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## Research Article

### The Civilian Transition: Retelling the Lived Experiences of Medically Discharged Filipino Military Amputees

Jervin Dinglasan Quicho<sup>1\*</sup>, Christian Edmund U. Abay<sup>2</sup>, Rohan Timothy G. Emnas<sup>2</sup>, Chrishelle Jana B. Tupas<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Social Sciences and Humanities, Cavite State University Imus Campus, Imus City, Cavite, 4103, Philippines

<sup>2</sup>Psychology Department, San Sebastian College-Recoletos de Cavite, Inc., Cavite City, Cavite, 4100, Philippines

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#### \*Corresponding author:

E-mail:

[jervin.quicho@cvsu.edu.ph](mailto:jervin.quicho@cvsu.edu.ph)

## ABSTRACT

Amputation in military service leading to discharge and transition difficulty is the Philippines was still yet to resolve, a focus on training the jungle and sea division of the military was made in order to train the soldiers for the different terrains that they will engage the rebels on. Over the years, numerous studies were already made on the narratives of the discharged military veterans for both honorable and dishonorable discharges yet there was little to no studies centered around the lives of the medically discharged amputees after leaving the organization. This study aims to narrate the lived experiences of the medically discharged amputees, more specifically a qualitative research study that details their personal lives after leaving the organization. A total of five (5) medically discharged amputees were interviewed face to face in this study and a total of four (4) themes were generated which are 'Post-Medical Discharge Experience', 'Overcoming Adjustments', 'Self-Concept', and 'Personal Goals'. The results showed the difficulty of the amputees to accept their new condition and the engagement in drinking alcohol or using cigarettes to lighten their burdens. The importance of financial stability was also widely discussed fueling a discussion for the consideration of the benefits that the amputees do receive after leaving the organization.

**Keywords:** *Amputation, Adjustment, Civilian, Medically Discharged Amputees, Military, Rehabilitation, Transition*

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## Background

The transition from being a military serviceman to civilian amputee, with a distinguished origin coming from their combat service, could impact their self-esteem and identity as it results in difficulty adjusting to a handicapped civilian lifestyle. (Caddick et al., 2019). Puranik (2021) reaffirmed this stating that amputations are sometimes necessary but it could also have repercussions. Despite the circumstances of amputation, most of the military soldiers who sustained heavy injuries still wanted to continue working in the field (Backus, 2020). The majority of these amputees will still be relieved of their duties and only a small number of them can return to their post (Murray et al., 2023). Through the first quarter of 2024, over 150,000 active personnel of the Philippine Armed Forces are mobile in service for the Filipino people (World Bank, 2024). Additionally, over 5,419 military personnel retired from service every year from 2005 to 2010 (Economic Planning Office, 2012).

The process of amputation could also strain the psychosocial relationship of the client (Rosca, 2021), as amputation is a stressful phenomenon for the victims and their relatives, and impairment to a distinct part could hinder the person's daily function, therefore, also causing psychological distress (Sahu et al., 2016). This hindrance in functioning affects the performance in the profession, and sometimes leads to resignation. Interpersonal relationships including family and intimate relationships should also be affected during transition. (Sahu et al., 2016).

A research study in the Philippines implied the resiliency culture in the Philippines is related to why the Philippine Military have a high self-esteem and optimism (Faluera & Valencia, 2023). However, a contradicting study implicates the effects of stigma as its barrier in help-seeking among military personnel, to which the study with regards to the life adjustment also aims to integrate to current literatures (Fajardo & De Guzman, 2017). The Philippine Military's history of counterinsurgency is visible throughout the country. This results in the imminent occurrence of injuries and casualties, sometimes leading to amputation.

(Naranjo et al., 2023) the current study will focus on amputation as the critical variable missing from Filipino veteran transition literature.

The current study will focus on amputation as the critical variable missing from Filipino veteran transition literature was a study conducted by Morris & Hanna (2023) where the authors focused on military veterans with no amputation, yet no Filipino participants were included leaving a gap in the study. On the other hand, the most recent local research study of military transition was conducted in the Philippines by Bergado (2022) and this research study had focused on the impacts of interpersonal relationships in the overall transitional experience of the military veterans with no participants having an amputation being added which also left a gap in the literature.

Despite the existence of laws and programs for military amputees, there is still the lack of studies regarding military veteran amputees and more studies will be needed for a better understanding of the field of interest (Murray et al., 2023).

This aims to improve the quality of life in regards to the medically discharged military amputees and an integration to the current knowledge in the societal aspect with connection to the psychological field. The military profession is a field that has unique accounts for different experiences of amputation and military to civilian transition (Spinuzza et al., 2024). This research study aims to fill the gaps that were discussed from the previous research studies. Medically discharged amputees will be taken as the participants for the study due to the majority of them being relieved of their duties almost immediately after the amputation.

