



Parents' Viewpoint on the Proposed Philippine Mandatory Reserve Officers' Training Corps for Senior High School Students

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to determine the parents' viewpoint on the proposed Philippine mandatory Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program as well as how these perspectives might influence the participation of the participants' children if it were to be implemented. The participants of this study were the ten purposively chosen senior high school parents residing in Sultan Kudarat Province. A self-developed, semi-structured interview questionnaire that underwent pilot testing was used by we. The study's findings were then analyzed and interpreted using a thematic approach. The majority of parents believe that the ROTC program can teach their children responsibility and discipline, according to we' findings. The program is effective at fostering the kids' sense of self-discipline, leadership, and responsibility, according to their common responses. They could also use what they have learned as a form of self-defense to keep themselves safe. However, there were also concerns raised regarding the program. These are issues such as the students' age and strength to undergo the program; the program's possible effect on their academic studies; and acts of violence like hazing that are said to be the reason why the mandatory implementation of the program was abolished. Thus, the majority of parents in the Philippines are in favor of the senior high school ROTC program being implemented.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Making Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), compulsory for senior high school students, has been a contentious issue in the Philippines ever since early 2022 (Bell *et al.*, 2022; Lipset, 1996). Despite being one of the National Service Training Programs (NSTP) available to college students in the nation, ROTC still does not accept senior high schools. Reserve Officers' Training Corps refers to a military organization that trains people to become officers in the armed forces. This is consistent with the program's goals, which aim to instill in its cadet's patriotism, love of the nation, spiritual and moral principles, reverence for human rights, and conformity to the Constitution. Several nations, including Taiwan, South Korea, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Russia, require their male residents to participate in the ROTC program (Menger & Barlow, 2013). In the Philippines, according to former president Rodrigo Duterte, the program is essential for educating young Filipinos about the principles of basic military service and training them to protect the nation in the event of future risk-related events (Youniss *et al.*, 2002). This is following Article II, Section XIII of the 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, the government is obligated to advance and safeguard the welfare of young people on all fronts, including their health, ethical, mental, and social well-being (Blanco & Panao, 2019).

Parents who may say yes probably think that mandatory ROTC will discipline their children in a good manner by making them serve and protect the country as well as enhance their physical and mental abilities (Bartlett & Lutz, 1998; Hall, 1945). On the other hand, parents who may say otherwise mostly worry about the poor treatment that the cadet leading them may give. This is because the program is allegedly a hotbed of cruelty and corruption, with hazing and brutality having become the norm at the training camp to test the cadets' bravery, tenacity, and honesty. Some of the officers even inflicted violence on them to the point that it led to the deaths of some students.

Thus, we find this topic timely and relevant to their senior high school level, which prompted them to study and determine the parents' viewpoints on the proposed Philippine mandatory ROTC and know how these viewpoints can affect the participation of the respondents' children if ever implemented.

This study aims to ascertain parents' opinions about the planned senior high school ROTC requirement in several areas of Sultan Kudarat Province.

Specifically, the study would like to answer the following question: What are the parents' viewpoints on the proposed Philippine mandatory Reserve Officers' Training Corps Program for senior high school students in terms of Parents' Perception and 1.2 Parents' Stand?

2. METHODS

To ascertain the opinions of senior high school parents regarding the proposed required ROTC for senior high school students, this study used a qualitative research design, notably the phenomenological study. Ten purposively chosen senior high school parents residing in Sultan Kudarat Province, particularly in the Municipality of Isulan and Bagumbayan, and in the City of Tacurong, were the participants of the study. Moreover, participants were required to meet the following criteria: he or she must (a) be a parent of a senior high school student, (b) be a resident of Sultan Kudarat province, (c) have the confidence to share thoughts, ideas, and viewpoints regarding the proposed Philippine mandatory ROTC, and (d) be willing to participate in the study. The study was conducted in the Province of Sultan Kudarat, specifically in the Municipalities of Isulan and Bagumbayan, as well as the City of Tacurong. Purposive Sampling was used as the sampling method, as it is suited to identify the

participants that are suitable for the study. Thematic analysis was also employed in analyzing the results of the study. Detailed information is in **Figure 1**.

