

Lifeworld of registered criminologists in PNP enlistment



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Abstract Regardless of the professional qualifications, the challenges are recurrent for many applicants, which follows a systemic barrier. Although fulfilling formal requirements, these individuals are facing complexities in the form of stringent quota restrictions, high procedural delays, and opaque end decisions. This research paper will offer significant insights into the lived experiences of legitimate criminologists who were once denied the opportunity to join the PNP but ultimately gained entry. Based on a qualitative-transcendental phenomenological research design, the scholars conducted unstructured interviews with seven initially failing, then gaining, enlistment participants. Thematic coding was employed to analyze the data, and ethical precautions, including obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring participant validation, were strictly adhered to. The results also indicate that although it can be qualified, rejection leads to emotional distress, internalized self-doubt, and poor motivation. However, the subjects were resilient, as they demonstrated spiritual growth, family influence, and patient perseverance. They were able to stay true to their aims through adaptive coping mechanisms (repeated application, physical and emotional preparation, and career recalibration). The emotional fallout reached even family members, who became grieved and disappointed alongside the aspirants. This research offers a deeper understanding of the process by which applicants perceive, endure, and overcome institutional barriers to advancing their careers and relationships. It also contributes to the emerging literature on law enforcement enlistment and emotional labor in entering a career of public service in the Philippine setting.

Keywords: criminologists, PNP enlistment, lived experience

1. Introduction

There is a growing pressure on law enforcement organizations to be more transparent, professional, and accountable worldwide without considering the mounting sociopolitical demands and reduced citizen trust (UNODC, 2020). The search and retention of skilled police officers has grown to be more significant since policing remains a complex, hazardous and emotionally demanding profession (Bayley & Perito, 2011). The developing countries such as the Philippines are still afflicted by systemic issues such as politics, corruption, and lack of resources and the recruitment process is not effective (Transparency International, 2022). The Philippine National Police (PNP), being mandated by the Republic Acts 6975 and 8551, strives to professionalize its ranks on the basis of this national framework through such programs as the PNP PATROL Plan 2030. Since they have a formal education, knowledge of law enforcement, criminal justice, and ethics, recruiting qualified and licensed criminologists is one of the key strategies in this plan (PNP, 2023).

Nevertheless, most criminologists have been facing a constant challenge of recruitment despite their scholastic qualifications. The strict procedures in the PNP are further worsened by bureaucracy, and quotas, nepotism, and competition with non-criminology graduate (Lofamia, 2022; ADB, 2019; NAPOLCOM, 2017). Although the pass rates in the licensing examination are very high, according to national data, only a small part of the criminology graduates manage to join the law enforcement (PCAP, 2020; Adriano, 2021). There are also other challenges at the regional level where applicants face recurring setbacks and psychological anguish due to haphazard recruitment processes, lack of funds and access to preparation materials (Domingo, 2021).

The scholarly literature can be used as a helpful lens to understand this phenomena. With the use of Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961), criminologists invest in education and professional licenses in order to become more employable and contribute to the further development of their country. Nevertheless, they often do not get the expected social and economic rewards of institutional investment in education because of the inefficiencies within the institutions (Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, 2018; ADB, 2019). Rejection more often in hiring processes has been linked to psychological distress, decreased self-efficacy and increased stress besides economic outcomes (Babb, 2022; Hassan et al., 2023; Popa Velea et al., 2021). Conversely, the studies indicate that adaptive coping, resilience, and intrinsic motivation help the candidates to be optimistic and engaged despite the adversity (Wu et al., 2022; Li and Chen, 2023; Sigmundsson et al., 2024). Social and

family support networks also have a significant impact on emotional stability as mentors, family, and communities support them in being tenacious and believing in their ability to overcome adversity (Perez & Chang, 2022; King et al., 2023). Equally, spiritual coping (faith and prayer) offers resilience to the emotional experience and purpose among the applicants (Dolcos et al., 2021; Okan et al., 2025). This problem is essential to improving the fairness, inclusivity, and psychological sustainability of police recruitment regimes. Therefore, the current study aims at exploring the lifeworld of registered criminologists who are going through the system of recruiting into the PNP, their issues, coping mechanisms, and motivational interactions in the context of systemic and individual restrictions. Lighting up these lived experiences, this research would be added to the existing body of information on the subject of occupational resilience and professional identity formation and provide empirical evidence to be used in the policy reforms, recruitment processes, and psychosocial support mechanisms in the PNP and other law enforcement agencies.

2. Methods

2.1. Design

The researchers employed the qualitative-transcendental research method. An observational scientific method is referred to as a qualitative method for collecting non-numeric data. Moreover, by examining their lives, the analytical work also enables the identification of their specific emotional and professional challenges (Guira, 2023). The most appropriate strategy for studying the lifeworld is phenomenology, as it is a philosophical approach to understanding experience (Bobita & Talbo, 2023) and has been used for the purpose of exploring happenings involving humans (Rabanal & Domondon, 2023).

2.2. Participants of the Study

The participants in this study are police officers who completed the recruitment process but were not included in the final list, then reapplied and were hired, aged 21-30 years. Exclusion criteria eliminated individuals who had never undergone the full recruitment process, those who were not licensed criminologists, and those with incomplete application experiences, as their perspectives could not meaningfully contribute to the study's central phenomenon of persistence and resilience through repeated enlistment attempts. Purposive sampling was employed to collect qualitative data. The researchers engaged seven participants, consisting of six females and one male.

