

Security Culture in Philippine Airports: Insights of Personnel of Philippine National Police Aviation Security Unit 7 (PNP-AVSEU 7)

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Abstract

Aviation security is essential in protecting airports, passengers, and aircraft from terrorism and other security threats that can endanger public safety and national stability. In the Philippines, air transportation plays a vital role in economic growth, tourism, and regional connectivity, making strong aviation security measures a necessity. The Philippine National Police Aviation Security Unit 7 (PNP AVSEU 7), created under Republic Act No. 6975, is tasked with ensuring airport safety by implementing security protocols that align with international standards and by maintaining public trust in air travel.

This research study aimed to explore the work life of Philippine National Police Aviation Security Unit 7 (PNP-AVSEU 7) personnel through a qualitative research method. The informants of this study were ten (10) personnel assigned in Mactan-Cebu International Airport (MCIA), Cebu, Philippines. All ten (10) informants were subjected to an in-depth interview.

The findings of this study are articulated in emergent themes. Four (4) emergent themes described the positive and negative experiences of the informants in the performance of their duties. For the positive experiences, two (2) emergent themes were developed, namely: Compassion in Action: Finding Meaning in Everyday Service, and Guardians of Peace: Pride in Quiet Protection. For the negative experiences, two (2) emergent themes were also developed, to wit: Few Hands, Heavy Load, and Echoes of Service, Shadows of Blame. Meanwhile, two (2) emergent themes were formulated to explain the informants' coping with the challenges encountered in the performance of their duties, namely: Flexible Roots, Unshakable Service and Composure in Chaos: Patience with Grace. Finally, two (2) emergent themes were created to express the aspirations of the informants to improve the quality of the performance of their duties, to wit: Driven to Grow, Trained to Serve and More Boots, Better Move. This research highlights the importance of supporting the mental and physical well-being of PNP-AVSEU 7 personnel through adequate staffing, continuous training, and proper support to help them remain resilient and effective in their duties. It is recommended that PNP-AVSEU 7 increase personnel deployment to reduce workload and improve security operations. Continuous training and wellness programs should be strengthened to enhance competence, resilience, and service quality. Clear accountability and recognition mechanisms are also recommended to sustain morale and public trust in aviation security.

Keywords: Aviation Security, Philippine National Police, Philippine National Police Aviation Security

Unit 7, Phenomenology, Mactan-Cebu International Airport

1. Introduction

Mobility, particularly air transport, is vital to the economic stability and growth of a nation. Air transport symbolizes national self-confidence and self-conception, which has made commercial aviation a preferred target for attacks by terrorists and other offenders. Airports are part of the critical infrastructure of a country and provide shelter, amenities, and security for thousands of people and hundreds of planes at the same time making them a vulnerable target against terrorist attacks. Given these factors, aviation security is not just necessary, it is crucial. It plays a key role in safeguarding lives, protecting national infrastructure, and maintaining public confidence in air travel. (Cole & Kuhlmann, 2012).

Globally, growing security concerns have prompted the implementation of stricter airport security policies, including enhanced passenger screening, increased intelligence sharing, and the deployment of aviation security personnel. In response to these evolving threats, the European Union also introduced new regulations to establish common rules aimed at protecting civil aviation from unlawful interference (Enders & 2 Sandler, 2011). Internationally, various countries have developed their specialized units, contributing to a global increase in the utilization of Aviation Security Group like teams.

In the Philippines, aviation industry contributes significantly to the country's economic growth, tourism, and connectivity by connecting domestic and international locations. The industry consists of major international airports, regional airports, and a variety of aircraft, both commercial and cargo, which facilitate trade and travel. Aviation security is a top priority for protecting passengers, crew, and airport facilities from dangers like terrorism, smuggling, and other criminal activity. The government adheres to International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) regulations by implementing severe security processes such as passenger screening, baggage inspection, and surveillance systems. PNP Aviation Security Unit 7 (PNP-AVSEU 7) was established under Republic Act No. 6975, also known as the "Department of the Interior and Local Government Act of 1990". This law created the Philippine National Police (PNP) and outlined its organizational structure, including the formation of specialized units like Aviation Security Unit (AVSEU).

In Cebu, Mactan-Cebu International Airport (MCIA) situated on Mactan Island plays a very important role in the Philippine's aviation industry as it is considered as the second busiest airport in the Philippines. It serves millions of domestic and international travelers each year and is a major entry point to the Visayas and Mindanao regions. Security at MCIA is a top priority, ensuring the safety of travelers, airport personnel, and aircraft operations. The Aviation Security Unit 7 (AVSEU 7), in coordination with the Office for Transportation Security (OTS) and airport authorities, implements strict security measures. These include baggage screening, passenger profiling, perimeter surveillance, and emergency response protocols.

This study aims to bridge the gap in comprehensive research on the lived experiences and perspectives of Philippine National Police Aviation Security Unit 7 (PNP-AVSEU 7) personnel. These include research on the following: challenges encountered of being a PNP-AVSEU 7 personnel, the coping mechanisms that PNP-AVSEU 7 personnel adopt to deal with the challenges faced in performing their functions, and the aspirations of PNP AVSEU 7 personnel in the improvement of their duties and functions.

