officers who strive for promotion due to the deficiency of leadership and guidance by other females.

Moreover, personal challenges are problems or barriers faced by female police officers that are non-organizational. These challenges evolve from the personal life outside of the work environment and not presented by the police department. Females may, or may not, have control over these challenges. Personal challenges include family responsibilities, gender role conflict, and low self-confidence in the role as a police officer (Glaser & Saxe, 1982). Therefore, the potential challenges females may face in the field of policing may be organizational, personal, or both.

➤ *Recruitment of Women in Law Enforcement*

Entering the Philippine National Police (PNP) as Police Officer is not an easy feat. Applicants must hurdle several stages from the recruitment down to training before they become a public servant. During the recruitment stage, all applicants are given their fair share to showcase their skills, qualifications, and eligibility in the eyes of the Recruitment Board. However, there is one part of the selection process that seems to be unfair especially for the female applicant and that is the minimum ten percent (10%) allocated quota for women in every recruitment which is according to Section 58 of Republic Act No. 8551, the PNP shall reserve ten percent (10%) of its annual recruitment, training, and education quota for women.

As confirmed by discussed research, upward mobility in the Law Enforcement field has been seemingly difficult for female police officers. Statistics show women only account for one in ten supervisors in the law enforcement field (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2015). It is clear from research that women tend to be just as successful, or exceed more often, than their male colleagues, however this trend is not observed within law enforcement. Wolfe (2019) offers an explanation, as he believes there are many industries where it is still a “good old boys’ network” that could make things harder even for the most talented women. It has been long proven that the police force is a male-dominated field with women often being passed over for supervisor positions yet despite this, some women have managed to break these barriers.

The Highway Patrol Group was established as Traffic Control Group (Trafcon) in 1955 as a response to a high-profile vehicular accident along a highway in Pampanga, now known as the MacArthur Highway. At present, Traffic Control Group (Trafcon) was renamed as the Highway Patrol Group which is tasked to enforce traffic safety rules and to provide general supervision to local police forces with regard to the enforcement of traffic laws. With that, it has been hard for the women to be deployed under the group because they differ sharply from male officers in their views of policing and their experiences, according to a new Pew Research Center survey conducted by the National Police Research Platform.

Over the past 31 years since the PNP was established in 1991, there have only been six female generals, with the latest being Ma. Asuncion Placino in 2019. Other previous female generals were Yolanda Tanigue, Lorlie Arroyo, Angelina Vidal, Liza Sabong and Lina Sarmiento, who was the only female general to reach the two-star rank in 2012.

➤ *Understanding Barriers Effect to Female Police Officers*

The idea that female applicants lack confidence in their abilities to do the job as well as their ability to get through the various stages of the application process is one of the barriers in entering the law enforcement field. Women do not believe that they are strong and capable enough to do police work resulting to discouragement. Moreover, studies have shown that women in policing experienced stress and exhaustion resulting to burnout (Tougas, Beaton, Rinfret, & Sablonniere, 2005). Family issues were also identified as an effect of the challenges associated with the work. Also, the schedule or work shift of being a police officer damages the connection between families impacting the performance of duties in workplace and drains one's mental and emotional capability.

Similarly, burnout because of stress and exhaustion in policing comes from many aspects of the job including occupational or operational stressors that are specific to the actual performance of the job (Abdollahi, 2002; Violanti et al., 2012). An unpredictable work schedule is seen by many researchers as a key organizational stressor due to the negative effect a rotating shift schedule can have on family time and personal life, the ability to be present at key events and holidays, and sleep cycles (El Sayed et al., 2019). Hence, family life for female officers can be a source of comfort and coping, but it can also be a source of stress as female officers work to the often-competing demands of their job and their personal lives.

➤ *Women's Entrance into Law Enforcement*

Historically a "males-only" field, women began making their way into the law enforcement field at the end of the 19th century. Despite the addition of many women to vice squads, women would still experience challenges while working alongside their male counterparts. One of the most glaring issues was the lack of acceptance by their male colleagues, as the tradition of male dominance had been established for many years prior. As the perceived notion that law enforcement was considered as a "males only field" persisted, women were subjected to numerous instances of discrimination. Women interested in becoming police officers were subjected to higher standards for police employment, were restricted to special units and bureaus, and were assigned primarily to clerical, juvenile, guard duty and vice work (Price, 1996). They were also subjected to lower wages, unable to be promoted except within special women units, and not permitted to take the same assessments for promotion as men (Price, 1996). Law enforcement is a predominantly male profession, and it has been this way since police departments and sheriff departments were first created. As of 2007, even in large departments (100 sworn officers or greater), females accounted for 15% or less of the total sworn officers (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2010).

➤ *Managing Occupational Stress and Job Performance*

Spirituality has been acknowledged in research as a means for individuals trying to manage stressful life events (Behera, & Dash, 2015). It explored different types of spiritual methods and techniques that are effective in managing stress connected to the mind and body, such as yoga, tai chi, martial arts, and mindfulness meditation and praying (Kopacz & Connery, 2015).

The innate stressors linked to police work may stem from organizational burdens, such as shift work, prolonged work hours, work overload, scarce budget resources, ineffective policies/procedures, and undesirable job experiences (Brown & Daus, 2016).