2.3. Data Gathering Instrument

To address the study's problems, the researchers developed an in-depth, unstructured interview guide, which the research committee subsequently validated. It was used to determine the experiences of Registered Criminologists in PNP Enlistment.

2.4. Data Gathering Procedures

Participants were recruited in an ethical and voluntary manner. Initially, the researchers asked prospective participants for their informed permission by outlining the goal of the study, guaranteeing anonymity, and letting them know that they might withdraw at any moment. The participants were asked if they preferred an oral or written interview format by the researchers. The timing of the interview was predetermined if an oral interview was selected. In contrast, a follow-up interview was invited if they wanted a written interview. An audio recording of the interview was made using a mobile phone. Further, the participants responses were transcribed. There was no financial motivation given. The interview involves voluntariness and sincerity. Referrals were used to contact the participants.

2.5. Data Analysis

After seven participants were interviewed, the data reached saturation, and no more significant details or subjects emerged from the subsequent interviews. The recurrence of recurring themes and common sense in the participants' narratives showed that the themes were comprehensive and that there were enough data to convey the essence of their lived experiences. The researchers have used Moustakas' transcendental phenomenological approach to make sure the technique is robust. According to Wa-Mbaleka (2019), referenced by Bersamina et al. (2022), the thematic technique was used for data collection, coding, transcription, and sorting. This approach was widely applied to qualitative data analysis.

To make sure that the experiences of the participants will be represented correctly, credibility was achieved by use of participant checking, and the transcribed interviews were given to the participants to correct and ensure that the credibility was achieved. The authenticity of the replies was recorded by means of field notes, tapes, and verbatim transcriptions. The rich and comprehensive experiences, contexts and meanings of the participants made them even more transferable, because the reader and other researchers were able to know whether the findings could be applied in other situations or the phenomena. The confirmability aspect was facilitated by the coding decision, which was determined based on an audit trail, reflective journaling, and a frequent consultation with research mentors to ensure that all was within the audit trail. This made

sure that the three aspects that minimized bias and supported the overall objective of the analytical process were not violated. The researchers also ensured ethics and confidentiality when they destroyed audio files once they finished writing the report.

3. Results and Discussion

Five major themes, along with their sub-themes, emerged from the lived experiences of Registered Criminologists in PNP Enlistment as shown in Figure 1, 1. Formative Influences- a. Family influence, b. System Challenge, c. Resilient Attitude, d. Emotional Impact (Internalized Doubt & Affective Distress). 2. Transformative Resilience- a. Growth Mindset (Self-awareness, Patience, & discipline), b. Optimistic Outlook (process faith & Second chances), c. Resilient Spirit (Re-engagement & Courage after rejection), d. Emotional Weight (Dream uncertainty & Confidence dip), e. Faith Resilience. 3. Relational Impact - a. Emotional Ripple (Sadness, Grief, and Vicarious Disappointment), b. Inspired Support (Motivation & Encouragement) 4. Coping Strategies- a. Spiritual Endurance (Devotional Practice, Reflective Patience, and Transcendent Trust), b. Active Persistence (Self-motivation and Intentional Practice), c. Resilient Progress (Cognitive Release & Forward Orientation). 5. Adaptive Transformation- a. Health Discipline; b. Purposeful adjustment.

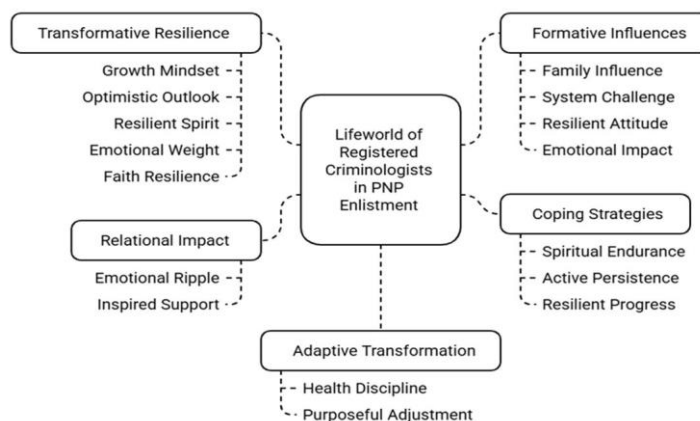


Figure 1 Research Map.

Formative Influence refers to the key people, events, beliefs, and systems that shape an individual's motivation and values during the enlistment journey. Familial support, experiences of rejection, and spirituality play central roles in building resilience, identity, professionalism, and determination among law enforcement candidates (McCubbin & Patterson, 2015; Stevenson et al., 2021).

With sub-themes: a. Family Influence, b. System Challenge, c. Resilient Attitude, d. Emotional Impact.

Family influence refers to the ways in which the values, expectations, communication, and emotional support within the family shape an individual's decisions and behaviors. These influences are most effective when parents are actively supportive, involved, and encouraging (Givertz et al., 2021).

Participant 1 said, "My family.. intimately connected with the experience."

Participant 7 mentioned that. When I was removed from the final list of those who would take the oath for the PNP, the first thing I thought of was my parents... But they were also the first to advise me not to give up and to try again. Because of that, I became stronger, and my reason for wanting to enter the service deepened even more.

This implies that participants demonstrate how family support is crucial as their motivation and commitment to become a member of PNP during the PNP enlistment process. This further shows the reality of their emotional resilience is intimately linked with the support of their family.

