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Research Article

Preparedness among Reserve Officers' Training Corps Graduates on the Rigors of ROTC and Defense Security: Basis for Policy Enhancement

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ABSTRACT

The Philippines Reserve Officers' Training Corps aims to provide military education and training for students to mobilize them for national defense preparedness. This study aimed to assess the rigor of the Philippine Reserve Officers' Training Corps, and defense and security preparedness among ROTC graduates in selected universities in the Philippines, and determined the significant difference in the perceived level of preparedness on the rigor of the Philippine ROTC among Military Science courses graduates in selected universities such as: physical organization of cadets, combat training of individual soldiers, regional annual administrative and tactical inspection, drill and ceremonies, infantry, rescue, field artillery, and; civil operation activities as assessed by the three groups of respondents. Moreover, the study also determined the significant difference in the perceived level of preparedness on defense and security such as: internal security operations, territorial defense, disaster response, international defense, security engagements, international humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping operations, and support to national development as assessed by the two (2) groups of respondents. This study utilized a descriptive correlational research design. The study covered 200 respondents; composed of 100 Military Science 42 Graduates, and 100 Military Science 43 graduates conducted during the School Year 2022 – 2023. Generally, the respondents were Highly Prepared for the rigor of the Reserved Officers Training Corps. On the other hand, the respondents were Highly Prepared on defense and security as embedded in the Reserved Officers Training Corps. Further studies may be conducted using empirical evidence to further the implementation of ROTC mandates, supplementation to an early career in AFP, and the impact of ROTC on both high school and college graduates in the Philippines.

Keywords: Policy legislation, ROTC enhanced law enforcement, ROTC preparedness, Security and defense

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Introduction

The Reserve Officers' Training Corps program of the Philippines was for many decades a compelling aspect affecting the lives of male youths whom many despise and even question its relevance in pursuing a college education. The Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) in the Philippines is one of three components of the National Service Training Program, the civic education and defense preparedness program for Filipino college (12th Congress of the Republic of the Philippines, 2022). The Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) is a program institutionalized under Sections 38 and 39 of Republic Act No. 7077 designed to provide military training to tertiary level students in order to motivate, train, organize and mobilize them for national defense preparedness. The ROTC aims to provide military education and training for graduates to mobilize them for national defense preparedness (Labuguen et al., 2012). The graduates of the ROTC advanced program serve in all branches of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Meme, 2020). In 2008, Reserve Officers' Training Corps graduates of the officer candidate schools of the various services constituted roughly 75% of the AFP officer corps (Farolan, 2008). The ROTC grants qualified student-cadets scholarship benefits through a merit-based incentive program in return for an obligation of military service in the reserve force, or active duty in the AFP if given the opportunity, after graduation. The legal mandates of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps ascribed from the Commonwealth Act No. 1, the National Defense Act of 1935, referred to the ROTC as the "Reserve Officers Training Corps", whereas Republic Act No. 7077, the Citizen Armed Forces of the Philippines Reservist Act of 1991, referred to the ROTC as the "Reserve Officers' Training Corps, and the Republic Act No. 9163, the National Service Training Program Act of 2001 likewise uses the same possessive form as Republic Act (R.A.) 7077 (Muhallin, 2021) to answer to the clamor for change in the ROTC program. The Republic Act No. 9163 and the National Service Training Program Act of 2001 mandated that ROTC is no longer a mandatory program for college students, but an optional program component of the NSTP. From more than 800,000 enrolled cadets during the school

years 1999-2000, the ROTC enrollment has dropped to 150,000 in the SY 2011-2012. During the first quarter of 2011, 500 colleges and universities were participating in the ROTC program. This is a sharp decline from the 2,000 schools offering ROTC before the National Service Training Program was enforced (President Benigno Aquino III, 2012). Accordingly, the ROTC component of NSTP has produced 1,435,000 graduates over a ten-year period from 2002 to 2012 as depicted by the Commission on Higher Education. In comparison, the CWTS and LTS components of NSTP have produced 8,614,000 and 538,700 graduates, respectively (Liveta, 2015).