➤ *Policewomen making waves in the PNP-HPG*

While from this literature review, female HPG employees have been dispatched to Camp Crame to protect the PNP national headquarters' gates. Policewomen who became female bikers will be on the watch for "hot cars," such as motorbikes and cars, entering the camps with expired registration. As part of the fight against illegal vehicles, the Philippine National Police-Highway Patrol Group (PNP-HPG) deployed a special team made up of female motorbike riders in every police camp countrywide. The deployment of female officers, according to Brig. Gen. Eliseo Cruz, director of HPG, is a part of efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment (Caliwan, 2020). In addition, The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), a prestigious police organization that represents both officers and police leadership globally, requested an Ad Hoc Committee "to examine the role of women in policing and various issues of concern" in response to what was perceived to be the slow growth during that time. The IACP found after polling over 800 members that recruitment, employment for women in policing, retention, prospects for advancement, sexual harassment, and gender discrimination remained problems (May, 2018).

Moreover, Calawad stated, "Women entering the highway patrol work do so at a disadvantage, not just because of their gender and their perceived biological differences, but also because of the social norms ascribed to them that emerge from everyday interactions." Most women are not permitted to join the highway patrol since their physical capabilities differ from men. They lack power that some police officers possess, since both male and female police officers are capable and skilled in their positions, she expressed appreciation for the initiative and claimed that it will boost their morale and drive (Calawad, 2020).

Women's entry into the profession of law enforcement and the barriers they encounter are major topics in female police research. However, an accurate account of female officers' current representation and role in law enforcement is unknown. That number is even lower in small or rural police departments. Despite the strides women have made in the profession, recruitment remains low and the retention rate has not improved (Hassell et al., 2011). As the literature has shown thus far, women have historically faced many challenges within their professional lives. Women throughout history have been forced to create a variety of niches in order to maintain employment, even when conditions were poor and unsafe. Although women have been able to mitigate the majority of historical obstacles in many occupations, women still remain largely marginalized and underrepresented within all levels of law enforcement; including local, state and federal levels (Wu, 2018). Women within law enforcement had to face numerous challenges during their transition into law enforcement in which all of these obstacles have culminated in feelings of isolation, inadequacy and increased anxiety for female law enforcement officers.

➤ *Review of Related Studies*

Previous studies have emphasized that there are gender differences reported between men and women police officers' exposure to occupational stress. Leigh, Wills, and Schulberg (2016) found that female officers reported substantially higher levels of stress compared to their male counterparts. Conversely, Violanti et al. (2016) reported slightly significant gender differences when examining the sources of stress among female and male police officers. Violanti et al. found that women officers experienced more stress from a superior's lack of encouragement than their male colleagues did. The levels of stress reported by police are typically high, and it becomes a central concern for law enforcement agencies (Farr-Wharton et al., 2016). Researchers have suggested that spirituality could help ease some of the stressors police officers face on a daily while performing tasks (Charles et al., 2014).

In addition, according to James Clear in his study 'Developing Mental Toughness in Work and Life', mental toughness or "grit" as they call it plays a more important role than anything else for achieving goals in work, profession and life. Each year, approximately 1,300 cadets join the entering class at the academies. Cadets are required to complete a series of brutal tests including the initiation program known to be internally as "Beast Barracks." which deliberately engineered to test the very limits of cadets' physical, emotional, and mental capacities.

Meanwhile, Angela Duckworth, a researcher at the University of Pennsylvania, found something different when she began tracking the cadets. Duckworth studies achievement, and more specifically, how mental toughness, perseverance, and passion impact a person's ability to achieve goals. She found out in her study that it was not strength or smart leadership potential that accurately predicted whether or not a cadet would finish. Instead, it was grit or the perseverance and passion to achieve long-term goals that made the difference. It was mental toughness that predicted whether or not a cadet would be successful, not their talent, intelligence, or genetics.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents a discussion on the research design, locale of the study, population and procedures used in selecting the sample, research instruments, data-gathering procedure, and techniques that the researcher utilized to attain the objectives of the study.

➤ *Research Method and Design*

This qualitative research made used the descriptive case study to record the individual's or group's experiences including the challenges they faced and the coping mechanisms they utilized to overcome different struggles. Qualitative researched is often based on methods of observation and enquiry; it “explores the meaning of human experiences and creates the possibilities of change through raised awareness and purposeful action” (Taylor & Francis, 2013). In addition, a descriptive case study is used for an in-depth analysis of a single unit, such as one individual, one group and one organization's experiences and/or behaviours that may be used in a variety of ways to make inferences about developmental process, person's level of functioning and life events to arrive at a detailed description and understanding of the entity.

➤ *Population and Locale of the Study*

The participants of the study composed of three (3) female police officers who are deployed at the Philippine Highway Patrol Team located at BOE Compound, Brgy. 23, P. Gomez Street, Laoag City, Ilocos Norte. Participants consist of one (1) currently deployed at the Highway Patrol Team of Laoag City and two (2) former officers who are now deployed in Abra and Ilocos Sur. The participants were selected using total enumeration sampling technique that involves collecting and examining the data of the entire population that have particular set of characteristics. Therefore, since the entire population is so small and well-defined, and there are only few female police officers in the group, the researchers selected all the population as participants.