This supports the study of Givertz et al. (2021) and Musa et al. (2022), that parental support and motivation strengthen career commitment. Further, family support and spirituality are important resilient factors.

System Challenge is used to refer to the quota allocated to recruitment period and lack of certainty of final judgment, which could lead to perceptions of injustice are some of the systemic problems of PNP recruiting. In delayed communication enlistment process, it increases emotional distress and influences the life planning, quota limitations often deny good candidates. These obstacles lead to inequality being stronger and low confidence (Smith and Lee, 2023; Azhari Putri et al., 2024; Babb, 2022).

Participant 2 mentioned, "The process that I passed all the stages, but I did not become part of the batch of trainees."

Participant 6 said, "The application process, sir. I passed all the stages until final deliberation. Unfortunately, I did not become part of the batch of trainees because of excess of quota."

Participant 7 narrated, " I was removed from the final list of those who would take the oath for the PNP because of excess of quota."

Besides exposing the emotional and psychological weight of the structural barriers in the process of enrolling into the PNP, their eventful experiences stigmatize an unwanted declivity between personal qualifications and institutional acceptability.

Those candidates who manage to secure a job despite these obstacles, including a quota, a long process it, and uncertainty of the criteria, experience a feeling of injustice and disappointment. According to Azhari Putri et al. (2024) and Babb (2022), these inefficiencies are the typical feature of government recruiting and break the life trajectory and leading to high emotional costs to the possible recruits.

Through persistence coupled with personal drive, resilient attitude can help individuals to persevere to achieve long-term goals despite frequent disappointments. This strength promotes adaptability among criminologist applicants to PNP recruiting (Sigmundsson et al., 2024) and tenacious work driven by internal importance and not by external rewards (Wu et al., 2022).

Participant 1 stated, there is always a failure with every challenge/recruit but you have to accept it, it is the way it goes and that you should not give up.

Participant 4 said, I continued to think about my failures,.. I questioned myself what I was wanting. But I had to realize I only had to persist. It was after the third attempt that I passed and was able to get inside.

Participant 5 said, That experience made me really realize that I should not lose hope. I handed whatever I had, ma'am until I eventually got there. I passed on my second try.

The experiences indicate that resilience is both a trait and a deliberate choice to persevere in the face of rejection. According to the findings, having a resilient mindset is essential for preventing the psychological effects of institutional obstacles. These individuals are able to use failure as motivation to keep going rather than viewing it as their ultimate demise.

Future PNP recruits can be helped to persevere in it through resilience and intrinsic drive even in the face of frequent disappointments. According to Sigmundsson et al. (2024) and Wu et al. (2022), psychologically strong people can be flexible in the way they think and engage in the long term, and people who adhere to inner values are persistent. It is the combination that offers an immense combination that does not eliminate hope and promotes reapplication.

Emotional impact explains the psychological cost of uncertainty and awkwardness candidates experience about high-stakes hiring which tends to lead to reduced confidence, insecurity, and low mental health outcomes. The importance of these emotional processes is that they should allow criminologists to eliminate the issues of enrollment delays or rejection. With subthemes: a. Internalized Doubt and Affective Distress.

Internalized Doubt refers to self-scrutiny, often triggered by perceived failures, undermines belief and motivation to reapply (Babb, 2022).

Participant 2 said, "What went wrong despite my good record to include academically because I graduated in college as cum laude."

Participant 4 mentioned, "I felt like maybe my sacrifices and hard work weren't enough to pass and get into the PNP."

Participants 2 and 4 caught this silent but concealed institutional rejection price, namely, internalized incredulity. Emotional disorientation causes the individual to start blaming himself when he or she has been rejected by a highly qualified candidate like a graduate with cum laude.

Babb (2022) and Hassan et al. (2023) also concentrate on how the negative impact of the institutional systems on the mental health of applicants is caused by the unceasing rejection and perpetual uncertainty. This will lead to low self-esteem, hurt of emotions and the ultimate withdrawal of when a young achiever is not recognized and even accorded some form of feedback.

Affective Distress The long-term stressors, which may result in clinically significant emotional distress, are the recruitment delays(Hassan et al., 2023).

As mentioned by Participant 7. I also make an effort to move beyond and remind myself that maybe not yet it is time that I may serve the country as a part of PNP organization.

The quote of participant 7 describes a silent form of sufferings that most persons go through as they wait and hope in a process they are not pleased with. That is why the unhappiness does not last long, this is a long-term stress of the mind due to the irregularity of the schedule and the multitude of delays. Despite the fact that this form of grief is usually repressed and packaged positively, it has the impact of weakening the emotional and motivational power of a person. Long-term professional uncertainty brought on by institutional delays, according to Park and Santos (2023), causes stress, rumination, and feelings of powerlessness, which frequently lead to self-doubt and a decline in trust in both the system and one's own talents.

Transformative resilience is the skill of surmounting tough situations through seeking meaning, changing identity and developing new skills. According to Fletcher and Sarkar (2020), Lent et al. (2021), Del Rosario (2024), and other registered criminologists, it entails transforming enrollment difficulties into chances for personal development, bolstered by spirituality, emotional regulation, mentality, and support from family and the community.

With sub-themes: a. Growth Mindset, b. Optimistic Outlook, c. Resilient Spirit, d. Emotional Weight, e. Faith Resilience.

