



CHARACTER FORMATION AMONG FOURTH YEAR CRIMINOLOGY STUDENTS AND THE CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED AS BASIS TO PREPARE THEM FOR PROFESSIONAL FIELD

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the character formation of fourth-year criminology students and the challenges they encounter as a basis for preparing them for professional field practice. Using a descriptive research design, the study involved 133 fourth-year Bachelor of Science in Criminology students of Saint Ferdinand College–Cabagan Campus during School Year 2025–2026. A validated questionnaire was used to gather data, which were analyzed through frequency and percentage counts, weighted mean, analysis of variance, and Pearson’s coefficient of correlation. Findings revealed that respondents demonstrated a high extent of character formation. Moral values and personal growth obtained the highest ratings, both described as “Very Much,” while personal discipline and emotional intelligence received the lowest ratings, although still described as “Much.” Results further showed that age significantly influenced character formation, whereas sex, general weighted average, and parents’ combined monthly income did not. All eight components of character formation—moral values, personal discipline, responsibility and accountability, emotional intelligence, ethical reasoning, social awareness and interpersonal skills, resilience, and personal growth—were significantly related, indicating the need for a holistic approach to student development. The students also encountered field-related challenges, all rated as “Challenging,” with psychological and emotional challenges ranking highest, followed by ethical dilemmas and exposure to highly stressful environments. Recommended strategies include strengthening character formation programs, emphasizing professional behavior, integrating resilience training, embedding ethical values across criminology courses, and providing counseling, mentorship, simulations, and experiential learning opportunities. The study concludes that criminology education should continuously cultivate ethical, emotionally stable, resilient, and professionally prepared graduates for service.

Keywords: *Character formation, Criminology students, Professional readiness, Resilience, Ethical reasoning*

INTRODUCTION

Criminology students are the future frontliners in law enforcement and criminal justice, tasked with maintaining peace, ensuring public safety, and upholding the rule of law. Their preparedness to face challenges in the field is essential, as these challenges often involve high-stress environments, ethical dilemmas, complex decision-making, and interactions with diverse individuals and communities. Effective performance in such scenarios not only requires technical knowledge and practical skills but also strong character traits such as integrity, resilience, responsibility, emotional intelligence, and ethical reasoning. Character formation, therefore, plays a pivotal role in shaping criminology students to become competent, professional, and morally grounded individuals capable of navigating the pressures and demands of real-world criminology work.

Character formation as part of this readiness includes eight mutually intersecting elements that comprise the skills, values, and personal tools necessary to meet the natural challenges of the criminology field. These include moral values, personal discipline, responsibility and accountability, emotional intelligence, ethical reasoning, social awareness and interpersonal skills, resilience, and personal growth. Together, these elements provide a holistic structure that combines the ethical, emotional, social, and psychological attributes needed by future criminologists to act with integrity, professionalism, and sound judgment in demanding situations (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Kohlberg, 1981; Yusuf et al., 2024).

The integration of these components into the criminology curriculum is essential in empowering students to become morally grounded, socially responsible, and professionally prepared individuals. Faculty members and administrators should model these values in their conduct to establish an academic culture rooted in integrity, responsibility, and ethical behavior. Learning approaches such as values education, service learning, case teaching, simulations, value discussions, immersions, mentoring, leadership development, and reflection expose students to real-life situations that challenge them to examine their values, strengthen their career goals, and improve ethical decision-making. Experiential learning, field study, internships, peer interaction, stress management programs, and resilience-building activities further help students manage risks, cope with tension, observe field realities, and prevent burnout, enabling graduates not only to possess technical skills but also the values needed to de-escalate tense situations, resist temptations, and contribute positively to society at the values that make "justice" valuable in a democracy can be put into practice. (Christopher et al., 2018; Kakar, 2025; Romzi et al., 2024).

Saint Ferdinand College Cabagan (SFCC), a private Catholic educational institution, is devoted to providing higher learning and holistic formation to its students. Preparing students to face the challenges of the field is a central goal of the Bachelor of

Science in Criminology (BSCrim) program. To ensure that students are not only academically competent but also morally and professionally prepared, character formation programs have been integrated into the curriculum. Although these programs aim to develop students' ethical values, emotional intelligence, resilience, and professional skills, there is a need to assess how effectively they prepare students for the real-world challenges encountered in law enforcement and criminology practice.

The objective of this study, entitled "Character Formation Among Fourth Year Criminology Students and The Challenges Encountered as Basis to Prepare Them for Professional Field," is to equip fourth-year criminology students with the competencies necessary to overcome obstacles in the professional field. Emphasizing the eight components of character formation as essential in developing student's readiness for professional practice. This transformative phase of education should extend beyond fulfillment of academic requirement by fostering a strong ethical framework and cultivating the resolve to confront professional challenges with integrity and confidence. Such preparation ensures that students are adequately equipped for both their vocational duties and broader life responsibilities, thereby contributing to the preservation of public trust in the criminal justice system.

With such vast experience in the field of criminology education and professional development, the researcher is thus motivated to conduct this study to determine the implications that these eight elements of character formation have in the criminal justice contexts and to propose targeted strategies for enhancement that could effectively advance the ethical and resilient practitioners of the field.

Research Questions

This study addresses these gaps by examining the character formation among fourth year criminology students and the challenges encountered.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - a. Age
 - b. Sex
 - c. GWA for 1st semester 2025-2026
 - d. Parents combined monthly income
2. To what extent have Criminology students developed character formation in terms of?
 - 2.1. Moral Values
 - 2.2. Personal Discipline
 - 2.3. Responsibility and Accountability
 - 2.4. Emotional Intelligence
 - 2.5. Ethical reasoning
 - 2.6. Social Awareness and Interpersonal Skills
 - 2.7. Resilience
 - 2.8. Personal Growth

3. Is there a significant difference in the respondents' character formation when grouped according to profile?
4. Is there a significant relationship between and among the eight components of character formation?
5. What is the extent of the perceived challenges encountered by Criminology students in the professional field?
 - 5.1. Exposure to highly stressful environment
 - 5.2. Ethical dilemmas and moral challenges
 - 5.3. Physical and safety risk
 - 5.4 Psychological and Emotional Challenges
 - 5.5 Social and Interpersonal Challenges
 - 5.6 Time Management and Academic Pressure
 - 5.7 Adaptability and Problem-solving Challenges
6. What strategies can be recommended to further prepare students for challenges in the field?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive research design, which is appropriate for systematically identifying and describing the characteristics, behaviors, and perceptions of a specific population without manipulating variables. According to research methodology authorities such as Creswell (2014) and Babbie (2016), descriptive design is used to obtain an accurate profile of a situation or phenomenon questionnaires, or other structured instruments.

In this study, the descriptive design was employed to determine the extent of character formation and challenges among fourth-year Criminology students at Saint Ferdinand College, Cabagan Campus during the Academic Year 2025-2026. It enabled the researcher to gather quantifiable data using measures such as frequencies, means, and percentages in order to present an objective description of the student's traits and preparedness in facing challenges within the criminology domain. Through this design, the study systematically observed and documented existing conditions without intervention, focusing on providing a factual and comprehensive assessment of the variables under investigation.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Saint Ferdinand College - Cabagan Campus, located in Centro, Cabagan, Isabela . It is a separate campus of Saint Ferdinand College Incorporated, offering basic education and higher institution education, including B.S Criminology, which serves as the primary setting for assessing student readiness and development in character. Its 4-year course in B.S Criminology started in 2000. Currently, criminology program is the most populated, with 480 students enrolled.

Selection and Description of Respondents

The respondents of this study were 133 fourth Year Criminology students enrolled in the academic year 2025-2026. The researcher used total enumeration method, this approach allowed the researcher to gather data from all eligible respondents, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of findings in relation to the specific group being studied. The distribution of the respondents is presented in the table below.