➤ *Research Instruments*

The researchers conducted face-to-face and online interview assisted by a researcher-made interview guide questionnaire to collect all related information or data which composed of three (3) questions having four (4) sub-questions. First part elicit information on the challenges encountered by women in Highway Patrol Group, during the recruitment process and after joining the group. Second gathers information about the effects of these challenges into the job performance of women under the Highway Patrol Group and third, sought to answer the mechanisms or strategies used to cope up with the challenges encountered. In addition, voice and video recorder was also us to record responses and data gathered from the participants.

➤ *Data Gathering Procedure*

A letter to the PNP Chief of Philippine Highway Patrol Team Station of Ilocos Norte was presented to sought permission to conduct a survey interview to the participants. Upon approval, the researchers conducted a preliminary interview with the female officers who are under the Philippine Highway Patrol Team assigned in BOE Compound, Brgy. 23, P. Gomez Street, Laoag City, Ilocos Norte. The participants were informed of the procedure of the face-to-face and online interview. It was also predetermined the specific date and time of the availability of each participant before the conduct of the interview. Moreover, the researchers conducted a briefing with the participants informing them of the confidentiality and privacy of participants to be gathered from the interview.

From there, the interview proper was conducted which was done in Filipino language to make the subjects comfortable in answering the questions. The participants were asked the same open-ended questions and answers were obtained from them. Afterwhich, data gathered, were transcribed and analyzed.

➤ *Treatment of Data*

The researchers focused on the discussion to verify and clarify the responses. The recorded data were analyzed using the thematic analysis process which includes data familiarization, code generation, and theme searching. According to (Creswell 2014), the thematic analysis is a systematic process for coding data in which specific statements are analysed and categorized into themes that represent the phenomenon of interest.

Moreover, from the three (3) statement of the problem emerged four (4) sub-questions where the data were obtained. The recorded statements of the participants from the interview were then compiled then it was transcribed converting the audio into a text. Afterwhich, the text was translated where codes are generated from. The codes were analyzed and interpreted for theme identification creating a nine (9) sets of themes containing the findings of the interview.

In addition, assurance of confidentiality of information was also required to protect the participants. With that, a third-party administrator was used to distribute the contact emails or numbers from the researcher to the participants. Hence, there was no possibility of linkage other than the concerned individuals in the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This chapter presents the data collected from the participants as well as the codes and themes that emerged from their responses. It also includes the researchers' interpretation and analysis of the data collected.

A. *The Challenges Encountered by the Women in Highway Patrol Group*

Several themes were formulated based from the experiences shared by the women in the Highway Patrol Group (HPG) which include the following:

➤ *Shortlisted Recruitment Opportunity*

Recruitment is the search for a prospective employee that suits the job requirements as represented by job specification. It is the first stage in selection which makes the vacancies known to a large number of people and the opportunities that the organization offers attracting that manpower in adequate numbers to facilitate effective selection of an efficient workforce (Anderson, 2001).

As to the shortlisted recruitment opportunity experienced by women, they are given limited opportunity due to the passage coming from Section 58 of the Republic Act 8551 stating the Philippine National Police (PNP) shall reserve ten percent (10%) of its annual recruitment, training, and education quota for women. The limitations implemented before them provide a possibility of being seen as less qualified, not being able to get into the specified quota because of the competition between different applicants associated with recruitment and the uncertainty of being able to pass the challenges of entering the organization.

- *Participant 1 Revealed:*

“Applying is extremely difficult. You need to compete not only with time but with different people and at the same time the uncertainty whether to pass and be accepted. There is only a limited opportunity in Highway Patrol Group especially for us women because more men are recruited than women. In Region 1, the recruitment of men is ninety percent (90%) while for women, it's only ten percent (10%).”

- *Meanwhile, Participant 2 Affirmed:*

“The recruitment quota that the organization follows is ten percent (10%), that is why, as you can see, there are only few women who get in the Highway Patrol Group. Men are given greater chance getting into the Highway Patrol Group because they are given a bigger quota.”

- *Participant 3 Supported the Other Two with this Statement:*

“It's like this, it is not because only few women apply. Actually, there are plenty of women who apply because they want to join the Highway Patrol Group. However, it is limited with the ten percent (10% quota).”

Limited recruitment opportunity is perceived by the female police officers under Highway Patrol Group as their greatest challenge in pursuing a career in law enforcement field. It was further explained that with the limited quota given as for the recruitment of women under the PNP makes it difficult for them to apply leading to a greater competition with other applicants in the profession. Also, during the recruitment stage, all applicants are given their fair share to showcase their skills, qualifications, and eligibility before the Recruitment Board. However, in the process where there is limited opportunity in the recruitment, the feeling of uncertainty of whether they would be accepted or not is experienced.

This is supported by the study of Methereg (2008) which focused on lack of women's representation in all levels of government and in law enforcement. Adopting to survey research approach, the outcome of this study revealed that there is seemingly a shortage of women involved in law enforcement wherein they comprise only a token proportion of female officers representing approximately 10% of all sworn personnel. The research has shown that restrictions in recruitment make women evaluate their lives before going into police work resulting to under representation of women in their way into the labor force in general.

Undoubtedly, recruitment opportunity plays a vital role for women pursuing a career in the law enforcement field especially under the Highway Patrol Group. In a field predominated by men, women in law enforcement still tend to stand out. And though the percentage of women in law enforcement is small, women may be slow in progress but continues to break the challenge and enter the organization.