President Rodrigo Duterte approved the proposal to revive the mandatory nature of ROTC training for senior high school graduates in both public and private schools in February 2017. The Honorable President certified the proposal as urgent and forwarded it to the Congress of the Philippines - House of Representatives (Lower House) and Senate (Upper House) (Corrales, 2017). Similarly, after the 2022 presidential elections, Vice President-elect Sara Duterte and the Secretary of the Department of Education stated that she wants mandatory ROTC training under priority legislation (Mercado, 2022). In July, Senators Francis Tolentino and Robin Padilla announced support for a bill by Senator Ronald Dela Rosa that would introduce mandatory ROTC for graduates in grades 11 and 12, with a voluntary advanced ROTC program available for the first two years of higher education (Bacelonia, 2022). Further, President Bongbong Marcos stated in his first State of the Nation address, also in July, that re-instituting the ROTC as a mandatory component of senior high school programs in all public and private tertiary-level educational institutions is one of his priority bills.

With the priority legislation being put forward, this study aims to assess the level of preparedness on the rigor of the Philippine Reserve Officers' Training Corps, and the level of preparedness on defense and security areas and activities among graduates who were Military Science courses graduates in selected universities in the Philippines. The Reserve Officers' Training Corps requires physical and mental strength and good health as it provides

knowledge and applications of military science, the study of military processes, institutions, and behavior, along with the study of warfare, and the theory and application of organized coercive force. It is mainly focused on the theory, method, and practice of producing military capability in a manner consistent with national defense policy (Kim, 2018). The importance of countering terrorism on a global scale was accelerated with revolutionary terrorism ability to extremely adapt to new conditions (Michaela, 2018; Rostampour et al., 2018). The military education system in Bulgaria is being developed in accordance with national and European legislation and in accordance with NATO directives for organizing and conducting the individual training of personnel from the Armed Forces (Hristov, 2018). A new NATO approach to crisis resolution, which results in the need for closer cooperation between military units and civilian organizations, reflected the Bulgarian military educational system. It was hypothesized by Tullao that gender continues to impede women in military-dominated training programs and military leadership positions particularly in Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) in higher education institutions composed of 340 Basic ROTC cadets of Bulacan State University ROTC unit, as such, determined the level of gender awareness of ROTC cadets of Bulacan State University (Tullao, 2020). Further, Stanton examined current JROTC program data in regard to student attendance, discipline, and academic achievement. Graduates in JROTC had significantly higher attendance rates than non-JROTC graduates (Stanton, 2019) including gender and Hispanic ethnicity.

This study aimed to assess the defense and security preparedness among graduates of Philippine Reserve Officers' Training Corps in selected universities in the Philippines. Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions: (1) What is the profile of the respondents in terms of the following characteristics such age, sex, civil status, grade level, academic performance, involvement in extracurricular activities, and household monthly gross income? (2) How do respondents assess the level of preparedness on the rigor of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps in terms of the

following: physical organization of cadets, combat training of individual soldiers, regional annual administrative and tactical inspection, drill and ceremonies, infantry, rescue, field artillery, and civil operation activities? (3) How do respondents assess the level of preparedness on defense and security in terms of the following: internal security operations, territorial defense, disaster response, international defense, security engagements, international humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping operations, and support to national development? The study also tested the significant difference between the perceived levels of preparedness of the respondents on the rigor of Philippine Reserve Officers' Training Corps along with the aforementioned features; the significant difference between the perceived levels of preparedness of the respondents on defense and security along with the aforementioned areas and activities; and the significant relationship between the respondents levels of preparedness on the rigor of the Philippine Reserve Officers' Training Corps and the respondents level of preparedness on defense and security.

