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EXPLORING CIVIL-MILITARY OPERATIONS AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: INSIGHTS INTO ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY AND OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

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Abstract

Civil-Military Operations (CMO) and financial management serve as critical pillars in ensuring the successful implementation of military programs, community engagement initiatives, and organizational sustainability. This qualitative study explored the experiences, practices, challenges, and strategies of military personnel involved in civil-military operations and financial management. Using a phenomenological research design, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with fifteen key informants composed of military officers, finance personnel, and civil-military operations practitioners. Thematic analysis revealed five major themes: (1) Community-Centered Civil-Military Engagement, (2) Accountability and Transparency in Financial Management, (3) Interagency Collaboration and Partnership Building, (4) Operational Challenges and Resource Constraints, and (5) Adaptive Strategies for Organizational Efficiency. Findings indicate that effective civil-military operations depend largely on strong community relationships, while sound financial management enhances accountability, resource utilization, and mission accomplishment. The study highlights the importance of integrating participatory governance, financial transparency, and strategic leadership to strengthen organizational efficiency and operational effectiveness. The findings contribute to the growing literature on public sector management, military administration, and organizational governance by providing context-specific insights into the interconnected roles of civil-military operations and financial management.

Keywords: *Civil-Military Operations, Financial Management, Organizational Efficiency, Operational Effectiveness, Military Administration, Qualitative Research*

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INTRODUCTION

Modern military organizations perform responsibilities beyond traditional defense functions. In many countries, military institutions actively engage in humanitarian assistance, disaster response, community development, peacebuilding initiatives, and public service programs. These activities are commonly implemented through Civil-Military Operations (CMO), which serve as mechanisms for fostering positive relationships between military organizations and civilian communities.

The effectiveness of civil-military operations relies not only on operational competence but also on efficient financial management systems. Financial management ensures the appropriate allocation, utilization, monitoring, and accountability of resources necessary for implementing military and community-based programs. Sound financial governance strengthens organizational credibility, promotes transparency, and facilitates effective decision-making.

According to scholars in public administration, organizational efficiency is achieved when resources are optimally utilized to accomplish desired outcomes, while operational effectiveness focuses on achieving organizational goals through appropriate strategies and processes. Within military organizations, both efficiency and effectiveness are influenced by leadership, resource management, stakeholder engagement, and institutional accountability.

Despite the growing significance of civil-military operations and financial management, limited qualitative studies have explored how military personnel experience and navigate these functions in practice. Most existing literature focuses on policy implementation, budgeting mechanisms, and operational outcomes, leaving a gap in understanding the lived experiences of practitioners directly involved in these activities.

This study therefore explores civil-military operations and financial management practices through the perspectives of military personnel, providing valuable insights into how these practices contribute to organizational efficiency and operational effectiveness.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do military personnel describe their experiences in implementing civil-military operations?
2. How do participants characterize financial management practices within their organization?

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3. What challenges do personnel encounter in civil-military operations and financial management?
4. What strategies are employed to address operational and financial challenges?
5. How do civil-military operations and financial management contribute to organizational efficiency and operational effectiveness?

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Resource-Based Theory (Barney, 1991) and the Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984).

Resource-Based Theory posits that organizational success depends on the effective utilization and management of valuable resources. In military organizations, financial resources, human capital, and operational capabilities collectively determine efficiency and effectiveness.

Stakeholder Theory emphasizes the importance of maintaining productive relationships among organizations and stakeholders. In civil-military operations, stakeholders include local communities, government agencies, non-government organizations, and partner institutions whose collaboration contributes to successful mission implementation.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the experiences, perspectives, and practices of military personnel involved in civil-military operations (CMO) and financial management. Phenomenology was deemed appropriate because the study sought to understand how participants perceive, interpret, and give meaning to their roles in implementing community-oriented military programs and managing organizational resources. According to Clark Moustakas, phenomenological inquiry focuses on understanding the essence of human experiences as perceived by individuals who have directly encountered a particular phenomenon. Through this approach, the study captured rich descriptions of operational realities, financial accountability practices, and organizational challenges encountered by military personnel.

