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Baseline Study on the Mental Resilience of a Cohort of Military Personnel in the Philippine Army

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the baseline level of mental resilience among active military personnel assigned to the 5th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army and examined its potential association with socio-demographic characteristics. Utilizing a descriptive cross-sectional research design, primary data were gathered from a purposively sampled cohort of 50 respondents across eight operational and support units. Data collection utilized a structured survey based on the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC). Statistical analyses included frequency, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, and the Chi-square Test of Independence. Results indicated an overall positive level of mental resilience among personnel, with an overall weighted mean of 3.84 ($SD = 0.62$, interpreted as "Agree"). Among the assessed dimensions, the Ability to Cope with Stress registered the highest mean score (3.98), whereas Adaptability to Change yielded the lowest (3.65). Inferential testing revealed no statistically significant association between mental resilience levels and socio-demographic variables—namely age, sex, number of years in service, salary grade, or unit location. Based on these findings, an intervention program titled A.L.A.L.A.Y. (Advancing Leadership, Adaptability, and Lifelong Army Yield) was proposed to enhance adaptability, stress management, and emotional regulation across all military ranks.

Keywords: *Mental Resilience, Military Personnel, Philippine Army, Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, A.L.A.L.A.Y. Program*

INTRODUCTION

Military service demands physical prowess alongside sound mental fortitude to handle operational hazards and stress. In the Philippines, despite the enactment of Republic Act 11036 (Mental Health Act) and national initiatives promoting mental health, mental health provisions within military recruitment and continuous service remain insufficiently detailed in the literature. Evaluating baseline mental resilience among active military personnel is necessary to justify targeted mental health interventions and strengthen institutional mental health policies.

Statement of the Problem

The main objective of the study was to evaluate the baseline mental resilience of military personnel in a selected infantry division of the Philippine Army. Specifically, it addressed the following questions:

1. What are the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants in terms of age, sex, number of years in service, salary grade, and unit location?
2. What is the level of mental resilience of the personnel across key dimensions (Adaptability to Change, Ability to Cope with Stress, Focus and Clear Thinking, Competence, and Ability to Persevere Despite Failure)?
3. Is there a significant association between the mental resilience of military personnel and their enumerated socio-demographic characteristics?

Scope and Delimitations

This qualitative study focuses on the lived experiences of 15 Registered Nurses working under Job Order contracts at a public hospital in Bulacan during the academic year 2025–2026. Participants were selected via purposive sampling based on an inclusion criterion of at least six months of continuous clinical experience. Data collection utilized a validated interview guide with semi-structured, audio-recorded in-depth interviews to capture clear accounts of daily professional challenges, psychosocial impacts, and adaptive mechanisms defining contractual healthcare work.

Review of Related Literature

Although Republic Act 11036 establishes mental healthcare as a basic human right in the Philippines, lingering cultural stigma, resource constraints, and limited epidemiological research continue to hinder service accessibility and public engagement. Addressing these systemic gaps requires a focus on mental resilience—a dynamic psychological capacity that enables individuals to adapt to adversity and recover from stress. This buffer is especially vital in military settings, where service members face heightened psychological risks from operational duties and traumatic events, protecting them against conditions like depression, anxiety, and moral injury. Utilizing standardized tools such as the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) offers an effective means to evaluate these capacities and better support high-risk populations within the nation's evolving healthcare framework.

Conceptual Framework/ Theoretical framework

The study is grounded in psychological frameworks defining mental resilience as a dynamic, multifactorial construct. It views resilience as an individual's capacity to maintain or recover mental well-being, adapt, bounce back, and effectively manage stress or adversity through emotional, cognitive, and behavioral mechanisms.

The conceptual framework examines the association between key sociodemographic characteristics (age, sex, years in service, salary grade, and unit location) and the level of mental resilience among military personnel, illustrating how resilience contributes to overall mental health and occupational readiness.

Scope and Delimitation:

This study evaluates the baseline mental resilience levels of active military personnel using the 25-item Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) across five specific dimensions—Adaptability to Change, Ability to Cope with Stress, Focus and Clear Thinking, Competence, and Ability to Persevere—while examining potential associations with sociodemographic factors. However, the scope is deliberately restricted to a cohort of 50 active service members across eight specific units of the 5th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army. Consequently, these findings are strictly limited to this demographic and the standard constructs measured by the CD-RISC, preventing generalized extrapolation to other military branches or broader armed forces personnel.