## Statement of the Problem

This study seeks to determine the transitional experiences of medically discharged amputees. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of the medically discharged amputees?
2. What are the central themes and sub-themes that capture the essence of their transitional experiences?

## Methods

This research employed a narrative research design to explore the how medically discharged amputees identify responds to transition and adjustments in the civilian life from military personnel. While thematic analysis approach would be an appropriate method to find clear and common themes structure and to find out which participants have encountered providing insights and developed participants view. This was a methodology for qualitative research studies that aims to gather and inspect to better understand the culture, people, and society (Wolgemuth & Agosto, 2019). This method focuses on the events and the individual life experiences of the participants (Parks, 2023). The narrative research method is now progressively being used in the fields of education, health, and studies in social science (Ntinda, 2019).

In the field of sociology including psychology, narrative research designs are being utilized to investigate the subjective experiences of an individual and the meanings that they put behind it (Wolgemuth & Agosto, 2019). The data will be gathered from the participants through "storytelling", the stories that the participants will say will be limited to the point of view of the storyteller and will be based on their own interpretation of the experience (Ntinda, 2019).

This research employed a qualitative research method which includes pre-discussed questions in the interview and their ideas were used for the understanding of the transition of medically discharged amputees. Therefore, the usage of a narrative research design is applicable to this research study.

## Data Analysis

This study will be using thematic analysis for the interpretation of the gathered data. Thematic analysis is great for finding patterns that will be used to answer the research questions of a research study (Jnanathapaswi, 2021). This analysis methodology will allow us to properly familiarize ourselves with the data that will be given to us by our participants and form the themes in accordance to the themes that we have gathered. Thematic analysis is used for the creation of codes which will be compiled

into themes all in order to create meaningful data from the gathered observations, these codes will come from patterns that were gathered from the responses of the participants and compiled as themes to enable a better understanding of the results (Clarke & Braun, 2017).

The researchers will conduct a semi-structured interview using the interview guide in order to obtain the necessary data from the participants. Once the interview of the participants is finished, the gathered data will be scanned and the statements of the participants will also be reviewed for a better understanding of the statements and ideas that are presented which also includes the audio recordings. Each answer will be manually checked to gain a deeper apprehension on the experiences of the participants. Certain statements will then be broken down into phrases in accordance to the redundancy of the statement, type of emotion that was shown while conveying the idea and if words are repeated. These data will then be converted into a collection of codes which will be compiled. Once this is finished, these codes will be placed into basic themes in accordance to its similarity with other codes. These themes will be used to check if there are tendencies or trends in the gathered data. Once the creation of themes is finished, it will be arranged to create sub-themes. Once the sub-themes are finished, all the sub-themes will be arranged in accordance with the categories that the data belong to.

## Participants of the Study

Gathering five (5) to twenty-five (25) participants in a narrative research study is the best method for utilizing the allotted resources and time (Adhikari, 2021). The total number of respondents for this narrative study were five (5) medically discharged Filipino military who had served in the Philippine Army or Philippine Marine Corps with a particular feature, specifically, any form of amputation or orthopedic impairment caused by military service in active duty. Individuals around the age of 21 to 56 years old were the participants of the study and the participants were all-natural born Filipinos (Yazilar, 2023). All participants were literate enough to answer the interview questions

presented by the researchers (Josselson & Lieblich, 1995). The presentation of a military ID that indicates the participants affiliation with the military and whether the individual is affiliated with the sampled branch of the organization, specifically, Philippine Marine Corps and Philippine Army, along with a Person with Disability Identification Card implied with having orthopedic impairments were requested from the participants in order to ensure the credibility of their stories. This study did not focus on a specific type of amputation, likewise there was also no focus on the site of amputation for an easier access towards the criteria for participant selection. All of the experiences that were discussed in this study came from the firsthand statements of the participants through the interview. A focus on the coping mechanisms, adjustments in the established routine, personal self-view and sources of motivation were discussed in the study.

### **Sampling Technique**

For participant selection, purposive sampling was employed in the study. Purposive sampling was employed to make sure that the participants of the study were able to give out relevant information following the goal of the research study (Campbell et al., 2020). The sampling method was chosen to ensure the inclusion of participants who meet specific criteria deemed essential for the research objectives, while also considering the feasibility of the study as the study's time frame needs to be met. Specifically, purposive sampling was utilized to identify the medically discharged amputee research participants with amputations resulting from their military service. The chosen sampling technique implies the importance of congruence between the research objectives and participant selection as convenience in sampling the participants will also be met.