➤ *Financial Inadequacy*

Applying for a job not only takes a lot of time and effort but also entails monetary consequences associated with it. Along with their profession, women worry that as they pursue career in the law enforcement field, their financial capability will be challenged. Moreover, the cost of applying goes beyond just paying for their personal allowances; it encompasses the recruitment process, training, and other fees for the job. The lack or the state of insufficient capacity of women to provide necessary financial resources to enter the organization is a vital component challenging them whether they are able to fund and meet their needs in the profession.

• *Participant Number 1 Confessed:*

” Money is important when applying for a job. You should not only have intelligence or physical fitness but must also have adequate financial resources. In entering the organization, one’s BMI must be normal. For me, I have a health condition which makes me fat. I have spent so much money for health maintenance to the point that we borrow from others just to achieve a normal body, and to be qualified to enter the organization.”

• *Participant Number 2, on the Other Hand, Disclosed:*

“Actually, I am from Abra and just to apply, had to travel from Abra to Manila which is too far. From the transportation alone, my allowance would be used up and it is hard to budget the remaining money for the food and other things. In everything we do, we really need money. That is why it is unavoidable for us to have financial problems.”

• *Meanwhile, Participant Number 3 Told:*

“We are actually financially deprived and my family does not have enough budget needed for my application. Entering the organization is not as easy as what others think it is; you need to think whether you can, whether you are financially adequate and capable.”

The statements revealed that one of the most common challenges encountered by females in the Highway Patrol Group is the financial inadequacy especially in the processing of their application in the organization. Further, the study was able to recognize that financial struggles stem from escalating debt, unexpected expenses or a combination of factors dealt in modern life.

According to the findings of a related study called “Listahan 3” survey released by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), there are over 5.6 million Filipino families living in poverty as of 2022. With that, constraints because of financial incapability prevent some individuals of opportunities and of achieving higher quality of life. However, the statements provided by the participants implied that poverty is not a hindrance to one’s success, that despite financial limitations, they resorted to other means such as debts and loans to continue and enter successfully in the organization. After all, all hardships and sacrifices become the fuel that boosts individual’s motivation to strive for a life worth living. With sheer determination and hard work, it could defeat poverty (Salih, 2020).

➤ *Doubt in Competence*

Women entering the field of law enforcement do so at a disadvantage, not just because of their gender and their perceived biological differences, but also because of the social norms ascribed to them that emerge from everyday interactions. Along with negative attitudes from co-workers, a myriad of other barriers faced daily by women in the police force impede and make an officer hesitant of one’s skills and abilities. They do not only doubt the women’s ability to work under pressure, to maintain composure, to have sound judgement but at the same time the skills and capabilities within them.

• *Participant Number 1 Described:*

“When I entered the organization, at first a lot of them didn’t want to associate, that is why it was hard to fit in. It seemed like I was still groping to understand my co-workers’ attitude and at the same time the environment. There were times that I felt left out, maybe because I’m a woman that is why they treated me that way. There was doubt in me. But as time passed by, slowly, I adjusted and was able to keep up.”

• *For Participant Number 2, this was her Response to the Question:*

“We cannot really deny that at work, there are people who don’t open up easily to others. As for me, it is okay but at first it felt like as if you were not totally accepted. It was like they did not believe that you can, that they are doubting your competence. Even if they don’t say it directly, you can actually feel it by how they behave or treat you.”

• *Meanwhile, Participant Number 3 Supported the Statements of the Other Two Participants by Saying:*

“One of the challenges for us women are not only on how we can be accepted in the job but also on how we can be accepted by our co-officers and the public. There are those who are pleased to meet you; there are also those people who need time to fully accept you. At first you can see how they look at you, like they don’t believe that we can, because of course, we are women. Men are different from women specially with our kind of work.”

The quotes above from one of the female participants illustrate the plight of women working in an organization such as the police force. They feel less valued in their team due to their gender and they feel the need to prove themselves to their male colleagues and to the organization to be accepted and valued. In addition, the idea that female applicants lack competence to do the job as well as their ability to get through the various stages of the application process is one of the barriers to entering to the law enforcement field. Women do not believe that they are strong and capable enough to do police work or whether they have the qualities of individuals that make them well suited to the profession.

This study is also similar to the findings in the study of Balkin (1988), based on observable similarities and differences (such as gender) of women and their male counterparts. Gender bias and differences negatively impact women, creating a perceived incongruity between being a woman and being identified as a police officer. Significantly, Rabe-Hemp (2008) revealed in his study that the central object of controversy is that women do not possess sufficient physical strength, which limits them in certain operational functions, especially those involving the use of physical force. Studies conclude that women are considered at least as equal as men in most areas of police work, that they are as effective as men in patrol car tasks, that there are no consistent differences in their field performance, and that females are no less involved and no less able to meet the physical requirements of police work (French and Waugh, 1998).

B. Effects of the Challenges Faced by the Female Police Officers in Their Job Performance

With the challenges they have experienced linked, several themes were formulated based from the shared effects of such challenges in the performance of duties and responsibilities of female police officers in HPG. Such themes include the following:

➤ *Feeling of Discouragement*

Women embark on careers with high expectations and aspirations for advancement. However, this confidence evaporates as they enter their mid-career phase. As an effect, discouragement among females held back their hope in pursuing the said profession. Arising from the participants' common statements as to what effects such challenges they have encountered in their work, the word discouragement had become a negative force for them to lose their confidence or enthusiasm to go after something, do a certain action or enter into the profession.

