# Pnp's Body-Worn Camera: Perks and Drawbacks

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the perceptions of Dapitan City police officers regarding their experiences, challenges, and aspirations in the use of body-worn cameras (BWCs), a technology increasingly adopted in modern law enforcement. Using a phenomenological qualitative approach, the lived experiences of seven officers were explored through in-depth interviews. Findings reveal that while BWCs enhance transparency, accountability, productivity, and help reduce incidents of violence, their effectiveness is hampered by technical limitations such as device bulkiness and short battery life. The study highlights the need for improvements in BWC technology, including extended battery life and waterproof features, as well as comprehensive technical training for officers on device handling and data interpretation. These insights aim to inform operational practices, guide policy development, and encourage continuous evaluation of technology to strengthen both police performance and community trust.

**Keywords:** body-worn camera, PNP, law enforcement, experiences, challenges, accountability

## INTRODUCTION

Body-worn cameras, or BWCs, have become a major innovation in police enforcement in recent years to enhance officer conduct, accountability, and transparency. BWCs are being used all around the world to record police-public interactions and lower officer complaints (Lum et al., 2020; White & Malm, 2020). According to Ariel et al. (2017), these gadgets are thought to discourage improper conduct and boost professionalism on both sides of an interaction. In response to public uproar about contentious police practices, the Philippine National Police (PNP) has started incorporating BWCs into operating procedures (Tupas, 2021). The deployment is still restricted in places like Dapitan, though, and the real-life experiences of frontline cops have not yet been sufficiently examined. The perceptions and firsthand stories of police officers who use or want to utilize BWCs are examined in this study, utilizing a qualitative phenomenological approach. The study adds to the body of literature and offers recommendations for future deployment by comprehending how these devices affect performance, accountability, and operational problems.

The present study provides a cross-sectional analysis of police officers' perspectives on body-worn cameras (BWCs). Nonetheless, in the absence of longitudinal data, it is difficult to determine how these perceptions and experiences develop over time. For example, initial apprehensions regarding battery longevity and device weight may either last or lessen as cops acclimate to the technology. Prolonged research is crucial for comprehending these dynamics and the enduring influence of BWCs on law enforcement procedures. Comprehensive training is essential for both the efficient functioning of BWCs and the precise analysis of the data they produce. A University of Michigan study indicated that officers who underwent procedural training, which included the examination of body-worn camera footage, exhibited improved communication in community engagements, resulting in increased confidence and cooperation (University of Michigan, 2024). Moreover, public perception significantly influences the adoption and efficacy of BWCs. Studies demonstrate that although communities acknowledge the capacity of body-worn cameras (BWCs) to mitigate misconduct and improve transparency, apprehensions regarding privacy and the possible exploitation of recorded material remain (MSEUF, 2023). Addressing these issues through clear policy and community involvement is essential for enhancing police-

community relations.

**Objectives**

1. To investigate the positive experiences of informants in using BWCs.
2. To explore the negative experiences and challenges faced by police officers in BWC use.
3. To identify the aspirations and recommendations of informants regarding BWC improvements.

# METHODOLOGY

The lived experiences of Dapitan City police officers about body-worn cameras were investigated in this study using a qualitative phenomenological research design. Transcripts of semi-structured interviews were examined using Colaizzi's data analysis method to identify important statements, create meanings, and identify emerging themes. Using purposive sampling, the researchers chose seven police officers with at least two years of experience. The rich tales that the informants shared reflected their opinions, difficulties, and recommendations. No financial or personal conflicts of interest are disclosed by the writers. However, following the article's successful publication, the authors plan to apply for institutional incentives from their university. To make sure the study complied with ethical research guidelines, the authors secured ethics clearance from their institution before data collection. Throughout the study, rigorous adherence to ethical guidelines was maintained, including informed consent, voluntary participation, and data confidentiality. Written informed consent was acquired by each subject.

# RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Experiences with BWCs: Perks**

Police officers frequently indicated excellent experiences with body-worn cameras (BWCs), citing more openness, improved recordkeeping, and greater officer accountability as main benefits (Backman et al., 2022; Gaub & White, 2020). Many informants underlined that the conspicuous presence of BWCs fostered more professional conduct during field operations. BWCs were also regarded as reliable tools for documenting interactions and delivering essential evidence for legal processes (White & Malm, 2020). Furthermore, the technology aided in establishing public trust by increasing the visibility and integrity of police actions (Lum et al., 2020).

In addition to professional conduct and responsibility, officers also indicated that BWCs defended them from false allegations by giving objective video proof (Lum et al., 2020). This documentation typically helped faster resolutions of complaints and reduced instances of administrative inquiries. Similarly, studies have shown that BWC footage typically helps to de-escalate during contacts, as both cops and residents react more cautiously when they are aware of being recorded (Backman et al., 2022). These benefits underline the crucial role that BWCs can play in both operational and relational aspects of policing.

**Challenges: Drawbacks in BWC Use**

Despite their advantages, BWCs face noteworthy problems. Informants commonly cited concerns such as low battery life, particularly during protracted operations, and the physical bulkiness of the devices, which threatened officer safety during covert surveillance. These findings accord with prior and recent research that indicates persistent hardware restrictions in BWCs (Tad-awan et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2019). Moreover, officers emphasized the lack of uniform training in technical handling, maintenance, and data administration, which occasionally led to equipment failure or misuse, reflecting broader problems recorded in international studies (Lum et al., 2020).

Another key worry mentioned was the variance in activation processes, resulting in gaps in recording during critical occurrences. Officers sometimes indicated difficulty about whether and how to activate their devices,

especially in fast-moving, high-stress circumstances (Braga et al., 2021). Without clear and consistent training on activation regulations, cops risk missing vital footage that could otherwise give valuable evidence. Furthermore, concerns were made concerning potential privacy intrusions for both officers and civilians, especially during sensitive operations or within private dwellings (Lee et al., 2019).

**Aspirations: Desired Improvements**

Informants lobbied for technological advances, particularly the creation of waterproof BWCs with improved battery life to enable a wider range of operative settings. In addition, they strongly advocated the deployment of frequent, structured training focused on both the operational use and data interpretation components of BWCs. Addressing these demands could decrease operational risks and boost overall system efficacy. International studies have similarly underlined the importance of continual training and iterative technical updates to ensure the prolonged performance of BWC programs (Lum et al., 2020; Braga et al., 2021). Furthermore, including community feedback in BWC development and deployment was advised to increase public confidence and optimize community-police relations (University of Michigan, 2024).

Looking forward, officers advised that agencies focus on user-centered design improvements, such as lighter-weight cameras and automatic activation features prompted by gun draws or high-speed pursuits (Lum et al., 2020). These enhancements could solve usability difficulties in the field and help guarantee crucial events are routinely captured. Informants also advocated incorporating end-users (patrol officers) more significantly in pilot testing new BWC models before full-scale implementation. Incorporating officer feedback early in procurement and deployment processes may lead to greater acceptance, improved functionality, and eventually more effective integration of BWCs into law enforcement activities (Backman et al., 2022).

## CONCLUSION

This study affirms that body-worn cameras (BWCs) serve a vital role in boosting public confidence, police professionalism, and law enforcement transparency. However, practical obstacles such as short battery life, device bulkiness, and inadequate technical expertise among police continue to restrict their efficient deployment. To maximize the benefits of BWCs, it is necessary to invest not only in upgrading equipment but also in offering extensive training that encompasses both technical handling and the interpretation of recorded data. Furthermore, future studies should employ a longitudinal method to investigate how officers' experiences and adaptation to BWCs evolve over time. Beyond internal police operations, the larger social impact of BWCs—particularly on public perceptions and police-community relations—must also be examined. Continuous evaluation, adaptation, and community interaction are needed to guarantee that BWC technology promotes both effective police and the building of public trust.

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