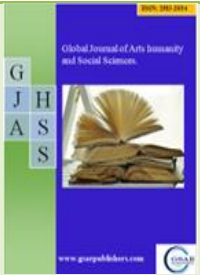
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The Revival of Mandatory Reserve Officers' Training Corps in the Philippines

BY

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Abstract

The research examined the responses of selected college students on the revival of mandatory Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) in the Philippines. Despite the program's history of abuse and cadet deaths, the proposed mandatory ROTC program became a contentious subject as lawmakers pushed for its reintroduction. The research employed quantitative-descriptive research to assess how students responded to the revival of mandatory ROTC in the Philippines. The respondents in this research were first-year to third-year college students, as they were the ones who may potentially undergo the program. The respondents were also selected by using stratified sampling technique, with seven college departments serving as strata and each having 100 respondents. In addition, the study used a Likert-scale survey questionnaire to assess respondents' responses on the effects of mandatory ROTC on students' such as physical, psychological, academic, and financial discipline; whether it genuinely promotes nationalism and patriotism; and what the program's benefits are. The research revealed that most college students believe that reviving mandatory ROTC will help shape strong, disciplined, and patriotic Filipinos capable of defending, preserving, and leading the country.

Keywords: revival, mandatory, reserve officer's training corps, abuse, cadets

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INTRODUCTION

The Reserved Officers' Training Corps, or ROTC, is a program that aims to encourage, train, organize, and mobilize students for national military readiness (R.A 9163, 2002). The ROTC program was previously mandatory, but Republic Act 9163 made it optional. Republic Act 9163, often known as the NSTP Act of 2001, established the National Service Training Program, which includes ROTC as one of three courses being offered (Hernando-Malipot, 2023). As of today, ROTC is not currently obligatory for tertiary students (UP Department of Military Science and Tactics, 2022).

The ROTC encourages, organizes, prepares, and mobilizes students for military training to support national security. According to Tullao (2019), the ROTC program aims to promote academic success and prepares students to become officers in the Philippine Armed Forces. The ROTC program offers military training, community service opportunities, and scholarships for eligible cadets (Angeles, 2022).

The Philippine Reserve Officers Training Corps (PROTC) began as a military drill at the University of the Philippines in 1912. The National Defense Act of 1935 became law, establishing the ROTC program and the independent Philippine Army, both of which were formally founded on December 2, 1935 (UP Department of Military Science and Tactics, 2019). However, following the murder of UST Cadet Mark Chua in 2001, petitions were filed to end the ROTC program due to the discovery of abuse and corruption in the university's ROTC program. The death of UST Cadet Mark Chua in 2001 was one of the reasons for ending the mandatory ROTC program and making it voluntary for students (Viray, 2018).

During his administration, former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte emphasized the need of mandating student participation in the ROTC program. According to the former president, reviving the ROTC would teach youth about discipline, cooperation, leadership, and patriotism (Bacelonia, 2022). Meanwhile, President Ferdinand Marcos' current administration included the restoration of required ROTC was on the legislative agenda, but instead of focusing on senior high school students, it was transferred to



college students (Chi, 2022). However, according to Chua and Gato (n.d), the country require a better strategy for youth socio-civic engagement that is congruent with the evolving challenges of the times but does not entail ROTC.

Accordingly, the Armed Forces of the Philippines will oversee the new ROTC program. Historically, there were previous reports arguing that the AFP was the most affected by corruption and crime that damaged the ROTC program. De Jesus (2019) emphasizes the importance of avoiding repeating the mistakes of the past. Moreover, as stated by De Jesus (2019), when the ROTC program becomes required, students may face financial, academic, physical, and psychological challenges, in addition to worries about abuse and corruption.

The government is determined to reinstate the mandatory ROTC in the tertiary education curricula of Philippine colleges and universities, as its purpose is to promote patriotism and nationalism while also preparing students to defend their country if necessary (Chi, 2022). Critics argue that this demand utterly undermines the realistic nature of the ROTC program. There were various concerns that would harm the program's students, including abuse, corruption, physical and intellectual consequences, declining mental health, and even costs (Madanglog, 2023). Hernando-Malipot (2023) confirms this statement and says that many parents and students are concerned about the bill's potential consequences, including abuse, corruption, fees, physical effects, academic burden, and mental health issues. The Philippine government's plan to restore mandatory ROTC may perplex the students (Viray, 2018).

