Defending People and Property: A Phenomenological Study on the Experiences of Security Personnel in Commercial Areas

[1]Rodito U. Pantaleon, [2]Dodelon F. Sabijon, [3]Carl Jay D. Mahinay, [4]Mohamadsamer P.Mamasalagat

[1]College of Criminology, Colegio De San Antonio De Padua,,6004, Guinsay, Danao City, Philippines.

[2]Graduate School, University of Cebu Main Campus,6000, Sanciangko Street, Cebu City , Philippine

[3,4]College of Criminal Justice Education, Pagadian Capitol College Inc., 7016, Tuburan District Pagadian City , Philippines.

ABSTRACT

The study explored the lived experiences of security officers in commercial establishments in Metro Cebu. The study delved into the positive and negative experiences, challenges encountered, and aspiration of the informants. The study used the phenomenological research design with the used of an interview guide and voice recorder. The twelve (12) informants were all agency security officers of commercial establishments in Metro Cebu. Open-ended questions and follow-up questions were used to extract in-depth narratives. The interview process comprises the individual interview and the focused group discussion (FGD). After data gathering, the participants' recorded responses were transcribed and translated using Colaizzi's methodological approach.

Eleven (11) emergent themes were developed as follows: on the positive experiences of the informants, two (2) themes are derived as follows: Experiences and Good Leadership Training Transforms Lives; and Well-Rounded Security Officer has Their Strategic Thinking for Planning And Proper Security Operation Execution. On the negative experiences, four (4) themes are derived as follows: Behavioral Conflict and Decentralized Organizational Communication Affects the Operation's Performance; Multi Responsibilities and No Security and Safety Manual is a Dilemma in Retail and Mall Security; No Security Contract, Recruitment Standard, and Lack of Workforce are Security Agency Lapses; and Abide the RA 5487 Law and Human Rights When Making an Arrest. On the challenges encountered, three (3) theres are created as follows: Flexible Security Principles is Vulnerable in Retail and Mall Operation; Poor Decision-Making of Security Issues and Lack of Training is Cost Ineffectiveness; and Observance of Human Rights: Code of Honors and Ethics. On the informants' aspiration, two (2) themes are created as follows: Security Profession is Noble: Be Proud; and Transform to a Better Life: Fly Like an Eagle.

Keywords: criminology, commercial security, qualitative method, Philippine

INTRODUCTION

Background Of The Study

Every retail company has a similar approach to its mission and purpose of loss prevention programs based on its unique needs, structure, and culture. The security and safety measures perspective encompasses a broad spectrum of defense, such as total protection of assets, loss prevention, and contingency disaster preparedness. In the real sense, the police officers' appearance within the vicinity took peace of mind and security among the stakeholders.

However, police officers can only guarantee the protection of some establishments due to a lack of workforce, limitations, and responsibility. Consequently, stakeholders of various establishments hired private security personnel from various security agencies to protect their business interests and look into the company's preparation to avoid severe damage from possible hazards or disasters that might occur at a time. Likewise, the employees and customers are very concerned about their security and safety and willingly ensure it.

Conversely, the physical financial aspects, trade secrets and company reputation, fraudulent acts, embezzlement, shrinkage stealing, and other criminal acts cut deep into company profits, which is very alarming in the commercial establishment. The 2010 National Retail Security Survey (RSS) reveals that US retailers lost approximately \$35.28 billion to inventory shrinkage. The percentage of losses was identified categorically as internal theft at 45 percent, followed by external theft at 31 percent, 14% belonging to administrative errors, 4% vendor fraud, and 6% unidentified acts.

It has also been observed that the commercial establishments' environment has a multi-hazard vulnerability outline due to the influx of customers daily, which might result in a loss of lives, injuries, limbs, and damage to property towards the customers and employees. Sometimes, the security forces cannot expect the incident to happen. They will expect but do not know what to do during a crisis.

In the Philippines, some incidents happen in natural and human-made disasters; natural disasters like earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and typhoons commonly devastate commercial establishments' infrastructures. A study has shown that our country is located along a typhoon belt and the so-called ring of fire. This vast pacific ocean region is an uncontrollable and unstoppable fury of nature, but we can minimize the damage and injuries if we prepare beforehand. Human-made disasters like theft, robbery, hold-up, bombing, terrorist attack, fire, hostage, and sabotage. Law enforcement officers make plans, platforms, and programs that are very comprehensive to eliminate and mitigate each adversity deemed necessary.

