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The weight of the uniform for women in the Brazilian Army's Temporary Voluntary Military Service

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The Armed Forces, historically characterized by their predominantly male composition, have promoted the inclusion of women as part of efforts aimed at gender equity. In Brazil, the Temporary Voluntary Military Service (SMTV) has stood out as a mechanism to increase female participation in the Brazilian Army (EB). This study aimed to understand, based on the perceptions of women who entered the SMTV, how their transition from a civilian to a military career is configured. This research adopted a descriptive qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews conducted with ten women who made the career transition to military service in the EB. Most of the interviewed women reported making the career transition from the civilian sector to military service to redefine their professional paths, seeking better financial conditions, less burnout, and more time for their families. Despite a strong desire to join the military institution, they faced challenges in adapting to military culture, such as difficulties in aligning their expectations with reality, which impacted their interpersonal relationships and mental health. However, some highlighted a positive re-signification, especially due to the recognition and new opportunities that the transition provided. The military career also imposed changes on work dynamics, impacting professional autonomy and requiring adjustment to a rigid hierarchy. The transition was also marked by emotional challenges, such as anxiety and apprehension, and by a process of reconstructing these women's professional and personal identities.

Keywords: career, career transition, women, Brazilian Army, temporary military service.

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O peso da farda para mulheres no Serviço Militar Temporário Voluntário do Exército Brasileiro

As Forças Armadas, historicamente caracterizadas por sua composição predominantemente masculina, têm promovido a inclusão de mulheres como parte de esforços voltados à equidade de gênero. No Brasil, o Serviço Militar Temporário Voluntário (SMTV) tem se destacado como um mecanismo para aumentar a participação feminina no Exército Brasileiro (EB). Nosso objetivo foi compreender, a partir das percepções de mulheres que ingressaram no SMTV no EB, como se configura sua transição da carreira civil para a militar. Esta pesquisa utilizou uma abordagem qualitativa descritiva, com entrevistas semiestruturadas realizadas com dez mulheres que fizeram a transição de carreira para o serviço militar no EB. A maioria das mulheres entrevistadas relatou ter realizado a transição de carreira do setor civil para o serviço militar com o intuito de redefinir seus percursos profissionais, buscando melhores condições financeiras, menor desgaste e mais tempo para a família. Apesar de um forte desejo de integrar a classe militar, enfrentaram desafios na adaptação à cultura militar, como dificuldades em alinhar suas expectativas com a realidade, impactando suas relações interpessoais e sua saúde mental. No entanto, algumas destacaram uma ressignificação positiva, especialmente pela valorização e novas oportunidades que a transição proporcionou. A carreira militar também impôs mudanças nas dinâmicas de trabalho, com impacto na autonomia profissional e no ajuste à rígida hierarquia. A transição também foi marcada por desafios emocionais, como ansiedade e apreensão, e por um processo de reconstrução da identidade profissional e pessoal dessas mulheres.
Palavras-chave: carreira, transição de carreira, mulheres, Exército Brasileiro, serviço militar temporário.

El peso del uniforme para las mujeres en el Servicio Militar Voluntario Temporal del Ejército Brasileño

Las Fuerzas Armadas, caracterizadas históricamente por su composición predominantemente masculina, han promovido la inclusión de las mujeres como parte de los esfuerzos orientados a la equidad de género. En Brasil, el Servicio Militar Voluntario Temporal (SMVT) se ha destacado como un mecanismo para aumentar la participación femenina en el Ejército Brasileño (EB). Nuestro objetivo fue comprender, desde la perspectiva de las mujeres que se incorporaron al SMVT en el EB, cómo se configura su transición de la carrera civil a la militar. Esta investigación utilizó un enfoque cualitativo descriptivo, con entrevistas semiestructuradas realizadas a diez mujeres que hicieron la transición de carrera al servicio militar en el EB. La mayoría de las mujeres entrevistadas relataron haber realizado la transición profesional del sector civil al servicio militar con el fin de redefinir sus trayectorias profesionales, buscando mejores condiciones financieras, menos desgaste y más tiempo para la familia. A pesar de un fuerte deseo de integrar la institución militar, enfrentaron desafíos para adaptarse a la cultura militar, como dificultades para alinear sus expectativas con la realidad, lo que impactó sus relaciones interpersonales y su salud mental. Sin embargo, algunas destacaron una resignificación positiva, especialmente debido a la valorización y las nuevas oportunidades que proporcionó la transición. La carrera militar también impuso cambios en la dinámica laboral, con un impacto en la autonomía profesional y el ajuste a la rígida jerarquía. La transición también estuvo marcada por desafíos emocionales, como la ansiedad y la aprensión, y por un proceso de reconstrucción de la identidad profesional y personal de estas mujeres.
Palabras clave: carrera, transición de carrera, mujer, Ejército Brasileño, servicio militar temporal.

1. INTRODUCTION

Historically characterized as a predominantly male profession, military work has seen the increasing inclusion of women in its institutions (Santos et al., 2024) and the gradual normalization of their presence, driven by women's entry into military emergencies, the need to replace personnel, and their own demands for inclusion in the emancipation process (Carreiras & Kümmel, 2008). Public policies have been implemented with the aim of promoting equal status between uniformed men and women (Moore, 2020).

In Brazil, women joined the Armed Forces starting in 1980, with the creation of the Women's Auxiliary Reserve Corps of the Navy, followed by the Women's Reserve Corps of the Brazilian Air Force in 1982 and the first female class at the Army Administration School in 1992 (D'Araujo, 2004). More recently, there has been further progress in this inclusion process, with the authorization for female military enlistment in Brazil: women who turn 18 from 2025 onwards will be able to enlist voluntarily from 2026, expanding the possibilities for female entry into the Armed Forces and signaling relevant institutional changes in the contemporary scenario (Exército Brasileiro, 2024).

The Temporary Voluntary Military Service (TVMS) is one of the main ways for women to enter the Brazilian Army (BA). This modality allows the incorporation of civilian professionals with technical and academic qualifications, selected through a rigorous selection process, to perform military activities for a maximum period of eight years, after which they are transferred to the unpaid reserve. This form of access constitutes a relevant strategy to increase the female presence in the active personnel of the BA, especially for those from civilian careers (Payne, 2022). Consequently, an increase in the number of women incorporated into the BA has been observed, attributed to the expansion and consolidation of the TVMS (Tinoco & Garbaccio, 2022).

