

# POLICE VISIBILITY IN THE PREVENTION OF CRIMES, PINAMUNGAJAN POLICE STATION, CEBU: IMPLICATIONS TO EFFECTIVE LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICE

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**Abstract:** Effective law enforcement service demands that the law enforcement officers are diligent and effective in their duties and responsibilities. They should be punctual and alert while on their respective beats. They should respect the human rights of the people of the community they serve. They should even patrol their beats on foot so that their visibility would be more evident thus curtailing the criminal impulses of the criminally inclined, instead of whisking through the vicinity on the “flying visit” to their assigned places without even giving the people a glimpse of their presence. Transparency is the call of effective law enforcement service. However, effective law enforcement necessitates that the police command should be provided police equipment like two-way radios so that they could readily call for assistance whenever necessary, in order to improve the delivery of services and the maintenance of peace and order. Furthermore, a strong partnership between the police and the community will help ensure the success of the Philippine National Police in its drive against criminality. The findings of this study showed that the police force of the municipality of Pinamungajan, Cebu did their best under the circumstances they had to work in, but their efforts were not equally recognized by the people of the community. Hence, the need for support from the local officials and the people in the community are important factors that would facilitate the effectiveness of the law enforcement service.

**Keywords:** Law enforcement research, police visibility, crime prevention, normative-survey method, Philippines.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The integrity of the Philippine National Police has been greatly dented by the unlawful acts of a few. To regain the public trust and confidence in this law enforcement agency, there is therefore need for strengthening and making more evident the police visibility in every area as a means of preventing crimes and maintaining law, peace and order. The omnipresence of law enforcers in their respective areas of responsibility can and do have substantial impact on the crime prevention strategy of the Philippine National Police. Police visibility creates a feeling of security on the part of the law-abiding citizen, a feeling of confidence that the policemen are available to respond when called upon at any situation, and a feeling of fear on the part of the would-be violators.

### OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

The purpose of the study was to determine the police visibility in the prevention of crimes, Pinamungajan Police Station in Cebu and its implications to effective law enforcement service.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

To achieve the purpose of the investigation, a normative survey method of research was employed and conducted on the police personnel and the local government officials of Pinamungajan, Cebu with the aid of a self-made questionnaire as data-gathering tool. The data gathered were subjected to statistical treatment to test the hypotheses and the findings became the basis for conclusions and the corresponding recommendations. The analysis and interpretation of data were made on the percentage basis using the formula:  $\text{Per cent} = \frac{F}{N} \times 100$ , wherein F is the frequency of responses and N is the number of cases. To determine the degree of agreement in the responses of the police personnel and the local government officials on the crimes committed in the area and on the problems in crime prevention/apprehension, the data were subjected to Spearman Rank-Difference Correlation test. The obtained correlation coefficient was checked against the Table of Critical Values of the Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient to prove its significance. To ascertain the degree of agreement in the perceptions of the police personnel and the local government officials on the evidences of police visibility, the data were subjected to the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation test. The resultant correlation coefficient was then checked against the Table on Significance Levels for the Pearson Product-Moment Coefficient of Correlation to prove its significance.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

On the crimes committed in the area, fourteen common crimes were identified by the two respondent groups. Based on their combined response frequencies these were ranked as follows: gambling, as reported by one hundred seventeen respondents ( 100.00 per cent ); public disturbance/scandal, by one hundred five ( 89.74 per cent ); vandalism, by one hundred five ( 89.74 per cent ); petty theft, by one hundred two ( 87.18 per cent ); physical injuries, by ninety-seven ( 82.91 per cent ); malicious mischief, eighty-seven ( 74.36 per cent ); and drug pushing/addiction, by seventy-two ( 61.54 per cent ).

The following were also noted: robbery, by sixty-seven ( 59.26 per cent ); vagrancy, by fifty-six ( 47.86 per cent ); homicide, by twenty-eight ( 23.93 per cent ); murder, by twenty-two ( 18.80 per cent ); rape by sixteen ( 13.67 per cent ); abduction, by fourteen ( 11.96 per cent ); and prostitution, by five ( 4.27 percent ).

When subjected to the Spearman Rank-Difference Correlation test, the separate response frequencies of the two subject groups produced a correlation factor of 0.862 which was found to be far above the tabular value of 0.456 at 14N and at.05 level of significance, thus indicating that there was a highly significant degree of agreement in the perceptions of police personnel and the local government officials on the crimes that were often committed in the municipality of Pinamungajan, Cebu.

The crimes that were committed in the municipality of Pinamungahan during the year are reported in Table II below. The more prevalent of these crimes were the following: Gambling. As reported by all the twenty police personnel (100.00 per cent); malicious mischief, by eighteen (90.00 Per cent); vandalism, by eighteen (90.00 per cent); public Disturbance/scandal, by seventeen (85.00 per cent); Physical injuries, by sixteen (80.00 per cent); petty theft, By thirteen (65.00 per cent), and drug pushing/ addiction, by nine (45.00 per cent).

These crimes were ranked 1, 8, 4, 3, 5, 2 and 10, respectfully, by the barangay officials. Less noted the following crimes: homicide, as reported by seven police personnel (35.00 per cent); vagrancy, by seven (35.00 per cent); robbery, by six (30.00 per cent); murder, by four (20.00 per cent); rape, by three (15.00 per cent); abduction, by three (15.00 per cent); and prostitution, by two (10.00 per cent).

These offenses were ranked 10, 9, 7, 11, 12, 13 and 14, respectively by the barangay officials. One could readily note that there were crimes that were taken by the people of the community but were not reported to the police.