Metro Manila is the Philippines' capital city, which has the largest population in the country. Several human-made incidents occurred in commercial establishments, like bombing, theft, robbery, and fire incidents, resulting in several civilians losing their lives and limbs and even property damage in the commercial establishment.

Metro Cebu, a vibrant and expanding metropolis, boasts a sizable workforce, attracting steady job seekers. Local and foreign investments fuel this influx, driving the construction of accessible infrastructure that further enhances the region's appeal. Recognizing the need for a secure environment, large and small business establishments turn to security agencies or employ in-house security personnel to safeguard their premises, prevent crimes, and maintain order during operating hours.

In the face of intensifying security demands amidst a rapidly globalizing world, security professionals in commercial establishments are continuously refining their approaches to enhance safety and security measures. Their efforts encompass the wellbeing of customers, employees, and property, upholding a steadfast commitment to asset protection, loss prevention, and contingency preparedness.

Hence, this study explored the informants' lived experiences in securing people and property using the phenomenological design. Moreover, the study aimed to know the informants' experiences more profoundly regarding personal and social preparations. Being knowledgeable and competent in commercial establishment works for several years, the researcher and the security practitioners would look for possible improvements to the existing preventive security and safety measures.

Theoretical Background

This study is anchored in Contingency theory by Fiedler (1964). Furthermore, this study holds on Risk Management theory by Roeser (2012) and Situational Crime Prevention theory by Clarke (1995) as support theories.

In contingency theory, leadership effectiveness is determined by the interaction between the leader's characteristics and aspects of the situation. Leaders are classified as primarily person-oriented or task-oriented. The type of leader who will be the most useful depends on the leader's degree of control over the situation. It is a fact that control is contingent on three factors: the relationship between the leader and members, the degree of task structure, and the leader's authority or position power. The most favorable situation for the leader is when leader-member relations are proper, the task is structured, and the leader's power is strong. It is least favorable when leader-member relations are wrong, the task is unstructured, and the leader's power is weak, making it

extremely difficult for the leader to control (Fiedler, 1964).

According to contingency theory, the task-oriented leader will be more effective in favorable or unfavorable situations, whereas relationship leaders are most effective in middle-range situations. In the most stressful, unfavorable situations, task leaders can focus on the tasks that must be addressed. In contrast, relationship leaders may save time trying to fix relationships in what may be fast becoming an unmanageable situation. On the other hand, in highly favorable situations, the leaders supposedly expand their leadership behaviors. The task leader becomes more interpersonal, and the relationship leader becomes more taskoriented. Unfortunately, this may lead to problems between the relationship leader and their co-employees/subordinates during such times (Lussier & Achua, 2015).

Furthermore, the contingency theory suggests that a leader's effectiveness depends on the fit between the leader's style and the situation. The theory identifies two types of leadership styles: task-oriented and relationship-oriented. Task-oriented leaders focus on getting the job done, while relationship-oriented leaders focus on building relationships and creating a positive work environment. The theory also identifies three situational factors influencing leadership effectiveness: leadermember relations, task structure, and the leader's position power. Leader-member relations refer to the relationship quality between the leader and the group members. Task structure refers to the degree to which the task is clearly defined and has a set of clear procedures for completing it. A leader's position of power refers to the leader's authority over the group. Moreover, the most influential leaders are those whose style matches the situation. For example, a task-oriented leader will be more effective in a situation with poor leader-member relations and an unstructured task. Meanwhile, a relationship-oriented leader will be more effective in a situation with good leader-member relations and a structured task (Fiedler, 1964; Lussier & Achua, 2015).

Used as the first supporting theory of this study, the risk management theory by Roeser (2012) is a comprehensive framework for understanding and managing risk. It is based on three concepts: risk identification, risk analysis and assessment, and risk mitigation and monitoring. Risk identification is identifying and assessing threats to an organization, its operations, and its workforce. Risk analysis and assessment refers to estimating the likelihood and impact of risks. Risk mitigation and monitoring refers to taking steps to reduce the likelihood or impact of risks and monitoring the effectiveness of those steps. The risk management theory also emphasizes the importance of considering the ethical dimensions of risk management. This ethical dimension includes factors such as the distribution of risks and benefits, the protection of vulnerable populations, and decision-makers' accountability. The risk management theory is a valuable tool for organizations of all sizes. It provides a systematic approach to identifying, assessing, and mitigating risks and helps ensure that risk management decisions are made ethically and responsibly.