## **Result and Discussion**

*Table 1. Main Theme and Subthemes*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Subtheme</b>
1. Post Medical discharge	1.1 Initial Reaction 1.2 Recovery 1.3 Communication

### **Ethical Considerations**

We considered the ethical codes that will be touched once we start the collection of research data and the considerations that must be taken to uphold the personal information of our participants.

Informed Consent Dissemination for the Participants, the distribution of informed consent for the chosen participants is of utmost importance so that the participants will be made aware of the background of the research study, the goals of the study and their rights which also includes whether they want to continue partaking in the study or not;

Informed Consent for Audio Recording before the start of data procurement, it is also important for the participants to know if the conversation is going to be recorded and get their opinions on the matter whether they do agree or not. This ensures that the participant will be able to speak freely and feel comfortable;

Right to Confidentiality and Privacy, we will make sure that the participants' information will only be used in the study and will remain private for any other matter. Data can only be revealed when the participant gives their permission in order to make sure that the identities of the participants are kept hidden;

Appropriate Reward and Participation Benefit. We will make sure that the reward given for the participation of the research participants will not in any way hinder or coerce them into giving positive or negative data that can affect the integrity of the research study. Potential benefits that come to participation in the study will also be discussed with all the participants before the start of the study; and

Right for Withdrawal, the participants will be briefed of the procedures that they are going to undergo if they agree to partake in the research study. The participants will be allowed to withdraw from the research study at any time.

Theme	Subtheme
2. Overcoming Adjustments	2.1 Daily Activity Struggles 2.2 Coping Mechanisms 2.3 Significant Routine
3. Self- Concept	3.1 Personal View 3.2 Discovered Qualities 3.3 Struggles in Recognizing the Self
4. Personal Goals	4.1 Post-Adjustment Plans 4.2 Facing Setbacks 4.3 Long and Short- Term Goals

Table 2. Themes, Sub-themes, Meaning, and No. of Participant

Themes	Meaning	No. of Participant
Theme One: Post-Medical Discharge Experience	This theme details the experiences of the medically discharged amputees after being relieved of their duty in the military. Their experiences, experiences pertaining to their recovery journey and their communication style was highlighted in this theme. An emphasis on being disappointed after the discharge were discussed alongside the importance of family members for recovery and exercising for better movement adaptation.	5
Sub-theme One: Initial Reaction	This sub-theme details the overall reactions of the participants after receiving the news for their medical discharge order. Disappointment became a significant point of the discussion and their view of finding it hard to accept the decision of the military.	4
Sub-theme Two: Recovery	This sub-theme details the overall experiences of the medically discharged amputees in regards to their journey as they were adjusting to their new condition including their initial actions after their medical discharge, the plans and goals pertaining to their physical aspect recovery and their sources of motivation for their recovery period. Discussion revolved around the engagement in social isolation and seeking professional help were highlighted, experiences pertaining to the importance of exercising were also made and the significance of family to the recovery process.	5
Sub-theme Three: Communication	This sub-theme explores the experiences of the participants centered around the transformation of their communication and relationship between their family and loved ones. Openness and honesty were brought up frequently emphasizing the stronger bond that the participants had developed with their families after becoming an amputee.	3

*Table 2.1 Continuation of Table 2: Themes, Sub-themes, Meaning, and No. of Participant*

Themes	Meaning	No. of Participant
Theme Two: Overcoming Adjustment	The second theme focuses on the specific struggles that the participants had encountered after becoming an amputee including the daily activities that they have engaged in, the coping mechanisms that they did and the significant additions in their overall daily routine.	4
Sub-theme One: Daily Activity Struggles	This covers the difficulties that the participants had encountered when they were adapting with their limb loss. Activities such as defecation and peeing were mentioned to have become difficult after the loss of the dominant body part that the participants were adjusted to thereby hindering them in their adjustment.	2
Sub-theme Two: Coping Mechanisms	This sub theme discusses the coping mechanism that the participants have made while they were adjusting to their daily activities. Smoking and drinking alcohol appear to be the most prevalent coping mechanism that the participants have chosen to engage in for stress relief and emotional regulation.	4
Sub-theme Three: Significant Routine	This sub theme revolves around the adjustments that the participants have made in consideration with their limb loss. Participants appeared to engage in using hot or cold compresses to alleviate the pain that they were experiencing in the area of the amputation which takes place even if the wound had completely healed up.	4
Theme Three: Self-Concept	This theme revolves around the subjective perception of themselves after becoming an amputee. Their view towards their identities, new qualities that they have discovered in themselves and experiences where they struggled in accepting their new reality were also discussed. A focal point of the discussion would be the sense of embarrassment from being seen by other people, learning how to appreciate the things that the amputees have and finding it difficult to look at mirror was highly emphasized in the study.	4