However, the career transition for women from civilian to military service presents some challenges. In addition to the difficulties inherent in a civilian career change, stemming from military socialization and the incorporation of military values, norms, and practices, these women face gender disparities in personnel and prejudices in the environment (Resende, 2021). The organizational culture of the BA demands characteristics that contrast with those of the public and private sectors, including the renunciation of certain individual rights in favor of the full fulfillment of institutional obligations, as well as the acceptance of constant risk to life.

Military service requires strict adherence to principles such as hierarchy, discipline, and exclusive dedication (Santos & Raposo, 2019). These military values extend beyond the workplace, also impacting the social interactions and family dynamics of these women (Nunes & Moreira, 2019). Thus, we understand that, in addition to the effects of the transition process from civilian to military identity, there is a set of symbolic, emotional, and institutional tensions that affect these women associated with their gender in the environment, which we metaphorically call the "burden of the uniform".

Under labor law, military professionals face restrictions, such as the prohibition of selling services, unionizing, or participating in strikes and protest movements (Santos & Raposo, 2019). The integration between the civilian and military worlds highlights the complexity of the adaptation process, in which new recruits need to internalize both professional responsibilities and the values and cultural structures of the military environment.

Unlike other careers, where choices are guided by values, convictions, and personal interests (Anderson et al., 2019), in the military context they are determined by demands that exceed traditional professional motivations. Commitment to militarism demands continuous availability, 24 hours a day, without additional financial compensation, in addition to imposing unrestricted geographical mobility and the maintenance of a rigorously evaluated physical level.

The literature highlights the importance of deepening the discussion on the challenges of career transition to the military environment, especially in the case of women facing this change (Becker et al., 2023; Shue et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2023). However, there is a scarcity of studies addressing this topic, particularly in the Brazilian context, underscoring the need to expand and improve knowledge in the area (Rizzatti et al., 2018).

Given this, the objective of this article was to understand, from the perceptions of women who joined the TVMS in the BA, how their transition from a civilian to a military career is configured. This transition requires a careful evaluation of the conditions that promote adaptation and management of professional changes, fundamental aspects for success in this process (Veloso, 2022). Considering that career building is a dynamic phenomenon subject to constant transformations, investigating how individuals face these transitions becomes relevant to support the development of more effective practices and public policies (Anderson et al., 2019).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, we discuss the main concepts that underpin the article, including theories on career transition and literature on the transition process from civilian to military identity and on women's participation in the military environment.

2.1 Career transition

Career can be understood in numerous ways, due to the variety of contexts, perspectives, purposes, and focuses, being considered a broad concept encompassing many meanings (Collin, 2007), lacking a single theoretical or disciplinary view (Baruch et al., 2015). It can refer to the individual's movement through time and space, focusing on the intersection between individual biography and social structures (Young & Collin, 2000). It can also be seen as an individual's adaptation to a chosen occupation or to their perception of that occupation, being a process not predetermined but constructed over time, which implies an active role for the individual (Kilimnik et al., 2008).

People make certain professional decisions and assign meaning to them, highlighting the uniqueness of each individual in a specific context and providing a unique perspective on the world (Wang & Li, 2024). Professional decisions are based on personal values, beliefs, and interests, especially when considering a career transition (Anderson et al., 2019).

Career transitions, whether planned or not, are moments of reflection and self-discovery that require preparation and knowledge of the job market (Rizzatti et al., 2018). They consist of complex processes, largely influenced by contextual factors, personal characteristics, support received, and other elements (Veloso & Dutra, 2014), and require adaptation and a willingness to start over, and should be in tune with the individual's new interests and life stage (Anderson et al., 2019).

Organizations need to be attentive to the different career development needs throughout the lives of employees (Steindórsdóttir et al., 2023). Career transitions, which are becoming increasingly common, are causing fragmented professional trajectories and interruptions, significantly impacting individuals (Chudzikowski, 2012) and their employability (De Vos et al., 2021). These changes, which go beyond simple alterations such as job rotation or enrichment, represent considerable transformations in the content and environment of work (Akkermans et al., 2024).

2.2 Military personnel in Brazil

The organizational culture of the Brazilian Armed Forces is linked to an expanded historical role attributed to the institution. As D'Araujo (2009) points out, Brazil associates national development with the strengthening of Defense, conferring on the military symbolic and strategic functions that go beyond strictly combative actions. The National Defense Strategy reinforces this centrality by presenting the Armed Forces as the "cradle of nationality" and agents of technological and industrial competence. This context contributes to the formation of a solid military ethos, which shapes institutional expectations and daily practices and also influences the experience of temporary military personnel (D'Araujo, 2009).

The historical breadth of the role assigned to the Brazilian Armed Forces, as evidenced by Carvalho (2019), reinforces this institutional ethos over time. Successive republican constitutions have assigned to the military not only the defense of the homeland, but also the responsibility of guaranteeing

constitutional powers, law and order, conferring upon them a political function that goes beyond the scope of military activity.

This legal and symbolic architecture consolidated the perception that national stability would depend, to some extent, on the tutelage of the Armed Forces, perpetuating a logic of moderating power that strains democratic consolidation. Within this context, the military organizational culture is structured on the basis of discipline, hierarchy, and an expanded national mission, strengthening an institutional identity that shapes internal behaviors, practices, and expectations.

Castro (2021) highlights that the military training process constitutes a rite of passage that requires the individual to deconstruct their civilian identity and construct a military identity understood as superior and distinct. According to the author, this transformation occurs through a symbolic opposition between the so-called military world and the civilian world, native categories that structure the perception that military personnel have of themselves and others. Castro (2021) argues that becoming a soldier means ceasing to be a civilian, since military identity overrides other forms of personal identification, remaining even outside the uniform or institutional spaces. The author further maintains that the very notion of civilian is produced through the military gaze and activated exclusively to demarcate who belongs to the military body and who is outside of it, which reinforces the totalizing character of this identity. Thus, for the author, the difference between military and civilian is not only functional, but profoundly symbolic and constitutive of the military experience.