Methods

This study utilized a descriptive correlational research design (Dasig et al., 2021). A descriptive correlational study is a study in which the researcher is primarily interested in describing relationships among variables, without seeking to establish a causal connection (CUYUGAN et al, 2017; Arulkumar & Latha, 2019). In particular, the descriptive phase used in determining the profile of the respondents; in determining the respondents' perception on the level of preparedness on the rigor of Philippine Reserve Officers' Training Corps; in determining the respondents perception on the level of preparedness on the defense and security areas and activities. Additionally, the correlation phase covered the test of the difference and the significance between the perceived level of preparedness of the respondents on the rigor of the Philippine Reserve Officers' Training Corps, test of the difference and the significance between the perceived level of preparedness of the respondents on defense and security, and to test the relationship and the significance between the levels of preparedness of the

respondents on the rigor of the Philippine Reserve Officers' Training Corps and the perceived level of preparedness of the respondents on defense and security. The researcher used a survey questionnaire as the main instrument in data gathering. The survey questionnaires were administered to the two (2) groups of respondents. The questionnaire was subjected to the measure of internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha (Timula, 2022). Further, the same questionnaire was subjected to Expert Validation by at least five (3) researchers or subject matter experts.

Result and Discussion

The order of the discussion was based on the sequence of the objectives of this study.

Profile of the respondents

Table 1 presents the age distribution of the respondents. All respondents were considered to be of legal age that need less of parental and familial guidance in the pursuit of their career, educational activities so that they will become more responsible enough to perform their roles and responsibilities and for their actions.

Table 1. Age Distribution of the Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18-20 years old	79	40%
21-23 years old	73	37%
24-26 years old	45	23%
older than 26 years old	3	2%
Total	200	100%

Table 2 presents the sex distribution of the respondents. Most were 128 or 64 percent of the respondents were males. On the other

hand, only more than a quarter of the sampled respondents 72 or 36 percent were females.

Table 2. Sex Distribution of the Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	128	64%
Female	72	36%
Total	200	100%

Table 3 presents the civil status distribution of the respondents. As reflected, 200 or 100 percent of the respondents were single. This implies that the respondents were bombarded with the demands and functions related to their educational career with less of stress, and challenges that could be attributed

to family, personal, or work-related matters. This conforms to the research findings that single or non-married graduates can achieve higher positional advantage, and assume responsibility for their employability as they can focus more on their educational career.

Table 3. Civil Status Distribution of the Respondents

Civil Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	200	100%
Married	0	0%
Widow/Widower	0	0%
Total	200	100%

Table 4 presents the grade level distribution of the respondents. As reflected, 100 or 50 percent of the respondents were in Military Science 42. Similarly, 100 or 50 percent of the respondents were in Military Science 43.

Table 4. Grade Level Distribution of the Respondents

Grade Level	Frequency	Percentage
Military Science 42	100	50%
Military Science 43	100	50%
Total	200	100%

Table 5 presents the academic performance distribution of the respondents during the first semester S.Y. 2022-2023. The majority of the respondents showed outstanding academic performance, one of the many factors influencing the graduates' academic and professional success.

Table 5. Academic Performance Distribution of the Respondents

Academic Performance	Frequency	Percentage
96-100	49	25%
91-95	58	29%
86-90	45	23%
81-85	27	14%
75-80	21	11%
74 or lower	0	0
Total	200	100%

Table 6 presents the involvement in extracurricular activities distribution of the respondents. The majority 138 or 68 percent of the respondents was involved in Sports, and 120 or 60 percent were involved in educational clubs. On the other hand, 77 or 39 percent were involved in community outreach, 58 or 29 percent were involved in student government, and only a few 22 or 11 percent were involved in campus journalism. This implies that apart from the rigor of academic demands, student of the selected universities' understudy have active involvement in activities that supplements their physical and mental health, thereby improving their holistic well-being.