*Table 2.2 Continuation of Table 2.1: Themes, Sub-themes, Meaning, and No. of Participant*

Themes	Meaning	No. of Participant
Sub-theme One: Personal View	This sub theme contains the personal self-image that the participants had constructed of themselves after becoming an amputee. Majority of the participants shared embarrassment towards themselves as their main issue when they saw themselves.	2

Themes	Meaning	No. of Participant
Sub-theme Two: Discovered Qualities	This sub-theme looks at the new qualities that the participants have made or discovered upon themselves. This includes the changes in the traits of the participants and the new interests that they formed. Becoming appreciative and valuing the members of the family became the most discussed in this section.	4
Sub-theme Three: Struggles in Recognizing the Self	This sub-theme focuses on the narratives of the participants regarding their experiences concerning the difficulty in accepting their new condition. Seeing themselves appeared to be the most mentioned difficulty in the acceptance of their condition followed by being actively called out by others. Having difficulty in fitting in with their long-time friends also appeared to be a difficulty for our participants.	4
Theme Four: Personal Goals	This theme focuses on the unique goals that each of our participants holds and aspires to achieve including their plans after finishing their adjustment period, their current source of motivation and the short- and long-term goals that they do want to achieve.	5
Sub-theme One: Post-Adjustment Plans	This theme focuses on the plans that our participants have after their recovery period. Saving money for retirement appeared to be a big motivator for the majority of the participants.	4
Sub-theme Two: Facing Setbacks	This sub-theme entails the responses that our participants made regarding the action that they do take every time they experience a difficulty in response would be finding a solution to the problem and trying to fix it themselves followed by asking for the help of their families.	5

Table 2.3 Continuation of Table 2.2: Themes, Sub-themes, Meaning, and No. of Participant

Themes	Meaning	No. of Participant
Sub-theme Three: Long and Short-Term Goals	This sub-theme discusses the personal long- and short-term goals that the participants had given out on the interview. Making their children finish college was frequently brought up alongside the goal of living a long life for the sake of their family and personal plans.	5

Table 2. Summarizes all of the four (4) themes that were grouped up in the study alongside the respective sub-themes for each theme.

### Theme One: Post-Medical Discharge Experience

The affiliation to the Military was highlighted more than the emotional response to amputation, as social identity was emphasized and disappointment in ineligibility to continue active-combat duty was recognized rather than the amputation itself, relating to the willingness of the military personnel to return to combat duty despite amputation, while the initial

response of the military amputee centered on the willingness in servitude despite the casualty, this opens for discussion and further study on how the culture in the military affects either the motivation and self-identity of the military. The aspects, ideologies, principles in the military culture should be studied to further understand the phenomenon of thinking about their occupation instead of the amputation became a common experience for the respondents.

#### **Sub-theme One: Initial Reaction**

Alpha stated that he felt numb and he lost the ability to feel any form of emotions and he also shared how everything that was happening around him felt nothing to him. In a study conducted by Ngwane (2024), it was shown that amputees are prone to experiencing negative emotions which includes but is not limited to loss of interest in doing any forms of daily activity, feeling numb emotionally and feeling like they were alone and isolated from their loved ones which will affect the well-being of the individual.

Bravo, Charlie and Delta all expressed disappointment when they found out that they were now medically discharged by the military. In an article published by Gomez (2021), it was stated that disappointments can only be avoided when you attain what you wanted, considering the military perspective, that would be expecting that the needs of the former military members would be addressed and disappointment arises when an action or result goes against their beliefs. Bravo, Charlie and Delta were still expecting to be reinstated at the military after their operation and being given the medical discharge order goes against their initial expectations which ended up disappointing them. Another study conducted by Thomas (2021) argues that the loss of social identity was something that the majority of the military members were not prepared for. Additionally, the job/role loss is as significant as the limb loss for a military person that affect their mental wellbeing. It can be inferred that one factor that contributed to the disappointment of Bravo, Charlie and Delta would be their lack of preparation to transitioning as a civilian amputee.