Castro (2021) also demonstrates that military life is organized by endogenous sociability structures that shape daily practices, behaviors, and relationships. The author describes hierarchical circles, as stipulated in the Military Statute, as devices that regulate interactions between categories, define rules of coexistence, and seek to preserve mutual respect and camaraderie. These mechanisms prevent situations classified as hierarchical promiscuity and reinforce institutional order.

The author also emphasizes that the military world functions as a relatively closed social circle, in which work, housing, leisure, and study are largely shared, thus increasing integration among its members. This dynamic extends to the families of military personnel, forming what is known as the military family, in which wives and children play essential roles in the daily reproduction of values, norms, and even informal hierarchies of the institution. In this way, the military world constitutes an environment of strong social cohesion, in which military identity permeates various dimensions of life.

2.3 Women in military careers

There has been an increase in the number of women and a diversification of their military roles driven by pressure for equality and changes in the Armed Forces aimed at reducing personnel and professionalizing them (Carreiras, 2008). However, even with these advances, these female military personnel face several challenges, from their incorporation into the military to their subsequent promotions throughout their careers.

The first barrier encountered is the inclusion of women in the Armed Forces, considering that differences still exist in the entry of men and women into these careers (Mariani, 2022). Despite these differences, some factors encourage women to pursue a military career, such as subsidized education, greater job security, medical and dental benefits, and the possibility of receiving a pension (Waruszynski et al., 2022).

International literature also demonstrates that family influence is a relevant element in the decision to join and adapt to a military career. Segal (1986) argues that families with prior ties to the Armed Forces tend to transmit values such as discipline, commitment, and respect for hierarchy, favoring the early internalization of the military ethos. Empirical studies reinforce this perspective: Gibson et al. (2007) show that parental attitudes, expectations, and models influence the propensity to enlist, while Spence et al. (2013) demonstrate that the family structure experienced in adolescence is directly related to the probability of enlistment after high school. These findings indicate that the family context acts not only as a motivator for career choice but also as a facilitator of socialization and adaptation processes in the military environment.

The impacts observed in the transition of women to military service stem both from the adaptation process of individuals from civilian life to an institution marked by its own ethos, and from gender. On the one hand, there are the effects resulting from military socialization, which involves the incorporation of military values, norms, and practices, such as hierarchy, discipline, and permanent availability. On the other hand, there are the effects associated with the experience of being inserted into a historically masculine environment, permeated by gender asymmetries. Although these dimensions intertwine in the concrete experience of the participants, they are not equivalent.

Some previous studies focus on the mental and physical health of women working professionally in military contexts. Bray et al. (1999) observed that gender-related stress in the military environment was an indicator of illicit drug use and smoking among female military personnel. Fadum et al. (2019) found that most female military personnel reported physical symptoms similar to those of male military personnel, but there were differences between the sexes regarding mental health and drug use.

Santos et al. (2023) observed that female military personnel face high rates of mental health disorders, along with the dilemma of motherhood, which involves balancing the demands of a military career and family responsibilities, such as separation from children due to deployment and the need to resume their military duties after maternity leave. Therefore, the literature shows that the "burden of the uniform" manifests itself primarily in the emotional, psychological, and social demands imposed on women, who must reconcile rigid institutional demands with gender pressures and family responsibilities.

There are some differences in the occupational distribution of men and women in the Armed Forces. Women continue to be largely excluded from combat roles and remain underrepresented in senior ranks and positions of power within the military system (Carreiras, 2008). For example, Patten and Parker (2011) found that while roles in electrical engineering and infantry are dominated by men, women on active duty are more concentrated in administrative and medical roles. However, there has been an increase in the number of women facing prolonged deployments in combat environments and performing combat support roles, being subject to unique risks to reproductive health during and after service, including infertility, a higher likelihood of hysterectomy, and sexually transmitted diseases (Berk Clark et al., 2018).

Carreiras et al. (2022) found that formal equality between men and women in the Armed Forces and security forces is necessary, but insufficient to guarantee effective integration. To move towards real equality, the authors argue, it is necessary to adopt measures that address the structures that still limit women's access to military careers and create concrete opportunities for professional development for both sexes, leveraging the gender perspective as a source of new skills essential to contemporary

forces. Thus, promoting gender equality in defense and security does not mean eliminating differences, but ensuring that different people have the same power.

The condition of women must be interpreted within the cultural and professional context in which they are embedded, considering the challenges of working in a historically masculine environment (Capelle et al., 2002). Female underrepresentation, occupational segregation, and power imbalances persist due to broader social and cultural processes, such as the devaluation of caregiving and unconscious biases and prejudices (Carreiras et al., 2022). Capelle et al. (2002) found a restriction of 10% of positions for women in the Military Police, highlighting structural inequalities, limiting their social representation and career growth opportunities, and also configuring the "glass ceiling". They also observed that the attempt to adapt norms to feminine characteristics is seen by men as a privilege, which generates greater demands, considering them as limitations to performance.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative approach with descriptive and explanatory purposes, using semi-structured interviews to collect primary data. The analysis developed seeks to interpret perceptions and experiences narrated by a specific group of participants, situated in a particular organizational and historical context. It describes the participants' experiences and seeks to explain how the transition from a civilian career to military service produces professional, socio-emotional, and personal effects, due to (1) the effects arising from the transition process from civilian identity to military identity and (2) effects associated with gender status in the military environment, which contribute to the perception of the so-called "burden of the uniform" on women.

The study was conducted with a group of ten women who transitioned from civilian occupations to military service, using the snowball sampling technique. They served as Temporary Technical Officers (TTO) and Temporary Technical Sergeants (TTS) in the Brazilian Army's Military Training Center (BAMTC) at the same military base. The participants, all adults between 25 and 45 years old, performed various military functions for varying periods. The interviewees' participation was anonymous to preserve confidentiality, and they were coded with flower names, as specified in Table 1.

TABLE 1 CHARACTERIZATION OF THE INTERVIEWS

Code	Function	Time in civil service	Time in TVMS
Camellia	Pharmacist	8 years	4 months
Dahlia	Nutritionist	8 years	4 months
Sunflower	Nursing Technician	10 years	1 year
Jasmine	Doctor	2 years	6 years
Lily	Pharmacist	10 years	4 months
Daisy	Nurse	6 years	4 months

(Continue)

Code	Function	Time in civil service	Time in TVMS
Orchid	Dentist	13 years	4 months
Rose	Pharmacist	13 years	7 years
Tulip	Social Worker	11 years	4 months
Violet	Administrator	6 years	4 months

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The research was conducted at a medical post linked to an operational Military Organization, responsible for providing care to military personnel and their dependents who use the Army's health system. This context implies a work routine distinct from that observed in administrative bases. The professionals work in shifts, on-call schedules, and provide direct care to the public, dealing daily with healthcare demands.

