Challenges Encountered by Non- Uniformed Personnel of Philippine National Police: A Phenomenological Study

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the daily challenges and adaptive strategies of non-uniformed personnel (NUP) within the Philippine National Police (PNP) in Misamis Occidental. The PNP, responsible for maintaining peace and order in the Philippines, relies heavily on NUPs to manage administrative, technical, and support roles, enabling uniformed officers to focus on law enforcement duties. Conducted across various police stations in Misamis Occidental, this research highlights the critical roles of NUPs in enhancing operational efficiency despite facing significant challenges such as limited career advancement and recognition disparities. Eight (8) NUPs participated in the study, selected based on specific criteria, and their experiences were gathered through a rigorously developed and verified interview guide. Data collection involved obtaining necessary permissions and conducting structured interviews. Additionally, the data analysis followed Moustakas' phenomenological reduction method, revealing key themes and insights. This study aims to bridge a gap in the literature regarding NUPs' experiences, providing valuable information for policymakers to improve organizational effectiveness and employee well-being within the PNP

Keywords: challenges, efficiency, mental well-being, public safety, support

INTRODUCTION

The Philippine National Police (PNP) stands at the forefront of law enforcement in the Philippines, tasked with maintaining peace, order, and public safety across the country (Baysa, Ferrer 2023). In its mission to uphold the rule of law, the PNP employs a multifaceted workforce consisting not only of uniformed personnel but also a cadre of dedicated non-uniformed personnel, whose roles and contributions are integral to the overall effectiveness of the organization. Their collective efforts serve as the backbone of the PNP's operational excellence, ensuring that law enforcement agencies are equipped with the necessary resources and logistical support to meet the ever-evolving challenges of maintaining public safety and security in the Philippines (Jones, 2019).

The creation of the Philippine National Police Non-Uniformed Personnel (PNP-NUP) came as a response to the evolving demands of modern policing in the Philippines (Bowling et al., 2019). It emerged as part of the reforms initiated during the 1990s when the PNP was established, absorbing the functions and personnel from the Philippine Constabulary and the Integrated National Police (Chen & Fu, 2023). According to R.A 6975 the PNP-NUP was conceived to handle administrative, technical, and support roles that are crucial in enabling the uniformed personnel to focus on their primary law enforcement duties. Delegating these essential but non-operational functions to the PNP-NUP, the PNP sought to streamline its operations and enhance its capacity to respond to the dynamic and complex security landscape in the Philippines (Sevilla, 2022).

An essential part of ensuring the PNP runs well is the PNP-NUP (Lazaro, 2023). They oversee several crucial tasks, including managing logistics, keeping records, communicating, handling finances, managing human resources, and many more. By supplying uniformed officers with the tools and assistance they need to complete their jobs successfully, these unnoticed duties directly contribute to the PNP's overall efficiency (Falloran et al., 2022). They play crucial roles in bridging the gap between administrative needs and

operational demands. The PNP-NUP serves as a force multiplier, allowing uniformed officers to concentrate on their core responsibilities of maintaining public safety and order (Vicente et al., 2020). This collaborative approach ensures that the PNP operates effectively.

Looking into the local context, the Misamis Occidental Police force exemplifies the significance of PNP-NUP. These police stations in the province of Misamis Occidental rely on non-uniformed personnel to facilitate daily operations (Gonzales et al., 2023). They manage case records for maintaining communication systems and overseeing logistical needs (Vicente et al., 2020). The PNP-NUP in Misamis Occidental is a testament to their critical role in local law enforcement. Even though Misamis Occidental is not a very big Province, there are still not enough uniformed police officers to efficiently patrol the entire region. Because of this, it is imperative to use non-uniformed troops to effectively secure the city and complete the task at hand (Bellamy, 2023).

