

A Mixed Methods Study on the Core, Organizational, Functional, and Leadership Competencies of Female Military Leaders in the Philippines

Val Roman G. Sena

Lyceum of the Philippines University–Batangas

Abstract—This mixed methods study explored the core, organizational, functional, and leadership competencies of female military leaders in the Philippines. Guided by Dreyfus' (2004) model of adult skill acquisition, the research sought to identify how knowledge, autonomy, decision-making, and standards of work evolve among women leaders in a traditionally male-dominated military institution. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and a competency survey administered to selected participants from the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Thematic analysis of qualitative data revealed that female military leaders demonstrated autonomy rooted in early independence, pragmatic decision-making, evolving knowledge shaped by mentorship, and strong moral ascendancy reflected in transformational leadership. Quantitative validation through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses confirmed these four dimensions as significant predictors of leadership competence. Findings highlight the interplay between personal experiences and institutional culture in shaping effective female leadership in the military, suggesting policy reforms and capacity-building initiatives to enhance gender inclusivity in the AFP.

Keywords— Female military leaders, competencies, mixed methods, leadership, Armed Forces of the Philippines.

I. INTRODUCTION

Military leadership is typically evaluated across four primary competency domains: core, organizational, functional, and leadership competencies (Ratnawat, 2018). Core competencies reflect alignment with institutional values and ethical principles, while organizational competencies emphasize collaboration and effective teamwork. Functional competencies involve technical and operational proficiency, and leadership competencies focus on guiding, motivating, and inspiring others. Previous studies have underscored that effective military leaders must exhibit ethical decision-making, strategic judgment, and emotional stability to perform well in high-pressure environments (Meyer & Wynn, 2018; Sang-jung & Yoo-shin, 2020).

Historically, leadership in the military has been defined by courage, discipline, and moral ascendancy, traits traditionally associated with men. However, the participation of women in the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has increasingly challenged these gendered assumptions. The implementation of gender equality legislation such as the *Women in Nation Building Act* (Republic Act 7192) and the *Magna Carta of Women* (Republic Act 9710) has opened opportunities for women to access military education, training, and leadership roles once reserved exclusively for men. Despite these

reforms, women still constitute a small proportion of AFP officers, highlighting the continuing need to examine how female leaders develop and sustain competencies that enable them to succeed within a predominantly male institution (Garcia Zea et al., 2023; Meyer & Wynn, 2018).

As more women assume leadership positions in the AFP, understanding the unique competencies that underpin their effectiveness becomes increasingly important. Although research on women in military leadership remains limited, existing literature emphasizes their distinct strengths such as collaboration, empathy, adaptability, and moral ascendancy, which enhance command effectiveness and promote team cohesion (Ferguson, 2021; Matondang, 2022). Female officers have shown a fantastic ability to gain trust and promote social stability in community and peacekeeping operations (Azizah, 2020). These findings suggest that women's leadership brings valuable diversity and inclusivity to military organizations, underscoring the importance of further exploring their competencies within the Philippine context.

Anchored in Dreyfus' (2004) model of adult skill acquisition, which describes progressive stages from novice to expert performance, this research investigates the evolution of knowledge, standard of work, autonomy, and decision-making among female leaders. By integrating qualitative insights with quantitative validation, the study aims to establish a competency model reflective of the unique leadership experiences of Filipino women in uniform.



Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

II. METHODS

This study employed an integrated mixed methods design combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to

understand the competencies of female military leaders in the AFP. Participants included commissioned officers holding the ranks of Lieutenant Colonel, Colonel, and Brigadier General. Purposeful sampling was used to ensure representation across branches of service.

Semi-structured interviews captured in-depth experiences, while a competency assessment tool, developed from the qualitative phase, was validated quantitatively. Data collection followed ethical protocols, including informed consent and confidentiality safeguards. Directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) guided the qualitative phase, using Dreyfus' framework as an initial coding guide. The quantitative phase employed exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses to validate the emerging competency dimensions. Statistical parameters such as factor loadings above .50 and model fit indices within acceptable thresholds (Hair et al., 2014; Stone, 2021) were used to confirm construct validity.