The participants consisted of fifteen (15) purposively selected military personnel who possessed direct involvement in civil-military operations and financial management activities. The inclusion criteria required participants to have at least three years of service

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experience, active engagement in community-based military programs, financial administration, logistics management, or budget utilization processes, and willingness to participate in the study. The participants included commanding officers, civil-military operations officers, finance officers, logistics personnel, and administrative staff. Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to select information-rich participants capable of providing detailed insights regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2015).

Data were gathered through semi-structured, in-depth interviews. An interview guide consisting of open-ended questions was developed to facilitate discussions related to participants' experiences, challenges, best practices, and perceptions regarding organizational efficiency and operational effectiveness. Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or through secure online platforms, depending on participants' availability and operational assignments. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants' consent. Field notes were likewise maintained to document non-verbal cues, contextual observations, and reflective insights that supplemented the interview transcripts.

The collected data were analyzed using the six-phase thematic analysis framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process began with familiarization through repeated reading of interview transcripts. Initial codes were subsequently generated to identify meaningful units of information. Similar codes were grouped into broader categories, leading to the development of preliminary themes. The emerging themes were reviewed, refined, and defined to ensure coherence and representativeness of participants' experiences. The final themes reflected recurring patterns that captured the essence of

civil-military operations and financial management practices within the organization. To ensure trustworthiness, the study employed credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability strategies as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Member checking was conducted by returning interview summaries to participants for verification. Peer debriefing with qualitative research experts was also undertaken to validate coding procedures and thematic interpretations. An audit trail documenting all stages of data collection and analysis was maintained to enhance transparency and methodological rigor. Ethical considerations were strictly observed, including informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and adherence to institutional research ethics protocols.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Theme 1: Community-Centered Civil-Military Engagement as the Foundation of Operational Success

One of the most prominent themes that emerged from the interviews was the importance of community-centered engagement in achieving successful civil-military operations. Participants consistently emphasized that the effectiveness of military interventions extends beyond operational execution and largely depends on establishing trust, cooperation, and meaningful relationships with civilian stakeholders.

One participant stated:

"Hindi magiging matagumpay ang operasyon kung walang tiwala ang komunidad sa atin. Kailangan munang maramdaman nila na nandito tayo para tumulong."

Another participant shared:

"Mas madali ang implementation kapag may magandang relasyon sa mga barangay officials at community leaders."

The findings suggest that trust-building and community partnership serve as essential components of successful civil-military operations. Participants viewed community engagement not merely as a supporting activity but as a strategic mechanism that facilitates information sharing, conflict prevention, and sustainable program implementation. Through active collaboration with local stakeholders, military personnel were able to enhance mission acceptance and strengthen public confidence in military institutions.

This finding supports the argument of Huntington (1957) that positive civil-military relations contribute significantly to institutional legitimacy and operational effectiveness. Similarly, Schiff (2009) emphasized that harmonious interactions among the military, political institutions, and civilian populations promote organizational stability and mission success. Recent studies by Alami and Sulaiman (2022) further indicate that community participation enhances the sustainability of military-led development programs and disaster response initiatives.

The findings also align with Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984), which posits that organizational success depends on the ability to maintain productive relationships with stakeholders. In the context of civil-military operations, community members function as critical stakeholders whose support significantly influences program outcomes.

Theme 2: Accountability and Transparency Strengthen Financial Management Effectiveness

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Participants highlighted accountability and transparency as fundamental principles guiding financial management practices. They emphasized that proper documentation, monitoring, auditing, and reporting mechanisms contribute significantly to organizational credibility and resource efficiency.

One finance officer remarked:

"Lahat ng gastos ay kailangang maipaliwanag at maipakita sa tamang dokumento. Transparency protects both the organization and the personnel involved."

Another participant explained:

"Kapag maayos ang financial reporting, mas mabilis ang approval ng mga future projects dahil may tiwala ang higher headquarters."

The findings indicate that transparent financial management practices enhance institutional integrity and promote responsible resource utilization. Participants viewed financial accountability as a safeguard against resource misuse and as a mechanism for ensuring that funds are allocated according to organizational priorities.