Preliminary Table
Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents

Criminology Program (year and section)	Frequency	Percentage
4 th year – Alpha	46	34.59
4 th year – Bravo	46	34.59
4 th year – Charlie	41	31.85
Total	133	100

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher formally communicated to the Dean of Criminology at Saint Ferdinand College-Cabagan Campus for permission to conduct the study.

To ensure the accuracy, reliability, and consistency of the data collected, the research instruments underwent a comprehensive validation process prior to data collection. The instruments were carefully reviewed and evaluated by the research adviser, Dean of the College of Criminal Justice Education, Saint Ferdinand College – City of Ilagan, the Criminology Program Coordinator of Saint Ferdinand College – Cabagan Campus, and a member of Philippine National Police (PNP), one of the Professor of Graduate School of Saint Ferdinand College– City of Ilagan, to assess the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness to the objectives of the study. After the validation process was completed and the necessary revisions were incorporated, a Certificate of Validation was issued as proof that the instruments had satisfactorily met the required standards for research use.

After approval and refinement of the questionnaire, the researcher personally distributed the questionnaire to the respondents. Ethical considerations are strictly considered. Informed consent was obtained from the participants, ensuring their voluntary participation and protection of their rights. Measures are also taken to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. Once the questionnaires completed and collected, a post-test was conducted. This involved a thorough review and analysis of the responses to ensure consistency and accuracy.

After the collection and verification of the administered questionnaire, the needed data were statistically tabulated and analyzed.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The data collected were processed and analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Frequency and Percentage Counts. This was employed in analyzing the respondent's profile in terms of age, sex, GWA for 1st semester 2025-2026, parents combined monthly income, as well as in determining the recommended strategies to prepare students for the challenges in the professional field.

Weighted Mean. This was used in ascertaining the extent of character formation and challenges among fourth year criminology students at Saint Ferdinand College – Cabagan Campus.

Analysis of Variance F-test. This was utilized in determining the significant difference between students' character formation when grouped according to their profile.

Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation r-test. This was used in determining the significant relationship between and among eight components of students' character formation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Profile of the Respondents

1.1 Age

Table 1.1
Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents According to Age

Age:	Frequency	Percent
20	13	9.8
21	46	34.6
22	60	45.1
23	11	8.3
24	2	1.5
26	1	.7
Total	133	100.0

Table 1.1 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents according to age. Most of the respondents are 22 years old, with a frequency of 60, or 45.1% of the total population. A minimal number of 1 or .7% is in 26. The finding indicates that respondents are in early adulthood, suggesting they are at a stage where they are preparing for professional practice and are likely influenced by their academic and training experiences. This implies that character formation programs should focus on the developmental needs of young adult learners while considering inclusivity for varied age groups.

This finding is supported by the study of Beso et al. (2018), which revealed that criminology students demonstrated high levels of social-emotional and character development, including self-control, honesty, respect, and prosocial behavior. Their findings suggest that students within this age bracket possess the maturity and emotional competencies necessary for character-building and resilience programs.

1.2 Sex

Table 1.2
Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents According to Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Female	36	27
Male	97	73
Total	133	100.0

Table 1.2 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents according to sex.

As presented in the table, majority of the respondents are male with a frequency of 97, or 73%. The female has a frequency of 36, or 27%. The finding in this study indicates that male dominates the criminology field. In this study, female respondents represent minority, which suggests the need for more inclusive programs that addressed gender diversity and ensure equal opportunities in developing preparedness to challenges.

1.3 General Weighted Average (GWA)

Table 1.3
Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents According to General Weighted Average

General Weighted Average (GWA) - 1 st Semester SY2025 – 2026	Frequency	Percent
1.0 -1.50	5	3.8
1.51 - 2.0	52	39.1
2.1 - 2.50	70	52.6
2.51 - 3.0	6	4.5
Total	133	100.0

Table 1.3 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents according to general weighted average for the 1st Semester of School Year 2025-2026. Majority of the respondents had their general weighted average of 2.1-2.50 with a frequency of 70 or 52.6%, while 5 respondents or 3.8% achieved a GWA within the range of 1.00–1.50. This implies that while students possess sufficient knowledge, there is still a need to strengthen academic support and character formation programs to enhance both academic excellence and preparedness for field challenges.

1.4 Parents' Combined Monthly Income

Table 1.4
Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents According to Parents' Combined Monthly Income

Parents' Monthly Income (Both Parents):	Frequency	Percent
Below $\pm 10,000$ –	104	78.1
$\pm 10,001$ - $\pm 20,000$	18	13.5
$\pm 20,001$ - $\pm 30,000$	9	6.8
$\pm 30,000$ - $\pm 40,000$	1	.8
Above $\pm 40,000$	1	.8
Total	133	100.0

Table 1.4 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents according to parents combined monthly income. As indicated in the table, majority of the respondents are from low-income households, with 104 students or 78.1% belong to combined parent monthly income of below $\pm 10,000$ representing the largest proportion of the total number of respondents. A minimal number of 1 or 0.8% respondent is with a combined parent monthly income of $\pm 30,001$ – $\pm 40,000$, and also 1 or 0.8% respondent is with a combined parent monthly income of above $\pm 40,000$.

The finding indicates that most respondents are from low-income households based on Isabela Province Poverty Threshold for 2025 which is around 14,375. This may affect their access to resources, opportunities, and support systems. This suggests that character formation and preparedness programs should consider socioeconomic challenges, providing additional guidance and support to ensure all students can effectively develop the skills and resilience needed for the criminology field.

In the study of Morales-Rodríguez and Morales-Rodríguez (2024) on educational and high-stress professional contexts indicates that students and trainees from low-income backgrounds tend to benefit significantly from proactive coping strategies, mindfulness practice, and communal or social support systems, which have been shown to buffer stress and enhance emotional resilience.

2. The extent of character formation in terms of: 2.1 Moral Values

Table 2.1
Mean Distribution and Description on the Extent of Character Formation of Criminology Students in Terms of Moral Values

Indicators	Mean	Description
1. I practice honesty in academic and personal matters	3.21	Much (M)
2. I uphold integrity even when no one is watching.	3.19	Much (M)

3. I show respect toward others regardless of status.	3.35	Very Much (VM)
4. I demonstrate compassion toward people in need.	3.24	Much (M)
5. I value teamwork, cooperation, and fairness.	3.36	Very Much (VM)
6. I take responsibility for my actions and their consequences.	3.33	Very Much (VM)
7. I honestly admit my mistakes.	3.30	Very Much (VM)
8. I respect rules and institutional policies.	3.36	Very Much (VM)
9. I show concern for the welfare of others.	3.22	Much (M)
10. I act consistently with my moral beliefs.	3.19	Much (M)
Overall Mean	3.28	Very Much (VM)

Table 2.1 displays the mean distribution and description on the extent of character formation of criminology students in terms of moral values.

The findings reveal that in terms of moral values, the overall mean score is 3.28, interpreted as **“Very Much,”** which indicates that criminology students demonstrate a high level of moral character formation. The highest rated indicators include valuing teamwork, cooperation, and fairness and respecting rules and institutional policies with both weighted mean of 3.36, and description of **“Very Much”**. The finding suggests that criminology students possess a high level of moral character formation, particularly in valuing teamwork, cooperation, fairness, and respect for rules and institutional policies. This indicates that students are well prepared to uphold ethical standards and work effectively in collaborative settings, which are essential qualities for successfully navigating challenges in the field of criminology.

The lowest rated indicator was statements *“I uphold integrity even when no one is watching,”* and *“I act consistently with my moral beliefs,”* both described as **Much** with a weighted mean of **3.19**. This implies that although criminology students generally demonstrate positive moral values, there is still a need to strengthen internal integrity and consistency in practicing ethical behavior even without supervision. This indicates the importance of continuous character formation programs that promote honesty, self-discipline, and accountability, which are essential qualities in the field of law enforcement.

