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A Study on Filipino Protocol Officers in Diplomatic Ceremonial Events

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the roles and challenges encountered by Filipino Protocol Officers in managing diplomatic ceremonial events. These officers played a vital role in ensuring the seamless execution of formal state functions and diplomatic interactions, balancing respect for tradition with the evolving demands of modern diplomacy. Using qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews and document analysis, the research examined the officers' preparation strategies, adherence to established protocol, and navigation of cultural nuances. Key findings underscored the critical importance of meticulous planning, cultural sensitivity, and effective inter-agency coordination. The study also identified major challenges, such as communication gaps, conflicting customs, and workload-related stress, along with the strategies employed to address them. Overall, this study contributed to a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in diplomatic protocol and offered recommendations for improving ceremonial event management practices in the Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

Diplomatic protocol is essential for fostering respect, order, and mutual understanding among nations. In an era where globalization is rapidly transforming international relations, the importance of effective protocol practices has never been more pronounced. Protocol officers act as the custodians of tradition while also facilitating smooth diplomatic interactions. They ensure that ceremonies, negotiations, and cultural exchanges are carried out with professionalism and a keen awareness of cultural sensitivities. Filipino Protocol Officers play a vital role in representing the Philippines on the world stage (Philstar.com, 2019).

The responsibilities of protocol officers go far beyond simply organizing ceremonial events. They are crucial in navigating cultural differences, overcoming communication barriers, and maintaining the nation's image in various international contexts. Whether they are orchestrating state visits, managing diplomatic receptions, or coordinating international conferences, these officers skillfully blend traditional practices with modern approaches. This balance allows them to honor customs while adapting to contemporary diplomatic trends (Center for Global Best Practices, 2023).

Background of the Study

International diplomacy relied on respect, order, and mutual understanding between nations. Established rules and customs, known as diplomatic protocol, governed interactions among countries, including ceremonial events such as state visits, diplomatic receptions, and formal dinners. Filipino Protocol Officers played a crucial role in ensuring that these diplomatic engagements proceeded smoothly (Kissinger, 2018). However, several challenges emerged. One significant issue was language barriers, which often hindered effective communication with international counterparts.

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) identified language proficiency as a critical skill gap among Filipino diplomats, including

Protocol Officers (Santos, 2023). Another crucial aspect involved navigating cultural nuances. Different countries observed unique customs, such as variations in greeting protocols or gift-giving traditions (Chen & Ryan, 2020). For instance, a study by Abu Bakar and Hassan (2017) emphasized the importance of understanding cultural sensitivities related to colors and patterns when organizing events involving delegations from specific regions.

While protocol ensures respectful negotiations, it also adapts to recent trends, such as environmental sustainability. By incorporating perspectives for various stakeholders, we gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by Filipino Protocol Officers. Their insights inform best practices and strategic decision-making (Johnson, 2014). Examining their experiences within regional contexts helps us grasp the broader implications of their work, such as protocol considerations for regional cooperation.

This study aims to understand the practices and experiences of Filipino Protocol Officers. By examining their preparations, strategies, and challenges, we will highlight their critical role in representing the Philippines and fostering international diplomacy.

Statement of the Problem

This study aims to address three key questions regarding the experiences of Filipino Protocol Officers in diplomatic protocol during ceremonial events. Specifically, it seeks to answer

1. What preparation processes do Filipino Protocol Officers employ for ceremonial events?
2. What strategies do Filipino Protocol Officers use to navigate the impact of cultural nuances and international customs on diplomatic protocol during ceremonial events?
3. What individual challenges do Filipino Protocol Officers encounter while adhering protocol during ceremonial events?

Definition of Terms

This study holds significant value for various stakeholders:

- **Cultural Nuances.** Subtle aspects of culture, including customs, traditions, and behaviors that may vary between different societies or regions.
- **Diplomatic Protocol.** Established rules, customs, and etiquette, governing interactions between nations, particularly during diplomatic engagements.
- **Foreign Service Institute (FSI).** An institution responsible for training and developing diplomats and foreign Service personnel.
- **International Customs.** Traditions, practices, and norms observed by different countries during diplomatic interactions and ceremonies.
- **Soft Power Theory.** A concept developed by Joseph Nye, focusing on nation's ability to influence others through culture, values, and policies rather than coercive means.
- **State Visits.** Formal visits by a head of state or government to another country, often involving diplomatic ceremonies and meetings with foreign leaders.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in its framework from the Soft Power Theory developed by Joseph Nye (2004), which emphasizes that a nation's ability to influence others is not solely derived from coercive or economic power but from its capacity to attract and persuade. According to Nye, soft power stems from three primary resources: a country's culture, political values, and foreign policies. In diplomacy, these elements are leveraged to build trust, foster goodwill, and promote cooperative relationships without the need force. Diplomatic ceremonial events, as key expressions of a nation's culture and identity, are vital arenas for exercising soft power. Protocol officers, who manage these events, play a central role in embodying and projecting these resources, ensuring the seamless execution of ceremonies that reflect a nation's values and traditions while cultivating positive relationships with foreign counterparts.

In the realm of diplomatic practices, soft power was increasingly recognized as a fundamental tool for managing international relations. Scholars such as Cull (2008) and Melissen (2005) emphasized that soft power diplomacy relied on symbolic interactions, cultural representations, and the capacity to engage audiences through shared values and mutual respect. Diplomatic ceremonial events, therefore, served as critical platforms through which soft power was exercised, requiring precision, cultural sensitivity, and strategic planning.

Recent studies, including those by Zaharna et al. (2020) and Lee (2022) argued that effective ceremonial diplomacy constituted a core aspect of a nation's soft power. Protocol officers, as facilitators of these ceremonies, embodied the cultural and institutional values projected by their respective countries. Their ability to manage complex intercultural interactions reflected not only their professional competence but also the broader capacity of their nation to wield soft power effectively.

For Filipino Protocol Officers, whose roles were deeply rooted in the Philippines' hospitable and culturally rich identity,

challenges such as resource limitations, cross-cultural misinterpretations, and geopolitical tensions often impeded the successful execution of soft power in diplomatic events.

Conceptual Framework

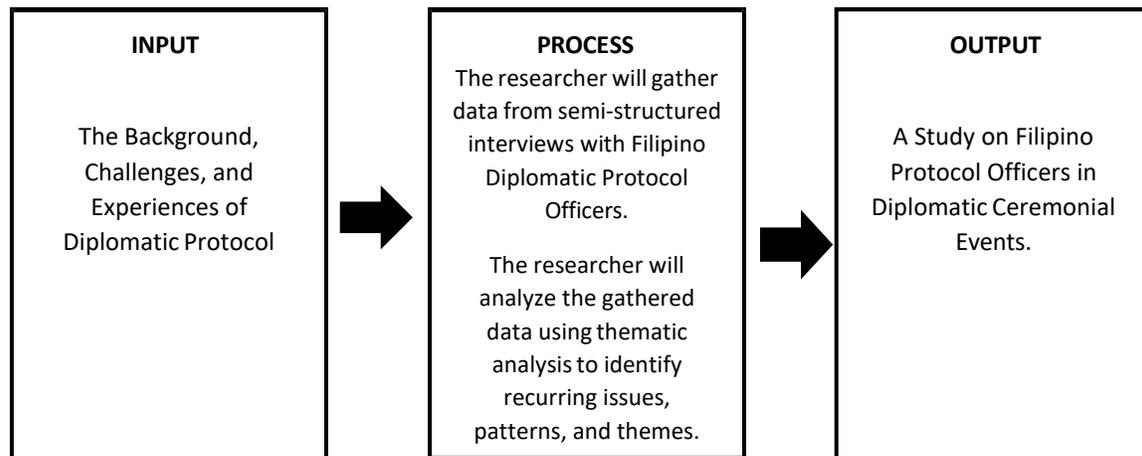


Figure 1. uses of Input-Process-Output (IPO) model as the conceptual framework for a methodical analysis of Filipino diplomatic protocol officers' experiences. This framework functions as an organized manual that outlines the ways in which different elements of the study interact and influence the results.

Input variables encompass the backgrounds of these officers, including their education, training, and prior experiences, as well as contextual factors such as the political, cultural, and organizational environments in which they operate.

Process variables involve the methodologies employed to gather qualitative data, specifically through interviews with protocol officers, and the analytical techniques utilized, notably thematic analysis, which facilitates the extraction of insights related to protocols for diplomatic events. Lastly, output variables consist of the insights gained regarding the experiences and challenges faced by protocol officers, along with actionable recommendations aimed at enhancing the management of ceremonial events based on these findings.

Significance of the Study

Significance of the Study This study holds significant value for various stakeholders:

- **Academe/Institution.** This study offers valuable insights that can enhance academic programs and research initiatives related to international diplomacy.
- **Diplomats.** This research deepens the understanding of Filipino diplomacy and fosters international cooperation.
- **Filipino Protocol Officers.** This study enhances awareness of the critical role of protocol officers and recognizes their importance in diplomatic engagements.
- **Foreign Service Institute (FSI).** The findings may inform the development of training programs and strategic recruitment efforts.
- **Future Researchers:** This study provides a foundation for further research, contributing to the evolving field of diplomatic scholarship.
- **Students.** This research aims to inspire interest in diplomatic careers and provides valuable insights into the complexities of international relations.

Scope and Limitation

This study explored the challenges faced by Filipino Protocol Officers in managing diplomatic ceremonial events, both domestically and internationally. It examined their preparation processes, strategic approaches, and the difficulties encountered in navigating cultural nuances and international customs, particularly during state visits, official receptions, and cultural festivals. The research specifically focused on Filipino Protocol Officers employed by the Philippine government and foreign embassies, with a minimum requirement of one year of experience in diplomatic protocol. No age restrictions were imposed on participants, allowing for a broader range of experiences and perspectives.

The study's focus on Filipino Protocol Officers employed by the Philippine government and foreign embassies limited the diversity of perspectives compared to a more globally representative sample. The requirement of at least one year of experience may have excluded officers with less tenure, thereby narrowing the range of insights regarding the challenges encountered by less experienced officers.

Furthermore, the study concentrated solely on ceremonial events, excluding other aspects of diplomatic protocol—such as negotiations and informal diplomatic interactions—which could have offered a more comprehensive understanding of protocol work.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Diplomatic Protocol Officers

In the Philippine context, Diplomatic Protocol Officers played a crucial role in ensuring that diplomatic functions were conducted smoothly and in accordance with diplomatic etiquette and customs (Evans, 2023). Their expertise in diplomatic protocol was essential for facilitating effective communication and creating public impact, as they managed diplomatic functions, engaged with local communities, and contributed to the strengthening of international relations (Fisher, 1966).

The Office of Protocol of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA-OP) conducted a training session on basic diplomatic and government protocol for the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) on March 5–6, 2024, at the LWUA Auditorium, MWSS-LWUA Complex, Katipunan Avenue, Quezon City. Secretary Lope B. Santos III, NAPC Lead Convenor, expressed gratitude to the DFA for conducting the training, emphasizing that it equipped their organization with essential knowledge for carrying out official ceremonial and social functions in adherence to established government and diplomatic protocols. The NAPC regularly engaged with various national and local government agencies and institutions, as well as with foreign diplomatic missions, international organizations, and basic sector stakeholders.

The two-day lecture-training, led by Acting Director Siegfred T. Masangkay of the DFA-Office of Protocol (DFA-OP), covered fundamental concepts of diplomatic and government protocol, including the order of precedence, flag protocol, and conference management. Group scenario simulation exercises for both ceremonial and social protocol were conducted to ensure the retention of relevant skills and knowledge among participants. Thirty NAPC officers and staff benefited from the training session (Department of Foreign Affairs, 2024).

The emergence of diplomatic protocol services within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) structure of Estonia in the early 20th century underscored the importance of protocol officers in managing state visits, diplomatic ceremonies, and adherence to international practices. Diplomatic protocol officers played a vital role in handling ceremonial and protocol-related matters within the MFA of various countries (Lolit & Ajakiri, 2022). A diplomat was not only considered an "educated and mentally developed" individual with unquestionable authority, strong will, endurance, and a sense of responsibility, but also as someone who contributed to building a system of international relations founded on cooperation, trust, respect, sovereignty, equality, and the territorial integrity of the state (Zakharova, 2022, as cited in Wood & Serre, 2016).

According to Kiselev (2022), the history of diplomatic protocol spanned various eras and regions, demonstrating its evolution as a critical element of international relations. Diplomatic protocol historically evolved in response to communication needs, technological advancements, and societal changes—from medieval rituals to modern ceremonial practices—ensuring effective and nuanced international communication (Sueldo et al., 2020).

The historical development of diplomatic protocol highlighted its adaptability and multifaceted purposes, ranging from preventing misunderstandings to subtly persuading counterparts (Hennings, 2008). Even in historical negotiations, such as the Muscovy delegation's visit to England in the 17th century, diplomatic protocol influenced the outcomes of diplomatic missions, reflecting the impact of a firm negotiating stance (Prideaux & Kim, 2018). Diplomatic protocol also functioned as an invisible structure shaping international relations and diplomacy, with the potential to significantly influence events, as illustrated by Pope Benedict XVI's visit to France in 2008 (Cazalla, 2017). Furthermore, diplomatic protocol held substantial importance in international negotiations, serving as a rule-based framework for clear and efficient communication (Smiljanov, 2022). It operated as a tool for ensuring effective and unambiguous interaction among stakeholders in diplomacy and politics, playing a vital role in shaping the international reputation of states (Sueldo et al., 2020).

As stated by Prideaux and Kim (2018), diplomatic protocols serve as a strategy for reducing travel barriers between countries facing political difficulties, promoting tourism development, and fostering mutual understanding through the unrestricted movement of tourists. According to Iucu (2008), the objectives of Diplomatic Protocol Officers involve observing relationships and determining factors between diplomacy and diplomatic protocol through historical and contextual analyses, emphasizing richness, antiquity, and polyvalence. They are tasked with upholding established rules and procedures to maintain the reputation of the state in international relations.

Additionally, protocol officers play a crucial role in modifying and enhancing international relations through the strategic use of protocol, which can lead to significant changes in events and relationships (Cazalla, 2017). Their work involves a combination of good behavior, logical reasoning, and attention to detail to prevent any unintentional deviations that could send unintended political messages (Smiljanov, 2022). By utilizing protocol as an invisible net, these officers facilitate smoother interactions between countries, ultimately fostering image, credibility, and trust among nations (Prideaux & Kim, 2018).

Diplomatic protocol officers face various challenges in their roles, including the need for differentiated training programs within institutions like the European External Action Service (EEAS) (Oliviera, 2022). According to Duke (2012), these officers often

encounter external factors that limit their work, such as conventions allowing misrepresentation and the pressure to alter records.

They are well-versed in the rules and customs that govern interactions between countries, utilizing protocol as a tool for effective communication and public impact (Mengchang He, 2022). Moreover, the demanding nature of diplomatic work, as seen in the heightened security measures taken by officials following the anticipation of terrorist attacks, adds to the challenges faced by protocol officers in ensuring the smooth execution of diplomatic agendas (Grauman, 2021). Hence, diplomatic protocol is a blend of science and art that not only facilitates communication but also conveys subtle political messages and shapes international interactions (Narro, 2012).

Ceremonial Events

According to Gonzalez and Alicia (2017), these events are not merely symbolic but also carry significant communicative functions, reflecting the image and identity of the organizing institution or country. The performance of rituals and the ritualization of events are key aspects studied in international politics, highlighting the interaction between participants and global audiences (Balae & Balzacq, 2021). Understanding the complexities of diplomatic ceremonies enhances comprehension of historical and contemporary diplomatic practices, contributing to a deeper insight into the cultural and social aspects of international relations.