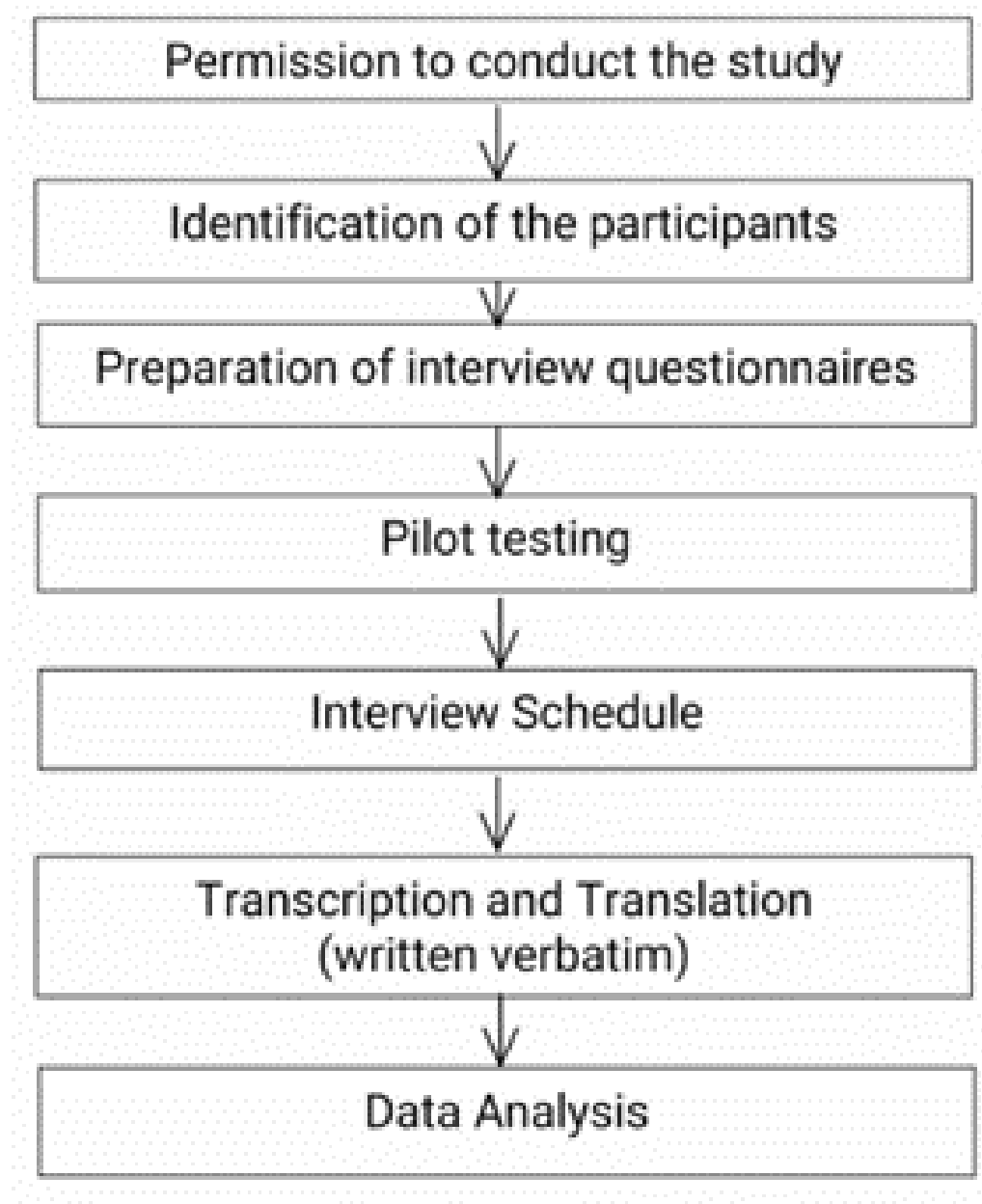


Figure 1. Waterfall Diagram of Data Gathering Process.

