

The Best Practices of the Topnotcher of Regional Training Center 2

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the best practices, challenges, and coping strategies of topnotchers at Regional Training Center 2 (RTC-2) during the Public Basic Recruit Course (PBRC). Using a qualitative thematic research design, seven (7) topnotchers from RTC-2 Batch 2023 and Batch 2024 were purposively selected based on their official recognition as top-performing trainees who excelled in the academic and non-academic components of the training. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that topnotchers engaged in deliberate preparation before and during training, particularly contingency preparation, spiritual strength, physical agility preparation, and goal-setting. They encountered psycho-emotional stress, physical hardship, and the overall rigor of the training environment. To manage these challenges, participants employed cognitive reframing, spiritual reliance, collaborative resilience, and purpose-driven discipline. Their achievement was further supported by a solid foundation, positive mindset, structured discipline, and resilient preparation. Overall, the findings indicate that topnotcher achievement was not attributed to a single practice but to the integration of mental, physical, spiritual, and behavioral preparation. The study recommends strengthening academic support, mentorship, and documentation of best practices to assist future police trainees in managing the demands of basic recruit training and pursuing outstanding performance.

Keywords: Police Training, Topnotchers, Coping Strategies, Preparation, Resilience, Public Basic Recruit Course, Regional Training Center

INTRODUCTION

The Public Safety Basic Recruit Course (PSBRC) serves as a fundamental component in the transition of civilians into professional law enforcement personnel. It provides police trainees with the knowledge, skills, discipline, and values necessary to meet the demands of police service. The training is rigorous and requires determination, resilience, discipline, and effective preparation not only to complete the program successfully but also to achieve outstanding performance.

Regional Training Center 2 (RTC-2) in Cauayan City, Isabela, serves as a regional training facility for police recruits in Region 2 (Cagayan Valley). Its training environment provides recruits with structured academic instruction, physical conditioning, practical activities, and professional development. The implementation of the PSBRC is guided by policies and standards established by the National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM) and implemented through the PNP training system, including NAPOLCOM Memorandum Circular No. 2023-056.

The PSBRC is designed to develop the core competencies required for effective police service. While the curriculum provides essential operational preparation, the development of professional competence, integrity, and accountability remains important in preparing personnel for the changing demands of law enforcement. The performance of graduates reflects the importance of training in developing the competencies required for police work (Ledesma & Tinagan, 2020). Thus, police training extends beyond completing prescribed requirements and contributes to the development of personnel capable of performing their duties responsibly and effectively.

NAPOLCOM Memorandum Circular No. 2023-056 prescribes a standardized Public Safety Basic Recruit Course across Regional Training Centers (RTCs), covering academic and non-academic competencies. Despite common training requirements, however, trainees may demonstrate varying levels of performance, with some achieving exceptional results. This variation suggests that standardized training inputs alone may not fully

explain outstanding performance. Individual factors such as resilience, emotional regulation, persistence, and active approaches to learning and skill application may also influence how trainees respond to demanding training environments (Blumberg et al., 2019).

Regional topnotchers represent a particularly important group for understanding exceptional performance in police training. These trainees demonstrate outstanding achievement across academic and non-academic components, including classroom activities, practical exercises, physical training, and other performance requirements. Their experiences may provide insights into how trainees manage physical and psychological demands, organize their preparation, maintain discipline, and apply knowledge under pressure. However, the specific criteria used by Regional Training Center 2 to determine final rankings and the overall topnotcher remain confidential in accordance with institutional policies. Therefore, this study focuses on the practices, experiences, and strategies reported by topnotchers rather than on the institutional ranking system itself.

The study is also aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16), which promotes peaceful societies, access to justice, and effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions. In police training, the development of competent, disciplined, resilient, and ethical personnel contributes to stronger law enforcement institutions. Understanding practices associated with exceptional training performance may therefore contribute to broader efforts to develop personnel capable of upholding public safety, accountability, and the rule of law.

Although previous studies have examined factors associated with academic performance, resilience, and success among students and trainees, limited research has specifically explored the experiences and best practices of police-training topnotchers, particularly in the Philippine context. Existing literature provides limited understanding of how exceptionally performing trainees prepare for demanding training requirements, manage challenges, sustain motivation, and develop practices that support high performance. This gap highlights the need to examine the experiences and strategies associated with outstanding achievement in police training.

