

From Combat to Protection: The Lifeworld of Former Agila Troopers Turned Protection Agents

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lifeworld of former Agila Troopers from 10th Infantry Division, Philippine Army, who transitioned into private protection agents. It examined their lived experiences in the performance of their duties, the challenges they encountered, the strategies they employed to address it, and their aspirations to improve their professional services. The research aimed to generate insights that may inform reintegration frameworks for discharged military personnel, particularly those not covered by formal transition assistance programs.

A qualitative research design anchored on Edmund Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology was utilized to capture the essence of the informants' lived experiences. Ten former Agila Troopers served as informants of the study. Four participated in Individual In-Depth Interviews (IDI), while six joined the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The research was conducted in Tagum City and Davao City, where many discharged soldiers are employed in private security. Data were gathered through validated interview guides, audio recordings, and field notes, and analyzed using Colaizzi's seven-step descriptive phenomenological method.

The findings revealed themes reflecting continuity and transition: persistence of military identity, adaptation to civilian work culture, struggles with stigma and financial instability, reliance on resilience and peer networks, and aspirations for professional growth and stability. While private security provided employment, it also exposed gaps in institutional support and career development.

The study recommends structured reintegration programs, targeted employment assistance, mental health support systems, and stronger regulatory mechanisms for discharged personnel entering the private security sector.

Keywords: Lifeworld, Former Agila Troopers, Transcendental Phenomenology, Military-to-Civilian Transition, Private Protection Agents, Reintegration

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SCOPE

INTRODUCTION

Rationale of the Study

Military service is marked by its difficulty, demands, and inherent risks; however, the shift to civilian life still poses considerable difficulties for transitioning veterans (Morin, 2011). While extensive research has been conducted on military careers and post-service reintegration, much of the existing literature has focused on general reintegration experiences and often overlook the specific career paths pursued by military veterans. Only very few studies have looked into the unique issues and opportunities that veterans encounter as they shift from military service into private protection agents, and much less involving discharged Agila Troopers from the 10th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army. As such, this study aims to bridge that gap by

exploring their lived experiences, their adjustments, and their overall integration into the private security sector.

Following their departure from the military service, active-duty service members encounter substantial challenges when reintegrating into the civilian life (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2015). This transition period is more than just the change of careers—it entails a drastic shift in their identity, routine, and social environment. However, this transition becomes even more difficult for discharged or involuntarily separated soldiers due to their lack of access to benefits, reintegration programs, or even formal recognition of their prior service. They face not only the emotional and psychological toll of separation but also the compounded burden of social stigma.

In the Philippine Army, the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and other support initiatives are only available for separating, retiring, and disabled AFP personnel (Gumabao, 2023). In contrast, discharged Army personnel are not eligible for TAP and other benefits. This has led to challenges in their transition including various mental health issues, financial instability, social isolation, and limited job opportunities.

While some discharged Army personnel have highly specialized skills, these do not always translate into the civilian job market. Their career prospects are further limited by their lack of formal civilian work experience, employer misconceptions, and social stigma. Without clear pathways for a post-military career, some face unemployment, resort to informal security work, or worse, engage in illegal activities. An example of this was the case of Negros Oriental Gov. Roel Degamo who was murdered in his home on March 4, 2023 (Rappler, 2023). The gun attack, caught on his residence's Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV), was executed with military precision (Rappler, 2023). Of the 10 suspects in custody, nine (9) were identified as former military personnel, with one being a former Enlisted Personnel who was discharged in 2016 following allegations of involvement in illegal drugs (Rappler, 2023).

Despite these risks, many discharged soldiers attempt to redirect their military training toward lawful employment, particularly in the private security sector. Former Philippine Army personnel are often recruited into security, law enforcement support, and protective services because of their discipline, tactical skills, and crisis management capabilities (University of the Philippines – Los Baños, 2025). In the Philippine context, many discharged soldiers, including former Agila Troopers, are presently employed as Private Protection Agents (PPAs) providing security services to politicians, business executives, and other moneyed individuals. This practice is legally recognized under Republic Act No. 5487, as amended by Republic Act No. 6975 and Republic Act No. 9514, which regulate the private security industry and authorize licensed agencies to deploy armed security personnel for the protection of persons, properties, and vital installations. Under the implementing rules of the Philippine National Police–Supervisory Office for Security and Investigation Agencies (PNP-SOSIA), former military personnel are among the primary manpower sources of the private security sector due to their prior combat training and firearms proficiency. However, despite being lawfully employed, many discharged soldiers still struggle to adapt to civilian work cultures, less hierarchical leadership, and uncertain career trajectories.

While some veterans tragically fall into criminal activities due to a lack of support and job opportunities, others seek to utilize their military skills in the private security sector. Many former Philippine Army members find careers in security, law enforcement, and emergency response, leveraging their previous military training (University of the Philippines – Los Baños, 2025). The structured nature of these fields closely aligns with the discipline, tactical expertise, and crisis management skills honed during their service in the Army. However, despite finding employment in private security, discharged personnel still continue to face significant challenges. Many of them struggle with the shift clear leadership structure in the military to the more independent and business-like nature of private security work. Further, some encounter difficulty adjusting to civilian communication styles and expectations, while others grapple with the uncertainty about their long-term direction. In the absence of a structured reintegration support from the Philippine Army prior and after their separation from the service, they are left to manage these difficulties alone.

This phenomenological study aimed to understand the subjective experiences of former Agila Troopers from the 10th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army as they transition as private security agents. By exploring

their thoughts, emotions, and perceptions, the researcher seeks to gain deeper insights into their adjustment process, skill adaptation, and professional integration. The findings can contribute significantly to existing literature on military-to-civilian transitions and to generate empirical evidence that can support the formulation of policy frameworks and reintegration programs specifically for discharged soldiers, with the goal of preventing their involvement in crime, violence, and social marginalization. Ultimately, this research seeks to facilitate a smoother, more stable, and more fulfilling career transition for former Agila Troopers in the private security sector.

In the 10th Infantry Division, Philippine Army, most discharges stem from Absence Without Leave (AWOL), drug-related offenses, and violations of Article 97 of the Articles of War, circumstances that further expose these individuals to stigma, legal barriers, and limited employment opportunities. These factors heighten their vulnerability to economic hardship and social exclusion.

As an Army Officer currently serving as the Deputy of the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Personnel, G1 in 10th Infantry (AGILA) Division, the researcher brought firsthand insight into the institutional dynamics of military transition to civilian life. This study is critical and timely as it addresses the critical gap in support for discharged personnel navigating the civilian life without any institutional support or guidance. Without clear pathways, some former soldiers are drawn into illegal activities, highlighting the consequences of neglecting their transition needs. By examining the lived experiences of former Agila Troopers now working in private security, the research offers valuable perspectives for policy development for discharged soldiers. With rising concerns over the marginalization, and at times, misdirection, of former soldiers, the urgency to craft informed, responsive, and inclusive reintegration pathways is not only practical but a moral imperative.

Theoretical Background

This study was primarily anchored on the Transition Theory by Nancy K. Schlossberg (1981) with the support of two theories, namely: the Resilience Theory by Norman Garmezy (1991) and Role Theory by Bruce J. Briddle (1986).

Transition Theory by Schlossberg (1981) defined a transition as any event or non-event that leads to changes in relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles. Even though the Transition Theory primarily focuses on the transitions experienced by adults, it is equally applicable to young adults and adolescents. The theory was grounded in several key premises. First, individuals continuously undergo transitions throughout their lives. Second, reactions to these transitions vary depending on their type, whether they are events or non-events, as well as the individual's perception, context, and the transition's impact on their life. Third, transitions are ongoing processes rather than fixed endpoints; they involve phases of assimilation and continuous appraisal as individuals move in, through and out of different life situations (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011).

The transition process can be understood through three primary stages. The first stage is moving in, which occurs when an individual enters a new situation or set of circumstances, such as moving away from home to attend university. Conversely, some transitions begin with moving out, which involves leaving a familiar situation, such as losing a job, and may include a period of emotional adjustment or grief. Once individuals become familiar with their new circumstances, they enter the moving through stage. During this phase, they attempt to balance, integrate, and adapt to the implications and demands of their new environment while maintaining other aspects of their lives. Finally, the moving out stage marks the conclusion of a particular transition, as individuals reach a level of stability and begin looking forward to the next phase of their journey. At this point, the transition becomes fully integrated into their broader life experience (Schlossberg, Anderson, & Goodman, 2011).

A key aspect of the definition of transition in Schlossberg's (1981) Transition Theory is the role of perception, as an event or non-event qualifies as a transition only if the individual experiencing it defines it as such. To fully understand the meaning of a transition for an individual, it is necessary to consider its type, context, and impact. According to the Transition Theory, transitions can be classified into three main categories. Anticipated transitions are those that occur predictably, such as graduating from college. Unanticipated transitions are unexpected and unscheduled, such as divorce or the sudden death of a loved one. Non-events

refer to transitions that were expected to occur but did not, such as failing to gain admission to medical school. Non-events can be further categorized into personal non-events, which are linked to an individual's aspirations; ripple non-events, which occur as a result of a non-event experienced by someone else; resultant non-events, which are caused by a separate event; and delayed non-events, which involve the anticipation of an event that may still occur. In addition to the type of transition, context and impact play crucial roles in understanding the transition experience. Context refers to an individual's relationship to the transition and the setting in which it occurs, while impact is determined by the extent to which the transition alters daily life. Together, these factors shape an individual's ability to navigate and adapt to change (Evans et. al, 1998).

Schlossberg (1995) introduced the 4S Model as a framework for assessing an individual's ability to navigate transitions. This model evaluates four key variables: situation, self, support, and strategies, all of which influence how an individual experiences and adapts to change (Musamali, 2018).

The situation variable pertains to the specific circumstances surrounding a transition, including the factors that contribute to its complexity or ease. The self variable encompasses an individual's personal characteristics, internal resources, and resilience, which determine their capacity to manage change. The support variable refers to the external assistance available, such as social networks, institutional resources, or professional guidance, which can facilitate the transition process. Finally, the strategies variable examines the coping mechanisms and actions an individual employs to manage and adapt to transitions effectively (Musamali, 2018).

The model assesses an individual's assets and liabilities in coping with transitions, recognizing that a greater number of assets—such as strong support systems, adaptive coping strategies, and a favorable situational context—enhance one's ability to adjust. Conversely, the presence of significant liabilities, such as limited support, maladaptive coping strategies, or an adverse situational context, can make transitions more challenging (Schlossberg, 1995).

The Transition Theory offers a valuable lens through which the experiences of discharged military personnel may be understood, particularly as they navigate the shift from military service to civilian employment. Applied to this study, it provides a framework for examining how former Agila Troopers, especially those employed in the private security sector, manage the complexities of reintegration, including changes in roles, routines, identities, and available resources. As such, it supports a deeper analysis of the personal and structural factors shaping their post-service adjustment.

This study also draws upon the Resilience Theory by Norman Garmezy (1991). According to the Resilience Theory, resilience is an individual's capacity to recover and maintain adaptive functioning following exposure to stress. Garmezy (1991) emphasized that resilience is not about being impervious to stress but rather about demonstrating functional adequacy despite emotional challenges. Garmezy's research challenged the notion that resilient individuals are "heroic," instead positioning resilience as a process influenced by multiple protective and risk factors (Garmezy, 1991).

Garmezy (1991) proposed an ecological framework for resilience, highlighting three (3) main sources of influence: (1) individual factors, such as temperament and cognitive skills; (2) familial factors, including warmth, cohesion, and the presence of a caring adult; and (3) external support systems, such as teachers, mentors, and community institutions (Garmezy et al., 1984). He further developed three (3) models to explain resilience: the compensatory model, in which protective factors counterbalance stressors; the protective vs. vulnerability model, where external supports mitigate the effects of stress; and the challenge model, which suggests that moderate stress exposure can enhance adaptive capacity but excessive stress diminishes resilience.

Further, Garmezy's (1991) research on resilience emphasized the prevention of mental illness through protective factors such as motivation, cognitive skills, social support, and personal agency. His pioneering work led to the Project Competence Longitudinal Study (PCLS), initiated around 1974, which provided structured frameworks and measures for studying resilience (Masten & Tellegen, 2012). A key finding of the PCLS was that resilience is not a fixed trait but a dynamic process that evolves over time. Additionally,

Garmezy (1991) and his colleagues introduced the concept of developmental cascades, which describes how positive or negative functioning in one domain can influence adaptive outcomes in other areas. This idea aligns with the broader understanding of resilience as an interactive process influenced by both internal strengths and external support.

These insights are particularly relevant to military-to-civilian transitions, as the Resilience Theory highlights the role of protective factors in adaptation. Former military personnel navigating careers in private security may experience resilience shifts over time, depending on their ability to leverage social support, cognitive adaptability, and motivation in new professional environments. The developmental cascades framework also suggests that early post-service experiences, whether positive or negative, can have lasting impacts on long-term adjustment.

Lastly, this study is also supported on the Role Theory by Bruce J. Biddle (1986) which suggests that human actions are shaped by the roles they assume within various social positions. As Biddle (1986) explains, role theory emerged from the theatrical metaphor, where actors perform "parts" according to "scripts." Similarly, in society, individuals behave in ways that are predictable and consistent with the expectations attached to their social roles. These roles are formed through shared norms and are sustained through mutual understanding among members of a social system (Biddle, 1986). Thus, according to Biddle (1986), role theory may be said to concern itself with a triad of concepts: patterned and characteristic social behaviors, parts or identities that are assumed by social participants, and scripts or expectations for behavior that are understood by all and adhered to by performers.

In Role Theory, Biddle (1986) identified five distinct perspectives: 1) functional, 2) symbolic interactionist, 3) structural, 4) organizational, and 5) cognitive. Each perspective offers a different lens through which to study the link between individual behavior and the larger social system.

Building upon this foundation, Role Theory has evolved within sociological paradigms that emphasize the embeddedness of personal experience within broader institutional and cultural structures (Morrow-Howell & Greenfield, 2016). In this light, social roles are understood as sets of behavioral expectations associated with a particular position or identity within a larger social framework. This conceptualization allows scholars to examine how individuals' engagement in various roles—such as caregiver, volunteer, or worker—contributes to their overall well-being Thoits, 1983, as cited in Morrow-Howell & Greenfield, 2016).

Recent developments have expanded role theory to explore the psychological processes that underlie role enactment and their consequences for individual outcomes. For instance, the extent to which a role is salient to a person's self-concept, the frequency of role performance, the coexistence of multiple roles, and the level of strain experienced in fulfilling a role are all critical factors that influence the impact of role engagement (Morrow-Howell & Greenfield, 2016). These insights help explain why the effects of the same social role may differ from one individual to another.