The risk management theory is a valuable tool for making ethical decisions about risk because it provides a framework for considering the full range of risks and benefits and weighing them against each other. The theory also emphasizes the importance of transparency and participation in risk management decisions, which can help to ensure that these decisions are made fairly and ethically. One of the strengths of risk management theory is that it is comprehensive. It considers a wide range of factors that can affect risk, including the probability and severity of the risks, the value of the benefits, and the distribution of risks and benefits. This allows for a more nuanced risk assessment than other approaches, such as the precautionary principle (Roeser, 2012)

Another strength of risk management theory is that it is flexible. It can be applied to various activities and technologies and adapted to different contexts. This makes it a valuable tool for risk management in various settings. However, the risk management theory has challenges. One challenge is that assessing the probability and severity of risks can be difficult, especially for complex and uncertain risks. Another challenge is that it can be difficult to weigh the risks against the benefits, especially when the values of different stakeholders are different. Despite these challenges, the risk management theory is a valuable tool for making ethical decisions about risk. The theory provides a framework for considering the full range of risks and benefits and for weighing these against each other. The theory also emphasizes the importance of transparency and participation in risk management decisions, which can help to ensure that these decisions are made relatively and ethically (Roeser, 2012).

As the second supporting theory of this study, the situational crime prevention theory by Clarke (1995) suggests that crime is not spread evenly across all places, people, or times. Preventive measures must be directed to where crime is most concentrated. Focusing on "hot spots," or those places with a high rate of reported crimes or calls for assistance, has proved helpful in directing police patrols and crime reduction measures. Similarly, giving priority to repeat victims of time has proved to be an effective use of prevention resources. There are sixteen techniques in situational crime prevention: target hardening; entry and exit screening; target removal; rule-setting; access control; formal surveillance; identifying a property; stimulating conscience; deflecting offenders; surveillance by employees; reducing temptation; controlling disinhibitors; controlling facilitators; natural surveillance; denying benefits; and facilitating compliance.

According to the situational crime prevention theory, crime can be prevented as long as the security and safety protocols must be followed by security personnel.

The lawless elements are frequently looked at only at the security operation's opportunities and flaws. Hot spots are places where most likely incidents transpired several times. No law enforcement officers conduct patrol to eliminate criminals' desire and opportunity to commit a crime again in the said place. The law enforcement authority prioritizes, focuses, and addresses untoward incidents for security and safety reasons (Clarke, 1995).

Situational crime prevention is a practical and effective approach to crime reduction. It is based on the idea that crime is often the result of rational decisions made by offenders and that by making it more difficult or less rewarding to commit crimes, we can deter offenders from doing so. Situational crime prevention can address many crimes, from minor offenses like vandalism to severe crimes like burglary and robbery. It can also prevent crime in various settings, from schools and workplaces to public spaces. Situational crime prevention is a cost-effective approach to crime reduction. The benefits of reduced crime rates often outweigh the costs of implementing situational crime prevention measures (Eck & Clarke, 2019).

Security is a matter of perspective. In the broadest concept, security operation is the workforce element to implement companies' security protocols against possible threats during business operations. It is a fact that security officers' duty and responsibility is not to secure people alone but rather to implement safety in the workplace to ensure that all employees and customers are far from accidents in their workplace. Peter Drucker says the first duty of business is to survive, and the guiding principle of business economics is not profit maximization. It is the avoidance of loss and accident. On the other hand, the security officers have personal knowledge about safety and security since they were in operation. However, they also need to coordinate with the engineering department to enhance the facility's safety protocols and programs and train officers and the rest of the security team to identify the threats and vulnerabilities for safety reasons (Tyson, 2018).

Moreover, Raths (2014) presented some advice to new security officers. People think technical qualifications are essential, and one needs to continue to hone technical skills, but one should emphasize relationship building significantly. The job is less about technical details and more about managing and describing risks to understand non-technical people. Hence, security personnel would consider organizational cultures and focus on risks based on available data. Do not focus on the technology. One can buy lots of boxes with pretty blinking lights that will make one's data center look good, but if one cannot incorporate what they do into that environment because of the culture, you spends much money for nothing.

A security officer's role is critical since they are considered a frontline service of their clientele. Thus, they must be upgraded to the latest and advanced training on security supervision as stipulated under Republic Act No. 5487, otherwise known as the "Private Security Agency Law." According to Rule XI, Par. 1, RA 5487, private security training states that the following are basic knowledge and subject requirements on guarding or providing security that private security personnel trainees should be imparted with principles, definitions, aspects, and risk of guarding and security; general orders and function of a guard; patrolling, observation, and description; recording, reporting, and investigation; visitor, material and vehicle movement/ access control/ denial, inspection and necessary control procedures; public relation, regulation/ law enforcement arrests, and communication and other equipment and reaction to emergencies.