Therefore, this study aimed to explore the best practices, preparation strategies, coping mechanisms, and personal attributes of topnotchers at Regional Training Center 2 during their Basic Recruit Training. It specifically sought to understand the practices they employed, the challenges they encountered, and the strategies they used to sustain their performance. The findings may provide an evidence-informed reference for future police trainees, instructors, and training administrators in developing approaches that support academic achievement, physical preparedness, practical competence, resilience, and professional development.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Goal-Setting Theory, Adult Learning Theory, Coping–Hardiness Theory, and Experiential Learning Theory, which collectively provide a framework for understanding the preparation, learning, coping, and performance of RTC-2 topnotchers during the Basic Recruit Course (BRC).

Goal-Setting Theory, developed by Locke and Latham, posits that specific and challenging goals can enhance motivation and performance. Latham (2023) emphasized that clearly defined goals provide direction and encourage individuals to sustain effort toward desired outcomes. This theory is relevant to the present study because participants described goal-setting as an important preparation practice, particularly their intention to excel and attain topnotcher status. Their goals provided direction for their academic preparation, physical conditioning, and disciplined behavior throughout training.

Adult Learning Theory provides a framework for understanding how trainees actively participate in their own learning. Adult learners are generally viewed as self-directed and capable of drawing on prior experiences, reflection, and interaction with others to facilitate learning (Hanna et al., 2017). This perspective is applicable to police training, where learning occurs through classroom instruction, practical exercises, peer interaction, and the application of knowledge to training situations. The participants' experiences suggest that their performance was supported by active engagement, self-directed preparation, and learning through practical training experiences.

Coping–Hardiness Theory explains how individuals manage stressful and demanding situations through adaptive coping and psychological resilience. Hardiness involves commitment, control, and a tendency to view difficult situations as challenges that can be managed. Allison et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of adaptive coping in managing stress and maintaining well-being. This theory is particularly relevant to the present study because the participants encountered psycho-emotional stress, physical hardship, and the overall rigor of residential training. Their use of cognitive reframing, spiritual reliance, collaborative resilience, and purpose-driven discipline reflects adaptive responses that helped them remain engaged despite these challenges.

Finally, Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), developed by Kolb (2017), explains learning as a continuous process involving concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. The BRC provides an experiential learning environment through physical conditioning, academic instruction, drills, simulations, and other practical activities. The participants' experiences indicate that they learned from challenges, reflected on their experiences, adjusted their approaches, and applied these lessons to subsequent training situations. Thus, ELT helps explain how repeated experiences and adaptation contributed to their development and performance.

Taken together, these theories provide complementary explanations of topnotcher achievement. Goal-Setting Theory explains the role of purposeful goals and motivation; Adult Learning Theory explains self-directed and experience-based learning; Coping–Hardiness Theory explains resilience and adaptive responses to training stress; and Experiential Learning Theory explains how experience and reflection contribute to continuous improvement. Collectively, they provide a theoretical basis for examining how deliberate preparation, adaptive coping, disciplined behavior, and learning through experience contributed to the exceptional performance of RTC-2 topnotchers.

Research Questions

This study aimed to explore the specific preparation practices, experiences, and personal attributes that enabled the topnotchers of Regional Training Center 2 to achieve outstanding performance in the Basic Recruit Training. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. How did the topnotchers of Regional Training Center 2 prepare for their Basic Recruit Training?
2. What challenges did the topnotchers encounter during their training?
3. What coping strategies did the topnotchers employ to overcome these challenges?
4. How did their preparation practices and coping strategies contribute to their achievement as topnotchers?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design using thematic analysis to explore the preparation practices, challenges, coping strategies, and experiences of topnotchers during their Basic Recruit Training at Regional Training Center 2 (RTC 2), Cauayan City, Isabela, Philippines. The participants consisted of seven (7) topnotchers from Batch 2023 and Batch 2024. They were purposively selected based on their official recognition as top-performing trainees who attained topnotcher status through their performance in the academic and non-academic components of the Basic Recruit Course. A researcher developed semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions was used to gather data regarding their preparation practices, challenges, coping strategies, and experiences during training. Follow-up questions were asked when clarification or elaboration was necessary.

Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the appropriate authority, and the purpose and procedures of the study were explained to the participants. Informed consent was obtained before participation. Interview questions were provided in advance, and participants responded through phone calls or voice messages at their convenience. All information obtained from the participants was treated confidentially. The responses were transcribed and analyzed through thematic analysis. The researchers repeatedly reviewed the data, identified

meaningful statements, assigned codes, and grouped related codes into themes representing preparation practices, challenges, coping strategies, and perceived contributors to outstanding performance. The themes were reviewed to ensure that they accurately reflected the participants' experiences and remained grounded in the collected data.

Ethical principles were observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to decline or withdraw without penalty. Their identities and personal information were kept confidential, and the collected data were used solely for research purposes. The findings were reported accurately and objectively, and research data were securely handled and disposed of after completion of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Preparation Of Rtc-2 Topnotchers Before And During Basic Recruit Training

I. Contingency Preparation emerged as an important practice among the RTC-2 topnotchers. The participants generally described mentally preparing themselves for difficult, unexpected, and demanding situations during Basic Recruit Training. Participant 6 expressed this practice: *"I need to be prepared first, whether physical or emotional, kumbaga kinausap ko sarili ko na the worst is yet to come, tulad ng lagi kong sinasabi na expect the worst."*

The findings reveal that anticipating difficulties helped them develop psychological readiness and realistic expectations about training demands. Rather than viewing challenging activities as unexpected obstacles, they regarded them as part of the training process. This mindset supported their adaptability, persistence, and continued focus despite demanding situations. The finding is consistent with the Coping–Hardiness perspective, which emphasizes adaptive coping and commitment when facing challenges. It also aligns with Jensen et al. (2020), who highlighted the role of mental preparation in managing stressors and maintaining performance in demanding environments. Thus, contingency preparation appeared to complement physical preparation by helping the topnotchers remain psychologically prepared for the challenges of Basic Recruit Training.

II. Spiritual Strength. The participants generally described prayer and faith as practices that helped them remain focused and emotionally composed during the demanding phases of Basic Recruit Training. Participant 3 expressed this experience by stating, *"God is truly the only one you can hold onto during times when you feel like you can no longer go on."*

The findings indicate that spirituality provided emotional support when they experienced fatigue, pressure, and difficult training situations. Prayer was also practiced consistently as part of their daily routine. Participant 7 described this practice: *"During BRC ayun lang bago umpisahan ang araw sa loob ng training camp pray lang nang pray."* (During the BRC, before starting the day inside the training camp, I just prayed and prayed.) These accounts indicate that spiritual practices were not merely occasional responses to difficulties but were incorporated into the participants' daily preparation and coping routines.

This finding is consistent with Toto Ngadiman et al. (2023), who reported that spiritual practices may support balance and concentration among PNP personnel. It also corresponds with Captari et al. (2018), who highlighted the potential role of religious and spiritual coping in managing stress and emotional difficulties. In the present study, faith and prayer appeared to provide the topnotchers with emotional support and a sense of strength when confronted with demanding training experiences. Thus, spiritual strength complemented their physical and psychological preparation and formed part of their overall coping practices during Basic Recruit Training.

III. Physical Agility Preparation. The participants generally emphasized the importance of developing physical fitness before entering Basic Recruit Training through running, strength exercises, and other activities related to the physical requirements of the course. Participant 7 described deliberately exceeding the required standards: *"Before kami pumasok ng training... bini-beat ko yung 21 mins ng 3km tapos yung 35 na sit ups ginagawa kong 50 hangga't kaya ko ganon."* (Before we entered training, I aimed to beat the 21-minute requirement for the 3-kilometer run and increased my sit-ups from the required 35 to 50 as much as I could.)

The reported experiences emphasize that physical preparation began before formal training and involved preparing beyond the minimum requirements. They incorporated running, workouts, and other physical activities into their routines to develop the fitness needed for the demands of the course. They also recognized the connection between physical conditioning and mental readiness, suggesting that being physically prepared helped them manage demanding activities and maintain focus during training. This finding is consistent with Korre et al. (2019), who associated physical fitness at entry with successful police academy completion, and with Marks et al. (2022), who emphasized the importance of comprehensive physical fitness preparation among law-enforcement recruits. Thus, proactive physical conditioning was an important preparation practice among the RTC-2 topnotchers before and during Basic Recruit Training.