III. RESULTS

Thematic analysis revealed four major competency domains: autonomy, decision-making, knowledge, and standard of work. These domains collectively describe the behavioral and cognitive characteristics that define female military leadership within the AFP. Autonomy emerged as a foundational attribute developed through early exposure to independence and responsibility. Participants described themselves as self-reliant and confident in carrying out decisions without constant supervision. Decision-making reflected a balance of caution and firmness, emphasizing evidence-based judgment and empathy for subordinates. Knowledge development was continuous and pragmatic, anchored on mentorship, experience, and a 'winning mindset' oriented toward resilience and adaptability. The standard of work was characterized by moral ascendancy and transformational leadership, where women leaders led by example, demonstrated compassion, and prioritized the professional growth of their subordinates. Quantitative validation through factor analysis confirmed these four

dimensions as reliable predictors of competency (See Table 1). Fit indices (CFI = .93, RMSEA = .04) indicated a well-fitting model (Figure 2). These results substantiate the theoretical alignment of the emergent framework with Dreyfus' stages of skill acquisition, confirming that competency development among female officers corresponds with the progressive development of autonomy, expertise, and ethical judgment.

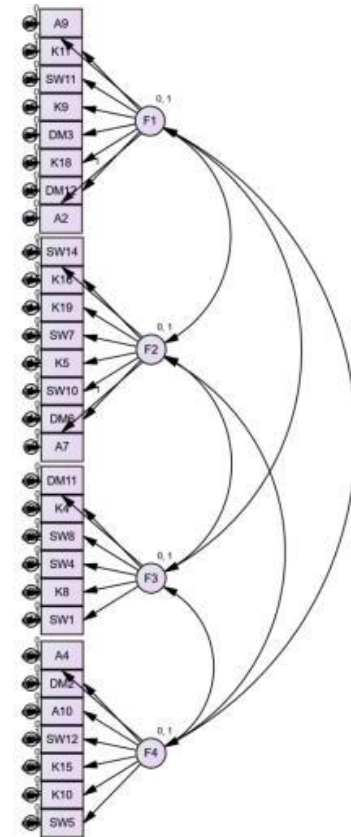


Figure 2. 4-Factor Female Military Competency Model

TABLE 1. Convergent validity

Sub-factors	Factor 1		Factor 2		Factor 3		Factor 4	
	r value	p value	r value	p value	r value	p value	r value	p value
Factor 1			.33*	.022	.28*	.01	.34*	.002
Factor 2	.33*	.022			.38**	.000	.30*	.006
Factor 3	.28*	.01	.38**	.000			.35**	.001
Factor 4	.34*	.002	.30*	.006	.35**	.001		

*p value ≤ .05, **p ≤ .001

IV. DISCUSSION

This study provides empirical evidence of how female military leaders in the Philippines develop and sustain core, organizational, functional, and leadership competencies within a patriarchal institutional context. The findings affirm that women in the AFP demonstrate comparable, and often superior levels of strategic thinking, ethical leadership, and collaborative decision-making. Their leadership journey mirrors Dreyfus' model, evolving from novice compliance to

expert-level intuition characterized by adaptive judgment and self-directed competence. The interplay between moral ascendancy and transformational leadership underscores the distinct contribution of female leaders to military culture emphasizing empathy without compromising authority.

These findings reinforce global perspectives that inclusive leadership strengthens operational effectiveness (Matondang, 2022; Ferguson, 2021). Moreover, mentorship and experiential learning surfaced as key mechanisms for competency

development, suggesting the need for institutionalized mentorship programs and gender-sensitive leadership training in the AFP. Future research may expand this competency model across service branches or explore comparative analyses between male and female officers. Policy implications include the integration of gender-responsive leadership frameworks in military education and career development systems to enhance organizational inclusivity and performance.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- [2]. Dreyfus, H. L. (2004). The five-stage model of adult skill acquisition. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, 24(3), 177–181.
- [3]. Ferguson, K. (2021). Gender, leadership, and resilience in the military. *Armed Forces & Society*, 47(2), 213–231.
- [4]. Garcia Zea, M., Meerits, A., & Kivipõld, J. (2023). Leadership competencies in military organizations. *Defense Studies Journal*, 12(1), 45–58.
- [5]. Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2014). *Multivariate data analysis* (7th ed.). Pearson.
- [6]. Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277–1288.
- [7]. Matondang, R. (2022). Women's leadership and collaboration in military operations. *Asian Journal of Peace and Security Studies*, 9(4), 221–235.
- [8]. Meyer, E., & Wynn, S. (2018). Leadership development in military contexts. *Journal of Military Ethics*, 17(3–4), 201–215.
- [9]. Stone, M. (2021). Model fit evaluation in structural equation modeling. *Quantitative Methods Review*, 14(2), 78–95.