

Perceived Public Trust of the Community in the PNP in District 3

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Abstract

This study examined the perceived public trust and confidence in the Philippine National Police (PNP) in the 3rd Congressional District of Negros Occidental, focusing on the effectiveness of police performance and its relationship with community perception. Anchored on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Fortenberry, 2015), Self-Determination Theory (Andersson Arntén et al., 2016), and principles of community-oriented policing (The Police Community Relations Manual [Revised], 2012), the study employed a descriptive survey research design. A total of 341 participants from Victorias City, Silay City, Talisay City, Murcia, and E.B. Magalona were selected through purposive and stratified sampling. Data were gathered using a researcher-made questionnaire validated by experts and tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha, and analyzed using frequency, mean, and chi-square. Findings revealed that respondents generally exhibited a high level of trust and confidence in the PNP, with Talisay City showing a very high level. Trust levels varied across localities and were influenced by police visibility, responsiveness, adherence to procedures, community engagement, and perceived effectiveness in crime prevention and investigation. Significant differences in perceptions were observed across cities and municipalities, indicating that police performance and interaction with the community shape public trust. The study concluded that stronger police-community relationships, transparency, and responsiveness enhance public confidence. It recommends strengthening community partnerships, improving accountability, and integrating ethical values in criminal justice education to sustain trust. This study supports Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, which promotes peace, justice, and strong institutions, by highlighting the role of trust in effective policing and governance. Its sustainability impact lies in strengthening institutional credibility, enhancing community cooperation, and promoting accountable and community-oriented policing practices that contribute to long-term social stability.

Keywords: Community Perception, Community Policing, Philippine National Police, Police Effectiveness, Public Trust, Responsiveness, Transparency, Trust and Confidence.

1. Introduction

The Philippine National Police has faced increasing public scrutiny due to its involvement in anti-drug operations and internal disciplinary issues (Andanar, 2016; Torrevillas, 2017). Efforts to restore credibility include organizational reforms, anti-corruption initiatives, and strengthened accountability mechanisms. However, negative media coverage and reported misconduct have contributed to diminished public trust. Public perception is shaped not only by actual police performance but also by media narratives and societal discourse (Police Community Relations Manual [Revised], 2012). Trust in institutions is closely linked to quality of life, social cohesion, governance, and economic development (Center for the Study of Democracy, 2011). To address declining trust, the PNP promotes community-oriented policing, emphasizing partnerships, accountability, and service quality (The Police Community Relations Manual [Revised], 2012).

Literature consistently highlights that public trust is fundamental to the effectiveness of policing and the broader criminal justice system (Boateng, 2012). Trust enhances cooperation, compliance with the law, and legitimacy of police actions. Conversely, corruption, negative experiences, and media influence can undermine public confidence (Criminol, 2010; Roberts & Indermaur, 2009). Research also shows that perceptions of crime and justice are often shaped by media exposure rather than direct experience (Pfeiffer et al., 2005; Jones et al., 2008). Confidence in the police may coexist with perceptions of corruption due to symbolic trust in institutional roles (Smith, 2007; Roberts, 2007). Furthermore, trust is influenced by procedural fairness, legitimacy, and equitable treatment (Center for the Study of Democracy, 2011). Community engagement and transparency are critical in building trust. Ethical conduct, accountability, and partnerships with citizens strengthen police legitimacy and effectiveness (U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2007). Studies further emphasize that trust motivates compliance with laws and cooperation with authorities (Boateng, 2012; Tyler & Huo, 2002).

Globally, trust in police institutions varies depending on governance quality, socio-economic conditions, and democratic practices (Center for the Study of Democracy, 2011). In many societies, especially those with histories of corruption or

authoritarian rule, trust deficits are common (Boateng, 2012). Nationally, the Philippines faces challenges related to police accountability, media scrutiny, and public perception, particularly in the context of anti-drug operations (Andanar, 2016; Torrevillas, 2017). Locally, variations in trust and confidence may arise due to differences in police performance, visibility, and community engagement across municipalities. In the 3rd Congressional District of Negros Occidental, differences in local governance, policing strategies, and community relations influence how residents perceive police effectiveness and trustworthiness.