IV. Goal-Setting emerged as an important preparation practice among the RTC-2 topnotchers. The participants generally entered Basic Recruit Training with clear performance objectives that guided their preparation, effort, and persistence throughout the course. Participant 4 described how becoming a topnotcher became a specific goal despite coming from a non-criminology background: “Sa pagiging topnotcher siguro ang ginawa ko siyang goal na kahit non-crim ako gusto kong maging top yun lang ang pinasok ko sa isip ko gusto ko maging topnotcher.” (*Regarding being a topnotcher, what I did was make it a goal. Even though I am a non-criminology graduate, I put it in my mind that I wanted to be a topnotcher.*)

The participants’ experiences reveal that having a clear goal provided direction and motivation throughout the training. Their goals encouraged them to remain focused on their academic, physical, and practical responsibilities despite the demanding conditions of the course. This finding is consistent with Goal-Setting Theory, which proposes that specific and challenging goals can direct effort, strengthen motivation, and promote persistence (Locke & Latham, 2019). It also aligns with Saks (2024), who emphasized the relationship between clear performance goals, motivation, and achievement. Thus, goal-setting appeared to provide the topnotchers with a clear sense of direction that supported their sustained effort and pursuit of outstanding performance during Basic Recruit Training.

Challenges Encountered By The Topnotchers In Their Training

I. Psycho-Emotional Stress emerged as a major challenge among the RTC-2 topnotchers during Basic Recruit Training. The participants commonly described family separation, low morale, self-doubt, pressure, fatigue, and emotional difficulties as experiences that tested their ability to remain focused and persistent throughout the training. Participant 6 described the difficulty of coping when fatigue and lack of sleep accumulated: “Siguro sa emotional breakdown kasi pag talaga nagsabay-sabay na yung antok at pagod, mapapatanong ka nalang kung kaya pa ba ganun.” (*I think the emotional breakdown, because when lack of sleep and total tiredness hit you all at once, you can't help but ask yourself if you can still continue.*)

The findings indicate that psycho-emotional stress was closely associated with the demanding conditions of training and separation from familiar sources of support. Several participants reported experiencing low morale because of being away from their families, while others described self-doubt and pressure when facing fatigue and demanding training situations. These experiences indicate that the challenges of Basic Recruit Training extended beyond physical demands and required participants to manage emotional and psychological pressures while maintaining their responsibilities.

The finding is consistent with research indicating that separation from family and prolonged exposure to demanding training conditions can contribute to psychological stress among individuals in intensive training environments (Johannessen et al., 2017). It also corresponds with Rodrigues et al. (2024), who identified emotional exhaustion and occupational stress as important concerns among police personnel and recruits. From the perspective of Coping–Hardiness Theory, these experiences highlight the importance of adaptive coping and psychological resilience in responding to demanding circumstances. Thus, psycho-emotional stress represented a significant challenge that required the topnotchers to develop persistence and adaptive responses while continuing to meet the requirements of Basic Recruit Training.

II. Holistic Training Rigor reflects the simultaneous physical, psychological, emotional, and academic demands of Basic Recruit Training. The participants described difficulties related to limited sleep, early

schedules, reduced personal comfort, physical conditioning, leadership responsibilities, and the adjustment from civilian life to a highly structured training environment. Participant 5 summarized the overall experience: *“The challenges were very difficult, lalo na sa simula culture shock malala, physically exhausting, mentally stressful, and emotionally demanding. The training tested my discipline, endurance, and commitment every single day.”*

The participants’ responses indicate that the difficulty of training resulted not from a single challenge but from the convergence of multiple demands that had to be managed simultaneously. Physical exhaustion was accompanied by psychological pressure, emotional adjustment, limited personal time, and the need to maintain academic and practical performance. Participants also described differences in their experiences based on their backgrounds and responsibilities, including the additional demands associated with leadership roles and adapting to physical requirements.

These findings suggest that success in Basic Recruit Training required adaptability across multiple dimensions rather than competence in only one area. This is consistent with Korre et al. (2019), who emphasized the importance of adequate preparation and physical fitness in police academy training. The findings also support the perspective of grit, which emphasizes sustained effort and perseverance toward long-term goals (Duckworth et al., 2007). For the RTC-2 topnotchers, adapting to the combined physical, psychological, emotional, and academic demands of training was an important part of their experience and required continued discipline, persistence, and commitment.