The Head of Ceremonials at the Office of Protocol, Mr. Mangalile, would have been responsible for managing the logistics, seating arrangements, program flow, and overall coordination of these events to create a conducive environment for diplomatic discussions and interactions. His role was pivotal in upholding the prestige and professionalism of the Philippine diplomatic service during these ceremonial occasions, which are essential for fostering positive international relations and showcasing the country's diplomatic capabilities on the global stage (The Consul General - Philippine Consulate General, 2023). The study of diplomatic ceremonies aids in understanding the history, organizational culture, and international relations of different eras, contributing to a comprehensive view of accreditation ceremonies on the international stage (Vasquez et al., 2012). According to Rejujo (2023), ceremonial protocol encompasses the study and execution of formalities and procedures within various contexts. This field draws from historical events, official institutions, social interactions, and military traditions. These events play a crucial role in international communication, symbolizing independence and equality among sovereign states (Zakharova, 2022).

The analysis of ceremonial protocol often involves examining artworks depicting historical events, such as royal gatherings and military banquets (Polo et al., 2022). Additionally, the study of ceremonial protocol benefits from a solid methodological approach rooted in the social sciences, aiming to develop qualitative research designs for its scientific exploration (Somovilla, 2023).

Ceremonial events and protocols are held for various reasons, including honoring individuals of significance, maintaining order and respect, and communicating values and traditions. Regulations in different countries govern the precedence of state authorities, the organization of ceremonies, and the use of official symbols, highlighting the legal and official nature of ceremonial protocol (Alonso, 2021).

Diplomatic Relations

Diplomatic relations constitute the backbone of international interactions, serving as the primary avenue through which countries engage with one another on matters of mutual interest, cooperation, and conflict resolution (Carnago, 2022). These relations, governed by established protocols and conventions, play a pivotal role in shaping the global landscape, influencing political, economic, and social dynamics. The concept of diplomacy is often associated with international relations but can also be viewed from perspectives within political science and strategic studies, expanding its understanding beyond traditional boundaries (Balao et al., 2022)

Diplomacy goes beyond straightforward communication; it involves creating an atmosphere of trust, mutual respect, and understanding between nations. Whether at a state banquet, an official meeting, or a ceremonial event, adherence to proper etiquette and protocol serves as a silent language that conveys a nation's character and commitment to fostering international relationships.

One of the primary reasons this art is crucial is that it helps diplomats navigate the complex web of cultural diversity. Every nation has its own customs, traditions, and protocols, and failing to acknowledge and respect these differences can lead to diplomatic faux pas and strained relations (Global Diplomatic Forum, 2023).

Cultural Awareness

The intricacies of cultural disparities profoundly affect diplomatic conflict resolution endeavors. Divergent cultural values may engender contrasting approaches to negotiation, mediation, and compromise. Cultural norms regarding communication styles, decision-making processes, and expressions of conciliation may diverge markedly, necessitating astute cultural acumen to

bridge potential impasses. Failure to recognize and appreciate these cultural nuances can inadvertently escalate tensions and hinder the attainment of mutual understanding and resolution (Saaida, 2023).

In a typical negotiation with Mexican diplomats, it is customary to start with friendly small talk and approach the substantive issues only when the time seems appropriate. They do not follow agendas rigidly and prefer to discuss any point when it appears to be the most opportune moment. Nevertheless, the issues can then be discussed at length. As conversation is regarded as an art, Mexican diplomats seek the approval or conversion of their counterparts.

Consequently, passion and eloquence are central to their style of discourse, with feelings often considered more important than facts. At the conclusion of the negotiation process, symbols of success hold significant importance. For a Mexican diplomat, any public sign of surrender would pose a serious threat to any arrangement. For instance, during the 1982 debt talks with the US, Mexican diplomats preferred a substantially inferior agreement rather than the appearance of a greater Mexican concession (Bolewski, n.d.)

According to scholars, cultural exchange plays a crucial role in diplomacy by fostering understanding, trust, and cooperation between nations (Abassi & Maher, 2022; Omirzakova, 2023; Hardiman, 2022; Chandara Bahadur, 2022). As maintained by Vrdoljak (2015), cultural exchange in the international realm promotes knowledge, mutual understanding, and the circulation of cultural material, reflecting evolving priorities in balancing international exchange and cultural object regulation over the last century. Consequently, cultural exchange is a cornerstone of diplomacy, conflict resolution, and economic success in the international arena (Cronin, 2015). In higher education, cultural exchange and internationalization are vital for preparing students to engage in a globally connected society, especially in the face of rising exclusionism (McAlpine, 2020).

Synthesis

The review of the literature for this study suggests that diplomatic protocol officers face a unique set of challenges. Navigating the intricate world of international etiquette requires these officers to have a profound understanding of both global protocols and the cultural nuances of every country with which they engage. Even minor details, such as seating arrangements or flag placement, can carry significant meaning and impact diplomatic relations. Through meticulous planning and execution of ceremonial events, from state visits to signing ceremonies, diplomatic protocol officers serve as the guardians of a smoothly functioning international stage. Their expertise in formalities and customs helps prevent cultural faux pas and fosters respect among dignitaries. Cultural awareness is paramount for protocol officers. By understanding religious customs, social etiquette, and the significance of national symbols, they can tailor ceremonies to resonate with all participants. By ensuring cultural sensitivity, protocol officers transform ceremonies from mere formalities into powerful symbols of unity and cooperation, paving the way for stronger diplomatic relations.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design, which was particularly effective for exploring and understanding the intricate experiences and perceptions of participants. Qualitative research methods prioritized in-depth exploration, allowing researchers to gain insights into the meanings that individuals attached to their experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This approach was well-suited to the present research, as it aimed to capture the lived experiences of Filipino diplomatic officers, focusing on the complex nuances of their work during ceremonial events. By employing qualitative methods, the study sought to provide a rich and detailed understanding of the challenges encountered and practices employed by these officers in their roles.

Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was used to select Filipino Protocol Officers who met specific criteria essential for achieving the objectives of the research. The selection criteria were as follows:

1. **Experience:** Participants were required to have had at least one year of experience in managing ceremonial events within the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), the Office of the Presidential Protocol (OPP), or a foreign embassy.
2. **Rank:** Protocol officers from various ranks within the DFA, OPP, and foreign embassies were invited to participate, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives on ceremonial event management practices.
3. **Event Focus:** Participants were asked to share their involvement in any ceremonial event they had managed within the past year. This inclusive approach ensured that officers involved in different types of events contributed their unique insights to the research.
4. **No Age Limit/Restriction:** There were no age limits or restrictions for participation. This allowed for a broader representation of individuals with varied experiences, ensuring the findings captured a wide array of perspectives.

By adopting this inclusive sampling technique, the research aimed to gather insights from protocol officers across different

levels of experience and seniority. This approach ensured that the findings reflected the diversity of experiences within the protocol officer community, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of ceremonial event management practices within the Philippine government and foreign embassies.

Participants of the Study

The researchers interviewed five Filipino Protocol Officers who were employed in the Philippine government and foreign embassies. To qualify as participants, individuals were required to hold positions directly involved in managing diplomatic ceremonial events, possess a minimum of two years of experience in diplomatic protocol, and demonstrate a willingness to share their insights on the challenges encountered during such events. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of individuals with the necessary expertise and experience in the field. These participants provided valuable perspectives on the complexities of protocol management and the practices that contributed to the successful execution of diplomatic ceremonial events. Among the participants, PB was a Protocol Officer based in Bahrain who represented the Philippines at diplomatic ceremonial events in the country. DP served as the Deputy Chief of Protocol at the Department of Foreign Affairs, overseeing protocol operations at the national level. CG, the Consul General in Xiamen, actively participated in diplomatic ceremonial events in the city while representing the Philippines. MP, a Protocol Officer assigned to Malacañang, managed protocol for state and ceremonial activities in the Office of the President. Lastly, PJ, a Protocol Officer in Japan, represented the Philippines at diplomatic ceremonial events in that country. These individuals shared the challenges they encountered during their protocol duties.

Table 1. *Legends for Participants of the Study.*

Participant ID	Description
PB	Protocol Officer in Bahrain
DP	Deputy Chief of Consular Affairs, former Protocol Officer
CG	Consul General Xiamen
MP	Protocol Officer in Malacañang
PJ	Protocol Officer in Japan

Research Locale

The research will primarily focus on Filipino protocol officers based in the Philippines, specifically those working within the Office of Presidential Protocol in Malacañang (OPP), Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), and Foreign Embassy. However, depending on feasibility and access, interviews may also be conducted with Filipino protocol officers stationed in key embassies or consulates abroad to gain a broader perspective on their experiences in different diplomatic settings.

Research Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide will serve as the primary research instrument. The guide will consist of open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses from participants about their experiences. Before conducting the main interviews, the guide will be piloted with a small group of Protocol Officers to ensure clarity and comprehensibility (Flick, 2014).

Data Gathering Procedure

The following steps will be undertaken to gather data:

- **Participant Recruitment:** Potential participants were contacted and provided with detailed information regarding the study's objectives and procedures. Confidentiality was assured, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. This process ensured that participants were fully informed about the research aims and their roles in the study.
- **Document Analysis:** Relevant documents from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Office of the Presidential Protocol (OPP), foreign embassy archives, and online resources were systematically reviewed. These documents included official guidelines, handbooks, reports, and other materials related to diplomatic protocol and ceremonial event management. The analysis focused on identifying key themes, patterns, and practices within the formal framework of diplomatic protocol.
- **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Protocol Officers who met the inclusion criteria. These interviews followed a predetermined set of open-ended questions designed to explore participants' experiences and challenges in managing ceremonial events. With participants' consent, interviews were either audio-recorded or typewritten to ensure accurate documentation of their responses. The open-ended questions allowed for a detailed examination of the challenges encountered, as well as participants' perspectives and insights on addressing these issues.

Source of Data

The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data.

Primary Data Sources:

- **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of Filipino Protocol Officers who had extensive experience in managing ceremonial events. A purposive sample was selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research question (Patton, 2022). The interview schedule was designed to explore themes related to the officers' experiences, including preparation processes, strategies for navigating cultural nuances and international customs, challenges encountered, and the perceived impact of their work.
- **Document Analysis:** Official documents related to diplomatic protocol, including guidelines, handbooks, and reports issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) of the Philippines, were analyzed. This provided a deeper understanding of the formal framework within which Filipino diplomatic officers operated (Yin, 2018).

Secondary Data Sources:

- **Semi-Structured Literature Review:** A comprehensive review of existing literature on diplomatic protocol, cultural diplomacy, and the role of protocol officers was conducted. This included scholarly articles, books, and other academic sources that explored similar themes and issues. The literature review served to contextualize the study within the broader field of international relations and provided theoretical frameworks to guide data analysis and interpretation.
- **Government Publications:** In addition to the analysis of documents from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) of the Philippines, government publications from other countries' foreign ministries or diplomatic academies were also reviewed to provide comparative perspectives on diplomatic protocol and the responsibilities of protocol officers. These documents helped identify common practices, challenges, and innovations in diplomatic protocol management.
- **Media Sources:** News articles, interviews, and documentaries related to diplomatic events and the roles of protocol officers may provide anecdotal evidence and real-world examples to complement the primary data collected through interviews. Media sources offered insights into public perceptions of diplomatic protocol and the visibility of protocol officers in diplomatic affairs.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from semi-structured interviews with Protocol Officers were analyzed using thematic analysis, through which recurring patterns, themes, and insights related to ceremonial event management were identified. The interview transcripts were carefully reviewed, coded, and categorized to uncover commonalities and variations in participants' experiences and perspectives. Additionally, document analysis of relevant materials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the Presidential Protocol archives complemented the interview data by providing a formal framework and contextual background for understanding diplomatic protocol practices. Through this comprehensive approach to data analysis, the study offered nuanced insights into the complexities of Protocol Officers' roles in managing ceremonial events within the diplomatic context.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are paramount throughout the data gathering process:

1. **Informed Consent:** Participants were provided with clear information about the study's purpose and procedures to ensure their understanding prior to obtaining their voluntary participation through informed consent. They were also assured of their right to withdraw from study at any time without any consequences.
2. **Confidentiality:** To protect participants' confidentiality, all personal information was anonymized, and their identities were kept confidential. Data were securely stored and made accessible only to the research team.
3. **Respect for Participants:** The research team prioritized participants' autonomy, privacy, and dignity throughout the study. Participants were treated with sensitivity and professionalism, ensuring that their perspectives were valued and respected at every stage of the research process.

By adhering to these ethical principles, the research upheld the integrity of the data-gathering process while prioritizing the well-being and rights of the participants.

CHAPTER IV RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the thematic analysis of the interviews conducted with Filipino Protocol Officers, focusing on their experiences, challenges, and strategies in managing ceremonial events. The analysis reveals critical insights into their preparation processes, cultural navigation strategies, and the challenges they face while adhering to diplomatic protocol.

Table 1. Preparation Process Employed by Filipino Protocol Officer for Ceremonial Events.

THEME	DESCRIPTION	SUB-THEME
Event Planning and	Establishing clear goals, structuring the event, and assigning	Event

Preparation	responsibilities for seamless execution	Conceptualization
	Selecting, inspecting, and organizing the event space to meet logistical and aesthetic requirements.	Venue and Setup Logistics
	Creating a team and assigning specific roles to ensure smooth coordination during the event.	Team and Roles Assignment
Protocol Adherence	Ensuring formality by adhering to event-specific guidelines, cultural norms, and ceremonial requirements.	Checklist Utilization
	Considering cultural differences and respecting traditions to prevent misunderstandings or offenses.	Cultural Awareness
	Arranging national and ceremonial symbols appropriately to maintain decorum and symbolism.	Flag and Symbol Display
Execution on Event Day	Ensuring smooth operations through task delegation, detailed schedules, and proactive problem-solving	Scenario Planning
	Managing VIP arrivals, seating, and ceremonial roles to maintain the event's flow and dignity.	Guest Handling
Inter-Agency Coordination	Facilitating effective collaboration through clear communication and synchronized efforts.	Meetings and Communication
	Develop standard operating procedures and contingency plans for seamless execution.	Standardized Procedures
	The One Country Team Approach (OCTA) highlights the need for inter-agency collaboration in diplomatic events, ensuring that all government bodies work together for smooth execution	OCTA - One Country Team Approach

Event planning and preparation were crucial in ensuring the success of diplomatic events. The process involved a sequence of foundational steps to guarantee that the event proceeded smoothly and achieved its objectives. To comprehensively understand the event planning process, the researchers broke down three subthemes: (1) Event Conceptualization, (2) Venue and Setup Logistics, and (3) Team and Roles assignment.

Establishing clear goals, structuring the event, and assigning responsibilities for seamless execution: According to Deputy Chief Arman Talbo,

"It starts with asking some basic questions: Who will be the guests? What is the purpose of the event? How much is the budget? Where will the event be held?" (DP, LN# 11-13).

Selecting, inspecting, and organizing the event space to meet logistical and aesthetic requirements: Venue preparation is critical, as highlighted by Protocol Officer Jeff Santos:

"We always visit the venue in person to assess distances between entrances, seating areas, holding rooms, and facilities. We also develop a seating plan, considering VIPs and other key guests." (PB, LN# 26-29).

Similarly, Protocol Officer Rhodora Niadas stressed,

"The venue setup involves lights, mics, screens, décor, and flower arrangements." (PJ, LN# 13-18).