The Role Theory offers a valuable lens for understanding the transition of former soldiers from military to civilian roles. The shift from being a combatant under rigid military structures to assuming new responsibilities as protection agents in civilian environments entails a significant transformation of identity, behavior, and expectations. Role Theory allows for a nuanced examination of how these individuals internalize, negotiate, and perform the expectations attached to their new roles, while still being influenced by the norms and values of their previous military identity.

This section examines the literatures and studies that are related to the research topic, "From Battlefield to Private Security Practice: The Lifeworld of Former Agila Troopers as Private Protection Agents." This review draws from both local and international sources to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the topic. By exploring previous research, this section seeks to contextualize the transition of former Agila Troopers from 10th Infantry Agila Division of the Philippine Army from military service to private security roles, highlighting the factors that shape their professional reintegration. Every piece of literature and empirical data from studies included herein is deemed essential in framing the research within a broader academic and practical discourse.

Various motivations drive individuals to join the military, with patriotism, the acquisition of transferable skills, and the pursuit of educational benefits being prominent factors (Segal & Segal, 2004). While many military personnel successfully navigate the challenges of military-to-civilian transition (MCT) and reintegrate into civilian life, a significant number continue to experience substantial adjustment difficulties (Forbes, et. al, 2019). Existing literature consistently characterizes military-to-civilian transition (MCT) as a complex and often disruptive life process involving changes in identity, employment, relationships, and social functioning. While military service provides individuals with discipline, operational skills, and strong institutional identity (Segal & Segal, 2004), transitioning into civilian life frequently requires former soldiers to renegotiate routines, redefine personal roles, and adapt to less structured environments (Pedlar, Thompson, & Castro, 2019). Across international studies, reintegration difficulties are commonly associated with unemployment, mental health concerns, financial instability, and weakened social support systems (Forbes et al., 2019; Sargent, 2014).

Various literatures have suggested that mental health challenges are one of the most prevalent issues military personnel faces during their transition to civilian life. According to Blinded Veterans Association, (2019), depression and suicide rates are notably higher among individuals who have served in the military compared to the general population. However, many do not seek the mental health support they need due to the persistent social stigma surrounding mental illness. Additionally, the financial cost of treatment often serves as a significant barrier to accessing appropriate care.

Further, another challenge former military personnel face is the lack of job opportunities after their service. According to Pew Research Center, approximately 200,000 U.S. former soldiers face the challenge of finding employment after military service each year, with only one in four securing a job before they leave the armed forces (O'Donnell & Rinaldi, 2022).

However, the experiences of transitioning military personnel are largely determined by the circumstances of their military separation and discharge classification. Discharged military personnel face more compounded challenges in their transition to civilian life compared to retired service members. Servicemembers may leave the military either voluntarily, by personal choice, or involuntarily, at the discretion of their commanders (Reid & Sims, 2024). This distinction is important, as a personnel's discharge classification determines whether they can or cannot access various healthcare and reintegration services.

Although many former soldiers leave military service through routine separation or retirement, nearly 30% experience non-routine or involuntary discharges due to disability, failure to meet qualifications, family obligations, or disciplinary infractions (Reid & Sims, 2024). These discharges are generally classified as either administrative—categorized as honorable, general, or other than honorable (OTH)—or punitive, which result from court-martial proceedings involving serious misconduct or criminal offenses (Code of Federal Regulations, 2000).

In the United States, voluntarily separating servicemembers undergo the Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program (TAP), which provides pre-separation counseling and career readiness training to support civilian reintegration (Congressional Research Service, 2018; Bascetta, 2002). In contrast, former military personnel with involuntary or OTH discharges are often excluded from these programs and other benefits, making reintegration more difficult (Ritchie, 2019). OTH discharges may also limit access to housing, education, and healthcare services while increasing exposure to stigma, unemployment, and mental health challenges (Theisen, 2023).

As a result, discharged personnel under non-routine conditions face higher risks of adverse outcomes such as incarceration, homelessness, suicide, and unemployment (Berzofsky et al., 2012). Nevertheless, despite employment barriers, former soldiers with less-than-honorable discharges are not entirely excluded from civilian work opportunities. Many continue to pursue careers in fields such as law enforcement, criminal justice, cybersecurity, healthcare, government service, and security contracting, where military-acquired skills and discipline remain valued by employers (Seamone et al., 2018).

Despite these options, some still struggle to secure employment and resort to criminal activities such as gun-

for-hires. According to an article by Benoit Faucon and Kejal Vyas (2025) posted in the Wall Street Journal, former soldiers have often become "guns for hire," also known as mercenaries or private military contractors, who offer their combat skills for pay in various conflicts around the world. A recurring pattern across international literature is the movement of former military personnel into private security and protection work. Scholars argue that private security employment provides continuity between military and civilian life because it allows former soldiers to apply familiar skills, operational behaviors, and security-oriented identities within a civilian setting (Hawks, 2014; Berndtsson, 2012). This continuity often eases initial adjustment by preserving aspects of military culture such as discipline, hierarchy, and tactical competence.

What distinguishes security contracting from other forms of post-military civilian employment is the continuity between military service and private security work. This continuity is evident in both socio-cultural aspects—such as shared language, social identity, professional recognition, and established networks—and vocational aspects, including operational tempo, skill application, professionalism, and organizational structure (Hawks, 2014). Employment as a security contractor presents a low barrier to entry for military personnel transitioning to civilian life, commonly referred to as "service leavers." However, the literature presents contrasting perspectives regarding the long-term implications of this transition. On one hand, private security work serves as an accessible employment pathway that reduces unemployment and provides financial stability for former soldiers (Schooner & Swan, 2010). On the other hand, several studies argue that prolonged immersion in military-adjacent environments may delay full civilian integration by reinforcing residual military identities and limiting broader social adaptation (Hawks, 2014; Harris et. al, 2013). Security contractors frequently rely on current or former military colleagues, acquaintances, and friends—collectively forming a "residual military network"—to obtain employment within the industry. This dependence on military-affiliated connections reinforces their social ties to the military community while limiting exposure to civilian networks (Hawks, 2014). As a result, their social integration into civilian life remains minimal, further isolating them from broader civilian influences. Replication in the military-to-civilian transition can have both beneficial and detrimental effects.

In the Asian context, India has seen a growing body of literature focused on the reintegration of Ex-Servicemen into civilian society. As one of the largest military forces in the world, India faces significant challenges in ensuring smooth transitions for its former soldiers. In the Indian Armed Forces, approximately 60,000 service personnel retire annually at a relatively young age, typically between 35 and 40 years old (Singh, 1985). Many ESM experience profound alienation and struggle to socialize or communicate with civilians, including close friends and family members (Ahern et al., 2015). The military environment instills a unique set of values, behaviors, and communication styles that often create barriers to reintegration into civilian life. Institutions that should provide support often leave ESM feeling helpless, unappreciated, and disappointed. The transition from military to civilian life is marked by a significant sense of loss, particularly the loss of self-identity and distinctiveness, which can be deeply troubling (Brunger et al., 2013). Additionally, retirement brings the loss of income, professional status, camaraderie, autonomy, and a structured way of life (Singh, 1985). The military conditions soldiers to be aggressive, disciplined, and combative, but upon retirement, they are suddenly expected to conform to civilian norms, which can be an overwhelming and unrealistic expectation (Bray et. al, 2010). These challenges contribute to various psychological and societal issues that ESM face.

Following discussions on transitioning to civilian life, several literatures in the Indian context also offer insights into the specific experiences of discharged ESM. Personnel dismissed or discharged due to misconduct, indiscipline, or criminal offenses generally forfeit their pension and other retirement benefits (Controller General of Defence Accounts, n.d.). This is outlined in the Defence Pension Guide by the Controller General of Defence Accounts (CGDA), which states that adjudication of disability or family pension is not applicable to those discharged under such circumstances. As a result, dismissed personnel often face significant financial and social hardships upon reintegration into civilian life, lacking the structured assistance available to their retired counterparts. Additionally, the Army Rules of 1954 specify that dismissal or discharge takes effect from the date authorized, and such individuals are typically ineligible for ex-servicemen benefits (Ministry of Defence, 1954). This further reinforces the consequences of involuntary separation, as those dismissed for disciplinary reasons are excluded from veteran welfare programs, employment reservations, and pension schemes. Without these support mechanisms, they may struggle to

secure stable employment or access necessary healthcare and financial aid.

Despite this, some ESM find meaningful work in the private security sector. According to an article by Absolute Veritas, a premier provider of comprehensive compliance services in the Testing, Inspection, and Certification (TIC) industry, India's private security sector has grown significantly due to expanding infrastructure, rapid urbanization, and rising security concerns (Absolute Veritas, n.d.). This sector serves as a key employment avenue for ESM, who are widely employed in securing commercial establishments, residential complexes, public spaces, and events. The increasing demand for private security personnel has reshaped security dynamics across both corporate and residential environments.

In the Philippine context, literature on the transition of military personnel to civilian life remains limited. Existing discussions, however, suggest that this transition is often accompanied by mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and difficulty adjusting to non-military environments. These concerns are frequently linked to the abrupt shift in routine, loss of structured support systems, and unresolved trauma from service.

In addition to psychological struggles, many Filipino former soldiers face significant barriers in securing stable and meaningful employment. Despite their discipline and training, their military-acquired skills do not always align with the qualifications sought in the civilian labor market. Recognizing this, the Philippine government has implemented measures to support the transition of former AFP personnel and their families into public service. According to the CSC Memorandum Circular No. 2, s. 2020 issued on 9 January 2020, military personnel, their spouses, and orphans are granted priority in government employment. The Commission cited Republic Act No. 9049 promulgated on 22 March 2001, and its implementing rules and regulations (IRR) which took effect on 11 December 2019. This policy aims to provide career opportunities within various government agencies, acknowledging their sacrifices during their military service (Civil Service Commission, 2020).

However, former military personnel are not systematically monitored by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) after they leave the service. As a result, data on the employment status of discharged soldiers are not readily available. Unlike ex-soldiers in foreign countries where government agencies or independent organizations conduct longitudinal studies on post-service employment outcomes, the Philippines lacks a centralized monitoring of the career paths of its former soldiers. This is supported by the research of Gumabao (2023), which noted that the Philippine Army does not have a systematic system for monitoring soldiers who have left the service—including those who have availed of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), and even more so, those who were dishonorably discharged. This also corroborates with the recent statement of former Commanding General of the Philippine Army and current Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Gen. Romeo S. Brawner Jr., who stated in 2023 that the Philippine Army will now closely monitor soldiers with "very specialized military skills" once they are discharged from the service (Rapper, 2023).

In a similar vein, literature exploring the lived experiences of discharged military personnel are even more scarce. While existing works often focus on the broader aspects of military service or the experiences of retired personnel, few delve into the specific challenges faced by those who were involuntarily separated or discharged from service.

In the AFP, personnel who are dishonorably discharged, typically due to misconduct, indiscipline, or criminal offenses, generally forfeit their retirement benefits and other entitlements. This policy is outlined in several legislative documents. Presidential Decree No. 1638 establishes the system of retirement and separation for AFP personnel, explicitly stating that those separated under dishonorable conditions are ineligible for retirement benefits (Presidential Decree No. 1638, 1979). Additionally, discharged AFP personnel, just like in the United States, are also not eligible to undergo the Transition Assistance Program (Gumabao, 2023). According to the Letter Directive issued by the Philippine Army in 2013, the Army Personnel Management Center (APMC) shall supervise the TAP to provide transition services to qualified beneficiaries only (Philippine Army, 2013). These qualified beneficiaries include military personnel who were eligible for honorable separation, reversion, administrative discharge prior to Expiration of Term of Enlistment (ETE), retirement, and the dependents of military personnel killed in action (Army Personnel Management Center,

2020). These legal frameworks significantly affect discharged personnel's employability, as many civilian employers may be hesitant to hire individuals with a dishonorable military record. The compounded challenges of financial instability, social stigma, and limited employment opportunities make reintegration into society far more difficult for discharged personnel compared to those who retire with full honors.

Consequently, this leaves many discharged AFP personnel unemployed. Without access to military pensions or transition assistance programs, some are forced to take on precarious jobs, while others find themselves unable to reintegrate into the workforce at all. In more extreme cases, some discharged personnel resort to criminal activities. This is evidenced by the involvement of ex-soldiers as primary suspects in the assassination of Governor Roel Degamo in 2023, where several ex-military personnel were implicated in the politically motivated attack (Galvez, 2023). In a written statement from Philippine Army Spokesperson Col. Xerxes Trinidad, the arrested suspects were dishonorably discharged former Army soldiers who were removed from service for serious violations of the Articles of War, including drug involvement, unauthorized absence (AWOL), and conduct prejudicial to military discipline (Philippine News Agency, 2023). Additionally, a former Army Officer, who was dishonorably discharged in 2010 due to a case of attempted murder, was arrested in Antipolo City for his involvement in a gun-for-hire scheme (GMA News, 2021). The authorities seized high-caliber rifles and pistols, several rounds of special ammunition (for snipers), and a long knife, along with other weapons, from the suspect's vehicle (GMA News, 2021). Their participation in such crimes highlights the risks associated with inadequate reintegration programs for discharged military personnel, particularly those with combat experience and tactical skills. In light of the incident, then former Commanding General of the Philippine Army and current Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Gen. Romeo S. Brawner Jr., highlighted the intention of the Philippine Army to monitor former soldiers, particularly those with specialized training, to prevent them from turning into hired guns and criminals after separation from the service (Rappler, 2023).

While some turn to illegal activities, some enter the private security industry. While the Philippines currently does not have any officially recognized private military companies (PMCs) unlike India and other western countries, it has private security contractors (PSCs), some of which are affiliated with foreign entities such as United Defense Manufacturing Corporation, Leonardo, Remington Arms Company LLC, and ELTA Systems Ltd. These PSCs primarily offer services including bodyguard protection, security personnel deployment, and security training. Their operations are regulated under Republic Act 5487, also known as the "Private Security Agency Law" (1969) and Republic Act 11917 (2022) or the "The Private Security Services Industry Act."

Under these legal frameworks, Private Security Agencies (PSAs) must be wholly Filipino-owned and may employ up to 2,000 security professionals. Security personnel must be Filipino citizens, physically and mentally fit, possess at least a high school diploma, and have no criminal record involving moral turpitude. Former soldiers are granted employment priority, while all personnel are required to complete accredited security training to ensure operational readiness (Republic Act No. 5487, 1969).