These findings are supported by Diamond (2013), who argued that public financial management systems improve organizational performance when transparency and accountability mechanisms are effectively implemented. Similarly, Andrews et al. (2014) found that organizations exhibiting high levels of fiscal accountability demonstrate stronger operational performance and public trust.

From the perspective of Resource-Based Theory (Barney, 1991), financial resources constitute strategic organizational assets whose effective management contributes to sustainable competitive advantage and operational success. Participants recognized that sound financial stewardship enables organizations to maximize limited resources while maintaining compliance with institutional regulations.

Theme 3: Interagency Collaboration and Partnership Building Enhance Organizational Efficiency

Another major theme centered on the importance of collaboration with government agencies, local government units, non-government organizations, and community stakeholders.

One participant explained:

"Hindi sapat na military lang ang kikilos. Kapag may partnership sa LGUs at ibang agencies, mas marami kaming naaabot."

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Another participant noted:
“Coordination allows us to share resources and avoid duplication of efforts.”

The findings reveal that interagency collaboration contributes significantly to organizational efficiency by facilitating resource sharing, improving coordination mechanisms, and enhancing program implementation. Participants acknowledged that collaborative networks enable military organizations to leverage external expertise, financial resources, and logistical support.

These findings support the work of Bryson et al. (2015), who emphasized that cross-sector collaboration improves public service delivery and organizational performance. Likewise, Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) noted that collaborative governance structures foster collective problem-solving and improve institutional outcomes.

The results further reinforce stakeholder-oriented approaches to organizational management, highlighting the importance of partnerships in achieving complex operational objectives that cannot be accomplished by a single institution alone.

Theme 4: Resource Constraints and Administrative Challenges Affect Operational Performance

Participants consistently identified resource limitations and administrative procedures as major challenges affecting both civil-military operations and financial management.

One participant shared:
“May mga pagkakataon na kulang ang resources kaya kailangan naming mag-prioritize kung alin ang mas urgent.”

Another participant explained:
“Minsan naaantala ang implementation dahil sa dami ng documentary requirements bago ma-release ang pondo.”

The findings suggest that limited budgets, procurement delays, personnel shortages, and bureaucratic processes can hinder the timely implementation of programs and reduce operational flexibility. Participants acknowledged that while accountability measures are necessary, excessive procedural requirements may sometimes impede immediate operational responses.

These findings are consistent with the work of Pollitt and Bouckaert (2017), who observed that public organizations frequently encounter tensions between accountability

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requirements and operational efficiency. Similarly, Moynihan and Pandey (2010) found that bureaucratic complexity often affects organizational responsiveness and service delivery.

The results highlight the need for balanced governance systems that maintain accountability while promoting operational adaptability and timely decision-making.

Theme 5: Adaptive Leadership and Strategic Resource Utilization Promote Organizational Effectiveness

The final theme focused on adaptive leadership and strategic resource management as critical responses to operational challenges. Participants emphasized the importance of flexibility, innovation, and proactive planning in maintaining organizational effectiveness despite resource limitations.

One participant explained:

"Kailangan marunong mag-adjust ang leaders depende sa sitwasyon. Hindi lahat ng plano ay puwedeng sundin nang eksakto."

Another participant stated:

"Maximizing available resources and strengthening partnerships help us achieve our objectives despite limitations."

The findings demonstrate that adaptive leadership enables organizations to respond effectively to changing operational environments. Participants highlighted strategic planning, continuous monitoring, personnel development, and stakeholder engagement as key practices supporting organizational resilience.

These findings align with the Adaptive Leadership Framework proposed by Heifetz et al. (2009), which emphasizes flexibility and learning in addressing complex organizational challenges. Furthermore, Northouse (2022) argued that adaptive leaders facilitate innovation, collaboration, and organizational learning, thereby enhancing institutional performance.

The findings also support Resource-Based Theory, suggesting that organizations capable of strategically deploying their human, financial, and operational resources are better positioned to achieve long-term effectiveness and sustainability.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

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Conclusion

This study explored the experiences and practices of military personnel involved in civil-military operations and financial management, revealing the critical role these functions play in promoting organizational efficiency and operational effectiveness. The findings demonstrate that successful civil-military operations are rooted in strong community engagement, trust-building, and collaborative partnerships with various stakeholders. Participants emphasized that fostering positive relationships with civilian communities enhances mission acceptance, facilitates cooperation, and contributes to the sustainability of military-led programs and initiatives.