The finding is in accord with Castillo and Tumitit (2024) which investigates moral values and service dedication among aspiring enforcers, aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 16 to promote character formation in university settings. Castillo and Tumitit’s study also found values like honesty and commitment are nurtured in academic environments, directly linking them to SDG 16’s focus on peaceful societies. It illustrates how character-building initiatives prepare students for field roles that demand unwavering dedication, reducing the risk of ethical erosion in high-pressure law enforcement contexts.

2.2 Personal Discipline

Table 2.2
Mean Distribution and Description on the Extent of Character Formation of
Criminology Students in Terms of Personal Discipline

Indicators	Mean	Description
1. I can control my emotions during stressful situations	3.04	Much (M)
2. I persevere despite academic or personal difficulties.	3.19	Much (M)
3. I resist temptations that may negatively affect my goals.	3.09	Much (M)
4. I manage my time effectively.	3.15	Much (M)
5. I remain focused despite distractions.	3.11	Much (M)
6. I follow routines that promote self-discipline.	3.28	Very Much (VM)
7. I avoid impulsive decisions	3.10	Much (M)
8. I stay committed to my responsibilities.	3.31	Very Much (VM)
Overall Mean	3.16	Much (M)

Table 2.2 presents the mean distribution and description on the extent of character formation of criminology students in terms of personal discipline. The overall mean of **3.16** described as “**Much**” indicated that the respondents generally possess a satisfactory level of personal discipline. The highest rated statement is “*I stay committed to my responsibilities*” with a weighted mean of **3.31** or “**Very Much**”. The findings indicate that criminology students exhibit a generally high level of personal discipline, particularly in staying committed to their responsibilities and following routines that promote self-discipline. These traits suggest that students are capable of managing obligations and maintaining discipline necessary for professional conduct in the criminology field. However, the lowest-rated indicator, “*I can control my emotions during stressful situations*”, with a weighted mean of **3.04**, suggests that emotional regulation during stressful conditions remains an area that requires improvement. This implies that while students demonstrate discipline in routine responsibilities, they may still experience difficulty managing emotional responses under pressure. Strengthening emotional control through stress-management and coping interventions may help students respond more effectively in challenging field situations.

This finding is supported by the study of Mumford and Liu (2024), which emphasized that emotional self-regulation and stress tolerance are competencies that require intentional development and training. Their study explained that individuals exposed to stressful professional environments benefit from structured emotional regulation programs that improve discipline, decision-making, and adaptive behavior under pressure.

2.3 Responsibility and Accountability

Table 2.3
Mean Distribution and Description on the Extent of Character Formation of
Criminology Students in Terms of Responsibility and Accountability

Indicators	Mean	Description
1. I fulfill my academic and personal responsibilities	3.24	Much (M)
2. I accept the consequences of my actions.	3.32	Very Much (VM)
3. Others can rely on me to accomplish assigned tasks.	3.07	Much (M)
4. I feel motivated to contribute positively to the community.	3.23	Much (M)
5. I am confident in handling the challenges of the criminology profession.	3.16	Much (M)
6. I complete tasks without supervision.	3.11	Much (M)
7. I admit faults instead of blaming others	3.25	Very Much (VM)
8. I act responsibly in both academic and social settings.	3.17	Much (M)
Overall Mean	3.20	Much (M)

Table 2.3 reveals the mean distribution and description on the extent of character formation of criminology students in terms of responsibility and accountability. The overall mean of **3.20** interpreted as “**Much**” indicate that students demonstrate a high level of responsibility and accountability.

As showed in the table, the highest rated indicators are statement “*I accept the consequences of my actions*”, with a weighted mean of **3.32** or “**Very Much**”, and statement “*I admit faults instead of blaming others*”, with a weighted mean of **3.25** interpreted as “**Very Much**”. The findings indicate that criminology students demonstrate a high level of responsibility and accountability, particularly in accepting the consequences of their actions and admitting faults instead of blaming others. This suggests that students are likely to make ethical decisions and take ownership of their actions, which are essential qualities for professionalism and effectiveness in the criminology field. Also, the lowest indicator is statement “*Others can rely on me to accomplish assigned tasks*”, with a weighted mean of **3.07** and interpreted as “**Much**”. While students generally show high responsibility and accountability, the lower score in reliability for accomplishing assigned tasks suggests a need to further develop dependability. Strengthening this aspect can enhance teamwork and ensure consistent performance in field and professional settings.

These findings align with higher-stage moral reasoning in Kohlberg’s (1981) framework, where individuals prioritize justice and duty. The results also resonate with accountability standards promoted by the Philippine National Police - Internal Affairs Service (2018), which underscores responsibility as central to preventing misconduct. Moreover, ethical climate theory suggests that organizational culture influences accountability behaviors. Moderate scores in independent task completion suggest that

while institutional accountability is strong, autonomous responsibility could be further enhanced through experiential learning activities.

2.4 Emotional Intelligence

Table 2.4
Mean Distribution and Description on the Extent of Character Formation of Criminology Students in Terms of Emotional Intelligence

Indicators	Mean	Description
1. I am aware of my emotions and how they affect my actions	3.19	Much (M)
2. I can empathize with others and feeling.	3.19	Much (M)
3. I can regulate my emotions during conflict.	3.07	Much (M)
4. I can build positive relationships with others.	3.31	Very Much (VM)
5. I respond appropriately to emotional situations.	3.09	Much (M)
6. I listen actively when others speak.	3.31	Very Much (VM)
7. I manage stress in a healthy way.	3.01	Much (M)
8. I remain emotionally composed in challenging or tense situations	3.11	Much (M)
Overall Mean	3.16	Much (M)

Table 2.4 shows the mean distribution and description on the extent of character formation of criminology students in terms of emotional intelligence. The overall mean of **3.16** interpreted as “**Much**” indicate that they are generally able to recognize and manage their emotions.

As displayed in the table, the highest rated indicators are statements “*I can build positive relationships with others*” and “*I listen actively when others speak*”, both with a weighted mean of **3.31** or “**Very Much**”. The findings indicate that criminology students excel in building positive relationships and actively listening to others, reflecting strong interpersonal skills. These abilities are essential for effective teamwork, collaboration, and professional interactions in the criminology field. Meanwhile, the lowest-rated indicator is “*I manage stress in a healthy way*”, with a weighted mean of **3.01** interpreted as “**Much**”. This finding suggests that although students demonstrate strong interpersonal abilities, they may still encounter difficulties in managing stress effectively. This indicates a need for interventions focused on stress management, emotional resilience, and healthy coping strategies to help students maintain professionalism and emotional stability during challenging situations.

Research by Reyes and Santos (2021) found that emotional intelligence training significantly reduces stress levels among criminology students. Additionally, Mayer and Salovey (1997) emphasize that emotional regulation skills require deliberate cognitive training.

2.5 Ethical Reasoning

Table 2.5
Mean Distribution and Description on the Extent of Character Formation of Criminology Students in Terms of Ethical Reasoning

Indicators	Mean	Description
1. I understand ethical codes relevant to criminology	3.21	Much (M)
2. I apply moral principles in decision-making.	3.24	Much (M)
3. I avoid misconduct even under pressure.	3.11	Much (M)
4. I make clear and ethical judgments in difficult situations.	3.12	Much (M)
5. I think carefully before making ethical decisions.	3.21	Much (M)
6. I consider the consequences of my actions.	3.27	Very Much (VM)
7. I seek guidance when faced with complex ethical issues	3.13	Much (M)
8. I prioritize ethical conduct over personal gain	3.16	Much (M)
Overall Mean	3.18	Much (M)

Table 2.5 presents the mean distribution and description on the extent of character formation of criminology students in terms of ethical reasoning. The overall mean of **3.18** interpreted as **“Much”** indicated that criminology students demonstrate a moderately high level of ethical reasoning, suggesting they generally understand and apply ethical principles in decision-making.