As such, the demand for security professionals in the Philippines has led many former military personnel to transition into roles as private security guards, bodyguards, or consultants for security firms. Their military training, discipline, and combat experience make them highly sought after in this industry that require risk assessment and protection services. However, the shift from military service to private security is not always seamless, as many struggle with lower wages, lack of benefits (Gumabao, 2023), and the stark contrast between structured military life and the more commercial nature of private security work. Despite these challenges, private security remains one of the most accessible employment options for discharged military personnel in the Philippines.

Several studies in the local, Asian, and Western settings have explored the challenges and experiences of military personnel transitioning into civilian life. In the United States, a study by Morin (2011) found that 27% or 500 out of 1,853 surveyed former soldiers reported experiencing somewhat or very difficult transitions—a proportion that swelled to 44% among ex-soldiers who served in the 10 years since the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Similarly, Whitworth et. al (2020) reported that even under optimal conditions, approximately 75% of servicemembers report experiencing difficulties during the transition from military service to civilian life.

Relatedly, a study entitled “‘You’re just chopped off at the end’: Retired servicemen’s identity work struggles in the military to civilian transition” by Williams et al. (2018) highlighted the numerous challenges faced by British servicemen transitioning to civilian life, including shifts in family dynamics, loss of status, financial difficulties, competition with younger generations, and a perceived indifference from civilian society toward their service. Williams et. al (2018) also noted that a particularly significant challenge is the loss of prestige, often symbolized by the return or removal of official military identifiers such as watches, equipment, and badges.

Among the issues faced by former military personnel during their transition are the various mental health issues. The mental health issues of former soldiers are very complex (Morris, 2019). In 2009, Thomas E. Church examined the experiences of former servicemen returning to postsecondary education after suffering war-related injuries. In Church’s (2009) study, U.S. ex-soldiers who served in Iraq and Afghanistan frequently experience conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), depression, substance abuse, and sensory impairments, including hearing and vision-related injuries. Additionally, former soldiers may experience separation anxiety and a lingering attachment to military culture, which can contribute to feelings of depression and inadequacy (Brignone et al., 2017). The impact of these challenges is profound. Different studies have also proved that the stressors linked to military transition can heighten the risk of former servicemen engaging in harmful behaviors, including suicide (Rogers et al., 2017), with such risks persisting even years after separation from service (Stanley et al., 2022). The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2022) reported that difficulties in transitioning contribute to an alarming rate of over 6,000 veteran suicides annually.

Another persistent challenge that military ex-soldiers encounter is the lack of job opportunities, leading to unemployment. This transition from military service to civilian employment presents numerous challenges for former soldiers, as they leave behind the structured culture of the military and adapt to the civilian workforce (Dexter, 2016). According to a study of 103,788 US veterans conducted by Seal et al. (2007), among the factors affecting employment opportunities of former servicemembers are their mental health problems. The identified mental health issues include Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), which significantly hampers their ability and limits opportunities to obtain meaningful jobs (Seal et al., 2007). For ex-soldiers who are able to secure employment, studies have shown that their mental health status has a significant negative impact in their performance and productivity at work (Adler et al., 2011). Further, Adler et al. (2011) also found that psychiatric conditions, particularly PTSD and depression, were strongly associated with impaired work performance among Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)/Operation Iraqi Freedom OIF veterans. In a similar study, Sayer et al. (2010) found that a significant number of OEF/OIF veterans experienced reintegration difficulties in areas such as work, relationships, and community functioning, even when they were already receiving medical care from the Veterans Affairs (VA). Many also expressed strong interest in treatment options that addressed practical and psychological aspects of civilian life (Sayer et al., 2010).

Other than that, a study by Minnis (2014) also identified the transferability of their Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) as a factor affecting their employment (Minnis, 2014). The absence of sufficient employment opportunities poses a significant challenge, particularly for former servicemen whose work experience is limited to military-specific roles. While certain roles, such as those in the medical field, public relations, or culinary services have direct civilian equivalents, many specialized military positions do not easily translate into the civilian workforce (Minnis, 2014).

While many studies examine the reintegration of retired or honorably separated soldiers, fewer focus on those who have been discharged or involuntarily separated. This section highlights studies that centers on this often-overlooked group and whose transition experiences tend to be more complex and less supported.

Servicemembers who are separated before completing their contracted service period often experience a sudden loss of comprehensive benefits, with little to no structured transition support. Holliday and Pedersen (2017) examined the relationship between discharge status (honorable versus non-honorable) and mental health problems and substance misuse among young adult former soldiers in the United States. Their findings showed that those with non-honorable discharges face a significantly higher risk of adverse mental health outcomes, including substance abuse disorders, which hinder successful reintegration into civilian life. The

study also reported that approximately 16% of servicemembers experience less-than-honorable (LTH) involuntary separations: 10% receive general discharges, 5% Other Than Honorable (OTH), and 1% punitive discharges, underscoring the vulnerability of this subgroup.

To supplement this, various studies indicate that these former soldiers are at a heightened risk of psychosocial difficulties, substance use disorders, and involvement in the criminal justice system compared to those who received an honorable discharge (Elbogen et al., 2018). Elbogen et al. (2018) conducted a study involving 1,172 Iraq and Afghanistan-era American former servicemen to identify psychosocial risk factors linked to OTH discharges. The study found that soldiers with OTH discharges were more likely to be younger, single, and have a family history of drug abuse and depression. They also reported higher instances of sleep disturbances, lower social support, increased drug misuse, incarceration history, and were more likely to meet diagnostic criteria for Major Depressive Disorder (Elbogen et al., 2018). These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions and healthcare policies to support this vulnerable group of former soldiers.

Similarly, according to the research conducted by Brignone et al. (2017), U.S. ex-soldiers who were discharged due to disqualification, misconduct, or disability were found to be at a much higher risk of developing serious mental health conditions, including personality disorders, bipolar and psychotic disorders, anxiety disorders, and substance use disorders. Among these groups, those discharged for misconduct exhibited particularly high rates of substance abuse and suicidal ideation, indicating a strong link between behavioral-related discharges and post-service mental health struggles. Similarly, former soldiers discharged due to disqualification were also at elevated risk for severe mental health challenges, including increased suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Those discharged due to disability, while facing a different set of challenges, were also more likely to experience anxiety and other psychiatric conditions (Brignone et al., 2017).

Following the discussion on the experiences of discharged military personnel, this section presents studies that examine their entry into the private security industry. One of the most common post-service career paths for discharged military personnel is private security. According to a study by Hawks (2014), while financial incentives remain a primary motivation for many service leavers entering security contracting, this transition also plays a significant role in their overall adaptation to civilian life. This study, based on survey data from 1,515 contractors and 32 in-depth interviews, found that security contracting influenced the military-to-civilian transition in two key ways. First, security contracting eases the shift by maintaining familiar structures, creating a transition distinct from those entering traditional civilian jobs. Second, informal social networks facilitate entry into the field, allowing former military personnel to remain in a military-adjacent environment, reinforcing their identity and reshaping their reintegration into civilian society (Hawks, 2014).

Hawks (2014) also argued in his study that security contracting remains a viable post-military employment option, offering service leavers continuity with their military experience or a pathway to re-engage with familiar operational settings. He conceptualizes security contracting as a "quasi-military environment," where institutional attitudes, values, and recognition of prior service shape former soldiers' post-military identity and transition to civilian life. However, it also suggests that working as a contractor may delay full civilian integration, as the work closely resembles military life (Hawks, 2014).

In Australia, Harris et. al, (2013) conducted a study with five (5) former members of the Australian Special Operations Forces to explore how military identity and culture influence the retirement and reintegration process. In their study, it was found that participants experienced a strong attachment to their military units, characterized by camaraderie, intensity, elitism, and distinctiveness. After leaving the regiment, they reported feelings of grief and employed psychological strategies to manage these emotions and adapt to civilian life. These strategies often involved replicating military culture in civilian settings and avoiding triggers that reminded them of their past military identity. As Harris et al. (2013) suggest, it can act as a buffer against the challenges of retirement by minimizing behavioral adjustments while preserving key aspects of organizational culture and identity. However, Harris et al. (2013) highlighted that the replication may also hinder the critical process of identity reconstruction, delaying the individual's full adaptation to civilian life.

In the Asian context, several studies have explored the transition experiences of former military servicemen as they reintegrate into civilian society. In India, studies have identified a range of psychological and somatic

health issues among transitioning Ex-Servicemen (ESM). Malhotra et al. (2016) conducted a cross-sectional study to investigate the medico-social challenges faced by ex-servicemen and their spouses in Punjab, India which identified a range of issues including combat stress, moral injuries, substance abuse, depression, sleep disorders, and post-traumatic stress. Relatedly, the study of Shidganesh & Singh, (2024) argues that the transition itself can act as both a positive (eustress) or negative (distress) stressor, significantly influencing the overall well-being of ESM. In addition, assessing changes in physical and mental health serves as a crucial measure for understanding the subjective experience of MCT in ESM (Shidganesh & Singh, 2024).

Moreover, Shidganesh and Singh (2024) also developed and validated a conceptual framework and measurement scale designed to assess how Indian Ex-Servicemen (ESM) perceive their transition to civilian life. Through quantitative analysis, the study identified key psychological and social dimensions of the transition experience, including emotional preparedness, identity reconstruction, and perceived social support.

On the other hand, many ESM retire at a stage when they still have major financial and familial responsibilities, yet they often find themselves jobless and unprepared for civilian employment (Phadatare, 2006). Phadatare (2006) conducted an empirical investigation into the resettlement experiences of ex-servicemen in Satara District, India. The study examined economic, social, and institutional challenges faced by ex-soldiers in post-service and highlighted the gaps in support systems and the role of local government and community initiatives in their reintegration in the society (Phadatare, 2006).

One of the direct consequences of these economic, social, and institutional gaps is the limited employment opportunities for ESM. Despite their years of disciplined service and specialized training, many ESM struggle to find jobs that match their skills, often encountering barriers in translating their military experience into the civilian workforce. A study by Sharma et. al (2022) revealed that the majority of ESM (77%) retire at a young age and require a second career, with employment emerging as the most critical factor in their reintegration process. The study found that higher education, job reservations, and networking played a crucial role in securing employment. However, many ESM were not adequately trained for civilian jobs, and their military-acquired skills were often not directly transferable to the civilian workforce (Sharma et al., 2022).

In the local context, studies on the transition of former military personnel into civilian life remains relatively limited. However, a few local studies have begun to explore the challenges and opportunities faced by Filipino ex-soldiers as they navigate life beyond active service and have noted signs of emotional distress, social withdrawal, and limited access to psychological support among Filipino ex-soldiers. There was a study conducted by Clariza (1999) about Filipino World War II veterans who immigrated to San Jose, California under the Immigration Act of 1990, which granted them U.S. citizenship in recognition of their service under the U.S. flag during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines. In his study, Clariza (1999) interviewed 40 Filipino veterans in San Jose and found that many Filipino veterans in San Jose face extreme poverty, with some becoming homeless, living in shelters, or residing in substandard housing with fellow veterans. Others are forced to rely on relatives or friends for accommodation. The financial hardships, coupled with the stress of acculturation, have significantly impacted their well-being, leading to emotional and mental health issues such as depression, alcoholism, low self-esteem, and feelings of social marginalization due to their dependence on welfare assistance (Clariza, 1999).

Many international studies have shown that employment is a key factor in a veteran's successful reintegration, yet research on this issue remains limited in the Philippine context. Still, a few local studies suggest that many discharged soldiers face limited job options and often settle for informal or short-term work that does not match their skills. In 2024, Lacroa and Magbojos explored the lived experiences of 15 former members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines during their transition to civilian life, revealing significant challenges in their post-service transition. One of the findings in their study was that some former AFP personnel experienced financial constraints which drove them to seek employment after their military service (Lacroa & Magbojos, 2024).

However, the reintegration of Filipino former soldiers into the civilian workforce remains a significant challenge. The same study by Lacroa and Magbojos (2024) noted that former AFP personnel experienced difficulties in securing employment, which emphasized the need for early planning for post-service careers. In

a related context, a mixed-method study conducted by Losaria and Moreno (2024) evaluated the welfare services provided by the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office (PVAO) in Zamboanga City, Philippines. While not specifically focused on former AFP personnel or Filipino former soldiers, their study highlighted crucial gaps in the support services of PVAO for former AFP members, including limited access to employment support, which further compounds the challenges of their reintegration into the civilian workforce (Losaria & Moreno, 2024).

Despite the growing body of international literature on military-to-civilian transitions, there remains a notable absence of empirical studies focusing on discharged Filipino soldiers, particularly in relation to their type of military discharge, whether honorable, general, or other than honorable, and how these classifications affect their post-service opportunities. Unlike in countries such as the United States or the United Kingdom, where discharge status is closely examined in relation to employment, mental health, and reintegration outcomes, the Philippine context lacks systematic research on how the nature of a soldier's discharge influences their civilian trajectory (Gumabao, 2023).

This gap is especially evident in the area of private security employment, where anecdotal evidence suggests that former military personnel often find work as private security agents due to their skills and discipline. However, there is a dearth of scholarly inquiry into how these transitions occur, the working conditions they face, and whether their military background—including their discharge status—either facilitates or hinders their integration into the private security industry. Existing local studies rarely focus on discharged soldiers as a distinct population and often overlook how discharge status, institutional exclusion, and employment conditions shape reintegration experiences. Moreover, there is limited empirical research examining how former AFP personnel transition into private protection work and how military identity influences their adjustment to civilian roles. This absence of data not only limits policy development but also hinders the creation of targeted support systems for former soldiers navigating civilian life.

Consequently, this study addresses an important gap by exploring the lived experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and aspirations of former Agila Troopers who transitioned into civilian protection work.

The experiences and resilience of former Agila Troopers from the 10th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army transitioning into private security practice offer valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by Filipino former military personnel in civilian employment. Their stories reflect not only the evolving landscape of the private security industry but also the personal struggles and adaptations required in this new professional environment. Understanding their lifeworld sheds light on the broader implications of post-military careers, emphasizing the need for policies and support systems that facilitate smoother transitions. As we explore their journeys, it becomes essential to recognize their contributions, address their challenges, and foster a security industry that values both professionalism and the well-being of those who once served on the battlefield.

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

This study explored the lifeworld of former Agila Troopers of the 10th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army as they journey to the private protection.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following sub-problems:

1. What are the experiences of informants in the performance of their duties?
2. How do the informants address the problems encountered in the performance of their duties?
3. What are the aspirations of the informants to provide better services?

Significance of the Study

The result of the study can benefit the following entities:

Former Agila Troopers. This study's findings can provide valuable tools and strategies for improving the well-being and resilience of discharged Army personnel from 10th Infantry Division. Furthermore, this research will provide insights to help them improve their professional development and effectively navigate challenges in post military service.