METHODOLOGY

Institutional clearance and ethical approval were secured from the Research Ethics Committee and local military leadership prior to inviting eligible active personnel across eight targeted units to participate with formal informed consent. Data were gathered through self-

administered structured survey questionnaires, which were subsequently screened for completeness, encoded in Microsoft Excel, and imported into SPSS Version 26. Finally, rigorous statistical analyses were performed to evaluate resilience parameters, with the resulting conclusions directly informing the design of a proposed action program.

Research Design

The study utilized a **descriptive cross-sectional research design**. A descriptive approach allowed the researchers to measure and observe the variables (sociodemographic profiles and resilience levels) naturally without manipulation, while the cross-sectional element captured data at a single point in time

Data Collection and Sample Selection

The methodology utilized a purposive non-probability sampling technique to select n = 50 active military personnel who met the specific inclusion criteria across eight sub-units of the 5th Infantry Division—namely the 5ID Station Hospital, 5th Signal Battalion, 86th Infantry Battalion, 95th Infantry Battalion, Service Support Battalion, 5th Installation Management Battalion, 5th Civil Military Operations Battalion, and 5th Division CAA Unit. Data collection relied on a two-part survey instrument that captured participants' sociodemographic profiles alongside their responses to the standard 25-item Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) measured on a Likert scale.

Data Analysis Methods

Statistical analysis relied on frequency and percentage distributions to summarize and categorize participants' sociodemographic profiles, while the weighted mean and standard deviation were calculated to assess overall mental resilience levels alongside its individual sub-dimensions. Additionally, a Chi-Square Test of Independence (\chi^2) evaluated potential associations between categorical sociodemographic variables and resilience levels, applying a standard significance threshold of \alpha = 0.05.

Research Hypotheses and Validation

The study utilized the standardized and validated **Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC)**, widely recognized globally for assessing adaptability, composure, emotional stability, and stress coping ability. Additionally, the research instrument underwent formal panel validation using an Instrument Validation Rating Scale, and the textual document underwent academic grammar review and certification

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The research protocol strictly adhered to international and national standards—including the Declaration of Helsinki, WHO guidelines, the Data Privacy Act of 2012, and National Ethics Guidelines—by securing voluntary informed consent after fully disclosing study risks and benefits. Participant anonymity and data privacy were systematically maintained using identification coding, while physical and digital files were protected through locked storage and password encryption, scheduled for permanent destruction upon the expiration of ethics clearance. Furthermore, the primary investigators declared zero conflicts of interest throughout the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study cohort was predominantly male (**84%**), middle-aged (**34%** aged 40–49), serving between 1–8 years (**36%**), and occupying Salary Grades 13–15 (**38%**). Overall, participants demonstrated a high level of mental resilience, achieving an overall Weighted Mean of 3.84 (SD = 0.62, interpreted as "Agree"). Among the individual dimensions, Ability to Cope with Stress recorded the highest mean (3.98), followed by Competence (3.89), Focus and Clear Thinking (3.84), and Ability to Persevere Despite Failure (3.84), while Adaptability to Change received the lowest relative score (3.65) yet remained within the "Agree" range. Furthermore, the Chi-square test revealed no statistically significant associations between mental resilience and age ($p = 0.480$), sex ($p = 0.404$), years in service ($p = 0.430$), salary grade ($p = 0.560$), or unit location ($p = 0.920$), demonstrating that resilience levels were relatively uniform across demographic sub-groups within the military cohort.

SUMMARY

The military personnel demonstrate satisfactory levels of overall baseline mental resilience, with stress-coping scoring highest and adaptability to change showing room for improvement. Demographic variables showed no significant relationship with resilience.

CONCLUSIONS

Resilience among military personnel is non-dependent on demographic backgrounds but is rather a shared baseline capability fostered by occupational training and military experience

RECOMMENDATIONS

To operationalize these findings, military leadership should implement the proposed A.L.A.L.A.Y. Program (Advancing Leadership, Adaptability, and Lifelong Army Yield) to systematically foster adaptability, stress coping mechanisms, and cognitive resilience across ranks. Complementing this structural framework, military health personnel must offer routine psychological screenings, interactive stress management workshops, and structured peer support networks. Sustaining these initiatives will require HR and division headquarters to enact supporting institutional policies and secure dedicated budget allocations. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to build upon this baseline by utilizing experimental or longitudinal study designs to rigorously evaluate the long-term outcomes and impact of these resilience interventions.

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AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI-supported tools helped with grammar and structure in creating this article. No AI tools were used to collect, analyze, or interpret data; all authors are credited for their academic contributions.

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