

Student's Knowledge and Perception on the Reinstatement of Mandatory ROTC

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Abstract	Article Info
<p>This descriptive study aimed to assess students' knowledge and perceptions regarding the reinstatement of the mandatory Reserved Officer's Training Course (ROTC) among senior high school students. A quota sample of sixty Grade 11 and 12 students from Florentino Galang Sr. National High School was randomly selected as respondents. The findings revealed that students possessed only a moderate level of knowledge about ROTC and its reinstatement, demonstrating limited understanding of its purpose, objectives, and potential benefits. Despite this, students generally held a favorable perception of ROTC and supported its reinstatement as a mandatory program. The study also found no significant differences in knowledge and perception when data were grouped according to sex, year level, or academic strand, indicating a uniform attitude across demographic variables. Interestingly, students lacked awareness of the reasons behind ROTC being previously optional under the National Service Training Program (NSTP), which may influence their support for its mandatory reinstatement. The results suggest that while students support the idea of ROTC, their understanding of its significance remains moderate. For future research, it is recommended to explore the possible correlation between students' knowledge and perception of ROTC reinstatement, including potential influences of political biases. Additionally, conducting similar studies across different schools and regions could provide comparative data to validate these findings and better inform policies related to ROTC implementation in various educational settings.</p>	<p>Keywords: ROTC, Student Knowledge, Student Perception, Reinstatement, Senior High School, National Service Training Program</p>

INTRODUCTION

The Reserve Officers' Training Course (ROTC) is a military-oriented program offered in various universities and colleges worldwide, designed to prepare students for military service and instill patriotism. According to Moody (2022), ROTC provides students with military training as they pursue their academic degrees, with the primary goal of equipping them to serve their country effectively. This program has historically been viewed as a means to develop discipline, leadership, and national loyalty among young Filipinos, fostering a sense of civic duty alongside academic achievement.

In the Philippines, ROTC is currently one of the three components of the National Service Training Program (NSTP), established under Republic Act 9163 or the NSTP Act of 2001. Signed into law in 2002 by then-President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, NSTP aims to develop civic consciousness and patriotism among Filipino youth through three different programs: ROTC, Civic Welfare Service (CWTS), and Literary Training Service (LTS). While ROTC remains an option at the tertiary level, it is not a mandatory requirement for students, unlike the other NSTP components, leading to ongoing debates about its role and relevance in youth development.

Recently, the proposal to reinstate mandatory ROTC has gained significant attention. During his first State of the Nation Address (SONA) on July 25, 2022, President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. called on Congress to pass legislation that would make ROTC compulsory for Senior High School students in Grades 11 and 12 across all public and private educational institutions (Alvarez, 2022). This renewed interest reflects the government's intention to foster discipline and patriotism among the youth, but it also raises questions about the program's past issues and future implications.

Despite the political support, the push for mandatory ROTC faces opposition from various youth groups, including the National Union of Students of the Philippines (NUSP) and Anakbayan. Critics argue that ROTC has historically failed to cultivate true nationalism or social responsibility and has been associated with hazing and abuse, as exemplified by the death of student Mark Welton Chua linked to corruption within the training corps (Adriano, 2019). Given these concerns, there is a critical need to assess students' perceptions and knowledge regarding the proposed reinstatement. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the attitudes of Senior High School students—who will be directly affected by the policy—about the potential reintroduction of mandatory ROTC. Understanding their perceptions can offer valuable insights to policymakers and help evaluate whether reinstating ROTC aligns with the youth's views and the country's development goals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) is a program designed to foster civic consciousness, patriotism, and military preparedness among Filipino youth. As outlined by Argosino (2022), ROTC is currently part of the National Service Training Program (NSTP), created under Republic Act 9165 of 2001, and serves to develop the ethics of service and defense readiness among students. Historically, ROTC has been mandated in higher education institutions, with Executive Order No. 59 (1967) institutionalizing its mandatory status in colleges and universities with large enrollments. De La Salle University Dasmarias (2018) emphasizes that ROTC aims to prepare students for basic military training, ultimately developing a reserve force that can be mobilized in times of national emergencies. Furthermore, research by Moody (2022) links military training to the development of leadership traits and personality attributes, highlighting the program's long-term benefits in shaping responsible citizens. Despite its potential, enrollment in ROTC has seen a significant decline from over 800,000 cadets in 2000 to just 150,000 in 2011, indicating waning interest and participation over recent years.