Private Security Industry. The findings of the study can be used to develop training programs tailored to the needs of discharged Army personnel, resulting in more effective professional development.

10th Infantry (AGILA) Division. The study can provide valuable feedback and understanding of the post-service experiences of discharged Agila personnel. This understanding can be used to create and/or implement new policies that will be beneficial to discharged soldiers, improving their transition and overall well-being after their service.

Philippine Army (PA). The study offers an opportunity for the Philippine Army to reflect on the broader implications of military service on personnel after separation. Further, this study can contribute to the development of policies, career counseling programs, and post-service support systems to ensure the holistic development of its soldiers beyond active duty.

Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). This study may be utilized by the AFP in reassessing the existing support mechanisms for discharged personnel in other branches of service other than the Philippine Army.

Department of National Defense (DND). This study can serve as a reference for developing national policies about providing post-service opportunities and support systems for discharged military personnel.

Supervisory Office for Security and Investigation Agencies (SOSIA). This study can aid SOSIA in reviewing and strengthening its regulatory frameworks, especially in accrediting private security agencies that employ former military personnel. Furthermore, it can also lead to the formulation of competency standards or certification programs specific to this demographic.

Firearms and Explosives Office (FEO). The study can assist the FEO in evaluating the licensing and regulation of discharged soldiers who transition into armed roles in the private sector. It can also highlight the importance of psychological screening and accountability mechanisms for those handling firearms post-service.

Client. This study can shed light on the professionalism and capabilities of discharged soldiers working in private protection, which can increase public confidence in the sector and promote a more accurate understanding of the role that former military personnel play in community safety and corporate security.

Policymakers. The study adds to the existing body of knowledge on the experiences of discharged Army personnel and provides evidence-based recommendations for policies related to their reintegration, employment, and mental health support, laying the groundwork for future research in the fields of their personal and professional development, and workplace dynamics.

The Community. The study has the potential to raise awareness about the challenges that discharged Army personnel face. It can promote a more nuanced understanding of the private security industry and the role of discharged Army personnel within it, fostering greater understanding and appreciation.

Researcher. This study helped the researcher gain a deeper understanding of post-service employment of discharged military personnel, especially as a soldier. Moreover, it strengthened the researcher's academic and personal commitment to advancing institutional support for discharged military personnel.

Future Researchers. This study can serve as a foundation for further research on the transition of discharged

Army personnel to private security service. It can provide a framework for exploring similar transitions in other military units and security sectors.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

When a group or populations with difficulties or issues have to be studied, qualitative inquiry is most suited (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Thus, this study entitled “From Battlefield to Private Security Practice: The Lifeworld of Former Agila Troopers to Private Protection Agents” was conducted using a qualitative research methodology based on Edmund Husserl Transcendental Phenomenology.

Observations and in-depth interviews with informants are critical components of transcendental phenomenological research. This approach emphasizes understanding individuals' lived experiences and how they interpret their environment (Husserl, 1999), making it the ideal methodology for this study. By examining the experiences of former Agila Troopers who have transitioned into private protection roles, this study explored their emotions, challenges, adaptations, and professional growth. The researcher maintained objectivity by setting aside personal biases to present an unbiased synthesis of the raw data. Consequently, this study employs Transcendental Phenomenology to capture the essence of their shared experiences.

Largely established by Husserl, Transcendental Phenomenology is a philosophical approach to qualitative research methodology which aims to understand the human experience (Moustakas, 1994). Pure TPh is based on the principle of removing all preconceived notions (epoche) to perceive experiences clearly, thus allowing the genuine essence of phenomena to naturally reveal itself within its own identity (Moustakas, 1994).

Given their abstraction and complexity, it can be difficult to understand and use the philosophical concepts of transcendental phenomenology—such as noema, noesis, noeses, noetic, and epoche—in a meaningful way (Moustakas, 1994). According to Blum (2012), epoche is the suspension of the natural attitude, enabling a fresh perception of things, events, and people, allowing them to be experienced anew, as if for the first time. Moustakas (1994) defined noema as “not the real object but the phenomenon, not the tree but the appearance of the tree,” referring to that which is “perceived as such” and “that which is experienced, the what of experience, the object-correlate.” Further, Moustakas (1994) defined noesis as “perfect self-evidence,” encompassing the acts of perceiving, feeling, thinking, remembering, or judging. Noesis refers to the manner in which a noema is perceived (Moustakas, 1994); it constitutes an individual's internal viewpoint that characterizes the noema (Blanchard, 2013).

In Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, also known as the descriptive approach (Neubauer et al., 2019), the researcher aimed to attain transcendental subjectivity—a condition in which the researcher's influence on the inquiry is continuously evaluated and biases and preconceptions are neutralized to prevent them from affecting the object of study (Lopez & Willis 2004). Descriptive Phenomenological Analysis clarifies the lived context of the selection by underlining the person's perspective without distortion (Giorgi, 2009).

Additionally, adopting a qualitative approach and descriptive phenomenology, such as Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology, allowed the researcher to maintain the path of the participant's interview sessions, psychological profiles, and necessary information in further aiding the collection of data that was further linked to the challenges and the triumphs of the participants' lived experiences. It allowed the researcher to uphold the “voice” of the participants in the study without recapitulating their standpoints through analysis. Instead, the participant's subjective-psychological perspective captured the interest of the researcher (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). This emphasis on the participants' voices highlights the respect and value of the researcher for their lived experiences and perspectives.

Lastly, phenomenology follows an inductive and introspective methodology (Vagle, 2014). Its primary goal is to derive meaning from individuals' narratives of their past experiences. Through this lens, phenomenology seeks to understand the significance that people attach to everyday events. In the context of this study, this approach allowed for a deeper exploration of how former Agila Troopers perceive and make sense of their

transition from military service to private security roles.

Research Environment

This study was conducted in Tagum City, Davao del Norte, and Davao City, where a significant number of discharged Army personnel from 10th Infantry Division, Philippine Army reside and work in private security. The selection process, data gathering, and interviews took place in these areas as these cities are home to several private security agencies and establishments that commonly hire former soldiers and are one of the major cities within the area of responsibility of 10th Infantry Division. This approach was also chosen for efficiency purposes, considering time and budget constraints.

Tagum, officially known as the City of Tagum, is a component city situated at the heart of Davao del Norte. Over the years, it has earned various titles such as the City of Palms, the Music Capital of the South, and the City of Festivals. As the seat of the provincial government, Tagum plays a crucial role as a commercial and agricultural hub, not only for Davao del Norte but for the entire Mindanao region. Covering a land area of 195.80 square kilometers (75.60 square miles), Tagum City makes up 5.72% of the province's total land area. According to the 2020 Census, Tagum had a population of 296,202—accounting for 26.33% of Davao del Norte's population and 5.65% of the entire Davao Region. With these numbers, its population density is estimated at 1,513 residents per square kilometer or 3,918 per square mile (PhilAtlas, n.d.).

Moreover, Davao City is a coastal, highly urbanized city located in Region XI. While it is administratively independent due to its classification as a highly urbanized city, it is often associated with the province of Davao del Sur. Serving as the regional center of the Davao Region, Davao City plays a vital role in the region's governance and economy. It spans a total land area of 2,443.61 square kilometers (943.48 square miles). Based on the 2020 Census, the city had a population of 1,776,949, comprising 33.89% of the total population of the Davao Region. This translates to a population density of approximately 727 individuals per square kilometer or 1,883 per square mile (PhilAtlas, n.d.).

Research Informants

There were ten (10) former Agila Troopers as the informants of the study who were located within Tagum City and Davao City. A minimum number of informants were interviewed in order to learn about their lived experiences. Four (4) informants were subject for Individual Discussion Interview (IDI) and another six (6) informants were subject for Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

Thus, the informants were chosen in accordance with the following pre-determined criteria: (a) informants are former soldiers from 10ID who are discharged due to Absence Without Official Leave (AWOL) and served for at least three (3) years, (b) informants are residing and/or working within the Tagum City and Davao City, and (c) informants have been employed as private security agents.

Although the study intentionally included participants with varying discharge experiences and years of military service, the findings were interpreted within the context of qualitative phenomenological inquiry, which prioritizes depth of lived experiences rather than statistical generalization. Future studies may further examine how specific discharge classifications, duration of service, rank, and type of military assignment influence post-service reintegration outcomes among former military personnel.

This study employed a non-probability sampling technique, as not all members of the population had an equal chance of being selected. Specifically, convenience sampling was used to identify participants who meet the established qualifications, with selection based on their availability and accessibility (Jala, 2011).

Research Instrument

The researcher utilized an interview guide (IG) along with informed consent as tools for the data-gathering process. To ensure that the questions effectively elicit a thorough discussion of the phenomenon, the interview guide underwent a validation process. Data collection commenced once experts have validated the interview guide.

During the data collection process, the researcher used field notes and an audio recorder to capture and preserve the information provided by the informants. Verbatim statements from both individual and focus group discussions were treated with strict confidentiality. As for the interview guide's content, it was divided into three (3) parts. Part one (1) of the IG dealt with the informants' positive and negative experiences in the performance of their duty; part two (2) dealt with how the informants address the problems encountered in the performance of their duty; and part three (3) dealt with their aspirations to provide better services.

Research Procedures

The researcher proceeded to the environment to conduct an initial survey for the pre-determination of informants after the topic has been approved. Once the informants have been identified, the researcher visited them again to request their consent to participate in the study. Before conducting interviews and observations, the researcher provided an informed consent form for the informants to review and sign. The purpose of the informed consent form was to clearly explain the study's nature and objectives to the informants before they provide their consent.

Data Collection. Before the interview began, the researcher reviewed the study's objectives with the informants to ensure they understand the purpose and structure of the interview. Additionally, the researcher informed them that their verbatim statements will remain confidential and will not be made public. Each face-to-face, in-depth interview session lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes per informant and took place at a location of their choice. Data was collected using field notes and an audio recorder.

The informants were encouraged to respond to the questions outlined in the interview guide during the interview. Follow-up questions were also asked to clarify certain responses when necessary. This process allowed them to share and elaborate on their experiences transitioning from Agila Troopers to private protection agents.

Data Analysis. The data analysis plan for this study utilized Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive phenomenological method. As asserted by Myers (2019), Colaizzi's structured seven-step approach provides a rigorous and comprehensive account of the phenomenon under investigation, ensuring that the findings are grounded in the experiences of the participants. This approach relied on informants' detailed descriptions of their transition from Agila Troopers to private protection agents.

Furthermore, Colaizzi's (1978) method was applied to analyze each interview transcript. As demonstrated by Shosha (2012), this method follows seven key steps: (1) reading and rereading verbatim transcripts to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon; (2) extracting significant statements or phrases from the informants' responses; (3) formulating meanings from these significant statements; (4) grouping the formulated meanings into clusters that will later develop into emergent themes; (5) integrating the findings into a rich and detailed description; (6) incorporating any new or relevant data obtained from participant validation; and (7) refining the analysis to ensure alignment with the lived experiences of the participants.

The analysis procedure began by transcribing the selections' narratives during the interviews (Kumar & Grace, 2023). The researcher also listened to recorded interviews for more precise transcriptions. After the initial transcription, the researcher re-read and reviewed the transcript, consulting with the selections if necessary. This first step helped the researcher gain a general sense of the statements. Following the transcription, significant statements relevant to the research questions were identified and extracted from the transcripts. The researcher then derived meanings from these extracted statements. This stage resulted in a summarized form of the significant statements. The next step involved developing themes for similar or related meanings to further condense the meanings. During this stage, the meanings were categorized based on their similarities (Kumar & Grace, 2023).

After finalizing their themes, the researcher validated the interpreted data (Kumar & Grace, 2023). The next step involved re-examining the statements, meanings, and themes and creating an exhaustive description. Developing this description required reviewing all interpretations repeatedly and cautiously. The researcher then re-examined the created description to remove any excess information that may not be necessary to

describe the fundamental structure of a statement (Kumar & Grace, 2023).

Once everything was finalized, the last step was to validate the exhaustive descriptions and other data provided (Kumar & Grace, 2023). Validation was done by a) seeking validation from the selections, b) cross-checking related studies, and c) reviewing data with peers or experts in the field. If changes were necessary, the researcher revised the data to ensure a more accurate interpretation of results.

A pre-made interview guide that subject-matter experts approved was used to conduct the interviews, which were done in person. The selections were urged to speak openly and to describe their experiences in their own words.

Ethical Considerations. To prevent ethical concerns, this study implemented various safeguards. Measures were put in place to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the informants.

Beneficence. The researcher adhered to the principle of beneficence by ensuring that the insights gained from the participants contributed to the betterment of discharged Army personnel, the 10th Infantry Division, and the Philippine Army. This study highlighted their challenges, needs, and opportunities for support which can be used as basis for policies and programs that will help improve their quality of life and reintegration into civilian society, especially within the private security sector. After the research, the researcher shared the findings with the informants, allowing them to see how their contributions had influenced the study and the subsequent interventions.

Non-maleficence. The researcher took careful measures to avoid causing any harm to its participants. Sensitive topics such as the circumstances of their discharge, mental health, and employment struggles were approached with empathy and discretion. The researcher was cautious in how information was presented, avoiding language that might misinterpret or misrepresent the participants' experiences or challenges. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the data-gathering and reporting processes, and participants were assured that their identity and personal information will not be disclosed or misused in any way.

Justice. The researcher made sure that the participants were selected based on their relevance to the study, with no discrimination based on rank or type of discharge. If the research sheds light on significant issues, the researcher will advocate for changes or improvements based on those findings, hence promoting justice and fairness in society.

Autonomy. The researcher ensured that the participants' autonomy was respected by ensuring that their involvement in the study was entirely voluntary. Prior to any data collection, informed consent was obtained after clearly explaining the study's objectives, procedures, and their rights as participants. They were made aware that they can decline to answer questions or withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences. The researcher also provided the participants with the opportunity to review how their contributions were interpreted, empowering them and affirming their autonomy in the research process.

Trustworthiness. The trustworthiness of this study was ensured by maintaining credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability. These four criteria were established before and after the interviews to gain the participants' trust. As a result, they were encouraged to participate and respond to questions honestly.

Credibility. This referred to the extent to which the study accurately captures the true meanings of the informants' experiences, also known as "truth value" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To establish credibility, the researcher ensured integrity during data collection, particularly during interviews, by refraining from making personal interpretations and instead relying solely on factual data provided by the informants. The researcher also ensured that no relevant information was omitted and that no extraneous data was included.