According to the International Council of Shopping Centers (2015), shopping malls take safety and security very seriously – especially after the 9/11 attacks in the US. Security measures such as uniformed security guards and surveillance cameras are widely used in shopping malls. However, many factors should be taken into consideration. For example, security plans and procedures should be customized to each shopping mall's unique characteristics. This requirement is a challenge that security companies should always strive to overcome in shopping malls' ever-demanding security management.

Due to several incidents, mainly terrorist action done in public, the private companies also address the world to strengthen the security and safety measures and abide by the provisions of the Human Security Act of 2007 and its implementing rules and regulations.

Republic Act 10121, also known as the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act, was passed and approved on May 27, 2010. The act allows for the immediate release of calamity funds for risk reduction measures and 30 percent for quick response activities. This law should encourage local government units to take the initiative. However, Solidum (2018) reiterated that it is one thing to have resources available and another to take advantage of them. PHIVOLCS has presented the steps to be taken to prepare for tsunami-related events.

Moreover, Davidson (2014) states that the shopping mall security function ensures the shopping mall's overall safety and security and the people and property. This can be achieved by deterring crime through gathering and preserving evidence, enforcing regulations, reducing risk, incident response, and client services. This could help deal with everyday criminal activities and public order offenses such as fighting, violence to tenants or shop staff, unruly teenagers, drink-related incidents, illegal street trading, vandalism, theft/vehicle theft, and organized retail crime (organized shoplifting); shootings and terrorism.

It is a fact that most employees are stealing the company's property without hesitation. On the negative side of the security mindset, employees are the most dangerous threat to the company since they already know the building's access points where the merchandise is located. However, on the positive side, employees are considered additional resources in protecting the company's assets. Security personnel alone can only gather some information from their security force. It emphasized that security personnel's duty is to protect the company's assets. Still, it is a shared responsibility and everybody's concern within the organization. Still, they need to orient and convince them to help the security operation by giving or feeding information regarding the illegal activities within the company's external and internal environment. On the other hand, we also look at why employees are stealing the company's property. In practical concept, this is because of the employees' financial constraints that they cannot feed the family's needs.

Siegel (2011) stressed that some people might initiate a confrontation that eventually leads to injury or death. Victim precipitation theory can be either passive. Active precipitation occurs when victims act provocatively, use threats or fighting words, or attack first. In contrast, passive precipitation occurs when the victim exhibits personal characteristics that unknowingly threaten or encourage the attackers. Crime can occur because of personal conflict. For example, when two people compete for a job, promotion, love interest, or other scarce commodity. Hence, these situations could occur even inside the commercial establishment.

According to Stenning (2000), the relationship between public and private police is more often complementary than adversarial, and it is increasingly challenging to identify policing tasks and responsibilities that are the exclusive preserve of public rather than private police. Early analysts of private policing suggested that public and private police's respective roles were determined by the geographical domains in which they worked: the policing of public places was police personnel's responsibility and undertaken for the public interest. In contrast, the private police's role is confined to protecting private property in its owners' interests. He argues that this generalization is no longer valid, as public police obtained more and more power and technological possibilities to intrude on private property and personal relationships. Private police are policing more and more public life.

Dorn and Levi (2007) highlight several developments that indicate a growing cooperation between private and public policing. These include the involvement of private security and risk management professionals in establishing new systems for exchanging sensitive information, not only among enforcement agencies but also between them and corporate risk management professionals and databases. These systems cover vehicle crime,

plastic card crime, and intellectual property. Additionally, specific specialized squads and databases, such as those focused on arts and antiques, are selectively funded by parts of the private sector. This private funding introduces new priorities in public enforcement, emphasizing prevention rather than solely law enforcement. Another contributing factor to the collaboration is the existence of vital cultural and professional ties between security specialists in the private sector and public enforcement agencies, as well as other public agencies.

This is due to occupational mobility between the sectors and the increasing convergence of common interests.

Global retail loss reached USD 114.8 –Billion in 2009, 33.8 percent attributed to employee theft. It has always been a puzzle why good employees go badly and, with years of faithful service under their belt, suddenly steal from employers. When interviewed and asked why they did it, some responded that it was spontaneous or that other employees were doing it. Others felt it was a vindictive act for the hard work and little compensation or acknowledgment they received from their employers. It is interesting to note that most thefts are the product of opportunity rather than a well-thought-heist. It is more likely that stealing occurs because of lax management's perception of theft and losses. There is also little to no direct instruction from the supervisor (American Society for Industrial Security, 2009).