The debate over reinstating mandatory ROTC in the Philippines has intensified, especially in light of recent geopolitical tensions and national security concerns. Proponents argue that making ROTC compulsory for Grades 11 and 12 will prepare youth as future defenders of the nation, with bills filed by legislators such as Senate Bill 387 and House Bill 4500 emphasizing the importance of developing leadership, discipline, and patriotism among students (Fernandez, 2022; Ang, 2022). Surveys like Pulse Asia suggest widespread public support, with 69% of Filipinos favoring the program's reintroduction (Fernandez, 2022). Supporters also highlight the program's role in fostering civic responsibility, disaster preparedness, and military reserve capacity—critical components in safeguarding national sovereignty, especially amid territorial disputes and security threats (Philstar.org, 2016). Additionally, some local officials and community leaders see ROTC as vital for instilling discipline and patriotism among the youth, viewing it as a means to develop future leaders and soldiers.

However, significant criticisms and concerns challenge the reimplementation of mandatory ROTC. Numerous youth organizations, including Salinlahi Alliance and Gabriela Youth, have voiced opposition, citing past abuses such as hazing, sexual violence, and violations of student rights (GMA News, 2019; Formoso, 2022). Critics argue that the program's rigorous physical and psychological demands can be harmful, particularly for vulnerable students, and that the financial burden of uniforms, equipment, and related expenses adds to families' difficulties amid economic challenges (Formoso, 2022). Moreover, opponents contend that the program has historically been associated with repression and violence, and that alternative approaches to fostering discipline and patriotism should be prioritized (Magsambol, 2022). Recognizing these conflicting perspectives, the present study aims to explore the knowledge and perceptions of Senior High School students regarding the proposed reinstatement of mandatory ROTC. Understanding students' viewpoints will provide valuable insights into the factors influencing their attitudes and help inform policymakers on how to implement the program more effectively and ethically.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive research design to systematically explore students' knowledge and perceptions regarding the reinstatement of mandatory ROTC. According to Asio (2021), descriptive survey research effectively provides a comprehensive understanding of individuals, events, or conditions by collecting data through questionnaires or interviews. This approach allows researchers to accurately depict the current status of students' awareness and attitudes, facilitating the collection of extensive data that can be generalized to similar populations. The use of a structured survey questionnaire enabled a systematic and efficient method for gathering relevant data on students' understanding and opinions about the proposed program reimplementation.

Respondents of the Study

The target respondents were Senior High School students from Florentino Galang Sr. National High School, specifically those enrolled in the S.Y. 2022-2023 academic year across different strands such as ABM, STEM, HUMSS, and TVL. These students were selected because they are directly impacted by the potential reintroduction of mandatory ROTC. The official list of students was obtained from the school administration to ensure accurate sampling. A total of 60 students—30 from Grade 11 and 30 from Grade 12—were purposively selected to represent the student body, with the sampling process designed to provide a balanced perspective across different academic tracks.

Sampling Technique and Procedure

The researchers employed quota sampling, a non-probability sampling method, to determine the respondents. Given the total student population of 1,234 (677 Grade 11 and 557 Grade 12 students), the researchers selected 60 participants—30 from each grade level—to efficiently gather data while minimizing time and effort. This method allowed the researchers to ensure proportional representation from each grade level and track, aligning

with the study's focus without the need for random sampling. The selected respondents were then invited to participate in the survey, which was administered personally to facilitate clarification and ensure comprehension.