METHODS

The qualitative research method was applied in this study and used a phenomenological methodology. Following Moustakas' transcendental phenomenology, it interprets data from research participants to obtain meaningful themes (Moustakas, 1994). Using the design, this study ascertained the suitability of exploring the difficulties encountered by the Philippine National Police (Non- Uniformed Personnel) and their adaptive approaches. The study was conducted in various police stations across the province of Misamis Occidental, Philippines, which comprises 17 municipalities and 3 cities, each with its own police station under the supervision of the Misamis Occidental Police Provincial Office (MOPPO). These stations vary in size and resources, reflecting the diverse urban and rural settings of the province. Approximately 100 Non-Uniformed Personnel (NUP) are employed across these stations, with larger concentrations in the cities of Ozamiz, Oroquieta, and Tangub due to their higher operational demands. This setting is critical for understanding the operational dynamics and administrative support within the police force, highlighting the roles of NUPs in enhancing the efficiency of law enforcement activities in the province.

The interview guide was carefully developed by the researchers, taking into consideration the specific objectives of the study. It comprised a set of well-crafted questions designed to gather in-depth information from the participants about their experiences in dealing with work-related challenges. The Dean of the College of Criminology played a vital role in verifying the questions' reliability. The Dean carefully examined the interview guide to ensure its alignment with the study's objectives and the college's standards. This step aimed at improving the overall quality and validity of the questionnaire. By integrating feedback from both the research panel and the Dean, the interview guide underwent refinement and reached its final version, preparing for implementation in the study. A rigorous development and evaluation process was conducted to ensure the questions were pertinent, thorough, and capable of eliciting valuable insights from the participants.

Furthermore, the researchers informed the participants that the conversation would be recorded and assured them that all of their responses would be kept strictly confidential.

The study included the eight (8) non-uniformed personnel who were employed by the Philippine National Police and stationed in Misamis Occidental. The selection of participants was based on the following criteria: 1) a Non-Uniformed Personnel; 2) must be assigned anywhere in Misamis Occidental; 3) having a minimum of one year of experience in the assignment, and 4) has expressed willingness to take part in the study.

Ensuring the confidentiality of information obtained from participants was of paramount importance, and it was used solely for the study's intended purpose. The researcher strictly adhered to the guidelines set forth in the Republic Act No. 10173, commonly known as the "Data Privacy Act of 2012," to safeguard participants' data. This act established a legal framework for the collection, storage, and utilization of personal information, emphasizing the significance of upholding individuals' privacy rights. Respect for the autonomy and voluntary participation of each participant was a fundamental principle. No participant was compelled into an interview against their will, and their choice to partake in or withdraw from the study was fully honored. The researcher created a safe and comfortable environment during the interviews, enabling participants to openly share their experiences and perspectives. To ensure anonymity and protect participants' privacy, the researchers exercised discretion in sharing any information that wasn't directly relevant to the study. Personal identifying

information and extraneous background details not crucial to the research objectives were held in strict confidence. Additionally, the researchers prepared a comprehensive written letter of consent outlining the study's purpose and procedures. Participants willing to engage in the research were asked to carefully read and sign this consent letter, confirming their voluntary and informed participation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Profile of the Participants

The study included the eight (8) non-uniformed personnel who were employed by the Philippine National Police and stationed in Misamis Occidental. The selection of participants was based on the following criteria: 1) a Non-Uniformed Personnel; 2) must be assigned anywhere in Misamis Occidental; 3) having a minimum of one year of experience in the assignment, and 4) has expressed willingness to take part in the study.

Table 1. Profile of the Participants

Code Name	Age	Sex	Length of Service
P1	26	Male	8 years
P2	25	Female	4 years
P3	56	Female	6 years
P4	30	Female	2 years
P5	56	Female	7 years
P6	31	Male	4 years
P7	43	Female	19 years
P8	26	Female	8 years

Table 1 presents the profile of 8 participants, identified by code names P1 to P8, along with their ages and length of service. The participants' ages range from 25 to 41 years old, while their length of service varies between 2 and 11 years.

Crushing Workload and Time Pressure

In contemporary organizational contexts, the pursuit of enhanced efficiency and productivity frequently places employees under significant pressure, characterized by tight deadlines and escalating workloads (Smith, 2020). This strain often precipitates adverse outcomes such as stress, burnout, and diminished work quality (Jones & Johnson, 2019). Consequently, sustaining both personal well-being and professional excellence becomes increasingly challenging in such environments. Hence, it is imperative to comprehend and proactively address these issues to cultivate a sustainable and healthy workplace conducive to individual flourishing without jeopardizing mental health and overall performance.