Venue and setup logistics were vital to the success of ceremonial and diplomatic events. This involved the careful selection and inspection of the venue to ensure accessibility, security, and adequate space for guests. Key elements included creating a seating plan for VIPs, ensuring proper flow, and setting up necessary technical components such as lighting, microphones, and screens. Aesthetic details, including décor and floral arrangements, also contributed to enhancing the event's atmosphere. Thorough planning in these areas ensured that the event ran smoothly, upheld formality, and met the expectations of all attendees.

Consul Faith Bautista supports this by emphasizing the role of a concept paper:

"Everything begins with a Concept Paper. It details the name of the event, time, place, venue, people involved, objectives, type of audience, program, and resources available." (CG, LN# 7-11).

Event planning for diplomatic ceremonial events followed a similar process of conceptualization but with added complexity

due to the formality and international significance of such occasions. The concept paper ensured that all aspects of the event—from guest lists to diplomatic protocols and ceremonial details—were carefully planned to reflect the importance of international relations and to maintain the decorum of such high-profile occasions. This methodical preparation was essential in ensuring that diplomatic events were executed flawlessly, promoted goodwill, and reinforced the objectives of the host nation.

Assigning responsibilities ensures smooth coordination. Deputy Chief Arman Talbo explained that planning involves

“Constant coordination with different concerned offices, assigning personnel, and planning responsibilities.” (DP, LN# 16-18).

Protocol Officer Jeff Santos also mentioned:

“Creating committees for program, food, and documentation to align expectations and responsibilities.” (PB, LN# 19-21).

Clear team and role assignments were crucial for the smooth execution of events, particularly diplomatic ones. Proper delegation ensured that each task—from program planning to catering and documentation—was managed efficiently, thereby reducing the risk of miscommunication and delays. Studies indicated that well-defined responsibilities led to better coordination, enabling teams to anticipate challenges and respond effectively, ultimately contributing to the overall success of the event.

The research showed that effective event planning and preparation, particularly for diplomatic gatherings, hinged on careful conceptualization, meticulous logistics, and clear role assignments. The process began with defining the event’s goals, objectives, and key details in a concept paper. Venue selection and setup involved assessing accessibility, security, and appropriate arrangements for guests, along with technical and aesthetic considerations. Assigning specific roles within a dedicated team ensured smooth coordination and minimized the risk of errors.

The research further highlighted that clear delegation of tasks improved communication, ensuring that the event proceeded seamlessly and achieved its diplomatic objectives. Overall, meticulous planning and coordination were crucial to the success of high-profile diplomatic ceremonial events.

Protocol Adherence

Adherence to ceremonial protocols signified professionalism and respect for tradition. In diplomatic and official settings, following established procedures and customs demonstrated participants’ commitment to the values long honored within the diplomatic community. This theme comprised three sub-themes: (1) Checklist Utilization, (2) Cultural Awareness, and (3) Flag and Symbol Display.

Checklist Utilization pertains to ensuring formality by adhering to event-specific guidelines, cultural norms, and ceremonial requirements. Using a checklist helps in tracking requirements. Protocol Officer Theresia Bundoc shared, *“I usually have a checklist which I discuss during coordination meetings, so I can double-check and triple-check everything before the actual event.” (MP, LN# 13-15).*

Protocol Officer Jeff Santos also added,

“A checklist is essential to ensure all protocol requirements are met.” (PB, LN# 35-36).

The use of checklists in diplomatic event planning is crucial for ensuring adherence to formality, cultural norms, and ceremonial requirements. As emphasized by Protocol Officer Theresia Bundoc, checklists allow for thorough tracking and verification of all details, ensuring nothing is overlooked. Similarly, Jeff Santos highlighted that a checklist is indispensable in meeting all protocol obligations. This systematic approach helps ensure that every aspect of the event aligns with established guidelines, enhancing its professionalism and smooth execution. Cultural Awareness Considering cultural differences and respecting traditions to prevent misunderstandings or offenses. Understanding cultural nuances prevent potential missteps. Deputy Chief Arman Talbo highlighted this by recounting an incident:

“You can offer a handshake, and then your guest does not shake hands. It can be embarrassing.” (DP, LN# 19-20).

Similarly, Protocol Officer Theresia Bundoc noted, *“It’s important to know the dynamics of guests, their dietary restrictions, and cultural preferences.” (MP, LN# 24-26).*

Understanding and respecting cultural differences were essential in diplomatic events to avoid misunderstandings or offenses. As Deputy Chief Arman Talbo pointed out, failing to recognize cultural norms—such as differing practices around handshakes—could lead to awkward situations. Similarly, Protocol Officer Theresia Bundoc emphasized the importance of being aware of

guests' dietary restrictions and cultural preferences. Such attention to detail ensured respectful interactions and smooth engagement, fostering positive relations and minimizing the risk of cultural faux pas.

Flag and Symbol Display

The appropriate arrangement of national and ceremonial symbols was necessary to maintain decorum and uphold the symbolic significance of diplomatic events. Proper placement of flags and symbols was vital for preserving formality and order. Protocol Officer Rhodora Niadas emphasized this aspect as a crucial element of protocol practice.

"Ensure flags or symbols are displayed correctly," (PJ, LN# 31)

Protocol Officer Rhodora Niadas stressed that the correct placement of flags ensured respect for national and ceremonial emblems. Jeff Santos further emphasized the importance of thoughtful arrangements, including flag positioning and platform setup, as integral components of venue preparation (PB, LN# 33).

The proper display of flags and symbols was essential for maintaining decorum and upholding the symbolic significance of diplomatic events. These careful considerations contributed to the overall professionalism of the event and reinforced the importance of the symbols being displayed.

Research showed that adherence to protocol in diplomatic ceremonial events was crucial for ensuring professionalism and respect for tradition. Key aspects such as checklist utilization, cultural awareness, and flag and symbol display played vital roles in the smooth execution of events. Checklists helped track all requirements and prevent oversights, while cultural sensitivity regarding customs such as handshakes and dietary preferences prevented misunderstandings. Proper flag and symbol placement upheld decorum and reinforced the event's symbolic significance. Collectively, these practices contributed to the success and professionalism of diplomatic events.

Execution on Event Day

On the day of the event, the success of high-profile diplomatic functions relied on meticulous planning and seamless coordination. Every aspect, from timing to logistics, was managed with precision to ensure smooth execution. Effective communication among all parties involved—protocol officers, security personnel, and event staff—was crucial for promptly addressing any issues and preventing disruptions, thereby ensuring that the event proceeded smoothly and professionally.

Scenario Planning

Smooth operations were ensured through task delegation, detailed schedules, and proactive problem-solving. Creating a comprehensive timeline was essential. As Protocol Officer Jeff Santos described, *"We prepare a scenario table listing specific timelines, expected actions, and assignments for each task." This planning allows teams to anticipate challenges and act promptly. (PB, LN# 22-23.*

Ensuring smooth operations during diplomatic events require effective task delegation, clear scheduling, and proactive problem-solving. As Protocol Officer Jeff Santos explained, creating a detailed timeline with specific actions and assignments helped teams anticipate challenges and remain on track. This level of preparation allowed for quick, organized responses to any issues that arose, ensuring the event proceeded seamlessly and efficiently (PB, LN# 8–9).

Guest Handling

Managing VIP arrivals, seating, and ceremonial roles was essential for maintaining the event's flow and dignity. VIP coordination and reception were critical components. As Protocol Officer Jeff Santos stated,

"Ensuring the guest of honor and other VIPs are guided appropriately is crucial, such as being informed of their arrival and led to meet the ambassador." (PB, LN# 29-30).

He also highlighted tasks like

"Opening car doors, handling ceremonial items, and assisting with ribbon cutting." (PB, LN# 66-67)

Effective management of VIP arrivals, seating, and ceremonial roles is essential to maintaining the flow and dignity of an event. Protocol Officer Jeff Santos emphasized that guiding VIPs, such as the guest of honor, ensures they are properly welcomed and informed of their roles. Key tasks, including assisting with ceremonial items and coordinating activities like ribbon-cutting, are vital for preserving the event's order and ensuring a seamless, respectful experience for all attendees. (PB, LN# 30-32)

Inter-Agency Coordination. Collaboration among agencies is essential for ensuring the success of large diplomatic ceremonial events. Government departments and agencies work together to manage security, logistics, and crowd control. This coordinated effort helps mitigate potential issues, ensure safety, and deliver a smooth and dignified experience for all participants. **Meetings and Communication.** Open communication fosters alignment and efficiency. Deputy Chief Arman Talbo noted the importance of "Close interaction and open channels," adding that tools like "Viber groups and group chats" have enhanced coordination. (DP, LN# 204-207)

Protocol Officer Faith Bautista also stressed,

“Organized meetings with clear objectives and recommendations on how to move forward are essential.” (CG, LN# 69-70)

Standardized Procedures. Establishing guidelines and contingency plans reduces risks. Protocol Officer Rhodora Niadas emphasized developing

“Standard operating procedures” and “contingency plans” to ensure readiness for unexpected challenges. (PJ, LN# 56-58)

One Country Team Approach (OCTA) Highlights the need for interagency collaboration in diplomatic events, ensuring that all government bodies work together for smooth execution. According to Protocol Officer Jeff Santos,

“You are making sure that your country is in order. That your country looks good in the outside world. That is basically your goal as the protocol. And, if there are a lot of events like that, and our foreign counterparts are there, we must give all the best. We shouldn't be blaming each other. It should be a one country team approach. OCTA. It's still OCTA. Even in our country, it's still OCTA. Because usually they say OCTA, a country team approach, is a term we use when we are in the embassy.

Even if we are in different agencies, if there is an OCTA, meaning, we work as one. Sometimes, I don't know why, sometimes in the Philippines, the people in the government And, when that happens, it boils down to the preparations. Sometimes, they don't give enough information. That's why there are problems with logistics. So, there are times like that. I know these things because I hear them. But I guess that is my recommendation. To make sure that everybody is really on the same page. You must really insist or reiterate to everyone that what we are doing is for the country. It's for the image of our Republic of the Philippines. That's all I can say.” (PB, LN# 83-85)

The research shows that effective inter-agency coordination is crucial for smooth diplomatic events. Key factors include open communication, as noted by Deputy Chief Arman Talbo and Protocol Officer Faith Bautista, who emphasized the use of tools like group chats and organized meetings to align efforts. Additionally, standardized procedures and contingency plans, highlighted by Protocol Officer Rhodora Niadas, reduce risks. The One Country Team Approach (OCTA), emphasized by Protocol Officer Jeff Santos, underscores the importance of unity and collaboration across agencies to ensure a seamless, well-coordinated event.

The table 1 results shows that preparation processes for diplomatic events in the Philippines are centered around a combination of clear planning, strict protocol adherence, and collaborative coordination across various government agencies. Protocol officers follow a systematic approach to event planning, starting with conceptualization, where clear goals, timelines, and responsibilities are set. This foundational step is crucial in ensuring that the event's objectives are met while maintaining a high level of professionalism.

The use of checklists and adherence to cultural norms and ceremonial protocols ensures that every detail, from flag placements to seating arrangements, aligns with international standards and the diplomatic significance of the event. Cultural sensitivity is emphasized to avoid potential misunderstandings, while proper flag and symbols uphold national pride and decorum. These processes are essential for creating an environment where all participants feel respected, and the event's prestige is maintained.

On the day of the event, scenario planning and task delegation ensure that logistics and timing are managed efficiently, allowing teams to anticipate challenges and act swiftly to resolve any issues. Key roles like VIP handling are carefully planned to maintain the event's flow and dignity, ensuring that important guests are properly received and guided throughout the ceremony.

The research further highlights the importance of inter-agency coordination. Effective communication through tools like group chats, regular meetings, and shared objectives helps align efforts between different departments, minimizing the risk of miscommunication. The One Country Team Approach (OCTA) fosters collaboration, ensuring that all agencies, regardless of their individual roles, work together toward the same goal: the successful execution of a diplomatic event.

The results show that thorough planning, adherence to protocol, and cross-agency collaboration are fundamental to the success of diplomatic events. These strategies not only ensure smooth event execution but also reflect the professionalism and international reputation of the Philippines, enhancing its standing on the global stage. By implementing these processes, protocol officers contribute to creating events that align with national interests and uphold the country's diplomatic values.

Table 2. Strategies to navigate cultural nuances and international customs.

THEME	DESCRIPTION	SUB-THEME
Understanding Cultural Nuances	Extensive research on traditions, etiquette, and cultural norms, including dietary restrictions and religious practices.	Research and Planning: Extensive research on traditions, etiquette, and cultural norms, including dietary restrictions and religious practices
	Consulting experts and adapting protocols based on guest requirements to avoid cultural missteps.	Adaptation and Consultation

	Mindfulness of prohibited items, greetings, and interactions during the event.	Cultural Sensitivity in Execution
Training and Continuous Learning	Participation in workshops, seminars, and protocol-specific training programs.	Formal Training
	Observing veteran protocol officers and taking lead roles with mentorship.	Learning from Experience
	Utilizing diplomatic handbooks, cultural awareness programs, and academic coursework.	Use of Resources
Addressing Cultural Misunderstandings	Misunderstanding body language, handshake etiquette, and gestures	Misinterpreted Gestures
	Addressing issues like serving inappropriate food or wearing incorrect clothes	Dietary and Attire Missteps
	Managing tensions arising from differing political views or traditions	Political and Personal Differences

Understanding Cultural Nuances

This theme highlights the critical importance of cultural awareness and sensitivity in diplomatic events, especially when dealing with international guests and diverse traditions. Protocol officers in the Philippines emphasize the need for careful research, consultation with experts, and continuous training to avoid cultural missteps, ensure respect for local customs, and maintain diplomatic decorum. Research and Planning. Extensive research on traditions, etiquette, and cultural norms, including dietary restrictions and religious practices. Protocol Officer Rhodora Niadas:

"It requires research and planning. Conduct research, study the traditions and etiquette or cultures of the country. Pay attention to greetings, gestures, dining, customs, and attire." (PJ, LN# 26-28)

Consul Faith Bautista:

"It is best to take note of practices and preferences of sides involved. There won't be any problem if there are no conflicts, but if there are, it would be best to talk to both parties, either separately or together, and solicit ideas and guidance from experts and/or facilitators." (CG, LN# 23-26)

Protocol Officer Jeff Santos:

"It's important to understand prohibited items and cultural sensitivities. For example, in Muslim-majority countries, halal food options are preferred. We also need to respect cultural norms regarding handshakes and greetings." (PB, LN# 36-39)

"Research and Planning" provides strategies to address the challenge of avoiding cultural misunderstandings in diplomatic events. Protocol officers should prioritize in-depth research on cultural norms, dietary needs, and etiquette to anticipate and prevent conflicts. By considering individual preferences and consulting with experts, when necessary, they can ensure the event runs smoothly and respectfully. These proactive measures in planning help to eliminate misunderstandings and foster positive interactions during diplomatic events.

Adaptation and Consultation

Consulting experts and adapting protocols based on guest requirements to avoid cultural missteps. Consul Faith Bautista: *"When all has been done, and some things did not go as planned, one should just take it as a learning experience." (CG, LN# 27-*

28)

Protocol Officer Theresia Bundoc:

"Nuances during ceremonial events while adhering to diplomatic protocol? Usually, as a protocol officer, you must know the dynamics of the guests. For example, if the guests are from an Islamic country, you must know their dietary restrictions, schedule of their prayer, and other matters so that you will not offend them for the sake of having an event." (MP, LN# 19-22)

"Adaptation and Consultation" provides a solution to managing cultural differences in diplomatic events. Protocol officers must remain flexible and consult experts to adjust plans according to the needs of international guests. By understanding cultural nuances, such as dietary preferences and prayer schedules, they can preempt and address potential issues. This approach ensures smooth and respectful interactions, minimizing the risk of cultural misunderstandings during events. Cultural Sensitivity in Execution. Mindfulness of prohibited items, greetings, and interactions during the event. Protocol Officer Jeff Santos:

"We need to respect cultural norms regarding handshakes and greetings. Adapting to local customs is essential when working in different countries." (PB, LN# 38-39).