The researcher is a registered criminologist and an instructor of future law enforcement officers and agents of persons in authority. Future officers of the law must be provided with adequate and strict trainings and instructions for them to be well equipped. However, given the lack of qualitative research on PNP-AVSEU

7 and the increasing negative perceptions and deterioration of public trust towards police officers, the researcher feels the need to explore the lived experiences of the Philippine National Police Aviation Security Unit 7 (PNP-AVSEU 7). This study will benefit not just police personnel, but also the aviation industry, government administrator, and Filipino individuals in the larger community.

Statement of the Problem

This study explored the work life of Philippine National Police Aviation Security Unit 7 (PNP-AVSEU 7) personnel in Mactan-Cebu International Airport (MCIA), Cebu, Philippines. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following problems:

1. What are the experiences of the informants in the performance of their duties?
2. How do the informants cope with the challenges encountered in the performance of their duties?
3. What are the aspirations of the informants to improve the quality of the performance of their duties?

2. Literature Review

This research is primarily anchored on the Self-Efficacy Theory of Bandura (1977), and supported by Team Performance Theory of Meredith Belbin (1960) and the Competence Motivation Theory by Harter (1978).

Self – Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1977) is concerned with individuals' beliefs in their capability to exercise control over challenging demands and their own functioning. Self – efficacy emphasizes one's belief or perception of their capability to execute the action necessary to achieve a desired goal. It is the degree to which people adopt behaviors that enable them to endure in potentially stressful situations.

Team Performance Theory of Meredith Belbin (1960) delves into the elements influencing the cooperative ability of groups of individuals towards a shared objective. This theory is concerned with individual member's propensities to fulfil different team roles. He identifies a variety of important behaviors that make a successful contribution to team performance and indicates how the individual fits in the team. Regardless of the function the person performs, his model applies the term team roles, which represents a member's natural preference to behave and contribute in specific ways when working a team.

Competence Motivation theory of Harter (1978) is a conceptual framework that explains why people are motivated to engage, persist, and work hard in any given achievement setting. The theory's primary tenet is the idea that people are drawn to activities in which they feel competent or capable. Researchers and practitioners in sport and exercise psychology can utilize the theory to figure out why and how to inspire children, adolescents, and adults to participate and work hard in various accomplishment situations.

Section 23, Chapter III of Republic Act 6975 known as the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) established the Philippine 11 National Police (PNP). The formation of the PNP was a crucial step toward building a professional, civilian-led police force in the Philippines. The Philippine National Police seeks to efficiently serve and protect the Filipino people while preserving justice and the rule of law. Subsequently, Republic Act No. 8551 (1998) known as Philippine National Police Reform and Reorganization Act of 1998 amended RA 6975 which focused on strengthening the PNP by professionalizing its ranks, improving its capabilities, and establishing a framework for career development. The legislation provided guidelines for recruitment, training, and promotion within the PNP, emphasizing meritocracy and adherence to high ethical standards.

The Office of the Transportation Security issued Memorandum Circular No. 2020.007 setting down policies and guidelines to secure air cargo and mail pursuant to the requirements of the Philippine NCASP aligned with standard of the Convention on International Civil Aviation. the Memorandum highli-

ghted the responsibilities of the PNP AVSEU which includes monitoring the implementation of security controls and security screenings at all airport cargo areas and to respond to any reported acts of unlawful interference at the cargo area.

The performance of AVSEC (Aviation Security) is important because it has the task of handling security and safety at the airport. AVSEC officers carry out their responsibilities in handling the security and safety of passengers based on the Standard Operational Procedure that has been set. Other research also shows that AVSEC officers when carrying out their duties of checking passenger luggage are consistent and professional (Arcúrio et. al., 2018).

Yoo and Choi argued that despite substantial advances in the use of technology and physical security measures in aviation security, airport security personnel receive little attention. The human aspect is frequently viewed as the weakest link in the security system. Following 9/11, security professionals focus on personnel screening processes, human factors, inadequate investigation of background and job history, and their relevance to aviation security failures (Yoo & Choi 2006).

A proper deployment of aviation security measures includes: a significant financial strain. The cost of recruiting, training, and employing qualified security personnel is costly. This purchase, maintain and operate the more advanced screening the equipment is likewise pricey. In the highly competitive business. The environment of the air transportation business bearing the expense of security in the manner that it should be done might bring even a huge airline corporation has declared bankruptcy. For all of these reasons, placing the weight of security on the shoulders of airline corporations is a simple solution from a bureaucratic standpoint recipe for perpetuating the current unsatisfactory state of affairs. Governments must acknowledge their full responsibility to assume responsibility for aviation security (Wilkinson & Jenkins, 2013).

Airline security personnel should not presume that aircrew will interpret incidents in the same way. They must be willing to listen empathetically to aircrew reports of security events and recognize that opinions may differ. Communication methods must be developed to describe how the airline is responding to these security occurrences, ensuring that aircrews feel supported by the security department while also instilling faith in their assessments and suggestions. Security personnel must also communicate with the pilots in order to "help them help you". Some of these items may seem obvious to security professionals, but they may be foreign to aircrew, such as what procedures should be followed if an aircrew member is assaulted to aid in the prosecution of the passenger. Furthermore, the airline's security staff should provide pilots with training programs that cover bias and perception, as well as security risk management, in order to improve awareness of this issue and develop communication channels between the two groups (Derrickson & Tripathi, 2022).

