

EXPLORING THE PERCEPTIONS OF GRADE 12 STUDENTS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MANDATORY BASIC RESERVE OFFICER TRAINING CORPS

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ABSTRACT

Mandatory Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) programs have been proposed to instill patriotism and discipline among students, sparking diverse perceptions. This study investigated the perceptions of Grade 12 students towards the implementation of mandatory ROTC in Cateel, Davao Oriental. It aimed to profile respondents by age, gender, and ethnicity, assess their views on social development, disaster preparedness, national security, and related issues, and identify significant perception differences based on demographics. Using a quantitative descriptive methodology, data were collected from 241 students across three educational institutions via a stratified random sampling survey. Results showed a majority of respondents were above 18 years old (62.66%) and female (58.50%), all identifying as Mandaya. Students generally had a positive perception of mandatory ROTC, especially regarding social development, disaster preparedness, and national security, with concerns about physical and mental well-being, military abuse of power, and hazing. No significant perception differences were found based on age or gender. Recommendations include making ROTC programs inclusive, implementing safety and support measures, and establishing continuous monitoring and evaluation systems. Future research should consider diverse samples to understand the broader impact of mandatory ROTC across different ethnic groups.

Keyword: *mandatory, reserve officers, perceptions, quantitative, descriptive*

1. INTRODUCTION

The mandatory Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) has been questioned recently (Caangay & Baradilo, 2023). The Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) is an educational program that combines practical and unmatched leadership training (Tullao, 2019). Some view it as a valuable national defense and discipline opportunity, fostering a sense of duty and patriotism (Nepomuceno, 2022). Accordingly, Salanga (2019) stated that the ROTC program will inculcate patriotism, nationalism, and discipline among the youth. Contrarily, others see it as a burden, potentially disrupting education. While proponents argue for its benefits in national defense, character development, and skills training, critics raise concerns about its fairness, effectiveness, and potential negative consequences on education (Savcic et al., 2023).

The Armed Forces of the Philippines claim that compulsory military service will help the country build a foundation for strong armed forces, ultimately making it a powerful nation (Nepomuceno, 2022). However, making it mandatory is met with strong opposition. According to Mercado (2022), Buhay Representative Lito Atienza opposed emphasizing that it burdens the youth and leads in the wrong direction. Additionally, mandatory ROTC violates

students' constitutional rights and burdens parents with additional costs (Chua & Gato, 2022). Furthermore, there have also been hazing incidents among students in the past, and some school administrators have used ROTC as a corrupting opportunity for individuals who wish to take the course quickly (De Asis, 2019).

The proposal to impose the ROTC program loomed with issues, as mentioned in several articles and studies both in international and national contexts (Caangay & Baradilo, 2023). With the ongoing economic crisis, students and families will suffer from additional expenses from ROTC, such as uniforms, transportation, equipment, and tuition (Formoso, 2022). Formoso (2022) also added that mandatory ROTC will burden teachers and faculty as they will shoulder more workload for which they will not be appropriately compensated. Further, critics contend that the resources allocated to mandatory military training could be better utilized in other sectors (Magsambol, 2023). In an article by Mercado (2022), Buhay Representative Lito Atienza highlights the opportunity cost of mandatory ROTC, suggesting that the funds could be directed towards education, skills development, and disaster preparedness programs with a broader societal impact. Opposition to mandatory ROTC is also rooted in alternative perspectives on national defense.

Authors delve into student perceptions of implementing mandatory ROTC (Bagundol, 2023). Some argue that a purely voluntary military force can attract highly motivated individuals and more efficiently meet the country's defense needs (Sotelo, 2017). Conversely, Senator Ronald dela Rosa is a staunch advocate of mandatory ROTC, pushing for the consolidated bill to create the program. He has said that instead of students spending so much time on TikTok, it would be better to put them through military training (Magsambol, 2023).

As mentioned above, different studies have already focused on mandatory ROTC for students. Those mentioned studies incorporated different perceptions about how effective and impactful mandatory military service is to students and society, as well as opposition to its implementation. Although the proposal aims to develop patriotism and improve the country's military system, many still believe in its disadvantages. Based on the issues that impact not only the students but also the parents, this topic needs to be urgently investigated. This current study focused on perceptions regarding implementing mandatory basic reserve officer training corps, specifically from the student's perspective. The study aimed to address this gap, knowing that very few to no studies have been conducted on the local area's primary topic.

