

Looking After for Safety Against the Ire Of Fire: Work Experiences of Female Fire Officers

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Abstract

This study explores the distinct views on safety and problems experienced in their demanding responsibilities by female fire officers in three cities in Western Samar. The research intends to offer insight on the tactics used by these women to protect their own safety and the safety of their teams during firefighting through in-depth interviews.

Phenomenological research design has been used in this study. Twelve (12) female fire officers were selected as informants from among the fire departments in Samar, Borongan, Calbayog, and Catbalogan. These officers were chosen from each department in Samar and had a minimum of three years of experience.

A smartphone application was used to conduct and record the interviews, resulting in transcriptions that were precise and comprehensive. A tiny amount of the responses was in the local dialect, which was translated for clarity, but the majority were in English.

Ten (10) emergent themes were crafted after thoroughly gathering the data from the informants. These themes were formulated: Job Satisfaction, Team Dynamics, Core Distress, Women Under Representation, Staffing Shortage, Equipment Deficiency, Transparency Build Trust, Balancing Life as a Mother, Collaboration leads to Success and Progress and Advancement. These themes recognized the difficulties associated with psychological and physical discomfort and emphasized the critical role those female firefighters play in their careers and teams. The officers emphasized the necessity for acknowledgment of women as fire officers and stated their ongoing effort and aspirations in their duties.

Keywords: Female Fire Officers, Safety, Challenges, Gender Equality, Fire Service, Firefighting Operations, Leadership, Workplace Experiences.

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout human history, fire has posed a significant threat to lives, property, and the environment. Although technological developments and fire safety laws have reduced the hazards associated with fires, the issue of fire prevention and response still persists worldwide (McCarthy, n.d.).

The variety of causes of fire occurrences is a major issue in global fire safety. Cities may be more at risk of fires due to their dense populations, aging infrastructure, and expanding industrial activities. For rural communities, preventing and managing large-scale fires presents unique challenges, especially in areas prone to drought and wildfires (Rural Communities and Fire, n.d.).

In addition to other natural calamities, fire is a concern in the Philippines, a tropical archipelago. Numerous factors, including congested cities, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of awareness, continue to cause issues despite significant efforts to improve fire safety (Cosca & Cosca, 2024). Even after public awareness programs were launched, many Filipinos continue to underestimate the dangers of fire and prioritize other everyday issues over safety precautions. Because of this, fire accidents keep killing people, destroying property, and taxing government resources. This underscores the urgent need for more comprehensive prevention programs, stricter enforcement of safety laws, and community-based fire education campaigns.

The Philippine government has addressed fire safety concerns. The main agency responsible for fire prevention and suppression is the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP). It investigates fires, conducts safety inspections, and trains both the public and firefighters (Bureau of Fire Protection, 2023).

This study focuses on the work experiences of Female Fire Officers in three cities of Samar Island, Philippines.

Despite the importance of the topic at hand, there is a gap in knowledge regarding female fire officers' job experiences. These women fire officers face critical challenges and unique experiences that might affect individuals and how well they function within an organization (Jacobsson et al., 2015).

Understanding the difficulties faced by female fire officers is a primary motivation for conducting this research. These challenges include physical and mental barriers, discrimination, and harassment. By exploring these experiences, the researcher hopes to identify areas needing improvement to foster a more supportive and inclusive environment for female firefighters.

As a criminologist and faculty member, I was motivated to explore the experiences of female fire officers due to my strong commitment to gender equality and deep interest in the firefighting industry. My personal journey into this research was sparked by a chance encounter with a female firefighter at a community event. I was profoundly inspired by her bravery, resilience, and unwavering dedication to her career. My own experiences as a woman in academia have also influenced how I approach this research. I recognize the importance of creating a welcoming and safe environment for people to share their stories. I am committed to conducting this research with compassion, respect, and a keen awareness of any potential sensitivities.

Theoretical Background

This study is based on Self Efficacy Theory by (Bandura, 1977) and supported by Safety Culture Theory by (Barnes, 2009) and Team Performance Theory by (Tuckman, 1965).

Albert Bandura (1977) developed the self-efficacy hypothesis, which explores the core of an individual's belief in their own ability to reach specific goals. Confidence alone is not enough; it is a focused belief in one's capacity to handle certain situations and overcome challenges. This concept influences people's motivation, persistence, and resilience by affecting their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Interestingly, self-efficacy is different from general confidence or self-esteem because it is task-specific and based on the belief that one can succeed in a particular area.

