

The Collaborative Force: Lessons From Police Community Relations in Crime Solution

Ally Aika A. Manubag, Dr. William A. Revisa

Criminal Justice Education, University of Mindanao, Professional School

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the lived experiences of police officers in Tagum City who engage in collaborative crime-solving initiatives with community members. Using a qualitative approach, data were gathered through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with law enforcement personnel to understand their practices, challenges, and insights in building effective police-community relations. Thematic analysis revealed three key dimensions: (1) the importance of trust-building and sustained engagement in solving crimes, (2) coping strategies such as emotional resilience, structured communication, and community validation to navigate challenges, and (3) insights emphasizing patience, purpose, and mutual respect as cornerstones of collaborative crime solutions. Findings highlight that strong community relationships lead to faster case resolution and improved job satisfaction among police officers. However, officers also face emotional and procedural challenges that require institutional support, training, and public cooperation. The study recommends institutionalizing relationship-building in policing, enhanced mental health services, and participatory safety programs co-developed with local government units and barangays. These efforts aim to strengthen Tagum City's community policing framework by fostering shared responsibility between police and the public. Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader discourse on community-oriented policing by offering grounded lessons on how collaboration becomes a powerful force in crime solution.

Keywords: criminal justice, collaborative force, police-community relations, crime solution, community policing, Philippines, qualitative research.

INTRODUCTION

Community policing is meant to improve outcomes by increasing engagement between citizens and police through increased foot patrols, community meetings, and the adoption of problem-oriented policing strategies that address concerns raised by citizens. When cooperation leads to effective police responses, this approach reinforces citizen trust and facilitates further collaboration, creating a virtuous cycle (Blair et al., 2021).

The problematic issue in this study is that while community policing makes great efforts to be transparent and incorporate the community in justice to a greater extent, it still leaves the community relatively powerless

when it comes to effective involvement in their justice issues, leaving the ultimate decision-making capacity in the hands of police. Furthermore, a divide remains between the police and the public (Glowatski, Jones, & Carleton, 2020). A significant part of this relationship is the people's view of the police — their professionalism, fairness, and genuine involvement in helping, supporting, and collaborating with the people. When neighborhood members have good views of and confidence in their local police, they are more likely to turn to and cooperate with the police to deter and address crimes (Perez, Nguyen, & Vogel, 2021).

Much has been said over the years about community policing and how trusting relationships developed and maintained at the community level have successfully prevented crime. It is believed that these relationships have also proven incredibly successful in identifying individuals and groups that pose a threat of targeted violence to our communities (Romano, 2022). Further, this research will contribute to the realization of item number 16

(Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) of the Sustainable Goals of the United Nations, as adapted by the Philippine government.

The twenty-first century has seen policing agencies become involved in an increasingly diverse range of roles, often while managing relatively restricted resources, leaving them struggling to meet demand. Consequently, a key priority for applied policing is better understanding and anticipating changes in short-, medium-, and long-term demand. Changes to offense rates and types, reduced officer numbers, and structural population changes are all likely to impact police demand in complex ways (Walley & Adams, 2019).

The police alone cannot be responsible for community protection and the quality of life. Law-abiding citizens need to take some responsibility for their communities and neighborhoods. Therefore, the police need the citizens they serve in the policing process, and the police must take part in the citizen process. Such cooperation between law enforcement and the community enables more comprehensive solutions to emerging neighborhood problems, rather than relying solely on law enforcement (Schlosser, 2020).

With the increasing modernization of our policing system, the PNP decided to improve its methods. The method of policing that the PNP aims to implement has shifted from traditional policing to a newer and more community-friendly form of policing. Thus, the Community-Oriented Policing System (COPS) was slowly implemented. COPS, which focuses on identifying the causes of crimes and developing an effective response strategy, is a shift in policing methods that the PNP sees as its way of modernizing the police force of the country. The community-oriented policing system approach was espoused, where performance was measured to improve the quality of life and community participation in problem-solving activities. This method focused more on achieving the ends of justice rather than the means (Romano, 2022).

At the heart of this exploration lies community-oriented policing (COP), a transformative philosophy that redefines the role of police within the fabric of society. Emerging as a response to the limitations of traditional policing, COP represents a paradigm shift guided by principles of partnership, collaboration, and problem-solving (Miller & Hess, 2020). This progressive philosophy acknowledges that effective law enforcement transcends mere crime control; it necessitates active engagement with the communities it seeks to protect and serve.