- *Relative to the Above-Stated Statements, Participant Number 1 Said:*

“Sometimes, because of the problems I’m experiencing and at the same time those hurtful words I have heard discourages me to continue, like I lose interest doing my job.”

- *Participant Number 2, on the Other Hand Answered:*

“Our job is okay. However, there are times that I felt low-moralled because we cannot avoid hearing various comments.”

- *On the Other Hand, Participant Number 3 Stated,*

“For me, ever since I have experienced a lot of criticisms from my family and relatives. Then in the organization, there are still things that discourage me which affects my job performance.”

The statements revealed that one of the effects of the challenges affecting the job performance of female police officers especially under the Highway Patrol Group is the discouragement which is a particularly important emotion influencing the effectiveness of an officer in an organization. These women have heard hurtful words and other forms of criticisms questioning them coming from either their co-workers or family members which creates a feeling of discouragement in them to pursue such profession. To get ahead in the workplace, you have to be seen. But for women, the importance of visibility creates a big problem where their contributions are systematically overlooked at work.

This is supported by the study of Jochen Menges, who teaches at both the University of Zurich and Cambridge Judge Business School stating that the emotional burden may not only hamper opportunities for women, but also prevent them from contributing to an organization to the best of their ability.

Indeed, though women work hard, try their best, still sometimes things do not work out as they hoped. One may plan, prepare, and think ahead, yet, something unforeseen comes out of nowhere and creates another obstacle to overcome. After all, life in and out of the workplace is difficult.

➤ *Burnout*

Women are advancing in the police department, but they still face many obstacles in their workplace and at home. “Burnout” is a term that refers to physical or mental tiredness brought on by excessive effort or stress. It may also be defined as a psychological disorder marked by fatigue, cynicism, and depersonalization. Burnout has long been viewed as the crisis and illness of contemporary society and life. Because of the many challenge’s women face in their profession, one may assume that women are more stressed and experience more burnout than their male peers. Surprisingly, this notes that their exhaustion is not only stemmed from the pressure from the workplace environment, and pile of workloads, but also the time accessibility which is unfavorable for female officers leading to increased levels of burnout affecting their work performance and lives in general.

- *Participant Number 1 Revealed:*

“We also experienced exhaustion. There were also times that we don’t get enough sleep because of so many reports to do and finish. We are not only tired physically but also mentally.”

- *Meanwhile, Participant Number 2 Responded with the Statement:*

“Sometimes we even forget to give ourselves enough time to rest, because if you are called or is told to report, you must go immediately. Even if you are off-duty, you must always standby.”

- *The Foregoing Statements of the Two Participants were Confirmed with Participant Number 3 Saying:*

“One of the hard things in our job is that we are often tired or exhausted. Even if our body and mind want to rest already, we can’t, because we need to finish the task they assigned to us.”

Statements from the participants suggest that police officers face a work environment that is commonly depicted as one of the most stressful occupations because officers encounter various individuals and different situations during the course of their daily work. Moreover, the police possess a great amount of discretion that requires them to make tough decisions at the same time in the making of paper reports and necessary documents in relation to their job. Furthermore, the nature of the law enforcement organization is often identified as a primary source of work-related stress which at some point lead to exhaustion, health effects and sleep disturbances. With that, in the police profession, associated burnout among police officers can decrease job performance.

This is supported by the study of Dowler (2005) wherein he found that female officers who experience pile of workloads and the unusual shifting schedules heightened levels of burnout. Moreover, the study showed that burnout caused by stress and exhaustion is common in all of individuals’ lives. Many times, people find themselves coming out of a stressful situation, however, the most important thing is that stress is acknowledged and is effectively managed.

Globally, police work is considered to be one of the stressful occupations. They deal on a regular basis with an assortment of unique situations and stressors. Long working hours, irregular eating habits, shift duties and disturbed personal life which primarily produce stress in the police officer’s work and life.

➤ *Destruction of Family Connection*

The role of a police officer is ambiguous and requires one to use time and efforts to perform his/her duties. The role of the police officer, in itself, has already been acknowledged as a form of challenge and a source of strain placed upon the family of police officers. Further, the work of female officers under the Highway Patrol Group disrupts family life and interferes with holidays and special family events. Family issues were also identified as the effect of the challenges associated with the work, due to the schedule or work shift of being a police officer. It damages the connection between families impacting the performance of duties in workplace together with their personal lives. Hence, breaking one’s lifestyle and relationship towards other people causes a negative effect unto the work of an officer.

- *To Supplement the Statement, Participant Number 1 Responded:*

“Because of the call of our duty we can’t join some of the important occasions of our family, our time is not in our hands but is already under the organization.”

- *Participant 2, on the Other Hand, Stated:*

“Instead of spending my time with my family, I am on-duty, you can’t do anything about it but to follow because it is what you sworn to.”

- *Similarly, Participant Number 3 Answered:*

“Because I am from Cabugao, Ilocos Sur and I was deployed in Ilocos Norte which is far from home, my family and I don’t usually see each other. There were times when they sulk because I couldn’t attend some important occasions at home. They get angry at me. But at the end of the day, they do understand why things are like that.”

Police officers’ families, at one time or another, will have to go on with everyday living without them always at home. One of the hardest times for a police officer is to be away from the family working the three-to-eleven or mid-watch shift. Though they have some time at home, they are told to standby for phone call at work whenever needed to report for emergency situations.