Compared to civilian healthcare settings, especially those within organizations with greater organizational flexibility and less hierarchical rigidity, the military environment tends to impose higher levels of emotional pressure, stemming from the combination of care demands and institutional specificities such as discipline, hierarchy, and permanent availability (Denardin et al., 2022; Herman & Yarwood, 2014). Furthermore, studies indicate that military contexts are associated with higher levels of occupational stress due to the unpredictability of demands, the possibility of acting in critical situations, and the all-encompassing nature of the military profession (Adler et al., 2011; Britt et al., 2001), which intensifies the need for rapid decision-making and constant availability requirements, factors that can influence the career transition experience.

The invitation to participate voluntarily was sent via individual messages, in which the purpose of the research was presented concisely. After the participants accepted, the interviews were scheduled in person. Following a script composed of nine open-ended questions developed based on Anderson et al. (2019), Becker et al. (2023), Rizzatti et al. (2018), Veloso (2022), Veloso and Dutra (2014), and Visentini et al. (2023), all interviews were audio-recorded with due consent, formalized through the signing of an Informed Consent Form. The participants were informed about the confidentiality of their identities and the objective of the study.

The interviews were fully recorded and subsequently transcribed to preserve the content. Data analysis was conducted following the guidelines proposed by Bardin (2011) for content analysis. This process involved three phases: 1) pre-analysis, which included preparation and organization of the data through a cursory reading of all pages; 2) exploration of the material, in which the data were coded and categorized according to the four previously defined categories: Professional Resignification, Socioemotional Impact, Professional Impact, and Personal Impact; and 3) treatment of results, inferences, and interpretation, which involved analyzing the categories to identify relationships, patterns, or trends in the collected data.

Table 2 presents the 4 categories and a description of their respective concepts.

TABLE 2 CATEGORIES ANALYZED

Categories	Concepts	Theoretical basis
Professional Resignification	It involves comparing expectations and reality of military service, reinterpreting past experiences, and reconstructing the meaning attributed to one's own career.	Rizzatti et al. (2018); Veloso (2022); Visentini et al. (2023).
Socioemotional Impact	It refers to the effects of the transition on social relationships, belonging, and emotional well-being	Anderson et al. (2021); Becker et al. (2023).
Professional Impact	A professional repositioning occurs, marked by the "burden of the uniform", which redefines responsibilities, development possibilities, and modes of operation compared to a civilian career.	Denardin et al. (2022); Herman & Yarwood (2014); Iermakov et al. (2025).
Personal Impact	It relates to internal changes in self-concept, values, sense of identity, and private life.	Ibarra & Barbulescu (2010); Herman & Yarwood (2014); Iermakov et al. (2025).

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The systematization of the previously established categories made it possible to understand how different dimensions of professional, social, and personal life are affected by the transition to military service. By relating the empirical evidence to the literature, it is observed that the process simultaneously involves career redefinitions, emotional adjustments, professional repositioning, and identity transformations. Thus, the categories function as a structuring axis for the analysis of the results presented in the following subsections.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we present the findings organized into four analytical categories, accompanied by a discussion in light of the theoretical framework.

4.1 Professional Resignification

Professional redefinition occurs when individuals seek to transform the relationship between work and career (Rizzatti et al., 2018). The accounts of the interviewees showed that professional redefinition is mainly associated with the transition process from a civilian career to the military environment, and is therefore influenced by adaptation to the military institutional ethos. Although gender permeates the participants' experiences, the findings in this category predominantly show effects related to the change in professional context, and not exclusively to the condition of being women.

Some professionals choose to leave their corporate careers to align their occupations with their aspirations (Visentini et al., 2023), including in contexts of crisis and conflict, in which new social and professional demands emerge. They choose to abandon stable jobs for temporary occupations (Torres, 2020). Iermakov et al. (2025), for example, also observed that many women in the Ukrainian

Armed Forces, originally from fields such as design, journalism, education, and sociology, have become active as snipers, intelligence agents, and drone operators. Among the motivations for this transition, the desire to defend the country stands out.

Camellia emphasized in her account:

> Sometimes I felt that my career didn't have any meaning for me, but I also lacked clarity about where and what I wanted to work with. I knew I wanted to leave where I was; I didn't want to be a mother while I was there, I barely had time for myself, the workload consumed most of my day, but I felt trapped there because of the experience I had gained, the position I had already reached, the salary, the benefits. Due to the workload and exhausting work, I didn't have any spare time to prepare myself or look for something else, you know? Then the opportunity arose and I joined the TVMS of the BA, not that it was my dream or something I had been looking for, but it happened, it worked out on the first try, and I decided to go there to allow myself a chance to experience something new and try to have a better quality of life, thinking about preparing myself before becoming a mother.

Most of the women interviewed reported that they transitioned from the civil sector to the TVMS sector with the goal of redefining their professional path. They sought a new professional dimension that offered better financial compensation and less stress. These motivations are associated with the search for a balance between professional and personal life, a recurring aspect in career transition processes. In the case of the participants, these demands are also linked to their life trajectories, including family responsibilities, which can intensify the perception of overload in the previous context.

The interviewee, Sunflower, emphasized:

> In my previous job, I barely spent any time with my family. My teenage daughters were practically taking care of the house alone, I only went home to sleep, basically. I had recommendations that working for the BA would be better for me due to the workload, so as soon as I got into the BA of the TVMS, I quit my civilian career.

In the accounts of the interviewees who transitioned from civilian to military careers, a strong commitment to the values of honor, curiosity, and the desire to join the BA was observed. Interviewee Sunflower reported that she had always admired the women who served in the BA and felt intrigued by the possibility of becoming one of them. In turn, interviewee Daisy shared that her dream of joining the BA arose after graduation, considering military work highly noble. Despite initially facing limitations due to lack of experience, Daisy later dedicated herself to the selection process and achieved success.