This study will ascertain the perception and stand of the Grade 12 Senior High School students about the mandatory basic reserve officer training corps. Understanding students' perspectives on mandatory basic reserve officer training corps is crucial for multiple reasons; it could provide valuable insights into how such service influences national unity and identity, shaping individuals' perceptions of their societal roles, an examination of the long-term impact on career paths offers policymakers insights into the effectiveness of mandatory military service in preparing individuals for various professions and contributing to national development, and analyzing societal discourse sheds light on broader implications for democratic values, personal freedoms, and societal expectations. This exploration has the potential to inform policy decisions, influence educational programs, and shape public discourse regarding the role of mandatory military service in shaping a nation's social fabric.

1.1 Conceptual Framework

This study builds upon the findings of Brecio et al. (2023) and Senate Bill 236, both pivotal in understanding the landscape of Mandatory Basic Reserve Officers' Training Corps (MBROTC) programs. Brecio et al. (2023) delved into the perceptions of students and parents concerning the implementation of MBROTC, while Senate Bill No. 236 (known as the Mandatory Reserve Officers' Training Corps Act), introduced to the Philippine Senate in 2022, sought to reinstate and refine the ROTC program, including the establishment of MBROTC. Through a comprehensive literature review and analysis of Senate Bill No. 236, key themes emerged, focusing on social development, disaster preparedness, national security, and pertinent ROTC program issues. Examining these, the researchers aimed to elucidate the perceptions of Grade 12 Cateel 1 District students regarding implementing the Mandatory ROTC Program in the Philippines.

Social Development of Students. Social development encompasses individuals' gradual acquisition of societal norms, behavioral expectations, and cultural perspectives as they grow and interact within their communities

(Hepler & Mazarin, 2023). This intricate process involves absorbing explicit rules and the subtle nuances of social interactions, often learned through keen observation (Mesrobian, 2021).

The disciplined environment imposed by mandatory ROTC helps senior high students develop time management skills, a critical aspect of social development (Grant, 2019). Through military training in ROTC, it is also possible for individuals to improve their morale, intellect, social skills, and involvement in public and civic activities (Caangay & Bardillo, 2023). Mandatory military training presents a multifaceted opportunity for students to acquire essential life skills such as discipline, collaboration, and leadership while nurturing civic duty and obligation (Nepomuceno, 2022). Beyond individual growth, this experience can profoundly impact social development by fostering a stronger communal bond and a shared national identity among participants (Nasr, 2021). Participation in such programs can enhance physical fitness levels (Kizer & Le Menestrel, 2019) and bolster mental resilience (Cao et al., 2023), equipping individuals with the fortitude needed to tackle future challenges.

Additionally, compulsory service initiatives in contemporary discourse extend beyond traditional military roles to encompass diverse civic engagements, such as teaching in underserved communities, assisting the elderly, or contributing to infrastructure maintenance (Ricks, 2012). Embracing this wide array of service opportunities, these propositions aimed to cultivate a generation of socially conscious and engaged citizens. Experiences in mandatory ROTC cultivate interpersonal skills, teaching senior high students how to communicate effectively, resolve conflicts, and work towards common goals, all essential for social growth (Gagnon, 2024).

Disaster Preparedness and National Security. ROTC is crucial in disaster preparedness (Dela Peña, 2023) and national security by ensuring a trained and readily available pool of personnel to respond to emergencies (Diangca, 2023). Yaw (2018) recommended a two-year universal public service requirement to promote civility. As Yaw (2018) emphasized, people cannot generate enthusiasm for their way of life when less than 2% of our population has put forth effort for the country. Mandatory military service instills discipline, teamwork, and resilience, which are essential for effective disaster response and defense operations (Texeira, 2024). Additionally, it promotes a sense of duty and patriotism among citizens, fostering a strong and unified national defense posture (Nasr, 2021).

Implementing the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) in senior high schools can significantly enhance student disaster preparedness and national security (Gantalao, 2023). This training ensures that students are well-prepared to respond effectively to natural disasters, contributing to the safety and resilience of their communities (Marfilius, 2018). Through active participation in ROTC, young individuals cultivate a sense of discipline, patriotism, and readiness to execute their paramount duty of safeguarding the Philippines from external aggression, as everyone is responsible for defending the motherland (Lina, 2017). Military service also instills teamwork and leadership skills in young adults, qualities essential for effective disaster response and national defense (Johanna, 2023). It promotes a sense of civic duty and patriotism, fostering a strong bond between citizens and their country (Sharma, 2023). Furthermore, rotating citizens through military service ensures a continuous flow of trained personnel and maintains a robust defense infrastructure, which is crucial for deterring potential threats and maintaining stability in the face of evolving geopolitical challenges (Gomez et al., 2020), preparing them for the demands of tomorrow (Schult & Sparfeldt, 2015).

