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Holding On or Moving Out: An Exploration on Students Retention in the Criminology Program

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Abstract

This study explored the lived experiences of criminology students concerning retention, persistence, and departure from the Criminology Program, focusing on the academic, financial, personal, social, and institutional factors influencing their educational decisions. A qualitative phenomenological research design was employed involving 20 purposively selected adult criminology students from selected local colleges and universities in Region X (Northern Mindanao), Philippines. Data were gathered through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that failed retention subjects, demanding workloads, financial difficulties, emotional strain, and concerns about institutional fairness contributed to uncertainty and considerations of withdrawal or transfer. Conversely, family encouragement, peer support, educational assistance, personal determination, and professional aspirations strengthened students' commitment to completing their degrees. Participants also described developing resilience, discipline, responsibility, and professional identity through academic challenges. The study concluded that retention is a multidimensional process shaped by interactions between individual motivation and institutional support. It recommends strengthening transparent retention policies, academic interventions, financial assistance, counseling, and career-oriented mentoring. The findings were limited to the context-specific experiences of 20 participants and were not intended for statistical generalization. Aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), the study contributes to educational and socioeconomic sustainability by informing student-centered retention strategies, equitable institutional practices, and supportive pathways toward professional development.

Keywords: Academic Persistence; Criminology Education; Institutional Support; Phenomenological Research; Professional Identity; Student Retention; Student Support

1. Introduction

Student retention remains a significant concern in higher education, as students' decisions to continue, transfer, or withdraw from academic programs are influenced by interconnected academic, personal, financial, social, and institutional factors. Beyond academic performance, students must balance educational requirements with family responsibilities, employment, financial limitations, and expectations for their future careers. Recent studies emphasize that persistence is shaped not only by individual determination but also by students' sense of belonging, social relationships, access to support, and personal aspirations (Lessky et al., 2026, Bahnson et al., 2025). Understanding these experiences is particularly important in professional programs such as Criminology, where students face demanding academic requirements, physical training, retention policies, examinations, and preparation for law enforcement and public service careers.

A systematic review by Gonçalves et al. (2024) identified institutional retention initiatives and student-success activities as important areas of higher education practice. This reinforces the need to consider both students' individual circumstances and the institutional responses available to them.

Student persistence is increasingly recognized as a dynamic process shaped by interactions between students and their educational environments. Tinto (2019) emphasizes the importance of institutional support, classroom experiences, academic involvement, and educational practices in promoting student completion. Academic challenges, including difficult examinations, failed subjects, heavy workloads, strict deadlines, and unclear academic requirements, may create uncertainty and influence students' decisions to remain enrolled. However, academic setbacks do not necessarily result in withdrawal, as students may respond by improving study habits, seeking assistance, and strengthening their commitment to completing their degrees. Similarly, financial difficulties associated with transportation, uniforms, educational materials, and other academic expenses can affect students' ability to continue, particularly among those balancing employment and academic responsibilities.

Social relationships and institutional conditions also play essential roles in sustaining student retention. Family encouragement, financial assistance, peer support, and positive relationships with classmates can strengthen students' motivation and ability to manage academic challenges. Lessky et al. (2026) highlighted the importance of family expectations, socialization, personal commitments, and structural conditions in shaping persistence. Similarly, Bahnson et al. (2025) demonstrated that help-seeking behaviors and a sense of belonging contribute to continued enrollment. Conversely, unclear retention decisions, perceived unfairness, inconsistent instructional practices, and limited institutional accessibility may weaken students' confidence and commitment. Duncan et al. (2025) emphasized that withdrawal experiences involve institutional, academic, and personal circumstances, suggesting that student departure should not be understood solely as an individual decision.

Mtshweni (2024) found that sense of belonging and intrinsic motivation mediated the relationship between perceived social support and academic persistence among university students. This finding provides additional context for understanding how encouragement from family and peers may support criminology students facing demanding academic requirements.