Growth Mindset refers to the ability to overcome difficult situations by finding some meaning, a shift in identity, a growth mindset is the notion that professional and intellectual skills can be developed with the help of strategy, effort and

feedback (Yeager et al., 2022). It is linked to increased involvement, rigor, and enhanced mental health in post-secondary education, especially in situations when the learners experience struggling with slow recruiting or faulty processes (Schroder et al., 2017). The researchers have demonstrated positive growth mindset interventions to be efficient in improving persistence and delivering lasting motivation advantages especially in cases of underprivileged groups (Yeager et al., 2022; Schroder et al., 2017).

Sub-themes: Self-awareness, Patience and Discipline.

Self-awareness presupposes building an attitude of improvement, active consideration of the learning processes, recognition of the areas of improvement, and the formation of certain strategies (Schroder et al., 2017).

Participant 1 states that it is getting rid of my fears and being more aware of my actions.

Participant 7 remembered, Yes, there was a lot change that happened to me when I was not able to make it into the final list. I got to know myself better and discovered my weaknesses.

The answers of respondents 1 and 7 also served to achieve the positive effect of failure self-discovery that is underestimated in the past. Participant 1 and Participant 7 mentioned that he was able to be more open and aware about himself, respectively, and that he was able to learn more about himself, including his weaknesses, because he could not finalize the list. This aligns with the results of Kim and Villanueva (2022) who noted that in case a high-stress environment fails, it could lead to the discovery of the self in case the person has an opportunity to think positively. They found out that the process of thinking reflectively in times of job insecurity leads to developing personal resilience aspects such as strategic focus and cognitive acuity, which are critical in the future goal reorientation.

Patience refers he focus on progressive growth instead of instant outcomes allows one to bear long application schedules and wear them with patience (Yeager et al., 2022).

Participant 1 said, It touched me in many ways always be patient. "

Participant 7 added, "I have heard that entry into the training center is not going to be an easy process... failure is just a part of preparing to the suitable time.

The information provided by Participants 1 and 7 suggests a sound method for understanding the significance of patience in circumstances with long-term uncertainty. These revelations show that they adopted a mindset to accept delay as an unavoidable aspect of the travel experience rather of reacting to annoyance and despair. However, in their context, patience is not waiting but rather the deliberate decision to maintain patience in the face of systematic and emotional pressure.

Morales and Tanaka (2023) argue that a delayed hiring process or a competitive hiring process can be handled better when the applicant sees potential in the setbacks. Keeping this in mind, they can avoid burnout and other psychological hazards through patient wait, proactive adjustment, and focus.

Discipline: Discipline as part of the growth mindset is a key to acquiring skills and enhancing resilience by regularly practicing and doing so in a systematic manner (Yeager et al., 2022).

Participant 1 replied, it enabled me to concentrate on my objective.

Participant 7 described that, but I did not surrender, I took that as an encouragement to work harder, particularly physically.

Discipline as indicated in the response of Participants 1 and 7, which is an element of the growth mindset, served as a lifeboat to the two, as they continue to sail through the uncertain enlisting process. Discipline, in the case of these individuals, is not only a question of a habit itself but an active struggle to stick to the long-term purpose even in case of a short-term, undesirable failure.

According to Alvarez and Domingo (2023), the habit of discipline and a mental buffer created by the diligence in the shape of daily goal-focused actions like exercise or training enables individuals to become resilient in competition because of the uncertainty or postponement of the payoff.

Positive thinking also leads to the capacity of students to cope with stress and better adjust to it because of the knowledge of resilience, reduction of stress-related reactions, and stable moods, even in the case of unpredictable situations such as PNP enlistment (Popa-Velea et al., 2021; MiramindX, 2024).

With sub-themes: Process Faith and Second Chances.

Process Faith refers to the belief that system fairness allows candidates to stay motivated and focused even when outcomes are delayed (Popa-Velea et al., 2021).

Participant 2 said, "It was a blessing for me, nevertheless. I believe greater opportunities will be faced I felt frustrated, but I still trusted the process."

This implies that process faith creation or the preservation of the PNP seekers can be a significant inoculation against disappointment. Those applicants who believe that the result, though not instantaneous, is fair and competent and can make another attempt as well, are more likely to perform better and do not give in to their goals. It can be facilitated by increased transparency, frequent updates, and the transparency 286 of evaluation standards on the part of the institutions. Through this they can instill an attitude that is long lasting as well as exhibit procedural integrity.

The findings can be compared to the study conducted by Romero and Chen (2023) who discovered that individuals who state the so-called procedural optimism possess superior emotional regulation and are more tenacious on their objectives. In their study, the disqualified or delayed applicants cannot disengage because of the perceived fairness by the system.

Second chances refer to trusting that setbacks are temporary and encourages reapplication and ongoing effort, anchoring long-term resilience (Popa-Velea et al., 2021).

Participant 3 said, "I was challenged to try again, because may be that time it wasn't meant for me. That is why I tried again."

Participant 5 narrated, "For me, ma'am, that experience changed me because I learned the things I failed to say in the oral interview."

It demonstrates that the idea of second chances is not just the option of the backup, but it also helps to encourage people to go to work again, to evolve, as people. Similar in their method of thought is the commonality in attitude of the two stories, which tend to see rejection as a stepping stone and not a goal.

Delgado and Ishikawa (2022) highlighted that adaptive resilience is developed by seeing failure as a temporary situation because, in this attitude, one is motivated to improve oneself, to stick to long-term goals, and to overcome emotional damage, especially in careers that are competitive, like policing.