Issues Regarding Mandatory ROTC. Issues highlight the possible drawbacks and dangers faced by participants in the ROTC program (Briant, 2022). Mandatory ROTC raises questions about personal freedom, potential inequities, and the effectiveness of conscription versus a volunteer system (Peavie, 2018). It is a complex topic with arguments for and against (Llantero, 2023).

Implementing mandatory ROTC among senior high school students raises several issues that need careful consideration, including the potential infringement of students' freedom of choice (Quezada, 2020). Despite its benefits, mandatory ROTC participation also presents drawbacks, such as the two-year time commitment (Giordano, 2024). Giordano (2024) elaborated that this could conflict with students' academics and extracurricular activities. Balancing the demands of ROTC training with coursework can be challenging, and the program could impact their overall academic performance (Psaltis, 2016). Further, this raises ethical concerns about forcing individuals to risk their health potentially and lives they may not support (Bethmann & Cho, 2023). Also, critics suggest that mandatory conscription can disproportionately impact specific groups, such as those from lower socio-economic backgrounds or minority communities (Lindquist & Hjalmarsson, 2016). There is also the issue of gender equality in countries where only men are required to serve (Arakji, 2023). However, opponents question whether conscripts are as effective or

motivated as professional volunteers (Margulies, 2018). Ultimately, the decision to implement or abolish mandatory ROTC involves weighing these various factors and considering the values and priorities of society as a whole.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

The study employed quantitative research methodology, particularly a descriptive approach with a survey data acquisition method. Descriptive quantitative research aims to identify characteristics, frequencies, trends, and categories (McCombes, 2023). The descriptive method uses a questionnaire to obtain information from the subject, which is useful when interested in perceptions, beliefs, views, attitudes, or opinions (Siedlecki, 2020). In alignment with the current study, the researchers aimed to know the perceptions of Grade 12 students in line with mandatory ROTC and to accomplish this. A quantitative descriptive design was deemed appropriate.

2.2 Respondents and Sampling Procedure

The respondents included in administering survey questionnaires were Grade 12 students from Cateel 1 District, Cateel, and Davao Oriental. Specifically, respondents were merely those currently enrolled as Grade 12 students at the specific educational institutions: Cateel Vocational High School, Maryknoll Academy of Cateel, and San Antonio National High School.

They were chosen through a stratified random sampling method. According to Hayes (2023), stratified random sampling is a method of sampling that involves the division of a population into smaller subgroups known as strata. In this study, their designated schools were the strata. The stratified random sampling technique was fitting to effectively determine the appropriate respondents, specifically those who can render the utmost essential information needed to complete the study and fit the criteria of participant.

Table 1. Distribution of the respondents

HIGH SCHOOL	POPULATION	SAMPLE
San Antonio National High School (SANHS)	133	53
Maryknoll Academy of Cateel (MAC)	62	25
Cateel Vocational High School (CVHS)	409	163
	604	241

2.3 Research Instrument

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design, utilizing an adapted questionnaire to gauge students' perceptions of mandatory ROTC scientifically. The questionnaire comprises two sections: one focusing on demographic information and the other on students' views on mandatory ROTC. A questionnaire adapted from Brecio et al. (2023) was used to gather all the needed data for data analysis in the study. It contains statements regarding mandatory ROTC relative to a student's social development, disaster preparedness, national security, and issues regarding mandatory ROTC programs. The survey will use the five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree).

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection was done thoughtfully, with precautions to the standard protocol, to obtain reliable information from the identified respondents, who are Grade 12 students from Cateel 1 District, Cateel, Davao Oriental. The following are the steps in gathering the data:

Seeking ethical clearance. The researchers first sought ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Office (REO) of Davao Oriental State University-Cateel Campus.

Asking permission to conduct the study. The researchers drafted formal letters seeking authorization to conduct the study, directed to the principals of three educational institutions in Cateel 1 District: Cateel Vocational High School, Maryknoll Academy of Cateel, and San Antonio National High School. These letters were meticulously crafted to outline the purpose and objectives of the study, along with the potential benefits and assurances regarding the protection of participants' rights and privacy. After drafting, the researchers delivered these requests to the respective school authorities. Upon receiving approval from the heads of the institutions, the researchers proceeded to identify and approach potential participants for the study, ensuring a systematic and ethical approach to participant recruitment.

Administration of survey questionnaires. Before respondents officially commit to participating, they underwent a comprehensive briefing outlining the study's objectives. They were reassured that their well-being is paramount and that they can withdraw from the study at any point if they feel uneasy or threatened. Moreover, stringent measures were implemented to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all participants, ensuring that their identities remain undisclosed and protected from public exposure. Every effort was made to ensure that individuals were treated with respect and sensitivity throughout the study process to emphasize the importance of upholding the dignity of research subjects; following this preparatory phase, survey questionnaires were distributed to gather relevant data.