This research examines students' responses towards whether or not they agree with the mandatory revival of ROTC. The results of this research can help lawmakers develop a proposal related to the subject matter at hand. It also seeks to educate parents, students, and other stakeholders as they consider whether ROTC would be a beneficial addition to the Philippine educational curriculum, particularly at the university level. This research can be used to investigate the perspectives of various stakeholders, like educators, who may be affected by mandatory ROTC.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research followed a quantitative-descriptive research approach. Shuttleworth (2008) defines a descriptive research method as observing and describing a subject's behavior without influencing it. Descriptive research also encompasses any investigations that claim to offer information about the existence and status of an item. It describes and discusses current situations or relationships, actions that prevail or do not prevail, attitudes or opinions held, procedures that are ongoing or not, and current impacts or emerging trends.

Because the research was organized quantitatively, the researchers obtained numerical data from selected college students through survey questionnaires. The primary objective of data collection was to identify and recruit significant respondents who might be involved in the implementation of the revival of the required

ROTC. In this case, selected first-year to third-year college students were chosen to participate.

Moreover, the researchers used stratified random sampling to determine the appropriate number of respondents. Hayes (2023) defines stratified random sampling as the partition of a target population into subgroups, sometimes known as strata. To separate the population, the researchers grouped it by college. The researchers picked individuals at random from each grouping within their department. They also utilized proportional stratified sampling, hence the intended sample size of 87 was divided into seven sections, each representing one of the college departments. The number of responses in each department was comparable to 12.

The first step in the data collection process was to request a permission letter from the appropriate school authorities to conduct a survey on the respondents. After receiving approval, the researchers distributed a consent form that outlines the objective of the data collection and assured respondents that their information would be used solely for research and kept confidential. The researchers asked the target respondents if they were willing to participate in the research, and some consented, therefore consent forms and survey questionnaires were distributed to them. Finally, when respondents had completed the survey, the researchers asked whether they had any questions about their involvement in this research project and they were also been allowed to correct whatever errors they committed.

For the data analysis, the researchers used descriptive statistics to analyze their data. Vetter (2017) outlines ways for effectively calculating, characterizing, and summarizing study data. Descriptive statistics can be given quantitatively in the text and/or tables, or visually in figures. It summarizes data from a sample group, which can represent the full population or a subset of it.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1. Assessment on the Mandatory ROTC Program

Statements	Mean	Interpretation
Students believe the government, institutions, and colleges are willing to make changes if the program is adopted.	4.11	Agree
Students believe that the program has a high possibility of being free of corruption issues.	3.81	Agree
Students will be safe from the possibility of abuse and death among cadets.	3.90	Agree
Mandatory ROTC teaches students how to protect the state if necessary.	4.49	Agree
Students are prepared to go through the obligatory ROTC	3.64	Agree



program if it has been implemented.		
Overall Mean	3.99	Agree

Table 1 shows the mean of the mandatory ROTC program. The highest rank, "mandatory ROTC is essential for students to learn how to defend the state if necessary," received a mean of 4.49, indicating that the majority of respondents completely agreed. According to former President Duterte, reviving mandatory ROTC provides national defense preparedness as the program trains and prepares students to defend the country against any type of aggression and rising external threats by instilling the need to protect the nation, particularly in the current conflict between the Philippines and China over the West Philippine Sea.

Nepomoceno (2019) agreed that the ROTC program aims to develop trainees' psychological support skills, which are essential for dealing with difficult situations and environments. Former Secretary of National Defense Carlito Galvez Jr. noted that the DND ROTC program focuses on developing resilience, self-leadership, character development, discipline, and basic abilities for defending the state (Cayabyab, 2024).

On the contrary, the indicators with the lowest rank have a mean of 3.64 and are interpreted as "agree," which means "students are ready to undergo the mandatory ROTC program if it is implemented." This suggests that individual attitudes, beliefs, and personal circumstances can all influence students' willingness to participate in a mandatory ROTC program if it is enacted. It is critical to emphasize that student preparedness varies widely within a particular population, and there is no one-size-fits-all answer. To assess students' readiness for a mandatory ROTC program, educational institutions and policymakers should engage in open discussion, consider their concerns and feedback, and offer alternatives for those who are unwilling to participate while recognizing individual freedoms (Chua and Gato, n.d).

Finally, the general weighted mean of 3.99, interpreted as agree, demonstrated that the majority of the respondents agree that mandatory ROTC is vital for students to understand how to defend the state if needed.