Resilient spirit refers to the ability to view rejection as a learning opportunity, fostering adaptability and persistence. In higher education, cultivating this trait improves retention and coping in competitive paths. Redefining grit as a learning process enables candidates to reapply with renewed strategies and confidence after setbacks (Frontiers in Psychology, 2022).

With sub-themes: Re-engagement & Courage after rejection.

Re-engagement: Persistent effort following setbacks reflects an individual's psychological resilience and willingness to learn (Frontiers in Psychology, 2022).

Participant 3 said, "I was challenged to try again."

It is not an issue of choice to reapply but is an issue of psychological resilience or re-engagement. This is because when this participant felt rejected; they did not go back to their previous stance but instead considered this negative experience as a motivating factor to do more. It means that such resilience is not only indicative of the possibility of repeating the same task, but of trying to do it with a stronger purpose, realization and readiness.

Novak and Reyes (2023) discovered that adaptive resilience is characterized by re-engagement following failure, and applicants, in high stake environments, displayed more emotional maturity, problem solving, and better strategies in subsequent attempts- showing that success comes as a result of active growing between failures and not as a result of another opportunity.

Courage after rejection refers to emotional bravery after failure is a key element of resilience, enabling individuals to transform defeat into motivation (Frontiers in Psychology, 2022).

Participant 4 said, "But I encouraged myself to try again, so I applied once more. My family still supported me in my application."

It is no mere flash in the pan well-being, it is a daring and a conscious decision to continue with it despite the discouragement.

It has been found that resilience is enhanced when people do not give up following disappointments. Reapplicants who have failed again acquire more self-reflection and self-growth, and dependence on social support and intrinsic motivation strengthen determination and improve reapplication planning in high-stakes situations (Long and Freedman, 2021; Chan et al., 2022).

Emotional weight refers to the psychological burden caused by vocational uncertainty and rejection, which can harm academic performance and increase stress. Addressing it is crucial to sustaining motivation and well-being during long application processes (Popa-Velea et al., 2021).

With sub-themes: Dream uncertainty, & Confidence dip.

Dream uncertainty: Recurrent setbacks may cause students to question long-term career goals, leading to existential stress (Popa-Velea et al., 2021).

Participant 5 narrated, "Of course, ma'am, my dream of becoming a police officer was affected. I kept thinking if I would pass or not. That's what really affected me."

Participant 3 added "Maybe because it was hard for me to enter the service, so I gave more importance to my job."

This caused a huge feeling of insecurity that always derails the bigger-term aspirations. This kind of indecisiveness is typically disguised by external optimism; however, it is an indicator that there is an existential stress involved when no longer looking ahead to the future the stimulus is going to be located 348 elsewhere and the initial dream is going to lose its acuity and appeal to the heart.

According to recent research, career indecisiveness may become more pressing over time, leading to increased stress, decreased interest, and waning motivation, and even result in life and career priorities change due to prolonged ambiguity (Popa-Velea et al., 2021).

Confidence dip: A drop in self-efficacy after failure is common and highlights the need for emotional and academic support (Popa-Velea et al., 2021).

Participant 7 mentioned "For a few days, I kept asking if what I did wasn't enough, or if something was wrong with me."

Participant 4 said "I felt ashamed, ma'am, because I spent a lot of money going to Manila just to apply, and I also stayed with some people there. I felt embarrassed in front of my family, especially because I didn't pass the PNP AVSEGROUP."

Participant 6 added, "My confidence was affected, sir, because even though I passed everything, I still didn't make it. It's hard for me to accept where I fell short, sir."

One of the gross psychological impacts of unmet expectations, procedural diffuseness and sense of injustice in the enlistment process is related to emotional burden with aspirants. It is not discrete, not directly emotional, but cumulative, chronic, which concerns self-doubt, the looping of thoughts, burnout and existential stress.

The research conducted by Popa-Velea et al. (2021) concluded that the recurring vocational rejection, which is remarkable among aspirants with high levels of mission identification in vocation, can shatter mental health, decrease academic perseverance, and trigger internalized narratives of inadequacy.

Poor institutional communication (poor feedback, delayed announcements) in high-stakes situations such as PNP enlistment may produce emotional discomfort and uncertainty, and may undermine the confidence and feeling of safety in the candidates. In the absence of proper support, this pressure can turn to detachment, internalized failure or even giving up the career ambitions even in cases of highly qualified applicants.

Faith resilience involves using spiritual practices such as prayer and reflection to cope with adversity, with studies showing that intrinsic religiosity fosters emotional regulation and resilience in stressful situations like enlistment (Derouiche-El Kamel & Hentati-Ghorbel, 2025).

Participant 4 said, "But thankfully, God helped me."

Participant 7 narrated, "My faith in God also became deeper."

All these words demonstrate that faith was not only a means of being emotionally supported, but also a stabilizing element in the state of uncertainty and being in a weak emotional position. Spiritual practices provided the participants with strength and understanding to proceed whenever there was a lag or the opposite reaction of the institutional structures. As the accounts of these participants suggest, spiritual metaphysics cannot be deemed as peripheral to the way of negotiating the ordeals of PNP enlistment by a few of the applicants.