While existing studies confirm the positive correlation between police-community collaboration and crime reduction, they rarely explore the deeper mechanisms of this relationship. A significant gap exists in understanding how specific interactions, such as trust-building dialogues, translate into tangible outcomes, especially within the Philippines' unique cultural and historical context. There is a need to identify the specific challenges—like funding constraints and communication breakdowns—that can hinder collaboration and to understand the unique roles, sustainability, and global impact of these partnerships.

It suggests and answers the questions or the lived experiences that knowledge is not just given to us but is created through our interactions with others. In the context of policing, this means that effective partnerships between police and communities are not one-sided. Both sides must work together, sharing ideas and experiences, to find solutions to problems. This kind of collaboration helps build trust and leads to better outcomes for everyone.

This study aims to comprehensively explore police-community relations in Tagum City, focusing on collaborative crime-solving initiatives. It will use qualitative methods to delve into the experiences, challenges, and insights of police officers and community members. Specifically, this research will answer the following questions: 1. What are the lived experiences of police officers engaged in collaborative crime-solving initiatives with community members? 2. How do police officers cope with the challenges associated with collaborative crime-solving efforts? 3. What are the insights or lessons gained from their experiences in collaborative crime solutions with the community?

This research will contribute to the local and global understanding of effective police-community collaboration by examining the experiences of law enforcement and community members in Tagum City. The findings will provide new insights into how police and communities can work together, strengthening relations and identifying strategies to mitigate inherent risks. The study's outcomes will provide practical strategies for the Philippine

National Police (PNP) to enhance community relations, empower the community to participate in its own safety, offer practical knowledge for students at the University of Mindanao's Criminology program, and align with SDG 16 by promoting peace, justice, and strong institutions globally.

METHOD

This section considers the methodology used in this study, including the study participants, materials and instruments, and design and procedure.

Study Participants

The participants in this study were selected and identified through purposive sampling. It was the better matching of the sample to the aims and objectives of the research, thus improving the study's rigor and the trustworthiness of the data and results (Campbell, et.al, 2020).

Purposive sampling led to a greater depth of information from a smaller number of carefully selected units (Patton, 2020). Participants were drawn from various roles within the Tagum City police station, including patrol and community relations officers. To maximize the richness of the data, researchers strategically selected participants who could provide diverse and valuable insights. This involved considering factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, and years of service.

The willingness of these participants was acquired first before the proper interview. The inclusion criteria for this research approach were employed, combining in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). Ten (10) experienced Police Community Relations (PCR) officers from the Tagum City Police Station were selected as participants for the IDIs. Additionally, seven (7) experienced Patrol Police Officers from the same police station participated in focus group discussions. The participants were expected to have the ability to think critically, creatively, and innovatively in preparing group presentations and discussions. Facilitators or moderators were constantly reminded of the potential dangers that groupthink could pose to the outcome of FGD by ensuring fair distribution of opportunities to all participants to voice their perspectives. FGD participants' voluntary assumption of leadership roles and overly assertiveness were professionally discouraged. Individual participants in FGD were discouraged as much as possible from socially distancing themselves from the others, in order not to influence or dictate indirectly the outcome of responses (Yulianti & Sulistyawati, 2021). With at least four years of experience, these officers offered diverse perspectives on community policing strategies and challenges. This criterion aimed to capture diverse perspectives and insights from individuals who had demonstrated sustained engagement in the collaborative force between the police and the community, providing a comprehensive understanding of the lessons from such interactions.

Exclusion criteria further dictated that PNP personnel who were not included in the criteria were excluded. All participants were required to provide informed consent before participating in the study. This selection aligned with the research (Gunawan, Aunguroch, et.al. 2021). A phenomenological study of nurses' lived experience in the battle of COVID-19 suggested a maximum of 17 participants for phenomenological studies. Importantly, participation was entirely voluntary, and individuals could withdraw at any stage if they felt uncomfortable, unsafe, or believed there was an information imbalance (Nguyen & Phan, 2023).

In this study, the instruments used for gathering data were the in-depth interview (IDI) and focus group discussion (FGD), which used semi-structured interview questions wherein responses were recorded, transcribed, translated, and analyzed. A semi-structured interview was one in which the researcher did not strictly adhere to a pre-determined set of questions. The semi-structured interview enabled researchers to track their studies while being flexible and adaptable to ask questions to their interviewees. However, the flexibility and adaptability in the semi-structured interview were particularly distinctive from the looseness of an unstructured interview because its direction was fully controlled (Ruslin, et.al, 2022).