In the Philippine context, Criminology education is closely associated with professional licensure, employment opportunities, public service, and aspirations for socioeconomic advancement. Students often view degree completion as a pathway toward becoming licensed criminologists, pursuing careers in law enforcement, achieving financial stability, and supporting their families. However, the academic and institutional demands of the program, combined with financial constraints and personal responsibilities, may challenge their ability to persist. These circumstances highlight the importance of examining how criminology students interpret academic difficulties, access available support, and sustain their motivation despite competing responsibilities. Understanding these experiences can provide insights into the development of more responsive retention policies and student-centered support systems.

Gilani et al. (2024) further showed that the relationship between students' sense of belonging, intentions to persist, and subsequent continuation can change over time. Their findings suggest that retention strategies should respond to students' evolving experiences rather than treating persistence as a fixed individual characteristic.

The study is primarily anchored in Tinto's Student Integration Model, which explains student persistence through academic and social integration within educational institutions. This perspective is complemented by Bean and Metzner's attrition perspective, which emphasizes the influence of external circumstances such as employment, family responsibilities, transportation, and financial obligations. Astin's Student Involvement Theory further explains how students' participation and investment of effort in educational activities contribute to their academic experiences, while Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory provides a foundation for understanding self-efficacy, self-regulation, motivation, and resilience. Braithwaite's Theory of Reintegrative Shaming also informs the study by emphasizing the importance of supportive and non-stigmatizing institutional responses to students experiencing academic difficulties. Collectively, these theoretical perspectives provide a multidimensional understanding of how personal experiences, institutional practices, academic challenges, social relationships, and professional aspirations influence students' decisions to continue or leave the Criminology Program.

Although existing research has examined student persistence and withdrawal in higher education, the lived experiences of criminology students within the Philippine educational context remain comparatively underexplored. Lessky et al. (2026) emphasized that persistence develops through interactions among personal commitments, family expectations, and structural conditions, while Bahnson et al. (2025) identified belonging and help-seeking as important elements of continued enrollment. Duncan et al. (2025) further demonstrated the significance of institutional and personal circumstances in understanding student withdrawal. However, these broader findings do not fully explain how criminology students experience discipline-specific academic requirements, retention policies, financial pressures, and professional expectations. This gap highlights the need

for an experience-centered investigation that considers both the challenges students encounter and the resources that enable them to persist.

The study aligns primarily with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Quality Education, particularly its emphasis on equitable access to education, meaningful learning opportunities, and supportive educational environments. By examining the factors influencing student retention, the research contributes to understanding how higher education institutions can strengthen academic support, improve institutional responsiveness, and reduce barriers to degree completion. It also relates to SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, as completing criminology education may improve students' preparation for professional employment, career development, and economic opportunities. These connections emphasize the importance of educational systems that support students throughout their academic journeys and prepare them for productive participation in society.

From a multidisciplinary sustainability perspective, the study contributes to educational, socioeconomic, and institutional sustainability by highlighting the relationships among academic experiences, financial conditions, social support, institutional policies, and professional identity formation. Understanding these interconnected factors may help higher education institutions develop transparent retention policies, accessible student assistance programs, responsive academic interventions, and supportive learning environments. Such approaches can promote students' continued participation in higher education while strengthening institutional capacity to respond to diverse student needs. In criminology education, these efforts are particularly relevant to preparing future professionals for law enforcement and community-oriented public service.