It also overlaps with the work by Dolcos et al. (2021), who emphasized the fact that religious coping can be beneficial in the process of emotion regulation and in enhancing mental health. Similarly, Primah and Kusnadi (2023) found out a positive correlation between intrinsic religiosity and academic resilience among nursing students, thus demonstrating that practices related to faith can help people to be resistant to stress and maintain a high level of resilience even in a highly documented professional field as nursing. Relational Impact refers to the impact that may manifest as shared sadness or vicarious disappointment, especially in families who have emotionally or financially invested in the applicant's success (Martinez, 2024).

With sub-themes: a. Emotional Ripple and b. Inspired Support.

Emotional Ripple refers to how candidates' distress during high-stakes processes, like recruitment, extends to their families, who may experience shared grief and lowered morale, making it vital to consider these relational effects in understanding the recruitment lifeworld (Townsend et al., 2022; Smith et al., 2023; Garcia & Lewis, 2021).

With Sub-themes: Sadness, Grief, and Vicarious Disappointment

Sadness: Emotional mirroring causes loved ones to share sentiments of distress (Townsend et al., 2022).

Participant 2 stated, "They felt sad, of course. They hope that I could make it."

Participant 6 said, "That experience made my family feel sad."

These sentiments reveal the family's close interconnection, with the second-hand effect of the applicant experiencing failure or delay in obtaining the coveted job, as emotions spread throughout the house like a domino effect.

Recent studies can confirm this. Emotional mirroring, by which close family members join the emotional state of the person they, like, is another documented result in the transition to high stakes.

Townsend et al. (2022) confirm that reflections of similar emotional experiences in their relatives can lead to feelings of stress from vague career rejections or application setback results. Moreover, Shah and Turner (2021) observe that the carryings of deployments are mostly shared in collectivistic cultures, where family dreams are strongly tied to personal success, thereby cementing emotional ties and, at the same time, exacerbating communal pain.

Grief: Family members experience indirect mourning when candidates encounter personal or professional loss (Smith et al., 2023).

Participant 4 said, "...during that time, I cried a lot, especially when my grandmother passed away. I was a "Lola's girl."

It is the way that personal loss and vocational failure can meet and the emotional load can be burdened all the more by it. Sudden grief over the death of a loved one is a heavy weight of emotions that may easily divert the mind even of the hardest candidates in the process of preparing to do a challenging career path.

Smith et al. (2023) have found out that grief in high stakes periods (i.e., career enlistment) can enhance identity-related stress, create a sense of ambiguity concerning details, and undermine emotional resilience. The addition of loss to the

professional strains can add further burden to the applicants leading to a situation where they feel too overwhelmed and therefore unprepared to reapply in the future.

Vicarious Disappointment refers to family disappointment that reflects empathy toward the aspirant's unmet goals (Garcia & Lewis, 2021).

Participant 4 narrated, "At that time, I already had a child. My parents and my wife were expecting me to pass because I was already a board passer. But sadly, I didn't make it. It felt like I disappointed them."

Participant 7 mentioned, "..., I could feel their sadness and disappointment too."

These snippets bring out the relational cost involved in the failure to get what is wanted, not only the emotional cost on the part of the applicant, but the emotional and financial cost of the emotionally or financially invested in the dream.

According to Garcia and Lewis (2021), the concept of vicarious disappointment is a form of sadness that a relative in the family feels when he notices that an applicant is not doing enough to get a success. The resultant effect is that the chances of success will be a collective one and failure on the other a collective loss. This emotional pressure is capable of making a subtle pressure on the job seekers to put down their emotions so that they can handle the guilt of failing to satisfy others. Inspired support highlights the role of encouragement from family, peers, and even social media in strengthening psychological perseverance, enhancing emotional well-being, and boosting self-efficacy for PNP aspirants facing repeated selection 446 challenges (Perez & Chang, 2022; King et al., 2023).

With sub-themes: Motivation & Encouragement.

Motivation: Supportive communication reinforces internal drive and commitment (Perez & Chang, 2022).

Participant 3 stated, "Maybe they can see me as a motivation also, that you can try again once you failed. It's not the end of your dreams; you can try it again".

Participant 4 said, "She died in 2016, after my first application. I even promised her that I would become a police officer and give back for all her sacrifices for me."

These insights confirm that support, memory, and familial optimism serve as cohesive forces in generating resilience, particularly during times when the institutions of the system fail.

More recent research has pointed to the fact that family and community support is of particular use in high-stakes, delayed processes of selection in that it promotes resilience by supporting endurance, intentional action, and adaptive coping mechanisms. This support does not only help candidates feel at ease but also builds resilience and flexibility, which allow a candidate to stay driven and focused throughout the enlistment process (Perez and Chang, 2022; King et al., 2023).

Encouragement refers to family-based affirmation that boosts resilience and self-confidence during setbacks (King et al., 2023).

Participant 6 said, "...but they still encouraged me to keep trying."

Participant 7 stated, "They focused more on comforting and encouraging me because they knew it hurt me even more—especially since I had already passed all the requirements to enter the PNP, but we were too many, so we were called 'excess.'"

This characterizes the role of a family that is an anchoring force in disappointment and uncertainty. These responses indicate that emotional support as given by the family is not passive help as long as it is an action and is intended to inspire and not wait.

The support of family not only makes the setbacks less painful but also enhances resilience, self-worth, and psychological readiness to sustain long-term selection, which becomes an inspiring power that helps an applicant to endure the difficult and lengthy selection process (Perez and Chang, 2022; King et al., 2023).