Deputy Chief Arman Talbo:

"You must be mindful of the higher observance. Always make sure to ask the counterparts." (DP, LN#26).

"Cultural Sensitivity in Execution" presents strategies for ensuring cultural norms are respected during diplomatic events. Jeff Santos stresses the importance of adapting to local customs, especially in greetings and interactions, while Arman Talbo highlights the need to understand the cultural significance of certain practices. By consulting with counterparts and following proper protocols, protocol officers can successfully manage cultural differences, prevent errors and ensuring smooth, respectful events.

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Training and Continuous Learning emphasize the importance of staying updated on cultural practices, diplomatic protocols, and evolving event management trends. Regular training allows protocol officers to adapt to new challenges, enhance their problem-solving skills, and ensure smooth, respectful interactions during ceremonial events. Formal Training. Participation in workshops, seminars, and protocol-specific training programs. Protocol Officer Rhodora Niadas:

"It involves continuous learning: attend workshops, seminars, travel, or engage with international communities to gain experience of cultural norms and values." (PJ, LN# 31-33).

Consul Faith Bautista:

"Training on Protocol, Etiquette, and Diplomatic Practices. Training on Cultural Awareness of Various Cultures/Countries. Read, read, and read." (CG, LN# 31-32).

Protocol Officer Jeff Santos:

"Formal training provided by the Office of Protocol in Manila is a valuable foundation. Academic coursework in cross-cultural communication is also helpful." (PB, LN# 43-45)

Cultural Sensitivity in Execution outlines essential strategies for respecting cultural norms during diplomatic events. Jeff Santos emphasizes the need to adjust to local customs, especially in greetings and interactions, while Arman Talbo stresses the importance of understanding the cultural significance behind specific practices. By consulting counterparts and following the correct protocols, protocol officers can manage cultural differences effectively, avoiding mistakes and ensuring respectful, smooth interactions.

Learning from Experience. Observing veteran protocol officers and taking lead roles with mentorship. Protocol Officer Theresia Bundoc:

"When I entered the Protocol Office, I'm so grateful that I was surrounded by veterans of the industry. What our superiors did was to let us join them from meetings to actual events so that we can observe the know-how of the events. Then at a certain time and due to the demand of work, they let us take the lead role while they are behind observing our abilities." (MP, LN# 27-31).

Deputy Chief Arman Talbo:

"My personal experience that impacts the diplomatic protocol or preparation system, you can never over-prepare. And you can never let your guards down. Because even if you have good preparation, you should always be prepared for any incident that happens outside of the law. Always check and double-check because there are always other things happening." (DP, LN# 191-197).

Learning from Experience emphasizes mentorship and hands-on learning in protocol work. Theresia Bundoc highlights the value of observing veterans and gradually taking on leadership roles.

Arman Talbo stresses the importance of thorough preparation and adaptability to unforeseen challenges, underscoring that experience is essential in mastering diplomatic protocol. Use of Resources. Utilizing diplomatic handbooks, cultural awareness programs, and academic coursework. Protocol Officer Jeff Santos:

"The diplomatic handbook on protocol is a key resource, and it's regularly updated. Learning from experienced colleagues and superiors is also essential." (PB, LN#43-45)

Deputy Chief Arman Talbo:

"DFA, online learnings, manual, and trainings – observe bago bigyan ng task." (DP, LN# 59)

Learning from Experience provides strategies for enhancing diplomatic protocol expertise. Learning from veteran professionals and progressively taking on more responsibilities allows protocol officers to gain practical knowledge. Emphasizing thorough preparation and adaptability enables officers to handle unexpected situations. These approaches help officers refine their skills, improve problem-solving, and navigate diplomatic events with greater confidence and efficiency.

Addressing Cultural Misunderstandings stresses the importance of cultural awareness in diplomatic events. Protocol officers must recognize and respect different cultural norms to avoid misunderstandings. By staying adaptable and informed, they ensure respectful interactions and uphold diplomatic relations.

Misinterpreted Gestures. Misunderstanding body language, handshake etiquette, and gestures. Consul Faith Bautista mentions,

"One must always think with their feet. Quick decisions are important," suggesting that responding to misinterpreted gestures swiftly and diplomatically is essential. (CG, LN#41)

Protocol Officer Theresia Bundoc adds that even minor errors, such as addressing guests with incorrect honorifics, should be corrected discreetly to avoid embarrassment. (MP, LN# 37-38)

Misinterpreted Gestures provides strategies for handling misunderstandings in body language, handshakes, and etiquette. To prevent such issues, protocol officers must ensure thorough cultural training and quick, diplomatic responses to correct mistakes. Addressing minor errors discreetly, such as incorrect honorifics, helps maintain respect and professionalism. These strategies ensure smooth interactions and uphold diplomatic protocol during events.

Dietary and Attire Missteps. Addressing issues like serving inappropriate food or wearing incorrect clothes.

Protocol Officer Rhodora Niadas:

"Examples of cultural misunderstandings include dietary missteps (serving pork to Muslims), clothing and attire (wearing casual during formal events), and inappropriate gifts." (PJ, LN#66-67)

Protocol Officer Jeff Santos:

"The biggest challenge is often language barriers. Not everyone is fluent in English, and terms like RSVP or dress codes can be unfamiliar." (PB, LN# 48- 49)

Deputy Chief Arman Talbo:

"Serving wine (blueberry wine if di nainom yung guest) and greetings can be misinterpreted." (DP, LN# 66)

Political and Personal Differences. Managing tensions arising from differing political views or traditions.

Consul Faith Bautista:

"Western practices vs. Asian customs and traditions. Political tensions (examples include warring countries such as Iran-Iraq, the Sabah issue for the Philippines, etc.) and personal differences." (CG, LN# 35-37)

Protocol Officer Jeff Santos:

"Managing these tensions requires careful diplomacy, clear communication, and a focus on the overarching objectives of the event." (PB, LN# 74-75)

Political and Personal Differences focus on strategies for managing tensions from differing political views or traditions. Faith Bautista points out conflicts like Western vs. Asian customs and geopolitical issues. Jeff Santos stresses that careful diplomacy, clear communication, and prioritizing event objectives are key to handling such tensions. These strategies help ensure respectful, productive diplomatic events despite political or personal difference. The findings from Problem 2 provide a comprehensive strategy is to ensure that diplomatic events are executed smoothly, without cultural misunderstandings, missteps, or tensions, while maintaining professionalism and respect for all involved.

One of the core strategies for addressing potential issues during diplomatic events is thorough research and preparation. Protocol officers must invest time in understanding the cultural, dietary, and social norms of the guests they will be hosting. This includes verifying any dietary restrictions (such as halal or kosher food) and confirming dress codes to avoid the risk of offering inappropriate food or attire. By preparing in advance, officers can anticipate potential missteps such as serving culturally inappropriate food or clothing and mitigate the risk of offending guests. This proactive approach helps ensure the event runs smoothly, with no unintended cultural faux pas. Additionally, research allows officers to better manage the expectations of guests, preventing miscommunications and making the event more successful overall.

The ability to adapt and seek expert consultation is another crucial strategy in managing cultural differences and ensuring that diplomatic events are tailored to the specific needs of international guests. Protocol officers are encouraged to remain flexible and adaptable, particularly when dealing with last-minute changes or unexpected situations. This is particularly important in a diplomatic setting, where sudden changes or conflicts in expectations can arise. Faith Bautista emphasizes that challenges should be viewed as opportunities for growth, encouraging officers to be quick thinkers and adapt to unexpected circumstances.

Consulting cultural experts is also vital, as it helps officers navigate specific cultural nuances, such as local dietary restrictions or religious observances, ensuring that no inadvertent offense is caused. This strategy not only helps prevent misunderstandings but also fosters an environment of mutual respect and understanding between different cultures.

Ensuring cultural sensitivity during the actual execution of the event is another key strategy. This includes adapting to local customs and practices, particularly in sensitive areas such as greetings, dress codes, and dining etiquette. Jeff Santos highlights the importance of adjusting greetings and interactions based on the cultural context of the guests. Arman Talbo further emphasizes understanding the significance of practices that may vary from one culture to another. By consulting with local counterparts and adhering to established cultural norms, protocol officers can prevent cultural missteps, thereby creating an atmosphere of respect and goodwill. A strong understanding of cultural expectations ensures smooth interactions and fosters an environment conducive to productive diplomacy.

Experience plays a significant role in mastering diplomatic protocol. Theresia Bundoc and Arman Talbo both advocate for the value of mentorship and hands-on learning, allowing less experienced protocol officers to gradually take on more responsibility. By observing and learning from seasoned professionals, officers can refine their skills and gain a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in managing diplomatic events.

Additionally, gaining practical experience allows officers to learn how to handle unforeseen challenges, further enhancing their ability to adapt to diverse situations. This continuous learning process is crucial for developing the expertise needed to navigate complex diplomatic events with confidence and skill.

Effective communication is a constant theme in all the strategies discussed, underscoring its importance in overcoming cultural and political differences. Whether dealing with language barriers, political tensions, or personal differences, clear and respectful communication is essential for ensuring smooth interactions. Protocol officers are encouraged to maintain open channels of communication, not only with guests but also with colleagues and counterparts, to ensure all expectations are aligned and potential issues are addressed proactively. Jeff Santos points out that language barriers, for example, can often hinder smooth communication and create misunderstandings. Addressing these barriers through careful preparation,

translation services, and culturally aware communication, protocol officers can reduce the risk of diplomatic missteps. Additionally, non-verbal communication, such as body language and gestures, must align with cultural norms to avoid offending guests or creating awkward situations.

These findings underscore that effective diplomatic protocol hinges on a balance of preparation, adaptability, cultural awareness, and experience. Protocol officers must be proactive in researching cultural norms, remain flexible in the face of unforeseen challenges, and continuously enhance their skills through mentorship and real-world experience. Effective communication, both verbal and non-verbal, is vital to facilitate smooth interactions and minimize misunderstandings. By implementing these strategies, protocol officers can navigate the complexities of international diplomacy with greater confidence, ensuring that diplomatic events are conducted with respect, cultural sensitivity, and success.

This study also makes a valuable contribution to the broader field of international diplomacy. Although it focuses on Filipino protocol officers, the strategies identified are universally applicable across countries engaged in global diplomacy. These methods can be adapted to improve the management of diplomatic events, particularly when working with diverse cultures and international customs.

Furthermore, the research enhances event management practices by offering strategies for handling crises and unforeseen challenges. Understanding how protocol officers anticipate, adapt to, and respond to these issues provides valuable insights for improving the overall success and effectiveness of international diplomatic events.

Table 3. *Challenges faced by Filipino Protocol Officers in adhering to protocol during ceremonial events.*

THEME	DESCRIPTION	SUB-THEME
Execution Challenges	Filipino Protocol Officers face unique personal challenges such as stress, workload, and conflicting priorities during ceremonial events.	Role-Specific Obstacles
	Balancing individual responsibilities with event demands under high pressure.	Stress and Workload Challenge
	Protocol Officers face communication gaps which can hinder effective communication during ceremonial event personal challenges such as stress, workload, and conflicting priorities during ceremonial events.	Communication Gap
Protocol Conflict	Protocol Officers navigate conflicting diplomatic traditions, such as flag placement or ceremonial customs, to ensure strict compliance with diplomatic procedures	Protocol Breaches
	Protocol Officers must remain adaptable when unforeseen circumstances, like unexpected arrivals or logistical issues arise	Unforeseen Events
	Protocol Officers handle sensitive issues discreetly to avoid negative attention or public relations challenges, safeguarding the event's purpose and diplomatic reputation.	Media Presence

Execution Challenges are the unique personal and professional challenges that Filipino Protocol Officers encounter while executing their duties during ceremonial events. These challenges can significantly impact their performance and the overall success of the events. (1) Role-Specific Obstacle, (2) Stress and Workload Challenge, and (3) Miscommunication Gap.

Role-Specific Obstacle. Protocol Officers often face specific obstacles tied to their roles, which include navigating complex protocols and ensuring that all ceremonial aspects adhere to established guidelines.

According to Protocol Officer Jeff Santos

"Challenges can be many, some controllable and some not. For example, catering delays or unforeseen guest arrivals require

flexibility and adaptability. Maintaining a smooth flow of the program and ensuring guest comfort are always priorities." (PB, LN# 62-65).

Protocol Officer Jeff Santos highlights that the role demands a high level of adaptability to address both controllable and uncontrollable factors, such as catering delays or unexpected guest arrivals. His emphasis on flexibility underscores the need for quick problem-solving skills to maintain the event's flow and prioritize guest comfort. This reflects the dynamic nature of protocol work, where officers must balance meticulous planning with the ability to handle real-time disruptions gracefully. Stress and Workload Challenge. The demands of balancing individual responsibilities with the expectations of the event can lead to overwhelming stress and an increased workload. Consul Faith Baustista said:

"One must always think with their feet. Quick decisions are important. One should also always maintain their composure. Grand under pressure. Panicking will not help but will add to the already difficult situation." (CG, LN # 40-42).

According to Deputy Chief Arman Talbo

"Long hours... the way you walk, the way you stand, the way you wear your clothes, even the shoes you wear matter. Fast but not in a hurry. So, my advice is to have the right mind frame, the will to learn, and the strength to endure long hours." (DP, LN # 166-171)

Consul Faith Baustista and Deputy Chief Arman Talbo both highlight the critical need for composure and endurance in managing the stress and workload of protocol duties. Baustista emphasizes quick decision-making and remaining calm under pressure, while Talbo underscores the physical and mental demands of the role, advising a strong mindset and readiness for long hours. Both perspectives underscore the importance of resilience and preparation in navigating high-pressure situations effectively. Communication Gap. Referring to a lack of clear and effective communication between parties involved in such events. This gap can occur due to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, or differences in cultural norms and expectations. It can lead to confusion, inefficiencies, or even diplomatic faux pas during the ceremonial proceedings.

Protocol Officer Rhodora Niadas said

"It requires thinking, adaptability, and thorough understanding. Anticipate challenges, create a detailed plan, and inform other parties about any changes to avoid confusion." (PJ, LN # 45-51)

According to Protocol Officer Theresia Bundoc

"The first thing I do is coordinate with my superior, giving recommendations on how to resolve issues, then coordinate with counterparts to agree on a solution." (MP, LN # 45-48)

Protocol Officers Rhodora Niadas and Theresia Bundoc emphasize proactive communication to bridge gaps during events. Niadas highlights the importance of detailed planning and clear updates to prevent confusion, while Bundoc focuses on coordination with superiors and counterparts to resolve issues collaboratively. Both approaches stress adaptability and teamwork as key to overcoming communication challenges in ceremonial settings.

Protocol Conflict arises when different diplomatic traditions clash during a ceremonial event. This can happen when two or more countries have different customs or protocols. When protocol conflict arises, protocol officers must make decisions that uphold the event's integrity while respecting the diverse customs involved. This can be a challenging task, as it requires careful diplomacy and a deep understanding of different cultural norms.