To support the study, the research of Nicoletti and Spooner (1994) revealed that relationships between officers and their families are considered to be high risk because of the stressors of the job, as well as the stress created by shift work. In order to have the family survive such pressure, the officer and his or her significant others must structure time and interaction.

Undoubtedly, in most professions, there is some level of stress. However, the demands placed upon police officers and ongoing threats of and exposure to violence leads to extremely high levels of stress on a daily basis. Such stress can do more than affect an officer’s job performance; it can also seep into and damage their personal life.

➤ *Self Growth*

“Our differences do shape us, and the challenges we’re dealt can help us make something beautiful and inspiring (Lambert, 2014).” The women police officers interviewed supported this theme and there were several reasons why they experienced greater growth from greater challenges. Self-growth is the improvement or development of oneself including skills and capability which is obtained through experiences and challenges.

- *Participant Number 1 Disclosed:*

“I became more sociable because in the PNP you can meet various individuals that will come and become part of your life. The longer you are in service, the more people you’ll associated with and the more you’ll learn not only about the job but at the same time for the improvement of your ability as an officer.”

- *In Addition, Participant Number 2 Stated:*

“Those who didn’t believe me, those challenges I have experienced in the Highway Patrol Group were indeed burdensome but I did not take them negatively. Rather, I made it a lesson for me to do better int my job and to improve what I have.”

- *On the Other Hand, Participant Number 3 Responded:*

“In here, I have learned how to get along, fit in, and to feel what’s around me. This is one of the things they taught me. I didn’t only improve into a better person but also, I realized that in every challenge I experienced, the mistakes I have done can be overcome.”

Based from the statements given by the participants, it can be deduced that challenges have positive effects in their job performance which made them feel stronger from the experience. It made them grow more as a result of expending more effort to overcome challenges and made them learn how to deal with emotions in an effective manner contributing to an effective execution of duties and responsibilities. Afterall, the greatest accomplishments and most important growth happens because of the problems people are trying to eliminate (Jamison, 2015).

To corroborate, Manson (2017) in his study said that in the right amount of pain and struggle, it is what allows people to feel a sense of accomplishment and meaning in their lives, which then builds up our sense of autonomy and self-worth. Generally, research finds that when people are challenged or struggle in ways that they believe they are capable of overcoming, those struggles eventually invigorate and lead them to a sense of meaning and accomplishment.

C. *The Coping Mechanisms used by the Women in Highway Patrol Group to Overcome Their Challenges.*

How an individual deal with stress and exhaustion determines the overall health and vitality of the individual. There are two types of coping methods which are constructive and destructive. In this study, the researchers focused on the constructive coping mechanisms in dealing with exhaustion and reducing of tension regarding their line of work having several themes formulated based from the shared effects of such challenges of female police officers in HPG. Such themes include following:

➤ *Coping through Faith*

The researchers have come up with the theme “Coping through Faith” basing on the common answers expressed by the participants when asked of their action or coping mechanisms dealing with challenges. The participants described how they often use their faith systems to help cope with the daily pressures of police work. Majority of the officers stated that they usually express their faith through the spiritual practice of prayer to assist with relaxation, finding comfort and strength in distress, survival, guidance, and resolution of problems providing them with a sense of peace and calmness. Notably, some of the police officers expressed that time spent meditating and praying before work shifts help to alleviate stress and perform better in their roles.

- *Participant Number 1 Shared:*

“First you need to hold unto the Lord, you need to pray every day. Prayer is powerful. As for me, from the recruitment, I prayed non-stop, upon entering the organization I still prayed because despite all those problems and challenges, God helped me. In everything you do, pray. Because what you think is impossible is actually possible if only you have faith in God. Praying has been my haven, because whenever I am tired, when life gets extremely hard I pray then fight again.”

- *Further, Participant Number 2 Said,*

“You just only need to have faith in God and believe in yourself because I have been once rejected with my application, this is my second time to apply under the HPG. I thought I couldn’t pass because I am not that fit, I am somewhat big. But I didn’t stop there, I did everything that I can together with prayer. Thank God I entered the organization and I was able to be of what I am today. As what they say ‘Do your best and God will do the rest’.”

- *In Addition, Participant Number 3 Responded,*

“We must have faith in God because He is the only one who knows everything and the one who can help us of whatever we desire for our lives. Whenever I am tired and I feel like I want to give up, I close my eyes and pray. There was a time that I cried because of my mixed emotions, being tired at the same time I miss my loved ones. I prayed.”

The participants’ statements suggest that spirituality could help ease some of the stressors police officers face daily while performing their tasks. Practices of spirituality through faith helped them to face adversity and cope with feelings of anxiety, stress and exhaustion. Moreover, their statements prove that faith has not only helped them to manage stress but served as their reminder to not give up and to serve as source of survival in their profession.

To support the study, Hesketh (2014) stated that spirituality is a “lens” for individuals searching for a sense of “purpose” or “meaning” to feel more fulfilled in the workplace (p. 154). The attribute of “meaning” may be noteworthy for police officers because policing being considered a “calling” is eminent (Hesketh, 2014, pp. 157-158). Moreover, these findings clarify how faith contributes to better outcomes, especially in occupational settings. Tsang and McCullough (2003) suggest that the relationship between faith and outcomes can be better understood by looking at how people use their faith to cope with stressors. The present study looks at faith maturity and its association with aspects of stress including appraisal, religious coping, affect and growth, as a framework from which to view the role of faith in the way stressful demands are managed by employees of law enforcement organizations.