Coping Mechanisms Of Regional Topnotchers

I. Cognitive Reframing. The participants generally described changing how they viewed difficult experiences by considering them temporary, purposeful, and necessary components of Basic Recruit Training. Participant 1 explained how optimism and self-talk helped maintain motivation during challenging situations: *“Siguro yung pagiging optimistic ko, lagi kong sinasabi sa sarili ko na matatapos din to, makikita ko rin lahat ng mga mahal ko sa buhay, saglit lang to, and lahat ng to is part of the training, lahat ng to may kabuluhan, lahat ng to may ibig sabihin.”* (*Being optimistic, I constantly reminded myself: it will end, I will see all my loved ones again, it is only temporary, and all of this is part of the training and has purpose and meaning.*)

The findings demonstrate that reframing difficult experiences helped them manage low morale, self-doubt, and the pressure associated with training. Instead of focusing solely on the discomfort of demanding activities, they interpreted these experiences as temporary and meaningful steps toward completing their training goals. This perspective enabled them to maintain motivation and continue performing their responsibilities despite challenging conditions. The finding is consistent with resilience research, which emphasizes the role of adaptive cognitive responses in helping individuals manage adversity and maintain functioning (Masten, 2018). It also corresponds with the 4Cs model of mental toughness, particularly the dimensions of control, commitment, challenge, and confidence, which emphasize constructive responses to demanding situations. Thus, cognitive reframing served as an adaptive coping practice that helped the topnotchers maintain motivation and persistence throughout Basic Recruit Training.

II. Spiritual reliance emerged as an important coping mechanism among the RTC-2 topnotchers. The participants generally described prayer and trust in God as sources of strength and emotional support when they experienced physical fatigue, psychological pressure, and difficult training situations. Participant 7 described the role of faith in coping with the demands of training: *“Before I entered, I already decided that my goal was the training, and I did not fall short before or during; the dear Lord simply granted it — it’s really that you trusted everything to God. My coping strategies are that phrase ‘just accept,’ ‘follow and follow until you follow no more,’ and my prayers are always what push my body, which is already so weak, to still do what I need to fulfill inside the training.”*

It suggest that spiritual reliance provided emotional stability and a sense of support during periods of difficulty. Prayer was not described merely as an occasional response to stress but as a regular practice that helped participants maintain focus, acceptance, and motivation throughout training. Their trust in God also appeared to complement other coping strategies, particularly acceptance and persistence, by providing a sense of meaning and reassurance when situations were difficult to control.

This finding is consistent with Captari et al. (2018), who highlighted the role of religious and spiritual coping in responding to adversity and supporting psychological adjustment. It also aligns with Toto Ngadiman et al. (2023), who reported that spiritual practices such as prayer may support balance, concentration, and resilience among Philippine National Police personnel. Thus, spiritual reliance served as an important source of emotional support and meaning that complemented the topnotchers' other coping practices during Basic Recruit Training.

III. Collaborative Resilience. The participants generally emphasized that peer relationships provided emotional support, encouragement, and motivation during physically and psychologically demanding periods of Basic Recruit Training. Participant 1 described how interaction with classmates helped them manage difficult training activities: “Ayun, habang minamalas kami that time, naguusap na lang kami, nagkwewentuhan kami nung mga bagay na masaya, mga bagay na memorable — para lang maibsan yung sakit or yung hapdi na dulot nung mga physical exercises namin. At syempre think positive lang na malalampasan lahat ng iyon.” *(In the middle of those difficult situations, we would talk and share happy and memorable stories to ease the pain or discomfort caused by our physical exercises. And of course, we would think positively that we would overcome all of it.)*

The reported experiences emphasize that peer interaction helped reduce feelings of isolation and maintain morale during challenging situations. Sharing conversations, humor, encouragement, and positive perspectives allowed participants to support one another while coping with the demands of training. Some participants also described extending their own coping strategies to classmates who experienced low morale, indicating that peer support functioned not only as emotional assistance but also as a form of collective coping. Southwick et al. (2017), emphasized the importance of supportive relationships in promoting resilience and buffering the effects of stress. In the present study, peer relationships provided a valuable source of encouragement and belonging, particularly when participants were separated from their families and familiar support systems. Thus, collaborative resilience complemented the participants' individual coping strategies by creating a supportive environment in which they could collectively manage the challenges of Basic Recruit Training.