Protocol Breaches. Navigating conflicting diplomatic traditions presents another layer of complexity. Protocol Officers must ensure strict compliance with diplomatic procedures, which can involve reconciling different customs related to flag placement or other ceremonial practices. Deputy Chief Arman Talbo

"Sometimes, there are conflicting protocols. For example, the protocol of the flag. Here in the Philippines, the Philippine flag should always be on the left side... There are ways to minimize these things." (DP, LN # 77-80)

Protocol Officer Theresia Bundo said

"If the challenge is minor such as wrong honorifics were printed on the place card, immediately replace it and apologize." (MP,

LN # 38-39)

Emphasized by Protocol Officer Rhodora Niadas

"Be tactful when addressing protocol breaches or resolving conflicts." (PJ, LN # 51-52)

Protocol breaches require diplomatic tact and adaptability to maintain the integrity of the event while respecting diverse traditions. Deputy Chief Arman Talbo underscores the complexity of conflicting customs, offering creative solutions like alternating flag placements. Theresia Bundoc emphasizes addressing minor errors promptly and professionally, while Rhodora Niadas highlights the importance of tactful communication in resolving conflicts. Together, these insights demonstrate the balance between strict adherence to protocol and flexibility in addressing challenges.

Unforeseen Events. Unexpected occurrences that can disrupt or impact the planned proceedings. These events can range from minor disruptions to major incidents that require immediate attention and adaptation. Protocol Officers must remain flexible and responsive to unforeseen circumstances, such as unexpected arrivals or logistical challenges. Deputy Chief Arman Talbo said

"Your plan is 100%, but something will always go wrong... Rain is unexpected only because you didn't anticipate it. You need contingency plans like umbrellas or a covered meeting area." (DP, LN # 89)

Protocol Officer Jeff Santos said

"Unexpected guest arrivals require discreet seating adjustments. Maintaining control over the sound system and ensuring the national anthem is played correctly is crucial." (PB, LN # 68-70)

Unforeseen events highlight the importance of adaptability and preparedness in protocol management. Talbo emphasizes the value of contingency planning for logistical challenges, while Santos underscores discreet adjustments and maintains control over key details to ensure smooth proceedings. Media Presence. This aspect focuses on how Protocol Officers manage media interactions and public relations during events. Media presence can amplify certain aspects of the event while overlooking others, potentially skewing the public perception of the diplomatic proceedings. Ensuring that the media accurately and fairly represent the event is essential to prevent misinterpretations or miscommunications.

Protocol Officer Rhodora Niadas emphasizes "Handle media presence carefully and adapt without compromising protocol." (PJ, LN # 59)

Media presence requires careful management to ensure accurate and fair representation of events. Niadas stresses the need for adaptability, highlighting the importance of balancing media interactions while maintaining strict adherence to protocol to prevent misinterpretations and miscommunications.

The table shows the various challenges Filipino Protocol Officers face in adhering to protocol during ceremonial events. These challenges, categorized into themes such as Execution Challenges, Role-Specific Obstacles, Stress and Workload Challenges, Communication Gaps, Protocol Conflicts, Unforeseen Events, and Media Presence, highlight the complexities involved in successfully managing diplomatic ceremonies. The results of the analyses provide insights into how officers can address these challenges through adaptability, preparation, and effective communication.

One prominent theme that emerges from the table is Execution Challenges, particularly under the sub-theme of Role-Specific Obstacles. Protocol Officers must balance individual responsibilities with the demands of the event, which can be overwhelming. Officers, such as Protocol Officer Jeff Santos, emphasized that navigating both controllable and uncontrollable factors like catering delays or unexpected guest arrivals requires flexibility and adaptability. These findings suggest that success in the role depends not only on the ability to follow established guidelines but also on officers' capacity to respond quickly and adaptively to evolving situations. This highlights the importance of preparation and situational awareness to maintain a smooth event flow despite challenges.

Another crucial theme is Stress and Workload Challenge, with the sub-theme of Stress Management. As detailed by Consul Faith Baustista and Deputy Chief Arman Talbo, the stress of managing high-pressure situations requires composure and endurance. Maintaining a calm demeanor and making quick decisions is essential in protocol management. These results underscore the importance of emotional resilience and mental clarity, which can be developed through training and experience. Protocol Officers must remain focused, which helps in managing the event's demands without letting stress hinder their performance. By cultivating these qualities, officers can handle the heavy workload and stress that come with managing

such high-profile events.

Communication Gaps also play a key role in the challenges faced by Protocol Officers, as highlighted under the sub-theme of Proactive Communication. Miscommunication can result in confusion and inefficiencies, as shown in the experiences of Protocol Officers Rhodora Niadas and Theresia Bundoc. They stressed the importance of anticipating challenges, preparing in advance, and ensuring all parties involved are aligned and informed. By fostering clear, proactive communication, officers can prevent misunderstandings and streamline coordination, ultimately ensuring that the event proceeds smoothly. This proactive approach also helps address any unexpected changes quickly, reducing the chance of errors during the event.

The sub-theme of *Protocol Breaches* highlighted the challenge of navigating conflicting diplomatic traditions. Filipino Protocol Officers were required to reconcile differing customs and practices—such as flag placement—to ensure strict adherence to diplomatic procedures while respecting the traditions of various nations. As noted by Deputy Chief Arman Talbo and Protocol Officer Theresia Bundoc, resolving protocol breaches required both tact and efficiency. Officers had to act swiftly to address minor issues, such as the incorrect use of honorifics, while maintaining the integrity of the ceremony. This underscored the need for cultural sensitivity and a deep understanding of diverse diplomatic practices to uphold the standards of the event and minimize the impact of any breaches.

The theme of *Unforeseen Events* revealed how unexpected disruptions—such as adverse weather conditions or last-minute guest arrival could potentially derail a planned event. Protocol Officer Jeff Santos emphasized the necessity of having contingency plans in place to manage such situations effectively. The ability to remain flexible and prepared for unforeseen circumstances ensured that Protocol Officers could maintain the event's flow without compromising its objectives. Having backup solutions, whether for seating arrangements or logistical issues—was critical to retaining control over the event when unexpected challenges arose.

Finally, Media Presence introduces the challenge of managing media interactions during ceremonial events. Protocol Officer Rhodora Niadas highlighted the importance of handling media attention carefully to ensure accurate representation of the event. Given that the media can shape public perception, managing media presence without compromising protocol is essential. The results stress the need for officers to remain adaptable to media interactions while preserving the diplomatic integrity of the event.

To effectively handle the challenges they faced, Filipino Protocol Officers combined adaptability, effective communication, stress management, cultural sensitivity, and thorough preparation. The study revealed that these key qualities were essential for overcoming obstacles during ceremonial events and ensuring smooth proceedings. Adaptability was crucial in managing unexpected disruptions, such as sudden changes in guest arrivals or logistical issues. Protocol Officers, including Jeff Santos, emphasized the importance of flexibility and the need for contingency plans to minimize the impact of unforeseen events. Effective communication was vital in preventing misunderstandings and ensuring smooth coordination among all parties involved. As highlighted by Rhodora Niadas and Theresia Bundoc, proactive communication helped bridge information gaps and ensured that everyone remained aligned throughout the event.

Stress management allows officers to maintain composure under pressure, ensuring the event runs smoothly despite high-stress situations. According to Consul Faith Baustista and Deputy Chief Arman Talbo, staying calm and focused helps officers respond effectively to unexpected challenges without escalating the situation. Cultural sensitivity is also critical when managing differing diplomatic traditions, such as flag placements or honorifics. Officers must handle these situations with tact to uphold diplomatic integrity. Lastly, thorough preparation ensures that all aspects of the event are accounted for, reducing the likelihood of disruptions.

The study showed that Filipino Protocol Officers effectively navigated the complexities of ceremonial events by developing essential skills such as adaptability, effective communication, stress management, cultural sensitivity, and thorough preparation. These skills enabled officers to respond swiftly to unexpected disruptions, communicate efficiently with all involved parties, manage high-pressure situations, and respect cultural differences. Moreover, through careful planning and preparation, officers were able to prevent potential issues from escalating and resolve problems as they arose, ensuring the smooth execution and integrity of the event. By continually honing these abilities, Protocol Officers contributed to the long-term success of diplomatic events while preserving positive diplomatic relations.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The study draws on interviews with Protocol Officers and Deputy Chiefs, highlighting key insights into their roles and the complexities of diplomatic protocol.

Filipino Protocol Officers employed a systematic approach to preparing for ceremonial events. They began with a clear conceptualization of the event, defining its goals and objectives and assigning responsibilities accordingly. This process included the creation of a detailed concept paper outlining the event's purpose, timeline, venue, and key participants. Meticulous attention was given to the venue and setup logistics to ensure that the event space met both logistical and aesthetic

requirements, including seating arrangements, technical components, and décor. A dedicated team was assembled, with specific roles assigned to ensure smooth coordination and efficient execution.

Adhering to protocol is paramount in diplomatic events, signifying professionalism and respect for tradition. Protocol Officers utilize checklists to ensure compliance with event-specific guidelines, cultural norms, and ceremonial requirements. They emphasize cultural awareness to prevent misunderstandings and offenses. Proper flag and symbol display is also crucial, maintaining decorum and symbolic significance.

Scenario planning ensured smooth operations through effective task delegation, detailed scheduling, and proactive problem-solving. Managing VIP arrivals, seating arrangements, and ceremonial roles was critical to maintaining the flow and dignity of the event. Collaboration among government agencies was essential for the success of large-scale diplomatic events. The "One Country Team Approach" (OCTA) emphasized unity and inter-agency cooperation, ensuring a seamless and well-coordinated event.

Understanding and respecting cultural differences were crucial to avoiding misunderstandings or offenses. Protocol Officers conducted extensive research on traditions, etiquette, and cultural norms, including dietary restrictions and religious practices. They consulted with experts and adapted protocols based on guest requirements. Cultural sensitivity in executions such as mindfulness of prohibited items, appropriate greetings, and respectful interactions—was essential.

Protocol Officers were highly aware of potential cultural misunderstandings, including misinterpreted gestures, dietary and attire-related missteps, and political or personal sensitivities. They employed strategic measures to prevent and address such issues, emphasizing clear communication, cultural awareness, and prompt, diplomatic responses.

Protocol Officers faced unique personal and professional challenges while executing their duties. These challenges included role-specific obstacles, stress and workload, communication gaps, protocol conflicts, unforeseen events, and media presence. Training, mentorship, and real-world experience were crucial for developing the skills and knowledge necessary to manage diplomatic events effectively. Formal training provided a foundational understanding, while practical experience, professional networking, and continuous learning were essential for navigating the complexities of diplomatic protocol.

CONCLUSION

This research investigated the roles of Filipino Protocol Officers during ceremonial events, with a focus on their preparation processes and strategies for navigating cultural nuances and challenges. The study drew on interviews with Protocol Officers and Deputy Chiefs, highlighting key insights into their responsibilities and the complexities involved in diplomatic protocol.

Protocol Officers played a crucial role in ensuring the success of diplomatic events, representing the Philippines professionally on the global stage. Their dedication, adaptability, and commitment to upholding diplomatic protocol contributed to fostering positive international relations.

The research revealed that Filipino Protocol Officers faced a multifaceted set of challenges, including navigating complex protocols, managing stress and workload, bridging communication gaps, resolving protocol conflicts, adapting to unforeseen events, and managing media presence.

The study's findings illuminated the importance of adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and effective communication in addressing these challenges. Protocol Officers were expected to think on their feet, adapt to unexpected situations, and maintain composure under pressure. They required a deep understanding of diverse cultural norms and traditions to avoid misunderstandings and ensure respectful interactions with international guests. Clear and open communication was essential for coordinating with various agencies, resolving conflicts, and ensuring that all parties involved were informed and aligned.

While officers demonstrated dedication and adaptability, they continued to face unique challenges, including high levels of stress, demanding workloads, navigating conflicting traditions, and managing media visibility. Ultimately, the research underscored the critical role of Filipino Protocol Officers in fostering positive international relations and enhancing the Philippines' standing on the global stage.

Overall, Filipino Protocol Officers were well-versed in diplomatic etiquette, communication protocols, and crisis management, enabling them to prevent, resolve, and respond effectively to various scenarios that arose during diplomatic ceremonial events.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the researchers recommended several strategies, supported by statements from the respondents, to address the challenges identified in the study. First, enhancing training programs was deemed essential. These programs should have focused on cultural sensitivity and crisis management, incorporating real-world scenarios and role-playing exercises to equip Protocol Officers with the skills necessary to manage complex situations during diplomatic events. Second, regular workshops were recommended, in which seasoned diplomats shared their insights and best practices with junior officers. Such initiatives promoted knowledge transfer across ranks and fostered a culture of continuous learning within the diplomatic community, ultimately enhancing the capabilities of all officers.

Third, the establishment of formal mechanisms for inter-agency collaboration was considered crucial. Government agencies

involved in diplomatic events were encouraged to adopt shared digital platforms to provide real-time updates on event planning and execution, thereby improving communication and coordination among stakeholders. Fourth, the integration of technological tools—such as project management software and mobile applications designed for event planning—streamlined communication among team members, enhanced collaboration, and increased overall efficiency during preparations. Finally, the implementation of feedback mechanisms allowed Protocol Officers to share their perspectives on training programs and suggest improvements based on their experiences.

Aspiring Filipino Protocol Officers

Future Protocol Officers were encouraged to develop a strong network of contacts within the diplomatic community, as this was essential for navigating the complexities of international relations and ensuring the success of ceremonial events. They were also urged to embrace a spirit of continuous learning and improvement, given that the field of diplomatic protocol was constantly evolving. Aspiring Protocol Officers were trained to be effective communicators, both verbally and non-verbally. This included training in public speaking, presentation skills, and the use of non-verbal cues to convey messages effectively. By developing these competencies, future Filipino Protocol Officers were better prepared to face the challenges of the 21st century and to represent the Philippines on the global stage with confidence and professionalism.

Future Researchers

It is essential to emphasize several key areas that can significantly enhance the field. First, cultural sensitivity training should be prioritized to ensure that officers are well-equipped to navigate the diverse backgrounds of individuals they interact with. Additionally, compiling a comprehensive guide of best practices specific to the Filipino context, supported by case studies of successful protocol management, would be invaluable. The impact of technology on the efficiency of Protocol officers should also be explored, particularly using event management software and digital communication tools. Establishing networks among protocol officers can foster a community of practice, allowing for the sharing of experiences and solutions.

Furthermore, the research focused on aligning local practices with international standards, particularly in diplomatic and corporate settings. Investigating the role of protocol in reflecting and promoting Filipino culture and identity on the global stage was identified as another vital area of study. The development of specialized training programs tailored to the skills necessary for effective protocol management was also recommended. Evaluating the effectiveness of current protocol practices and their impact on diplomatic relations and event success provided critical insights. Additionally, examining the representation of different genders and ethnicities within the field highlighted how diversity enhanced protocol practices.

By addressing these areas, future studies could better align the practices of Filipino Protocol Officers with international standards and the evolving demands of diplomatic and corporate environments. This comprehensive approach ultimately contributed to the ongoing development and effectiveness of protocol management in the Philippines.

76 **##ID##**: What suggestions can you offer to newcomers in the field to navigate the complexities
77 of diplomatic protocol effectively?

78 **##PB##**: Newcomers should be prepared for the complexity and demands of protocol work. It's
79 important to be open-minded and learn from experienced colleagues. Protocol is a calling that
80 requires passion and dedication.

81 **##ID##**: What recommendations can you offer for improving inter-agency coordination during
82 the planning and execution of diplomatic ceremonies?