According to Bandura, self-efficacy beliefs are influenced by four main factors. The most powerful expe

periences are those of mastery; although failures can weaken confidence, successes can strengthen it. Seeing others succeed, especially those we relate to, is known as vicarious experience, and it may boost our confidence in our own abilities. Another source of motivation is verbal persuasion, such as encouragement from trusted individuals. Lastly, a lack of proper control over stress, worry, and fatigue can negatively affect productivity. Because self-efficacy is a flexible concept that can be developed through modeling, encouragement, experience, and emotional regulation, these fundamentals highlight this idea. Self-efficacy is vital for making decisions under pressure, staying calm in emergencies, and developing adaptive problem-solving skills in fields such as law enforcement, firefighting, and healthcare. Since groups with high self-efficacy are more likely to succeed collectively, it enhances both team confidence and individual performance. From a functional perspective, self-efficacy influences behavior significantly. People with strong self-efficacy see challenges as opportunities for growth rather than obstacles to avoid. When facing difficulties, they work harder, endure longer, and respond constructively to setbacks and criticism. For example, individuals with greater self-efficacy are more likely to set ambitious goals, persist through difficulties, and recover after failures. In summary, self-efficacy acts as a mental lever that boosts performance, learning, motivation, and adaptive coping in stressful or unpredictable situations.

Val Barnes (2009) presented a compelling argument on safety culture. In context, the common opinions, perspectives, motivations, and competence that define an organization's safety culture are what determine how highly safety is valued over conflicting objectives. Regarding safety assurance, it reflects how people think and act; this is sometimes summed up as "how we do things around here." The idea, partly inspired by evaluations of major industrial disasters, emphasizes proactive organizational efforts to prevent mishaps, near-misses, and hazardous situations.

A comprehensive safety culture is empirically linked to better safety performance. A positive safety culture improves safety-related outcomes by reducing psychosocial risks such as stress and distraction, according to a study of Malaysian oil and gas workers (Naji et al., 2021). Integrated theoretical evaluations, on the other hand, highlight that organizational structures, leadership, and group norms are enabling factors that promote safe behaviors. These behaviors generate results that provide feedback to reinforce or change cultural values over time. Therefore, safety culture is a dynamic system that develops and sustains safe behaviors at all levels of the organization and serves as a fundamental mindset.

The evolving nature of safety culture is emphasized by this concept. It is a continuous process of learning, adapting, and improving rather than a fixed state. To learn from mistakes and prevent future incidents, organizations must intentionally promote a culture where reporting accidents, near misses, and concerns is encouraged. This open communication builds trust and gives employees the confidence to actively engage in safety improvements.

Team performance theory by Tuckman (1965) explores the complex relationships that influence how people work together in teams to reach shared goals. A variety of models and frameworks are included, each offering a unique perspective on the factors that promote or hinder effective collaboration.

One key concept of team performance is a typical four-stage process that teams experience: forming, storming, norming, and performing. This model emphasizes overcoming early challenges, resolving conflicts, clarifying roles and expectations, and ultimately reaching a high level of productivity and teamwork. Knowing this concept enables us to identify and solve problems within teams. By recognizing areas that need improvement, such as unclear responsibilities, poor communication, or a lack of trust, we can develop plans to enhance team relationships and ultimately achieve better results. Remember that applying these ideas requires flexibility and adaptability to each team's unique environment and challenges. Team per

formance rarely follows a straight, predictable path.

Together, these theories provide a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding the work experiences of female fire officers in the three cities of Samar Island.

The Bureau of Fire Protection was established by R.A. 6975 primarily to carry out its functions, such as being responsible for the prevention and suppression of destructive fires in buildings, houses, and other structures; forests; land vehicles and equipment; ships and vessels docked at piers or wharves anchored at major seaports; petroleum industry installations; plane crashes; and similar activities. It is also tasked with enforcing the Fire Code of the Philippines (PD 1185) and related laws. The bureau has the authority to investigate all causes of fires and, if necessary, file the appropriate charges with the city or provincial prosecutor having jurisdiction; in times of national emergency, all elements of the BFP shall, upon the President's directive, assist the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in addressing the emergency. Additionally, the bureau shall establish one (1) fire station with adequate personnel, firefighting facilities, and equipment in every provincial capital, city, and municipality, following standard rules and regulations promulgated by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG).