Aviation security safeguards critical national interests, as well as passengers and planes. Baggage and passenger screening devices, as well as operations, are critical components of any airline security system. Determining how and where to assign such devices might be difficult. Furthermore, even if such mechanisms are in place, it might be difficult to assess their performance. These models are used to find the ideal airport. Baggage screening security device deployments take into account the number of passengers on a set of flights who have not been cleared using the Federal Aviation Administration's security risk assessment system (i.e., passengers whose baggage is subject to screening), the number of flights in this set, and the size of the aircraft for such flights (Jacobson et. al., 2003).

Advanced technologies were utilized in airport security. A new computer system, known as CAPPS II, is being developed to assess U.S. flight travelers based on their potential terrorist threat level. This system

gather extensive information about each traveler, potentially including personal details such as magazine subscription history. While CAPPS II aims to enhance aviation security, there are concerns about its effectiveness and the extent to which it would genuinely improve safety. Experts suggest that, rather than relying on CAPPS II as the primary security measure, it would be wiser to view it as one element within a broader and more comprehensive security strategy (Barnett, 2004).

Aviation security law is an essential component of aviation security. An aviation security expert is responsible for preserving their company's assets and must be aware of which security tactics are permissible in order to protect their company from litigation as a result of an illegal conduct committed by one of their employees. Many legal opinions emerge as a result of improper activities by law enforcement and other institutions participating in the security process to safeguard society. An aviation security professional must act within the boundaries of the law as it applies to their duties (Loffi et. al., 2013).

Airport security costing is a difficult task, but one that has rarely focused on the function and impact that passengers have on the entire cost. Until recently, passengers were thought of as passive actors who could be "delivered" to their flights in the most logical and effective manner possible through logistical and operational procedures. Airport security personnel were educated to carry out the procedures and rule compliance standards, and security technology was developed to accomplish this flawlessly. In addition to providing a safe airport and flights, the goal was to do it at prices that the public and the airport could afford (Kirschenbaum, 2013).

The perimeter security system at Budiarto Airport remains inadequate due to the limited presence of Aviation Security (AVSEC) personnel, who are stationed only at the gate. Interviews with local village heads reveal that many residents continue to approach the airport's security area, primarily because they do not comprehend the warning signs on the perimeter. This lack of understanding stems from insufficient community outreach and education efforts. The inadequate socialization process is evident in the fact that numerous residents are unaware of the meaning and purpose of the signs posted around the perimeter, highlighting the need for more effective communication and awareness campaigns to enhance security and prevent unauthorized access (Arti et. al., 2023).

3. Methodology

Research Design

The researcher utilized a qualitative research method that explored the lived experiences of the informants. Qualitative research is a naturalistic inquiry that aims to understand certain phenomena in their natural context. The researcher used transcendental phenomenology basing on the principles identified by Husserl (1931) and translated into a qualitative approach by Moustakas (1994). Moustakas's (1994) transcendental or psychological phenomenology focused on the interpretation of participants experience rather than the researcher's judgments. Transcendental phenomenology is a philosophical approach that delves into the core of human experiences and the structures of consciousness. Unlike empirical research that focuses on the external world, this method emphasizes the first-person perspective, aiming to understand the essential elements of intentionality, meaning, and perception.

Research Environment

The researcher conducted this study at PNP-AVSEU 7, located in Brgy. Ibo, Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu. The Philippine National Police Aviation Security Unit 7 (PNP-AVSEU 7) acts as the regional aviation security authority for the Visayas, overseeing several key domestic and international airports. These include Mac-

tan-Cebu International Airport in Cebu, Bohol-Panglao International Airport in Bohol, and other important facilities such as Ubay Airport, Tagbilaran Airport, and Bantayan Island Airport in Cebu. In its regional role, AVSEU 7 collaborates with local government units, airport authorities, and law enforcement agencies to implement security protocols, monitor compliance, and respond to emerging threats. This regional focus ensures aviation security strategies are both responsive to local circumstances and aligned with national standards, safeguarding passengers, airport personnel, and critical infrastructure throughout the Visayas.

Meanwhile, Mactan-Cebu International Airport (MCIA), located in Lapu-Lapu City on Mactan Island, is the second busiest airport in the Philippines. Serving as the main gateway to the Central Visayas region as well as the Visayas and Mindanao islands, it handles both domestic and international flights. The airport covers approximately 797 hectares and features a single runway that accommodates a wide range of aircraft, including large international carriers. Renowned for its efficient operations and award-winning design, MCIA plays a vital role in tourism and commerce, supporting Cebu's status as a prime destination for business and leisure.

Research Informants

The informants of this study were the Philippine National Police Aviation Security Unit 7 (PNP-AVSEU 7), which has an approximate total strength of 156 personnel. The researcher's informants were those assigned at Mactan-Cebu International Airport who expressed their willingness, commitment, and interest in partaking this study. Thus, the researcher carefully and circumspectly chose ten (10) informants who disclosed their individual work life including the informants' coping with the challenges encountered in the performance of their duties and the aspirations of the informants to improve the quality of their performance. The informants of the study were qualified and identified based on their years of experience as a PNP-AVSEU 7 personnel which is at least 3 years in service and above to generate lots of information based on the years they have in practice. Also, the informants have undergone specialized training to ensure the safety and security of the country's aviation sector. This includes rigorous instruction in airport security operations, counter-terrorism tactics, crisis management, and passenger profiling. Officers are also trained in responding to emergency situations such as hostage rescues and threats to aviation infrastructure. Under this qualitative research, the selected ten (10) informants were subjected for an in-depth interview.