83 **##PB##**: You are making sure that your country is in order. That your country looks good in the
84 outside world. That is basically your goal as the protocol. And, if there are a lot of events like
85 that, and our foreign counterparts are there, we have to give all the best. We shouldn't be blaming
86 each other. It should be one country team approach. OCTA. It's still OCTA. Even in our country,
87 it's still OCTA. Because usually, they say OCTA, one country team approach, is a term we use
88 when we are in the embassy. Even if we are in different agencies, if there is an OCTA, meaning,
89 we work as one. Sometimes, I don't know why, sometimes in the Philippines, the people in the
90 government. And, when that happens, it boils down to the preparations. Sometimes, they don't
91 give enough information. That's why there are problems with logistics. So, there are times like
92 that. I know these things because I hear it. But I guess that is my recommendation. To make sure
93 that everybody is really on the same page. You have to really insist or reiterate to everyone that
94 what we are doing is for the country. It's for the image of our Republic of the Philippines. That's
95 all I can say.

96 **##ID##**: How has your training or experience influenced your ability to navigate the
97 complexities of diplomatic challenges?

98 **##PB##**: Training provides a foundation, but practical experience is crucial for developing
99 proficiency. Networking and sharing experiences with other protocol officers is essential.
100 Adaptability and a willingness to learn are key to success in diplomatic protocol.

101 **##ID##**: Thank you so much for your time and insights, Sir Jeff. We truly appreciate your
102 sharing your knowledge and experience with us.

103 **##PB##**: You're welcome. It was a pleasure speaking with you all. Good luck with your studies.

Field text #02**Date of Interview: November 15, 2024****Site: Department of Foreign Affairs Aseana****Interviewer ID: ID****Participant ID: DP****Name: Mr. Arman Talbo****Gender: Male****Occupation: Deputy Chief of Protocol**

1 **##ID##:** First question, how do you initiate the planning process for a ceremonial event?

2 **##DP##:** Usually, it depends on the type of ceremonial event. It can be a signing ceremony, a
3 bilateral meeting, a dinner, or a lunch. In practice, the process starts with the Office of the
4 Secretary of Foreign Affairs determining the event. For example, we might learn from the Office
5 of the Secretary that there will be a testimonial dinner in honor of a visiting foreign minister.
6 That starts the entire process, and the information is cascaded to the Protocol Office. With this,
7 the Protocol Office will begin its preparation.

8 **##ID##:** What specific steps do you take to prepare for a ceremonial event?

9 **##DP##:** It starts with asking some basic questions: Who will be the guests? What is the purpose
10 of the event? How much is the budget? This is very important. Where will the event be held?
11 Who will be the participants? What level is the dinner or the ceremonial event? Once the Office
12 of the Secretary decides on an event, it is cascaded to the Protocol Office, and they will allocate
13 personnel, plan, and start coordination meetings. Usually, planning involves constant
14 coordination with different concerned offices, the Office of the Secretary, and the counterpart of
15 the secretary, the guests who will be visited. Handshakes. You can offer a handshake and then
16 your guest does not shake hands. So it can be an awkward situation. It can be embarrassing. You
17 know, if a foreign secretary offers his hand, he doesn't accept it. If he accepts it, you will be
18 putting the other person in an uncomfortable situation. Just because you didn't ask the question.
19 What else? Cultural differences. Oh, gosh. One very basic thing. It was not my mistake. It was
20 their mistake. Cultural differences: (Mexican and Fuel Measurement Differences). The
21 Mexicans. The Mexicans. They came. And then they were supposed to refuel their plane in the
22 Philippines. Their president will stop in Manila, stay for one, two hours, just to refuel the plane.
23 And then they will proceed to Mexico. So their embassy. But because it was their president, they
24 will have to offer something. Because they will have to get off the plane while it was being
25 refueled. It was like at 10 in the evening. So the huge plane landed. It's last refueled before flying
26 straight to Mexico. So imagine the amount of fuel that it needs. Thousands of dollars. So at the
27 part of the plane, the president and the delegation were safe, comfortable inside the room that we
28 provided for them. So I went down to check how the refueling was doing. And I saw a small
29 truck. It was running from the tarmac, coming to the plane. I called the Mexican guy. I said, what
30 is that? He said, that must be our fuel. I said, what do you mean that's your fuel? It's a small
31 truck. It's like a small truck that's being filled with water. It's a small truck. It's not even a full fire
32 truck. It's only half a fire truck. I said, what do you mean that's your fuel? And then he panicked.
33 And then he was making calls. Yes, yes, that's your truck coming. That's delivering the fuel that
34 you ordered. So he ordered 1,000 units. And of course, their units in Mexico are gallons. Our
35 units here are liters. One liter? A gallon. So he ordered 1,000 units. 1,000 gallons. It came to
36 1,000 liters.

37 That's the contents of the small truck going there. It's like going to Cebu. It could have been
38 funny, except that the president was in a hurry to leave. And it was 10, 11 in the evening. He was
39 about to buy aircraft fuel. He woke up his conversation with Petron. Petron, do you still have
40 extra fuel? Yes, yes, we can. But sir, because of Petron, the president is complaining. What's
41 taking them so long to refuel? Sir, we already loaded our big tanker. There's no problem, sir.
42 We're about to land at the airport, but there's a lot of traffic there. Remember? I asked him,
43 where's your truck? He said, it's on its way. But where exactly is it going? He said, it's going to
44 be hit by four motorcycles. The policemen that are waving. So imagine, there are two policemen
45 in front waving, and two policemen at the back. They're going like this on the road. What they're
46 guarding is a tanker. Of gasoline. So, it was delayed for half an hour. But at night, it left. It left.
47 Maybe it's not cultural. I don't know if that falls with the cultural differences. But something
48 similar. But it's not our fault. It's their fault that they ordered their gasoline. They're the ones who
49 don't observe the cultural differences. Here, what we're using are liters. You're there, right?
50 When you're buying. In America, gallons. In South America, gallons. So even if you look at their
51 price per gallon. Their quote for gasoline is price per gallon. Here, it's liters. They committed a
52 mistake. So, to be honest, there's no misunderstanding. Because we didn't let it happen.
53 **##ID##**: How do you ensure that all protocol requirements are met?
54 **##DP##**: Checklist (like dress code). Clear plan; detailed scenario. Dry run if requested.
55 **##ID##**: What are your strategies to accommodate varying international customs
56 and cultural nuances during ceremonial events while adhering to diplomatic protocol?
57 **##DP##**: Be Mindful. Higher observance. Must be aware. Make sure to ask the counterparts.
58 **##ID##**: What training or resources you utilize to enhance understanding of
59 cultural differences and diplomatic protocols?
60 **##DP##**: DFA, online learnings. Manual. Trainings- observe bago bigyan ng task.
61 **##ID##**: What specific cultural misunderstandings do you encounter when
62 interacting with foreign dignitaries during ceremonial events?
63 **##DP##**: Supposedly, there are no cultural misunderstandings during the actual
64 event because a good protocol officer will have taken care of that beforehand. But
65 let me discuss some potential misunderstandings if they were not addressed. For
66 example, if you have a Muslim guest, you don't serve them wine. It's a potential
67 misunderstanding if you are not careful. You might accidentally serve wine to a
68 Muslim who does not drink alcohol. You need to assign a dedicated waiter to
69 ensure that they are served the appropriate drinks. Another example is the color of
70 flowers. White flowers symbolize death in some cultures. Handshakes are another
71 potential misunderstanding. If your guest does not shake hands, it can be an
72 awkward situation. You don't want to put the other person in an uncomfortable
73 situation just because you didn't ask the question.
74 **##ID##**: How do you manage challenges that arise in adhering to diplomatic
75 protocol during ceremonial events?
76 **##DP##**: Try to minimize the challenges by discussing everything during
77 coordination meetings. Sometimes, there are conflicting protocols. For example,
78 the Philippine flag should always be on the left side. The problem arises when the
79 visiting country also requires their flag to be on the left side. There are ways to
80 minimize this. You can alternate the flags, placing the Philippine flag on the left,
81 then the visiting country's flag, then the Philippine flag again, and so on. Another
82 challenge is when the visiting country insists on their security or waiter serving their
83 foreign minister because they are used to it. This can be seen as disrespectful, so
84 you need to communicate with them and explain that it's part of our hospitality.

85 **##ID##**: How do you address unexpected challenges or crises that arise during
86 ceremonial events while maintaining adherence to diplomatic protocol?
87 **##DP##**: It's always the same. Always. And there will always be unexpected
88 challenges and crisis in every event that you will have. There will always be one.
89 Nothing goes according to plan. Your plan is 100%. Your plan. The first day, the
90 first step, the VIP was already trafficked. He was already late by 30 minutes. So,
91 what happened to your plan? It's just the beginning. It's just the beginning, right?
92 They arrive at 10am at the curve of the TFA to be met by the undersecretary of
93 this and that. So, you ask the undersecretary to come down at 9.45am or 9.50am
94 because he will arrive at 10am. At 10am, sir, we are running late. So, think of all
95 your plans. It's already pushed back. It's just a good plan. This involves people.
96 This involves people. You won't let your undersecretary stand there for 30 minutes
97 in the driveway to wait. So, what will you do to him? So, will you let him leave or
98 do you have a prepared holding room here in Malamin where he can sit and wait?
99 Does he have refreshments? A good protocol will do that, would have foreseen
100 that. A protocol officer who thinks everything will work according to plan, he
101 doesn't provide that facility anymore. So, he doesn't have an option. His option is
102 limited. Or he said, the VIP will arrive at the curb of the DFA at 10 o'clock in the
103 morning. He didn't consider how it will rain. That curb is open space. So, that's
104 another unexpected challenge. Unexpected only because you didn't anticipate it.
105 You don't have an alternative scenario. You don't have a scenario for a rainy day.
106 You could have moved the meeting place to a place that is covered. Or you could
107 have placed people who are ready with their umbrellas. (example Hello Kitty
108 umbrella instead of proper umbrella).
109 **##ID##**: What personal experiences do you find most impactful in shaping their approach to
110 diplomatic protocol during ceremonial events?
111 **##DP##**: Personal experiences that impacted my approach to protocol is, bad things happen all
112 the time. Even if I've done 10 presidential visits, no, something will happen. And what is that
113 something that happened? For example, in a visit of the French President Francois Hollande
114 to the Philippines. He went to sign a book, if I'm not mistaken. And luckily, when he got off, our
115 personnel involved noticed that the car seemed to have engine trouble. And the primary vehicle
116 had to be pulled out. We had to replace it. We had a plan, right? It's broken. We have a
117 replacement. So we pulled out the Mercedes-Benz car while it was in a meeting. Let's replace the
118 BMW, the spare car. Let's throw this car away. Let's have it repaired. Because the next meeting
119 was, the French President will now proceed to Malacanang. They will meet with the Philippine
120 President. And lo and behold, the official cars, what do they have in front of them? What do they
121 put in front of the car of the ambassador or president? Flag. Flag. It has to have their flag. So
122 where do we put the flag? Either the car itself already has a built-in flag. But because this is a
123 spare car, it doesn't have one. Where do we put the flag? We are ready. We have a magnetic flag.
124 It has a magnetic base. You just need to attach it to the hood. It can withstand up to 100
125 kilometers per hour. It won't take long. But there was a problem. What's the problem with
126 modern BMWs? Their hood is fiberglass. It doesn't have a magnet. If you attach your magnetic
127 there, it won't stick. Because it's fiberglass. Then after 5 minutes, it needs to leave to go to
128 Malacanang. Think of the scenario. The car is about to enter Malacanang, bearing a head of state.
129 There's no flag. We're going to die. We're going to die. But we're just going to die. What's the
130 problem? We're just going to die. Because we didn't attach the flag to the car. But we had a
131 solution. At the back of the spare car, there's a magnetic flag. And what happens if you attach the
132 two magnets? They stick. So we put one magnet under the hood. But we don't know how fast it

133 can withstand the car. Because while it's running, I know that it's 100 kilometers if it's attached
134 to the iron hood. But this time, I don't know. Because I just attached the two magnets at the back.
135 I don't know how fast it can withstand the car. So instruction to the driver. Be as slow as
136 possible. It's a bit rough. The flag should be on the hood. It shouldn't be on the side mirror. It
137 should be on the hood. And in the middle. No, it should be on the corner.

138 **##ID##**: What specific training programs do you believe are essential for enhancing their
139 effectiveness in managing diplomatic protocol?

140 **##DP##**: Actual simulations of events are very helpful. Watching video recordings of actual
141 events, focusing on the movement of the protocol officers, is also very valuable. It's hard to find
142 video recordings of actual events with protocol officers, but you can see how they move in the
143 background. These materials are very valuable for new protocol officers. They can also request
144 permission from the DFA to observe public events, such as the June 12 celebration of
145 Independence Day, where the President raises the Philippine flag. You can observe the protocol
146 officer and see what they do.

147 **##ID##**: In your past ceremonial events, what areas do you need to improve as a Filipino
148 diplomatic officer?

149 **##DP##**: It's better to be creative. We Filipinos are very creative. We make do with a small
150 budget. What other areas do you believe require improvement as a Filipino diplomatic officer?
151 Time management. Sometimes it's too late to start our events. Not because we're in the
152 Philippines. We're in a hurry. For reasons beyond our control. Traffic. If it starts raining, the
153 roads become impassable. Therefore, it's too late to start the event. Time management. We
154 should increase our budget. Perhaps we should also accredit or train the cultural performers.
155 Because sometimes we perform at national day celebrations or dinner receptions. There's also an
156 entertainment portion. Singers or dancers will perform. You need to look for someone who can
157 dance like this. Instead, we have someone who is more or less accredited or has a high level of
158 cultural performance of certain groups. The presentation should be world-class.

159 **##ID##**: What suggestions can you offer to newcomers in the field to navigate the complexities
160 of diplomatic protocol effectively?

161 **##DP##**: You have to be ready. If you really want to go into a diplomatic protocol, sometimes
162 you don't have time. For example, diplomats or VIPs arrive at the airport at 2am and they need
163 protocol assistance. Then you run to the airport. You don't go there when their plane will land.
164 You are there 2 hours before. Waiting. It's long hours. National day in Luneta. The flag will be
165 raised at 9am. But you are there as early as 6am to see to it that everything will be in order. It
166 will demand much from the way you conduct yourself. The way you walk. The way you stand.
167 The way you wear your clothes. The way you iron your clothes. The shoes that you wear. The
168 way you trim your nails. The way you have your hair. It has a standard. So you don't see a lousy
169 protocol officer. Even the shoes that you wear. You won't wear high heels or stiletto if you are a
170 woman. Because you will be standing for 3 hours. And you will be walking fast. No running.
171 Fast but not in a hurry. Fast but not in a hurry. So my advice is to have the right mind frame. The
172 will to learn. The strength to endure long hours. The personality to interact with people. And the
173 ability to smile even under pressure. Because that's very important for a protocol officer.

174 **##ID##**: What recommendations can you offer for improving inter-agency coordination during
175 the planning and execution of diplomatic ceremonies?