Data Gathering Instrument and Procedures

A self-constructed questionnaire served as the primary data collection tool, divided into three parts: demographic profile, students' extent of knowledge about the reinstatement of mandatory ROTC, and their perceptions of the program. The knowledge section consisted of ten statements rated on a five-point scale ranging from "Not all Aware" to "Extremely Aware," while the perception section used a similar five-point scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." Prior to data collection, the instrument underwent validity and reliability testing. Expert validation was conducted with three jurors using established criteria, resulting in an overall validity rating of 3.6 out of 4.0. Reliability was confirmed through pilot testing with 40 students, yielding a high Cronbach's alpha of 0.911, indicating consistency and dependability of the instrument.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was approved by the university's administration and the school principal. The researchers personally administered the questionnaires to respondents at convenient times, providing explanations to ensure understanding. After retrieval, responses were checked for completeness and accuracy before encoding and analysis. To enrich the quantitative data, the researchers conducted a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with two groups of seven students each, exploring their insights and understanding of ROTC and its potential reinstatement. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics—frequency and percentage for demographic data; mean and standard deviation for knowledge and perception scores; and the Mann-Whitney U test to examine differences based on gender, grade level, and strand. Ethical standards were strictly followed, including securing necessary approvals and safeguarding respondents' rights and confidentiality throughout the research process.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Results revealed that most of the respondents are female with a $f=37$; 61.7.0% higher compares to the male respondents with a $f=23$;38.3%. The year level has the same frequency count and percentage distribution of $f=30$;50.0% for Grade 11 and Grade 12, this is because the researchers employed a quota sampling where researchers only select respondents from Grade 11 and Grade 12 having 60 respondents overall. In terms of the strand/track, most of the respondents belong to the HUMMS/ABM strand with an $f=30$;50.0%, followed by the STEM strand with an $f=29$;48.3%.

Extent Knowledge of Senior High School Students in the Reinstatement of Mandatory ROTC

In terms of the respondents' extent of knowledge in the reinstatement of mandatory ROTC, the result shows that respondents are somewhat aware of the implementation of mandatory ROTC. Of the ten (10) statements, item no. 1 which states their knowledge of the purpose of ROTC which is to encourage, train, organize, and make a mobilized citizen for the preparation for the nation's defense, obtains the highest mean of 3.67 and interpreted as aware. While item no. 7 which states, "I am aware that if I failed to pass the ROTC training, I will not be able to graduate", has the lowest mean of 2.30 and is interpreted as slightly aware. Overall, the total weighted mean of the extent of knowledge of Senior High School students is 3.12, which is interpreted as somewhat aware. This implies that students of Florentino Galang Sr National High School do not have enough knowledge on the implementation of mandatory ROTC. There is not enough dissemination of the information for the awareness of students on the said implementation.

This is supported by the study of Tongol et al. (2019), which revealed in the result of their study that many Senior High School students do not have enough knowledge of ROTC. But the fact that they are in favor of its implementation is due to their knowledge that it is embodied in the Philippine Constitution to promote patriotism and love of country.

Furthermore, based on the Focused Group Discussion conducted, out of fourteen (14) respondents the researchers interviewed, it is manifested that students have an average knowledge about the ROTC. The majority of answers from the respondents only revolve around knowing that ROTC is military training. Some of the common answers are as follows: *“For me, ROTC training is about military training or exercise”* and *“For me, ROTC is a program which is more on training the students to be prepared to defend our country in case of war”*. While some of the respondents answered, *“For me, ROTC is for self-defense, and it can teach students good moral and to be a responsible individual”*.