Without doubt, spirituality encompasses strength that allows people to become resilient through adversity. Practicing spirituality may help female police officers alleviate work-related stress while developing self-worth and self-esteem.

- *Mind Over Body*

Mind over body mechanism is a way where thoughts and beliefs are given greater credits than the physical aspect. It plays a major role in influencing one’s stress and physical health. Given the emotional and physical demanding nature of law enforcement field of work, a particular dogma or belief system is a way to connect to something greater or look beyond self, which may increase a sense of responsibility for a wider community and better performance of a task (Moore et al., 2016). This notion was apparent in the responses provided by the participants.

- *Participant Number 1 Stated:*

“Our work is hard in general but it should be mind over body always. If you let or allow exhaustion consume your being, the more you feel the burden. Your mind should always think positively because if you think you can then of course your body will do the same.”

- *This Statement of Participant Number 1 is Supported by the Participant Number 2 Saying:*

“Mind over body is one of my means to overcome challenges. All jobs are hard especially to us women, the body and capability of men are indeed different compared to us. If I am tired, I don’t think that I am tired, rather I think positive thoughts and I usually say to myself that I can do it.”

- *Similarly, Participant Number 3 Reveals:*

“There were instances that I wanted to go home already; that I want to give up because it’s so hard especially to us women who don’t have the same firmness as those of men. But I told myself, I am already here. I have already come this far. Why should I give up now? Mind over body lang yan.”

This study revealed that the participants managed to overcome the challenges in the Highway Patrol Group by resorting to focusing on thoughts of mind. The adage “mind over matter” applies, which means that if one has the mental fortitude, he can will himself to do more than what he is capable of doing. It is either take the extra step, or make the extra effort. Basically, it is doing much more than what one’s physical endurance will. As what Bolton (2015) said: exhaustion and challenges might be the fuses that blows one’s light off but the brain is the breaker box that juices one to continue.

The statements are supported by a researcher at the University of Pennsylvania Angela Duckworth’s study, which revealed that it wasn’t strength or smarts or leadership potential that accurately predicted whether or not a cadet would finish. Instead, it was grit or the perseverance and passion to achieve long-term goals that made the difference. Related literatures further supported the statements provided by the participants revealing that it was mental toughness that predicted whether or not a cadet would be successful, not their talent, intelligence, or genetics.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the review of the study, the methods used in undertaking it, the results and findings, the conclusions arrived on the data gathered and analyzed.

➤ *Summary of Findings*

The participants of the study focused on the lived experiences of the female officers under Highway Patrol Group of Ilocos Norte. The participants shared the challenges they encountered, the effects of the challenges faced on their job performance and the mechanisms used by them in coping with such challenges. The female officers of Philippine National Police (PNP) under Highway Patrol Group experienced various challenges which gave them opportunity for personal growth and realize their inner strength. The researchers came up with the theme “Shortlisted Recruitment Opportunity” based on the common answers of the participants. The theme denotes the limited female hires in the Philippine National Police (PNP), manifested in having only an at least ten percent (10%) of its annual recruitment, training and education quota for women.

Moreover, with the challenges encountered by the women in Highway Patrol Group, analysis of the results yielded the presence of the theme “Financial Inadequacy” which stood out from the statements made by the participants. Financial inadequacy is the lack or the state of insufficient capacity of an individual to provide necessary financial resources to achieve a particular purpose. The theme denotes that the financial status of the hires under the Philippine National Police (PNP) Highway Patrol Group is an important component to fund and supply for their needs in entering the profession.

Another theme that emerged from the challenges encountered by female police officers in the Highway Patrol Group is “Doubt in Competence”. Competence is described as the ability to work under pressure, to maintain composure, to have sound judgement and decision-making skills during times of need and before deciding on the most logical course of action. As a matter of fact, female police officers experienced a doubt in their competence not only from their colleagues but at the same time from the public.

Based on the collected data, the female officers of Philippine National Police (PNP) under Highway Patrol Group are exposed to various challenges as part of their profession. The challenges they have experienced are linked to the effects of such in the performance of duties and responsibilities of female police officers. The theme “Feeling of Discouragement” that rose from the participants’ statements are their common answers to what the effects of the challenges they have encountered in their work are. The word discouragement is a state where an individual loses his/her confidence or enthusiasm to go after something or someone.

In connection, the three participants indicated “burnout” as the theme which is one of the effects of the challenges they encountered in their profession and responsibilities. The participants described “burnout” as the feeling of exhaustion and ultimately, not having enough time for one’s self.

Additionally, the researchers came up with the theme “Destruction of Family Connection” based on the common answers of the participants. Family connection is defined as the association or relationship between members of the family bound by love, trust and care. The role of a police officer is ambiguous and requires one to use time and effort to perform his/her duties. The role of the police officer, in itself, has already been acknowledged as a form of challenge and a source of strain placed upon the family of police officers.

Furthermore, the researchers supported the theme “Self-growth” with several reasons from the participants why they experienced greater growth from greater challenges. Based from the statements of the participants, it came out that challenges have a positive effect in their job performance. These included feeling stronger from the experience, growing more as a result of expending more effort to overcome such and put them to learn how to deal with emotions in an effective manner contributing to an effective execution of duties and responsibilities.