Interviewee Camellia reported frequently feeling overwhelmed due to the grueling workload and demanding nature of her civilian career. She applied for and was selected for the TVMS of BA program. She reported facing a period of confusion and a difficult decision, but, upon realizing the experiential opportunities offered by the BA, decided to take the risk. In contrast, interviewee Lily, who also transitioned to a military career with the intention of gaining more free time, found herself confronted with a series of frustrations and challenges stemming from this career change.

In the context of transitioning to a new career, a similarity was identified among the interviewees, as they all ventured into an unknown reality and faced new challenges, even without a complete

understanding of what military work entailed. Interviewees Sunflower, Lily, Daisy, and Tulip reported being aware of people already working in the BA and, based on experiences shared by others, formed expectations about working in the institution. However, when confronted with practical reality, these interviewees admitted to experiencing a certain degree of frustration. This result highlights an effect of professional transition processes, marked by the contrast between expectations built on external references and the institutional reality experienced.

The interviewee, Lily, expressed:

> I had friends who worked in that field and they told me it was super easy. But for me, it wasn't quite like that. I didn't identify with the principles of the BA, although in theory I knew some of the strict regulations, but in practice the feeling was different. This caused me psychological, financial, and emotional strain.

The interviewee, Dahlia, also emphasized:

> I entered the selection process to work in my field of study, but upon arriving at the job I'm experiencing job role deviations, having to work in areas that have nothing to do with my degree. I have to stay here until I can recover some of the losses, because I changed a lot in my life to come here, but if I could, I would go back.

These accounts indicate that the frustrations experienced are related to the organizational characteristics of the military environment, such as institutional rigidity, defined roles, and lack of autonomy, aspects that impact individuals from civilian backgrounds in general. On the other hand, in a positive way, the interviewee Sunflower shared that she feels grateful and has a new perspective since joining the BA. She stated that the transition provided numerous opportunities and recognition.

Similarly, interviewee Tulip highlighted that she feels honored and valued for having acquired this experience to include in her professional resume. A sense of positive resignification was observed among most of the interviewees who transitioned from civilian to military careers. They maintained their roles in the areas of training and experience they already held in their civilian careers, and this change brought them financial advantages.

The resignification experienced by all interviewees was influenced by how their work was structured after entering the new field. When an individual experiences a specific event triggered by one or more unexpected events, resulting in changes throughout their professional trajectory, these changes are closely linked to the perceived context, the passage of time, and the interpretation of the events experienced. This manifests itself through transitions that can reveal continuities or ruptures in career progression (Visentini et al., 2023).

Veloso (2022) points out that, before opting for a career transition, it is necessary to examine the current context of one's career, identifying both the strengths and weaknesses of one's professional situation. It is also necessary to investigate the underlying reasons that drive the desire to change career path, bearing in mind that a negative perspective of the current situation can lead to decisions influenced by emotions, frequently resulting in misguided choices in the long term. To avoid such mistakes, it is important to conduct a careful analysis of labor market trends and projections of career changes, especially those resulting from technological advances.

Table 3 presents a summary of the main evidence of resignification in the transition from civilian to military career.

TABLE 3 EVIDENCE OF RESIGNIFICATION IN CAREER TRANSITION

Evidence identified	Description
Motivations for career transition	Better quality of life, work-life balance, authenticity, and dissatisfaction with working hours.
Positive resignification in career transition	The search for meaning, balance, and authenticity in work leads to the pursuit of opportunities that provide greater personal and professional satisfaction, even if it means abandoning stable careers.
Challenges and risks of career transition	There were difficulties adapting to new work environments, especially when the tasks were not aligned with their skills and previous experiences.
Comparison between expectations and reality	Expectations regarding the new career often contrast sharply with the reality experienced after the transition. There was frustration regarding situations that did not meet initial expectations.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The accounts offer a multifaceted perspective on the process of professional resignification and career transition. It was found that the search for meaning and balance between professional and personal life is central to this journey. In this sense, the resignification observed in this category is predominantly associated with the transition from a civilian career to a military environment, involving adaptation to new routines, structures, and institutional expectations.

Although gender permeates these experiences, especially in aspects related to the participants' life trajectories, the findings indicate that the main elements of tension emerge from the clash between idealized expectations and the reality of military work. For many interviewees, this process was experienced simultaneously as liberating and burdensome, revealing one of the first outlines of the "burden of the uniform", here more related to the need to adapt to the military ethos.

4.2 Socioemotional Impact

The career transition from the civilian to the military sector implies not only an occupational change, but also a transformation in culture, philosophy, and work environment. In the context of this research, the observed socioemotional impacts stem both from the adaptation process of individuals from the civilian sector to the military ethos and, in some cases, from experiences related to gender in a historically male environment.

The accounts from the interviewees showed that when individuals seek guidance, they undergo internal and external transformations. For interviewees Dahlia, Lily, and Tulip, the opportunity to join TVMS led to changes in location, requiring them to leave their established comfort zones. They reported facing a sociogeographic discontinuity when abandoning their places of origin and

family support networks. This transition resulted in challenges, financial expenses, and the need for readjustment until they achieved a new sociogeographic fit, highlighting the effects of career transition processes involving geographic displacement and disruption of support networks.

It was observed that, for some interviewees, the socio-emotional impact presented more negative characteristics, while for others it proved to be insignificant. Interviewee Sunflower, who continued to perform a function similar to that performed in the civilian sector and did not face a geographical change, reported not having experienced a considerable socioemotional impact. She emphasized that, in the BA, she feels more valued and respected compared to her former civilian job, which motivates her even more to fulfill her responsibilities.

On the other hand, interviewees Camellia, Dahlia, Lily, Daisy, and Orchid expressed dissatisfaction and negative feelings regarding the socioemotional impacts resulting from the career transition. The interviewees reported difficulties in establishing new professional relationship dynamics and adapting to military culture. These elements can be understood as part of the socialization process in a more rigid institutional environment.

In her testimony, Camellia expressed:

> I come from a civilian job that valued human and personal values above all else, and I felt supported by the company's human resources department. In the BA, we have to be soldiers first and foremost, even above our own lives; I feel insecure about getting support for simple things like personal matters, because there isn't, for example, a human resources department.