Therefore, this study aimed to explore the lived experiences of criminology students concerning persistence, transfer, withdrawal considerations, and continued enrollment in the Criminology Program. Specifically, it sought to identify the personal, academic, social, financial, emotional, and institutional factors influencing retention, examine the challenges students encounter and the support systems they use to manage these difficulties, and understand how motivation, resilience, academic experiences, and emerging professional identity shape their decisions to continue. Ultimately, the study intended to develop evidence-informed recommendations for strengthening student-centered retention strategies, institutional support practices, and sustainable educational experiences in criminology education.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design to examine the lived experiences and meanings associated with student retention and departure from the Criminology Program. This approach was appropriate for understanding how students experienced academic pressures, retention requirements, personal challenges, institutional support, motivation, and professional identity rather than measuring relationships among predetermined variables. The phenomenological orientation was guided by Moustakas (1994), emphasizing the systematic exploration of lived experiences and the interpretation of meanings derived from participants' narratives.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in selected Local Colleges and Universities in Region X (Northern Mindanao), Philippines, offering the Bachelor of Science in Criminology program. The region was selected because of the relevance of criminology education to professional and public-service opportunities and the varied academic environments in which students encountered financial, social, academic, and institutional challenges. The investigation focused on the experiences of students within these institutions, and its findings were considered context-specific rather than statistically representative of all criminology students in the Philippines.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The participants consisted of 20 adult criminology students with firsthand experiences related to retention or departure from the program. They represented two experiential categories: "Holding On," referring to students who remained enrolled and continued their studies, and "Moving Out," referring to those who stopped, withdrew, transferred, or otherwise departed from the program. All participants were at least 18 years old, had current or previous enrollment in a Bachelor of Science in Criminology program, and possessed relevant experiences concerning academic persistence or departure. Their participation provided insights into the challenges, motivations, support systems, and institutional circumstances influencing their educational decisions.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was employed to select 20 participants who could provide meaningful accounts of their experiences with retention and departure. Selection was based on participants' direct involvement in the Criminology Program and their ability to describe circumstances affecting their decisions to continue or leave. Eligible participants were at least 18 years old, had current or previous enrollment in the program, possessed

relevant experiences, voluntarily agreed to participate, provided informed consent, and were willing to undergo an in-depth interview. This sampling approach ensured that the collected narratives directly addressed the phenomenon under investigation.

2.5 Research Instrument

The primary research instrument was a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide aligned with the study's four statements of the problem. The guide contained open-ended questions and follow-up probes designed to explore significant academic experiences, factors influencing continued enrollment, challenges and support systems, motivation, professional identity, and future aspirations. Its semi-structured format allowed participants to describe their experiences in detail while maintaining consistency with the research objectives. Field notes supplemented the interviews by documenting relevant observations and contextual information.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Data were collected through individual, in-depth interviews conducted in appropriate private settings to encourage open and confidential discussions. Before each interview, participants were informed about the study's purpose and procedures, and informed consent was obtained. With their permission, interviews were audio-recorded and supplemented with field notes to capture relevant information. Recordings were subsequently transcribed verbatim and checked against the original audio to ensure accuracy. Participant identities were protected through the use of codes or pseudonyms, and identifying information was removed from the transcripts before analysis.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected qualitative data were analyzed using a systematic thematic analysis approach informed by Braun and Clarke's methodological framework and subsequent clarification (Braun & Clarke, 2021, Byrne, 2022). The process involved familiarization with interview transcripts and field notes, generation of initial codes, identification of recurring patterns, development of candidate themes, review and refinement of themes, and preparation of the final analytical narrative. Related codes were organized into subthemes and broader themes representing participants' experiences of academic challenges, financial difficulties, institutional conditions, social support, motivation, and persistence. Throughout the analysis, consistency was maintained among the research objectives, interview questions, participant narratives, codes, themes, and findings to ensure that interpretations remained grounded in the collected data.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The study observed ethical principles of informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, privacy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice. Necessary institutional and ethical approvals were secured before conducting the research. Participants were informed about the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and confidentiality measures. They were assured of their right to decline questions or withdraw from participation without penalty. Personal information was protected through de-identification and the use of participant codes or pseudonyms. Research trustworthiness was strengthened through accurate transcription, systematic coding, reflexive documentation, maintenance of an audit trail, and member checking when appropriate, supporting the credibility and dependability of the findings.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Experiences Related to Staying in or Leaving the Criminology Program

3.1.1 Academic and Retention Demands

Participants identified academic requirements and retention policies as significant influences on their decisions to continue or leave the Criminology Program. Failed retention subjects, unclear academic records, grading concerns, repeated courses, and delayed academic progression created uncertainty about their ability to complete the degree. Some students became irregular students or considered transferring because of these difficulties, while others responded by improving study habits, monitoring grades, and increasing academic effort. These findings suggest that academic and retention requirements can function as both barriers and sources of motivation. Students who perceived opportunities for academic recovery were more likely to adjust their behavior and continue their studies. However, uncertainty regarding academic standing and progression could weaken their confidence and commitment to the program.