#### **Sub-theme Two: Recovery**

Alpha and Delta both stated that they have engaged in social isolation as an initial response towards the medical discharge that they have received. The most recognized approach when dealing towards traumatic experiences would be to allow the survivor to receive a validating response that recognizes what happened to them in order to slowly allow them to accept their new condition, on the other hand when the survivor was in an environment that promotes the idea of emotional avoidance then the survivor will distance themselves from others thereby fueling the community members to also respond the same way thus repeating the cycle of isolation (Shorer et al., 2024). This holds true towards the former military members as the military culture heavily as they were taught to be emotionally resilient and given the idea that showing their true feelings is a sign of weakness. In a study conducted by Ganz et al., (2022), they have mentioned that the military culture highly emphasizes the idea of "tough it out", a belief that each member of the military should learn how to solve their own personal problems and failing to do so is a result of vulnerability. This belief hinders the former military members from actively seeking the help of professionals or simply receiving the aid of the community as they view it as a sign of weakness.

This also raises concerns with regards to providing assistance with regards to the psychological and mental health of the Military personnel who are not just prone to diverse risks and fatality, but also to the individuals in profession like the following respondents. The challenge in tackling the barriers of help-seeking and overcoming stigma could contribute to the field of clinical aspects of military psychology.

Bravo and Echo had both participated in a rehabilitation plan constructed and given by the respective clinics that they have chosen to go to. They stated that they have made the decision because they wanted to be able to adjust properly with Echo admitting that he was not confident to recover by himself, thus he decided to seek the help of a qualified professional. In an article published by Grimwade (2024), she coined the term "career trauma"

which she said to be distressing experience from a professional experience which includes losing a job which may lead to shock and despair. Grimwade (2024) also added that seeking the help of a professional will be greatly beneficial for allowing the survivor to process their feelings and emotions. Seeking support from others particularly towards a professional proved to be greatly beneficial in the recovery journey of Bravo and Echo.

In accordance with the responses of the participants, it appears that help-seeking was perceived as a symbol of incompetence thereby limiting the capabilities of the amputees to seek professional help. A focus on the study of psychology and its implementation to physical therapy can be a noteworthy consideration for the future studies of the same topic.

Charlie, Delta and Echo all shared the same sentiments regarding the source of the support that they were getting coming from their family. Family support can become a source of emotional support and information support which can directly impact the self-confidence of the individual (An et al., 2024). Considering this, Charlie, Delta and Echo were able to ask for the support of their family in processing the medical discharge situation and have them join the participants as they process the events that had taken place.

This implied the ability to accept assistance of the respondent's contradictory to the barriers to help-seeking among military personnel. The narrative also highlights the importance of family and intimate relationships as a support system, which opens the discussion if showing vulnerability after being inflicted with an amputation can also strengthen the familial relationship rather than straining it altogether.

Bravo, Charlie and Echo all mentioned that they have engaged in the act of exercising so they can adjust towards their new condition. Health professionals advises amputees to engage in regular exercise as amputees are highly likely to refrain from engaging in physical activities, one such benefit in engaging with these activities would be that it prepares the body for the application of a prosthetic and allows them to move with better ease (Molina et al., 2021). Bravo, Charlie and Echo all engaged in exer-

cises in order to condition their bodies in accordance with the advice of the health professionals and prepare themselves for the prosthetic that they were going to receive.

Exercises were discussed as part of the recovery plan of the participants as it was commonly linked to the adjustment towards their new condition and the speeding up of their recovery process. Exercising became vital for their life as their body now compensates for their condition and muscles are vital for proper movement of the body.

Alpha and Charlie shared that they were receiving support and motivation from their families as they were driven to start their recovery after their encounters and conversations with them. Family members are essential for the trauma survivors, they may help in promoting resilience and to receive validation for their condition (Kpено et al., 2024). Alpha received validation from his wife which motivated him to continue his rehabilitation plan while Charlie became much more resilient after the conversation with his father.

Intimacy and family relevance were highly regarded in the recovery of the participants as their source of strength and motivation to recover. Family support appeared vital for their overall recovery, thus a focus for newer studies discussing the idea of recovery and family support can be made to check its significance.

Bravo and Delta mentioned that they were able to source their motivation from the doctors that they were appointed to after a meaningful conversation with them. It is important for a physician to find out the things that were meaningful to their patients and to use that in order to encourage them to do something that would be essential for their recovery (Bendix, 2023). The respective doctors of Bravo and Delta tried to find out what motivates them to achieve anything, once they have succeeded in motivating them, it becomes easier to persuade them to stick with the accomplished plan.

Consideration for future studies pertaining to the effectiveness of the therapeutic approaches of the healthcare professionals can be highlighted to provide a further foundation for this result.

People have the tendency to blame God for negative life events and this is directly correlated with the decline of the belief in God and the reduction in participating with actions such as prayer (Hunt, 2023), which is observable in the case of Echo who believed that God would have kept him safe if He wills it.