Retrieval of questionnaires. After administering the survey questionnaires, the researchers retrieved the completed questionnaires. The questionnaires were subjected to analysis through the aid of an expert statistician.

2.5 Analysis of Data

Descriptive statistics enabled the researchers to present the data according to the objectives set in this study. The following specific statistical tools were used in the study:

Frequency counts and percentages were utilized to examine the demographic characteristics of the respondents, providing insights into the composition of the sample population. Additionally, these measures were instrumental in addressing the first research problem statement.

Weighted mean was employed to gauge students' perceptions of mandatory ROTC programs across different dimensions, such as student social development, disaster preparedness, national security, and issues regarding the ROTC program. This method enabled a nuanced understanding of the participants' viewpoints, aiding in investigating the second research problem statement.

Table 2. Interpretation of different levels of performance

Interval	Response	Description
1.00– 1.80	Strongly Disagree	Have a very negative perception towards mandatory ROTC.
1.81– 2.60	Disagree	Have a negative perception towards mandatory ROTC.
2.61– 3.40	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Have somewhat of a positive perception towards mandatory ROTC.
3.41– 4.20	Agree	Have a positive perception towards mandatory ROTC.
4.21– 5.00	Strongly Agree	Have a very positive perception towards mandatory ROTC.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was applied to determine whether there are significant differences in students' perceptions of mandatory ROTC programs concerning various independent variables when respondents are

categorized based on their demographic profiles. This approach facilitated the exploration of potential factors influencing perceptions, thereby addressing the third research problem statement. The study aimed to provide a comprehensive and insightful analysis of the research questions using these diverse statistical techniques.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Profile of the Respondents

The study aimed to profile the respondents to understand the demographic context within which the perceptions of mandatory ROTC were evaluated. Specifically, the research focused on profiling respondents in terms of age, sex, and ethnicity.

Age. Table 3 presents the age distribution of the respondents. It shows that 37.34% of the respondents, or 90, are 18 years old and below. Meanwhile, 62.66% of the respondents, or 151 individuals, are above 18.

Table 3. Profile of respondents in terms of their age.

Age Interval	Frequency	Percent
18 years old and below	90	37.34
above 18 years old	151	62.66
Total	241	100.00

This distribution indicates that most survey participants are older than 18 years, suggesting that the findings and perceptions related to mandatory ROTC might reflect the perspectives of slightly older students within the Grade 12 cohort. The age distribution is essential for understanding the demographic context of the respondents and how their age might influence their views and experiences related to the ROTC program.

In the context of Cateel, Davao Oriental, the age distribution of respondents highlights important demographic insights. With the results indicated above, it can be inferred that most grade 12 students who are the survey participants are older than 18. This age distribution suggests that the findings and perceptions related to mandatory ROTC might reflect the perspectives of slightly older students within the Grade 12 cohort (Stanton, 2019). These older students may have more extensive life experiences and a greater understanding of civic duties, which can influence their views on ROTC (Loving, 2017). In contrast, the younger respondents might have different attitudes shaped by their immediate educational environment.

Sex. Table 4 showcases the gender distribution of the respondents. Of the 241 respondents, 41.50% are male, representing 100 individuals, while 58.50% are female, accounting for 141 individuals.

Table 4. Profile of respondents in terms of their sex

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	100	41.50
Female	141	58.50
Total	241	100.00

The results highlight a minimal difference in the number of male and female respondents. The slight This indicates more female respondents than male respondents in the study. The sex distribution is crucial for understanding the demographic context of the respondents and how sex might influence their perceptions and experiences related to the mandatory ROTC program (Malone, 2022).

Accordingly, the sex imbalance in the results may provide critical insights into the demographic context of the study locale, Cateel, Davao Oriental, particularly regarding the mandatory Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program. The higher number of female respondents could reflect broader societal trends where women increasingly participate in higher education and related programs (DiPrete & Buchmann, (2013) in the research locale. The more female respondents might suggest that women in this region are either more engaged or more available to participate in surveys and studies, reflecting a broader trend of increasing female educational involvement. distributed almost evenly across the 12 different puroks, each with a similar number of respondents. This even distribution ensures a representative sample from each purok, providing a balanced perspective on the Barangay Peacekeeping Action Team (BPAT) performance.

Ethnicity. Table 5 presents the ethnic distribution of the respondents. It shows that all 241 respondents, accounting for 100% of the sample, identified as Mandaya.