176 **##DP##**: Here in the Philippines. During diplomatic ceremonies. Our agencies often follow.
177 Because it will be embarrassing. If you breach protocol. They follow. Sometimes they ask, what
178 do I need to do? What time should I be here? Is this the right attire? Close interaction with each
179 other. Open channels. It will improve interagency coordination. Although it's good now. Maybe

180 because there are Viber groups now. Access to information is much better. Yes, yes. And there
181 are group chats now. This is how you do it, ma'am. This is the attire. And the coordination
182 meetings. Yes, they help a lot. In leveling expectations. And in sharing information.
183 **##ID##**: This is the last question. How has your training or experience influenced your ability to
184 navigate diplomatic challenges?
185 **##DP##**: As you experience more as a protocol officer or as a diplomat, you get seasoned. It's
186 like we go through a seasoning process. From a protocol officer who is still nervous. Where will
187 I stand? Where will I walk? What will I say? To someone who appears to know what he's doing.
188 Even if half of it is he's nervous. Because of all the things that we know now is something will
189 go wrong. But you are now able to handle yourself and handle pressure. And then you are now
190 able to anticipate because of your experience. You are now able to anticipate potential problems.
191 You now have a bigger network that you can tap. Remember, if you are a protocol officer, you
192 need direct lines. You need to be able to call someone that you need. You need to be able to call
193 your counterpart who is in the VIP car. So you know if he's in traffic. Otherwise, you won't
194 know. You waited for the Secretary of Foreign Affairs in the meeting room. While their
195 counterpart is an hour away stuck in traffic. And you won't be able to explain it. That's because
196 you don't have any network. You didn't get the contact number of the driver. You got it from his
197 secretary. She said, they left a while ago. Where are they? I don't know. I'm here in the office. So
198 there. Grow your network. Because I now have a network, I can call. I can call to ask if it will
199 rain at 11.30. What is the rain prediction? What are the chances of rain? Where is that? Here in
200 Pasay. Where exactly in Pasay? Here in Mayor Rojas Boulevard and here. What is the weather?
201 Because I need to know. Is the flood grazing? Is the National Anthem outside? Or should I make
202 provision that the National Anthem will be sung inside? So things like that. Because I now have
203 a network, I'm now more calm. But still, knowing that there is no event. Even if you're 100% in
204 preparation. And even if this is your 10th event like this. You're still nervous. But calm down.
205 Just chill. You know that even if there is a little bit of mud, you can still overcome it.
206 **##ID##**: Thank you, sir.
207 **##DP##**: You are welcome.3

Field text #03**Date of Interview: November 17, 2024****Site: Messenger****Interviewer ID: IH****Participant ID: CG****Name: Mrs. Faith Bautista****Gender: Female****Occupation: Consul General in Xiamen**

- 1 **##IH##:** How do you begin the planning process for a ceremonial event?
2 **##CG##:** Planning for ceremonial events involves research, careful planning, and
3 careful implementation by ensuring that all involved actors know their parts. I had an
4 Ambassador who would exactly asks "where will you be while this thing is
5 happening?"
6 **##IH##:** What specific steps do you take to prepare for a ceremonial event?
7 **##CG##:** Everything begins with a Concept Paper. The concept paper is to tell the
8 name of the event, time, place, venue, people involved (names and number),
9 objectives to be met, type and kind of audience, activities involved, program
10 including timing and venue, logistical and administrative requirements, and most
11 importantly, resources on hand, especially financial ones. The Concept Paper is to be
12 proceeded by a Scenario which would list Name of Activity, Date and Time,
13 Activity, Personnel Requirements, Logistical Requirements, Funding Resources, and
14 Remarks (to include all other information not in the other categories listed.)
15 **##IH##:** How do you ensure that all protocol requirements are met?
16 **##CG##:** One needs to prepare a list of protocol requirements, determine
17 participants and implementors, determine resources, and consult with
18 knowledgeable people about protocol practices (do's and don'ts). The secret is
19 preparation and coordination.
20 **##IH##:** What are your strategies to accommodate varying international customs and
21 cultural nuances during ceremonial events while adhering to diplomatic
22 protocol?
23 **##CG##:** It is best to take note of practices and preferences of sides involved.
24 There won't be any problem if there are no conflicts, but if there are, it would be
25 best to talk to both parties, either separately or together, and solicit ideas and
26 guidance from experts and/or facilitators (they are those in authority to speak to
27 contending sides). When all has been done, and some things did not go as plan, one
28 should just take it as a learning experience.
29 **##IH##:** What training or resources you utilize to enhance understanding of
30 cultural differences and diplomatic protocols?
31 **##CG##:** Training on Protocol, Etiquette, and Diplomatic Practices Training on

32 Cultural Awareness of Various Cultures/Countries Read, read, and read.
33 **##IH##**: What specific cultural misunderstandings do you encounter when
34 interacting with foreign dignitaries during ceremonial events?
35 **##CG##**: Western practices vs. Asian customs and traditions. Political Tensions
36 (examples are warring countries such as Iran-Iraq, the Sabah question for the
37 Philippines, etc.) Personal Differences.
38 **##IH##**: How do you manage the challenges of adhering to diplomatic
39 protocol that arises during ceremonial event?
40 **##CG##**: One must always think with their feet. Quick decisions are important.
41 One should also always maintain their composure. Grand under pressure.
42 Panicking will not help but will add to the already difficult situation. It is always best to
43 prepare for Plan B. Anticipate.
44 **##IH##**: How do you address unexpected challenges or crises that arise during
45 ceremonial events while maintaining adherence to diplomatic protocol?
46 **##CG##**: Such a situation would require that the person responsible speaks
47 and consults with people involved in the unexpected challenge or crisis.
48 Explain to them the situation and ask them how they could compromise. Like if a
49 husband insists that the wife be invited at a dinner meant stag or other similar
50 situations.
51 **##IH##**: What personal experiences do you find most impactful in shaping
52 their approach to diplomatic protocol during ceremonial events?
53 **##CG##**: I am always open to speaking with all people – with different kinds of
54 people. And this has helped me shaped my strength in organizing/participating in
55 ceremonial events.
56 **##IH##**: What specific training programs do you believe are essential for
57 enhancing their effectiveness in managing diplomatic protocol?
58 **##CG##**: Training on Protocol and Social Events Training on Managing Events
59 **##IH##**: In your past ceremonial events what areas do you need to improve as a 60
60 Filipino diplomatic officer?
61 **##CG##**: I should work hard on knowing the history of most nations. They help
62 one understand the person before him/her and it would be good conversation
63 pieces.
64 **##IH##**: What suggestions can you offer to newcomers in the field to
65 navigate the complexities of diplomatic protocol effectively?
66 **##CG##**: Read – Research – Prepare – Anticipate – Stay Cool.
67 **##IH##**: What recommendations can you offer for improving inter-agency
68 coordination during the planning and execution of diplomatic ceremonies?
69 **##CG##**: Organized meetings should be done. Organized in the sense that
70 objectives have to be set and met, with recommendations on how to move
71 forward. Then, it takes a lot of coordination and openness.

72 **##IH##**: How has your training or experience influenced your ability to navigate
73 the complexities of diplomatic challenges?
74 **##CG##**: I had a mother who has even give me enough self-confidence to face any
75 audience. I had training as a Catechist at an early age which made me
76 further develop my planning and speaking skills. I strived for good grades in
77 school which required, not only academic prowess, but knowing how to join and
78 lead organizations, and deal with the most difficult of people and situations
79 especially the higher-ups. I also am a curious and very observant person. I look,
80 observe, and try to emulate good practices. Most of all, I am a people-person. I am
81 curious about every individual and is therefore, not unfamiliar with all types especially
82 on how they would react to various situations.

Field text #03**Date of Interview: November 17, 2024****Site: Messenger****Interviewer ID: IH****Participant ID: CG****Name: Mrs. Faith Bautista****Gender: Female****Occupation: Consul General in Xiamen**

- 1 **##IH##**: How do you begin the planning process for a ceremonial event?
2 **##CG##**: Planning for ceremonial events involves research, careful planning, and
3 careful implementation by ensuring that all involved actors know their parts. I had an
4 Ambassador who would exactly asks "where will you be while this thing is
5 happening?"
6 **##IH##**: What specific steps do you take to prepare for a ceremonial event?
7 **##CG##**: Everything begins with a Concept Paper. The concept paper is to tell the
8 name of the event, time, place, venue, people involved (names and number),
9 objectives to be met, type and kind of audience, activities involved, program
10 including timing and venue, logistical and administrative requirements, and most
11 importantly, resources on hand, especially financial ones. The Concept Paper is to be
12 proceeded by a Scenario which would list Name of Activity, Date and Time,
13 Activity, Personnel Requirements, Logistical Requirements, Funding Resources, and
14 Remarks (to include all other information not in the other categories listed.)
15 **##IH##**: How do you ensure that all protocol requirements are met?
16 **##CG##**: One needs to prepare a list of protocol requirements, determine
17 participants and implementors, determine resources, and consult with
18 knowledgeable people about protocol practices (do's and don'ts). The secret is
19 preparation and coordination.
20 **##IH##**: What are your strategies to accommodate varying international customs and
21 cultural nuances during ceremonial events while adhering to diplomatic
22 protocol?
23 **##CG##**: It is best to take note of practices and preferences of sides involved.
24 There won't be any problem if there are no conflicts, but if there are, it would be
25 best to talk to both parties, either separately or together, and solicit ideas and
26 guidance from experts and/or facilitators (they are those in authority to speak to
27 contending sides). When all has been done, and some things did not go as plan, one
28 should just take it as a learning experience.
29 **##IH##**: What training or resources you utilize to enhance understanding of
30 cultural differences and diplomatic protocols?
31 **##CG##**: Training on Protocol, Etiquette, and Diplomatic Practices Training on

32 Cultural Awareness of Various Cultures/Countries Read, read, and read.
33 **##IH##**: What specific cultural misunderstandings do you encounter when
34 interacting with foreign dignitaries during ceremonial events?
35 **##CG##**: Western practices vs. Asian customs and traditions. Political Tensions
36 (examples are warring countries such as Iran-Iraq, the Sabah question for the
37 Philippines, etc.) Personal Differences.
38 **##IH##**: How do you manage the challenges of adhering to diplomatic
39 protocol that arises during ceremonial event?
40 **##CG##**: One must always think with their feet. Quick decisions are important.
41 One should also always maintain their composure. Grand under pressure.
42 Panicking will not help but will add to the already difficult situation. It is always best to
43 prepare for Plan B. Anticipate.
44 **##IH##**: How do you address unexpected challenges or crises that arise during
45 ceremonial events while maintaining adherence to diplomatic protocol?
46 **##CG##**: Such a situation would require that the person responsible speaks
47 and consults with people involved in the unexpected challenge or crisis.
48 Explain to them the situation and ask them how they could compromise. Like if a
49 husband insists that the wife be invited at a dinner meant stag or other similar
50 situations.
51 **##IH##**: What personal experiences do you find most impactful in shaping
52 their approach to diplomatic protocol during ceremonial events?
53 **##CG##**: I am always open to speaking with all people – with different kinds of
54 people. And this has helped me shaped my strength in organizing/participating in
55 ceremonial events.
56 **##IH##**: What specific training programs do you believe are essential for
57 enhancing their effectiveness in managing diplomatic protocol?
58 **##CG##**: Training on Protocol and Social Events Training on Managing Events
59 **##IH##**: In your past ceremonial events what areas do you need to improve as a 60
60 Filipino diplomatic officer?
61 **##CG##**: I should work hard on knowing the history of most nations. They help
62 one understand the person before him/her and it would be good conversation
63 pieces.
64 **##IH##**: What suggestions can you offer to newcomers in the field to
65 navigate the complexities of diplomatic protocol effectively?
66 **##CG##**: Read – Research – Prepare – Anticipate – Stay Cool.
67 **##IH##**: What recommendations can you offer for improving inter-agency
68 coordination during the planning and execution of diplomatic ceremonies?
69 **##CG##**: Organized meetings should be done. Organized in the sense that
70 objectives have to be set and met, with recommendations on how to move
71 forward. Then, it takes a lot of coordination and openness.

Field text #04**Date of Interview: November 14, 2024****Site: Messenger****Interviewer ID: IH****Participant ID: MP****Name: Ms. Theresia Bundoc****Gender: Female****Occupation: Malacañang Protocol Officer**

- 1 **##IH##**: How do you begin the planning process for a ceremonial event?
2 **##MP##**: Every ceremonial event has its purpose, as a protocol officer you
3 must know what is the objective/ background of the event like how many guests
4 are invited, who are the invited guests, their dietary restrictions, dynamics of guests,
5 venue of the event and most importantly the program for the event. Once you have an
6 idea on all the mentioned pointers you can now see the bigger picture of the event you'll
7 organize.
- 8 **##IH##**: What specific steps do you take to prepare for a ceremonial event?
9 **##MP##**: Depending on the type of event, Protocol usually holds an inter-age meeting
10 composed various departments/agencies vital in preparation for the event.
- 11 **##IH##**: How do you ensure that all protocol requirements are met?
12 **##MP##**: As a protocol officer, I usually have a check list which I usually discuss during
13 the coordination meeting/s so that I can double check and triple check before the actual
14 event takes place. Check List: Event title; Venue, date and time; No. of guests and
15 composition; Proposed attire; • Coverage classification;
16 Diagrams; • Program; • Other matters.
- 17 **##IH##**: What are your strategies to accommodate varying international customs and
18 cultural
19 **##MP##**: nuances during ceremonial events while adhering to diplomatic protocol?
20 Usually as protocol officer you must know the dynamics of the guests for example if the
21 guests are from a Islamic country you must know their dietary restrictions, schedule of
22 their prayer and other matters so that you will not offend
23 them for the sake of having an event. In social gatherings know who are those
24 allowed to drink alcoholic beverages and those who are not allowed due to their
25 religion or preferences.
- 26 **##IH##**: What training or resources you utilize to enhance understanding of
27 cultural differences and diplomatic protocols?
28 **##MP##**: When I entered the Protocol Office I'm so grateful that I was
29 surrounded with veterans of the industry. What our superiors did was to let

30 us join them from meetings to actual events so that we can observe the know abouts of
31 the events. Then at a certain time and due to the demand of work they let us take the
32 lead role while they are behind observing our abilities.

33 **##IH##**: What specific cultural misunderstandings do you encounter when
34 interacting with foreign dignitaries during ceremonial events?

35 **##MP##**: None so far.

36 **##IH##**: How do you manage the challenges of adhering to diplomatic protocol
37 that arises during ceremonial event?

38 **##MP##**: If the challenge is minor such as wrong honorifics was printed on the
39 place card immediately replace it and apologize. If the situation needs to be
40 raised to a higher level immediately report to your superior so that the situation
41 can be resolve without other people noticing it especially this time where social
42 media is a big factor.

43 **##IH##**: How do you address unexpected challenges or crises that arise during
44 ceremonial events while maintaining adherence to diplomatic protocol?

45 **##MP##**: If I see an unexpected situation during a ceremonial event, the first
46 thing I do is to coordinate with my superior giving recommendation on how to
47 possibly resolve it then we shall coordinate with our counterpart if they are
48 amenable of the suggestion or if they have a better solution for the problem.

49 **##IH##**: What personal experiences do you find most impactful in shaping their
50 approach to diplomatic protocol during ceremonial events?

51 **##MP##**: Having a veteran superiors who willingly shares their experiences for us to
52 avoid the same mistake is a big factor on how I handle ceremonial events.

53 **##IH##**: What specific training programs do you believe are essential for
54 enhancing their effectiveness in managing diplomatic protocol?

55 **##MP##**: Aspirants may take Seminar-workshop on Protocol and Social Graces
56 which tackles diplomatic protocol.

57 **##IH##**: In your past ceremonial events what areas do you need to improve as a
58 Filipino diplomatic officer?

59 **##MP##**: Always know your event, the personalities of your guests, seat plan, attire.

60 **##IH##**: What suggestions can you offer to newcomers in the field to
61 navigate the complexities of diplomatic protocol effectively?

62 **##MP##**: Always familiarize yourself with your event especially the personalities
63 attending know them by their names and faces so that can guide them to the
64 correct room or seating where they are needed. Also, try to look at the event on a
65 bigger picture so that you can foresee possible problems which you can prevent
66 before it happens.