Ariely and Melamede (2009) discovered that people perceived a difference between stealing money and an equal-worth item. There is a feeling of detachment from the act that there is less guilt when taking a pencil from the office than when stealing directly from the cash register or petty cash. His study used cheating as an indicator. He learned that many people cheat if given the opportunity and enough incentive; people cheat only a tiny amount. When people are reminded of cheating's immorality, they cheat less; when benefits derived are one step removed from money, they cheat more; if cheating is observed among their companions or acquaintances, cheating also goes up.

Montojo (2006) stressed that decision-making is a fundamental function of a leader in any field. It is a daily routine duty for every security officer. Few jobs require as frequent decision-making that carries a lifetime effect as this field. The contact between officers and the community depends on how the security officer takes action. An officer's action is a direct result of a decision he makes. Aside from the general order, the security guard must communicate with people. According to Davis (1976), communication is the dual or two-way process of transmitting messages from one person to another. The symbolic interaction between two or more people influences each other's behavior.

According to Trujillo (2008), in his finding of the study "Security Risk and Management System in Six (6) Army Detachments in Northern Negros Occidental", eighteen (18) personnel perform guard duty while the remaining nine compose the alert squad. The alert squad conducts perimeter security or patrol while the 18 members of the guard force maintain the inner security.

Montojo (2006) added that to improve security guards' capability, efficiency, and effectiveness in performing their duties and responsibilities. They should be encouraged to take the supervisory course, security officers training courses, and other specialized courses from authorized training centers.

According to Saludo (2018), it is difficult to determine the actual dimension of shoplifting in the Philippines and point to the same problem in the US, where only 1/35 shoplifters are caught and prosecuted. He divides shoplifters into two categories, namely: the amateurs include first-timers, thrills, seekers, and some repeat offenders. He stresses that amateur shoplifters are sometimes given leniency, most especially if they are minors. On the other hand, professionals have more sophisticated alibis and styles and come complete with lookout financiers and backups who usually signal to their companion if store staff follows them. They would even go into hysterics when apprehended, while another companion uses the opportunity to swipe items.

Cagalitan (2000) observed that the first defense line was slightly vulnerable regarding the security guard force's capability. The perimeter barriers' dependability could have been more dependable, implying that it is open to intruders and harmful elements. Installing locking devices, implementing a critical control system, and proper lighting installation were highly dependable. In securing the company's assets and properties, the first layer of the facility's environment must be tightly guarded by providing barriers such as human animals, security policies

and guidelines, lighting, and security lock devices to deter crime criminality. Such devices must be installed strategically in the building environment to defeat the purpose.

Posadas (2009) acknowledged that the CCTV cameras were useful in detecting intrusions and monitoring activities within the selected facility. In crime prevention and investigation, with the recent happening in some academic

institutions that pose dangers to the property and the client's safety and security, it is paramount to consider safety and security first. Thus, this study is timely and could help other entities improve the security measures implemented in their respective institution. Installing CCTV cameras in commercial establishments should be given importance, and its effectiveness should be emphasized. The CCTV Camera is a Closed Circuit Television that is considered a vital tool in security operations. First, it can record all the usual and unusual events within 24/7 hours. Secondly, it is also considered psychological deterrence against the criminal not to consummate their evil desire to commit crimes. Third, every establishment is required to have a CCTV camera as one of the requirements of the local government.

Ugbaniel (2013) stressed the importance of considering the level of workrelated capabilities of security guards in decision-making. In a commercial establishment, the security measure covers the layering of security. The first security layer is the physical barriers such as a fence, CCTV camera, human, lights of the parking area, and other alternative signages for security and safety purposes.

Moreover, Pepito (2016) considered the security system in convenience stores mainly in the 24-hour operation to ascertain the most acceptable ways to secure the establishment from any damage, including endangering customers' and personnel's lives for security personnel's detection and prevention of criminalities in the store.

These theories, laws, books, related studies, and studies presented are crucial in the understanding of my research study related to the lived experiences of agency security officer assigned in a commercial establishment in Metro Cebu by looking into their experiences of work-related capabilities, decision making, and leadership in terms of unnatural disasters, natural disasters, and daily routine activities.

Statement of the Problem

This study explored the lived experiences of security officers in a commercial establishment in Metro Cebu.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following sub-problems.