Research Instrument

In gathering of data, the researcher designed an interview guide in such a way that the researcher was able to identify the lived experiences of the informants. The interview guide was validated by the research panel to make sure that the contents reflect the statement of the problem and sub-problems. The first part of the interview guide was composed of the positive and negative experiences of the informant in the performance of their duties. The second part of the interview guide was the informants' coping with the challenges encountered in their duties and the third part of the interview guide was the aspirations of the informants to improve the quality of the performance of their duties.

Data Collection

The data collection method utilized in this research was individual in-depth interview. Before the conduct of the interview, the researcher checked if the willing informants meet the selection criteria. Also, the informants was informed that the involvement in the research is voluntary and that they can interrupt and end the interview at any time. The researcher also explained that the informants will not receive any kind of reward their involvement in the study as mentioned in the informed consent form. The researcher then

introduced to the informants the interview guide which served as the research instrument before the conduct of the interview sessions. The interview guide was subjected for checking, validation, and approval by the panel of experts. Then, the informants were informed that an audio recorder would be used during the interview. After this, the researcher proceeded to conduct individual in-depth interviews with the ten (10) informants. The recordings 46 were transcribed verbatim. After transcribing the interview, the researcher translated the transcriptions into English before analyzing the data.

Data Analysis

In this research, Colaizzi's (1978) strategy was employed for data analysis. The process began by thoroughly reading and re-reading each transcriptions to grasp its meaning. Significant statements related to the phenomenon being studied were identified and recorded, with their page and line numbers noted. From these statements, meanings were formulated and categorized based on their underlying themes. These meanings were organized into clusters and emergent themes, which contributed to a comprehensive description of the phenomenon. Redundant or irrelevant descriptions were eliminated to create a clear and concise structure.

Ethical Consideration

Engaging in qualitative research about PNP-AVSEU 7 personnel imposed inherent ethical responsibilities to minimize harm and enhance benefits. In this study, which delved into the work-life of PNP-AVSEU 7 personnel, the commitment to ethical conduct is of utmost importance. This section delineates how the research adhered to the fundamental principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, and autonomy.

4. Results and Discussion

From the gathered data, through the recorded response of the ten (10) informants, eight (8) substantial emergent themes were created. These themes formulated are as follows:

I. A Positive Experience Experiences of the Informants in the Performance of their Duties

1. Compassion in Action: Finding Meaning in Everyday Service.

It feels fulfilling. Of course, it's about assisting our passengers and making sure that everything at the airport runs smoothly so that they have a safe and orderly travel experience. (Participant 3)

It feels good because we're able to help others our fellow people, fellow Filipinos. Sometimes, even international travelers who get lost here we guide them to the correct terminal. We're able to help others and contribute to their safety. That's what matters. (Participant 5)

For us in the PNP assigned at the airport, one of the most positive things we experience is being able to assist passengers especially when they lose items or need help. We are there to guide and support them with small acts of assistance. Since we are visible in our areas, we're able to help many passengers who approach us with questions or concerns. That's the positive part of our job we get to help people, and that gives meaning to what we do. (Participant 9)

This theme highlights the positive lived experiences of the informants in the performance of their duties. It reflects a shared understanding among informants that they feel genuinely happy and fulfilled when assisting passengers. For them, helping others is not just a part of the job but a rewarding experience that gives purpose to their daily work.

This theme is supported by the Self-Efficacy Theory of Bandura, which highlights how an individual's belief in their own capabilities influences motivation, persistence and performance. Officers who believe in their ability to effectively carry out aviation support missions are more confident and proactive in taking on challenging tasks. Their empowered behaviors reflects strong sense of self-efficacy, enabling them to

engage fully in their duties. This confidence also sustains their commitment even under pressure, leading to higher performance and greater job satisfaction. Ultimately, self-efficacy not only drives their willingness to help others but also transforms their service into a deeply meaningful and rewarding experience (Bandura, 1977).

2. Guardians of Peace: Pride in Quiet Protection

Of course, we'd be happy, that's the main goal here at the airport: to maintain peace and order. So if we're able to achieve that, then naturally, we'll feel happy and fulfilled. (Participant 4)

It is fulfilling and rewarding when you're able to protect the passengers. It feels good to see them move around freely and comfortably, knowing that they feel safe and secure inside the terminal. (Participant 6)

It is fulfilling and makes me happy because it's already an accomplishment. As a police officer, it's part of my duty to ensure the safety and security of the passengers and the airport. (Participant 10)

This theme captures how the informants find genuine pride and meaning in keeping the airport safe and peaceful. For them, protecting others is not just a job, it is something that gives them a sense of accomplishment. They feel fulfilled when passengers can travel smoothly, when everything runs orderly, and when no incidents happen during their shift. Seeing people move freely and comfortably, knowing they feel safe, makes their efforts worthwhile. Each peaceful day, each moment without trouble, becomes a quiet but meaningful success.

This theme is supported by the Competence Motivation Theory of Harter, which suggests that individuals are driven to engage in behaviors that allow them to demonstrate competence and effectiveness. According to the theory, when people successfully perform tasks or receive recognition for their abilities, they experience intrinsic motivation, a stronger sense of self-worth, and positive emotions such as pride and fulfillment. This is clearly reflected in the experiences of the informants, who regularly carry out complex and high-stakes duties including threat detection, crowd control, and other critical responsibilities that demand a high level of skill, discipline, and decision-making. Their pride and motivation stem from knowing they are effective in maintaining airport safety, and their continued enthusiasm for their roles mirrors Harter's assertion that demonstrating competence fuels deeper engagement and a lasting sense of purpose (Belbin, 1960).