Table 5. Extent Knowledge of Senior High School Students in the Reinstatement of Mandatory ROTC

	Mean	SD	Int
1. I know that the purpose of ROTC is to encourage, train, organize and make a mobilized citizen for the preparation for nations defense.	3.67	1.110	Aware
2. I know that ROTC can develop my moral character, intellect, social skills, and involvement in public and civic concerns.	3.57	.915	Aware
3. Through ROTC I can learn fundamentals of nationalism and patriotism.	3.22	1.010	Somewhat Aware
4. I am aware of incidence of violence in ROTC in the past	2.82	1.255	Somewhat Aware
5. I know that ROTC will require me to submit medical certificate to the ROTC Commandant if I am fit for the ROTC training	3.38	1.121	Somewhat Aware
6. I am aware that if I am physically and mentally fit, I shall be accepted in the ROTC program and exceptions maybe made for me if I received a psychological and physical unfit certification	3.15	1.300	Somewhat Aware
7. I am aware that if I failed to pass the ROTC training, I will not be able to graduate	2.30	1.046	Slightly Aware
8. I know that I am covered by insurance for health and accident, provided by the school administration concerned during the duration of my ROTC training.	3.22	1.209	Somewhat Aware
9. I am aware that if I completed the two-year basic ROTC program I will be registered in the Reserve Force upon reaching the legal age	3.00	1.262	Somewhat Aware
10. I am aware that if I join the ROTC program, I can avail of scholarships.	2.92	1.266	Somewhat Aware
Overall	3.12	0.794	Somewhat Aware

Level of Perception of Senior High School Students in the Reinstatement of Mandatory ROTC

The result reveals that the level of perception of Senior High School students about the mandatory ROTC is High. This is evident in item no. 8 which states “ROTC is an opportunity to train me physically and can improve my skills in time management” which has the highest mean of 4.13 interpreted as high. On the other hand, the negative statements about mandatory ROTC are reflected in items no. 4 and 9 which state “I don’t believe that ROTC can only expose me early in violence” and “I don’t believe that ROTC is a form of

militarization” has the lowest mean and interpreted as moderate. In general, the perception of Florentino Galang Sr National High School students is high, with a mean score of 3.66 which implies that the students have a positive perception about the mandatory ROTC and that they consider the re-implementation as necessary.

The result of the study is supported by the survey conducted by OCTA Research “Tugon ng Masa Survey” in which about 68 percent of Filipinos agree with the plan to pursue the re-institutionalization of the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) while only 28 percent are against of such plan. De Vera-Ruiz, E. (2023)

The result of the study conforms with the theory of Acceptability by Sekhon et.al (2017) which introduces the multiple facets of acceptance that include effective attitude, burden, perceived effectiveness, ethicality, and self-efficacy. The students’ views on the mandatory ROTC were classified in accordance with the multiple facets of acceptance.

In terms of effective attitude, students' feelings towards the ROTC program were examined. The result indicates that students moderately believe that participating in ROTC would not be a time-consuming or exhausting experience suggesting a positive attitude towards the program. Regarding the burden aspect, students expressed a moderate belief that joining ROTC would not impose additional financial burdens on their parents, who are already dealing with various school expenses. This indicates that students perceived ROTC as not overly costly. Perceived effectiveness focused on how students perceived the purpose of the ROTC program. The findings revealed that students highly believed that ROTC is a means to fulfill their responsibility of defending the country from foreign aggression. They also believed that ROTC would help them understand the commitment of soldiers to protecting and defending the nation and foster discipline and love of the country. Ethicality, on the other hand, examined the alignment of the ROTC program with students' value systems. The result indicates that students somewhat believed that ROTC was not an environment for bullying or harassment. They even rejected the notion that ROTC solely exposed them to violence and is a form of militarization.

Lastly, self-efficacy focuses on how the student is more likely to succeed, on how they think, behave and feel. This is evident with the result showing that students highly believe that ROTC provides an opportunity to practice following instructions and self-control. They also saw ROTC as a chance to train them physically and develop their skills in time management. Generally, the result of the study demonstrated that respondents had a high level of positive perception regarding mandatory ROTC. The respondents responded favorably and held favorable views regarding the reinstatement of mandatory ROTC.