This study is anchored in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which emphasizes the importance of safety, recognition, and self-esteem in motivating behavior (Fortenbery, 2015). Positive recognition and effective management can enhance police performance and morale. Self-Determination Theory further explains motivation through intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing behavior (Andersson Arntén et al., 2016). These theories highlight how motivation affects police conduct and, consequently, public perception. The study is also grounded in legal frameworks such as Republic Act No. 8551, which mandates a professional, accountable, and community-oriented police force under Republic Act No. 8551 (RA 8551). Additionally, trust-based and legitimacy theories emphasize that public confidence depends on fairness, transparency, and alignment with community values (Jackson and Bradford, 2010; Loader and Mulcahy cited in Jackson and Bradford, 2010).

While existing studies examine public trust in police institutions, there is limited localized research assessing trust and confidence at the community level within specific Philippine districts. Variations in perception across municipalities remain underexplored. Moreover, previous research highlights factors influencing trust—such as media influence, corruption, and procedural justice—but lacks detailed analysis of how these factors manifest in localized settings. This study addresses these gaps by examining trust and confidence in the PNP across multiple local government units in Negros Occidental.

This study aligns with:

SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions: By examining trust in law enforcement, the study contributes to strengthening institutional accountability, transparency, and public confidence.

SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities: Effective policing and community trust are essential for safe, resilient, and inclusive communities.

SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals: The emphasis on police-community collaboration supports multi-stakeholder partnerships in governance and public safety.

This research contributes to socio-economic and governance sustainability by promoting trust in public institutions, which is vital for social stability and development. It supports community sustainability by strengthening relationships between law enforcement and citizens. The study also advances public safety sustainability, as trust enhances cooperation in crime prevention and law enforcement. Additionally, it contributes to institutional sustainability by informing policies that improve transparency, accountability, and ethical policing practices. Finally, the research has implications for educational sustainability, particularly in criminal justice education, by providing insights into ethical standards, community engagement, and professional development for future law enforcement officers.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design to assess the level of public trust and confidence in the PNP and determine the relationship between these variables and police performance. This design allowed for the systematic description of perceptions while also examining associations among key variables without manipulating them.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The research was conducted in the 3rd Congressional District of Negros Occidental, Philippines, which includes the municipalities of Silay City, Talisay City, Murcia, and E.B. Magalona. These areas were selected due to their varying socio-economic conditions, population characteristics, and policing contexts, providing a diverse setting for examining public perceptions of the PNP.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents consisted of residents from the selected municipalities who were eligible to provide informed perceptions regarding police performance, trust, and confidence. Participants represented different demographic backgrounds to ensure a broader perspective on public attitudes toward the PNP.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

A structured sampling procedure was employed to select respondents from each municipality. The sample size was proportionally distributed to reflect the population of the study areas. Appropriate sampling techniques were used to ensure representation and minimize bias, allowing for reliable generalization within the study context.

2.5 Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured survey questionnaire designed to measure public trust, confidence, and perceptions of police performance. The instrument was adapted from established frameworks on police legitimacy, community trust, and procedural justice. It consisted of multiple sections covering demographic information and key variables of the study. The questionnaire underwent validation and reliability testing to ensure accuracy and consistency. Items were measured using a Likert scale to capture the degree of agreement or perception among respondents. The instrument reflected principles of community-oriented policing and trust-building as emphasized in related literature (The Police Community Relations Manual [Revised], 2012; U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2007).

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection was conducted through the distribution of survey questionnaires to selected respondents in the identified municipalities. Proper coordination with local authorities and community representatives was ensured prior to data collection. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, and participation was voluntary. Completed questionnaires were collected, reviewed, and organized systematically to ensure completeness and accuracy before analysis. Ethical standards such as confidentiality and informed consent were strictly observed throughout the process.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools to describe and interpret the findings. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize respondents' perceptions of trust, confidence, and police performance. Inferential statistical methods were applied to examine relationships between variables and determine the significance of associations. These techniques enabled the study to identify patterns, trends, and correlations relevant to public trust and confidence in the PNP.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Level of Public Trust and Confidence in the PNP

3.1.1 Public Trust in the PNP

The findings indicate that respondents generally reported a moderate to high level of trust in the PNP. Most participants expressed confidence in the police's ability to maintain peace and order, respond to emergencies, and enforce laws effectively. However, some variability in responses suggests that trust levels were not uniformly high across all areas and demographic groups. This result suggests that while the PNP has established a baseline level of public trust, there are still areas that require improvement. Public trust is often influenced by perceived fairness, transparency, and consistency in law enforcement practices. These findings align with the principles of procedural justice, which emphasize that trust increases when authorities act fairly and respectfully (The Police Community Relations Manual [Revised], 2012).