1. What are the positive experiences of the informants in the commercial establishment?
2. What are the negative experiences of the informants in the commercial establishments?
3. What are the challenges encountered by the informants in the performance of their duties?
4. What are the aspirations of the security officers?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The qualitative phenomenological design is the method that I utilized in this study. Phenomenological research is the most appropriate approach for this endeavor to cope with individual experiences at their workplace. It developed a better and deeper understanding of their respective positive experiences, negative experiences, the problems encountered, and aspirations as security officers.

In its broadest sense, phenomenology refers to a person's perception of an event's meaning instead of the event as it exists externally to (outside of) that person. The phenomenological inquiry focuses on what people experience regarding some phenomenon or other and how they interpret those experiences. This study attempts to understand people's perceptions, perspectives, and understandings of a particular situation (or phenomenon). In other words, a phenomenological research study tries to answer the question. As security officers, what are

their positive and negative experiences, the problems encountered, and life aspirations? By looking at multiple perspectives of the same situation, a researcher can start to generalize what something is like as an experience from the insider's perspective (Van Manen, 1997).

The phenomenological study aims to illuminate the specific and identify phenomena through how the actors perceive them. In the human sphere, this translates typically into gathering in-depth information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions, and participant observation and representing it from the research participant's perspective(s).

Phenomenology studies experience from the individual's perspective, 'bracketing' taken-for-granted assumptions, and usual ways of perceiving. Phenomenological approaches are based on a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity. Likewise, its emphasis is on personal perspective and interpretation. As such, they are decisive for understanding the subjective experience, gaining insights into people's motivations and actions, and cutting through the clutter of taken-forgranted assumptions and conventional wisdom.

Phenomenological research has overlapped with other essentially qualitative approaches, including ethnography, hermeneutics, and symbolic interactionism. Pure phenomenological research seeks to describe rather than explain and start from a perspective free from hypotheses or preconceptions. Husserl (1970) originally conceived of and developed the method of phenomenological description. A Husserlian description uncovers or discloses the structures and forms of conscious experience. A Husserlian description typically begins by describing an experience in the first person.

Phenomenology can offer the possibility of understanding lived experiences in a way that other methodologies may not. It explicates the deeper human aspects of a situation, attending to mood, sensations, and emotions, seeking to find out what the experience is, what it means to individuals, and the personal implications (Van Manen, 1997).

Research Environment

The study was conducted in twelve (12) commercial establishments of Central Visayas, Southern Cebu, and Northern Cebu in 2018 – 2019. It comprises the different cities and municipalities, an estimated 315 square kilometers equivalent to 122 square miles with 922,611 residents.

Southern Cebu is otherwise known as the Queen City of the South. It comprises districts comprised of municipalities and cities, further subdivided into barangay. It is also composed of two districts comprised of several barangays, with several high-rise commercial establishments at Lahug, Colon, Fuente Osmena, North and South Reclamation areas subdivided into 80 barangays. Said city enjoys a vibrant economy brought about by the influx of investors in outsourcing and other industries. One of the retail business industry's growing trends in commercial establishments is selling essential commodities and garments. With that, the local and foreign investors are expanding their commercial retail business here in Cebu City, southern and northern parts of Metro Cebu. It encompasses several high-rise commercial buildings wherein the nature of 24/7 operation. However, some commercial establishments in Metro Cebu only operate within 12 hours a day. However, the operation is also similar.

The high-rise commercial establishments situated in Central Visayas, where the nature of work performed by the employees is around the clock, include neighboring establishments, which are also located in the following areas Lahug, Ayala, and Mabolo. At the same time, other commercial establishments having related works performed were located in the North Reclamation Areas like SM, Robinson Galeria, Radisson Hotel, Bayfront Hotel, S&R retail store, Pacific Mall, Gaisano Grand Mall, and Gaisano Capital. The most populated commercial establishments are located in the downtown: Metro Gaisano, Elizabeth Mall, Crown Regency Hotel, Robinson Mall, and Colonade Mall since all the private and public utility vehicles conveyed traffic from the neighboring cities to the downtown area.

This study focused on twelve commercial establishments consisting of Metro Naga, Metro Carcar, Gaisano Tabunok, Gaisano Capital SRP, Metro Gaisano, Metro Ayala, Robinson Galleria, Pacific Mall, Gaisano Grand

Mall Mandaue, Gaisano Capital Liloan and Gaisano Grand Danao, and Metro Bogo. Of the twelve commercial establishments is the Metro Naga, which is nearby located in the plaza. It is an old complex, while Metro Bogo is the commercial establishment near the new public market (please see Appendix D for the location map).