Transferability This is a form of external validity, referred to the extent to which the findings of this study can be applied to other contexts, theories, or future research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To address transferability, the researcher provided a detailed discussion of the theories underpinning the study, as well as a thorough description of the research setting. By ensuring that the data is well-documented, future researchers will be

able to determine whether the findings are applicable to their own contexts.

Confirmability. This referred to the extent to which the study's results can be corroborated by other sources (Ramsey, 2010). Suter (2012) further emphasizes the importance of researcher impartiality in maintaining the integrity of the findings. To uphold confirmability, the researcher actively set aside personal beliefs, assumptions, and judgments during data collection and analysis. This was achieved through the consistent use of audio-recorded interviews, note-taking, and reflective journaling throughout the research process.

Dependability. It ensured that the study's findings remain consistent over time and across different conditions (Ramsey, 2010). It is closely related to reliability, as it emphasizes the stability of the research outcomes. To establish dependability, the researcher employed Colaizzi's seven-step method of data analysis, ensuring a systematic and rigorous approach to data processing. This structured methodology contributed to the overall trustworthiness and consistency of the study's findings.

Bracketing. It served to validate the process of data collection and analysis (Ahern, 1999). The researcher momentarily set aside personal opinions, prejudices, and subjective interpretations to prevent the participant's beliefs and the study material from being obscured or warped by the researcher's own framework.

Reflexivity. Reflexivity involved scrutinizing one's own assumptions, beliefs, and judgment frameworks, and thoughtfully and critically considering their impact on the research process (Jamieson et al., 2023). The researcher examined their own judgments, habits, and belief systems during the data gathering process to uncover any personal biases that may potentially influence the research.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the sake of making this study simpler to understand, the researcher has operationalized the terminology below.

Addressing the Problems Encountered. This referred to the strategies, adjustments, and coping mechanisms employed by former Agila Troopers to overcome or mitigate the problems they faced as they transitioned into private security practice.

Aspirations of the Informants to Provide Better Services. This pertained to the personal and professional goals, ambitions, and future plans of former Agila Troopers after leaving military service and entering the private security sector.

Experiences of Informants in the Performance of their Duties. This referred to both positive and negative professional and personal encounters, challenges, and learning opportunities of former Agila Troopers as they navigated their post-military careers in private security.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presented the findings of the study after a thorough examination of the gathered qualitative data from document analysis, Individual Discussion Interviews (IDI) and Focused Group Discussions (FGD) with the informants. The findings were presented in accordance with the subproblems.

Presentation of Data

To describe the informants' experiences, all recorded statements were read and carefully reviewed several times. From these, significant statements directly related to the study's phenomenon were identified and extracted from the informants' transcripts (see Appendix F for sample significant statements).

Several procedures were undertaken prior to organizing the data into emerging themes. Meanings were formulated from the significant statements and systematically arranged to derive coherent interpretations (see Appendix G for samples of formulated meanings). These were then grouped into cluster themes, which were further classified into emergent themes (see Appendix H for samples of cluster themes with corresponding

emergent themes). Through this process, the findings yielded a comprehensive and in-depth account of the informants' personal experiences.

Emergent Themes

A total of 148 formulated core meanings were derived from the significant statements. From the 113 stated formulated core meanings, 22 cluster themes were identified, reorganized, and classified into 10 emergent themes (see Appendix J for the diagram of common themes). These emergent themes were further organized under overarching categories, namely: the informants' positive and negative experiences as private protection agents, the ways they addressed the challenges they encountered, and their aspirations to provide better services. The following presents a summary of the themes:

I. Experiences of Informants in the Performance of their Duties.

A. Positive Experiences

1. Reconstruction of Military Identity in Civilian Roles
2. Experiencing Relative Economic Satisfaction

B. Negative Experiences

1. Difficulty Adjusting to Civilian Work Structures
2. Social Marginalization and Psychosocial Strain
3. Feelings of Diminished Professional Worth and Symbolic Identity

II. Addressing the Problems Encountered in the Performance of their Duties.

1. Application of Military Coping Skills
2. Proactive Professional Development
3. Support Systems

III. Aspirations of the Informants to Provide Better Services.

1. Pursuit of Personal and Professional Growth
2. Institutional Pathways for Career Advancement

The emergent themes formed from the life stories of the informants as former Agila Troopers turned protection agents were presented and described below.

I. Experiences of Informants in the Performance of their Duties.

A. Positive Experiences of Former Agila Troopers Turned Protection Agents

From the responses of the informants, two (2) themes related to their positive experiences as former Agila Troopers turned protection agents have emerged. These were the following:

1. Reconstruction of Military Identity in Civilian Roles. This theme reflected how former Agila Troopers continue to draw upon their military training, mindset, and operational discipline as they perform protection duties in civilian settings. Rather than abandoning their soldier identity, the informants reconstruct it by

transferring core military competencies into their civilian protection roles. Through this, their prior military experiences remain central to how they define competence, responsibility, and professional worth, despite the transition from military to civilian employment. Informant 1 shared how his background as an intelligence Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) allowed him to think ahead and maintain heightened situational awareness during security operations, stating:

As intel NCO, advance ako mag-isip at marunong mag observe sa mga tao na nakapalibot sa security at iniisip ko paano maka exit kung may mangyari. May plan A exit at plan B (IDI1:SS2). As an intelligence NCO, I have an advantage because I think ahead and know how to observe the people around the security.

Informant 6 further demonstrated the reconstruction of military identity by through finding purpose in protection work, a job that retained elements of his former military role. Accordingly, in civilian protection work, the sense of being a capable soldier was no longer expressed through rank or command but through the trust and reliance placed in him by the “VIP.” In this context, the word “VIP” was a codename commonly used by protection agents to refer to their principal or employer. Informant 6 noted:

Ang pride ko karon mag gikan sa tiwala na gihatag sa ako ni VIP. Kanang kabalo ka na kampante si VIP kay naa ka, dako kaayo na nga garbo sa ako isip security niya (FGD2:SS68). My pride now comes from the trust given to me by the VIP. Knowing that the VIP feels secure because you are there gives me great pride as his security.

Similarly, Informant 9 expressed that professional fulfillment in civilian protection work is achieved when his military-derived competence is recognized through increased responsibility and proximity to the principal. Being entrusted as a close-in security and engaging with key stakeholders served as indicators that his military skills continued to hold value in a civilian context, reinforcing his reconstructed identity as a capable protection agent. Informant 9 said:

Proud na nafulfill dahil nagtitiwala ang aking VIP sa aking kakayahan at naging close-in ako at marami ako nakilala mga stakeholders (FGD5:SS123). I feel proud and fulfilled because the VIP trusts my abilities, I became a close-in security, and I was able to meet many stakeholders.

2. Experiencing Relative Economic Satisfaction from Protection Work. This theme reflected how former Agila Troopers experience a sense of relative economic satisfaction in civilian protection work, particularly when compared to the uncertainty following military discharge. While most informants acknowledged that their compensation does not necessarily equate to long-term financial stability, they nonetheless viewed protection work as a viable and sustaining source of income. Through regular salaries, allowances, and material support provided by their VIPs, the informants were able to meet daily needs and support their families, allowing them to remain economically functional despite their discharge from military service. Informant 3 shared:

Very supportive ang VIP ko sa pagkain at cash incentive at allowances (IDI3:SS35). My VIP is very supportive in terms of food, cash incentives, and allowances.

Informant 2 further illustrated this sense of relative economic satisfaction by describing how consistent allowances contributed to the practicality of protection work as a source of livelihood after his discharge. He emphasized that regular financial support, coupled with basic necessities, made the work economically manageable. He stated:

Dito sa amin, maganda kasi may monthly allowance tapos meron pa bawat lakad na may allowance din. At walang limit ang pagkain, basta ang kapalit trabaho lang na maayos (IDI2:SS24). Here at work, it is good because there is a monthly allowance, and there is also an allowance for every trip. Food is unlimited, as long as you do your work properly.

Informant 6 further framed protection work as a sustainable livelihood by expressing his intention to remain in the security sector even beyond his current engagement. Drawing from his accumulated experience in VIP

security, he viewed continued employment in the field, and possible advancement within it, as a practical and realistic career path after his discharge in military service. He stated:

For me, bilang experience ko as a VIP security for 3 years, after siguro dito mag apply parin ako as security. Maybe aiming for a higher position (FGD2:SS87). For me, based on my experience as a VIP security for three years, after this I will probably still apply as security, maybe aiming for a higher position.

B. Negative Experiences of Former Agila Troopers Turned Protection Agents

From the responses of the informants, three (3) themes related to their positive experiences as former Agila Troopers turned protection agents have emerged. These were:

1. Difficulty Adjusting to Civilian Work Structures. This theme captured the informants' struggles in adapting to civilian protection environments that lack the formal hierarchy, clearly defined roles, and structured command systems characteristic of military organizations. Former Agila Troopers noted that the absence of an established chain of command in civilian settings often led to confusion, inefficiency, and difficulty in coordinating tasks, contrasting sharply with their previous experiences in the Army where authority and responsibilities were clearly delineated. Informant 10 articulated this challenge by emphasizing the structural differences between military and civilian work systems. He remarked:

Isa sa challenge jud kaayo na wala proper chain of command ang civilian, dili parehas sa Army nga naay CO, naay S1 ug mga staff (FGD6:SS146). One major challenge is that civilians do not have a proper chain of command, unlike in the Army where there is a commanding officer, an S1, and staff.

Another informant further illustrated the difficulty of adjusting to civilian work structures by describing the abrupt transition from combat-oriented field operations to VIP protection work. Coming from a Scout Platoon, Informant 3 emphasized that the shift required not only changes in task execution but also significant interpersonal adjustment, particularly in learning how to interact and work alongside civilians. He stated:

Galing ako sa field, from Scout Platoon. Then biglang napunta sa VIP kaya medyo mahirap mag adjust kasi kailangan mo makiramdam at makisama sa mga civilian na kasama mo sa trabaho at makakasalamuha (IDI3:SS28). I came from the field, from the Scout Platoon, then suddenly transferred to VIP security, which made adjustment difficult because you need to be sensitive and get along with civilians at work.

Another informant described how role ambiguity in civilian protection work manifests through being assigned tasks that fall outside the scope of security duties. Such experiences highlight how former Agila Troopers are sometimes treated as general helpers rather than professional protection agents, leading to emotional strain and regret over their transition from military service. Informant 2 shared:

Yes, minsan pag mautusan ng kahit ano, like 'bili ka dun ng beer' o 'magtimpla ka nga ng kape' then mali natimpla tinapon sakin ng VIP ko. Doon ko marealize or magsisisi bakit ako nadischarge (IDI2:SS15). Yes, there were times when I was ordered to do anything, such as "go buy beer" or "make some coffee," and if the coffee was mixed incorrectly, it was thrown at me by my VIP. That was when I realized and regretted why I was discharged from the service.

Another informant highlighted how difficulty adjusting to civilian work structures was intensified by the absence of formal career progression mechanisms. Unlike in military service where promotion systems were institutionalized, civilian protection work offered limited opportunities for advancement, prompting some informants to consider alternative livelihoods outside the security sector. He highlighted:

Ang goal ko ay ma umpisahan ko na ang farm sa aking lupa. Hindi kasi ako nakaka-angat sa trabaho ngayon kahit okay ang sahod, wala talaga progress career kasi wala promotion e (IDI2:SS22). My goal is to finally start a farm on my land. I'm not really moving up in my job right now, even though the salary is okay, there's no real career progress because there's no promotion.

2. Social Marginalization and Psychosocial Strain. This theme reflected how former Agila Troopers experience blurred professional boundaries and diminished status in their post-discharge employment. Informants reported being assigned tasks beyond their security roles, creating role ambiguity and excessive work demands. Being required to perform manual labor despite holding a security position contributed to feelings of marginalization and loss of professional identity. These conditions, together with workplace hostility and social stigma, resulted in psychosocial strain.

Informant 6 emphasized the experience of being assigned duties that extend beyond the defined scope of security work, highlighting a clear case of role ambiguity. These additional responsibilities blurred professional boundaries and imposed an increased workload that was unrelated to protection functions, reinforcing feelings of marginalization within the workplace. Informant 6 remarked:

Minsan gumagawa din ako ng mga trabaho sa bahay ng VIP at sa farm niya, like pagmamasa ng semento, pagtrim ng mga damo, at pag haul ng mga materials kahit na security ako at hindi worker (FGD2:SS96). Sometimes I also do tasks at the VIP's house and farm, such as mixing cement, trimming grass, and hauling materials, even though I am security and not a worker.

Another informant highlighted the experience of role ambiguity in civilian protection work, particularly when tasks assigned extend beyond the defined scope of security responsibilities. The lack of clear role boundaries contributed to confusion regarding professional identity and expectations, which blurred the distinction between being a protection agent and a general helper. Informant 4 shared:

Minsan pag nautusan na hindi mo naman trabaho o hindi naman part ng trabaho mo as security. Hindi clear role mo kung security ba o helper (IDI4:42). Sometimes I am ordered to do tasks that are not part of my job, making it unclear whether my role is security or helper.

Another informant described experiencing social stigma linked to his discharge from military service, particularly through misinformation and negative labeling within the workplace. He explained that former soldiers were sometimes subjected to unfounded accusations that question their competence and courage, which were then relayed to their superiors. Such narratives reinforced stigma and undermine their professional credibility despite their military background. Informant 1 shared:

Minsan sinisiraan kami sa aming boss. Ginagawan kami ng kwento na walang katotohanan. Accordingly, sa engagement naglayo daw ako o kami mga dating army kasi takot sa bomba.” (IDI1:SS6). Sometimes we are spoken ill of to our boss. Stories are made about us that are not true. Allegedly, during engagements, we former soldiers stayed away because we were afraid of bombs.

3. Feelings of Diminished Professional Worth and Symbolic Identity. This theme reflected how former Agila Troopers experienced a decline in professional worth and symbolic authority after transitioning from military service to civilian protection work. In the absence of military rank, uniform, and institutional respect, informants reported encounters that made them feel devalued and stripped of the professional dignity once associated with their role as soldiers. These experiences underscored how civilian work environments can erode the symbolic markers of authority and respect that previously defined their professional identity.

One informant described how being assigned menial tasks and subjected to humiliating treatment reinforced feelings of being undervalued in his current role as a protection agent: Informant 2 stated:

Minsan pag mautusan ng kahit ano, like “bili ka dun ng beer” o “magtimpla ka nga ng kape” then mali natimpla tinapon sakin ng VIP ko. Doon ko marealize or magsisisi bakit ako nadischarge (IDI2:SS15). Yes, there were times when I was ordered to do anything, such as “go buy beer” or “make some coffee,” and if the coffee was mixed incorrectly, it was thrown at me by my VIP. That was when I realized and regretted why I was discharged from the service.