Table 6. Involvement in Extracurricular Activities Distribution of the Respondents

Extracurricular Activities	Frequency	Percentage
Student Government	58	29%
Community Outreach	77	39%
Sports	136	68%
Campus Journalism	22	11%
Educational Clubs	120	60%

Table 7 presents the monthly gross income distribution of the respondents. As reflected, 69 or 35 percent of the respondents belonged to the P 51,000- 75,000 household monthly gross income bracket, 58 or 29 percent belonged to the households with more than P 100,000 monthly gross income, and 49 or 25 percent belonged to the households with more than P 76,000- 100,000 monthly gross income bracket. On the other hand, 21 or 11 percent of the respondents belonged to the households with less than P 25,000 monthly gross income

bracket, and only a few 3 or 2 percent of the respondents belonged to the households with P 26,000- 50,000 monthly gross income bracket at the time of the survey. This implies that there were only 21 or 11 percent of the respondents who were categorized as low-income but not poor per the 2018 classification

of the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS). Accordingly, the family can provide educational support to the graduates to be able to achieve their dreams and aspirations in life, and have a successful educational career as preparation for the entrance to college or tertiary education.

Table 9. Household Monthly Gross Income Distribution of the Respondents

Monthly Gross Income (PHP)	Frequency	Percentage
More than 100,000	58	29%
76,000- 100,000	49	25%
51,000- 75,000	69	35%
26,000- 50,000	3	2%
less than 25,000	21	11%
Total	200	100%

Assessment on the Level of Preparedness on the Rigor of the ROTC

The respondents' assessment on the level of preparedness on the rigor of the Reserved Officers Training Corps has a computed mean

of 3.61, with descriptive interpretation of Highly Prepared, the aspect of Field Artillery being ranked 1 among 8 aspects with a computed mean of 3.75 as shown in table 10.

Table 10. Assessment on the Level of Preparedness on the Rigor of the ROTC

FEATURE OF ROTC	COMPOSITE MEAN	RANK
1. Physical Organization of Cadets	3.41	8
2. Combat Training of Individual Soldiers	3.57	6
3. Regional Annual Administrative and Tactical Inspection	3.67	3
4. Drill and Ceremonies	3.61	4
5. Infantry	3.56	7
6. Rescue	3.60	5
7. Field Artillery	3.75	1
8. Civil Operation Activities	3.70	2
COMPUTED MEAN	3.61	

Legend:
 4 = Highly Prepared
 3 = Moderately Prepared
 2 = Slightly Prepared
 1 = Not at all Prepared

This implies that the ROTC program in the universities has prepared the respondents as one of three components of the National Service Training Program, the civic education and defense preparedness program for Filipino college graduates. Similarly, it is of great importance that the universities prepare the graduates for possible service in the defense establishment during the event of an emergency, train officers and enlisted

personnel for the reserve components of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

Respondents assessment the level of preparedness on the areas of Defense and Security

Table 11 markedly shown the respondents' level of preparedness in the *areas and activities of national defense and security* in selected universities in The Philippines in terms of

"Support to National Development" revealed the composite mean of 3.86 with descriptive interpretation of *Highly Prepared*, and was ranked 1st among 8 areas and activities of national defense and security. Both the "Internal Security Operations" and "Territorial Defense" have composite mean of 3.77 with a descriptive interpretation of *Highly Prepared*. Moreover, level of preparedness in "Disaster Response" revealed the composite mean of 3.65 with descriptive interpretation of *Highly Prepared*, and was ranked 4th among 8 areas and activities of national defense and security. The preparedness on "Peacekeeping Operations" and the "International Humanitarian Assistance" has a composite mean of 3.62, and 3.41 with descriptive interpretation of *Highly Prepared*, ranked 5th and 6th, respectively. Inversely, the "Security Engagements" has a composite mean of 3.23, and "International Defense" has a composite mean of 3.41, both with descriptive interpretation of *Moderately Prepared*, ranked 7th and 8th, respectively.

Overall, the respondents' assessment on the level of preparedness on the defense and security as embedded in the Reserved Officers Training Corps has a computed mean of 3.55, with descriptive interpretation of *Highly Prepared*, the aspect of "support to national development" being ranked 1st among 8 areas and activities of national defense and security with a computed mean of 3.86. This implies that the ROTC program in the universities has prepared the respondents as partner in pursuing a credible self-reliant defense posture, giving much and high regard to a cooperative relationship with allies and security partners. Further, the preparedness of the respondents show the support of higher education institutions in the Philippines to fulfil the national vision and safeguard the national interests which include, among others, the protection of the people, their ways of life, welfare and well-being; strengthening of the country's democratic institutions; safeguarding its territorial sovereignty.