As gleaned in the table, the highest rated indicator is statement *“I consider the consequences of my actions”*, with a weighted mean of **3.27** or **“Very Much”**, while the lowest indicator is statement *“I avoid misconduct even under pressure”*, with a weighted mean of **3.11**, and interpreted as **“Much”**.

The findings imply that criminology students are generally capable of applying ethical principles and considering the consequences of their actions before making decisions. However, the lower mean score on avoiding misconduct under pressure indicates that students may still be vulnerable to ethical compromise in stressful or demanding situations. This highlights the importance of strengthening ethical resilience through scenario-based training, moral reasoning activities, and values-oriented instruction to prepare students for real-life professional dilemmas.

The current study is parallel to the study of Caitor et.al (2021) which examined the moral foundations among criminology students in the Philippines and found that values education strengthens ethical reasoning and character development. The study showed that students demonstrated improved understanding of core values such as honesty, fairness, duty, and care, which guided their decision-making in academic and real-life situations. It also revealed that values instruction enhances moral judgment and helps students resist peer pressure and unethical influences, supporting the development of discipline, integrity and professional responsibility in criminal justice practice. Also, Salvador (2026) emphasized that ethical training in criminology education is essential in

equipping students with moral tools to handle real-world dilemmas. Through empirical assessments, it demonstrates that well-implemented training programs significantly enhance students' ability to discern right from wrong, fostering a character rooted in justice and empathy. It underscores the long-term impact on field preparedness, where ethical lapses can lead to misconduct, thereby advocating for rigorous, outcome-oriented ethical education as a core component of character formation.

2.6 Social Awareness and Interpersonal Skills

Table 2.6
Mean Distribution and Description on the Extent of Character Formation of Criminology Students in Terms of Social Awareness and Interpersonal Skills

Indicators	Mean	Description
1. I communicate effectively with peers and authority figures	3.10	Much (M)
2. I work well with others in a team.	3.23	Much (M)
3. I respect cultural and individual diversity.	3.30	Very Much (VM)
4. I demonstrate leadership when necessary.	3.10	Much (M)
5. I cooperate with classmates and peers.	3.28	Very Much (VM)
6. I contribute positively to group tasks.	3.31	Very Much (VM)
7. I encourage teamwork and collaboration.	3.31	Very Much (VM)
8. I resolve interpersonal conflicts respectfully and constructively	3.19	Much (M)
Overall Mean	3.23	Much (M)

Table 2.6 displays the mean and distribution and description on the extent of character formation of criminology students in terms of social awareness and interpersonal skills. The overall mean of **3.23** or interpreted as "**Much**", implies that students demonstrate strong cooperation, teamwork, and respect for diversity. These are essential competencies in policing, which requires community collaboration and multicultural sensitivity.

As gleaned in the table, the highest rated indicators are statement "*I contribute positively to group tasks*", and "*I encourage teamwork and collaboration*", both with a weighted mean of **3.31** or "**Very Much**", while the lowest indicators are in statements "*I communicate effectively with peers and authority figures*", and "*I demonstrate leadership when necessary*", with a weighted mean of **3.10**, interpreted as "**Much**". The findings indicate that criminology students excel in contributing to group tasks and promoting teamwork, reflecting strong collaborative skills. However, lower scores in effective communication with peers and authority figures and demonstrating leadership suggest areas for development, highlighting the need to enhance interpersonal and leadership competencies for professional readiness in the criminology field.

Cultural strengths such as *bayanihan*, noted by Nicomedes et al., (2020) may reinforce collaborative tendencies. Furthermore, community-oriented policing models

advocated by the Philippine National Police emphasize teamwork and public trust-building.

2.7 Resilience

Table 2.7
Mean Distribution and Description on the Extent of Character Formation of Criminology Students in Terms of Resilience

Indicators	Mean	Description
1. I can quickly recover from setbacks and academic failures	3.09	Much (M)
2. I view challenges as opportunities to grow and improve.	3.28	Very Much (VM)
3. I remain calm and composed during stressful situations.	3.13	Much (M)
4. I seek support and guidance when I encounter difficulties.	3.19	Much (M)
5. I am confident in my ability to adapt to challenges in my environment.	3.16	Much (M)
6. I learn from failures.	3.30	Very Much (VM)
7. I cope well with demanding situations.	3.10	Much (M)
8. I persist even in uncertain conditions.	3.10	Much (M)
Overall Mean	3.17	Much (M)

Table 2.7 presents the mean distribution and description on the extent of character formation of criminology students in terms of resilience. The overall mean of **3.17**, reflected a **“Much”** level of resilience, particularly in viewing challenges as opportunities for growth.

As shown in the table, the highest rated indicator was statement *“I learn from failures”*, with a weighted mean of **3.30**, or **“Very Much”**, while the lowest indicator was statement *“I can quickly recover from setbacks and academic failures”*, with a weighted mean of **3.09**, interpreted as **“Much”**. The findings suggests that criminology students were strong in learning from failures, demonstrating a reflective and growth-oriented mindset. However, the lower score in quickly recovering from setbacks indicated a need to further develop resilience and coping strategies to effectively overcome challenges in academic and field situations.

According to the American Psychological Association (2020), resilience is a flexible process that enables people to maintain or regain mental equilibrium by enabling them to react to adversity, injury, or extreme stress in a positive way. Resilience is not a fixed trait; rather, it results from learned behaviors, attitudes, and techniques refined with intentional practice. Strong interpersonal relationships, a positive yet realistic outlook, adept emotion management, and adaptable problem-solving are all contributing factors. As foundations

of resilience, the American Psychological Association also emphasizes self-maintenance habits like as regular exercise, getting enough sleep, and engaging in contemplative activities. According to this holistic perspective, resilience is a combination of cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements that work together to support stress management and recovery. It provides a fundamental viewpoint for creating educational and professional programs that enhance people's capacity to thrive in the face of adversity, and it has direct application to disciplines like criminology that demand perseverance.

2.8 Personal Growth

Table 2.8
Mean Distribution and Description on the Extent of Character Formation of Criminology Students in Terms of Personal Growth

Indicators	Mean	Description
1. I reflect on my experiences to improve myself	3.31	Very Much (VM)
2. I positively accept constructive feedback.	3.27	Very Much (VM)
3. I am committed to lifelong learning.	3.29	Very Much (VM)
4. I seek opportunities for self-improvement.	3.26	Very Much (VM)
5. I set personal and academic goals.	3.31	Very Much (VM)
6. I apply lessons learned from experiences.	3.31	Very Much (VM)
7. I take initiative in my personal development.	3.23	Much (M)
8. I actively work on improving my weaknesses	3.28	Very Much (VM)
Overall Mean	3.28	Very Much (VM)

Table 2.8 shows the mean distribution and description on the extent of character formation of Criminology students in terms of personal growth. The over-all mean of **3.28** which is interpreted as **“Very Much”** indicates that criminology students demonstrate a high level of personal growth suggesting they are actively developing self-awareness, adaptability, and a growth-oriented mindset.

As shown in the table, the highest rated indicators are in statements *“I set personal and academic goals”*, and *“I apply lessons learned from experiences”*, both with a weighted mean of **3.31**, or interpreted as **“Very Much”**, while the lowest indicator is statement *“I take initiative in my personal development”*, with a weighted mean of **3.23**, interpreted as **“Much”**. The implies that criminology students are strong in setting goals and applying lessons from experiences, reflecting a proactive and reflective approach to personal growth. However, the slightly lower score in taking initiative in personal development indicate room to further encourage self-driven growth and proactive engagement in learning and skill-building.