67 **##IH##**: Always familiarize yourself with your event especially the personalities
68 attending know them by their names and faces so that can guide them to the

69 correct room or seating where they are needed. Also, try to look at the event on a
70 bigger picture so that you can foresee possible problems which you can prevent
71 before it happens.

72 **##MP##**: Take into consideration the agencies/departments vital for the event
73 don't let anyone be left blinded. For example, if there's a head of state arriving in the
74 country on a private type of visit make sure to coordinate with the embassy concerned
75 ask for their requirements if they wish to have a security detailed to the VIP and
76 coordinate with the airport authorities that a VIP will be arriving so that necessary port
77 courtesies may be accorded and that is the standard protocol for every arrival/
78 departure of Head of State/Government.

79 **##IH##**: How has your training or experience influenced your ability to navigate the
80 complexities of diplomatic?

81 **##MP##**: Due to the numerous events that I've handled before, I saw a standard
82 template for each event which may be tweak a little depending on the requirements of
83 the host. Negotiation is a key for a good diplomatic relation if you can't get what your
84 superior wants you may negotiate halfway so that the requirements of both parties are
85 met.

Field text #05**Date of Interview: December 05, 2024****Site: Messenger****Interviewer ID: IC****Participant ID: PJ****Name: Ms. Rhodora Niadas****Gender: Female****Occupation: Protocol Officer in Japan**

- 1 **##IC##:** How do you begin the planning process for a ceremonial event?
2 **##PJ##:** It involves several steps to ensure it is well-organized and successful.
3 clear description of the event
4 theme
5 planning
6 budget
7 venue (set-up, lights, mics, screens, décor, flower arrangements, etc.)
8 create a team (assign responsibilities)
9 Detailed Program
10 Invitation and guests
11 Catering
12 **##IC##:** What specific steps do you take to prepare for a ceremonial event?
13 **##PJ##:** It involves several steps to ensure it is well-organized and successful.
14 clear description of the event, theme, planning, budget, venue (set-up, lights, mics,
15 screens, décor, flower arrangements, etc.) Create a team (assign responsibilities)
16 Detailed Program. Invitation and guests. Catering
17 **##IC##:** How do you ensure that all protocol requirements are met?
18 **##PJ##:** It requires planning, communication and course of action. Make a research,
19 consult an expert. Make check list of protocol requirements
20 Sequence, attire. Designate a person responsible for supervising protocol
21 Assign specific duty – seating arrangement, VIP handling, etc. Know the specific greeting
22 styles, bow, handshakes etc. Ensure flags or symbols are displayed correctly
23 communication tools to maintain realtime coordination.
24 **##IC##:** What are your strategies to accommodate varying international customs and
25 cultural nuances during ceremonial events while adhering to diplomatic protocol?
26 **##PJ##:** It requires research and planning. Conduct research, study the traditions and
27 etiquette or cultures of the country. Pay attention to greetings, gestures, dining, customs,
28 attire. Consult experts to confirm practices.
29 **##IC##:** What training or resources you utilize to enhance understanding of cultural
30 differences and diplomatic protocols?
31 **##PJ##:** It involves continuous learning: Attend workshops, seminars
32 Travel or engage with international communities to gain experience of cultural
33 norms and values.
34 **##IC##:** What specific cultural misunderstandings do you encounter when
35 interacting with foreign dignitaries during ceremonial events?
36 **##PJ##:** I don't have any personal experiences but according to some research, some

- 37 examples are: Misinterpreting gestures or body language. Handshake length
38 Incorrect use of flags, playing the wrong national anthem
39 Dietary missteps (serving pork to muslim, etc.)
40 Clothing and attire, (wearing casual during formal events, etc.)
41 Inappropriate gifts
42 Misunderstanding
43 **##IC##**: How do you manage the challenges of adhering to diplomatic protocol that arises
44 during ceremonial event?
45 **##PJ##**: It requires thinking, adaptability and thorough understanding.
46 Anticipate challenges
47 Create a detailed plan
48 Train event staff
49 Assign roles
50 Plan for contingencies
51 Inform other parties about any changes to avoid confusions. Be tactful when addressing
52 protocol breaches or resolving conflicts
53 **##IC##**: How do you address unexpected challenges or crises that arise during
54 ceremonial events while maintaining adherence to diplomatic protocol?
55 **##PJ##**: · Stay calm and assess the situation
56 Prepare contingency plan in advance
57 Communicate effectively and discreetly
58 Adapt without compromising Protocol
59 Handle media presence carefully
60 Learn and improve
61 **##IC##**: What personal experiences do you find most impactful in shaping their
62 approach to diplomatic protocol during ceremonial events?
63 **##PJ##**: Cultural sensitivity
64 Greetings – for Japanese – bowing
65 Western countries – handshake
66 Dietary restrictions – Muslims – no pork
67 Guests with allergies
68 Understanding and respecting cultural norms is critical.
69 Understanding errors in titles
70 Mistakenly addressed a visiting Ambassador with an incorrect title
71 Ambassador should be His Excellency not Mr.
72 Attention to details is vital when dealing with dignitaries.
73 **##IC##**: What specific training programs do you believe are essential for
74 enhancing their effectiveness in managing diplomatic protocol?
75 **##PJ##**: It requires formal training, practical experiences and ongoing education.
76 **##IC##**: In your past ceremonial events what areas do you need to improve as a
77 Filipino diplomatic officer?
78 **##PJ##**: Communication and coordination-miscommunication may lead to errors
79 **##IC##**: What suggestions can you offer to newcomers in the field to navigate the
80 complexities of diplomatic protocol effectively?
81 **##PJ##**: Learn the basics. Study diplomatic rank, greetings, addressing the
82 diplomats, flag etiquette, seating arrangements and gift giving customs

- 37 examples are: Misinterpreting gestures or body language. Handshake length
38 Incorrect use of flags, playing the wrong national anthem
39 Dietary missteps (serving pork to muslim, etc)
40 Clothing and attire, (wearing casual during formal events, etc.)
41 Inappropriate gifts
42 Misunderstanding
43 **##IC##**: How do you manage the challenges of adhering to diplomatic protocol that arises
44 during ceremonial event?
45 **##PJ##**: It requires thinking, adaptability and thorough understanding.
46 Anticipate challenges
47 Create a detailed plan
48 Train event staff
49 Assign roles
50 Plan for contingencies
51 Inform other parties about any changes to avoid confusions. Be tactful when addressing
52 protocol breaches or resolving conflicts
53 **##IC##**: How do you address unexpected challenges or crises that arise during
54 ceremonial events while maintaining adherence to diplomatic protocol?
55 **##PJ##**: Stay calm and assess the situation
56 Prepare contingency plan in advance
57 Communicate effectively and discreetly
58 Adapt without compromising Protocol
59 Handle media presence carefully
60 Learn and improve
61 **##IC##**: What personal experiences do you find most impactful in shaping their
62 approach to diplomatic protocol during ceremonial events?
63 **##PJ##**: Cultural sensitivity
64 Greetings – for Japanese – bowing
65 Western countries – handshake
66 Dietary restrictions – Muslims – no pork
67 Guests with allergies
68 Understanding and respecting cultural norms is critical.
69 Understanding errors in titles
70 Mistakenly addressed a visiting Ambassador with an incorrect title
71 Ambassador should be His Excellency not Mr.
72 Attention to details is vital when dealing with dignitaries.
73 **##IC##**: What specific training programs do you believe are essential for
74 enhancing their effectiveness in managing diplomatic protocol?
75 **##PJ##**: It requires formal training, practical experiences and ongoing education.
76 **##IC##**: In your past ceremonial events what areas do you need to improve as a
77 Filipino diplomatic officer?
78 **##PJ##**: Communication and coordination-miscommunication may lead to errors
79 **##IC##**: What suggestions can you offer to newcomers in the field to navigate the
80 complexities of diplomatic protocol effectively?
81 **##PJ##**: Learn the basics. Study diplomatic rank, greetings, addressing the
82 diplomats, flag etiquette, seating arrangements and gift giving customs

83 Understand formal guidelines and hierarchies. Learn about the customs, traditions and
84 taboos of different cultures. Develop strong communication skills
85 Be detailed oriented. Be flexible
86 Build network
87 Stay updated on current affairs
88 Treat all guests with dignity and professionalism regardless of rank
89 Continuous learning.
90 **##IC##**: What recommendations can you offer for improving inter-agency
91 coordination during the planning and execution of diplomatic ceremonies?
92 **##PJ##**: Ensure smooth operations, avoiding miscommunication and achieving a unified
93 approach. Assign a coordinator to oversee and resolve issues
94 Develop standard operating procedures
95 Conduct meetings / trainings
96 Develop contingency plan
97 Maintain cultural awareness
98 **##IC##**: How has your training or experience influenced your ability to navigate the
99 complexities of diplomatic challenges?
100 **##PJ##**: It provides knowledge and skills needed to approach challenges with
101 confidence and professionalism. It ensures familiarity with international norms.
102 Exposure to real-world diplomacy builds adaptability and problem solving skills that cannot
103 be taught in a classroom.

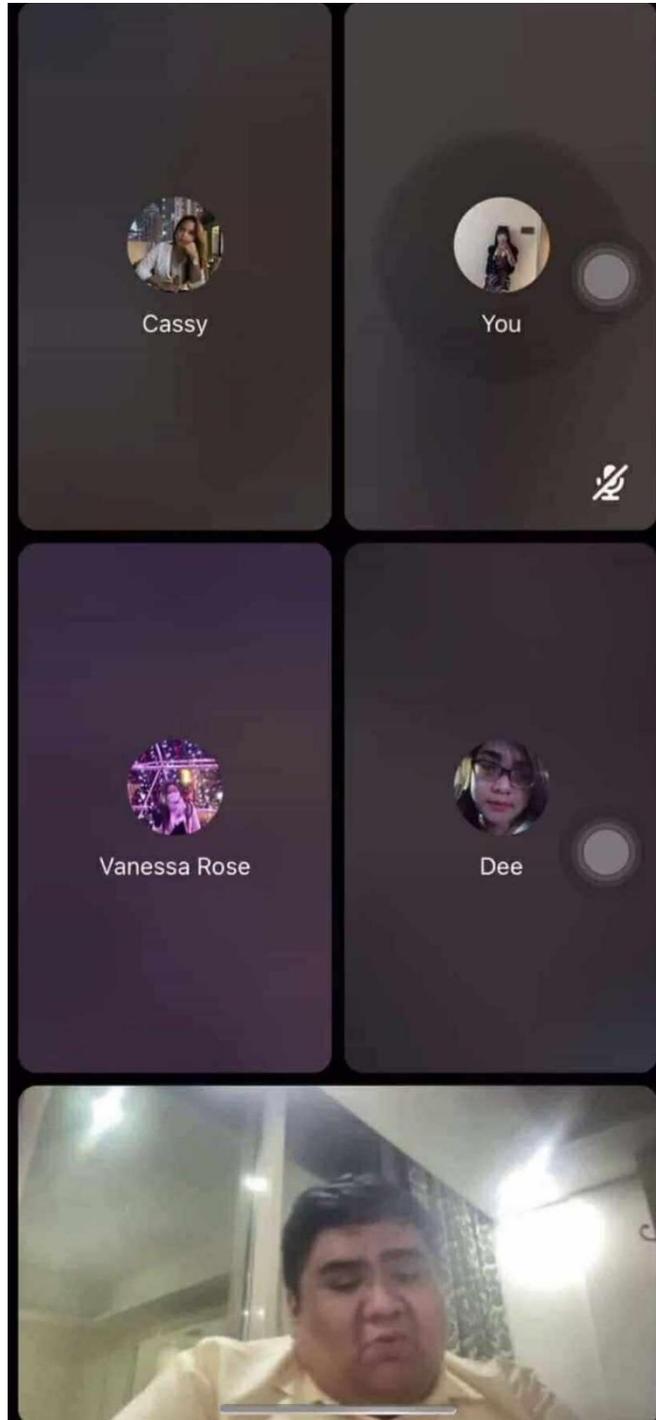
**APPENDIX VI
DOCUMENTATION**











APPENDIX VII CURRICULUM VITAE

Hannah Grace C. Aling, born on October 11, 2002, is a senior student pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Foreign Service at Lyceum of the Philippines University- Cavite. She has been actively involved in the Foreign Service Club throughout her academic journey, serving as an Events Committee member during her second year and as part of the Documents Committee during her third year, first term. She later assumed the role of Auditor and is currently serving as a Protocol Officer in the same organization during her fourth year. A consistent Dean's Lister, she demonstrates both academic excellence and a strong commitment to leadership and service within the university community.



Vanessa Rose D. Faustino is a fourth-year student pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Foreign Service at Lyceum of the Philippines University Cavite. Since her first year, she has been an active member of the Foreign Service Council, formerly known as the Foreign Service Club, holding various leadership roles. In her first year, she joined the Alliance and Communication Committee. In her second year, she served as Public Relations Officer, and in her third year, she was appointed Executive Secretary, organizing meetings and managing documentation. She continues to serve as Executive Secretary in her fourth year. Vanessa has attended several seminars to enhance her knowledge, including "The Imperatives of Policy Frameworks and Good Governance" (May 2023), "FSC Trade Talk Series: Current Trends, Issues, & Challenges in ASEAN Trade" (December 2023), and "International Law Talks: Through the Global Lens of Humanitarian Law" (March 2024). Additionally, she contributed to outreach programs, such as welcoming AFS Foreign Service students to Lyceum of the Philippines University Cavite in 2022, the Badjao Wash Promotion and Outreach Activity (January 2023), and the "Taste of Falestine Community Outreach Program" (June 2023). Through her leadership, academic achievements, and active participation in outreach programs, Vanessa continues to develop both personally and professionally, preparing for a meaningful career in Foreign Service.



Daryl Kate F. Guanzon, a dedicated student currently pursuing her studies in the AB Foreign Service program at Lyceum of the Philippines University-Cavite. Renowned for her role as the Logistics Committee Head, she excelled in overseeing tasks that demanded adept organizational skills, eye for detail, and the finesse to orchestrate intricate operations. Her profound passion for cross-cultural communication, diplomacy, and global awareness underscores her unwavering dedication to unraveling the entanglement of international relations. With a knack for research and strong communication skills, she is driven by the aspiration to make a substantial impact in the domain of foreign service.



Cathlaine Morillo is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Foreign Service at Lyceum of the Philippines University, Cavite, where she has been recognized on the Dean's List and received the Junior Diplomat Award. Cathlaine has a diverse skill set that includes communication, with excellent abilities in both verbal and non-verbal forms, enabling her to convey ideas effectively and engage meaningfully with others. She demonstrates strong teamwork, showcasing her ability to collaborate with others towards common goals. Her adaptability allows her to adjust seamlessly to new situations and challenges, while her effective time management ensures she meets deadlines and manages her workload efficiently. Additionally, her proficiency in multitasking equips her to handle various responsibilities simultaneously, making her well-prepared for fast-paced environments. Cathlaine has actively participated in various school activities, including competing and representing the Philippines at the "Leader's Conference" in Thammasat University Bangkok, Thailand last June of 2023. She also attended seminars such as "The Imperatives of Policy Frameworks and Good Governance" in May 2023 and the "FSC Trade Talk Series: Current Trends, Issues, & Challenges in ASEAN Trade" in December 2023 at her university. She is involved in the Foreign Service Council, serving as Assistant Diplomatic Protocol for the academic year 2023-2024 and as Chief of Diplomatic Protocol for 2024-20