Figure 1. Possible Effects of Mandatory ROTC Program on Physical Aspect

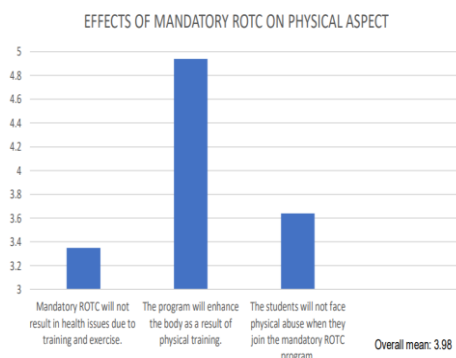


Figure 1 shows the effects of mandatory ROTC on physical aspects. The highest rank was "the program will enhance the body as a result of physical training" with a mean of 4.94, indicating that the majority of respondents completely agreed that ROTC programs often include intensive training. Consistent physical activity can enhance cardiovascular health, muscular strength, and flexibility. Physical training programs aim to improve students' strength, endurance, and general fitness. According to Newman et al. (2022), students in ROTC programs face challenges in maintaining adequate physical fitness for combat readiness. Proper assessment of preparedness is crucial for the achievement of missions and soldier safety.

The indicators with the lowest mean of 3.35 are interpreted as undecided, implying that "mandatory ROTC will not result in health issues due to training and exercise". While mandatory ROTC programs can provide excellent physical training experiences, the absence of health problems is uncertain. As stated by Nepomuceno (2023) military training can improve students' physical strength, but it must be well-designed, supervised, and tailored to their unique requirements and abilities to protect their safety and health.

The overall mean of 3.98 which was interpreted as agree indicated that the majority of respondents believe the program will improve their bodies as a result of physical activity.

Table 2. Possible Effects of Mandatory ROTC Program on Psychological Aspect

Statements	Mean	Interpretation
The program will not cause emotional exhaustion.	3.26	Undecided
Mandatory ROTC will not decrease students' motivation to attend to school.	3.56	Agree
Mandatory ROTC may increase self-confidence.	4.57	Strongly Agree
Mandatory ROTC can promote mental wellness.	4.06	Agree
Overall Mean	3.99	Agree

Table 2 shows the effects of mandatory ROTC on psychological aspects. The highest rank was "mandatory ROTC can improve self-confidence" with a mean of 4.57 interpreted as "strongly agree". This suggests that the majority of respondents completely agree that the ROTC program may increase their self-confidence. Pacatang and Montallana (2022) affirmed this statement and asserted that ROTC had assessed the usefulness of a simulation-based ROTC training intervention to improve tourniquet placement skill performance and self-confidence. A simulation-based ROTC curriculum led to a significant, consistent, and long-term increase in participants' tourniquet placement skill

competency and self-confidence. These gains were sustained by participants two to five months after initial training.

In contrast, the indicators with the lowest mean of 3.26 are interpreted as "undecided" and state that "the program will not be emotionally exhausting," implying that the intensity of ROTC training may differ. Some programs may have rigorous physical and mental demands while others may be less intense. The degree of emotional exhaustion can depend on the method of training and how well it aligns with a student's physical and emotional resilience. As stated by Manila Bulletin (2023) mandatory ROTC will worsen the mental health crisis in schools. Students already bear a mentally draining academic load and adding the mandatory ROTC program will affect not only their physical health but also their mental health.

Mandatory ROTC, as a supplementary education, may entail additional time and effort from students (Angeles, 2022). This will limit students' and teachers' opportunities for rest, enjoyment, family, and extra income. The program's physical demands may negatively affect the well-being of students who are already overburdened by the K-12 school's output-based curriculum.

Finally, the total weighted mean of 3.86 indicates that the majority of respondents believe that required ROTC contributes to increased self-confidence.