Another informant emphasized that the loss of symbolic authority was manifested through changes in how

former soldiers were addressed and recognized in civilian work settings. The absence of honorific titles and formal modes of address contributed to a diminished sense of professional status: Informant 1 shared:

Dati sa service iaddress ka with respect tawagin kang Master or Sgt, pero dito tatawagin ka lang sa pangalan (IDI1:SS5). Before in the service, you were addressed with respect and called Master or Sergeant, but here you are just called by your name.

Similarly, Informant 3 highlighted how the removal of rank and command authority in civilian protection work imposed a fundamental shift in interpersonal relations. The inability to issue commands, which was once central to his military role, further reinforced the perceived loss of status and authority. He remarked:

Yung biggest adjustment ko paano makikisama sa mga kasama ko na civilian, kasi hindi katulad sa kampo dati na pwede ko utusan ang mga juniors ko. “O magluto ka,” “O duty ka muna.” As a Squad Leader pwede kaagad ako mag utos o magbigay ng command. Dito ngayon kailangan sila kaibiganin bago pakisuyuan. Sa civilian kasi wala na ranggo (IDI3:SS30). My biggest adjustment is learning how to get along with civilian colleagues... now you have to befriend them before making requests because in civilian work there is no rank.

Another informant reflected on the broader symbolic loss associated with leaving military service, particularly the diminished sense of pride tied to wearing the uniform and serving a collective mission. In civilian protection work, professional motivation became more practical than symbolic. Informant 6 noted:

Iba pa rin ang pakiramdam noong sundalo ka, mas nakakaproud yun. Dito, mas practical na lang ang dahilan, isang tao nalang pinoprotektahan mo. Wala na tong feeling na proud kayka sa imo uniporme ba. Kabalo ko mga kauban nako mao sad ni nafeel, lahi rajud tong sundalo ka (FGD2:SS81). It still feels different when you were a soldier; that was more something to be proud of. Here, the reason is more practical, you are protecting only one person. The feeling of pride in wearing the uniform is no longer there. I know my colleagues feel the same; being a soldier was really different.

II. Addressing the Challenges Encountered

From the responses of the informants, three (3) themes related to how they address the challenges they have encountered have emerged. These were the following:

1. Application of Military Coping Skills. This theme captured how former Agila Troopers drew upon internalized military values and coping mechanisms to manage the challenges they encountered in civilian protection work. Rather than relying solely on external support or formal structures, informants emphasized self-regulation, discipline, and adaptability—skills deeply rooted in their military training—as primary means of overcoming work-related difficulties. By reframing challenges through a soldier’s mindset, they sustained resilience while navigating the demands of civilian environments.

One informant shared that he addressed workplace challenges by consciously recalling his identity as a former soldier and applying the discipline and adaptability learned during military service, while also making deliberate efforts to maintain harmonious relations with civilian colleagues. Informant 4 shared:

I handle all the challenges sa pamamagitan ng pag iisip ko na ako ay dating sundalo dapat kaya ko ang aking trabaho at lalo na makikisama sa kapwa ko escort na purely civilian (IDI4:SS45). I handle challenges by reminding myself that I am a former soldier and by getting along with my purely civilian co-escorts.

Another informant emphasized that addressing challenges in civilian protection work required a conscious adjustment of interpersonal behavior, particularly when working alongside civilian colleagues. Unlike in the military where authority was exercised through rank and command, civilian settings demand relational approaches rooted in patience, respect, and adaptability. This behavioral adjustment reflected the Informant 3’s application of learned discipline in a different social context.

Yung biggest adjustment ko paano makikisama sa mga kasama ko na civilian, kasi hindi katulad sa kampo dati na pwede ko utusan ang mga juniors ko... Dito ngayon kailangan sila kaibiganin bago pakisuyuan. Sa civilian

kasi wala na ranggo (IDI3:SS30). My biggest adjustment is learning how to get along with civilian colleagues, now you have to befriend them before making requests because in civilian work there is no rank.

Another informant highlighted how physical endurance and mental conditioning acquired during military service enabled him to cope with the demanding and often unpredictable nature of civilian protection work. His familiarity with fatigue, sleep deprivation, and sudden operational movements allowed him to remain functional, reflecting how discipline acquired during service remained a key coping mechanism in challenging situations. Informant 6 noted:

Sanay nako sa pagod, sa puyat, ug sa biglaang mga lakaw o movement... you make do with what you know para dili ka mahimong liability sa team (FGD2:SS69). I am already used to fatigue, lack of sleep, and sudden movements or travel. That is why even here in civilian work, it is not new to me. Even if there is sometimes no clear briefing about the VIP's engagement, you make do with what you know so that you do not become a liability to the team.

2. Proactive Professional Development. This theme reflected how former Agila Troopers actively pursue skill enhancement to improve their effectiveness and credibility as civilian protection agents. In the absence of formal training structures comparable to those in military service, informants emphasized personal initiative in acquiring new competencies to meet the technical and operational demands of protection work. Their proactive efforts demonstrated a commitment to continuous learning as a means of strengthening role competence and maintaining professional standards.

Informant 2 shared that recognizing his lack of formal VIP security training motivated him to seek assistance from fellow former soldiers, which allowed him to develop the skills necessary to perform his duties more effectively.

Nagsikap talaga ako na matuto ng ibang skills pa kasi hindi ako naka VIP security course dati, so nagpatulong ako sa mga sundalo din dati na naka VIP course para matuto ako (IDI2:SS20). I really made an effort to learn additional skills because I had not undergone the VIP security course before, so I sought help from fellow former soldiers who had taken the VIP course in order to learn.

Additionally, another informant emphasized that proactive professional development also involved deliberate efforts to improve efficiency and confidence in performing assigned tasks. Informant 1 stated that by taking initiative, seeking clarification, and thoroughly preparing before execution, the informant strengthened his role competence and ensured effective work performance.

Kapag may mahirap na trabaho sa akin, inaaral ko talaga muna. Gawin lahat, initiative at magtanong para mas maging effective sa role. Tinututukan ko talaga para mas confident ko gawin (IDI1:SS7). When I'm given a difficult task, I really make an effort to study it first. I take initiative and ask questions so I can be more effective in the role. I really focus on it so I can perform with more confidence.

3. Support Systems. This theme highlighted the role of interpersonal and organizational support in helping former Agila Troopers manage the challenges of civilian protection work. In the absence of formal military support structures, informants relied on trusted networks—particularly colleagues, former comrades, and personal contacts—to seek guidance, share experiences, and enhance their capacity to perform effectively. These support systems served as important coping resources that supplemented individual resilience and professional initiative.

One informant shared that he consistently sought assistance from co-workers and former colleagues, particularly when faced with unfamiliar tasks, as a way of strengthening his performance and reducing uncertainty. Informant 4 stated that:

Sa aking mga kasama sa work, nagtatanong ako palagi kung di ko alam lalo na pag may ipagawa na di ko pa naranasan. At minsan nanghihingi din ako ng mga idea sa dati ko mga kasama na ngayon ay nasa

security/escort din ng mga politician (IDI4:47). I always ask my co-workers when I do not know something and seek ideas from former colleagues now working as escorts.

Further, Informant 9 emphasized that, beyond peer support, assistance was also sought from organizational leaders and employers when challenges arose. Approaching the principal or management for guidance provided direction and reassurance, particularly in situations that required decision-making beyond the informant's immediate control. He remarked:

Minsan inaapproach ko ang VIP or yung management. Nagahatag pud sila ug advice unsa pwede buhaton para maresolve ako problema (FGD5:SS128). Sometimes I approach the VIP or the management. They also give advice on what can be done to resolve my problem.

III. Aspirations of the Informants to Provide Better Services

From the responses of the informants, two (2) themes related to the aspirations of the informants to provide better services have emerged. These themes reflected how former Agila Troopers envisioned personal and professional growth beyond their current roles as protection agents.

1. Pursuit of Personal and Professional Growth. This theme captured the informants' aspirations to continuously develop their skills and competencies as a means of improving performance, maintaining relevance, and ensuring long-term professional growth in the field of civilian protection. Former Agila Troopers emphasized the importance of sustained learning through specialized trainings and refresher seminars, viewing continuous skills improvement as essential in preserving operational readiness and professional confidence.

Informant 10 underscored the need for regular refresher training, particularly in technical and security-related competencies, to prevent skill deterioration over time:

Dapat naa refresher training, labi na sa pistol ug VIP Course. Miskan pag nakaagi nako VIP training, dapat regular gihapon na refresher para bisan dugay nasa trabaho, dili mawala ang knowledge (FGD6:SS147). There should be refresher training, especially in pistol handling and the VIP Course. Even if I have already undergone VIP training, there should still be regular refreshers so that knowledge does not fade even after a long time on the job.

Additionally, Informant 8 expressed that his personal and professional growth was tied to continuous self-improvement in work performance. He emphasized the desire to become more efficient and responsive in his duties. He remarked:

Ganoon din sakin. Bukod sa financial stability given na yun, gusto ko sa sarili ko mas maging snappy pa na escort kay VIP malay mo mapromote (FGD4:SS118). It's the same for me. Aside from financial stability, which is already a given, I want to become a more alert and effective escort for the VIP—who knows, I might get promoted.

Informant 7 emphasized the importance of making specialized trainings accessible not only to former military personnel but also to civilian members of protection teams. He highlighted that additional training in driving and combat driving were necessary to enhance overall team effectiveness, particularly since some civilian colleagues have not undergone formal VIP security training. Ensuring the availability of such trainings for civilians was viewed as essential in addressing skill disparities and strengthening operational readiness within mixed military–civilian protection groups. He shared:

As driver and escort, kailangan ko ng dagdagag kaalaman sa pagddrive at combat driving. Sa mga kasamahan naman na civilian na walang VIP Course (FGD3:SS93). As a driver and escort, I need additional knowledge in driving and combat driving, especially since some civilian colleagues have not undergone a VIP Course.

2. Institutional Pathways for Career Advancement. This theme reflected the informants' aspirations for more structured and institutionalized career development mechanisms within civilian protection work. Drawing from

their experiences in military service, former Agila Troopers expressed the need for formal systems of recognition, promotion, and comprehensive benefits that acknowledge performance, experience, and length of service. The absence of such institutional pathways in civilian settings was viewed as a limitation to long-term professional growth and motivation.

Informant 6 emphasized the absence of formal recognition and promotion mechanisms in civilian protection work, contrasting it with the structured reward system experienced during military service.

Sa sundalo pa, pag apil lang gani ka sa isa ka activity na dako, apil dayon ka sa awards. Magamit pajud nimo to nga awards sa promotion. Diri sa trabaho ko karon, wala ingana nga recognition jud, unta maconsider nila (FGD2:SS74). When I was still a soldier, just participating in a major activity would already include you in awards. You could even use those awards for promotion. Here in my current job, there is no such recognition. I hope they consider it.

Further, Informant 2 emphasized the need for comprehensive employment benefits that extend beyond immediate compensation and address long-term career and retirement preparedness. Drawing from his knowledge of military retirement programs, he expressed the desire for similar institutional support mechanisms to be made available to civilian protection agents.

Ang alam ko sa Army pag retire mo may mga TESDA, sana kami din mga escort ni VIP may ganun. Para lang din prepared sa retirement (IDI2:SS11). As far as I know, in the Army, when you retire there are TESDA programs. I hope that we VIP escorts could also have something like that, so we can be prepared for retirement.

Lastly, Informant 5 emphasized the need for expanded employment benefits for discharged escorts, particularly those that address health and welfare concerns. He contrasted the comprehensive benefit systems available in the Army—such as combat pay and health insurance—with the more limited provisions in civilian protection work, underscoring the desire for similar institutional support.

Siguro more benefits sa aming mga escort na discharged. Sa Army may mga combat pay kami, may HMO (FGD1:SS66). Maybe more benefits for us escorts who were discharged. In the Army, we had combat pay and HMO.

Analysis of Data

The emergent themes in this study were identified through the application of Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive phenomenological method, a systematic and rigorous approach to qualitative data analysis that sought to capture the essence of lived experiences. This method was employed to closely examine each interview and focus group discussion transcript drawn from the narratives of former Agila Troopers turned civilian protection agents, providing a structured framework for interpreting their transition from military to civilian protection work.

Through a careful and iterative process of reading and re-reading the verbatim transcripts, extracting significant statements, formulating meanings, clustering related meanings, and synthesizing these into emergent themes, the analysis progressed toward a deeper understanding of the informants' lived experiences. This analytic procedure enabled the researcher to identify recurring patterns, shared challenges, positive experiences, coping mechanisms, and aspirations that characterized the lifeworld of former soldiers as they navigated civilian protection roles.

By applying Colaizzi's method, the analysis remained grounded in the participants' own words while allowing for the systematic abstraction of meanings across individual accounts. This approach ensured that the resulting themes authentically reflected the informants' perspectives and provided rich, nuanced insights into how they reconstruct identity, confront structural and symbolic challenges, and envision personal and professional growth after military service.

I. Experiences of Informants in the Performance of their Duties.

A. Positive Experiences

1. **Reconstruction of Military Identity in Civilian Roles.** The theme “Reconstruction of Military Identity in Civilian Roles” reflected how former Agila Troopers reconstructed their military identity within civilian protection work by carrying forward core military values, skills, and orientations into their new occupational roles. Rather than experiencing a complete rupture from their identity as soldiers, they demonstrated continuity by redefining professional competence and worth outside the formal military institution. Military-derived attributes such as discipline, vigilance, anticipatory thinking, and responsibility remained central to how they approached their duties and assessed their effectiveness, indicating that their soldier identity persisted despite the absence of rank, uniform, and formal command structures. Through this reconstruction, protection work became a meaningful extension of their military self, which allowed them to retain a sense of purpose and professional legitimacy in civilian settings. This process reflected the assumptions of role continuity and identity reconstruction, wherein individuals reinterpret prior roles to remain functional in new social contexts.

This was supported by Hawks (2014) who stated that former soldiers often seek civilian occupations that allow them to retain and apply military-acquired skills, particularly in security-related roles. Such continuity enabled veterans to preserve identity coherence by transferring familiar norms of discipline, alertness, and preparedness into civilian employment. This process reduced identity disruption by allowing military identity to be reconstructed through performance rather than institutional affiliation. From the perspective of Role Theory, as articulated by Biddle (1986), individuals tend to maintain salient role identities by continuing to enact behaviors associated with prior roles, even after transitioning to new social contexts. In this sense, former Agila Troopers reconstruct their military identity by performing soldier-like functions within civilian protection work.