IV. Purpose-driven discipline emerged as one of the coping mechanisms used by the RTC-2 topnotchers. The participants shared that proper time management, planning, and having clear goals helped them manage the demands of training. Participant 2 stated: “*First, it is your guide for your better action. It helps you to manage your time in a shorter way. Most is in time management: the more you have a strategy or strategic plan, the more you have time to keep. By following your plan, your strategy will be reflected in the outcome of your actions.*”

This response shows that planning helped the participants organize their time and determine what needed to be accomplished despite the demanding training schedule. Their responses further indicated that having a clear goal, particularly the desire to become a topnotcher, encouraged them to remain focused and disciplined. Time management therefore became not only a way of organizing daily activities but also a means of maintaining their commitment to their goals. It supports Locke and Latham (2019), who explained that clear and challenging goals can guide effort and encourage persistence. In this study, the topnotchers' use of planning, time management, and goal orientation helped them remain focused on their responsibilities despite the pressures of Basic Recruit Training.

Other Factors Toward Topnotcher Achievement

I. Solid Foundation. The participants generally described their preparation, daily routines, and coping practices as interconnected factors that helped them manage the demands of Basic Recruit Training. Participant 2 explained: “*It serves as my strength. My preparations and strategies are my foundation to achieve being a topnotcher.*”

This statement reflects the participants' view that preparation provided the basis for their performance during training. Their experiences showed that physical conditioning, goal-setting, time management, daily routines, and coping strategies worked together rather than as separate practices. The preparation they developed before entering the training helped them adjust to its demands, while the coping strategies they used during difficult situations enabled them to remain focused and continue performing their responsibilities.

This finding is consistent with Korre et al. (2019), who emphasized the importance of adequate preparation and physical readiness among police recruits. In the present study, preparation was not limited to physical conditioning but included mental readiness, discipline, planning, and goal orientation. These practices provided the participants with a foundation that supported their ability to manage challenges and maintain consistent performance throughout the training. Thus, the achievement of the RTC-2 topnotchers appeared to be the result of sustained preparation and the effective application of coping strategies throughout the Basic Recruit Training.

II. Positive mindset orientation emerged as another factor contributing to the achievement of the RTC-2 topnotchers. The participants generally described optimism and positive thinking as ways of maintaining focus despite fatigue, homesickness, and the demanding conditions of Basic Recruit Training. Participant 1 explained: “Nakatulong yung preparation at coping strategies... dahil wala nang oras mag-isip ng negative habang nasa training — halo-halo na yung puyat, pagod, gutom, at homesick. Kaya pagiging optimistic at positive thinking yung naging way para mag-excel.” (*The preparation and coping strategies helped because there was no more time to think negatively during training—the lack of sleep, fatigue, hunger, and homesickness were all present. Being optimistic and thinking positively became my way to excel.*)

The findings indicate that maintaining a positive outlook helped them manage difficult experiences and remain focused on their responsibilities. Their responses also indicate that positive thinking was most effective when combined with preparation, discipline, and effort. Rather than eliminating the challenges of training, optimism helped the participants maintain motivation and continue working toward their goals despite these difficulties.

This finding is consistent with Santos (2024), which identified mental toughness and emotional stability as important qualities for effective law-enforcement performance. In the present study, positive mindset orientation complemented the participants' preparation and coping strategies by helping them maintain focus and persistence throughout Basic Recruit Training.

III. Structured discipline. The participants generally emphasized the importance of maintaining consistent daily routines, managing time effectively, and following established training requirements. Participant 6 described the contribution of his routine to his achievement: “Yung daily routine ko nagbunga ng maganda — maganda ibig kong sabihin... yung naging topnotcher — yan yung naging resulta.” (*My daily routine produced a good result. What I mean by good is exactly what you are mentioning—becoming a topnotcher was the result.*)

The participants' experiences reveal that consistent routines helped them organize their activities and maintain discipline throughout the training period. Rather than relying solely on motivation, they developed regular practices that supported their academic, physical, and training responsibilities. This consistency allowed them to maintain their focus and respond to daily demands in an organized manner. The finding suggests that structured discipline was closely connected with the participants' preparation and coping practices, particularly in managing time and maintaining commitment to their goals.