In the accounts of the interviewees, one of the difficulties faced is the emptiness during the transition or the confusion of not being able to detach themselves from their previous experience, an aspect related to the identity change process from civilian to military. At the same time, some participants reported feeling more restrained and reserved in the military environment, indicating not only the internalization of institutional norms, but also, in certain cases, tensions associated with emotional expression in a context marked by traditional gender patterns.

Camellia, Daisy, and Lily reported a socioemotional upheaval upon readjusting to the military environment, where affective interactions are limited to salutes and handshakes. Camellia said: "I feel I can't be myself in the BA; I have to adopt a rigid and austere posture". Daisy noted: "I can't express my emotions or opinions in the BA. I remain silent, introspective, and reserved". These accounts indicate the internalization of institutional norms and the limitation of emotional expression, contributing to more reserved and introspective behaviors.

A military career is distinctive and possesses unique characteristics. Interviewee Sunflower reported that, upon entering military service, she felt the need to adopt a more discreet demeanor, reflecting on the responsibility of her personal actions. Camellia expressed apprehension when comparing a military career with a civilian one, emphasizing that "in a civilian career, the greatest fear was being dismissed for just cause. In the military environment, there are punishments and even the possibility of imprisonment". Lily reported experiencing panic attacks and anxiety, especially during weeks of on-call duty, due to the fear of being called to emergency situations, which affects her sleep.

These accounts demonstrate that psychological pressure and apprehension are related to the structural characteristics of a military career, such as rigid discipline, the possibility of sanctions, and the requirement for constant availability, affecting individuals in the process of adapting to the

military environment. In contrast, Jasmine mentioned that she incorporated principles of military culture into her personal life, such as respect and organization.

Furthermore, it was observed that the length of time spent in TVMS influences the intensity of socioemotional impacts. Among the interviewees, those at the beginning of the transition, with less than a year in TVMS, or those nearing the end of their service, with almost eight years, are the most affected by the effects of the career transition. Interviewee Rose, about to conclude her TVMS period, reported feeling apprehensive about the future due to the lack of established external guarantees. Despite this, she also expressed a certain relief at the end of her military service.

These findings are supported by international literature on career transitions in military contexts. Anderson et al. (2021) highlight that, in the career transition process, people seek emotional support from family and friends to minimize the effects of professional change, such as the uncertainties and anxieties generated in this process. Becker et al. (2023) investigated the experiences of 31 veterans of the Australian Defence Force who transitioned to the civilian sector. Upon leaving military service, these individuals faced a sense of displacement or culture shock and challenges in reconstructing their identity.

In turn, the women interviewed who recently joined the BA reported experiencing a culture shock when adapting to the new demands of the military environment. They mentioned difficulties with saluting, the hierarchy to be followed, assigned missions, patriotism, and the work schedule in the off-duty hours. The adaptation process involves adjusting to a military culture with a more rigid posture, strict hierarchies, and new social dynamics. This culture shock results mainly from adapting to an organizational structure distinct from that experienced in civilian life, marked by hierarchy, formality, and discipline. Although these elements affect all individuals in the transition process, for some participants they are linked to specific gender-related experiences, intensifying the emotional dilemmas they face.

Table 4 presents a summary of the main evidence regarding the socioemotional impact of the transition from a civilian to a military career.

TABLE 4 EVIDENCE OF THE SOCIOEMOTIONAL IMPACT ON CAREER TRANSITION

Evidence identified	Description
Impact on interpersonal relationships	Some of the interviewees had difficulty establishing new relationship dynamics in the new environment, facing the loss of support networks and the need to build new connections.
Restriction of emotional involvement	The interviewees reported that gestures of affection were replaced by formalities, such as military greetings, resulting in a feeling of emotional distance and making it difficult to connect with colleagues.
Psychological impact of pressure	The interviewees highlighted that this institutional pressure led them to adopt a more rigid and austere stance, inhibiting the expression of emotions and opinions. As a result, they reported more introspective and reserved behavior.
Apprehension and concerns	The interviewees reported anxiety and uncertainty due to harsh punishments, including the possibility of imprisonment. In addition, panic attacks and difficulty sleeping occurred, especially during weeks of on-call duty.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Each transition trajectory is unique, reflecting the diversity of individuals and situations. The findings in this category indicate that the socioemotional impact stems from a combination of two processes: on the one hand, adaptation to the military environment, marked by the breaking of bonds, incorporation of institutional norms, and redefinition of professional identity; on the other hand, experiences related to gender in a historically masculine context, which can intensify feelings of surveillance, pressure, and limitation in emotional expression. Although these dimensions intertwine in the reported experiences, the analysis allows us to identify that a significant portion of the impacts is associated with the institutional demands of military service.

The process of adaptation, resilience, and identity reconstruction is complex and requires careful attention to facilitate a successful transition between different professional contexts. Capelle et al. (2002) highlight that female military personnel feel more professionally pressured and personally observed, while men perceive preferential treatment, such as exemption from risky duties and maternity leave. Spijkers et al. (2024), investigating the Dutch Armed Forces, observed that women's performance is constantly scrutinized, so that mistakes, emotions, or unmet goals are used to question their competence.

This evidence from the literature contributes to the discussion of how gender factors can intensify the socio-emotional impacts identified in this research. Institutional culture makes it difficult for individuals to reveal the aforementioned situations or seek support. These practices can generate socio-emotional impact, causing feelings of undervaluation, insecurity, and frustration, as well as increasing the pressure to prove competence in a predominantly male environment, which affects self-esteem and sense of belonging.

4.3 Professional Impact

Military service differs from civilian work from its initial stages. In the context of this research, the observed professional impacts are predominantly associated with the institutional characteristics of the military environment and the adaptation process of individuals from civilian backgrounds. According to the interviewees, while in the civilian sector selection processes usually detail functions, remuneration, and working hours, in the TVMS selection process is based primarily on training and experience, with job postings often omitting information about remuneration and duty schedules. Unlike the civilian system, a military career is not limited to a fixed weekly workload, demanding full commitment and continuous availability.