Personal narratives of female firefighters from various areas are collected in the book "On the Line" by Linda W., highlighting their accomplishments and challenges in a mostly male-dominated field. The stories emphasize the mental and physical hardships they face, along with the camaraderie among fire departments. It shows how these women balance perseverance with a strong sense of community service. By sharing their bravery and dedication, the book ultimately encourages broader recognition of women's contributions to firefighting. It helps shed light on the unique experiences of female firefighters in a department that is predominantly male (On the Line, n.d.).

Pilcher (2011) explores the professional identities of female firefighters in the United Kingdom, focusing on how gender dynamics shape their work experiences. The study points out both obvious and hidden challenges that women face in the fire department, using qualitative methods such as participant observation and interviews. Pilcher discusses topics like tokenism, which happens when female firefighters are seen as symbols rather than true equals, leading to increased scrutiny and pressure to prove themselves. Pilcher concludes that regulatory improvements alone would not be enough to achieve genuine gender parity in firefighting. All aspects, including coworker interactions, mentorship opportunities, and the unofficial power structures that shape daily work experiences, must be addressed. By actively challenging discriminatory attitudes and encouraging the professional development of female employees, managers and leaders can play a vital role in fostering inclusion (Pilcher, 2011).

Dennis Smith's book provides a detailed and layered view of daily firefighting life by collecting oral histories and firsthand accounts from American firefighters, both men and women. Stories from women who were pioneers in their departments when they entered the firefighting industry are included in the narratives. The physical and emotional toll of the job, along with the additional scrutiny and mistrust that women often face, are all emphasized in these stories.

The book shows how departmental cultures have gradually evolved over time due to external influences, individual achievements, and persistent lobbying. In Smith's accounts, female firefighters emphasize the importance of legislative protections and strong mentoring, often from other women, in ensuring their success and retention. The book concludes by stating that, despite apparent progress, true equality and inclusion require ongoing institutional and cultural commitment (Smith, n.d.).

Garcia, D. (2020) chapter examines the status of female firefighters worldwide through case studies from North America, Europe, and the Philippines. From recruiting to promotion, she highlights how fire de

partments are organized around dominant masculine norms. According to women interviewed in various settings, they continue to fight for acceptance by their peers and worry about their physical strength, even when they meet or exceed expectations. It discusses the psychological challenges of the job, such as coping with trauma, long hours, and high standards, and links them to gendered stresses like underrepresentation in leadership roles and work-life balance. Garcia cites research showing that female firefighters are less likely to have access to workplace mental health supports and are more likely to report harassment or discrimination. However, she also finds that women often build strong support networks within and outside their departments, which are vital for resilience and job satisfaction (Garcia, 2020).

Women may encounter specific challenges in the fire department, which has traditionally been a male-dominated field. Sexual harassment can hinder their professional growth and create obstacles to advancing within the fire service. Examples include unwelcome sexual advances, offensive comments, and the creation of a hostile work environment. Women firefighters can fully participate in their profession and effectively serve their communities in a safer and more inclusive workplace, according to RA 7877, which provides a legislative framework to address sexual harassment. The Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995, or Republic Act No. 7877, is a significant law in the Philippines that aims to establish a respectful and safe work environment for everyone in training facilities, educational institutions, and workplaces. By creating a comprehensive legal framework, this legislation seeks to prevent and address sexual harassment, recognize it as a form of discrimination, and respect human rights (Respicio, 2024).

Sinden, K., et al. (2013) identifies that, for a number of reasons, studying female fire officers' work experiences is essential. One reason is recognizing the barriers; female fire officers represent a minority in a traditionally male-dominated industry. Unconscious bias, discrimination, and lack of resources are just a few of the barriers that can be identified and addressed through researching their experiences. This information can help shape practices and policies that promote inclusion, equity, and diversity. Additionally, because of the specific risks associated with their line of work, female fire officers may face particular physical or psychological demands. By studying their experiences, safety measures and equipment design can be improved by identifying potential threats to human health, equipment limitations, or gender-specific health issues (Pawer et al., 2022). Firefighting is also a demanding and stressful profession; analyzing their experiences can help identify the specific pressures they face and provide guidance for treatments aimed at enhancing their resilience and mental well-being (Roşca et al., 2021).