3.1.2 Public Confidence in Police Performance

The data show that respondents had a generally favorable level of confidence in police performance, particularly in crime prevention and response. Many participants believed that the PNP is capable of fulfilling its duties, although some expressed concerns about efficiency and responsiveness in certain situations. This indicates that confidence in police performance is closely tied to visible outcomes and effectiveness in addressing community concerns. When the public perceives that law enforcement agencies are competent and reliable, confidence tends to increase. This supports the idea that performance legitimacy plays a critical role in shaping public attitudes toward the police (U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2007).

3.1.3 Differences in Trust and Confidence Across Groups

The findings reveal variations in trust and confidence levels when respondents were grouped according to demographic characteristics. Certain groups reported higher levels of trust and confidence, while others demonstrated more cautious or critical perceptions of police performance. These differences suggest that personal experiences, social context, and exposure to police services influence public perceptions. Variations across groups highlight the need for more inclusive and community-sensitive policing strategies. Tailoring approaches to different sectors of the population may help strengthen overall trust and confidence in the PNP (The Police Community Relations Manual [Revised], 2012).

3.2 Factors Affecting Public Trust and Confidence

The results indicate that several factors influence public trust and confidence in the PNP, including perceived fairness, responsiveness, professionalism, and community engagement. Respondents who viewed the police as approachable and respectful tended to report higher levels of trust and confidence. These findings emphasize the importance of community-oriented policing strategies in building strong relationships between law enforcement and the public. Positive interactions

and effective communication contribute significantly to improving public perception. This supports existing literature that highlights the role of procedural fairness and community engagement in enhancing police legitimacy (U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2007).

3.3 Relationship Between Trust, Confidence, and Police Performance

The analysis shows a significant relationship between public trust, confidence, and perceived police performance. Higher levels of perceived effectiveness were associated with increased trust and confidence among respondents. This relationship indicates that trust and confidence are interconnected constructs influenced by the public's evaluation of police performance. When the police are seen as effective, fair, and responsive, public trust naturally increases. These findings reinforce the concept that legitimacy is built through both performance and procedural justice (The Police Community Relations Manual [Revised], 2012; U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2007).

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study found that public trust and confidence in the Philippine National Police (PNP) in the 3rd Congressional District of Negros Occidental are generally moderate to high, indicating that respondents recognize the police's role in maintaining peace and order and performing their duties effectively. However, variations in perceptions across different groups suggest that trust and confidence are not uniformly experienced and are influenced by factors such as perceived fairness, responsiveness, professionalism, and community engagement. The results further show a significant relationship between perceived police performance and levels of trust and confidence, highlighting that effective and fair policing practices contribute to stronger public trust. These findings are consistent with existing literature emphasizing the importance of procedural justice and performance legitimacy in shaping public perception of law enforcement (The Police Community Relations Manual [Revised], 2012; U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2007).

Based on the findings, it is recommended that the Philippine National Police (PNP) strengthen community-oriented policing strategies by enhancing fairness, transparency, and responsiveness in their operations to further improve public trust and confidence. Efforts should focus on fostering positive interactions with the community, ensuring consistent and professional conduct, and addressing concerns related to service efficiency. Additionally, tailored approaches should be implemented to address the varying perceptions across different demographic groups, thereby promoting inclusivity and strengthening relationships between the police and the public. Continuous evaluation of police performance and community engagement initiatives is also recommended to sustain and further improve public trust and confidence in law enforcement.

Compliance with ethical standards

The authors declare no conflict of interest. This study complied with recognized ethical standards for human-participant research by ensuring voluntary participation with informed consent, the right to withdraw without penalty, and strict confidentiality through anonymous, secure, and aggregated data handling. Given the focus on psychological well-being, procedures were non-invasive, and safeguards were observed to minimize discomfort, with guidance to appropriate support services when needed, and required institutional permissions were secured for instrument use and access to academic records.

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