In addition, there are two types of coping methods: constructive and destructive. In this study researchers focused on constructive coping mechanisms which are positive ways of how the female officers under Highway with exhaustion and reducing of tension regarding their line of work. The researchers have come up with the theme “Coping through Faith” basing on the common answers expressed by the participants when asked of their action or coping mechanisms dealing with challenges. And the participants described how they often use their faith systems to help cope with the daily pressures of police work.

Besides, the theme “Mind over Body” was concluded as another topic for the same question of what coping mechanisms used by female police officers in dealing with challenges in Highway Patrol Group. Mind over body mechanism is a way where thoughts and beliefs is given greater credits than the physical aspect that plays a major role in influencing one’s stress and physical health.

➤ *Conclusions*

From the results and findings of the study, the participants have experienced several problems at some point throughout their career. It was revealed that recruitment is a big challenge because of the limitations implemented before them, together with financial struggles which stem from escalating debt, unexpected expenses or a combination of factors and doubt in their competence causing self-doubt.

This study confirmed that with women still facing barriers often began at the from the application phase and persist throughout the female police officer's career. Today female police officer entry and attrition in law enforcement remains a major topic in police studies. Although women continue to enter the police profession, their recruitment has stalled.

Additionally, the findings showed the challenges encountered by the participants do not only negatively affect their lives and their career but also served as their opportunity which led them to strengthen their skills and capabilities. Despite the challenges experienced, the participants learned to cope with their problems through spiritual faith and focusing on mental fortitude rather than the physical endurance can. If these challenges and matters are taken seriously, problems are resolved and then the chances to increase their performance would be better, hence, women may feel more welcomed and appreciated specially in a male-dominated field of profession.

➤ *Recommendations*

Based on the result of the study, the researchers may recommend the following:

- Propose a plan to enhance the opportunities for women under Highway Patrol Group through mentoring opportunities and leadership competencies to develop skills and improve work efficiency resulting to wider capacity of female police officers to perform efficiently and effectively their roles in the organization.
- Undergo seminars and trainings to advance their core competencies and build an excellent officer or leader of the organization.
- Provide mentoring programs to support new hires and share personal experiences to guide those in need of improvement.

CHAPTER SIX

PROPOSED ACTION PLAN TO ENHANCE THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN UNDER HIGHWAY PATROL GROUP

➤ *Rationale*

This study is believed to be useful for the female police officers under and criminology students who aspires to join the Philippine National Police (PNP) Highway Patrol Group in Ilocos Norte, Philippines. The findings of the study can be used by organizations, particularly Highway Patrol Team, Laoag City to develop policies and activities that will enhance the opportunities for women under the aforementioned agency. It could also be the most ideal means for Departments in the Law Enforcement, Training Institutes, Police Academies, and female police officers, to take a step forward in boosting their confidence, improve skills and capabilities and developing their core competencies as leaders in the law enforcement profession in the country.

➤ *Purpose and Objectives*

To translate into action our commitment to the aims and principles of case study (explanatory), this implementation of mentoring opportunities is to educate women and provide a foundation for the preparation of leadership roles later on and to develop and learn their career skills such as communication, gain professional experience and practical skills to improve work efficiency. This plan is applicable to the female police officers and future female police officers who will join Highway Patrol Group through promoting Mentoring Circles where officers can gather as a group to connect and discuss the strengths and weaknesses within the organization, illuminating areas in need of improvement and Buddy Programs to pair new hires with experienced officers to provide support and share personal experiences in order to develop skills and advance in the organization. As per time frame of this plan this can be administered upon the application phase.

Moreover, Leadership Competencies is another one of the action plans to be carried out. This is to widen the capacity of officers to perform efficiently in their roles in the organization and to develop or hone professional abilities to create a positive image of leaders in the organization. Herein, persons involved are Senior Leaders, National Police Commission, National Police Training Institute, thus this can be an earned into action atleast once a year.

Table 1: Proposed Action Plan to Enhance the Opportunities for Women under Highway Patrol Group

Areas of Concerns	Objectives	Strategies	Time Frame	Propose Budget	Persons/Agencies Responsible	Expected Output
Mentoring Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To educate women and provide a foundation for the preparation of leadership roles later on. To develop and learn their career skills such as communication, gain professional experience and practical skills to improve work efficiency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Mentoring Circles where officers can gather as a group to connect and discuss the strengths and weaknesses within the organization, illuminating areas in need of improvement. Provide Buddy Programs pairing new hires with experienced officers to provide support and share personal experiences to develop skills and advance in the organization. 	Upon application phase	Allocated funds from the participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior Leaders Philippine National Police Academy Department of Interior and Local Government Philippine Public Safety College 	Boost their confidence and improve skills and capabilities.
Leadership Competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To widen the capacity of officers to perform efficiently in their roles in the organization. To develop and hone professional abilities to create a positive image of leaders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergo seminars in terms of leadership enhancement facilitated by expert speakers. Enroll to leadership development trainings to expand and advance their leadership capabilities. 	At least once a year	Allocated funds from the participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior Leaders National Police Commission National Police training Institute 	Develop their core competencies and build an effective and efficient role model or leader.

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