Moreover, based on the Focused Group Discussion conducted, the majority of the respondents have a positive insight towards the mandatory ROTC. The respondents believed that it is okay to make ROTC mandatory again in the country. These are evident in the following answers of the respondents when they were asked if they are in favor of reinstating the mandatory ROTC among Senior High School; Several respondents say, *“For me, it’s okay that there is a mandatory ROTC in Senior High School so we students, can train physically”*. Another group expressed support by saying, *“For me, I’m in favor of having a mandatory ROTC it’s because, for example, if ever there is a war coming in our country, we can defend ourselves and most especially our country”*.

Some exclaimed, *“Yes, I’m in favor of having a mandatory ROTC in Senior High School so I can experience some of the training of the soldiers because I want to be a soldier soon”*. A pair says, *“For me I’m in favor of having a mandatory ROTC because if ever there is a war, we already have a trained individual ready to defend our country”*, and *“For me, it’s okay to have a mandatory ROTC because through this training we can learn self-defense especially when it comes to the girls they can learn how to protect themselves”*.

Table 6. Level of Perception of Senior High School Students in the Reinstatement of Mandatory ROTC

	Mean	SD	Int
1. I don’t believed ROTC would only be time consuming and an exhausting experience	3.32	1.282	Moderate
2. I don’t believed that joining ROTC will force my parents who are already burdened with my numerous school expenses to spent for my ROTC uniform concerns.	3.35	0.954	Moderate
3. I don’t believed that ROTC is an environment for bullying and harassment	3.25	1.114	Moderate

4. I don't believe that ROTC can only expose me early in violence	3.13	1.081	Moderate
	4.05	0.982	High
5. I believed that ROTC will help me fulfill my responsibility of defending my country from foreign aggression			
6. I can practice how to follow instructions and self-control in ROTC	3.98	0.965	High
7. ROTC will make me understand soldiers sacrifices and their steadfast commitment on protecting and defending the nation and the Filipino people	4.10	0.838	High
8. ROTC is an opportunity to train me physically and can improve my skills in time management.	4.13	0.853	High
9. I don't believed that ROTC is a form of militarization	3.13	1.033	Moderate
10. I believed that mandatory ROTC will instill discipline and love of country	4.12	0.976	High
Overall	3.66	0.853	High

Extent of Knowledge of Senior high school Students when Grouped According to Profile

Using Mann-Whitney U Test at a 5% level of significance, a p-value of 0.538 indicates that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference on the extent of knowledge of male and female participants on the reinstatement of mandatory ROTC.

Using Mann-Whitney U Test at a 5% level of significance, a p-value of 0.610 indicates that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference on the extent of knowledge of Grade 11 and Grade 12 participants on the reinstatement of mandatory ROTC.

Using the Mann-Whitney U Test at a 5% level of significance, a p-value of 0.750 indicates that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference on the extent of knowledge of participants under the HUMSS/ABM and STEM strands on the reinstatement of mandatory ROTC.

The extent of knowledge of male and female students about the reinstatement of mandatory ROTC is likely to vary depending on a variety of factors, including their level of involvement in military-related activities, their exposure to media coverage of the issue, and their personal opinions on the matter.

This implies that regardless of gender, year level, and strand, the Senior High School students of Florentino Galang Sr. National High School do not differ in their knowledge as to their demographic profile. This may be so, since their awareness to the re-implementation of mandatory ROTC is the same.

This is confirmed in the study of Mostajo (2018), which states that all respondents, regardless of profile agreed to the implementation of mandatory ROTC. According to this study, ROTC can enhance their abilities in both physical and social skills and will make them more patriotic. ROTC should be implemented when the students start their high school education, and it should be both male and female.