Table 5. Profile of respondents in terms of their ethnicity

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percent
Mandaya	241	100.00

3.2 Level of Perception on Mandatory ROTC

This section presents the level of perception of mandatory ROTC, examining its impact on three key areas: student social development, disaster preparedness, and national security. It also discusses the various issues surrounding the mandatory implementation of the ROTC program.

Social Development of a Student. Table 6 shows the level of perception of mandatory ROTC in terms of social development among students. The category mean is 4.30 with a standard deviation of 0.69, indicating a strong agreement among respondents that mandatory ROTC significantly contributes to social development. This high level of agreement suggests that respondents have a very positive perception of mandatory ROTC.

Table 6. Level of perception on mandatory ROTC in terms of social development of a student.

No.	Descriptions	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
1	Develop leadership skills in the community.	4.34	0.79	Strongly Agree
2	Enhance social interaction skills in the community.	4.28	0.78	Strongly Agree
3	Helps realizing role in society.	4.31	0.78	Strongly Agree
4	Teaches one to participate in community projects.	4.27	0.78	Strongly Agree
	Average	4.30	0.69	Strongly Agree

Among the aspects evaluated, the perception that mandatory ROTC develops leadership skills in the community received the highest mean score of 4.34. This indicates a strong consensus that mandatory ROTC is particularly effective in fostering leadership skills within the community. This high rating signifies the importance of leadership development as a key outcome of the ROTC program.

On the other hand, the perception that mandatory ROTC teaches one to participate in community projects has the lowest mean score of mean score of 4.27. Although this is relatively lower than the other aspects, this score is still interpreted as "strongly agree". This suggests that while respondents acknowledge the positive impact of ROTC in fostering community participation, they may see other aspects of social development as more prominently influenced by the program.

The results corroborate the study of Peavie (2018), which states that both proponents and participants widely recognize the benefits of the ROTC program for social development. For instance, ROTC is seen as a means to develop leadership skills, physical fitness, and civic responsibility among students (Moody, 2020). Proponents argue that such programs instill discipline, patriotism, and a sense of duty among the youth, which are crucial for fostering national unity and preparedness in times of crisis (Cayabyab, 2016). The program's emphasis on leadership and community service activities, such as tree planting, blood donation drives, relief drives, and medical missions, further supports the development of well-rounded individuals prepared for various leadership roles in

civilian life (Argosino, 2022). Studies indicate that ROTC cadets often exhibit higher academic achievement and leadership levels than their non-ROTC peers, demonstrating enhanced discipline, time management, and career readiness skills (Bergstrom, 2022). Additionally, ROTC scholarships and financial incentives attract students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, thereby promoting inclusivity and access to higher education (Moody, 2020).

Disaster Preparedness and National Security. Table 7 shows the level of students' perception of mandatory ROTC in terms of disaster preparedness and national security. The category mean is 4.28, with a standard deviation of 0.67, indicating a strong agreement among respondents that mandatory ROTC significantly enhances national security and disaster preparedness. This high consensus level reflects a positive perception of the mandatory ROTC program.

Table 7. Level of perception on mandatory ROTC in terms of disaster preparedness and national security.

No.	Descriptions	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
1	Instill patriotism	4.10	0.83	Agree
2	Develop the country's ability to respond to natural calamities (earthquakes, typhoons, volcanic eruptions).	4.26	0.83	Strongly Agree
3	Enhance the country's capacity to defend itself against foreign invasions.	4.37	0.75	Strongly Agree
4	Improve the country's capability to counter domestic attacks.	4.41	0.79	Strongly Agree
	Average	4.28	0.67	Strongly Agree

Among the aspects evaluated, the highest mean score of 4.41 was attributed to the perception that mandatory ROTC improves the country's capability to counter domestic attacks. This suggests that respondents see the ROTC program as particularly effective in strengthening the nation's internal security measures. The strong agreement here underscores the critical value placed on domestic defense. Conversely, instilling patriotism received the lowest mean score of 4.10. Although this is the lowest among the evaluated aspects, it is still interpreted as "agree." This indicates that while respondents recognize the role of ROTC in promoting patriotism, they view its impact on other areas, such as national defense and disaster response, as more substantial.

The results align with the study of Candaza et al. (2024), highlighting that ROTC programs are crucial in enhancing student disaster preparedness and national security. Historically, ROTC was designed to establish a reserve pool of trained officers ready for national emergencies (Gross, 2023). Influences like the Plattsburg and Preparedness Movements underscored the importance of military readiness and shaped the development of ROTC (Wissing, 2024). Today, ROTC continues to prepare students for national defense and emergency response roles, with training that includes disaster response, military leadership, and smallunit tactics (University of the Philippines, n.d.). Advocates argue that ROTC fosters patriotism and preparedness for national emergencies, vital for national security (Nepomuceno, 2019). Countries like South Korea and Israel, which have mandatory military service, including ROTC-like training, stress the importance of collective responsibility and national pride in their defense strategies (Rawat, 2023; Lee, 2013). In the Philippines, proposals to reinstate mandatory ROTC for senior high school students demonstrate the government's commitment to strengthening national defense readiness (Ferreras, 2022).