Figure 2. Possible Effects of Mandatory ROTC Program on Financial Aspect

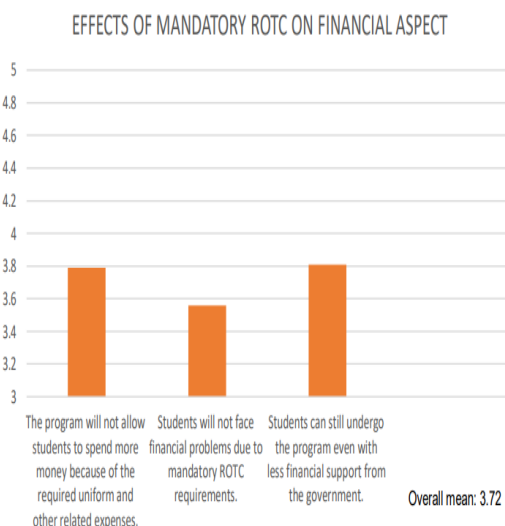


Figure 2 demonstrates the mean effect of the mandatory ROTC in terms of financial issues and the results show that the highest rank was "students can still participate in the program even with less financial support from the government" with a mean of 3.81, interpreted as "agree". It simply suggests that students might continue to pursue educational programs despite receiving reduced financial assistance from the government. Although funds from the government can help make education more inexpensive and accessible, it is not the only source of funding for education. Many students pursue their educational ambitions in a variety of ways

even when government funding is limited. According to Tactacon et.al (2023) even with minimal government assistance, students should research and explore all available solutions to make education more affordable.

Additionally, financial assistance services at educational institutions are capable of providing students with guidance and assistance to help them pay for their education. ROTC cadet officers who maintain a grade point average of at least 88 percent are eligible for scholarship rewards. The CSAFP Scholarship is given to students having a cumulative GPA of at least 94% (Nepomuceno, 2023).

On the contrary, the indicators that have the lowest mean of 3.56 and are interpreted as agree which means that "students will not face financial problems due to mandatory ROTC requirements". It implies that the financial impact of mandatory ROTC requirements on students can vary depending on several factors including the specific ROTC program, scholarships and financial incentives, and individual financial circumstances. It confirms the assertion of Acompañado et.al (2023) who stated that the ROTC provides scholarship benefits to qualifying student-cadets through a merit-based incentive program in exchange for an obligation of military service if given the opportunity, following graduation, serve in the reserve force or on active duty in the AFP.

Finally, the general weighted mean was 3.72 interpreted as agree which demonstrated that the majority of respondents agree that students can still undertake the program even with reduced financial support from the government.

Table 3. Possible Effects of Mandatory ROTC Program on Academic Aspects

Statements	Mean	Interpretation
Through this program, students will be more responsible in terms of their studies and being students.	4.15	Agree
Mandatory ROTC can improve your prospects of academic advancement or scholarships.	4.35	Agree
Students may manage or handle academic tasks even when the program is added to the curriculum.	3.72	Agree
Overall Mean	4.07	Agree

Table 3 shows the mean effect of mandatory ROTC on academic aspects and the highest rank was "mandatory ROTC can enhance your chances for academic promotion or scholarships". Typically, students need to maintain a certain level of academic performance to receive scholarships, so excelling in the academic coursework is essential to taking full advantage of these opportunities. With a

mean of 4.35 which was interpreted as "agree". It simply means that students feel the mandated ROTC program will provide them with possibilities such as academic advancement and scholarships. According to Tactacon et.al (2023) the ROTC program offers academic scholarships to those who meet the qualifications and standards to pursue further education and may provide the refinements required to increase their chances of success.

The indicators with the lowest mean of 3.72 interpreted as "agree" suggest that students can manage academic tasks even when additional programs such as mandatory ROTC are added to their curriculum. However, managing these additional responsibilities requires effective time management and organizational skills. This supports Acompanado et.al (2023) claim that the ROTC program promotes academic good time management which is linked to improved academic accomplishment. Despite decreasing levels of anxiety in students, many struggle to find a balance between their schoolwork and their personal life.

Finally, the general weighted mean of 4.07 interpreted as agree indicated that the majority of respondents believe that mandatory ROTC can improve the likelihood of academic advancement or scholarship.