Coping strategies refer to responses of stress that can be either an active one including further training and revision, or passive including prayer and spiritual practices. The various coping strategies that applicants employ tend to be problem and emotion-oriented based on the level at which the recruitment process is taking place (Del Rosario, 2024).

With sub-themes: a. Spiritual Endurance, b. Active Persistence, and c. Resilient Progress

Spiritual endurance refers to sustaining resilience through ongoing religious practices like prayer and meditation, which help reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. Such practices foster patience, positive reflection during delays, and a sense of transcendent trust, which strengthens perseverance and life satisfaction in pursuing difficult career paths (Okan et al., 2025).

With sub-themes: Devotional Practice, Reflective Patience, and Transcendent Trust.

Devotional Practice: Ritualized spirituality (e.g., prayer) supports emotional regulation and coping in high-stress or transitional contexts (Pazer, 2024).

Participant 3 said, "With that experience, I prayed to God."

Participant 4 stated, "I just kept praying."

Participant 6 added, "I just kept praying to God."

Prayer is the main coping strategy of the applicants as it provides solace, strength, and resilience when it comes to enlistment failures. In line with the work by Graca and Brandao (2024), spiritual coping in terms of prayer improves emotional regulation and psychological well-being and acts as the practice of personal discipline which enables to maintain the focus throughout the long recruitment periods and deal with fear.

Reflective Patience: Acceptance of slow procedural results is enhanced by mindfulness that is based on religious beliefs (Pazer, 2024).

Participant 2 said, "I stayed patient and trusted the process."

It is a classic example of faith-based tolerance to the delays, as opposed to anger. Instead of being paralyzed, they opted to wait with a reason, which was embedded in spiritual faith.

The recent syntheses show that religiosity facilitates emotion control, such as acceptance and enduring patience in stressful situations (Lopez-Posada et al., 2024). The spiritual belief in the mindful acknowledgment of postponements can eradicate nervousness and the ability to have emotional composure in case where things take a long time to happen.

Transcendent Trust can be understood as a belief that a higher purpose or some greater force helps increase perseverance during a period of uncertainty (Okan et al., 2025).

Participant 6 responded that he was waiting and was called saying that he would not have to submit his documents once again as he would be reassigned to Camp Crame.

It demonstrates a strong faith instead of giving up, they thought that something bigger was happening, and it finally did.

This observation is in line with the Okan et al. (2025) results which found a great connection between emotional resilience, life satisfaction, and more explicit spiritual routes to recovery after an adversity and our faith in a transcendent goal or a divine plan. It is second order trust; people do not interpret mistakes as their failures but rather it helps them to put them into perspective.

Active persistence is self-motivated, long-term, goal-oriented activity that builds endurance, flexibility, and emotional resilience during tough hiring processes through personal values, intentional practice, and readiness (Li & Chen, 2023; Jones et al., 2022).

With sub-themes: Self-motivation and Intentional practice.

Self-motivation: An inner incentive creates resilience and allowance to engage in a stable effort against institutional friction (Li & Chen, 2023).

Participant 1 said, "... but I believed in myself, trying my best until I was hired."

Participant 4 stated, "I reminded myself to move forward."

This underscores the fact that internal motivation is a real source of resilience. These people do not need outside validation or pressure, but they find the courage of self-belief and individual commitment. Such attitude helps them to stay to the end despite hindrances like delays in procedures, exclusion of quotas or rejection, etc. without forgetting their goals.

Recent researches have confirmed that self-determined motivation is an important indicator of persistence of efforts in high-stress environment. According to the study conducted by Li and Chen (2023), individuals who perceive their goals or objectives as valuable or self-sanctioned recognize their motive as an internal value and they are persistent in the process of achieving the goals even when they fail. This is what makes it clear that the only way to emerge successful in competitive recruitment processes is to find and build personal meaning and purpose, besides being technically well in the fronts.

Intentional Practice: Aware rehearsing (i.e., exercise, studying) boosts the skill and readiness (Jones et al., 2022).

Participant 1 said, "I continued to learn, every day I am trying to improve my abilities, skills, and knowledge."

Participant 3 stated, "I inquire on the needed requirements, like how many push-ups or sit-ups do I need to achieve. I set my goal; I need to do more than the minimum requirement."

Participant 5 narrated, "It's like the drawing part, ma'am. I wasn't good at it. But I wanted to perfect it, so I learned how to draw."

These behaviors are comparable to strategic effort, which involves planning and practicing with design rather than just doing the actions.

This finding is consistent with the findings of Jones et al. (2022), who claim that sufficient practice in which purpose is communicated, behavioral direction is focused, and skills are trained that is associated with improved performance and increased psychological endurance. They demonstrated how people who participate in controlled rehearsal activities may not only improve their competency but also feel calm and secure throughout high-stakes exams.

Resilient progress is the process of moving on by letting go of previous setbacks and concentrating on future objectives. Reframing failures helps candidates create new goals, makes decision-making easier, and lessens mental strain—all of which are essential for maintaining resilience throughout uncertain career transitions (Miller & Roberts, 2020; Zhao & Smith, 2021).

With sub-themes: Cognitive Release & Forward Orientation

Cognitive Release: Embracing setbacks as learning opportunities facilitates mental clarity (Miller & Roberts, 2020).