The ROTC program is an optional part of the National Service Training Program (NSTP) under Republic Act 9163, providing military education and training for national defense preparedness (Llantero, 2022). Supporters contend that ROTC is essential for nation-building (De La Salle University, 2022). Vice President Duterte advocates

reinstating mandatory ROTC, emphasizing the need to cultivate a new generation of disciplined and patriotic youth (Marcelo, 2022). Likewise, Senator de la Rosa has stressed the necessity of a reserve officer corps to defend national sovereignty, especially given potential threats from neighboring countries like China (Parrocha, 2019). These views signify the significant role of ROTC in preparing students for national emergencies and defense roles.

Issues regarding Mandatory ROTC. Table 8 shows the perception of mandatory ROTC in terms of various issues associated with the program. The category mean is 4.01 with a standard deviation of 1.00, indicating an overall agreement among respondents that mandatory ROTC poses certain risks to participants. This level of agreement highlights a notable concern regarding the potential negative impacts of the ROTC program

Table 8. Level of perception on mandatory ROTC in terms of issues regarding mandatory ROTC

No.	Descriptions	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
1	Risk one's physical well-being.	4.10	1.00	Agree
2	Threaten mental well-being.	3.95	1.12	Agree
3	Puts one at risk of military abusing their power.	3.98	1.14	Agree
4	Make one vulnerable to possible hazing.	4.02	1.10	Agree
	Average	4.01	1.00	Agree

Among the aspects evaluated, the perception that mandatory ROTC risks one's physical well-being received the highest mean score of 4.10. This suggests that respondents are particularly concerned about the physical dangers associated with the ROTC program. The agreement on this aspect signifies a strong awareness of the potential physical hazards. On the other hand, the perception that mandatory ROTC threatens mental well-being received the lowest mean score of 3.95. Although this is the lowest among the evaluated aspects, it is still interpreted as "agree." This indicates that while respondents acknowledge the mental health risks posed by the ROTC, they may consider these risks slightly less severe compared to the physical dangers and the potential for power abuse and hazing.

The results conform with the study of Kim and Sa (2022), which particularly states that mandatory ROTC programs encounter significant criticism and opposition despite their benefits. There are concerns about potential abuse and the impact of military training on students' academic pursuits and personal development (Cepeda, 2016). The death of Mark Chua, a University of Santo Tomas student who exposed corruption within the ROTC program, led to significant public outcry and legislative reforms, making ROTC optional and introducing the National Service Training Program (NSTP) as an alternative (Viray, 2018). Critics argue that compulsory military training infringes on individual freedoms and may not align with students' personal values or career aspirations (Cayabyab, 2016). Common concerns include hazing, harassment, and the overall militaristic culture of ROTC programs, which are viewed as detrimental to the educational environment (Hernando-Malipot, 2023). The Vietnam War era intensified scrutiny and opposition to ROTC, leading to widespread protests and calls for the demilitarization of campuses (Kindig, 2024). Today, student groups and organizations oppose the revival of mandatory ROTC, arguing that it does not address the broader issues facing students and the education sector (Hernando-Malipot, 2023).

Critics assert that mandatory ROTC fails to resolve the current issues plaguing the country, especially those affecting Filipino students under the existing education system (Hernando-Malipot, 2023). Some students perceive mandatory ROTC as restricting their freedom and misaligned with their career goals or interests, leading to dissatisfaction and negatively impacting their emotional well-being and academic performance (Giordano, 2024). Safety concerns are also significant, as military training poses risks of injury, prompting backlash from parents (Giordano, 2024). Financial implications add to the burden, with mandatory ROTC programs requiring additional expenses for uniforms, equipment, and other necessities, which can strain students and their families (Perez, 2022). Critics further highlight the potential for corruption, abuse, and exploitation within the program, issues underscored

by the murder of Mark Chua, who exposed ROTC corruption (Cepeda, 2016). In response to these concerns, Senator Gatchalian proposed implementing legal safeguards against hazing, abuse, and corruption within the ROTC program (Legaspi, 2019).