I. B Negative Experience Experiences of the Informants in the Performance of their Duties

1. Few Hands, Heavy Load

We are really understaffed here because we are covering both Terminal 1 and Terminal 2. Terminal 1 caters to domestic flights, while Terminal 2 handles international flights. Given this wide coverage, we are truly lacking in manpower. Although our superiors are aware of this situation, the fact remains that we are short on personnel. (Participant 1)

But that's really part of the job. It comes with it. Of course, you're obligated to give extra effort, especially when there's a lack of manpower. It's something that really needs to be done. (Participant 2)

I don't really have any major concerns or requests because I'm happy with my duties. Our leaders are also doing well. Maybe the only thing I could suggest is to increase the number of personnel here, since the airport operates 24/7. Sometimes, the workload really calls for more manpower. (Participant 7)

This theme reflects the informants' shared experience of being understaffed while covering both domestic and international terminals. They clearly express that the number of personnel assigned is not enough to meet the demands of these two busy terminals, and although their superiors are aware of the situation, the lack of manpower continues. Because of this, workers feel obligated to perform beyond their usual tasks, often doubling their effort to make sure operations run smoothly.

This theme is supported by Team Performance theory which emphasizes that effective team performance relies on the presence of distinct, complementary roles and a sufficient number of team members to fulfill them. When teams are understaffed or lack role diversity, essential functions go unfulfilled or are performed inefficiently, leading to role gaps, reduced coordination, and overall performance decline. In the context of PNP-AVSEU 7, these challenges are evident. Due to limited personnel, critical roles such as access control, patrol coordination, and surveillance operations are either unassigned or distributed among too few officers. This lack of adequate role coverage results in operational inefficiencies, staff fatigue, and decreased performance. Belbin's framework directly aligns with this scenario: the insufficient staffing prevents effective distribution of tasks, forcing individuals to take on multiple roles, which contributes to stress, burnout, and disorganization (Belbin, 1960).

2. Echoes of Service, Shadows of Blame

When it comes to negative experiences, there are many. No matter what you do, once you're a police officer, people often only see the negative. Even if you do a lot of good things, some people will focus on just one mistake and judge you for it. (Participant 2)

It's unfortunate that when incidents like 'tanim bala' are reported on TV, people immediately blame the police, when in reality, we have no part in it. The OTS handles baggage inspection, and the PNP only steps in when required. (Participant 9)

One of the most common situations we encounter here involves unruly passengers and left-behind baggage. Unattended baggage poses a serious threat because the airport is always a potential target for terrorist acts. If a piece of luggage is left behind and turns out to contain an explosive, and it detonates, that could become a national issue. In such cases, the PNP would be blamed for negligence because we are seen as the frontline in airport security. (Participant 10)

This theme shows how the informants often feel judged unfairly by the public, even when they are doing their jobs well. Many informants said that people tend to focus on one mistake and ignore the good things they do. Some shared experiences of being blamed for delays or problems that were not their fault, like baggage checks handled by other agencies. Others talked about being insulted by passengers during stressful situations, or being affected by the poor performance of coworkers. Officers also mentioned that strict rules are needed for safety, especially with threats like unattended baggage, but they are still criticized for being too strict.

This theme is supported by Self-Efficacy theory as it emphasizes the importance of an individual's belief in their ability to perform tasks and achieve goals. When officers are repeatedly exposed to external criticism, social invalidation, and public distrust, their perceived self-efficacy begins to erode even if their actual performance remains competent. For the officers of PNP-AVSEU 7, negative public perceptions and ongoing criticism serve as damaging social feedback that weakens their confidence in the value of their service. This leads to demoralization, especially when their consistent efforts go unrecognized or unrewarded. Over time, these experiences reduce motivation, diminish emotional resilience, and contribute to burnout or disengagement (Bandura, 1977).

II. For Coping the Challenges Encountered by the Informants in the Performance of their Duties

1. Flexible Roots, Unshakable Service

In police training, ma'am, we are always taught about the importance of flexibility. We always say, 'the situation dictates.' You can't just stick to one way of doing things all the time. You have to be well-prepared that's why we are trained to condition our mind and body, physically, emotionally, and mentally so that

whatever situation arises, we can adapt. When you're on duty, you should always expect that anything can happen. That way, if something does happen, you won't be caught off guard. (Participant 2)

As I said, our main problem is the lack of personnel. So we've learned to manage the work even when we're short-staffed, we find ways. We adjust, like handling two posts if possible or taking on multiple functions. You just have to be flexible in everything. (Participant 4)

Challenges are always there, but we should learn to maximize what we have. Just because there's a lack of personnel doesn't mean we stop performing. As a team leader, I still need to supervise. If there are posts that are not fully manned due to the shortage, I go out and monitor myself being well-rounded, so to speak. Based on the experience of those who were assigned here before us, and from stories shared by colleagues, some officers only stay here for a few months, sometimes just two. (Participant 8)

This theme reflects how the informants are trained and conditioned to adapt to unpredictable and demanding situations while maintaining a steadfast commitment to duty. The responses highlight that flexibility is not just a skill but a foundational mindset that police officers are prepared physically, mentally and emotionally to respond to whatever the situation dictates, whether it involves multitasking due to limited manpower, assuming multiple roles, or stepping into leadership responsibilities when needed.