Research Instrument

I used an interview guide containing open-ended questions. Before conducting the in-depth interview, the researcher gave informed consent regarding the research informants' involvement and confidentiality rights. After that, the informant's signature and date were indicated on the last page of the informed consent form. However, the interview guide (IG) containing open-ended questions was subjected to evaluation and validation by the panel of examiners headed by the

Dean of Graduate School. Also, the writer used note to record the informants' responses and a voice recorder that recorded the responses during the interview. A transcript of the interview was to be made as part of the appendices. Likewise, the instruments are found in the appendix as Appendix B, Informed Consent Form and Appendix C, Interview Guide and Validation.

This study was employed in three folds: In-depth Interview (IDI), and Focused Group Discussion (FGD). However, analysis involves records of the interview transcript from informants and then processing to emerge emergent using Colaizzi's methods.

Research Procedures

Purposive sampling was employed to select the participants. The researcher explained to the participants the purpose of the research and the interview process.

Once the participants agreed to be interviewed, the researcher requested that they sign the informed consent to proceed. The researcher used a voice recorder during the interview.

Qualitative research requires standardization of procedures and random selection of participants to remove the potential influence of external variables and ensure the generalization of results. In contrast, subject selection in qualitative research was purposeful; participants were selected based on who could give the best information under investigation. Hence, one of the essential tasks in the study design phase was identifying appropriate participants. Selection decisions are based on the research questions, theoretical perspectives, and evidence informing the study.

Purposive samples are the most frequently used form of non-probability sampling in qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These techniques use our judgments to choose cases that best enable us to answer our research question and meet our aim. They are typically used to choose a relatively small number of participants, particularly informative ones (Neuman, 2005).

Data Collection

Before the initial contact with the security officers, a transmittal letter was given to the security agency, allowing permission to conduct the study from the Graduate School of the University of Cebu. The letter has been received and signed by the agency operator.

For this study, the selected subjects were visited at the office of the security agency or the mall for the interview. They were given an introductory letter outlining the following: 1) the purpose and significance of the study, 2) details of the discussion, and 3) consent forms with an explanation of confidentiality. I ensured that the subjects were informed of confidentiality in data gathering. The appropriate sample for a phenomenological study shall consist of 12 subjects from different commercial establishments. All the subjects selected for the study were open regardless of gender.

This study utilized in-depth interviews and focused group discussions on gathering data to determine security

officers' live experiences in commercial establishments in Metro Cebu. The informants' decision to participate in this research study was entirely voluntary. The informants can refuse to participate or withdraw from the study. The informants were given a consent form. The researcher read the consent form to the informants before participating in the interview. The consent form requires the informant to confirm that they were of legal age.

The study aimed to explain in general terms that anonymity was guaranteed, and the significance of candid responses was emphasized. The informant's records were kept private and not released without their consent except as required by law. The subject's identity was kept confidential and known only by a code. The data were stored in a safe file cabinet, and only the researcher and research adviser must have access to the said documents. The voice recorder was used to record the interview and later transcribed without any information to identify the subject. After the data were transcribed, the responses were translated, and the responses were translated, and the recorded response in the voice recorder was appropriately kept.

Data Analysis

In the presentation of the gathered data, I adopted the qualitative method. During the in-depth interview and focused group discussions, each security officer's responses were adequately documented by taking notes and audio recording. The informant responses were evaluated to recognize essential themes.

The study utilized simple coding for all the information that was gathered. The transcribing information helps the researcher develop a more profound and better understanding of the information gathered as it encompasses what was represented in the transcript. The examination of responses according to themes and categories was adequately identified.

Ethical Considerations.

To safeguard each research informant, I protected the informants' rights through a cover letter and provided them with a consent form. The informed consent form that I provided to all respondents contains necessary information about the study, the purposes, the procedures, the confidentiality, and the contact information. The consent form I provided includes the participants' instructions on the nature of the study, the benefits of participating, and the importance of comfort with the process and questions.