The study further revealed that accountability and transparency serve as foundational principles of effective financial management. Proper financial planning, documentation, monitoring, and reporting mechanisms ensure responsible resource utilization and strengthen institutional credibility. Participants recognized that sound financial management not only safeguards organizational resources but also supports timely and efficient implementation of operational activities.

Interagency collaboration emerged as another significant factor contributing to organizational efficiency. Partnerships with local government units, government agencies, non-government organizations, and community stakeholders enable resource sharing, improve coordination, and expand the reach of civil-military programs. These collaborative efforts enhance the capacity of military organizations to address community needs and achieve operational objectives.

Despite these strengths, participants identified several challenges, including resource limitations, bureaucratic procedures, procurement delays, and personnel constraints. Such challenges affect the timeliness and effectiveness of program implementation. However, the study found that adaptive leadership, strategic planning, resource optimization, and stakeholder engagement serve as effective strategies for overcoming operational and financial obstacles.

Overall, the findings suggest that organizational efficiency and operational effectiveness are not solely dependent on military capabilities but are significantly influenced by the quality of community engagement, financial governance, collaborative partnerships, and leadership practices. The integration of these elements enables military organizations to fulfill their mandates more effectively while maintaining public trust and institutional accountability.

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Implications of the Study

Theoretical Implications

The findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on civil-military relations, public administration, and organizational management by demonstrating the interconnected nature of civil-military operations and financial management. The study supports the assumptions of Stakeholder Theory, which emphasizes the importance of maintaining productive relationships with stakeholders to achieve organizational goals. The findings likewise reinforce the principles of Resource-Based Theory, highlighting how effective management of financial, human, and operational resources contributes to organizational performance. Furthermore, the study expands existing literature by providing qualitative evidence on how military personnel experience and interpret organizational efficiency within the context of both operational and financial functions.

Practical Implications for Military Organizations

The findings underscore the need for military organizations to strengthen community-centered approaches in implementing civil-military operations. Building trust and sustaining partnerships with local communities can enhance mission success, improve public perception, and support long-term peace and development objectives. Military leaders may also benefit from institutionalizing mechanisms that promote continuous stakeholder engagement and collaborative decision-making.

In terms of financial management, the study highlights the importance of maintaining transparent and accountable financial systems. Strengthening financial monitoring, reporting procedures, and internal controls can improve resource utilization and increase organizational credibility. The findings suggest that investments in financial management training and capacity-building programs may further enhance organizational efficiency.

Leadership and Management Implications

The emergence of adaptive leadership as a key theme suggests that military leaders should cultivate flexibility, innovation, and strategic thinking in managing operational and financial challenges. Leadership development programs should incorporate competencies related to stakeholder management, collaborative governance, crisis response, and resource optimization. Such initiatives can enhance leaders' ability to navigate complex operational environments while maintaining organizational effectiveness.

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Policy Implications

The study provides evidence that may inform policy development related to civil-military operations and financial governance. Policymakers may consider reviewing existing administrative and financial procedures to balance accountability requirements with operational responsiveness. Streamlining procurement processes, improving resource allocation mechanisms, and strengthening interagency coordination frameworks may contribute to more efficient implementation of military and community development programs.

Community and Stakeholder Implications

The findings emphasize the value of collaborative partnerships between military organizations and civilian stakeholders. Local government units, community organizations, educational institutions, and non-government organizations can play a significant role in supporting civil-military initiatives. Strengthening these partnerships may promote greater community participation, enhance program sustainability, and contribute to broader social development outcomes.

Implications for Future Research

The study provides a foundation for future investigations into civil-military operations and financial management. Future researchers may conduct multiple-case studies across different military units, regions, or operational contexts to validate and expand the findings. Mixed-methods studies may also be undertaken to quantitatively examine the relationships among stakeholder engagement, financial management practices, organizational efficiency, and operational effectiveness. Additionally, future studies may explore the perspectives of civilian stakeholders, community leaders, and partner agencies to develop a more comprehensive understanding of civil-military collaboration and organizational performance.

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