3.1.2 Multiple Pressures and Personal Strain

Students experienced overlapping academic, financial, and personal responsibilities that affected their ability to remain enrolled. Working students struggled to balance employment and academic requirements, while others reported physical exhaustion and emotional fatigue associated with transportation, training activities, school events, compliance requirements, and demanding workloads. These experiences contributed to frustration, reduced motivation, and occasional thoughts of transferring or withdrawing. The findings indicate that persistence is influenced by students' capacity to manage competing responsibilities rather than academic performance alone.

When multiple pressures accumulate, students may experience uncertainty about continuing their education, particularly when sufficient personal and institutional support is unavailable.

3.1.3 Career Aspirations as an Anchor

Participants consistently associated degree completion with becoming licensed criminologists, joining law enforcement, serving communities, achieving career stability, and supporting their families. These professional aspirations encouraged students to remain committed despite academic setbacks, financial difficulties, and personal challenges. Career aspirations provided meaning to students' educational experiences by connecting present difficulties with future opportunities. This suggests that professional goals can strengthen persistence by helping students interpret academic challenges as temporary obstacles toward achieving meaningful career and personal objectives.

3.1.4 Transforming Adversity into Persistence and Personal Growth

Several participants described responding to academic failures and personal difficulties by developing greater discipline, responsibility, resilience, and determination. Rather than immediately withdrawing, they adjusted their study practices, increased their efforts, and reconsidered their priorities to sustain enrollment. These experiences demonstrate that persistence involves interpreting and responding constructively to adversity. Students' ability to transform challenges into opportunities for improvement reflects the evolving nature of academic commitment. This interpretation is consistent with contemporary research emphasizing persistence as a process shaped by personal meaning, adaptation, and available resources (Lessky et al., 2026).

3.2 Factors Influencing the Decision to Remain Enrolled

3.2.1 Personal Aspirations and Goal Commitment

Participants identified personal ambitions and commitment to degree completion as major reasons for remaining enrolled. Their goals included passing the criminology licensure examination, becoming licensed criminologists or police officers, and achieving professional success. The desire to complete what they had started encouraged continued participation despite academic difficulties. These findings indicate that clear educational and professional goals can provide direction during challenging academic experiences. Students who maintained a strong connection between their studies and future aspirations demonstrated greater willingness to manage difficulties and continue working toward graduation.

3.2.2 Family Influence and Social Support

Family members played an important role in students' decisions to continue their education. Participants described parental sacrifices, emotional encouragement, financial assistance, and the desire to improve their families' circumstances as important motivations. Friends and classmates also provided academic assistance, encouragement, and a sense of belonging. These findings highlight the importance of supportive relationships in sustaining academic commitment. Family and peer support helped students manage challenges and reduced feelings of isolation. Such relationships strengthened students' motivation by connecting educational achievement with family responsibilities and shared aspirations.

3.2.3 Financial Considerations and Educational Assistance

Financial difficulties affected students' ability to meet educational expenses, including transportation, uniforms, projects, membership fees, contributions, and other school requirements. Participants identified scholarships, free tuition, Tertiary Education Subsidy assistance, and family financial support as important resources that enabled them to continue their studies. The findings suggest that financial assistance contributes to retention by reducing practical barriers to continued enrollment. Although educational subsidies and family support did not eliminate financial hardship, they helped students manage expenses and maintain academic participation despite limited resources.

3.2.4 Commitment Through Meaning and Responsibility

Participants described developing greater responsibility toward their academic performance and future careers. Retention requirements encouraged closer monitoring of grades, improved time management, and increased awareness of academic obligations. Students increasingly recognized that completing their education required consistent effort and personal accountability. These findings indicate that persistence develops through the interaction of personal commitment and supportive external conditions. Students were more likely to remain enrolled when they understood the relevance of academic responsibilities to their future professional roles and had sufficient resources to manage educational demands.

3.3 Challenges and Support Systems Influencing Persistence

3.3.1 Academic Challenges

Participants encountered academic difficulties involving failed retention subjects, demanding examinations, sudden assessments, strict deadlines, unclear instructions, grading concerns, and heavy workloads. These experiences generated stress and uncertainty, particularly when academic performance threatened their retention

status. Some students responded by increasing study efforts, monitoring grades, and seeking academic assistance. These findings demonstrate that academic challenges influence persistence through their effects on students' confidence and perceptions of educational progress. Although difficulties could discourage continued enrollment, opportunities for improvement and access to academic assistance helped some students remain committed to completing the program.