In the study of Dariano (2024), cadet training within a highly structure military was found to significantly influence ethical decision-making, discipline, and behavioral development. The study emphasized that strict rule enforcement, hierarchical authority, and continuous supervision within the training environment contribute to the formation of obedience, self-control, and professional conduct among cadets. It further highlighted that

exposure to demanding and high-pressure situations fosters emotional resilience, adaptability, and composure in managing stress and moral dilemmas. Additionally, peer influence and institutional expectations were identified as contributing factors in shaping behavioral conformity and ethical awareness. Disciplined and regulation-bound training environments play a critical role in developing character and preparing individuals for service in uniformed professions.

Table 2.9
Summary of Mean Distribution and Description on the Extent of Character Formation of Criminology Students

Component	Mean	Description
Moral Values	3.28	Very Much (VM)
Personal Discipline	3.16	Much (M)
Responsibility & Accountability	3.20	Much (M)
Emotional Intelligence	3.16	Much (M)
Ethical Reasoning	3.18	Much (M)
Social Awareness & Interpersonal Skills	3.23	Much (M)
Resilience	3.17	Much (M)
Personal Growth	3.28	Very Much (VM)

Table 2.9 displays the summary of mean distribution and description on the extent of character formation of criminology students. As shown in the table, moral values and personal growth got the highest mean score of **3.28**, described as “**Very Much**” across all eight components indicating strong ethical grounding and commitment to personal development. Personal discipline and emotional intelligence got the lowest mean score of **3.16**, described as “**Much**” among components.

The findings suggest that criminology students possess strong moral foundations and demonstrate commitment to personal growth and ethical behavior. However, comparatively lower scores in personal discipline and emotional intelligence indicate that students may still encounter challenges in emotional regulation, stress management, and maintaining self-control during difficult situations. These areas are critical in criminology practice where professionals are frequently exposed to high-pressure environments requiring emotional stability, discipline, and sound judgment.

Personal Growth, tied with Moral Values for the highest mean, indicates strong commitment to lifelong learning, reflection, and self-improvement, consistent with Mumford and Liu’s (2024) findings that life experience enhances professional competence. The overall results suggest that criminology students are ethically prepared and socially competent, though aspects like stress management and emotional regulation can be further strengthened.

Comparing the components, Moral Values and Personal Growth emerge as the strongest, indicating the effectiveness of curricular and institutional interventions in fostering ethical and reflective capacities. Personal Discipline and Emotional Intelligence, while high, reflect areas where structured stress management training and mindfulness

programs could enhance performance, consistent with studies by Christopher et al. (2018) on Mindfulness-Based Resilience Training.

3. Is there a significant difference in the respondents' character formation when grouped according to their profile

Table 3
Results on the Difference of Character Formation of the Respondents When Grouped According to Their Profile

Profile	Significance F	Decision	Remarks
Age 26 Years	.020	Reject Ho	Significant
Sex	.316	Accept Ho	Not Significant
General Weighted Average (GWA) - 1st Semester SY2025 – 2026	.369	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Parents' Monthly Income	.733	Accept Ho	Not Significant

Table 3 reveals the significant difference of character formation of the respondents when grouped according to their profile, using Analysis of Variance ANOVA F-test at .05 level of significance.

As shown in the table, the significance F -values for profile sex, GWA and parents' monthly income are greater than .05 which resulted to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. There is no significant difference between the character formation of the respondents when grouped according to their profile sex, GWA and parents' monthly income. Thus, sex, GWA and parents' monthly income are variables that do not affect the character formation of the respondents.

For the profile age of the respondents, the significance F -value is less than .05 which resulted to the rejection of the null hypothesis. There is a significant difference in the character formation of the respondents. Thus, respondents' age is a variable that do affect the character formation of the respondents. The finding implies that character formation among criminology students is generally consistent regardless of sex, academic performance, and economic background, suggesting that the program provides equal developmental impact across these groups. However, the significant influence of age indicates that maturity and life experience play an important role in shaping character. This highlights the need for age-responsive or developmentally appropriate interventions to better support students at different stages of maturity.

According to Yusuf, et.al. (2023) and Romzi, et.al. (2023) Character formation plays a pivotal role in criminology, equipping professionals with ethical frameworks, moral resilience, and commendable behavior to navigate the field's inherent challenges. Insights from foreign contexts, particularly Indonesia, demonstrate the efficacy of

integrating local wisdom and cultural values into character education, fostering mental resilience and ethical standards. These approaches provide valuable lessons for empowering criminology practitioners, as explored in studies that emphasize culturally adaptive strategies over purely theoretical models.

Complementing this, Kohlberg (1981) moral development unfolds through progressive stages that evolve with age, experience, and environmental influences, enabling individuals to navigate complex ethical dilemmas by considering self-interest, social expectations, societal norms, legal obligations, and universal principles of justice and human rights.

4. Significant Relationship Between and Among the Eight Components of Character Formation

Table 4
Results on the Significant Relationship Between and among the Eight Components of Character Formation

Group	Significance r	Decision	Remarks
Moral Values And Personal Discipline	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Moral Values And Responsibility and Accountability	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Moral Values And Emotional Intelligence	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Moral Values And Ethical Reasoning	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Moral Values And Social Awareness and Interpersonal Skills	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Moral Values And Resilience	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Moral Values And Personal Growth	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Personal Discipline And Responsibility and Accountability	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Personal Discipline And Emotional Intelligence	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Personal Discipline And Ethical Reasoning	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Personal Discipline And Social Awareness and Interpersonal Skills	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Personal Discipline And Resilience	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Personal Discipline And Personal Growth	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Responsibility and Accountability And Emotional Intelligence	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Responsibility and Accountability And Ethical Reasoning	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Responsibility and Accountability And	.000	Reject Ho	Significant

Social Awareness and Interpersonal Skills			
Responsibility and Accountability And Resilience	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Responsibility and Accountability And Personal Growth	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Emotional Intelligence And Ethical Reasoning	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Emotional Intelligence And Social Awareness and Interpersonal Skills	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Emotional Intelligence And Resilience	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Emotional Intelligence And Personal Growth	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Ethical Reasoning And Social Awareness and Interpersonal Skills	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Ethical Reasoning And Resilience	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Ethical Reasoning And Personal Growth	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Social Awareness and Interpersonal Skills And Resilience	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Social Awareness and Interpersonal Skills And Personal Growth	.000	Reject Ho	Significant
Resilience And Personal Growth	.000	Reject Ho	Significant

Table 4 shows the significant relationship between and among the eight components of character formation using Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation r -test at .05 level of significance.

As shown in the table, the significance r -values between and among the eight components of character formation are less than .05 which resulted to the rejection of the null hypothesis. There is significant relationship between and among the eight components of character formation of the respondents. The findings implies that the eight components of character formation are interconnected, meaning that strengthening one area can positively influence others. This highlights the importance of a holistic approach in criminology education, where developing moral values, personal growth, discipline, and emotional intelligence together can better prepare students to become well-rounded and ethically responsible professionals.

According to Guerrero and Estera (2025), the role of values education in shaping classroom behaviors, fostering order, respect, and responsibility as foundations for development. Their research demonstrates that it enhances academic conduct and moral integrity, facilitating ethical decisions in educational and societal contexts. This supports the necessity of character in criminology, as values such as integrity, accountability, and respect for others underpin the ethics of justice. Furthermore, values instill resilience and adaptability, providing emotional fortitude and behavioral regulation for law enforcement

preparation and operations. Guerrero and Estera thus associate values, character, and strength as essential for preparing criminology students for employment opportunities.