In addition, Pedlar, Thompson, and Castro (2019) emphasized that former soldiers actively redefine their sense of purpose as a key adaptive strategy in transitioning to civilian life. Rather than relying on military rank or institutional roles, veterans reconstruct meaning by identifying new ways their skills and values remain relevant in civilian occupations. In the context of protection work, embedding military-derived competencies such as vigilance, discipline, and responsibility allowed former soldiers to sustain a renewed sense of purpose and professional worth.

Consistent with this, in Harris, Gringart, and Drake’s (2013) study, it was observed that former soldiers often cope with the challenges of civilian employment by replicating elements of military culture in civilian settings. This intentional recreation of familiar military practices enabled former soldiers to maintain identity continuity and psychological stability, thereby reinforcing the reconstruction of military identity in civilian protection roles.

From the perspective of Role Theory (Biddle, 1986), individuals tend to preserve salient role identities by continuing to enact behaviors associated with prior roles even after transitioning to new social contexts. In this sense, former Agila Troopers reconstructed their military identity by performing soldier-like functions within civilian protection work. This process also aligned with Schlossberg’s Transition Theory (Schlossberg, 1981), which explained that individuals adapt to major life transitions by redefining roles and sources of meaning. By embedding military-derived competencies such as vigilance, discipline, and responsibility into their civilian roles, former Agila Troopers sustained a renewed sense of purpose and professional worth.

2. **Experiencing Relative Economic Satisfaction from Protection Work.** This theme reflected how former Agila Troopers experienced a sense of relative economic satisfaction in civilian protection work, particularly when compared to the uncertainty they faced after leaving military service. While informants acknowledged that protection work does not always provide long-term security or structured career progression, they nonetheless viewed it as a stable and viable source of income that supported their immediate financial needs. Regular salaries, allowances, and material provisions contribute to a perception of economic adequacy, which enabled them to meet family responsibilities and sustain daily living. In this context, economic satisfaction was not

framed as wealth accumulation but as financial sufficiency that allowed them to function and remain productive in civilian life.

According to Berndtsson (2012), the private security industry has emerged as a common post-service career path for former military personnel largely because of its accessibility and minimal requirement for additional formal training. This ease of entry allowed former soldiers to secure employment soon after discharge, thereby limiting prolonged periods of unemployment and financial instability. The ability to quickly convert military experience into civilian income supported a smoother economic transition and reinforced perceptions of work continuity after military service. Moreover, Schooner and Swan (2010) observed that compensation in the private security sector is often higher than that of other civilian occupations typically available to veterans, particularly those requiring comparable skill levels. This relative wage advantage contributed to a sense of economic adequacy, making protection work not only a practical option but also a financially reassuring source of livelihood during the early stages of post-military adjustment.

Further, a study by Hawks (2014) noted that financial incentives remain a primary motivation for many service leavers entering security contracting. This transition also played a significant role in their overall adaptation to civilian life.

This finding may be further understood through Schlossberg's (1981) Transition Theory, particularly the "situation" and "support" dimensions of the 4S Model. The availability of stable income and financial resources through protection work eased the participants' adjustment to civilian life by reducing economic uncertainty following military separation. In this sense, protection work functioned not only as employment but also as a stabilizing mechanism that facilitated their transition by restoring a sense of security, responsibility, and continuity after leaving military service.

B. Negative Experiences

1. **Difficulty Adjusting to Civilian Work Structures.** This theme reflected the challenges former Agila Troopers encountered in adapting to civilian work environments that lack the formal organization, hierarchy, and predictability of military institutions. After years of operating within clearly defined chains of command, standardized procedures, and structured tasking, informants experienced difficulty adjusting to civilian protection work where roles were often ambiguous and authority was diffused. The absence of clear leadership, inconsistent instructions, and overlapping responsibilities contributed to confusion, frustration, and reduced operational clarity. These structural differences required former soldiers to recalibrate not only how they performed their duties but also how they related to supervisors and co-workers in civilian settings.

This difficulty was further explained by Grimell (2024), who noted that the continued salience of military identity often heightened veterans' sensitivity to differences in civilian work environments. As former soldiers carry forward deeply internalized standards of discipline, responsibility, and accountability, they perceived civilian work structures as lacking rigor or commitment. Grimmell (2024) argued that this contrast amplified moral frustration and can even generate conflict, particularly when veterans encounter unclear roles, inconsistent authority, or perceived lapses in work ethic. In civilian protection work, such contrasts intensified adjustment challenges as former Agila Troopers navigated systems that diverged sharply from military organizational norms.

In addition, Theisen (2023) highlighted that former military personnel often faced stigma and significant challenges when reintegrating into civilian life, particularly in relation to employment stability. Such difficulties were not limited to securing work but also involved adjusting to civilian organizational norms and expectations that differ markedly from military structures. These reintegration challenges can compound feelings of uncertainty and marginalization, especially when former soldiers encounter civilian work environments that lack clear systems of authority and role definition. In the context of civilian protection work, this stigma and structural misalignment further complicated adjustment and reinforced negative transition experiences.

This finding may be interpreted through Biddle's (1986) Role Theory, which posits that individuals internalize behavioral expectations associated with their previous social roles. Having long operated within rigid military hierarchies characterized by clear authority, discipline, and standardized procedures, former Agila Troopers experienced role conflict and adjustment difficulties when confronted with the more flexible and less structured nature of civilian work environments. Likewise, Schlossberg's (1981) Transition Theory suggests that the disruption of familiar routines, relationships, and organizational systems during the transition process intensified feelings of uncertainty and challenged their adaptation to civilian employment.

2. Social Marginalization and Psychosocial Strain. This theme captured how former Agila Troopers experienced social marginalization and psychosocial strain as they navigated civilian protection work, particularly in contexts marked by role ambiguity, work overload beyond security functions, workplace hostility, and stigma associated with discharge status. Informants described being assigned tasks unrelated to their security role, subjected to disrespectful treatment, and perceived differently because of their discharge from military service. These experiences collectively contributed to emotional strain, diminished morale, and a weakened sense of belonging in civilian work environments. Rather than feeling integrated, former soldiers often felt socially distanced and psychologically burdened by the mismatch between their expectations and civilian realities.

According to Ahern et al. (2015) and Brunger et al. (2013), many ex-service members experienced profound feelings of alienation during reintegration and often struggled to socialize or communicate with civilians, even their close friends and family members. Brunger et al. (2013) noted that the military environment cultivated a distinct set of values, behaviors, and communication styles that can create barriers when transitioning to civilian life. These differences frequently resulted in misunderstandings, social withdrawal, and emotional strain, particularly when former soldiers feel that civilians were unable to relate to their experiences. Moreover, the absence of adequate institutional support may leave ex-service members feeling helpless, unappreciated, and disappointed, intensifying psychosocial strain during post-military adjustment.

Moreover, according to Reid and Sims (2024), individuals who leave the military under suboptimal conditions—such as receiving a discharge other than honorable—faced compounded difficulties during civilian reintegration. Beyond the general challenges of transition, these individuals often experienced social stigma and reduced access to formal support systems, which further marginalized them within civilian environments. Such stigma can manifest in mistrust, discrimination, or diminished professional credibility, intensifying feelings of exclusion and psychological strain. In the context of civilian protection work, this added burden exacerbated experiences of marginalization, particularly when former soldiers perceive that their discharge status shaped how they were treated by employers and colleagues.

This finding may be understood through Schlossberg's (1981) Transition Theory, particularly the "support" dimension of the 4S Model, which emphasizes the importance of social acceptance, institutional assistance, and interpersonal relationships during periods of transition. The absence of supportive civilian environments, coupled with stigma associated with discharge status, weakened the participants' ability to adjust effectively and intensified their feelings of isolation and uncertainty. On the other hand, from the perspective of Biddle's (1986) Role Theory, these experiences also reflected the difficulty of renegotiating identity and social position after military service, as former Agila Troopers struggled to reconcile their previous military roles with the reduced recognition, ambiguous expectations, and diminished status they encountered in civilian work settings.

3. Feelings of Diminished Professional Worth and Symbolic Identity. This theme reflected the feelings of diminished professional worth and loss of symbolic identity experienced by former Agila Troopers after transitioning into civilian protection work. Informants described how the absence of military rank, uniform, and institutional authority altered how they were perceived and treated in civilian settings. Tasks unrelated to security functions, diminished respect, and the erosion of command authority contributed to a sense that their professional value had been reduced. These experiences marked a stark contrast to their former roles as soldiers, where status, hierarchy, and symbolic recognition were integral to their identity and sense of worth.

This theme resonated with earlier discussions on the challenges of post-military transition, particularly the sense of loss experienced by former soldiers. As noted by Brunger et al. (2013), the transition from military to

civilian life was often accompanied by a profound loss of self-identity and distinctiveness, which can be deeply unsettling. This sense of loss was further intensified by the erosion of professional status previously tied to military service (Singh, 1985). In the context of civilian protection work, where institutional recognition and formal authority were largely absent, former Agila Troopers found that their military experience no longer carried the same symbolic weight. Consequently, the diminished visibility of their prior roles and achievements contributed to feelings of being undervalued and reinforced perceptions of reduced professional worth in civilian settings.

This was further supported by Williams et al. (2018), who observed that a particularly significant challenge in the transition from military to civilian life was the loss of professional status and prestige, which was also symbolized by removal of official military identifiers such as uniforms, badges, and equipment. When former soldiers enter civilian environments, the authority, respect, and social recognition that once accompanied their role are often no longer afforded to them. This shift can be particularly disorienting, as professional worth is no longer automatically acknowledged despite prior responsibility and service. For former Agila Troopers, this loss of prestige manifested in civilian work environment where their expertise may be functionally relied upon but symbolically undervalued, reinforcing perceptions of diminished professional standing.

This finding may be best understood through Biddle's (1986) Role Theory, which explains that individuals derive identity, meaning, and social value from the roles they occupy within institutional structures. The loss of military rank, uniform, and formal authority disrupted the participants' established role identity, resulting in role displacement and a diminished sense of professional worth as they entered civilian environments where their previous status was no longer symbolically recognized. Likewise, Schlossberg's (1981) Transition Theory suggests that the transition out of military service involved not only occupational change but also the disruption of deeply internalized assumptions about self, recognition, and social standing, making adaptation emotionally and psychologically challenging for former Agila Troopers.

II. Addressing the Challenges Encountered

1. Application of Military Coping Skills. This theme reflected how former Agila Troopers actively draw upon military-derived coping skills to manage the challenges they encountered in civilian protection work. Faced with role ambiguity, interpersonal tensions with civilian colleagues, and sustained physical and emotional demands, informants relied on ingrained military traits such as discipline, adaptability, endurance, and emotional regulation. Rather than perceiving these challenges as insurmountable, they approached them through problem-focused coping, behavioral adjustment, and sustained functional performance. These strategies enabled them to remain effective in civilian environments that often lacked the structure and predictability of military service.

This process of coping and adjustment can be understood through Schlossberg's Transition Theory, particularly the stages of transition described by Schlossberg, Anderson, and Goodman (2011). As former Agila Troopers moved out of military service and enter civilian protection work, they underwent a period of adjustment marked by uncertainty and the loss of familiar structures. During the moving through stage, individuals actively attempt to adapt by integrating prior skills and behaviors into their new environment while managing the demands of civilian life. In this study, the application of military-derived traits such as discipline, emotional regulation, and endurance reflects this adaptive phase, wherein former soldiers drew on established coping mechanisms to navigate stress, interpersonal challenges, and operational uncertainty in civilian protection work.

This adaptive process was further explained by Evans et al. (1998), who emphasized that context and impact are crucial in shaping an individual's transition experience. Context refers to one's relationship to the transition and the environment in which it occurs, while impact concerns the extent to which the transition disrupts daily life. For former Agila Troopers, employment in civilian protection work provided a familiar operational context that closely resembles aspects of military service, thereby moderating the disruptive impact of transition. As a result, they were able to draw upon military-derived coping skills—such as discipline, endurance, and situational awareness—to navigate challenges, adjust behaviors around civilian colleagues, and sustain performance under pressure.

2. **Proactive Professional Development.** This theme highlighted how former Agila Troopers actively engaged in professional development as a deliberate strategy to cope with the demands of civilian protection work. Faced with operational expectations, mixed teams of civilian and military backgrounds, and evolving security requirements, informants emphasized the importance of continuously upgrading their skills and competencies. Rather than relying solely on prior military training, they sought additional knowledge and practical skills to remain effective and credible in their roles. This proactive orientation reflected an effort to maintain professional relevance, confidence, and operational readiness in a civilian environment that often lacks formalized training pathways.

This pattern can be understood through Schlossberg's (1981) Transition Theory, particularly the 4S Model (Schlossberg, 1995). This model explained how individuals navigated transitions through the interaction of situation, self, support, and strategies (Musamali, 2018). The strategies component was particularly salient in explaining this theme. Strategies refer to the specific actions individuals take to cope with and adapt to transitions (Musamali, 2018). In this study, proactive professional development—such as seeking refresher trainings, acquiring new operational skills, and enhancing role-specific competencies—served as a primary coping strategy. These actions enabled former soldiers to bridge gaps between military training and civilian demands, ensuring continued effectiveness despite limited institutional support.

This was further supported by Garmezy's (1991) Resilience Theory, which emphasized the role of individual initiative and adaptive responses in managing stress and adversity (Garmezy, 1991). Within Garmezy's ecological framework, proactive skill acquisition can be viewed as an individual protective factor that compensated for external stressors associated with transition. Through the compensatory model, professional development counterbalanced the loss of structured military training. In this context, former Agila Troopers' pursuit of continuous learning enhanced resilience by strengthening their capacity to cope with occupational stress and sustain effective performance in civilian protection roles.

3. **Support Systems.** This theme highlighted the importance of interpersonal and organizational support in helping former Agila Troopers manage the challenges of transitioning into civilian protection work. Informants emphasized the value of confiding in trusted colleagues, family members, and friends, as well as seeking guidance from supervisors, management, or their employers when faced with work-related or personal difficulties. These support systems provided emotional reassurance, practical advice, and a sense of belonging, which collectively eased the psychological strain associated with role changes, operational stress, and uncertainty in civilian employment. In the absence of formal military structures, such networks became critical resources for sustaining morale and resilience.

This pattern can be explained through Schlossberg's Transition Theory, particularly the Support component of the 4S Model (Schlossberg, 1995). According to Musamali (2018), support refers to the availability and quality of external resources such as family, peers, institutions, and organizations that assist individuals in coping with transitions.