This finding is consistent with research emphasizing the role of disciplined time management and behavioral consistency in achieving goals in demanding performance environments (Rsisinternational, 2024). In the present study, structured discipline provided the participants with a consistent framework for managing their daily responsibilities and sustaining their pursuit of topnotcher achievement.

IV. Resilient preparation refers to the ability of trainees to accept and adapt to difficulties encountered during training. The findings showed that topnotchers prepared themselves not only for expected demands but also for situations that were difficult or beyond their control. Participant 7 emphasized the importance of acceptance: “Para sakin nakatulong talaga yung pagtanggap ko nalang kung ano nangyayare sa loob ng training. Lahat ng paghihirap ko sa loob part of the training... ayun isa sa mga nakatulong saakin.” (*For me, what truly helped was simply accepting whatever was happening to me inside the training. All the hardships I experienced were part of the training, and that was one of the things that helped me.*)

This statement suggests that acceptance helped the participant adjust to the difficulties of the Basic Recruit Training rather than allowing these experiences to negatively affect her performance. Viewing hardships as part of the training enabled her to remain focused and continue performing despite unexpected demands. This finding

indicates that resilient preparation involved psychological readiness and adaptability, particularly when trainees encountered conditions that differed from their expectations. It is consistent with Rodrigues et al. (2024), who emphasized the importance of adaptive coping in managing changing stressors among police personnel.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the achievement of RTC 2 topnotchers in the Public Basic Recruit Course (PBRC) was shaped by deliberate preparation, effective coping, and consistent personal discipline. Before and during training, the participants practiced psychological preparation, spiritual reliance, physical conditioning, and goal-setting to develop readiness for the demands of the program. They encountered significant psycho-emotional stress, physical hardship, and the rigorous demands of residential training, but managed these challenges through cognitive reframing, spiritual reliance, peer support, and purpose-driven discipline. Overall, their experiences indicate that topnotcher achievement was not attributed to a single practice but to the integration of mental, physical, spiritual, and behavioral strategies. These findings suggest that purposeful preparation and adaptive coping can help future police trainees manage training demands and pursue outstanding performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

- 1. Establish a Recruit Academic Support Program at RTC-2.** RTC-2 may provide recruits with standardized learning materials, digital resources, and scheduled academic consultation sessions based on the subjects and competencies of the Basic Recruit Course. The program may be coordinated by designated instructors and supported by existing training facilities and learning resources to minimize additional costs. Potential barriers may include limited access to updated materials, instructor workload, and restrictions on the use of digital devices during training. Its effectiveness may be evaluated through recruit participation rates, utilization of learning materials, academic performance, and changes in assessment scores before and after implementation.
- 2. Implement a Topnotcher Mentorship Program.** RTC-2 may organize structured mentoring sessions in which previous topnotchers share their preparation practices, time-management strategies, coping mechanisms, and experiences with incoming recruits. Mentors may be selected from qualified former topnotchers, while training personnel may facilitate the sessions to ensure that shared practices remain appropriate to official training policies. Resources required may include meeting space, communication materials, and designated personnel. Possible barriers include the availability of former topnotchers and scheduling conflicts with training activities. Effectiveness may be assessed through mentorship participation, recruit satisfaction, adoption of recommended practices, and improvements in academic, physical, and overall training performance.
- 3. Develop a PNP Best Practices Documentation and Dissemination Program.** The Philippine National Police, through appropriate training authorities, may systematically document effective preparation and coping practices demonstrated by high-performing recruits across Regional Training Centers. Information may be collected through post-training interviews, reflective reports, and structured documentation of successful practices, subject to applicable confidentiality and institutional policies. The program would require designated personnel, standardized documentation tools, and secure data management procedures. Potential barriers include limited personnel, inconsistent documentation across training centers, and restrictions concerning confidential training information. Program effectiveness may be measured through the number of documented best practices, number of training centers adopting validated practices, frequency of dissemination, and changes in trainee performance indicators following implementation.

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