5. Extent of the Perceived Challenges Encounter in the Fields in terms of:

5.1 Exposure to a Highly Stressful Environment

Table 5.1
Mean Distribution on the Extent of the Perceived Challenges Encountered by Criminology Students in the Professional Fields in Terms of Exposure to a highly stressful environment

Indicators	Mean	Description
1. Field work affects my physical health.	2.75	Challenging
2. Stress impacts my mental and emotional well-being.	2.90	Challenging
3. Stress negatively influences my behavior.	2.87	Challenging
4. Stress affects my academic performance.	2.99	Challenging
5. I experience emotional exhaustion.	2.85	Challenging
6. I feel overwhelmed during field exposure.	2.77	Challenging
7. I experience anxiety related to fieldwork.	2.76	Challenging
8. I find it difficult to balance stress from fieldwork and academics	2.89	Challenging
Overall Mean	2.85	Challenging

Table 5.1 presents the mean distribution on the extent of the perceived challenges encountered by criminology students in the professional fields in terms of exposure to a highly stressful environment. In terms of exposure to a highly stressful environment, the overall mean is **2.85**, with a description of **“Challenging”**. This implies that criminology students are significantly exposed to stressful environments during field exposure, which may affect their performance and well-being.

As gleaned in the table, all indicators are with description of **“Challenging”**. The highest rated indicator is on statement *“Stress affects my academic performance”*, with a weighted mean of **2.99**, and with a description of **“Challenging”**, while the lowest rated indicator is on statement *“Field work affects my physical health”*, with a weighted mean of **2.75**, described as **“Challenging”**.

The finding implies that stress experienced during field exposure has a consistent and meaningful impact on students, particularly on their academic performance. This suggests the need for institutions to integrate stress management, academic support, and coping mechanisms into the program to help students remain effective and resilient despite challenging field conditions.

Challenging situations can lead to positive outcomes such as motivation and improved task performance according to studies (Rheinberg, 2020). While threatening

ones or distress can result in anxiety, depression, social dysfunction and even suicidal intention. Along with the enhancements during the scientific era and the speedy development of information, competitiveness among people has become increasingly robust, as a consequence, people have become busy and demanding, and thus, stress is a natural consequence. Albeit appropriate stress is a juncture for self - growth, it is also a drive for people to headway keenly. It not merely affects thoughts and feelings but actions as well. However, overstress causes problems and discomfort, and can have severe effects on people. Precisely, students face stress when they enter an entirely new world of the education professionals.

5.2 Ethical dilemmas and Moral challenges

Table 5.2
Mean Distribution on the Extent of the Perceived Challenges Encountered by Criminology Students in the Professional Fields in Terms of Ethical Dilemmas and Moral Challenges

Indicators	Mean	Description
1. I experience conflicting moral principles in field situations	2.87	Challenging
2. I struggle with moral loss in decisions.	2.79	Challenging
3. I face uncertainty when making ethical decisions.	2.87	Challenging
4. I encounter situations involving competing values.	2.90	Challenging
5. I feel pressure in making moral choices.	2.87	Challenging
6. I find it hard to choose the right action	2.89	Challenging
7. I experience uncertainty in ethical decisions.	2.80	Challenging
8. I fear the consequences of making ethical mistakes	2.87	Challenging
Overall Mean	2.86	Challenging

Table 5.2 displays the mean distribution on the extent of the perceived challenges encountered by criminology students in the professional fields in terms of Ethical Dilemmas and Moral Challenges. It shows that all indicators related to exposure to a highly stressful environment were rated “**Challenging**”, with an overall mean of **2.86**. This indicates that respondents commonly experience ethical challenges during field exposure, particularly in situations involving conflicting values, uncertainty in decision-making, and pressure in making moral choices.

As gleaned in the table, the highest rated indicator is statement “*I encounter situations involving competing values*”, with a weighted mean of **2.90**, described as “**Challenging**”, while the lowest indicator is statement “*I struggle with moral loss in decisions*”, with a weighted mean of **2.79**, interpreted as “**Challenging**”. The findings imply that criminology students regularly face ethical dilemmas involving competing values during field exposure. This highlights the need for enhanced ethics education, guided decision-making exercises, and mentorship programs to equip students with the skills and moral confidence to handle real-world challenges effectively.

Kohlberg (1981) moral development unfolds through progressive stages that evolve with age, experience, and environmental influences, enabling individuals to navigate complex ethical dilemmas by considering self-interest, social expectations, societal norms, legal obligations, and universal principles of justice and human rights. This theory is particularly relevant to the study, as it directly informs the development of character in criminology students, who must cultivate a strong moral compass to handle high-pressure situations involving ethical dilemmas, such as balancing law enforcement duties with fairness and integrity.

5.3 Physical and Safety Risks

Table 5.3
Mean Distribution on the Extent of the Perceived Challenges Encountered by Criminology Students in the Professional Fields in Terms of Physical and Safety Risks

Indicators	Mean	Description
1. I feel physically vulnerable in the field	2.76	Challenging
2. I worry about personal security	2.77	Challenging
3. Safety concerns affect my performance	2.69	Challenging
4. I lack adequate safety training	2.81	Challenging
5. I feel anxious about physical risks	2.79	Challenging
6. Fieldwork exposes me to hazards	2.67	Challenging
7. I feel unprepared to handle a dangerous situation.	2.73	Challenging
8. I am concerned about accidents or injuries during fieldwork	2.89	Challenging
Overall Mean	2.76	Challenging

Table 5.3 displays the mean distribution on the extent of the perceived challenges encountered by criminology students in the professional fields in terms of physical and safety risks; It shows that all indicators related to physical and safety risks during field exposure are rated “**Challenging**”, with an overall mean of **2.76**. The highest rated concern is “*I am concerned about accidents or injuries during fieldwork*”, with a weighted mean score of **2.89**, while the lowest rated concern is “*Fieldwork exposes me to hazards*”, with a weighted mean score of **2.67**, both described as “**Challenging**”. This indicates that students commonly experience physical vulnerability and safety-related anxiety during field activities. The findings implies that criminology students are regularly exposed to physical and safety risks during fieldwork, which can impact both their performance and sense of security.

This finding aligns with the World Health Organization and International Labour Organization (2018) emphasizes the importance of safety orientation in field-based activities. Exposure to hazards, fatigue, and uncertainty can increase stress and contribute to reduced concentration and work-related errors. Students’ concerns about physical safety also influence their engagement and participation in field tasks. Therefore,

adequate supervision, proper training, and preventive measures are essential for mitigating these risks.

5.4 Psychological and Emotional Challenges

Table 5.4
Mean Distribution on the Extent of the Perceived Challenges Encountered by Criminology Students in the Professional Fields in Terms of Psychological and Emotional Challenges

Indicators	Mean	Description
1. I experience social belonging issues	2.84	Challenging
2. I encounter mental health concerns.	2.79	Challenging
3. I experience low self-esteem or body image issues.	2.87	Challenging
4. Family and financial stress affect my studies.	2.97	Challenging
5. I sometimes use negative coping mechanisms.	2.74	Challenging
6. I fear failure.	2.91	Challenging
7. I experience academic failure.	2.88	Challenging
8. I feel emotionally drained by academic and field demands	2.93	Challenging
Overall Mean	2.87	Challenging

Table 5.4 displays the mean distribution on the extent of the perceived challenges encountered by criminology students in the professional fields in terms of psychological and emotional challenges. The table shows that all indicators related to psychological and emotional challenges during field exposure are rated “**Challenging**”, with an overall mean of **2.87**. This indicates that criminology students commonly experience psychological and emotional challenges during field exposure, such as stress, anxiety, and pressure, which can affect their performance, decision-making, and overall well-being.