Additionally, this was also supported by Garmezy's (1991) Resilience Theory, which underscored the critical role of external support systems in buffering individuals against stress and adversity (Garmezy, 1991). External supports, including mentors, organizational leaders, and trusted peers, function as protective factors that counterbalance the psychological and occupational stressors associated with civilian reintegration. Through the protective model, these support systems mitigated vulnerability by providing guidance, reassurance, and problem-solving assistance. In the context of civilian protection work, access to supportive networks strengthened resilience by enabling former Agila Troopers to manage stress more effectively, maintain emotional well-being, and sustain functional performance during their post-military transition.

III. Aspirations of the Informants to Provide Better Services.

1. **Pursuit of Personal and Professional Growth.** This theme captured the aspirations of former Agila Troopers to achieve sustained personal and professional growth within or beyond civilian protection work. Rather than focusing on immediate coping or survival strategies, informants articulated forward-looking goals centered on gaining access to specialized trainings, seminars, and opportunities for continuous skills improvement. These

aspirations reflected a desire to enhance competence, credibility, and long-term employability, particularly in a work environment that often lacks structured development pathways. For the informants, personal and professional growth signified more than skill acquisition; it represented progress, self-improvement, and the possibility of advancement, recognition, or transition into more stable and fulfilling roles. Through these aspirations, former Agila Troopers envisioned a future where their capabilities are strengthened, their careers are not stagnant, and their efforts lead to tangible personal and professional development.

This aspiration was consistent with broader discussions on workforce transformation and lifelong learning. Moats (2021) emphasized that the job landscape is continuously evolving due to technological advancements and changing industry demands, requiring workers to adapt through reskilling and upskilling. For veterans, access to opportunities that enhance existing skills or develop new ones is essential for maintaining employability and advancing in civilian careers. In this context, former Agila Troopers' desire for specialized trainings and seminars reflected an understanding that continuous skills improvement is necessary to keep pace with changing security demands and professional expectations.

Moreover, Hall et al. (2014) and Kintzle et al. (2015) highlighted that career development initiatives tailored for veterans not only strengthened employability but also contributed to long-term career success and retention in civilian organizations. Aspirations for professional growth among former Agila Troopers align with these findings, as they envisioned structured trainings and development as pathways toward stability, advancement, and recognition. Through reskilling and upskilling, they sought not merely to remain employed but to build meaningful and sustainable careers beyond their military service, underscoring the importance of institutional support for veteran-focused professional development initiatives.

This finding may be interpreted through Garmezy's (1991) Resilience Theory, which views adaptation as a dynamic process strengthened by protective factors such as motivation, self-improvement, and access to supportive opportunities. The informants' aspirations for continuous training and professional development reflected their active efforts to enhance competence and maintain adaptive functioning despite the uncertainties and limitations of post-military civilian life. Similarly, Schlossberg's (1981) Transition Theory suggests that these aspirations served as coping strategies that enabled former Agila Troopers to regain direction, rebuild confidence, and establish a stronger sense of stability and purpose during their ongoing transition to civilian careers.

2. Institutional Pathways for Career Advancement. This theme reflected the aspirations of former Agila Troopers for the establishment of clear institutional pathways that support career advancement in civilian protection work. Informants expressed hopes for formal systems of promotion, recognition, and benefits that would allow them to progress professionally rather than remain in stagnant roles. These aspirations go beyond immediate job satisfaction and point to a desire for long-term security, upward mobility, and acknowledgment of competence and experience. For the informants, institutionalized pathways symbolize fairness, sustainability, and the possibility of building a future-oriented career after military service.

Mael et al. (2022) reinforced that civilian hierarchies are often not as orderly or dependable as military promotion systems. Veterans are frequently required to begin at entry-level positions and gradually acquire the skills necessary for advancement, a process that can be challenging when promotion criteria are unclear or inconsistently applied. In the Philippine context, particularly within private-sector security and protection work, formal promotion ladders comparable to those in the Army are often nonexistent. As a result, former Agila Troopers aspired for the existence of institutional mechanisms that would clarify progression, recognize experience, and provide predictable opportunities for advancement.

This finding may be understood through Biddle's (1986) Role Theory, which posits that individuals seek stability, recognition, and identity through clearly defined social roles and institutional structures. Having previously operated within a military system characterized by formal ranks, predictable promotion mechanisms, and institutional recognition, former Agila Troopers aspired for similar structures in civilian protection work to restore a sense of professional direction and legitimacy.

CONCLUSION

This chapter presented a synthesis of the study, highlighting how the themes emerged from the data, the key findings that were derived from the interview process and subsequent data analysis, and the conclusions drawn from the overall findings of the research.

Summary

This study explored the lifeworld of former Agila Troopers of the 10th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army as they journey to private protection.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following sub-problems:

1. What are the experiences of informants in the performance of their duties?
2. How do the informants address the problems encountered in the performance of their duties?
3. What are the aspirations of the informants to provide better services?

The study employed a qualitative research design using Transcendental Phenomenological approach, as it was the most suitable for examining the lived experiences and meanings attributed by individuals undergoing significant life transitions. The research was conducted in Tagum City, Davao del Norte, and Davao City, areas where a substantial number of discharged personnel from the 10th Infantry Division are currently residing and working in the private security sector.

A total of ten (10) former Agila Troopers served as informants of the study. Four (4) informants participated in Individual Discussion Interviews (IDI), while six (6) informants took part in Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The informants were selected using convenience sampling, guided by pre-determined criteria: (a) former Agila Troopers who were discharged due to Absence Without Official Leave (AWOL) and served for at least three (3) years, (b) currently residing and/or working in Tagum City or Davao City, and (c) presently employed as private protection agents.

An Interview Guide (IG) validated by subject-matter experts, along with informed consent forms, served as the primary instruments for data collection. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, supported field notes and an audio recorder to ensure accuracy and depth of data. All verbatim statements gathered from the informants were treated with strict confidentiality.

Data analysis was carried out using Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive phenomenological method, which involved a systematic process of reading and re-reading transcripts, extracting significant statements, formulating meanings, clustering these meanings into themes, and integrating them into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon. Validation of findings was undertaken through participant validation, peer review, and cross-checking with related literature to ensure credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the results.

Through this, the study was able to surface insights into how former Agila Troopers reconstruct their identity, cope with challenges, and articulate aspirations as they navigate the transition from military service to civilian protection work.

FINDINGS

A total of 148 formulated core meanings were derived from the significant statements extracted from the interview transcripts. From the 113 stated formulated core meanings, 22 cluster themes were identified, reorganized, and classified into ten (10) emergent themes as follows:

For the first sub-problem, which sought to determine the experiences of former Agila Troopers in the performance of their duties as private protection agents, five (5) themes emerged, capturing both positive and

negative experiences in civilian protection work. The positive experiences are reflected in the themes Reconstruction of Military Identity in Civilian Roles and Experiencing Relative Economic Satisfaction from Protection Work. These themes describe how former Agila Troopers retain and apply military habits, skills, and values in civilian settings, allowing them to reconstruct their professional identity and find continuity after military service. Informants also viewed protection work as a meaningful extension of their military roles and as a viable source of livelihood, expressing relative satisfaction with compensation, allowances, and material provisions that support their daily and family needs.

On the other hand, the negative experiences are encapsulated in the themes Difficulty Adjusting to Civilian Work Structures, Social Marginalization and Psychosocial Strain, and Feelings of Diminished Professional Worth and Symbolic Identity. These themes highlight the challenges encountered by informants as they navigate civilian work environments characterized by unclear hierarchies, limited career advancement opportunities, role ambiguity, work overload, workplace hostility, and social stigma attached to discharge status. Informants also expressed feelings of being undervalued and a perceived loss of status and symbolic authority, particularly in contrast to the rank-based respect and structured command systems they previously experienced in the military.

The second sub-problem, which examined how informants addressed the challenges they encountered, revealed three (3) emergent themes, namely: Application of Military Coping Skills, Proactive Professional Development, and Support Systems. These themes illustrate how former Agila Troopers draw upon military-derived mindsets and traits to manage stress, regulate emotions, and sustain endurance under pressure. They also demonstrate a proactive orientation toward acquiring new skills and strengthening role competence, as well as the importance of interpersonal and organizational support in helping them adapt to civilian protection work.

Lastly, the third sub-problem, which explored the aspirations of the informants, yielded two (2) emergent themes, namely: Pursuit of Personal and Professional Growth and Institutional Pathways for Career Advancement. These themes reflect the informants' aspirations for continuous skills improvement through access to specialized trainings and seminars, as well as their desire for clearer promotion systems, recognition mechanisms, and comprehensive benefits. Collectively, these aspirations underscore their long-term goal of achieving stability, professional growth, and sustained relevance beyond their current roles as private protection agents.

IMPLICATIONS

Implications for Practice

Based on the findings of this study, several practical implications are proposed to address the experiences, challenges, and aspirations of former Agila Troopers employed as private protection agents. These implications are intended to guide security agencies, employers, policymakers, and related institutions in improving transition outcomes, professional sustainability, and workforce effectiveness.

Strengthening Transition Support Mechanisms for Former Soldiers. The findings indicate that former Agila Troopers experience difficulty adjusting to civilian work structures, social marginalization, and feelings of diminished professional worth. Security agencies, private employers, the Philippine Army, and the Armed Forces of the Philippines should establish structured transition support mechanisms that address not only operational readiness but also psychosocial adjustment. These mechanisms may include structured onboarding programs and access to mental health and well-being resources. Creating a supportive environment can help mitigate the loss of military structure and reduce psychosocial strain, thereby improving job satisfaction and retention.

Institutionalizing Professional Development Pathways in Private Protection Work. Private security firms should institutionalize access to specialized trainings, refresher courses, and competency-based seminars. Unlike the military, the private security industry often lacks standardized training pipelines; thus, employers play a critical role in ensuring skills relevance, operational credibility, and career longevity. Investing in

structured professional development not only enhances individual performance but also strengthens organizational effectiveness.

Enhancing Organizational Support and Leadership Engagement. The importance of support systems emerged strongly from the findings. Employers should foster leadership practices that encourage open communication, mentorship, and responsiveness to employee concerns. Employers who understand the military background of former soldiers can serve as stabilizing figures who bridge military culture and civilian organizational norms, thereby easing adjustment and reinforcing professional identity.

Addressing Role Ambiguity and Workload Management. Employers should clearly define the scope of protection work explicitly and avoid assigning tasks beyond security-related functions without adequate training or compensation. Clear delineation of roles helps reduce workplace tension, prevents burnout, and reinforces a sense of professional worth among former soldiers.

Developing Recognition and Career Advancement Structures. The aspiration for institutional pathways for career advancement highlights a gap in civilian protection systems, particularly within private-sector settings in the Philippines. Security agencies should explore transparent promotion systems, performance-based recognition, and long-term career tracks to replace the rank-based progression familiar to military personnel. Such structures can help restore motivation, reduce perceptions of stagnation, and support long-term commitment to the profession.

Strengthening Policy and Regulatory Oversight in the Private Security Sector. Regulatory bodies overseeing private security agencies may use the findings of this study to develop guidelines that promote fair labor practices, standardized training requirements, and employee welfare provisions. Policies that encourage ethical treatment, professional recognition, and continuing education can elevate the status of protection work and protect former soldiers from exploitation or marginalization.

Post-Service Monitoring and Support Mechanisms. The experiences of former Agila Troopers suggest the need for sustained post-service engagement, especially for discharged soldiers. The PA and AFP may consider establishing follow-through support systems, such as alumni networks or liaison offices, that provide guidance, referrals, and psychosocial support during the early years of civilian employment. Such initiatives reinforce institutional care beyond active service.

Policy Development for Veteran Transition and Reintegration. The Department of National Defense may use the findings as an empirical basis for crafting or refining policies on veteran transition and reintegration. Policies that address employment readiness, psychosocial well-being, and professional sustainability can contribute to more holistic support for discharged military personnel.

Building Foundations for Future Workforce Development Initiatives. Finally, this study provides a foundation for future workforce development programs targeting former military personnel transitioning into civilian protection roles. Documenting their lived experiences contributes to a growing body of knowledge that can inform evidence-based interventions, cross-sector collaboration, and long-term planning for veteran reintegration into civilian employment.

Implications for Future Studies

The researcher suggests carrying out in-depth investigations into the following:

Expanding Research Across Military Branches and Service Backgrounds. Future studies may extend this inquiry by examining the transition experiences of former personnel from other branches of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, including the Philippine Navy and Philippine Air Force. Exploring similarities and differences across service cultures can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how organizational norms, operational roles, and service histories shape post-military identity reconstruction, coping strategies, and career aspirations. Such studies can contribute to a more inclusive framework for understanding military-to-civilian transitions in the Philippine context.

Comparative Studies on Civilian Employment Pathways of Discharged Soldiers. Further research may compare discharged soldiers engaged in private protection work with those who transitioned into non-security civilian occupations such as entrepreneurship, government service, or technical professions. Comparative analyses can clarify how employment context influences adjustment outcomes, perceptions of professional worth, and psychosocial well-being. This approach would help determine whether protection work uniquely facilitates continuity of military identity or merely represents one of several viable post-service pathways.

Longitudinal Examination of Post-Military Adjustment and Career Trajectories of Discharged Soldiers. Longitudinal research designs are recommended to capture the evolving nature of discharged soldiers' civilian integration over time. Tracking participants across multiple years of civilian employment can reveal how early challenges, coping strategies, and support systems influence long-term stability, job satisfaction, and professional growth. Such studies can provide critical insights into whether initial identity reconstruction and economic satisfaction translate into sustained career development.

Mixed-Methods Validation of Transition Experiences and Coping Strategies. Future researchers may employ quantitative or mixed-methods approaches to validate and extend the themes identified in this phenomenological study. Survey-based studies can examine relationships among variables such as organizational support, resilience, professional development, and psychosocial strain. Combining statistical analysis with qualitative narratives would strengthen empirical understanding and enhance the generalizability of findings.

Institutional and Employer Perspectives on Discharged Soldiers' Reintegration. Subsequent studies may explore the perspectives of private security firms, government agencies, and defense institutions regarding the employment and management of discharged military personnel. Investigating institutional policies, training frameworks, and promotion systems can uncover structural facilitators and barriers to successful reintegration. This line of research can inform organizational reforms that better align civilian employment structures with the capabilities and expectations of former soldiers.

Evaluation of Transition Programs and Policy-Oriented Interventions. Future research may focus on evaluating formal transition programs, professional development initiatives, or psychosocial support interventions designed for former military personnel, especially discharged soldiers. Program evaluation studies can assess effectiveness, identify best practices, and generate evidence-based recommendations for the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Department of National Defense, and civilian employers. Such research can play a crucial role in shaping sustainable transition policies and veteran-centered employment strategies.

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