Participant 7 said, "I got through those tough times by accepting what happened and praying. I knew I wouldn't be able to reach my dreams in life if I stayed stuck in that experience." Participant 3 said, "With that experience, I had my vacation in Ilocos Sur, and I applied to UNP Vigan; those are things I've done. My relatives even tell me, "Maybe you are not into PNP, why not try teaching?" So, I've tried teaching also."

These depict the way applicants start to lose earlier disappointment in order to make room and possibilities in the future. This way of thinking is an important first step toward being strong. Reevaluating failure and moving on is an important part of cognitive release, which is important for keeping up professional momentum and protecting mental health.

According to Miller and Roberts (2020), an individual decision-making improves when a setback is perceived as an internalized learning process, and, partially, internalized failure decreases. Candidates do not experience the psychological vertigo that tends to be part and parcel of loss, but rather enable themselves to proceed since they have positive and depersonalized images of loss and the attendant loss process.

Forward Orientation refers to proactive goal-setting and future planning that demonstrate resilience and career adaptability are referred to as forward orientation (Zhao & Smith, 2021).

"I focused on my career. I focused on my work and kept pushing through, even when it was challenging. Especially during training that I focused on that and God. I overcame those struggles," stated participant number four.

It exhibits a forward-thinking attitude. Instead of withdrawing, the participant decided to focus on their career advancement and continue working on an equal footing with the rivals. This power of refocusing is a characteristic feature of the progressive school of thought.

Zhao and Smith (2021) assert that future planning is a feature of adaptive resilience after rejection. Bouncing forward is a character of people who can switch their efforts to what is possible rather than merely recuperate. On the same note, according to the research of Del Rosario (2024), in the long run, applicants who alternate between active persistence and spiritual or emotional control are better copers.

Adaptive transformation denotes conscious shifts like health-promoting exercises, cognitive reorganization, and prospective planning, which improve resilience. It implies planned adaptations depending on previous mistakes and accomplishments as they can assist applicants to become more prepared, adaptable, and professionally and psychologically resilient in the long term (Silva and Ramos, 2022; Lent et al., 2021).

With sub-themes: a. Health Discipline; b. Purposeful adjustment.

Health disciplines emphasize maintaining physical fitness and overall wellness through exercise, nutrition, rest, and mental health practices, which improve resilience, prevent burnout, and strengthen long-term readiness for demanding careers, such as law enforcement (Williams et al., 2022; Kumar & Lee, 2023).

Participant 4 said, "I made sure my BMI was normal before entering the PNP. I jogged, did push-ups, and sit-ups. "

Participant 7 stated, "I became more disciplined with my time, with how I handle things, and in taking care of my body."

These quotes reveal how healthy habits are incorporated in the preparation process of an applicant. These attempts show not only that people meet the standards of the PNPs physically, but show that they are ready and respect themselves.

The field of self-directed health is in line with the results of Williams et al. (2022) who stated that physical training programs play a crucial role in psychological preparedness and stress response in a law enforcement environment. On the same note, Kumar and Lee (2023) explained that protective factors against burnout are all-inclusive life patterns such as sleep and mental integrity, especially long-term or emotionally demanding selection stages.

A purposeful adjustment is a self-regulative process where individuals modify goals and behaviors based on feedback, enabling flexibility, improved performance, and career growth through deliberate selfmanagement (Martin & Carter, 2023; Perez & Robinson, 2022).

Participant 6 mentioned, "I'm still adjusting to my new environment. "

Participant 1 said, "The adjustments that I made were based on the process I failed."

The statements are an indication of how the health-conscious activities are integrated within the preparatory process of an applicant. It is not merely adherence to PNP physical standards but an indication of the state of mind of being prepared and respecting oneself.

These self-health behaviors are compatible with the results of Williams et al. (2022), which explain that physical training programs produce considerable beneficial effects on the psychological preparedness and stress-related events among law enforcement officers. In the same regard, Kumar and Lee (2023) observed that, although all efforts have been made in burnout prevention, holistic wellness practices (including restful sleep to management of mental health) protect against burnout especially in the case of long or emotionally intensive selection cycles.

4. Conclusions

The experiences of dreaming criminologists in terms of their enlistment in the Philippine National Police (PNP) are characterized by negative feelings, which include disappointment, persistence, and subsequent resilience. Although they are academically and professionally prepared, they experience rejection in form of quota restrictions and systemic barriers and are left in doubt and subjected to emotional distresses. Nevertheless, family, faith and personal determination offers strength to the candidates, who tend to resume with a lot of patience and discipline. The enlistment process, then, becomes not just procedural but personal, emotional and social milestones to both applicants and their families, and this raises the problems of structural inequity and the moral duty to provide the equity. Acknowledgment

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the University of Northern Philippines, Philippine National Police Personnel, and everyone else who helped make this study possible.

5. Declarations

5.1. Ethical considerations

Number A-2024-222, with the approval of the university's Ethics Review Committee. The most important thing was to protect the dignity of those who answered. Before the study began, everyone who took part gave their full consent. A suitable degree of secrecy in the study results was ensured by guaranteeing the privacy of study participants.

5.2. Use of artificial intelligence (AI)

The authors declare that the generative artificial intelligence (AI) tool [ChatGPT] was used exclusively for grammatical improvement. The use of AI did not influence the scientific content, study design, data analysis, data interpretation, results, or conclusions of the manuscript. Full responsibility for the content remains with the authors.

5.3. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

5.4. Funding

The University of Northern Philippines-University Research and Development Office funded this research.

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