Echo also shared that his hate for God was only temporary and he is presently going to church regularly to ask for guidance. Individuals who have undergone amputation find it hard to adapt to their new life circumstances and relying on a higher power is effective for alleviating their difficulties and is correlated with improvements in the well-being of an individual (Sousan et al., 2025). In accordance with this, Echo was able to find comfort in worshiping God and his belief in God allowed him to strengthen his resilience while he was still recovering.

Multiple studies have presented the idea of family support for a better recovery highlighting the necessity of reliance and sincerity. On the other hand, studies centered around the importance of religion for the recovery process of an amputee was rarely discussed, thereby further studies can aid in exploring the relationship of religion and recovery.

### ***Sub-theme Three: Communication***

Alpha and Bravo specifically mentioned how they became closer with their families highlighting their reliance towards their support and becoming more vocal towards them. Stories and issues appeared to be topics that were being brought up by the participants towards their family. Family communication is the process of exchanging any forms of information with family members (Bi & Wang, 2023). Family communication plays a very important role inside a family as it allows everyone at the family to understand and thereby support each other forming the foundation for a strong bond and overcome challenges that may arise (Avitasari & Sulistyarini, 2024). Alpha and Bravo benefited from being exposed with their family members most of the time as it allowed them to build a solid bond with each other wherein they can seek the support of their family when they are experiencing an ordeal.

According to Kpeno et al. (2024), our families can serve as our listeners vital for reducing stress and help with the recovery of individuals who had undergone a traumatic experience. Kpeno et al. (2024) also noted that families can foster resilience by providing reassurance and encouragement. This coincides with the statements that Alpha, Bravo and Echo have given, denoting that their families were there to validate their feelings and emotions thereby supporting them in their recovery journey. Keeping secrets from your partner is a sign that you do not completely trust them or it is rooted from a belief that one's partner will not respond with acceptance or empathy (Davis & Tabri, 2023). Discussions around being honest towards their wives were also made as a direct

display of their trust and understanding that their partner will respond kindly towards their worries.

Bravo and Delta both shared their most memorable experiences being conversations with their family members. Both of their responses were centered around being recognized and validated by their families. In a study conducted by Kuo et al. (2022), a study regarding the effects of validation and invalidation were discussed, participants who had received validation after verbally disclosing their pain reported positive effect and less worry while the participants who were invalidated after doing the same thing experienced the exact opposite.

### ***Theme Two: Overcoming Adjustments***

The second theme focuses on the specific struggles that the participants had encountered after becoming an amputee including the daily activities that they have engaged in, the coping mechanisms that they did and the significant additions in their overall daily routine.

#### ***Sub-theme Two: Daily Activity Struggles***

Bravo mentioned that he initially found it difficult to pee and defecate because he was having a hard time balancing himself. Lower limb amputation was correlated with considerable changes in the balance of an individual and impaired balance became the primary reason as to why the majority of the population with

these amputation falls down (Olenšek et al., 2021). Bravo appeared to struggle with finding the balance of his body after receiving a lower limb amputation thereby inhibiting his capability to coordinate with his body resulting in him finding it hard to pee and poop. Delta shared that he initially found it hard to defecate as he used his other hand for this before.

The difficulty in daily activities could be distinct yet the implication of the effects of the amputation could inhibit the accomplishment of activities while even simple tasks could have an increased difficulty if a specific amputated organ was habitually being used. This could emphasize that the following adjustment may not be only applicable to physical difficulty but also in cognitive aspects.

#### ***Sub-theme Two: Coping Mechanisms***

Alpha shared that he engaged in the act of constantly drinking alcohol in order to make himself feel better. In a study conducted by Aquino & Callinan (2023), the idea of drinking alcohol in order to alleviate and cope with negative feelings was pointed out. This directly coincides with the constant drinking of Alpha being his own method of coping with the loss of his occupation. Unemployed people are more likely to become socially isolated while having no one to rely on (Eckhard, 2022). It can be deduced that Alpha engaged in the act of drinking alcohol in order to alleviate his negative feelings which includes feeling socially isolated. Delta and Echo had both chosen to do smoking in order to lessen their stress and mentioned that they felt better after smoking. Smoking causes rapid shifts in the emotional state of the individual, smoking stimulates the feeling of pleasure and relaxation which is attractive for individuals under a lot of stress (Friedman, 2020).

This entails that smoking becomes one of the most popular coping strategies of people under stress, considering the circumstance of Delta and Echo after the medical discharge, it can be seen why they have chosen to use smoking in order to reduce their perceived stress often linking it to temporarily forgetting the issues that they were experiencing and sharing how effective it was for lightening the burden that they were carrying.