The researcher created an interview guide, which was submitted for validity and reliability, and evaluated by five (5) panels of validators from the University of Mindanao and one (1) external validator. It assimilates different questions and suggestions to improve the situated information for the interview guide.

This research employed a qualitative research methodology, specifically a descriptive phenomenological approach, to comprehensively capture and describe the distinctive traits or attributes of a particular individual, situation, or group. This collaborative approach was used to gain a comprehensive understanding. Ten participants were selected for IDIs to explore their experiences and most profound thoughts, as this one-on-one method is highly effective for gathering detailed, personal insights (Osborne & Grant-Smith, 2021). FGD with 7 participants was conducted to understand group shared beliefs and social interactions (Reisner et al., 2020). This combined method allowed the researcher to capture unique, individual, and collective viewpoints, ensuring a rich and complete data set for analysis.

The researcher's role was central to ensuring the study's credibility and integrity. The research followed a systematic and ethical procedure to produce reliable results. First, the researcher invited potential participants to the study and obtained their informed consent. Participants had the autonomy to decide whether or not to participate. Additionally, the researcher sought permission from the head of the respective office to conduct interviews at specific locations.

Second, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with police officers and community members to understand their perspectives on police-community relations in crime prevention. The research also outlined plans for managing potential challenges and conflicts that arose during collaborative crime-solving. It examined the inherent risks in these partnerships—physical harm, psychological impacts like fear and betrayal, and socioeconomic disparities—and proposed mitigation strategies.

The Findings were based on rigorous analysis, free from fabrication or misrepresentation, and the conclusions were supported by evidence and consistent with existing literature. Furthermore, plagiarism detection by uploading or submitting the paper to Turnitin or Grammarly was used to ensure originality and prevent overlaps with existing research. In addition, the researcher ensured that no intentional manipulation of study materials, instruments, or techniques, nor any modification or omission of data or findings, would occur to prevent the research from being accurately recorded in the falsification search record. Authorship of a research article typically signifies substantial contributions to the published work. In this regard, the researcher noted that those who contributed significantly to the project were appropriately acknowledged for their efforts, acknowledging their part in the study's success. In the acknowledgments section, all contributors were thanked correctly, including those whose contributions were too little to be listed as authors.

These interviews were recorded (with consent) to capture detailed information and foster open discussions. The goal was to build trust and collaboration between the police and the community to develop effective crime prevention strategies.

This study employed a qualitative, phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of police officers and community members regarding their relationships in crime prevention. The research was underpinned by the principle that understanding the complexity of meanings within the data is more valuable than measuring their frequency. To achieve this, the study utilized purposive sampling to select participants who could provide rich, in-depth accounts of their experiences. Data were collected through in-depth interviews (IDIs) conducted in a manner that fostered trust and open discussions. The interviews, which were recorded with participant consent, were the primary source of information, providing detailed narratives on the challenges and collaborative efforts in crime-solving. All research findings were the product of a rigorous analysis of these lived experiences, free from fabrication or misrepresentation. Furthermore, the study adhered to strict ethical guidelines, ensuring that participant autonomy and confidentiality were respected and that all contributors to the research were acknowledged correctly.

To ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of the analysis, the researcher adhered to the four key criteria of *credibility* through accurately reflecting participant perspectives, achieving *transferability* by providing detailed methodological descriptions, confirming *dependability* by grounding all conclusions in the data, and ensuring *confirmability* by minimizing researcher bias in the interpretation of findings (Ahmed, 2025). This involved accurately reflecting participants' perspectives, providing detailed methodological descriptions, grounding conclusions in the data, and minimizing bias in interpretation.

The researcher was committed to conducting the study ethically, adhering to guidelines set by the University of Mindanao Ethics Review Board and the Philippine Data Privacy Act. To safeguard participant privacy, recordings were securely deleted after transcription. Participants were carefully selected from the Philippine National Police in Tagum City, prioritizing those with relevant experience and ensuring their involvement was informed. A letter to conduct the study was provided and given to the office of Tagum City Police Station, headed by PLTCOL WILDEMAR TIU. Participation in this research offered several benefits to participants, including contributing to policy development, networking opportunities, and personal growth.