Table 7. Extent Knowledge of Senior High School Students when grouped according to Profile

Profile	Mean Rank	Test Statistic	p-value	Decision for Ho	Conclusion
Gender					Not Significant
• Male	32.26	385.000	0.538	Do Not Reject Ho	
• Female	29.41				
Year level		484.500	0.610	Do Not Reject Ho	Not Significant

• Grade 11	29.35				
• Grade 12	31.65				
Strand/Track					No Significant
• HUMMS/ABM	29.81	471.000	0.750	Do Not Reject Ho	
• STEM	31.24				

Perception of Senior High School Students on Mandatory ROTC when grouped according to Profile

At a 5% level of significance using the Mann-Whitney U Test, a p-value of 0.709 indicates that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. Therefore, it is concluded that there is no significant difference on the perception of male and female participants in the reinstatement of mandatory ROTC.

At a 5% level of significance using the Mann-Whitney U Test, a p-value of 0.433 indicates that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. Therefore, it is concluded that there is no significant difference on the perception of Grade 11 and Grade 12 participants in the reinstatement of mandatory ROTC.

At a 5% level of significance using the Mann-Whitney U Test, a p-value of 0.463 indicates that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. Therefore, it is concluded that there is no significant difference on the perception of participants taking HUMSS and STEM strands in the reinstatement of mandatory ROTC.

This implies that regardless of profile, the perception of Senior High School students of Florentino Galang Sr. National High School is not influenced by gender, year level, or strand. Their exposure and awareness of the re-implementation of mandatory ROTC is the same which reflects their perception of the matter.

According to Padilla (2017), if the youth will understand the reason of the ROTC training, they will learn many skills such as basic life support, first aid training, basic self- defense, combat preparation, survival skills, and others. In total, not only does the nation benefit but we also learn many not only in defense but also on disciplining ourselves.

Table 8. Perception of Senior High School Students on Mandatory ROTC when grouped according Profile

Profile	Mean Rank	Test Statistic	p-value	Decision for Ho	Conclusion
Gender					No Significant
• Male	29.43	450.000	0.709		
• Female	31.16				
Year Level					No Significant
• Grade 11	28.73	503.000	0.433	Do Not Reject Ho	
• Grade 12	32.27				
Strand/Track					No Significant
• HUMMS/ABM	28.90	499.000	0.463	Do Not Reject Ho	
• STEM	32.21				

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, senior high school students demonstrated a moderate level of knowledge about the ROTC program and generally held a positive perception, expressing support for the reintroduction of mandatory ROTC in the country. This indicates that students tend to view the program favorably and believe that their participation would be beneficial, suggesting a sense of readiness to engage in ROTC training should it become compulsory again in the future. However, the results also reveal that many students may lack a comprehensive understanding of the historical incidents and challenges associated with ROTC, which contributed to its previous abolition. This raises important questions about whether students'

favorable attitudes are based on informed awareness or simply on perceived benefits, highlighting the need for better education about the history and implications of ROTC for more well-rounded student perceptions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Future researchers are encouraged to utilize the data collected in this study as a foundation for further investigation. Specifically, they may explore potential correlations between students' levels of knowledge about ROTC and their perceptions of its reinstatement, including examining how political biases or influences may affect these perceptions. Such studies could provide deeper insights into the factors shaping student attitudes toward mandatory ROTC.
2. It is also recommended that subsequent studies replicate this research in different schools or regions to enhance the generalizability and validity of the findings. Comparing results across various educational settings can help identify consistent patterns or unique differences, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of student perceptions and knowledge about ROTC in diverse contexts.
3. Additionally, educational institutions and policymakers should consider integrating comprehensive information about the history, purpose, and implications of ROTC into the curriculum. This approach will ensure that students form more informed opinions, which can facilitate more constructive discussions and decision-making regarding the program's future.
4. Lastly, stakeholders are advised to conduct awareness campaigns or seminars that address misconceptions and provide balanced perspectives on ROTC, promoting informed engagement among students, parents, and educators alike.

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