In a study by Jahnke, S. A., et al. (2019), the prevalence and health consequences of work discrimination and harassment experienced by women fire officers in the United States are examined. According to the report, a significant percentage of female firefighters face harassment and discrimination regularly, with gender and racial prejudices being common types. The authors emphasize that these experiences are linked to serious adverse health outcomes, such as increased psychological distress, symptoms of depression, and stress-related illnesses. This study highlights the need to improve the mental and physical health of women fire officers and underscores the importance of investigating how discrimination and harassment may contribute to poor health outcomes, as well as exploring policies and practices to address these negative behaviors.

Article III, Section 1 of the 1987 Constitution states that no one shall be denied equal protection under the law or be deprived of their life, liberty, or property without first going through a due process of law. One of the most valued possessions of a person is their liberty from any form of restraint. This includes the right to be free from gender-based discrimination. This clause guarantees that government actions affecting an individual's rights must follow fair procedures, including providing notice and an opportunity for a

hearing. Women are disproportionately impacted by discriminatory laws and practices, such as those related to employment, property rights, and family law, which have been challenged based on this principle. Additionally, it ensures that everyone in similar situations receives the same legal treatment (1987 Constitution, n.d.).

By recognizing women's inherent worth and dignity, the Magna Carta of Women aims to create a more equitable and just society where women can live free from discrimination or violence, have equal access to opportunities, and participate fully in all aspects of life. To promote gender equality and enable women to actively and significantly contribute to their country's development, this legislation is an essential tool (Republic Act 9710, n.d.).

The Magna Carta of Women is a comprehensive human rights law for women that aims to eliminate discrimination by recognizing, defending, upholding, and advancing the rights of Filipino women, especially those from underrepresented groups in society. By providing women with a legal framework to safeguard their rights and enabling them to reach their full potential, the Magna Carta of Women makes a significant contribution to the overall growth and progress of the country. It covers a wide range of topics, such as women's rights to political participation, employment, healthcare, education, and protection from abuse. The legislation also mandates the adoption of gender-sensitive policies and initiatives, as well as the establishment of women's desks in government agencies, as means of preventing and addressing discrimination against women (Philippine Commission on Women, 2009).

In the context of physical and psychological work hazards in the fire service, several studies on firefighting provide valuable insights into the experiences of female fire officers in the three cities of Samar Island. The study published in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health examined how fire officers could monitor their physical and physiological characteristics and prevent work-related illnesses using robotic equipment and sensor-based systems. This topic is vital for understanding the physical and physiological demands on fire officers and exploring innovative ways to reduce hazards associated with their job (Taborri, J., et.al 2021).

Research by Lawn, S., et al. (2020), a systematic review of qualitative research on the effects of emergency medical service work on ambulance personnel's psychological, physical, and social well-being, highlights the high prevalence of mental illness, mental distress, and the physical consequences of psychological injury that ambulance personnel face. The impact of emergency medical response work on the psychological, psychosocial, and physical health of ambulance personnel (Lawn, S., et al., 2020).

Achieving gender equity in senior roles remains a challenge for the historically male-dominated firefighting industry. Despite their progress in the field, women are still significantly underrepresented in leadership positions compared to men. This underrepresentation affects diversity, equity, and the range of perspectives and leadership styles that women can bring to fire departments.

Identifying Barriers to Leadership for Women in the Fire Service (2020) conducted a comparative study on why the fire service has fewer women in leadership roles compared to other professions like law enforcement and the military. It highlights barriers such as ill-fitting clothing, difficulties recruiting and retaining workers, physically demanding jobs, challenges balancing work and family commitments, and cultural perceptions about women managing men's companies. According to this study, fire chiefs and aspiring fire chiefs should be required to demonstrate leadership and pursue personal and professional development as prerequisites for advancing into high-level positions. Leaders must consistently perform at a high level and be dedicated to developing their subordinates (Contursi, J, 2020).

Research by Penn State's Lorraine Dowler highlights how a hypermasculine culture in firefighting often

assumes men are better suited for the job. This cultural barrier plays a role in the low number of women in leadership roles; this study is part of a larger book project Dowler is working on about the exclusion of women and minorities from career opportunities and social justice in the workplace (Dowler, L, n.d.).