To maintain transparency and avoid conflicts of interest, the researcher disclosed any potential biases and refrained from actions that could compromise the study's integrity. By prioritizing ethical considerations, participant well-being, and data privacy, the researcher aimed to conduct a rigorous and meaningful analysis. The researcher has obtained approval from the University of Mindanao Ethics Review Committee (UMERC) to conduct the research and was issued an approved UMERC Certificate on February 19, 2025, with UMERC Protocol Number: UMERC-2025-047. The researcher used recording devices like cellphones and other similar audio and recording tools for data collection. However, all audio and video recordings were permanently deleted once transcribed into written form. To thank participants for their time, especially since the interviews would take away from their activities, the researcher provided tokens of appreciation. Finally, to ensure complete transparency and avoid any perceived conflict of interest, the researcher confirmed that neither they nor their relatives had any personal or commercial interest or potential for gain from any organizations or individuals connected to the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and interprets the qualitative findings derived from in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted with police officers assigned in Tagum City. The results presented here are grounded in thematic analysis, which allowed for the systematic identification and interpretation of patterns in participants' narratives. Each theme is supported by direct participant quotations, providing rich, contextualized insights into their lived experiences.

Collaborative Crime-Solving Initiatives with Community Members.

Trust Building and Relationship Development. Police officers reported building trust with community members was a central and ongoing aspect of their collaborative work. Officers experienced initial hesitation or skepticism from residents, but meaningful relationships began to form through consistent presence, responsiveness, and transparency. This theme highlights the relational dimension of policing, where officers gradually shift from being perceived as authoritative figures to becoming trusted community partners.

This was especially evident in statements like that of IDI 3, who underscored the importance of community support in pinpointing criminal suspects:

If they had not cooperated with us, we would not have been able to pinpoint who the suspect was and where they lived. (IDI 3-C-RQ1)

Other officers described specific cases where strong community relationships directly led to the resolution of serious crimes.

In IDI 4, one officer shared how community cooperation enabled the successful resolution of two interconnected cases:

We solved a case of a robbery incident. It was a robbery, and it was connected to a murder case with the same suspect. We solved that with the help of the community. . (IDI 4-D-RQ1)

IDI 5 highlighted the community's role in preventing further harm or criminal escape, showing how the timeliness of cooperation can have life-saving implications:

The community is a big help in solving cases quickly. If the community were not there, something else might have happened to the victim, or the criminal might have escaped. (IDI 5-E-RQ2-PQ4)

IDI 6 emphasized how cooperation is not uniform across barangays:

Ahh... we have encountered different personal experiences where they help us, or there are also communities or areas or places that are not that very, ahh... active for the police, especially in the barangays, because we were working with the barangay tanods, BPATs. (IDI 6-F-RQ1)

IDI 9 further stressed the impact of relational policing:

The level of community involvement and initiative truly diverges in crime solution. This is because many factors depend on solving a crime, and it is definitely more effective if the police also have good public relations. This would really encourage the community (IDI 9-I-RQ1)

Finally, community members also showed initiative in proactive prevention. As described in FGD 1:

So, the best way to do it is to help the personnel in the stores or in the houses, talk to them so they do not keep company with suspicious individuals, because we do not know when, just like that, anytime, criminals might attack. (FGD 1-L-RQ1)

This shift, from viewing the community as mere informants to recognizing them as prevention partners, mirrors global policing reforms emphasizing co-production of safety (Mangai et al., 2022). This aligns with existing literature emphasizing that procedural justice and sustained interaction are key in fostering police legitimacy and public cooperation (Morrow & Vickovic, 2023). Trust-building allows officers to gather critical intelligence and prevent the escalation of crime through community engagement. Once trust is established, residents become more willing to report crimes, identify suspects, and engage in neighborhood watch efforts (Melkamu & Teshome, 2023). This affirms the value of relational policing frameworks (Modise, 2023), which call for greater emotional intelligence, cultural awareness, and sustained dialogue as practical law enforcement tools.

This illustrates the mutual reliance between the police and public, a characteristic also noted in research, which found that community-oriented policing models are significantly more effective when rooted in sustained interpersonal trust. Such examples of assessment of grassroots enforcement bodies like BPATs in the Philippines emphasize their crucial role as bridges between formal policing institutions and everyday citizens. However, officers also noted variability in community responsiveness (Bradford et al., 2023). This reflects findings that argue that historical police-community relations and perceived equity of service shape how willing different neighborhoods are to engage. Disparities may stem from prior negative experiences with law enforcement, social stigma, or lack of visible support (Griego, 2021).