These were revealed in the answers of the participants:

"The challenges that I have encountered as a NUP is I think it is time pressure, because if the higher office sends a message that they need the file, it must be submitted immediately. It is very difficult because we have to keep up with the times. We will also catch up on the days we need to submit." (P-1)

"Time management is one of my difficulties since I am a mother and an employee. Like the challenges of other NUPs, I will also encounter time pressure because they have time to submit that file, but then the other records are not available, so we are not able to encode them." (P2)

"We have a lot of files that need to be submitted on time, and sometimes we have to work overtime to finish the said work and tasks. But I can't do anything about it because this is our job. Papers pile up, and files are sometimes delayed." (P-3)

"One of the challenges that I have encountered is that the pressure of work is that I don't have time for myself, since the work should come first because the time given to us is limited, so we can't make a report about why it is delayed." (P-4)

"Additionally, there were times when the workload was overwhelming, requiring multitasking and prioritization skills to meet deadlines and fulfill various responsibilities efficiently." (P-5)

Within the Philippine National Police (PNP), non-uniformed personnel (NUPs) contend with significant challenges surrounding pressing time constraints and overwhelming workloads. Participants across different roles within the organization consistently report the intense pressure of meeting tight deadlines imposed by higher authorities. This pressure stems from the need to promptly submit files, reports, and other essential documentation critical to the functioning of the PNP. Moreover, participants highlight the perpetual influx of tasks and responsibilities, indicating a constant struggle to manage workload effectively amidst competing demands.

Decreased Job Satisfaction

In contemporary society, the importance of mental health has surged as individuals grapple with the relentless pressures imposed by the fast pace of life, demanding work environments, and constant connectivity (Jones & Smith, 2020). These stressors manifest in various psychological challenges such as anxiety, depression, and burnout, which impede individuals' ability to function effectively both personally and professionally. Moreover, the pervasive stigma surrounding mental health issues often acts as a barrier, hindering individuals from seeking the necessary support and assistance they require (Brown et al., 2019). Effectively addressing the strain on mental well-being necessitates a multifaceted approach, encompassing activities such as raising awareness, promoting mental health resources, and cultivating environments that prioritize psychological safety and support. By undertaking such measures, communities can foster resilience and promote healthier outcomes for individuals.

These were revealed in the answers of the participants:

"If the internet is too slow, the system is down, or the files are not yet available, then it will be difficult for us to submit on time what they are asking, and that gives us a negative thought." (P-1)

"It affects our mental health because we are way too busy. I felt pressured at the same time because the work was increasing" (P-2).

"I didn't have anxiety before. Now I have it. We always overthink about how to get our job done, and there are a lot of sleepless nights." (P-3)

"I may experience increased stress levels, which can lead to stress, decreased productivity, lower quality work, and an inability to fulfill responsibilities effectively." (P-4)

"Balancing administrative duties, such as paperwork and record-keeping, with operational support tasks could be demanding, especially during critical situations or emergencies. I was really struggling and suffered from great stress." (P-5)

"The challenge I faced as a Non-Uniformed Personnel (NUP) in the PNP organization was the need to constantly adapt to changes in policies, procedures, and technology. This impacted the overall efficiency and effectiveness of fulfilling my duties and responsibilities because it required quick learning and adjustment to new methods and tools to be used" (P-6)

"This made it harder to get things done efficiently. I really felt the tension at work and the pressure at the same time." (P-7)

The results implied that the the strain on mental well-being among non-uniformed personnel (NUPs) within the Philippine National Police (PNP) is a significant concern highlighted by participants across various roles within the organization. Participants consistently describe the detrimental impact of job-related pressures on their mental health, including feelings of anxiety, stress, and sleeplessness Moreover, participants express concerns about the long-term consequences of prolonged stress and anxiety on their mental health.