This theme is supported by Self-Efficacy Theory, which emphasizes an individual's belief in their ability to perform tasks and achieve goals, particularly in challenging situations. Their ability to adapt swiftly, take on multiple roles, respond to emergencies, and manage staff shortages reflects repeated mastery experiences and modeled behaviors that reinforce their confidence and competence. This sustained adaptability under pressure demonstrates high self-efficacy, placing emphasis on the individual's internal belief in overcoming unpredictable and high-stakes scenarios (Bandura, 1977).

2. Composure in Chaos: Patience with Grace

In situations like that, the best thing to do is stay calm even if someone curses at you, just keep your cool. Don't respond with insults because there are a lot of people watching, and if you react that way, it could create more issues. (Participant 5)

For us in the service, no matter how many problems or challenges we face at work, we should never let our emotions, especially anger, take over. If we allow anger to control us, it might lead to a situation we'll later regret because if something serious happens, especially to the person you had a conflict with, you can't take it back. That's why we always need to practice maximum tolerance. (Participant 9)

In situations involving unruly passengers, what's really needed is a lot of patience. You have to take the time to calmly explain things to them because we don't always know what they might be going through. (Participant 10)

This theme emphasizes the vital role of emotional regulation and composed behavior in the operations of the PNP-AVSEU 7. It reflects on the ability to stay calm, respectful, and understanding in the face of conflict or emotionally charged situation. The informants emphasized the importance of patience and maximum tolerance. They shared how, even when confronted by unruly passengers or verbally abusive individuals, they choose not to retaliate but instead respond with long patience, explanation and empathy, recognizing that people may be acting out due to personal struggles.

This theme is supported by Self-Efficacy Theory which highlights the role of an individual's belief in their ability to manage specific tasks or challenges effectively. The informants demonstrate high self-efficacy by confidently managing stressful encounters, regulating emotions, and resolving conflicts without aggression. Their ability to remain calm and composed under pressure stems from repeated mastery experiences, where successful de-escalation reinforces their belief in their capabilities (Bandura, 1977).

III. Aspirations of the Informants to Improve the Quality of the Performance of their Duties

1. Driven to Grow, Trained to Serve

When it comes to that, ma'am, it really depends on the organization. But I think there's still room for improvement, especially when it comes to additional training and schooling. If there are already programs in place, I hope they can still be improved. (Participant 2)

Well, ma'am, in our profession, there are many designations or assignments here at the airport. It's not just limited to office work, investigation, intelligence, or patrol duties. As for me, I personally prefer the opportunities where I get to study or learn more. I feel more enhanced and fulfilled when I'm studying. (Participant 9)

It's important to conduct regular schooling or refresher courses, especially for personnel who completed their training a long time ago. Over time, systems and equipment become more advanced everything is getting high-tech now. That's why our training should also be updated and upgraded, so it matches the current tools, standards, and situations we face today. Continuous learning ensures that we stay capable and effective in our duties. (Participant 10)

This theme reflects the informant's commitment to continuous professional development. They emphasized the importance of advanced training and schooling such as counter-hijacking, criminal investigation, and even first aid, for them to address broader operational scenarios. They also recognized that learning should go beyond physical skills to include cognitive and even leadership competencies. This drive for growth is rooted in their awareness of situational demands and the limitations of their current scope, highlighting the importance of being well-equipped to respond effectively.

This theme is best supported by Self-Efficacy Theory, which states that individuals' belief in their own ability to succeed directly shapes their motivation, persistence, and performance. In this theme, the drive to improve is sustained and strengthened through specialized training that provides mastery experiences. Seeing peers and trainers excel in drills and simulations offers vicarious experiences that boost team-wide confidence, while constructive feedback and organizational encouragement reinforce the belief that further growth is possible. Stress-exposure training also helps officers manage their physiological and emotional responses, allowing them to face high-pressure situations with composure (Bandura, 1977).

2. More Boots, Better Move

It would really be better if we could have more personnel assigned here. (Participant 1)

I don't really have any major concerns or requests because I'm happy with my duties. Our leaders are also doing well. Maybe the only thing I could suggest is to increase the number of personnel here, since the airport operates 24/7. Sometimes, the workload really calls for more manpower. (Participant 7)

When it comes to manpower, the buddy-buddy system is really important. It helps ensure that there's always someone to assist or back you up, especially during operations or duties. Right now, there's still a shortage of personnel, which is why there's a need to increase the quota. (Participant 10)

This theme captures the collective sentiments among the informants that there is a need for increased personnel, as the current staffing levels are insufficient to meet the operational demands of a high-traffic, 24/7 airport, leading to coverage gaps and compromised tactical systems, such as the buddy-buddy approach. They emphasized that Mactan Cebu International Airport is a busy airport covering both domestic and international flights, and the airport's 24/7 operations and high passenger volume demand more personnel to ensure public safety.