As gleaned in the table, the highest rated indicator is statement “*Family and financial stress affect my studies*”, with a weighted mean of **2.97**, described as “**Challenging**”, while the lowest indicator is statement “*I sometimes use negative coping mechanisms*”, with a weighted mean of **2.74**, interpreted as “**Challenging**”. The finding implies that external factors, particularly family and financial stress, had a significant impact on students’ psychological and emotional well-being during field exposure. While students generally manage challenges, some may resort to negative coping mechanisms.

These findings aligned with the study of Manuel and Lao (2023) that analyzes the academic struggles and coping strategies, recommending adaptive interventions to strengthen students’ moral fortitude amid rigorous demands. Focusing on the psychological toll of heavy workloads and competitive environments, this work identifies coping mechanisms that promote inner strength and ethical resilience. It argues that without such adaptive strategies, students risk burnout, which could compromise their character and preparedness for field challenges involving stress, moral dilemmas, and

high accountability thus reinforcing the need for character centric educational approaches.

5.5 Social and Interpersonal Challenges

Table 5.5
Mean Distribution on the Extent of the Perceived Challenges Encountered by Criminology Students in the Professional Fields in Terms of Social and Interpersonal Challenges

Indicators	Mean	Description
1. I struggle with peer relationships	2.70	Challenging
2. I experience difficulties in interpersonal communication	2.71	Challenging
3. I feel misunderstood by others	2.80	Challenging
4. I hesitate to express my ideas	2.88	Challenging
5. I lack of confidence in social interactions	2.89	Challenging
6. I find teamwork challenging	2.77	Challenging
7. I experience conflict with classmates or peers	2.72	Challenging
8. I feel isolated in academic or field settings	2.76	Challenging
Overall Mean	2.78	Challenging

Table 5.5 displays the mean distribution on the extent of the perceived challenges encountered by criminology students in the professional fields in terms of social and interpersonal challenges. The table shows that all indicators related to social and interpersonal challenges during field exposure are rated “**Challenging**”, with an overall mean of **2.78**. This indicates that social and interpersonal challenges can affect students’ collaboration, confidence, and engagement in field activities.

As shown in the table, the highest rated indicator is statement “*I lack of confidence in social interactions*”, with a weighted mean of **2.89**, described as “**Challenging**”, while the lowest indicator is statement “*I struggle with peer relationships*”, with a weighted mean of **2.70**, interpreted as “**Challenging**”. The finding implies that criminology students face notable challenges in social confidence and interpersonal interactions during field exposure. While difficulties with peer relationships exist, lack of confidence in social interactions is the most prominent issue.

If a student that has more interpersonal stress and depression, anxiety, and somatization, and reported less use of engagement coping strategies and greater use of disengagement coping strategies. Engagement coping strategies accounted for a significant portion of the association between interpersonal stress and mental health symptoms. Unexpectedly, coping strategies did not moderate the association between stress and mental health symptoms (Coiro et al., 2017).

5.6 Time Management and Academic Pressure

Table 5.6

Mean Distribution on the Extent of the Perceived Challenges Encountered by Criminology Students in the Professional Fields in Terms of Time Management and Academic Pressure

Indicators	Mean	Description
1. I struggle with time management	2.72	Challenging
2. I find critical thinking and analysis challenging.	2.87	Challenging
3. I lack confidence in practical application.	2.81	Challenging
4. I have limited exposure to real-life field situation.	2.81	Challenging
5. I struggle with motivation and focus.	2.75	Challenging
6. I feel academically unprepared	2.71	Challenging
7. I lack adequate support systems	2.70	Challenging
8. Academic workload overwhelms me.	2.90	Challenging
Overall Mean	2.78	Challenging

Table 5.6 displays the mean distribution on the extent of the perceived challenges encountered by criminology students in the professional fields in terms of time management and academic pressure. The table shows that all indicators related to academic challenges during field exposure are rated **“Challenging”**, with an overall mean of **2.78**. The finding indicates that students face significant time management and academic pressure during field exposure, highlighting the need for support programs, time management training, and aligned practical experiences. The highest rated challenge is statement *“Academic workload overwhelms me”*, with a weighted mean of **2.90**, while the lowest rated indicator is statement *“I lack adequate support systems”*, with a weighted mean of **2.70**, both described as **“Challenging”**. This indicates that students frequently experience difficulties managing academic demands alongside field responsibilities, as well as challenges in motivation, practical application, and critical thinking.

Jalem et al. (2025) explores the intensified challenges faced by criminology students from single-parent households, suggesting targeted support to build resilience and character integrity. This research highlights socioeconomic factors that exacerbate personal struggles, such as financial instability and emotional strain, which can undermine a student's ability to develop the steadfast character needed for demanding fieldwork. By proposing interventions like counseling and mentorship, the study emphasizes how fostering resilience through character formation helps these students persevere, transforming vulnerabilities into strengths that contribute to ethical and dedicated service in law enforcement.

5.7 Adaptability and Problem-Solving Challenges

Table 5.7
Mean Distribution on the Extent of the Perceived Challenges Encountered by Criminology Students in the Professional Fields in Terms of Adaptability and Problem-Solving Challenges

Indicators	Mean	Description
1. I find it difficult to transition between academic and professional environments.	2.78	Challenging
2. I struggle to adjust to new learning modalities.	2.79	Challenging
3. I find it challenging to overcome personal weaknesses.	2.87	Challenging
4. I struggle to apply theory to practice.	2.82	Challenging
5. I lack foundational knowledge in some areas.	2.82	Challenging
6. I struggle with real-life problem-solving.	2.88	Challenging
7. Instructional gaps affect my learning.	2.76	Challenging
8. I struggle to make quick and effective decisions under pressure	2.81	Challenging
Overall Mean	2.82	Challenging

Table 5.7 displays the mean distribution on the extent of the perceived challenges encountered by criminology students in the professional fields in terms of adaptability and problem-solving challenges. The table shows that all indicators related to adaptability and problem-solving challenges during field exposure are rated “**Challenging**”, with an overall mean of 2.82. This indicates that criminology students frequently encounter challenges related to adaptability and problem-solving during field exposure, indicating that adjusting to changing situations and finding effective solutions can be difficult in real-world settings.

As shown in the table, the highest rated indicator is statement “*I struggle with real-life problem-solving*”, with a weighted mean of **2.88**, described as “**Challenging**”, while the lowest indicator is statement “*Instructional gaps affect my learning*”, with a weighted mean of **2.76**, interpreted as “**Challenging**”. The findings imply that criminology students face notable challenges in applying problem-solving skills in real-life field situations, with struggles in practical decision-making being the most prominent issue. While instructional gaps also affect learning, they are less significant.

The finding is supported by the study of Modula et al. (2024) in the study Strategies for Coping with Occupational Trauma: A Scoping Review of the Police Officer Context, which emphasized that police personnel and trainees often experience difficulties in adapting to occupational stress, applying problem-solving skills in real-life situations, and making decisions under pressure. The study identified that resilience, mental preparation, competency building, and adaptive coping strategies are essential in helping individuals effectively manage operational and field-related challenges. This supports the present findings that criminology students encounter adaptability and problem-solving difficulties

during field exposure, particularly in applying real-life problem-solving skills and adjusting to challenging environments.

Table 5.8
Description of the Overall Extent of the Perceived Challenges Encountered by Criminology Students During Field Exposure

Component	Overall Mean	Description
Psychological and Emotional Challenges	2.87	Challenging
Ethical Dilemmas and Moral Challenges	2.86	Challenging
Exposure to a Highly Stressful Environment	2.85	Challenging
Adaptability and Problem-Solving Challenges	2.82	Challenging
Time Management and Academic Pressure	2.78	Challenging
Social and Interpersonal Challenges	2.78	Challenging
Physical and Safety Risks	2.76	Challenging

Table 5.8 presents the overall ranking and description of challenges encountered by criminology students during field exposure.