Denardin et al. (2022) emphasize that military service transcends the traditional model of a profession, configuring itself as an occupation that demands rigorous adherence to norms, discipline, and permanent dedication. This dynamic also appears in Herman and Yarwood (2014), who demonstrate that military identity is constructed from the incorporation of institutional values that guide behavior, attitudes, and decisions inside and outside the work environment. Similarly, Iermakov et al. (2025) show that military service transforms not only professional performance but also routines, self-concepts, and lifestyles. Thus, "burden the uniform" ceases to be merely a functional attribute and comes to represent an extension of the identity and availability required by the military profession, broadly affecting individuals in the process of transitioning from civilian life.

This scenario generated discrepancies between expectations and reality in military service, highlighting challenges typical of transition processes to organizational contexts with strong

institutional rigidity. Camellia entered the BA without a clear understanding of remuneration and was assigned to a role without experience. Lily, in turn, took on a task without a history and with lower pay, discovering these issues only after accepting the offer and leaving the civilian sector. Sunflower also faced a job deviation, being allocated to a department different from her training, without the possibility of contesting it.

The interviewees reported distress and restrictions due to the need for 24-hour availability for the BA, which limits personal planning. They also expressed frustration with the rigid rules of obedience. These accounts indicate that the tensions experienced are related to the structural characteristics of the military career, such as initial undefined roles, compulsory assignment of tasks, and the requirement of continuous availability, affecting the professional autonomy of individuals from civilian backgrounds.

Military life is based on hierarchy and discipline, which are essential pillars of the military institution. Hierarchy establishes an ordered scale of authority and subordination among members, while discipline emphasizes obedience and readiness to follow superior orders (Guirra, 2021). Camellia and Lily, who previously held management positions or high-responsibility roles in the civilian sector, reported negative impacts from the military hierarchical system.

They expressed feeling restricted in developing activities due to the rigorous authorization process and hierarchical communication, which limits their ability to take initiatives and seek solutions independently, as they did in their civilian careers. This result highlights the contrast between civilian work models, which tend to value autonomy and initiative, and the hierarchical logic of the military environment, which structures decision-making in a centralized manner.

Table 5 presents a summary of the main evidence regarding the professional impact of transitioning from a civilian to a military career.

TABLE 5 EVIDENCE OF PROFESSIONAL IMPACT ON CAREER TRANSITION

Evidence identified	Description
Dedication and total availability	A military career demands an exceptional level of dedication and availability, beyond the expectations of a conventional job. The interviewees reported demands that extend 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
Lack of choice in job assignments	Unlike many civilian jobs, where individuals often have some choice or influence over their duties, in the military career, the women interviewed reported being assigned tasks that did not match their skills or training.
Impact on development	Some of the women interviewed acknowledge that the challenges of a military career can contribute to their professional growth, requiring adaptation, coping with complex situations, and developing leadership skills in challenging contexts.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The "burden of the uniform" manifests itself in the loss of autonomy, the compulsory assignment of duties, and the mandatory adherence to rigid discipline and hierarchy, which contrast with the civilian career paths of several interviewees. The accounts illustrate how a military career affects

the professional trajectory of its members in a complex and distinct way. A military career demands not only commitment but also a substantial reconfiguration of the professional approach, marked by unique and challenging characteristics. The tension between hierarchical rigidity, the need for constant availability, and restrictions on autonomy, as reported by the interviewees, highlights the contrast between the expectations of the civilian context and the realities of the military environment.

4.4 Personal Impact

Transitions to new professional fields often result in confusion, insecurity, regret, self-questioning, and uncertainty (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). Interviewees Camellia and Lily, who left their careers in large corporations, reported these feelings. They mentioned the sensation of having traded a developed work environment, where human and contemporary values were valued, for an institution with conservative and rigid standards. Furthermore, both Lily and Daisy faced embarrassing moments with superiors who approached them in a provocative and abrupt manner, resulting in humiliation and demoralization. Despite these experiences, both felt compelled to maintain a firm stance to avoid showing weakness in the professional environment.

The interviewee, Camellia, mentioned:

> I haven't yet found what I came here looking for (more free time and quality of life), but I know I need to wait and be patient. I know things are harder in the first year; I find myself fighting against myself, sometimes feeling desperate, questioning myself, and even regretting it. I think about going back to my previous career, but I hold back because I know I shouldn't do that.

Participant Lily also shared her experience:

> I wonder what I've done with my life. But I know this transition has helped me move forward. Although I don't intend to stay here for long, I know I need to be patient and wait for my training period before I can leave. This transition has had a huge impact on me, and so much has happened at once that, if I had known, I wouldn't have changed. I moved to a different city and, consequently, my relationship ended, and I found myself alone in a place without any emotional ties, so everything became very complicated during that period.

All the interviewees reported a feeling of strangeness when they saw themselves wearing the uniform, perceiving a "masculinization" and the need to adhere to the strict presentation guidelines of the BA. These guidelines include rigid rules for hair, nails, earrings, and makeup. They felt as if they were assuming a different persona. Furthermore, the interviewees noted the need to achieve a more robust physical condition to meet the requirements of the physical fitness tests. This aspect highlights not only the incorporation of institutional norms but also gender-related tensions regarding conformity to body and aesthetic standards historically constructed based on masculine references in the military environment.

Herman and Yarwood (2014) stated that the Armed Forces transform the identities of civilians upon becoming military personnel. During military service, individuals generally adopt a collective and structured identity, strongly linked to their role and expectations within the military context.

Iermakov et al. (2025) note that many women in the Armed Forces use their social networks to assert that they operate under conditions equivalent to those of men, facing the same challenges in the field and using identical weapons, uniforms, and equipment. However, some of the women analyzed by the authors draw attention to the absence of uniforms specifically designed for the female body. Like their male colleagues, they adopt codenames that express their identities, but these names generally combine two elements: the courage and camaraderie shared with male military personnel, and traits of femininity and cultural symbolism that also mark their performance in military service.

Interviewee Daisy reported difficulties maintaining a regular exercise routine, a concern that didn't exist in her previous civilian career, now exacerbated by lack of time. Orchid mentioned suffering fractures in both knees during adaptation training due to her inadequate physical condition before joining the BA, resulting in health problems. Dahlia, in turn, highlighted the feeling of being trapped by the constant availability demanded by the BA. She emphasizes the need to fulfill unofficially assigned missions, always be ready for unexpected demands, including deviations from her assigned duties, and face 24-hour work shifts without adequate rest periods. These factors generate distress and frustration, as she commented:

> I have a young child, and thankfully my husband works from home, but if it weren't for that, it would be very complicated to manage, as I wouldn't be able to leave my child alone during those crazy shifts that sometimes come up.