#### ***Sub-theme Three: Routine Adjustments***

Surprisingly, four (4) out of our five (5) participants mentioned that putting ice on the site of amputation already became a significant part of their routine and mentioned that it sometimes becomes painful or uncomfortable. Phantom limb pain can sometimes take place amongst the amputees, it is the perception of pain in a limb that was no longer there. This is a phenomenon that up to this day is still poorly understood. (Deutmeyer et al., 2023). In order to ensure that they were not talking about residual limb pain which is the pain that came from the healing of the amputation wound, we have verified it with the participants wherein they stated that they still sometimes feel the pain even if the amputation wound was completely healed.

### **Theme Three: Self-Concept**

This theme revolves around the subjective perception of themselves after becoming an amputee. Their view towards their identities, new qualities that they have discovered in themselves and experiences where they struggled in accepting their new reality were also discussed. A focal point of the discussion would be the sense of embarrassment from being seen by other people, learning how to appreciate the things that the amputees have and finding it difficult to look at a mirror was highly emphasized in the study.

#### ***Sub-theme One: Personal View***

Charlie and Delta voiced out embarrassment as their main issue when they first became an amputee. Amputation is widely known to cause a considerable change in the psycho-social relationship of an individual, amputees are at the stage where they are struggling to accept their new physical appearance and the limitation that comes alongside it (Roșca et al., 2021). Charlie struggled to accept the limitation that was imposed upon him after the amputation as it altered his view of himself which was the reason why he initially considered himself as an embarrassment, connecting it with the belief of amputation becoming a weakness of his.

Delta disclosed that the main source of his embarrassment would be having people he is

personally acquainted to finding out that he became an amputee. A lot of amputees do engage in social isolation due to a variety of factors which includes mobility restriction and societal stigma (AK & MJL, 2024). Delta feared that people who he knows will judge him after seeing that he became an amputee coupled with his physical limitation may have become his own justification to partially avoid associating with other people. These experiences which revolve around the feeling of embarrassment and isolation underscores the psychosocial struggles they inevitably face, which also suggests that their change of personal view extends to experiencing identity crisis sourced from the change of their physical appearance following their amputations.

#### ***Sub-theme Two: Discovered Qualities***

Bravo and Echo shared a very similar response focusing on them becoming more grateful towards the things that they do have. Gratitude was directly correlated with recovery, gratitude can make someone appreciate what they have in the present and reduce their focus on the past thereby directly opposing regret (Zhang & Wang, 2022). One factor that helped in the recovery of Bravo and Echo was their gratitude towards what they have as it allowed them to focus on the present which directly influences their diminishing regret.

Alpha and Delta discussed how they became attached with their family and how they became affectionate with their family members. Amputees naturally require a lot of support from their families and even their loved ones as they can use them as a source of comfort while they are recovering (Ohenewa et al., 2025). Alpha and Echo both mentioned that they have received a lot of support from their families during their recovery period. Utang na loob is a trait that Filipinos do note for when someone did good deeds towards them, it can come in the form of returning the "Kagandahang-loob" to those who had shown it to you (Peña, 2024). It can be assumed that Alpha and Echo became much more affectionate with their family because they want to return the favor which is the concept of utang na loob in the Philippines.

The characteristics and qualities that were discussed by the participants of the study were not guaranteed to be an innate or acquired quality meaning that their responses cannot be verified if it was only something that was hidden within them or if they learned of it after becoming an amputee, further studies isolating the extraneous variables can provide further insight for the verification of the acquired qualities of the amputees.

#### ***Sub-theme Three: Struggles in Recognizing the Self***

Alpha, Bravo and Delta all shared the same sentiment when asked about their struggles in recognizing themselves. They responded with having difficulty in looking at themselves, specifically their body. In a study conducted by Torra et al. (2024), it was given that some of the participants in a linked study found it hard to look at themselves and sometimes required professional intervention. Considering their circumstances, Alpha, Bravo, and Delta found it difficult to recognize their new condition and found it harder to accept their condition. According to Torra et al. (2024), being able to look at a mirror as an amputee is a great sign of acceptance.

Alpha also mentioned that he found it hard to be called out of his condition and found it shameful. Shame arises when there is a difference between the self-image and the ideal-self and can be interlinked wBravo, Delta and Echo all agreed that their main goal that keeps them from moving forward despite their amputations would be money. Living in the Philippines is starting to get really expensive, basic goods such as our groceries and services such as power and medical care all soared in prices (Chanco, 2022). All three of them also shared the same sentiment that a retirement fund will allow them to meet the needs that they will have in the future and it became their main motivation to keep working. The financial plan signifies the importance of financial stability for the lives of the amputees and can be a point of discussion for the benefits that they receive.