Figure 3. Promotion of Nationalism and Patriotism

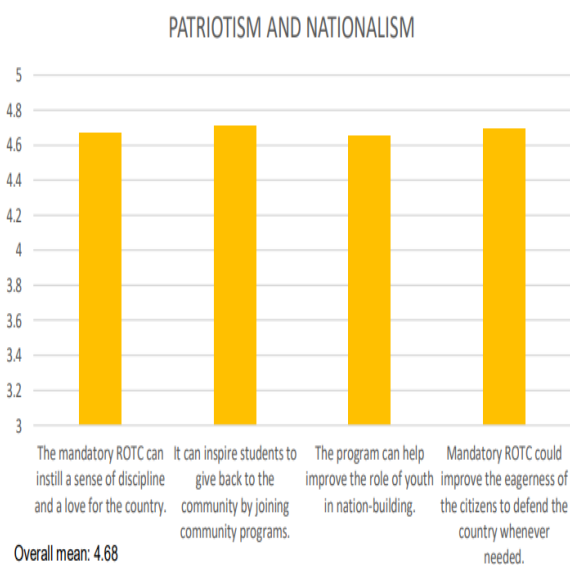


Figure 3 depicts the mean effect of mandatory ROTC on patriotism and nationalism and the results show that the highest rank was "it can inspire students to give back to the community by participating in community programs" with a mean of 4.71 interpreted as "strongly agree". It suggests that the program will inspire students to give back to their communities, educational institutions, and community organizations. The program can also give opportunities for community involvement, acknowledge and reward students' contributions, and provide direction and support to assist them in becoming involved. According to Angeles (2022) ROTC students can participate in community service initiatives such as clean-up campaigns, tree planting, and blood donation drives. Likewise,

Pacatang and Montellana (2022) states that R.A. 9163, or the NSTP Act comprised of three program components such as CWTS, LTS, and ROTC. The ROTC program aims to develop high school students' leadership abilities and expertise. It also aims to educate students on their rights, duties, and privileges while helping in community projects.

The lowest mean of 4.65 indicates strong agreement with the statement "the program can help improve the role of youth in nation-building". This suggests that students believe the mandatory ROTC program can educate young people about their roles and responsibilities in a democratic society. Participation in these programs can provide a deeper understanding of government and civics. Tullao (2019) describes ROTC as an educational program that provides both leadership and practical skills.

Sytangco (2019) echoed this statement arguing that in order to maximize the potential of youth in nation-building they must be provided with the proper assistance, resources, and mentorship. Furthermore, governments, educational institutions, and community organizations should actively involve young people in decision-making processes and provide forums for their perspectives to be heard on a local, regional, and national scale. Nations that invest in youth involvement and development may harness the energy and ingenuity of the next generation to address urgent issues and build a better future.

The overall weighted mean was 4.68 which was interpreted as strongly agree indicates that the majority of respondents believe mandatory ROTC can encourage them to give back to the community by participating in community programs.

Table 4. Advantages of Mandatory ROTC

Statements	Mean	Interpretation
The mandatory ROTC can provide students with tools, training, and experiences that can aid their success in any competitive environment.	4.69	Strongly Agree
The program of study helps students improve their teamwork skills.	4.92	Strongly Agree
It can teach students about leadership roles.	4.90	Strongly Agree
The program enables students to do community service better.	4.88	Strongly Agree
Mandatory ROTC can offer military education to students in order to mobilize them for national defense preparation.	4.82	Strongly Agree

Overall Mean	4.84	Strongly Agree
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Table 4 shows the mean of the benefits of the mandatory ROTC program with "the program can enhance the student's ability to work as a team" receiving a mean of 4.92 indicating "strongly agree". This indicates that the majority of students focus on the ability to operate in groups is critical. ROTC teaches students leadership qualities such as decision-making, teamwork, and effective communication. These qualities apply to leadership roles in community service where volunteers must be coordinated and motivated.

Massey-Torres (2023) claimed that there is an intricate structure of the organization and numerous variables are involved in communication procedures, especially in the military. Effective communication in ROTC operations requires significant research to investigate the use of team building and cross-cultural communication among ROTC participants. The fundamental argument for the claim is on the important components that lead to communication methods that help ROTC activities run smoothly. Goal-oriented communication techniques, styles of communication, motivational communication strategies, and consensus-building communication tactics emerged as wide communication techniques for team development.

In contrast, the indicators with the lowest ranking have a weighted mean of 4.69 and are understood as "strongly agree" which suggests that "the mandatory ROTC can give students the tools, training, and experiences that will help them succeed in any competitive environment". This implies that mandatory ROTC programs ensure a steady stream of trained individuals who can survive in any competitive environment such as the military. This can strengthen a nation's defense preparedness and provide a larger pool of potential recruits in times of need. Estribor et.al (2022) state that the fundamental goal of ROTC is to train and prepare Filipinos to defend their country as stipulated by the Philippine Constitution if we need to defend the state if necessary.

The Philippine ROTC aims to train students for national defense readiness is achieved through military education and training. According to Alvarez (2022), the AFP has consistently advocated for a military training program as part of the school curriculum promotes nationalism and patriotism that will prepare students for national defense.