3.3.2 Financial Challenges

Participants experienced financial pressure from transportation expenses, school contributions, uniforms, projects, membership fees, and other academic requirements. Working students faced additional difficulties balancing employment and studies. Financial strain affected attendance, concentration, energy, and overall academic stability, while family assistance, scholarships, and educational subsidies provided practical support. These findings indicate that financial circumstances directly influence the feasibility of continued enrollment. Students experiencing economic hardship may struggle to fulfill academic responsibilities, making accessible financial assistance an important component of retention support.

3.3.3 Personal and Emotional Challenges

Students reported exhaustion, frustration, anxiety, reduced motivation, and emotional pressure associated with balancing academic requirements, employment, family responsibilities, transportation, and training activities. These challenges occasionally led participants to consider transferring or discontinuing their studies. Nevertheless, encouragement from family and peers and the desire to complete their degrees helped them manage these difficulties. The findings suggest that emotional well-being and personal circumstances are closely connected to academic persistence. Supportive relationships and meaningful educational goals can help students cope with emotional strain and maintain commitment despite demanding academic experiences.

3.3.4 Institutional Challenges

Participants identified unclear retention decisions, perceived unfairness, inconsistent instructional practices, limited accessibility, heavy compliance requirements, and perceived unequal treatment as institutional challenges. These experiences weakened students' confidence and trust in institutional processes and contributed to uncertainty about their academic future. The findings emphasize that institutional practices can either support or undermine student persistence. Transparent policies, consistent academic procedures, and responsive institutional support are important in maintaining students' confidence and educational commitment. This interpretation is consistent with research demonstrating the influence of institutional circumstances on students' withdrawal experiences (Duncan et al., 2025).

3.3.5 Support Systems as Protective Factors

Participants identified family encouragement, peer assistance, scholarships, institutional support, and personal motivation as resources that helped them manage academic and personal difficulties. Although these support systems did not completely remove the challenges students encountered, they reduced the likelihood that difficulties would immediately result in withdrawal. These findings highlight the protective role of accessible support systems in promoting persistence. Supportive relationships and opportunities for assistance can strengthen students' capacity to overcome educational barriers. This is consistent with research identifying belonging, help-seeking, and supportive educational environments as important contributors to continued enrollment (Bahnson et al., 2025).

3.4 Academic Journey, Motivation, Identity, and Future Direction

3.4.1 Personal Growth and Self-Realization

Participants described their academic experiences as opportunities for developing resilience, self-awareness, confidence, discipline, and perseverance. Academic setbacks and personal difficulties encouraged them to improve time management, exercise patience, and become more responsible in managing their educational obligations. These findings suggest that the academic journey contributes to personal development beyond the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge. Through overcoming challenges, students developed attitudes and behaviors that supported continued enrollment and strengthened their ability to manage future responsibilities.

3.4.2 Professional Identity Formation

Students increasingly identified themselves as future criminologists, police officers, and public-service professionals. Academic requirements, training activities, and institutional expectations helped them recognize the discipline, accountability, and responsibilities associated with their intended professions. These findings indicate that professional identity formation contributes to students' commitment to completing their education. As participants developed a clearer understanding of their future roles, academic responsibilities became more meaningful and connected to their long-term professional aspirations.

3.4.3 Future-Oriented Motivation

Participants viewed completion of the Criminology Program as a pathway toward professional employment, public service, financial stability, and improved family circumstances. These aspirations motivated students to continue despite financial limitations, academic challenges, and emotional difficulties. The findings demonstrate that future-oriented motivation helps students connect present educational demands with long-term personal and professional goals. This perspective allows students to interpret academic hardships as manageable challenges within a broader process of career preparation and personal advancement.