Navigating Rapid Changes and Technological Demands

In the ever-evolving landscape of technological advancement, individuals and organizations face the imperative to continually adapt to remain competitive and pertinent (Gupta & George, 2020). This dynamic milieu offers both prospects and obstacles: although it facilitates unparalleled efficiency and connectivity, it demands perpetual learning and adaptability, often engendering sensations of overwhelm and aversion to change. Effectively managing these pressures entails adopting a proactive stance toward skill enhancement, fostering a flexible mindset, and establishing a supportive framework capable of accommodating the rapid pace of technological progression while alleviating associated stressors.

These were revealed in the answers of the participants:

"One of the challenges that I have also experienced is that sometimes their system is broken and our work piles up." (P-2)

"One of the hardest aspects was navigating the hierarchy and dynamics within the organization. Being in a support role meant understanding and adapting to the needs and expectations of both uniformed personnel and higher-ranking officials." (P-5)

"The challenge I faced as a Non-Uniformed Personnel (NUP) in the PNP organization was the need to constantly adapt to changes in policies, procedures, and technology. This impacted the overall efficiency and effectiveness of fulfilling my duties and responsibilities because it required quick learning and adjustment to new methods and tools to be used." (P-6)

The challenge I faced as a Non-Uniformed Personnel in the PNP was dealing with sudden increases in work. Sometimes, we'd have a lot more tasks and work to do because there were times when the workload surged due to events like major incidents, special operations, or administrative projects. (P-7)

"In terms of limited resources, like equipment and budget, it makes tasks harder. And communication barriers with uniformed colleagues can cause misunderstandings. Also, there's often an uneven workload, making some tasks overwhelming." (P-8)

The results implied that navigating rapid changes and technological demands presents a formidable challenge within the Philippine National Police (PNP). The organization operates in a dynamic environment where policies, procedures, and technologies frequently evolve.

Overcoming Communication Hurdles and Foster Collaboration

In today's interconnected world, effective communication stands as a cornerstone, underscoring its pivotal role in facilitating collaboration and achieving common goals across diverse spheres, from professional to personal realms (Smith & Jones, 2020). Despite the abundance of communication tools and platforms, navigating

through varied perspectives, cultural disparities, and conflicting priorities often poses challenges, impeding information flow and collaboration endeavors. Overcoming these obstacles demands a multifaceted strategy encompassing the cultivation of active listening skills, the nurturing of an environment characterized by openness and mutual respect, the utilization of appropriate communication channels, and the adoption of technology that augments rather than inhibits collaboration (Brown et al., 2019). By prioritizing transparent and empathetic communication, teams can effectively harness the collective intelligence and creativity of their members, thereby fostering enhanced success and innovation.

These were revealed in the answers of the participants:

"For me, it really helps organize my workload efficiently. Of course, delegating tasks when needed and maintaining clear communication with my workmates can alleviate pressure and ensure everyone is on the same page regarding the strict deadlines and responsibilities" (P-4)

"Communication was also key but `sometimes challenging, as conveying information accurately and effectively across different departments and levels of authority really required diplomacy and clarity." (P-5)

"Effective communication and collaboration with team members were important. By fostering a supportive and cooperative work environment, we could collectively overcome challenges and improve overall performance." (P-6)

"I surely made flexible schedules and focused on doing the most important tasks first. Also, I teach my team to handle different jobs so we could help each other out when things got too busy. And, we made sure to talk a lot to stay organized and avoid chaos and confusion." (P-7)

"In terms of limited resources, like equipment and budget, it makes tasks harder. And communication barriers with uniformed colleagues can cause misunderstandings." (P-8)

Overcoming communication hurdles and fostering collaboration are critical elements for ensuring effective operations within the Philippine National Police (PNP). Clear communication channels and effective teamwork are essential for navigating challenges and achieving organizational goals. Strategies such as flexible scheduling, task prioritization, and mutual support among team members are employed to address communication barriers and promote a cohesive work environment.