This theme is best supported by Team Performance Theory, which explains that teams function best when all necessary roles such as coordinator, implementer, completer-finisher, and monitor-evaluator are

present and effectively filled. When staffing is insufficient, critical roles go unfilled, leading to coordination breakdowns, slower decision-making, heavier individual workloads, and reduced efficiency, exactly as described by the informants. Belbin's framework shows that adding personnel restores missing roles, improves coordination, balances workload, and eliminates bottlenecks, resulting in immediate gains in overall team performance (Belbin, 1960).

Implications for Practice

Aviation Security Unit 7 (AVSEU 7) needs to focus on building a stronger support system for its personnel by implementing fair duty rotations and securing additional manpower to ease workload demands while promoting wellness through regular stress management initiatives. It would also help to regularly conduct morale-boosting activities such as recognition programs, counseling sessions, and team-building exercises to uplift the spirit of the personnel and remind them that their sacrifices are valued. Just as important is creating open and safe communication between leaders and frontline officers, so that challenges and concerns can be heard and addressed without fear of blame. With these measures, PNP-AVSEU 7 can foster a healthier and more motivated workforce, which will naturally lead to stronger and more effective aviation security operations.

The Airport Police Department (APD) should strengthen both personnel support and its operation by providing regular training that not only sharpens technical skills but also will equip officers with ways to manage stress and handle tense situations calmly. The department may also push for additional manpower and create balance workload. With this, officers will feel valued and motivated, allowing them to operate more effectively.

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) should strengthen collaboration with airport security through joint training on drug interdiction, intelligence sharing, and rapid response protocols. Establishing clear communication, regular evaluations, and improved detection tools will enhance operations. Additionally, integrating wellness and recognition programs will also help sustain personnel morale and efficiency, ensuring stronger security at critical transit hubs.

The Bureau of Customs (BOC) is encouraged to strengthen collaboration with PNP-AVSEU 7 through joint trainings, regular coordination, and improved information sharing to ensure efficient interception of illegal goods. Providing additional manpower, enhancing communication, and supporting personnel well-being can help ease workload and boost morale. These measures will foster stronger teamwork and lead to 96 smoother, more effective customs enforcement at Mactan-Cebu International Airport.

The Bureau of Immigration (BI) can strengthen coordination and communication between immigration staff and security forces, ensuring smoother operations at checkpoints and entry points including providing joint training programs that emphasize teamwork, situational awareness, and stress management, thereby improving both efficiency and morale. Furthermore, the BI may consider adopting streamlined processes and digital innovations to reduce bottlenecks in passenger processing, minimizing delays while maintaining strict security standards.

The Office for Transportation Security (OTS) should improve screener training by incorporating real-life threat scenarios and stress-based simulations, complemented with refresher courses and peer mentoring. For aircraft inspections, the use of digital checklists and joint exercises with airline personnel can enhance both efficiency and coordination. To uphold international compliance, OTS must consistently update its protocols in line with global standards and host workshops or exchange programs with international experts to keep abreast of best practices and emerging technologies.

The Bureau of Quarantine (BQ) should establish joint training programs and simulation exercises with airport security units to ensure coordinated and efficient responses during public health emergencies. Regular communication channels and feedback mechanisms should also be developed to promote smooth coordination and information sharing, reducing delays in decision-making during critical situations. Furthermore, the Bureau of Quarantine may implement wellness and support programs for its personnel to address the challenges of heavy workloads and stress, enabling them to maintain resilience and efficiency in fulfilling their duties.

Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP) should strengthen its role by keeping inspection and registration protocols up to date and grounded in real-world challenges. Working more closely with agencies like PNP-AVSEU 7 through joint drills and shared reporting systems will also improve security coordination. Regularly reviewing air utility charges, with input from frontline staff, can help ensure fairness and practicality. They should also upgrade navigation systems and maintain International Civil Aviation Organization compliance through continuous audits and infrastructure improvements that will not only boost safety and efficiency but also raise staff morale and public confidence in aviation services. Philippine Air Force (PAF) can strengthen its inter-agency coordination through practical and mission-aligned initiatives which includes conducting joint simulation exercises with civilian airport authorities to improve rapid deployment and disaster response and upgrading logistics systems to streamline airlift and relief operations. These collaborative efforts will foster better coordination, enhance communication, and ensure unified responses in times of security threats or critical incidents. Establishing regular feedback channels with ground units can help refine protocols and uplift morale. In turn, these efforts will lead to improved efficiency, stronger teamwork, and a more unified approach to safeguarding airports and national defense.

The Grandhi Mallikarjuna Rao (GMR) Megawide Cebu Airport Corporation should adopt a smart operations and passenger experience program. This should include using real-time data to improve terminal flow and facility use, incorporating passenger feedback into infrastructure upgrades, and expanding digital retail platforms and flexible leasing models to increase non-aeronautical revenue. They can also set up innovation labs or pilot programs to test new service technologies, strengthening its commitment to innovation and sustaining Mactan-Cebu International Airport's global competitiveness.

The Aboitiz Corporation can enhance both efficiency and staff resilience by using current data to keep terminal operations running smoothly and by offering scenario-based training to better prepare its people. Facility upgrades should be guided by passenger feedback and include eco-friendly systems that promote sustainability. To make travel easier, digital wayfinding and multilingual tools can be introduced, while stronger partnerships with tourism and transport sectors can help expand regional connectivity and drive economic growth.