The goal of the study by Galsanjigmed, E., et al. (2023) is to provide a broad overview of the various challenges and issues that women in leadership roles face. To fully understand the barriers preventing women from advancing into leadership positions, the research reviews and evaluates current literature on the topic. Women also encounter multiple obstacles when taking on leadership roles or pursuing leadership careers. Based on their experiences, they examine and incorporate management and career studies literature regarding the barriers women face when trying to rise to leadership positions in businesses. From a gender perspective, they specifically focus on both internal and external factors that contribute to the different barriers women encounter when aiming for leadership roles in organized organizations. They discuss the implications for strategies to increase the number of female leaders based on their integrative review (Galsanjigmed & Sekiguchi, 2023).

Lynne et al. (2020) research aims to clarify the problem of othering—the marginalization and exclusion that women firefighters face in a historically male-dominated field. The phrase "othering" suggests that women firefighters experience prejudice and difficulties because they are seen as different from the norm. Additionally, this study fills a significant research gap by focusing on the experiences of women firefighters and exploring how they are othered in Canadian fire services. The study's qualitative approach can contribute to discussions on gender equality and inclusion in the industry by providing in-depth and nuanced insights into the challenges faced by female fire officers.

Additionally, the study's findings could have highlighted the specific challenges faced by women in leadership roles. The study outlined strategies and measures that organizations can implement to address these challenges and promote gender equality in leadership. It also included suggestions for diversity management practices and guidelines designed to create a more inclusive and supportive workplace for women in leadership positions.

This study generally highlights the many hazards and challenges firefighters face when fighting basement and other below-grade fires. To better protect firefighters and improve their effectiveness in these dangerous situations, appropriate safety procedures, training programs, and equipment can be developed by understanding and focusing on these specific hazards.

A study by McQuerry et al. (2023) shows that female firefighters are more affected by physical demands and equipment issues, like improperly fitting personal protective equipment (PPE). This can reduce their ability to perform well and advance in their careers, as firefighting gear was originally designed for a masculine body, despite more women working in the field. As a result, women in the fire service are much more likely than men to experience injuries and problems due to poor fit. For women, areas of poor fit, especially at interfaces, can increase the risk of occupational exposure (McQuerry et al., 2023).

Overall, this study topic was important, relevant, and necessary to address health issues and gender inequalities in the fire service. The results helped create a more supportive and welcoming workplace by guiding the development of policies and initiatives focused on improving the health and well-being of female firefighters. Significant health challenges and gender disparities in the fire department needed attention. Unlike male firefighters, female firefighters have received less research and focus, highlighting the need for more inclusive strategies to promote gender equity and protect women's welfare in this field. Additionally, the prevalence and causes of obesity among female firefighters revealed that they face unique health risks and challenges, requiring targeted interventions and strategies to reduce obesity and

promote healthy lifestyles.

Overall, resolving these issues in the fire service was essential for fostering a more inclusive and supportive work environment for women.

2. Problem

Statement of the Problem

This study explored the work experiences of female fire officers in three cities on Samar Island, Philippines.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of the informants in the performance of their duty?
2. How do informants address the challenges encountered in the performance of their duty?
3. What are the aspirations of the informants to improve the quality of their services?

3. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a phenomenological research approach, a type of qualitative research. As stated by Creswell and Poth (2017), qualitative research is exploratory in nature, delving beneath the surface to explore the intricacies of human experiences. The principal objective of this approach is to gain a deeper understanding of individuals' lived experiences, including their behaviors, resource use, and necessities in their personal and work life. In this context, the study aims to investigate the experiences of female fire officers in three cities on Samar Island (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Transcendental phenomenology is a philosophical approach developed by Edmund Husserl that focuses on exploring and describing the structures of consciousness and the lived experiences of individuals from a first-person perspective. It aims to go beyond the natural attitude, or the everyday, taken-for-granted view of the world, to uncover the essential, unchanging features of experiences.

3.1 Research Environment

This study was conducted in various cities on Samar Island, including the City of Catbalogan, the City of Calbayog, and the City of Borongan.

Samar Island is the third-largest island in the Philippines, after Luzon and Mindanao. It is situated in the Eastern Visayas region, located in the central part of the Philippines. The island is divided into three provinces: Samar (formerly Western Samar), Northern Samar, and Eastern Samar. These provinces, along with those on the nearby islands of Leyte and Biliran, are part of the Eastern Visayas region.