3.4.4 Academic Journey as a Transformative Experience

Participants described their educational experiences as a process of learning to manage pressure, recover from setbacks, adapt to changing circumstances, and prepare for professional responsibilities. Their experiences contributed to increased maturity, determination, discipline, and awareness of the demands associated with criminology education. These findings indicate that the academic journey can shape both personal development and professional identity. Students' experiences of persistence reflect the interaction of individual growth, social relationships, and institutional conditions. This interpretation aligns with contemporary scholarship emphasizing the development of perseverance and identity within broader educational and social contexts (Lessky et al., 2026).

3.5 Integrative Interpretation of Student Retention and Departure

Across the four areas of inquiry, the findings revealed that criminology student retention was influenced by the combined effects of academic demands, financial circumstances, personal and emotional challenges, institutional practices, social support, and professional aspirations. Participants who remained enrolled often relied on family encouragement, peer assistance, financial resources, personal determination, and meaningful career goals. Conversely, accumulated academic difficulties, financial strain, and institutional concerns contributed to uncertainty and considerations of withdrawal or transfer. These findings demonstrate that student retention is a multidimensional and evolving process rather than an outcome determined solely by individual motivation. Although students demonstrated resilience, self-regulation, and commitment, their ability to persist was influenced by the availability of institutional assistance and supportive educational conditions. This interpretation is consistent with the importance of institutional action and contemporary perspectives recognizing that persistence and departure emerge from interactions between personal agency and broader educational circumstances (Tinto, 2019, Lessky et al., 2026).

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concluded that student retention in the Criminology Program is a multidimensional process influenced by academic demands, financial circumstances, institutional practices, social support, personal aspirations, and professional identity development. The lived experiences of 20 criminology students from selected higher education institutions in Northern Mindanao revealed that failed retention subjects, demanding workloads, financial difficulties, transportation challenges, emotional strain, and concerns about institutional fairness contributed to uncertainty and considerations of withdrawal or transfer. However, family encouragement, peer support, educational assistance, personal determination, and aspirations for professional licensure and law-enforcement careers helped sustain students' commitment to completing their degrees. Academic challenges also provided opportunities for developing resilience, discipline, responsibility, and self-awareness. These findings suggest that persistence depends not solely on individual motivation but also on supportive and responsive educational environments. The study highlights the importance of shared responsibility between students and institutions in promoting equitable, transparent, and sustainable retention practices in criminology education.

Based on the findings, higher education institutions offering Criminology programs are encouraged to strengthen academic monitoring and early-intervention systems for students experiencing failed subjects, declining academic performance, or retention-related difficulties. Administrators should establish transparent grading, assessment, and retention policies supported by clear guidelines, timely communication, accessible grievance procedures, and appropriate academic advising. Institutions should also improve access to scholarships, financial assistance, counseling services, peer mentoring, and coordinated student support programs to address overlapping academic, financial, and emotional challenges. Faculty development initiatives should emphasize student-centered instruction, constructive feedback, inclusive classroom practices, and supportive communication to encourage help-seeking and reduce stigma. Furthermore, career-oriented mentoring and professional identity development should be integrated into criminology education to strengthen students' connections between academic responsibilities and future professional opportunities. Future research may examine retention experiences across multiple institutions over time and evaluate the effectiveness of student-centered interventions in supporting continued enrollment.

The study was limited to a qualitative phenomenological investigation involving 20 purposively selected criminology students from selected local colleges and universities in Region X, Northern Mindanao, Philippines. Because the findings were based on participants' lived experiences and personal accounts, they reflect context-

specific perspectives rather than statistically generalizable patterns across all criminology students or higher education institutions. The qualitative design provided an in-depth understanding of persistence and departure but did not establish causal relationships or measure the effectiveness of retention interventions. Future studies may involve broader institutional settings, larger participant groups, and longitudinal or mixed-methods approaches to further examine changes in retention experiences and institutional support practices.

5. Compliance with ethical standards

The authors affirm that no conflicts of interest exist in relation to this study. The research involved 20 adult criminology student participants from selected local colleges and universities in Region X (Northern Mindanao), Philippines, and was conducted with the necessary institutional and ethical approvals, informed consent, and voluntary participation. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their right to decline questions or withdraw without penalty. Privacy and confidentiality were maintained through private interviews, the use of participant codes or pseudonyms, and the removal of identifying information from interview transcripts.

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