2.1. Data Gathering Procedure

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Initially, letters of correspondence were written to the chairwoman of the Laboratory High School requesting permission to conduct the study.

After obtaining permission to conduct the study, the interview participants were identified using the inclusion criteria. The selected individuals were sent an invitation letter.

Questions for the semi-structured interview were then prepared and checked by the research adviser. After this, we also conducted a pilot test with three (3) parents, excluding the ones they are planning to interview, to verify if there were any questions in need of revision for better understanding.

The one-on-one interviews for interview participants were done face-to-face. We visited the respondents' homes or places of work, depending on the respondent's availability and choice of setting. The interview was recorded using an audio recorder. Following each interview, some of the questions were examined for clarification, and participants were asked if they wanted to provide more information.

We listened to the recorded interview through an audio recorder at least twice per interview. We transcribed the tapes, checked them for accuracy, and translated them into English. All utterances from the semi-structured interview must be written verbatim in the transcription. Then, the final transcripts of the interviews were subjected to data analysis.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There was a total of four questions asked during the interview with the ten (10) senior high school parents. These questions cover all other potential questions to explore, and we were able to obtain some results by creating follow-up questions.

Generally, most parents see ROTC as one way for the youth to be disciplined and practice their patriotism and nationalism more. Observing the parents, particularly those who have had prior experience with the ROTC or similar training, the main reason they approve of the program is that it effectively disciplines them in the sense that, after the program, they have already embodied the learning they gained during the program. They also stated that experiencing ROTC could be a way for the youth to realize that they have a responsibility as citizens, which is to serve the country in every way possible. Apart from that, students can use the skills they learn in the program for daily survival and, if necessary, self-defense.

The objectives of the proposed House Bill No. 8961, which was primarily written by Deputy Speaker Raneo Abu (2019), are supported by the remarks of these parents and include: a) raising children's understanding of service ethics, patriotism, and nationalism; fostering self-discipline and leadership; promoting creative thinking for scientific and technological advancement; b) offering fundamental military education to inspire, prepare, and use for civil-military operations; and c) encouraging public involvement in government.

On the contrary, some parents opposed it for a variety of reasons, including hazing and the possibility that the program would distract their children from their studies. Also, one parent pointed out that the ROTC's main goal, which is to teach children military training in preparation for national defense, would be useless if mandated because not all students want to serve in the military in the future. Some of them also lack the strength and capability to complete the program due to factors such as health conditions, which is why the NSTP Law makes it optional at the college level. With the raised concern about the hazing, it is found out in the study of Baron (2021), that parents do not fear the thought that their child can't handle the ROTC program but rather the possibility of hazing, in line with what happened to Mark Chua, who was a participant in the ROTC and who faced his death at the tragic age of 21. They believe the cause of his death was linked to his exposé of alleged irregularities in the program, which was also the reason why the law was abolished in 2001.

The discussed perspectives differ in terms of how the parents perceive the program itself and how their personal experiences influence what they have to say about it. The only thing that is common to both parties is that if the ROTC is indeed mandated in the country, the parents will have no choice but to follow the laws imposed by the Philippine government.

4. CONCLUSION

The majority of parents view the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) as a program that can help their children be disciplined and aware of their responsibilities as a citizen. Parents commonly view the ROTC program as a good program to develop the senior high school students' sense of responsibility, leadership, and discipline among themselves. Aside from that, they could use what they have learned as a form of self-defense to keep themselves safe. There were also issues and concerns found in the study that were classified into four categories: (1) the student's age and strength to undergo the program; (2) the program's possible effect on their academic studies; (3) the exemption of the students with health conditions; and (4) acts of violence like hazing that are said to be the reason why the mandatory implementation of the program was abolished. Therefore, even though the majority of parents are in favor of the proposed mandatory ROTC program in the Philippines for seniors in high school, there are still issues that the national government should look into and, if necessary, take into account before reviving the Reserve Officers' Training Corps program.

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6. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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