In the accounts of the interviewees, all faced a challenging and frustrating reality in the TVMS on the BA. Each was dealing with her own emotional difficulties, in addition to the personal implications of the career transition. The change also had repercussions in the family circle: Camellia and Daisy reported friction with their partners due to jealousy caused by the predominantly male environment and the need to be absent at unconventional hours due to long work shifts. Sunflower mentioned that her daughters noticed an increase in her authoritarian attitude after she entered military service. In turn, Tulip revealed that, during periods of high intensity in the BA, she experienced feelings of irritation and intolerance in her home life.

Table 6 presents a summary of the main evidence regarding the personal impact of the transition from a civilian to a military career. It can be inferred that the transition to military service in the BA had a considerable personal impact on the interviewees. Feelings of anguish, doubt, remorse, and insecurity emerged as natural reactions to adapting to a new professional identity and the challenges of a military career. The interviewees reported difficulties with strict standards of appearance and behavior, which frequently affected their sense of individuality. Furthermore, the career changes impacted family dynamics, generating conflicts with partners and children, and altered the interviewees' attitudes and behavior at home.

TABLE 6 EVIDENCE OF PERSONAL IMPACT ON CAREER TRANSITION

Evidence identified	Description
Feelings triggered	The transition to a new professional environment, such as military service, can trigger emotional and psychological challenges, resulting in feelings of distress, insecurity, doubt, and regret during the adaptation to a new professional identity.
The need for adaptation and patience	The importance of exercising patience to overcome initial difficulties and allow the initial excitement of change to subside, enabling the integration of the new professional identity, was highlighted.
Appearance and physical fitness standards	Feelings were attributed to adapting to the use of military uniforms and personal presentation standards, coping with strict appearance rules, and the need to meet the physical fitness standards set by the BA.
Family relationships	Changes in work schedules, physical and emotional demands, and the adoption of new behaviors and norms have resulted in friction and challenges in family relationships.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The transition experienced by the participants presents specificities when compared to traditional military socialization. Castro (2021) indicates that full military training produces a symbolic rupture between the civilian and the military, marked by the "death" of the civilian individual and the "birth" of a new military identity. In the case of TVMS, however, this process is not completed in the same way. The interviewees undergo institutional and behavioral adaptation, but do not experience all the rituals, stages, and in-depth training characteristic of career military education.

This results in a partial integration into the military ethos, which helps explain feelings of alienation, hybrid identities, and the recurring sensation that they still belong, to some extent, to the civilian world. This incompleteness of the socialization process intensifies some elements of the "burden of the uniform", as it requires professionals to adopt military norms and postures without fully experiencing the identity formation that would support such demands.

Finally, it can be inferred that the personal impact of transitioning to military service in the BA results from the articulation between processes of institutional adaptation and identity reconstruction. Feelings of anguish, doubt, and insecurity emerge, to a large extent, from the need to redefine one's own identity in a context marked by rigid norms and specific expectations. At the same time, aspects related to gender become more evident in elements such as appearance standards, body perception, and insertion into a predominantly male environment. Thus, the findings indicate that the personal impact cannot be attributed exclusively to a single factor, but must be understood considering the intersection between institutional demands and gender dynamics.

5. CONCLUSION

This article aimed to understand the career transition of women from the civilian sphere to the TVMS. Four main impacts of this transition were observed. Resignification involved the search for meaning and authenticity in work, bringing challenges and opportunities for personal and professional growth.

The socioemotional impact included emotional and social changes, such as cultural adaptation and psychological pressures, resulting in difficulties during the transition. The professional impact encompassed considerable challenges and adaptations, highlighting the differences between military life and civilian practices. Finally, the personal impact profoundly affected the identity, family relationships, and emotional health of the interviewees, generating feelings of anguish, insecurity, doubt, and regret. These findings illustrate the complexity of career transition and its far-reaching effects in both the professional and personal spheres.

These findings allow us to understand what is characterized here as the "burden of the uniform" for women in the Brazilian Army: a set of emotional, symbolic, and institutional tensions that permeate the subjectivity of women upon entering the military world. This burden manifests itself in the need to reorganize identities, renegotiate social roles, and internalize values that, while conferring belonging and purpose, impose renunciations, displacements, and pressures distinct from those experienced in the civilian sphere. It is a burden that is expressed not only in the daily work routine but also within the personal, emotional, and relational experiences of these professionals.

The contribution of this study to the literature lies in deepening the understanding of the motivations and impacts associated with the career transition from the civilian sector to the TVMS. The results elucidate how the transition challenges the personal identity, family relationships, and emotional well-being of women, highlighting differences between military life and civilian practices and offering valuable insights for future research on the impact of career changes.

This article also offers a practical and public management contribution by providing military organizations with in-depth insights into the impacts of career transition on women's personal and professional lives. The evidence can guide the implementation of support measures, such as psychological counseling and emotional support programs. Socially, the article contributes to the promotion of women's empowerment and diversity, aligning with Target 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aims for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

Among the limitations of this research, given that it is a qualitative study focused on the perceptions of ten participants from the same military base, the findings should be understood as contextualized and not generalizable to all women serving in temporary military service or the Brazilian Armed Forces. The small sample size of only ten women is noteworthy, as it may not reflect all the experiences and perspectives of women who have undergone this transition.

Furthermore, the study was conducted in a single region of Brazil, limiting the generalizability of the results to other military regions of the country. Another point is that the data collection focused on women who recently made the career transition, which may not fully capture the effects and impacts experienced by those who went through this change a long time ago.

For future research, it is recommended to investigate the career transition of active-duty military personnel in the BA of the TVMS, with the aim of evaluating the reverse transition process. It is also suggested that quantitative studies with larger samples be conducted to obtain a more precise assessment of the effects of career transitions in military and civilian contexts, in addition to longitudinal studies to monitor changes in women's experiences and perceptions over time after the transition.

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RESEARCH DATA AVAILABILITY

The dataset that supports the results of this study is not publicly available.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicts of interest.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE USAGE

The ChatGPT artificial intelligence tool was used to assist in the technical and grammatical review of the text and the standardization of references.