To uphold compliance to global standards and operational excellence the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) should continue assisting Philippine aviation focusing on technical support, scenario based trainings, and regular audits consistent with Annex 17 and related standards. Strengthening capacity-building and inter-agency collaboration will enable Mactan-Cebu International Airport to meet global benchmarks while staying responsive to new threats, evolving passenger needs, and sustainability objectives. These efforts reflect International Civil Aviation Organization's mission to foster a safe, secure, and efficient global air transport system.

The Philippine National Police (PNP) should strengthen support systems by providing adequate manpower allocation, mental health interventions, and stress management programs. Continuous training and 100

development initiatives must also be implemented to enhance resilience, adaptability, and professional competence, ensuring that personnel remain effective despite difficulties. Furthermore, recognition and reward programs should be institutionalized to reinforce the sense of pride and fulfillment among officers. Establishing open communication channels and grievance mechanisms is likewise essential to address concerns promptly and prevent burnout. Through the adoption of these initiatives, the PNP can foster a more positive and efficient work environment that strengthens the morale, promotes the well-being, and improves the overall effectiveness of AVSEU 7 personnel in carrying out their mission of ensuring peace and security in aviation operations.

The National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM) exercising administrative control and operational supervision over the PNP should enhance its recruitment process by selecting candidates who embody a strong commitment to public service, dedication to maintaining peace and order, and the ability to adapt to the challenges of police work. This can be achieved by integrating comprehensive psychological evaluations, values-based training, and community engagement activities into the selection process to ensure that only individuals with integrity and purpose are admitted. In addition, the study underscores the importance of strengthening NAPOLCOM's systems for the fair and timely investigation of police misconduct, ensuring accountability while safeguarding officers from unjust accusations. To further support police personnel, the Commission should implement mentorship programs, regular monitoring, and initiatives focused on stress management and overall well being, fostering a culture of professionalism, accountability, and genuine service within the organization.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) should craft clear policies and strengthen coordination efforts to help PNP Aviation Security Unit 7 personnel perform their vital responsibilities more effectively. Just as important, DILG should ensure that officers who face charges while carrying out their lawful duties receive the legal support they need. In addition, the Department of the Interior and Local Government is also encouraged to implement recognition and wellness programs to sustain personnel morale, while also fostering stronger collaboration with local government units.

The Department of Transportation (DOTr) should strengthen its policy making and regulatory functions by updating aviation security guidelines and enhancing coordination and oversight of airport authorities and security agencies. It should also promote technological and infrastructure improvements to ensure efficient, safe, and globally competitive airport operations. 102 The Local Government Unit (LGU) should support PNP-AVSEU 7 personnel by recognizing their dedication, addressing workload challenges, and providing necessary resources. Implementing programs on resilience, stress management, and peer support can help officers cope with job pressures. These measures will enhance morale, operational efficiency, and strengthen collaboration between the police and the local government.

Mactan-Cebu International Airport (MCIA) should strengthen its role in airport security by supporting PNP Aviation Security Unit 7 and other partner agencies with targeted training, sufficient staffing, and adequate resources. Promoting resilience, a strong sense of purpose, effective coordination, and the use of modern technology and updated protocols will further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of law enforcement operations within the airport.

Aviation Security Unit 7 (AVSEU 7) – Regional Advisory Council can strengthen its role in shaping policy and coordinating regional security by creating a structured system to regularly review operational challenges and best practices. Holding consistent meetings with local government units and law enforcement agencies will help ensure that security measures follow national standards while addressing local needs. Introducing standardized reporting and monitoring tools can track the effectiveness of airport

policing 103 efforts. Through collaboration and accountability, AVSEU 7 can enhance its advisory role and ensure that regional aviation security strategies remain comprehensive and adaptable to emerging threats.

Airline Operators and Carriers can strengthen their collaboration with airport authorities and security teams by implementing joint training programs on threat management, passenger safety, and emergency response. Clear communication and regular coordination help carriers anticipate and manage risks like terrorism, smuggling, or disruptive passengers. Airlines can also improve internal procedures through compliance checks, staff wellness programs, and passenger awareness initiatives. By making security an integral part of daily operations, carriers can provide safer, more reliable, and confident travel experiences. The Airline Concessionaires working in airports should align their operations with security protocols by implementing clear procedures for staff access, supply chain management, and service delivery. Regular training and orientation on airport security will help them understand how to maintain a safe environment without disrupting passenger services. Working closely with airport authorities can also ensure quick adjustments to operations as new threats arise. Maintaining compliance alongside high service standards allows 104 concessionaires to uphold passenger satisfaction while supporting overall airport safety.

Conclusion

This study examined the work life of Philippine National Police Aviation Security Unit 7 (PNP-AVSEU 7) personnel assigned at Mactan-Cebu International Airport by exploring their experiences, coping strategies, and aspirations in performing aviation security duties. The findings revealed that the personnel experience both rewarding and challenging aspects in their work. While they take pride in protecting passengers and maintaining airport safety, they also face difficulties such as limited manpower, heavy workloads, and operational pressures.

Despite these challenges, the informants demonstrated resilience, adaptability, and a strong sense of duty in fulfilling their responsibilities. Their coping strategies included maintaining patience, remaining flexible in demanding situations, and relying on teamwork and commitment to service. The study also highlighted the need for greater institutional support, particularly in terms of increased personnel deployment, continuous training, and programs that promote the well-being of aviation security personnel. Strengthening these areas can help improve the effectiveness of airport security operations while supporting the professional development and welfare of PNP-AVSEU 7 personnel.

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