Mandatory ROTC programs can significantly aid senior high students' social development by equipping them with valuable life skills beyond military applications (Grant, 2019). For instance, the leadership training, teamwork, and problem-solving skills gained through ROTC are transferable to various professional and personal scenarios (Gagnon, 2024). Graduates often report increased confidence and the ability to handle stressful situations more effectively. As PNP General Abayalde stated, the purpose of the ROTC program is to establish a robust framework for cultivating patriotism and nationalism among young individuals, aiming to enable their development into industrious contributors to society, possessing the requisite knowledge, skills, and ethical values necessary to safeguard and support the nation's institutional integrity and sovereignty (Gonzalez, 2019).

3.3 Level of perception on mandatory ROTC

Table 9 summarizes the overall perception of mandatory ROTC among respondents, categorized into three main areas: student social development, disaster preparedness, national security, and issues regarding ROTC. The data reveals a generally high level of agreement on the positive impacts of mandatory ROTC while also acknowledging some concerns.

Table 9. Summary on the level of perception of mandatory ROTC

A	Social Development of a Student	4.30	0.69	Strongly Agree
B	Disaster Preparedness and National Security	4.28	0.67	Strongly Agree
C	Issues Regarding ROTC	4.01	1.00	Agree
	Overall Perception	4.20	0.65	Agree

The perception that mandatory ROTC positively impacts the social development of students scored a high mean of 4.30. This indicates that respondents strongly agree with the program's role in enhancing leadership skills, social interaction, and community participation. Similarly, the impact on disaster preparedness and national security scored a mean of 4.28, reflecting strong agreement among students regarding the program's effectiveness in instilling patriotism and improving the country's defense capabilities. Conversely, the perception of issues related to mandatory ROTC, such as risks to physical and mental well-being and potential abuses, scored a mean of 4.01. This indicates that while students agree with these concerns, they do not overshadow the perceived benefits of the program. The overall perception score of 4.20, interpreted as agree, suggests that despite some concerns, respondents view the mandatory ROTC program favorably.

This comprehensive summary emphasizes the importance of balancing ROTC's positive contributions with addressing the identified issues to ensure a beneficial and safe experience for all participants. These diverse perspectives highlight the complexity of balancing ROTC programs' benefits with protecting students' rights and welfare. It is crucial to foster open dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders to address these concerns and ensure that ROTC programs effectively contribute to individual development and national security. Gagnon (2024) found that ROTC programs significantly enhance students' leadership skills and civic responsibility. Pelkey (2021) also noted that participants in ROTC programs often exhibit higher levels of discipline and physical fitness than their peers. Argosino (2022) states that the sense of community service fostered by ROTC is crucial in shaping well-rounded individuals prepared for leadership roles. Moreover, Giordano (2024) highlighted that ROTC participants tend to have improved academic performance due to the structured environment and time management skills instilled by the program.

Similarly, Rawat (2023) emphasized the long-term benefits of ROTC in promoting social cohesion and national pride among students. The perception of issues regarding ROTC reflects concerns documented in the literature. According to Kim and Sa (2022), mandatory ROTC programs often face criticism for infringing on students' freedoms and clashing with their personal values or career goals. Legaspi (2019) highlighted the persistent issues of hazing and harassment within ROTC programs, which can create a hostile educational environment. Formoso (2022) asserts that although ROTC instills a sense of nationality and patriotism, it has historically resulted in murder and other human rights violations.

While ROTC programs contribute positively to leadership development and national security, they also face significant opposition due to issues related to mandatory participation and the potential for abuse (Kim & Sa). Many students and educators acknowledge the value of ROTC in fostering discipline and civic responsibility but also express concerns about the program's alignment with educational goals and student autonomy (Bergstrom, 2022; Moody, 2020). According to Goings (2022), effective implementation of ROTC requires addressing these issues transparently and ensuring robust safeguards against hazing and misconduct. Welsh and Dehler (2013) also emphasized integrating student feedback into program reforms to enhance their relevance and acceptability.

3.4 Significant Difference of the Students' Perceptions Towards the Implementation of MBROTC when Grouped in Terms of Profile

Significant Difference in Terms of Age. Table 10 compares respondents' perceptions of mandatory ROTC by age intervals.

Table 10. Mean comparison on the level of perception of mandatory ROTC in terms of different age intervals of respondents

Factors	t-value	df	pvalue	Interpretation
Social Development of Student	0.208	239	0.835	Do not differ significantly
Disaster Preparedness and National Security	0.366	239	0.715	Do not differ significantly
Issues Regarding ROTC	0.307	239	0.759	Do not differ significantly
Overall Perception	0.211	239	0.833	Do not differ significantly

The results indicate no significant differences in perception among various age groups for all evaluated factors. Specifically, the perceptions of Social Development of a Student, disaster preparedness and national security, issues regarding ROTC, and overall perception with an overall t-value of 0.211 and a pvalue of 0.833 all suggest that age does not significantly influence how respondents perceive the impact and issues related to mandatory ROTC.