CONCLUSIONS

The urgent need for comprehensive strategies aimed at addressing the challenges associated with pressing time constraints and overwhelming workloads among non-uniformed personnel (NUPs) within the Philippine National Police (PNP). This includes investing in training programs focused on time management and stress reduction techniques, streamlining administrative processes through technological solutions, and fostering a supportive work culture that prioritizes employee well-being. By implementing these strategies, the PNP can alleviate the pressures faced by its personnel, thereby improving operational efficiency and overall employee satisfaction.

The study emphasizes the critical importance of prioritizing mental health support and resources for NUPs within the PNP. Addressing the strain on mental well-being is essential not only for individual employees' overall quality of life but also for organizational effectiveness and resilience. By implementing initiatives aimed at promoting work-life balance, providing access to counseling services, and fostering a supportive work culture, the PNP can create a healthier and more productive workforce. This holistic approach to mental health will ensure that employees are better equipped to handle the demands of their roles and contribute positively to the organization's goals.

The varied nature of challenges encountered by NUPs within the PNP, emphasizing the critical importance of addressing resource limitations, improving communication channels, and promoting a more equitable distribution of workload. Failure to address these challenges could result in diminished organizational

effectiveness and hinder the PNP's ability to fulfill its mission. Therefore, the PNP must develop targeted strategies that address these specific issues, ensuring that all personnel have the resources and support they need to perform their duties effectively.

Overcoming communication hurdles and fostering collaboration are vital elements for ensuring effective operations within the PNP. Clear communication channels facilitate better decision-making processes and coordination of resources, contributing to organizational effectiveness and mission fulfillment. Fostering a collaborative work culture enhances organizational resilience and employee morale, leading to higher levels of job satisfaction and retention. By prioritizing these aspects, the PNP can create an environment where personnel work together seamlessly, thereby enhancing overall organizational performance and achieving its objectives more efficiently.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Philippine National Police (PNP) leadership prioritize initiatives aimed at improving organizational support and resource allocation for non-uniformed personnel (NUPs). This includes implementing policies to streamline administrative processes, providing adequate training and support for time management and stress reduction, and fostering a culture of open communication and collaboration within the organization. By addressing these challenges proactively, the PNP can enhance operational efficiency, promote employee well-being, and ultimately strengthen its ability to fulfill its mission of maintaining public safety and security. The PNP leadership should take proactive steps to address mental well-being concerns among NUPs. This includes investing in mental health awareness training, establishing employee assistance programs, and implementing policies that promote work-life balance. Creating a supportive work environment where employees feel comfortable seeking help and openly discussing mental health concerns is crucial for fostering employee well-being and organizational success. These measures will help ensure that NUPs are mentally and emotionally equipped to handle their responsibilities effectively. The PNP may prioritize ongoing training and professional development for NUPs to enhance digital literacy and adaptability. Additionally, fostering a culture of open communication and collaboration across departments is essential for overcoming communication barriers and maximizing the potential of technological solutions. Equitable resource allocation and support mechanisms are also crucial for promoting cohesion and mitigating disparities within the organization. By prioritizing these efforts, the PNP can enhance its operational resilience and adaptability, ultimately better serving the needs of the community. To address communication hurdles and promote collaboration within the PNP, the organization should invest in communication training, enhance access to resources, and foster a culture of transparency and cooperation. By prioritizing communication and collaboration initiatives, the PNP can enhance operational efficiency, strengthen organizational resilience, and ensure effective coordination in fulfilling its mission of maintaining public safety and security. These efforts will lead to a more integrated and effective organization, capable of responding to challenges with agility and unity. Future researchers are encouraged to expand the scope of this study by exploring the experiences of non-uniformed personnel (NUPs) across different regions in the Philippines to identify regional variations and commonalities in the challenges and adaptive strategies employed. Additionally, a longitudinal approach could provide deeper insights into how these challenges and coping mechanisms evolve over time. Researchers should also consider examining the impact of specific organizational interventions on the well-being and performance of NUPs to assess their effectiveness and provide evidence-based recommendations for policy enhancements. Incorporating quantitative methods alongside qualitative analyses could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the issues faced by NUPs, thereby contributing to a more robust and holistic view of the law enforcement ecosystem in the Philippines.

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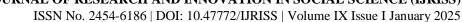
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