The resemblance of the participant's plan was inclined to the financial objectives, this opens a discourse whether the compensation and benefits allotted for the amputated military

are sufficient and justifiable, therefore, opening the discussion for programs and improvements for the assistance to the Military amputees.

#### **Theme Four: Personal Goals**

This theme focuses on the unique goals that each of our participants holds and aspires to achieve including their plans after finishing their adjustment period, their current source of motivation and the short- and long-term goals that they do want to achieve.

##### ***Sub-theme One: Post-Adjustment Plans***

Bravo, Delta and Echo all agreed that their main goal that keeps them from moving forward despite their amputations would be money. Living in the Philippines is starting to get really expensive, basic goods such as our groceries and services such as power and medical care all soared in prices (Chanco, 2022). All three of them also shared the same sentiment that a retirement fund will allow them to meet the needs that they will have in the future and it became their main motivation to keep working. The financial plan signifies the importance of financial stability for the lives of the amputees and can be a point of discussion for the benefits that they receive.

The resemblance of the participant's plan was inclined to the financial objectives, this opens a discourse whether the compensation and benefits allotted for the amputated military are sufficient and justifiable, therefore, opening the discussion for programs and improvements for the assistance to the Military amputees.

##### ***Sub-theme Two: Facing Setbacks***

Alpha, Delta and Echo mentioned their families in their responses. Alpha highlighted how he trusts that his family will be there to help him when he is finding it hard to do something. Families can serve as a source of motivation for a lot of people as it ensures that they will do their best at the job with the primary reason being to be able to provide all the needs of their families (Howe & Menges, 2024). Alpha and Delta already mentioned that they still have children that they do want to graduate and that could be one of the sources of motivation for Alpha and Delta.

Bravo and Charlie all agreed that they do try to solve the problems that they do have by themselves instead of seeking the support of other people. Historically, men are always known to be the ones providing the help instead of the receivers of help and many consider it as non-befitting for a man (Piatkowski et al., 2023). Both of them do believe that they need to act as the bigger person and that would be in the form of solving things independently. The emphasis on family-oriented qualities is evident throughout the interview, as the source of strength and openness in facing setbacks are centered towards intimate and family relationships. The following responses and thoughts are the aspects that should be reflected upon whether it is a product from gained experiences of amputation or influenced by other aspects like culture, personality, or military influence.

##### ***Sub-theme Three: Long and Short-Term Goals***

Alpha and Delta mentioned that they wanted to see their children graduate in school. According to an article published by Gonzales (2023), in a poll trying to understand why parents want their children to go to college, 7 out of the 10 asian parents mentioned that their children should strive for a college degree and it might be influenced by the vision that parents have on their children getting a degree and their socio-economic status. Both Alpha and Delta were not from well-off backgrounds and seeing their children succeed acts as their motivator to continue working.

Bravo and Charlie highlighted their homes when discussing their own short-term goals. Bravo highlighted having his house fixed as his short-term goal while Charlie mentioned that he wanted to have the rooftop of his house replaced eventually due to the holes that cause leaks in the house.

Alpha, Bravo and Echo all mentioned their desire to live longer, crediting it to their future unfulfilled plans that they do want to achieve. Willingness to live even if an individual was under an impairment were associated with the age range, middle aged adults which are adults at the age of forty to sixty were mostly filled with ideas of what a good ideal life should look

like while adults on the age of sixty and above do seriously consider if they are prepared for the afterlife (Couto et al., 2023). Since Alpha, Bravo and Echo were still aged under sixty, they were still filled with motivation to pursue the ideal life that they were envisioning.

There is a strong connection between their career goals and personal aspirations, both of which are driven by their sense of responsibility and purpose, as seen particularly through their roles within their respective families. This implies that the importance of goal-setting, whether guided by the rehabilitation center or personal values, in enhancing their motivation, emotional and psychological well-being, including their resilience.

## Conclusion

The research was able to discuss the experiences of the medically discharged amputees after leaving the military. The news of the medical discharge was met with disappointment rooted in the belief that the participants can still do their duties. Exercising and family support became vital for the overall recovery process of the participants and were linked with the need for further support, with exercising becoming a necessity for movement adaptation and family support as a motivator. Communication received a significant improvement as the participants found it easier to open up their problems and become much more honest towards their families. Peeing and defecating became a struggle for the participants, smoking and drinking alcohol were emphasized as the coping mechanism of the participants and putting ice on the area of amputation due to pain or itch was emphasized. Feelings of embarrassment from their condition were shown and the struggle of recognizing their new physical condition. Qualities such as being appreciative as an amputee were also noted. Retirement funds appear.

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