The more serious problems were the following : failure or fear of the people to report crimes to the proper authorities, as described by all the twenty police officers (100.00 per cent) ; undermanned police force to patrol all barrios regularly, by twenty ( 100.00 per cent); lack of facilities for police work especially in distant places, by (100.00 per cent) ; refusal of offended parties to twenty (100.00 per cent) ; fear of reprisal among people of the community to report crimes and offenders, by nineteen (95.00 per cent); and flight of offenders to hide in other towns, barrios, places, by eighteen (90.00 per cent).

These problems were also perceived by the barrio officials and ranked as follows: 6, 9, 10, 2, 4 and 5 respectively.

Less disturbing were the following problems: amicable settlement between offenders and aggrieved parties, by seventeen (85.00 per cent); offenders are not from the place so cannot be identified before they flee, by fifteen (75.00 per cent); distance of barrios from the police headquarters and from each other, by fourteen (70.00 per cent); transfer of gambling dens from one place to another, by thirteen (55.00 per cent); protection of gambling Lords by influential persons, by nine (45.00 per cent); and political intervention in crime investigation, by seven (35.00 per cent).

These problems were also noted by the Local Government Officials and given the following rank: 8, 1, 11, 7, 8, and 12, respectively.

One notes that the two subject groups did not see these problems on the same level of seriousness.

In proving this inference, the data were subjected to spearman RHO formula. The computation in Table V resulted in a correlation factor of 0.401 which was found to be lower than the tabular value 0.506 at 12N and at .05 level of significance. This showed that there was no significant degree of agreement between the police personnel and the local government officials on the problems that deterred crime prevention and the apprehension of offenders. The null hypothesis was therefore accepted.

Despite the crimes and the problems in crime prevention and the apprehension of offenders, there were evidences of police visibility in the municipality of Pinamungajan.

All the twenty personnel (100.00 per cent) claimed that the following practices: efficiency in the performance of duties and responsibilities; alertness in responding to calls for assistance; regularity in patrolling the assigned areas or beats; presence in crowded places to maintain peace and order; monitoring suspicious persons, characters, persons in the area; and observance/ surveillance of unsecured places/ buildings.

These practices were admitted by seventy-one (73.20 per cent), Sixty-nine (71.13 per cent), Sixty-one (62.89 per cent) Seventy-two (74.23 per cent), sixty-eight (70.10 per cent) Sixty seven (69.07 per cent) and fifty-nine (60.82per cent) barrio officials, respectively.

All the twenty police personnel (100.00 per cent) also claimed to form the following: regular inspection of public places/ buildings especially at night; warning the public of impending danger or disaster especially at night; making successful apprehension of crime offenders; participation in community activities for improvement development; regular visits even to remote/ farthest barrios; and harmonious relationship with the people of the community.

These were concord with sixty-two (63.92 per cent), eighty-eight (90.72 per cent), fifty-nine (60.82 per cent); seventy-one (73.20 per cent), fifty-two (53.61 per cent), and eighty-seven (89.70 per cent) barangay officials, respectively.

To ascertain the degree of agreement between the two subject groups on the evidences of people visibility in the area, these data were subjected to the Person Product- Moment Correlation Test in table which resulted to correlation coefficient of 0.00. This was found to be far below the tabular value of 0.553 at 11df and at .05 level of significance, thus proving that there was no significant degree of agreement between the police personnel and the local government officials on the aspect of police visibility. The null hypothesis was thus accepted.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Anchored on the aforementioned findings, the following conclusions were arrived at:

Both respondents groups admitted the existence of the crimes that were identified, although they slightly differed in the order of prominence or prevalence by which these crimes were committed.

While both the police personnel and the barangay officials recognized the problems that deterred crime prevention and/or apprehension, they did not agree on the degree of seriousness of each problem. What was considered of prime importance by the police personnel was not admitted as such by the barangay officials.

The police personnel and the local government officials were on agreement that proofs or practices of police visibility were apparent in the municipality. However, they did not agree on the intensity of such visibility. While the police force claimed that these practices were performed to the best of their ability under the circumstances they were in, the local government officials expected much more from them, not considering the fact that the only twenty policemen had to maintain the peace and order in nineteen barrios and in the poblacion or town proper and without the necessary facilities to transport them fast from one place to another.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the foregoing findings and conclusions the following recommendations are offered:

1. More personnel should be added to the police force of the municipality in order to cover the wide area and make police visibility more evident and effective.
2. To improve the delivery of services and the maintenance of peace and order in the municipality, police equipment should be provided the members of the Pinamungajan police force. This may be in the form of motor cycles, jeeps and transmission radios acquired through donations or through purchase by the local government units.
3. Anti-crime units should be formed among barrios who should undergo a rigid training program on basic police work and human rights so that they could provide the police force of the municipality with intelligence information on criminal activities in their localities.
4. The local governments units should pass a curfew ordinance restricting minors from seventeen years of age and below from roaming the streets at night and resorting to mischief. Curfew time maybe set from as early as eight o'clock at night to four o'clock dawn. It goes without saying of course that this ordinance should be strongly imposed by the law enforcement officers and the local government officials without discrimination.
5. A local anti-crime group like the Lungsod Batok Salaod (LUBAS) in Cebu City should be formed in the municipality of Pinamungajan and its barrios to provide support to the police force. Care should be taken, however, in the choice and proper screening of members to make sure that only those without any criminal records whatsoever and who are reliable citizens are allowed to join the group. Also, proper training should be instituted so that the members would exactly know their duties, responsibilities and the bounds of their authority.
6. To improve police visibility and the maintenance of peace and order in the municipality, the program of strengthening measures should be implemented at the earliest possible time. The effects of the program may be the subject of the future study on police visibility.

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