As to the study's nature, I emphasized that their participation is entirely voluntary to all the informants. I clarify that their decision on whether or not to join does not affect their current or future relations with any institution, agency, or person. The informants who decided to participate were informed that they were still free to change their minds and withdraw from the study. During the time of the interview, they can relax anytime. Informants are allowed to skip any questions during the discussion when they feel it is too personal. Participants who decided to withdraw were given the privilege, and all the information gathered was returned to them or destroyed, whichever they preferred. There were no known risks of being involved in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of twelve (12) security officers assigned to various commercial establishments across Metro Cebu. Using Colaizzi's (1978) method of phenomenological analysis, in-depth interviews (IDI) and focus group discussions (FGD) were conducted to uncover personal, professional, and social dimensions of security officers' experiences. The participants' narratives were transcribed, translated, and coded into 322 significant statements, from which 283 formulated meanings and 190 cluster themes were derived. These were further refined into eleven (11) emergent themes grouped under four major categories corresponding to the study's research questions.

Positive Experiences

Two themes emerged:

1. Experiences and Good Leadership Training Transform Lives – Security officers perceived their work as a transformative experience that fostered leadership, empathy, and organizational commitment. Charismatic

leadership and strong interpersonal relationships were key drivers in developing professionalism and morale.

2. A Well-Rounded Security Officer with Strategic Thinking – Officers demonstrated proactive decision-making and planning in security operations. This reflects adaptability, initiative, and a continuous drive for professional growth.

Negative Experiences

Four themes surfaced describing the structural and operational challenges faced:

1. Behavioral Conflict and Decentralized Organizational Communication – Miscommunication and fragmented management structures caused operational inefficiencies.

2. Multi-Responsibilities and Lack of Security Manual in Retail Settings – Officers faced over extension of roles and unclear standard procedures, leading to stress and inconsistent enforcement of policies.

3. Security Agency Lapses: Lack of Contract, Standards, and Workforce – Institutional gaps in recruitment, contractual obligations, and staffing weakened operational security.

4. Adherence to RA 5487 and Human Rights – Officers emphasized the need to uphold legal and ethical standards during arrests and enforcement activities, underscoring awareness of human rights.

Challenges Encountered

Three major challenges were identified:

1. Flexible Security Principles are Vulnerable – Inconsistent practices across establishments increased risks and confusion.
2. Poor Decision-Making and Lack of Training as Cost Ineffectiveness – Deficiencies in tactical and procedural training affected judgment during incidents.
3. Observance of Human Rights: Code of Honor and Ethics – Officers highlighted the moral imperative of ethical conduct and professionalism as central to maintaining public trust.

Aspirations of Security Officers

Two aspirational themes emerged:

1. Security Profession is Noble: Be Proud – Officers viewed their roles as dignified and vital to public safety, countering common societal misconceptions.
2. Transform to a Better Life: Fly Like an Eagle – Participants aspired for upward mobility, improved welfare, and lifelong learning within the security profession.

Table 1. Emergent Themes and Core Coding Statements

Main Category	Emergent Theme	Coding Statements / Clustered Meanings
Positive Experiences	Experiences and Good Leadership Training Transform Lives	Good leaders provide stability, safety, and motivation. Appreciation builds morale and teamwork. Leadership is persuasion grounded in fairness and empathy.
Positive Experiences	A Well-Rounded Security Officer with Strategic Thinking	Planning ensures proper operation execution. "Security is everyone's concern." Continuous learning and criticism acceptance improve performance.

Negative Experiences	Behavioral Conflict and Decentralized Communication	Fragmented systems hinder communication. Conflicts arise from unclear authority lines. Adaptability and cooperation needed to reduce misunderstanding.
Negative Experiences	Multi-Responsibilities and Lack of Security Manual	Absence of a safety manual leads to confusion. Security officers handle multiple unrelated tasks. Lack of procedural guidance causes burnout.
Negative Experiences	Security Agency Lapses	Incomplete contracts and low workforce. No clear recruitment standards. Inefficiency due to agency negligence.
Negative Experiences	Abide by RA 5487 and Human Rights	Legal compliance required in arrest procedures. Uphold dignity and human rights at all times.
Challenges Encountered	Flexible Security Principles are Vulnerable	Inconsistent application of rules. Weak coordination between agency and client.
Challenges Encountered	Poor Decision-Making and Lack of Training	Lack of tactical knowledge causes poor judgment. Training gaps increase operational costs.
Challenges Encountered	Observance of Human Rights and Ethics	Uphold honor and integrity in every task. Ethical discipline fosters respect and professionalism.
Aspirations	Security Profession is Noble: Be Proud	Security is a calling, not just employment. Pride in service motivates excellence.
Aspirations	Transform to a Better Life: Fly Like an Eagle	Strive for promotion and personal growth. "Opportunity comes once grab it." Lifelong learning as key to transformation.

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