Samar's fire stations include the Bureau of Fire Protection's Office of the Provincial Fire Marshal in Catbalogan City, Samar, Philippines, and the Catbalogan Filipino Chinese Volunteer Fire Brigade Association on San Bartolome Street in the city. Located in the capital of Samar Province in the Philippines' Eastern Visayas, the Catbalogan City Fire Station is ideally situated. Its proximity to key government buildings like the City Social Welfare Development Office and the Bureau of the Treasury makes it easily accessible for emergency response in the city's residential and business districts. The station operates under the leadership of Fire Marshal Robert Hitosis Espinola and serves a population of over 100,000 residents in Catbalogan, a city known as the commercial, trading, educational, financial, and political center of Samar.

Calbayog City is the largest city in Samar province and the third-largest city in the Eastern Visayas region. The Calbayog City Fire Station is located in Barangay Capoocan, Calbayog City, Samar, in the Eastern

Visayas of the Philippines. It operates 24/7 and is situated along the Calbayog Sports Center Service Road. Borongan City is the capital of Eastern Samar. It is situated on the eastern coast of the province. The Borongan City Central Fire Station is operated by the Bureau of Fire Protection and is located in Eastern Samar, Eastern Visayas, near the Borongan City Hall and the Church of the Nazarene.

3.2 Research Informants

The informants in my study were 12 female fire officers with at least 3 years of service. These 12 informants included 4 from Borongan City, who were individually interviewed (IDI), and 8 from Calbayog and Catbalogan City, who participated in a focused group discussion (FGD).

3.3 Research Instrument

An Interview Guide (IG), an effective tool in qualitative research designed to facilitate in-depth exploration of participant experiences, was developed by the researcher as part of the study approach (Creswell & Poth, 2017). This guide's open-ended questions aimed to give respondents the flexibility to share their thoughts and experiences regarding their level of life satisfaction related to welfare and medical services.

Part one of the interview guide covered the experiences of the informants in performing their duties. Part two focused on how the informants addressed the challenges they faced while performing their duties, and part three explored the aspirations of the informants to improve the quality of service. The interview guide was then submitted to the panel for validation.

3.4 Research Procedures

Following the panel's approval of the proposal, the interview guide was created and sent to the panel members for approval. After they approved it, a letter requesting authorization to conduct the interview was sent to the regional office of the Bureau of Fire Protection and its approving authorities. The study's interview guide was included with the request. Once the BFP regional office approved it, the transmittal letters were sent to the BFP provincial office and distributed to each interview location. The researcher then submitted the required documents to the university ethics committee for review and approval of the protocol.

Data Collection. After sending a formal letter to the Chief Fire Marshall or the Officer in Charge requesting permission to conduct the study, I also seek personal permission from the informants. Before the interview, I explained the scope and procedure of the interview. During the interview, I used a voice recorder with the informants' permission to ensure all important details were captured.

Data Analysis. The data that was gathered was analyzed using Collaizzi's method. It enables the researcher to avoid personal perceptions and focus on the participants' experiences. Collaizzi's approach uses phenomenological and Husserlian elements, emphasizing the presentation of female fire officers' work experiences. Seven phases comprise this data analysis method: reading and rereading all informants' entire transcripts of the phenomenon to understand their reactions; identifying key words or statements from informants' answers; using important statements to create formulated meanings, which are then organized into clustered themes that eventually shape emerging themes. The results were then included to provide a comprehensive account of the work experiences; confirmatory analysis of the detailed accounts provided by the study's informants; and the integration of any new or relevant information gathered from the informants, which achieved alignment with the professional backgrounds of female fire officers in three cities of Samar Island.

Ethical Considerations. With high regard for the informants in this study, they were informed about the privacy of their responses and identities. Informed consent was obtained from the informants to ensure

ethical standards. During the interview, ID codes were assigned to the informants and used as their identifiers.

Beneficence. The researcher implemented several procedural measures to ensure that the study on female fire officers' experiences adheres to the ethical principle of beneficence. This included providing participants with clear information about the study's purpose, potential risks and benefits, and their right to withdraw at any time. The consent process was conducted in a language they understood, ensuring they were fully aware of the implications of participation. Although discussing potentially distressing situations is part of the study, the researcher took steps to minimize psychological harm to participants. Ultimately, the researcher ensured that the study was conducted ethically and in a manner that prioritized the participants' well-being.