Table 11. Respondents Assessment on the Level of Preparedness on Defense and Security

AREAS AND ACTIVITIES IN DEFENSE AND SECURITY	COMPOSITE MEAN	RANK
1. Internal Security Operations	3.77	2
2. Territorial Defense	3.77	2
3. Disaster Response	3.65	4
4. International Defense	3.11	8
5. Security Engagements	3.23	7
6. International Humanitarian Assistance	3.41	6
7. Peacekeeping Operations	3.62	5
8. Support to National Development	3.86	1
COMPUTED MEAN	3.55	

Legend: 4 = Highly Prepared
3 = Moderately Prepared
2 = Slightly Prepared
1 = Not at all Prepared

Test of Significant Difference between the Perceived Levels of Preparedness of the Respondents on the Rigor of Philippine ROTC

Table 12 shows Military Science 42 and Military Science 43 preparedness on the rigor of the Philippine Reserve Officers' Training Corps. The output indicates that mean for Military Science 42 is 3.54 and for Military Science 43 it is 3.64. The *t-value* is -7.041 with *df*= 168 as

reflected in Table 20. Since the computed *t-stat* of -7.041 did not exceed the tabulated *t-value* of 1.65 at .05 level of significance, we cannot reject H_0 which means that there is no significant difference between the Military Science 42 and Military Science 43 preparedness on the rigor of the Philippine Reserve Officers' Training Corps.

Table 12. *t*-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances (Preparedness on ROTC of Military Science 42 and Military Science 43)

	Military Science 42 (Preparedness on ROTC)	Military Science 43 (Preparedness on ROTC)
Mean	3.5432558	3.6425565
Variance	0.005730841	0.014156175
Observations	100	100
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	168	
t Stat	-7.041537449	
P(T<=t) one-tail	2.32236E-11	
t Critical one-tail	1.653974208	
P(T<=t) two-tail	4.64471E-11	
t Critical two-tail	1.974185191	

Test of Significant Difference between the Perceived Levels of Preparedness of the Respondents on Defense and Security

Table 13 shows the Military Science 42 and Military Science 43 preparedness on defense and security. The output indicates that *mean* for Military Science 42 is 3.61 and for Military Science 43 it is 3.50. The *T-value* is 4.592 with

df= 156 as reflected in Table 21. Since the computed *t-stat* of 4.592 exceeded the tabulated *t*-value of 1.65 at .05 level of significance, we reject H_0 which means that there is significant difference between preparedness of Military Science 42 and Military Science 43 on defense and security.

Table 13. *t*-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances (Preparedness on Defense and Security of Military Science 42 and Military Science 43)

	Military Science 42 (Preparedness on Defense and Security)	Military Science 43 (Preparedness on Defense and Security)
Mean	3.6125	3.495
Variance	0.015625	0.049848485
Observations	100	100
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	156	
t Stat	4.592034456	
P(T<=t) one-tail	4.49308E-06	
t Critical one-tail	1.654679996	
P(T<=t) two-tail	8.98617E-06	
t Critical two-tail	1.975287508	

Test of Significant Relationship between the Respondents Levels of Preparedness on the Rigor of the ROTC and the Level of Preparedness on Defense and Security

As shown in table 14, statistically, there is no significant relationship ($r= 0.062$, $p= 0.38$)

between the preparedness on the rigor of the Philippine Reserve Officers' Training Corps and preparedness in defense and security. Hence, we fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 14. Test statistic using Pearson's *r*

SUMMARY OUTPUT

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.06201258
R Square	0.00384556
Adjusted R Square	-0.0011855
Standard Error	0.12508564
Observations	200