All components are rated “**Challenging**”, which indicates that students face considerable challenges across multiple areas. The highest rated challenges are **Psychological and Emotional Challenges** with a weighted mean of **2.87**, followed closely by **Ethical Dilemmas and Moral Challenges** with a weighted mean of **2.86**, and **Exposure to a Highly Stressful Environment** with a weighted mean of **2.85**. The lowest-rated challenge is **Physical and Safety Risks** with a weighted mean of **2.76**. This implies that criminology students are most affected by psychological, moral, and stress related challenges during field exposure, highlighting the intense mental and emotional demands of practical training. While physical risks are also present, they are comparatively less pressing. This underscores the need for comprehensive support programs including mental health services, ethics guidance, stress management training, and resilience building initiatives to help students cope effectively and perform successfully in real-world fieldwork environments.

Delima (2025) emphasize bridging gaps in criminology program accreditation by assessing readiness and overcoming barriers, highlighting how institutional reforms can foster ethical and professional character among aspiring law enforcers. They examine the practical barriers, such as resource limitations and curriculum inconsistencies, that impede students' development of resilience and integrity—qualities essential for navigating the unpredictable and high-stakes environments of law enforcement fieldwork. By advocating for targeted reforms, it positions character formation as a foundational

pillar, ensuring that students are not only academically prepared but also morally equipped to uphold justice and professionalism in real-world scenarios.

6. Recommended Strategies to Enhance Preparedness

Table 6
Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents According to Recommended Strategies for Students' Preparedness

Strategy	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Incorporate character formation programs into the curriculum	52	38.5
Focus academic programs on developing professional behavior	47	34.8
Integrate resilience training into criminology education	40	29.6
Embed ethical values in all criminology courses	25	18.5
Regularly conduct ethical decision-making simulations	17	12.6
Promote community engagement and service-learning activities	16	11.9
Provide more field exposure and practical training	14	10.4
Enhance counseling and mental health support	13	9.6
Establish mentorship programs for criminology students	12	8.9
Implement stress management and coping workshops	9	6.7

Table 6 shows the respondents' recommended strategies to enhance students' preparedness in criminology education. The highest priority recommendation, chosen by **38.5%** of the respondents is to "*incorporate character formation programs into the curriculum*". This indicates that students and educators recognize the critical role of strong moral and ethical foundations in shaping competent and responsible criminology professionals. Closely following this is **34.8%** recommended on "*focusing academic programs on developing professional behavior*", and **29.6%** suggests "*integrating resilience training*". These responses reflect a strong perception that academic preparation alone is insufficient; students also need structured development in professionalism, ethical judgment, and psychological resilience to succeed in fieldwork and real-world scenarios.

Less frequently recommended strategies, such as "*ethical decision-making simulations*" with **12.6%**, "*community engagement*" with **11.9%**, and "*additional field exposure*", with **10.4%**, indicates that while experiential learning and practical application

are valued, they are secondary to building foundational character and coping skills. Similarly, strategies like “*counseling and mental health support*”, with **9.6%**, “*mentorship programs*” with **8.9%**, and “*stress management workshops*”, with **6.7%**, suggests that formal support mechanisms are important but perceived as complementary to core curriculum enhancements.

Modula et.al. (2024) describe adaptation strategies for officers who deal with trauma related to their jobs, how to map paths to durability in trauma-heavy fields, and how to guide readiness for criminology students. These strategies are divided into three categories: personal (e.g., mindset shifts, workouts, awareness), relational (e.g., colleague or family ties), and systemic (e.g., review sessions and therapy access). To ensure permanency, gaps in under-resourced communities require culture-fit remedies, which are defined as seamlessly integrating trauma into growth. By demonstrating how effective strategies not only reduce immediate suffering but also promote growth after adversity. The researcher highlights the role of coping in building resilience and advancing trauma scholarship. This helps officers continue to perform their duties in the face of ongoing challenges. This model is appropriate for criminology education, as similarities emerge in event simulations, moral dilemmas, and externships with the Philippine police that involve system stresses and urban hazards.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the study concluded that criminology students possess a high level of character formation, particularly in moral values and personal growth, while also demonstrating strong personal discipline, responsibility and accountability, emotional intelligence, ethical reasoning, social awareness, interpersonal skills, and resilience. These findings indicate that students are developing the necessary values, attitudes, and behaviors expected of future law enforcement professionals. Although personal discipline and emotional intelligence were rated slightly lower than other components, they still reflect positive character development that can be further strengthened through continuous training and guidance.

Furthermore, criminology students experienced various challenges during field exposure, including stressful environments, ethical dilemmas, physical and safety risks, psychological pressures, social difficulties, and time management concerns. Despite these challenges, students were able to demonstrate resilience and adaptability. Lastly, the findings emphasized that strengthening character formation programs is considered the most important strategy in enhancing students' preparedness, highlighting the importance of moral, professional, and emotional development in preparing criminology students for future responsibilities in law enforcement.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing findings and conclusion of the study, the following are recommended for implementation.

1. The study found that criminology students demonstrated a high level of character formation, particularly in moral values and personal growth, while personal discipline, responsibility and accountability, emotional intelligence, ethical reasoning, social awareness and interpersonal skills, and resilience were rated at a slightly lower level. Therefore, it is recommended that criminology programs intensify character formation activities that focus on strengthening internal integrity and consistency in ethical behavior. With this, the schools should implement values-oriented seminars, reflective exercises, and real-life ethical scenario training that emphasize doing what is right even without supervision. Faculty and field instructors may also serve as role models in demonstrating integrity in practice, while mentorship programs can help reinforce honesty, self-discipline, and accountability among students in preparation for their future roles in law enforcement.
2. Respondents reported facing considerable challenges during field exposure, described as “**Much**,” particularly in areas such as stress, ethical dilemmas, safety risks, academic demands, and social interactions, highlighting the impact of real-world practice on student performance and well-being. With this, there is a need to integrate resilience training, stress management programs, and psychological support to help students cope effectively with field-related challenges.
3. Incorporating character formation programs into the curriculum is prioritized by respondents, indicating the importance of moral, professional, and resilient foundations. With this, there is a need to implement structured character-building activities and professional development modules to strengthen students’ ethical judgment, responsibility, and professionalism.
4. Experiential learning activities, such as additional field exposure, simulations, and community engagement are described as important by respondents, suggesting that practical application complements theoretical learning. Therefore, there is a need to expand hands-on opportunities that develop adaptability, problem-solving, and ethical decision-making skills in real-world settings.
5. Support mechanisms, including counseling, mentorship programs, and guidance services are described as “**Much**,” indicating that formal support enhances students’ emotional well-being and personal discipline. With this, there is a need to provide accessible support services to foster holistic development and strengthen coping strategies throughout criminology education.
6. The study identified gaps in areas such as personal discipline, emotional intelligence, and coping strategies, suggesting that further research could provide additional insights. With this, there is a need to conduct longitudinal and comparative studies to explore the long-term effects of character formation programs and field exposure on student preparedness and professional readiness.
7. There is a need to conduct future similar research to validate the findings in this study.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

This study complied with accepted ethical standards in the conduct of educational research by securing formal permission from the Dean of Criminology of Saint Ferdinand College–Cabagan Campus prior to data gathering, ensuring that the research instrument was validated by qualified professionals for clarity, relevance, and appropriateness, and obtaining informed consent from the respondents before their participation. The respondents were informed of the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to decline or withdraw without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly observed by ensuring that no personally identifiable information was disclosed in the presentation and analysis of data. All gathered information was used solely for academic and research purposes, handled with care, and reported objectively without manipulation or misrepresentation. The study did not expose the participants to physical, psychological, social, or academic harm, and the researcher ensured that the administration of the questionnaire did not interfere with their academic responsibilities. Overall, the study upheld the principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, objectivity, and respect for human dignity.

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