The overall weighted mean of 4.84, interpreted as strongly agree indicates that the majority of respondents strongly agree that the educational program may improve students' abilities to work as a team.

Figure 4. Possible Programs That Can Be Implemented in Relation to Mandatory ROTC

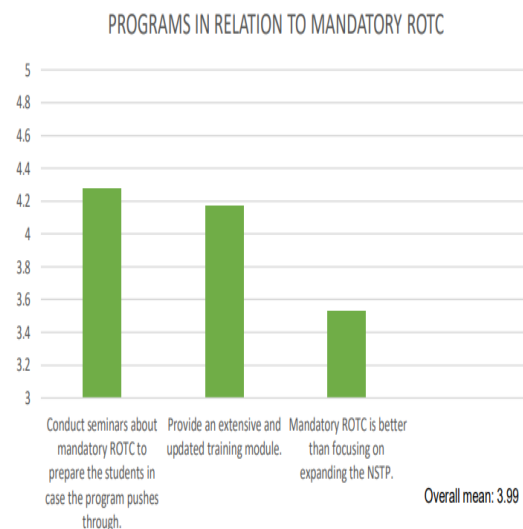


Figure 4 illustrates the mean of programs that can be implemented in connection to mandatory ROTC as well as the results. The highest rank was "conduct seminars about mandatory ROTC to prepare the students in case the program pushes through" having a mean of 4.28 which was translated as "agree". It means that the majority of respondents want ROTC seminars to help them prepare in case the program is implemented. Since most of them are unaware of the mandatory ROTC and the things that they may encounter, having a seminar prior will help them prepare for what to do, and if someone explains about the ROTC, they will know what to expect when they undertake the program. Attending a seminar or workshop with a well-known speaker might provide students with insights into their work processes. Keeping up with professional institutions and new discoveries in their sector is beneficial (Sytagco, 2019).

Meanwhile, the lowest mean is 3.53 and is translated as "agree" which signifies that "mandatory ROTC is better to focusing on expanding the NSTP". This suggests that students may have conflicting emotions about mandatory ROTC and the NSTP. The NSTP offers similar benefits to ROTC by allowing students to select the optimal component for their needs. The NSTP law (2001) aims to recognize the importance of youth in nation-building, raise awareness, and improve their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social well-being. The program aims to promote patriotism and nationalism among youths as well as encourage participation in public and civic issues. Tactacon et.al (2023) proposes extending the NSTP rather than making ROTC mandatory. The NSTP should engage students in countering disinformation, enhancing cybersecurity, data science and technology, and meeting the country's health requirements.

Lastly, the weighted mean of 3.99 indicates that most respondents agree that mandatory ROTC seminars should be conducted initially to prepare students for the program.

CONCLUSION

The revival of the mandatory ROTC program in the Philippines became one of the country's most contentious issues, eliciting



conflicting reactions from the government, critics, and the general public. However, it is critical to determine the response of potential program participants, as they will be the ones who will most likely go through the program.

An assessment of the response of college students in the Philippines found that they support the revival of mandatory ROTC due to its perceived benefits. Tullao (2019) defines ROTC as an educational program that provides leadership and practical skills. This program offers military training to students, preparing them for disaster response, relief operations, and rehabilitation, in addition to improving physical strength (Nepomuceno, 2023).

As stated by many scholars, the proposed mandatory ROTC program in the Philippines benefits both students and the community. Caliwan (2019) argues that this initiative benefits both students and the community by providing benefits beyond the mandated tasks. Moreover, according to Angeles (2022), participants can participate in community service activities like as clean-up initiatives, tree-planting, and blood donation drives.

This research also found that the benefits of the program given to selected college students have no substantial impact on students' physical, psychological, intellectual, or financial discipline. However, according to Estribor et.al (2023), the required ROTC program has a history of hazing and abuse, making power tripping a risk for physical violence. The ROTC program has faced criticism for its persistent use of violence against cadets. The respondents stated that before beginning the program, students should attend a seminar to learn about what they need to know and the potential problems they would face.

The respondents strongly believe attending a seminar before the mandatory ROTC program can help students prepare for potential problems and tasks. They support reviving the mandatory ROTC program in the Philippines but recommend a seminar to ensure its effectiveness. The benefits of the program may outweigh the costs, leading members to join the mandatory ROTC program.

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