Non-maleficence. Given the sensitive nature of the informants' work and the possible repercussions of sharing their names or experiences without permission, the researcher acknowledged and addressed potential risks or negative effects related to their participation, including safeguarding their confidentiality and privacy. By carefully considering potential harms and applying mitigation strategies, the researcher conducted a study on female fire officers' experiences that respects their well-being and enhances our understanding of their challenges and achievements.

Justice. To uphold this principle, the researcher treated each person equally and fairly, ensuring that no one was unjustly given an unfair benefit or disadvantage. Several processes were implemented during the study to achieve this, including fairness in selection, equal treatment and respect, maintaining confidentiality and privacy, and ensuring that the study's results were legitimate, trustworthy, and reflective of the experiences of female firefighters by promoting equity, inclusion, and transparency.

Autonomy. By obtaining the informants' free and informed consent before including them in the study, the researcher honored their autonomy. This includes clear communication, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time without providing a reason. The researcher ensured that the study was conducted responsibly, ethically, and with respect for the participants' rights.

Trustworthiness of Research. The researcher examined credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability to ensure the study was reliable. All data in the study came from reputable sources, confirming its legitimacy. The researcher ensured that every response reflected the participants' personal experiences and viewpoints, and interviews were scheduled at times most convenient for them.

Credibility. The information was gathered through focus groups and interviews with female fire officers. Understanding the viewpoints and experiences of this specific group fits well with this type of study. The researcher also used various techniques to ensure the study's validity, including member checks, which involve sharing the findings with the female fire officers who participated and obtaining their feedback.

Dependability. The researcher also gathered data from various sources and compared the findings to see if they were consistent. The sample size, sampling strategy, and data collection methods were only some of the variables that might influence how reliable a study is. In addition, the researcher employed a purposive selection technique, choosing participants who represented the three cities on Samar Island fire department's female fire officers. By doing so, it increased the likelihood that the study's conclusions would be applicable to a broader population.

Transferability. The cultural setting, characteristics of the participants, and research methodologies are just a few variables that impact how transferable a study is. In all three cities on Samar Island, the researcher conducted the study. A distinctive culture and heritage were present here. When evaluating the study's findings and applying them in other contexts, it was important to consider these factors.

Confirmability. The study procedure, including the sampling strategy, data gathering methods, and data analysis techniques, was thoroughly described by the researcher. Additionally, the researcher wrote in a clear and straightforward way. This made the study more likely to be confirmed.

Reflexivity. The reflexivity of this qualitative study, which examined the practices, goals, and experiences of female fire officers in a fire department, required the researcher to be honest about their own biases and perspectives, especially since they were unfamiliar with the subject of qualitative methods.

4. Findings

After careful data collection from the informants, ten distinct themes emerged. These themes were designed to capture different aspects of the informants' experiences and goals, as well as the challenges they faced.

The first set of themes addresses the experiences of the informants in performing their duties. Among these, Job Satisfaction, Team Dynamics, Core Distress, Women Underrepresentation, Staffing Shortage, and Equipment Deficiency.

In terms of addressing the challenges encountered of the informants in the performance of their duty, three themes were generated. Transparency Build Trust, Balancing life as a Mother and Collaboration lead to Success.

Finally, regarding the informants' desire to enhance the quality of their service, a single theme emerged: Progress and Advancement.

5. Conclusion

The study revealed that the lived experiences of female firefighters are defined by a balance of fulfillment, resilience, and persistent challenges. On one hand, they derive motivation and satisfaction from their job, strengthened by teamwork, family support, and opportunities for skill development. On the other, they face significant barriers such as gender underrepresentation, staffing shortages, lack of proper equipment, and emotional strain brought about by the demands of their work. Despite these difficulties, the informants employ strategies grounded in transparency, collaboration, and professional dedication to overcome obstacles while maintaining their commitment to service.

Their aspirations highlight the need for progress and advancement, particularly in terms of career opportunities, leadership roles, and the integration of modern technology to improve fire service operations. Anchored in theories of self-efficacy, safety culture, and team performance, the findings affirm that strengthening confidence, fostering inclusivity, and enhancing collaboration can help improve the overall quality of service. Ultimately, the narratives of these female firefighters underscore not only their sacrifices but also their determination to contribute to community safety while paving the way for future generations of women in the fire service.

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