Therefore, perceptions of mandatory ROTC are consistent regardless of the respondents' age. The study's findings align with existing literature, indicating that perceptions of mandatory ROTC do not significantly differ across various age groups (Gontz, 2019). For instance, research by Reed and Loman (2019) found that age was not a determinant factor in students' views and attitudes on the development aspects of ROTC programs. Similarly, Harris et al. (2019) demonstrated that disaster preparedness and national security perspectives were uniformly distributed among ages (Peavie, 2018).

Significant Difference in Terms of Sex. Table 11 shows the mean comparison of respondents' perceptions of mandatory ROTC categorized by sex.

Table 11. Mean comparison on the level of perception of mandatory ROTC in terms of different sex of respondents

Factors	t-value	df	pvalue	Interpretation
Social Development of a Student	0.65	239	0.52	Do not differ significantly
Disaster Preparedness and National Security	0.44	239	0.66	Do not differ significantly
Issues Regarding ROTC	0.68	239	0.50	Do not differ significantly
Overall Perception	0.73	239	0.46	Do not differ significantly

The overall perception of mandatory ROTC yielded a t-value of 0.73 and a p-value of 0.46. Across the factors, the data reveals no significant differences in perceptions between male and female respondents, indicating a consistent view of mandatory ROTC across genders.

The findings of this study are consistent with prior research indicating that perceptions of mandatory ROTC do not significantly differ between sexes. For example, a study by Atwood (2017) revealed that male and female students held similar views on the benefits of ROTC programs. Additionally, research by Candaza et al. (2024) confirmed that both sexes shared comparable attitudes toward overall perceptions of ROTC programs, agreeing that they impact a country's disaster preparedness.

There is a Significant Difference in Terms of Ethnicity. There is only one ethnic group, so the data cannot be analyzed further.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the above summary of results, the researchers have concluded as follows:

- 1. Profile of the Respondents.** The study concluded that the respondents were predominantly above 18 years old (62.66%) and female (58.50%), with all participants identifying as Mandaya. This demographic profile suggests a specific cultural context for interpreting the perceptions of mandatory ROTC among Grade 12 students in Cateel, Davao Oriental.
- 2. Perceptions on Mandatory ROTC.** The Grade 12 students perceived mandatory ROTC positively, particularly enhancing social development, disaster preparedness, and national security. They strongly agreed that the program fosters leadership, social interaction, patriotism, and national defense capabilities. However, concerns about the potential risks to physical and mental well-being, military abuse of power, and vulnerability to hazing were also noted. Overall, the students agreed with implementing mandatory ROTC, reflecting a generally favorable view tempered by awareness of its possible drawbacks.
- 3. Significant Difference in Perceptions in terms of Demographic Profile.** The analysis revealed no significant differences in perceptions of mandatory ROTC when grouped by age or gender. This finding indicates that the positive and negative views towards ROTC were consistent across different age groups and between male and female students. Given the homogeneity in ethnicity (all respondents were Mandaya), no further analysis was required for this demographic factor. This uniformity in perceptions suggests a broadly shared attitude towards mandatory ROTC among the Grade 12 students surveyed.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, we thank God from the bottom of our hearts for His divine guidance and blessings during this journey. His strength and knowledge have always been by our side, helping us to overcome obstacles and accomplish our objectives. This thesis would not have been possible without His grace. Glory and honor be to Him!

We thank our parents for their unflinching support which has been crucial to this attempt. Their financial and emotional support gave us a strong base to grow. Their unshakeable faith in our skills was a great source of inspiration when things became tough. This accomplishment is proof of their steadfast assistance.

We sincerely thank Ms. Mary Lovely Suzzeth P. Mendez, our research adviser, for her great advice and mentoring. Her knowledge in the area guided us through the challenges of this investigation like a compass. Her endurance and openness to offer advice at every turn were crucial in forming this thesis. We are incredibly grateful for her commitment to our academic development.

We also thank Mr. Jade S. Cervantes, Ms. Jilla Mae A. Susada, and Mr. Jim Ryan P. Solomon, who chaired our thesis advisory committee. Their astute observations were like gold nuggets, guiding our research in the proper direction. Their insightful criticism encouraged us to improve and aim higher with our work.

To all our wonderful friends, relatives, and supporters, thank you for your support throughout this journey. It is our great fortune to be surrounded by such a kind community. This accomplishment would not have been possible without you all because you were also part of the trip!

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