ANOVA					
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	0.011959498	0.0119595	0.7643602	0.383026632
Residual	198	3.097990502	0.0156464		
Total	199	3.10995			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	3.74561675	0.166220363	22.534043	1.497E-56	3.417827288	4.07341	3.41782729	4.07340621
Preparedness on Defense and Security	-0.0408348	0.046706963	-0.874277	0.3830266	-0.13294177	0.05127	-0.1329418	0.05127213

	Preparedness on ROTC	Preparedness on Defense and Security
Preparedness on ROTC	1	-0.062012577
Preparedness on Defense and Security	-0.062012577	1

Conclusion

The majority of both groups of respondents were considered to legal age requiring less of parental and familial guidance in the pursuit of their career, and educational activities so that they will become more responsible enough to perform their roles and responsibilities and for their actions. All respondents were single, such that they can focus and manage well the demands and functions related to their educational career with less stress, and challenges that could be attributed to family, personal, or work-related matters. The majority of the respondents showed outstanding academic performance, one of the many factors influencing the graduates' academic and professional success. Most of the respondents were involved in sports, educational clubs, and student government activities. These compliment the rigor of the ROTC program and other educational activities of the graduates. Only a few or less than a quarter of the respondents were categorized as low-income but not poor, therefore their families can better provide educational support to the graduates to be able to achieve their dreams and aspirations in life, and have a successful educational career as preparation for the entrance to college or tertiary education.

Generally, the respondents were Highly Prepared for the rigor of the Reserved Officers Training Corps with a computed mean of 3.61. It can be gleaned that the ROTC program in the universities has prepared the respondents as one of three components of the National Service Training Program, the civic education and defense preparedness program for Filipino college graduates. Similarly, it is of great importance that the universities prepare the graduates for possible service in the defense establishment during the event of an emergency, and train officers and enlisted personnel for the reserve components of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). The respondents were Highly Prepared on defense and security as embedded in the Reserved Officers Training Corps with a computed mean of 3.55. Therefore ROTC program in the universities has prepared the respondents as a partner in pursuing a credible self-reliant defense posture, giving much and high regard to a cooperative relationship with allies and security partners. Further, the preparedness of the respondents shows the support of higher education institutions to fulfill the national vision and safeguard the national interests which include, among others, the protection of the people,

their ways of life, welfare, and well-being; strengthening of the country's democratic institutions; safeguarding its territorial sovereignty. There is no significant difference between the Military Science 42 and Military Science 43 preparedness on the rigor of the Philippine Reserve Officers' Training Corps, hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. There is a significant difference between the preparedness of Military Science 42 and Military Science 43 on defense and security, therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant relationship between the preparedness on the rigor of the Philippine Reserve Officers' Training Corps and preparedness in defense and security. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

There is a need to conduct an intensified implementation of the ROTC aspects and features such as in "Major Services, Unified Commands, Echelons of Command", training on patrolling techniques such as conducting raids, ambushes, and handling compromise situations", security engagements, and international defense to fully prepare ROTC cadets as bases for the strong foundation as a mandatory component for senior high school programs. Universities must support and provide relevant linkages and training that will invigorate senior high school graduates to best prepare themselves in civic education, and defense and security preparedness. The university must capacitate the ROTC Units and forge a partnership with Local Disaster Risk Reduction Management councils to understand the local and national situation while preparing them for possible service in the defense establishment during the event of an emergency. Training and development of those in the Student Services and Student Support of the University for enhanced enforcement of ROTC mandates, such interaction between AFP and the university are aligned towards the training of future officers and enlisted personnel for the reserve components of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Enrich sports programs that advance the physical and mental health and well-being of ROTC cadets and the entire studentry. These help graduates develop leadership skills and equip them with the ability to set goals and build character. These are important aspects of

the ROTC program to train officers and enlisted personnel for the reserve components of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Further studies may be conducted using empirical evidence to further the implementation of ROTC mandates, supplementation to an early career in AFP, and the impact of ROTC on both high school and college graduates in the Philippines.

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