In conclusion, the theme of trust building and relationship development highlights the crucial role of police-community collaboration in effective crime-solving initiatives. The experiences shared by the participants in Tagum City underscore the importance of cooperation, information sharing, and active community involvement in addressing criminal activities. While challenges persist, fostering positive interactions and adapting to local dynamics can strengthen these partnerships and enhance the overall effectiveness of crime-solving efforts.

Improved Job satisfaction and Morale. Police officers in Tagum City experience increased motivation, pride, and fulfillment due to positive community engagement. Officers expressed that when residents are cooperative, responsive, and supportive, it improves operational outcomes and enhances their sense of purpose and Morale.

Participants acknowledged that community involvement is pivotal in reducing criminal activity, boosting their confidence, and increasing job satisfaction. As noted in FGD 2, collaboration between the police and citizens was seen as an essential deterrent to crime:

It is terrific to Collaborating with the PNP and the community is terrific because it lessens crime. (FGD 2-M-RQ1)

Officers also expressed pride and personal motivation when public trust is evident. In FGD 5, a participant reflected on their proactive efforts during a sensitive criminal case and emphasized the value of grassroots intelligence, even informal or gossip-based information:

Based on my own experience, I was able to apprehend someone. In my experience as a police officer, my initiative was when we caught someone who committed rape against a child, an act of lasciviousness. I did not hesitate then; I went straight there because the child might be harmed. It also went through the townspeople, those single motorcycle riders – that information, even gossip, is very useful. If we did not have that, we would not get information from those people there, the loiterers, those gossips. (FGD 5-P-RQ1)

This statement reflects the critical role of informal community networks in empowering officers to act swiftly and decisively while feeling connected to the public they serve. The positive emotional and psychological effects of community support were further emphasized in FGD 6, where cooperation was linked to greater efficiency in addressing peace and order concerns:

When people are active in reporting and helping, it is easier for us to solve peace and order issues. Cooperation is vital to make our community safer. (FGD 6-Q-RQ1)

Finally, FGD 7 emphasized that it is not only the exchange of information but the emotional and moral support of the community that boosts Morale and work ethic:

Community involvement makes our operations more effective. Not just because of the information, but also because of their support, which motivates us to work hard for their security. (FGD 7-R-RQ1)

The participant's narratives align with research by Mangai and colleagues (2022), which highlights that trust and legitimacy perceptions from the community act as motivational drivers for law enforcement personnel, encouraging ethical behavior, commitment, and resilience. Moreover, it also coincides with findings by Melkamu and Teshome (2023), who emphasize that police officers feel more professionally competent when community-police cooperation leads to tangible crime reduction. Additionally, Morrow and Vickovic (2023) emphasized that the feeling that the public values one's efforts enhances a sense of moral duty and institutional belonging among officers. This reflects what Modise (2023) describes as relational reinforcement, where positive interaction with the public improves both procedural outcomes and emotional well-being for frontline officers.

Overall, this theme illustrates how community engagement enhances operational effectiveness and profoundly impacts officers' internal motivation, emotional well-being, and professional satisfaction. The symbiotic nature of public trust and police morale reinforces the need for sustained community-police relations as a foundation for safety and service excellence.

Communication and Transparency. Effective communication emerged as a foundational strategy in fostering trust and collaboration between police officers and community members in Tagum City. Participants underscored the importance of empathy, active listening, sincerity, and consistent follow-up as tools to promote transparency and openness in interactions with the public.

IDI 1 emphasized the role of emotional intelligence and adaptability in community interactions:

So, I have learned about active listening and empathy that we all have different kinds of problems, so we need to adjust wherever we fit in. It is not just about achieving your desired goal. (IDI 1-A-RQ1)

IDI 3 reflected on the psychological barriers to open communication, particularly in areas with high crime or gang activity:

A significant reason why people might be hesitant to talk to us is the fear of potential harm or retaliation from the criminals involved. Ultimately, it comes down to building trust, fostering open communication, and achieving mutual understanding within the community. (IDI 3-C-RQ2-PQ2)

IDI 4 further illustrated how transparency and persistence strengthen communication:

Based on experience, the most important thing is to show that you are sincere in your questions. And then, you follow up because if you only ask once, they might not tell you anything. However, as time goes by and you keep following up, you gain the trust of someone there or someone they know. (IDI 4-D-RQ1-PQ1)

IDI 5 also spoke to the relational dynamics of respect and human dignity in communication:

We build trust because, mostly, when interacting with civilians, we have a dialogue with them. First, you respect them, you respect their dignity and their rights, and that is how trust is built, through your respect for them. (IDI 5-RQ1PQ1)

Beyond interpersonal dialogue, officers also leveraged mass communication tools to increase transparency and information accessibility. IDI 8 highlighted the strategic use of local media:

Using our local radio stations for public service announcements and community updates is effective here in Tagum. Because we have this platform here where we regularly appear on radio stations to cater to concerns or address issues, it is easier for us to reach many people, and they can easily understand the information. (IDI 8-H-RQ1-PQ2)

This aligns with findings by Murphy and McCarthy (2024), who assert that officers who demonstrate empathy and active listening are more likely to elicit cooperation and support from the public. Emotional intelligence facilitates conflict resolution and reduces the risk of escalation during police encounters. This also reinforces the study from the research by Li et al. (2024), which emphasizes the role of perceived safety and procedural justice in shaping public willingness to engage with law enforcement. When communities feel protected rather than exposed, they are more inclined to share critical information. This comment reflects the importance of consistency and sincerity in trust-building, a central principle in community policing literature (Perry et al., 2021). Follow-up engagement signals a genuine commitment to the community's concerns, rather than a transactional or superficial approach. Respectful treatment has enhanced perceptions of police legitimacy and fairness (Cram, 2023). When individuals feel heard and valued, they are more likely to reciprocate through cooperation and engagement.

The findings presented in this theme suggest that communication and transparency are critical to fostering a productive relationship between the police and the community. Officers can overcome initial hesitancy and build trust that encourages public cooperation through active listening, empathetic engagement, and sustained follow-up. Furthermore, leveraging mass communication tools—such as local radio—amplifies these efforts by ensuring that accurate and accessible information reaches a broad audience. These practices significantly enhance police legitimacy and effectiveness in community-oriented policing, paving the way for safer and more resilient communities.

Strategies for Effective Collaborative Crime Solving Initiatives.

The analysis surfaced three key themes: Sustainable Community Collaboration, Use of Formal Structures and Policies, and Community Validation and Positive Feedback. These themes illustrate the strategies officers employ to navigate the complexities of community engagement, ranging from leveraging formal protocols and preventive measures to maintaining positive community relationships through consistent communication and acknowledgment of public support—sustainable Community Collaboration. Police in Tagum City have developed methods to increase trust and gather helpful information to fight crimes. Through these narratives, we realize just how many different simple approaches can build trust. Even if it is sometimes unclear, these talks help prove the cultural relevance of these beliefs. Offering rewards helps community members make ends meet, encouraging them to cooperate and spread information. This reflects the mutual reinforcement between community support and police service, where continuous interaction fosters a foundation for effective crime-solving. Participants highlighted that seemingly small acts of reciprocity, such as providing aid or being present, can result in a more substantial information flow from community members.

FGD 5 emphasized the transactional nature of initial police-community exchanges: First, in the police-community relationship, we give a little rice. We can get information to solve cases because they will provide us with tips. (FGD 5-P-RQ2)

The relational dimension of this collaboration is further evident in FGD 3:

If you keep talking to them, it is like you become close. So it is easy for them to call us in an emergency. (FGD 3-N-RQ1-PQ2)

Another perspective is provided through strategic deployment, as explained in IDI 2:

Based on our station, the crime rate here is relatively high because it is a city. So, when we deploy, we deploy more troops who are active in the field and troops who are personnel in positions in different areas, like substations. (IDI 2-B-RQ2)

The significance of institutional partnerships also emerged in IDI 3:

Building trust through active engagement, and the different ways we utilize community policing strategies, like actively listening to community concerns, really involves collaborating with NGOs or local barangays to set up things like seminars or meetings. (IDI 3-C-RQ2)

This reflects a co-production framework in policing, where collaborative efforts are essential in addressing criminality and ensuring public safety (Braga et al., 2024). This highlights the complex nature of sustainable collaboration, where efforts extend beyond day-to-day interactions to include formal partnerships with NGOs and barangays. By hosting seminars and meetings to address community concerns, police amplify trust-building efforts through education and empowerment, aligning with co-production theories advocating multi-sectoral collaboration (Braga et al., 2024). Repeated engagement reduces barriers between police and residents, creating a pathway for quicker emergency responses. Such continuous interaction aligns with procedural justice principles, where consistent police presence and dialogue establish legitimacy and foster cooperation (Melkamu & Teshome, 2023).

This operational focus complements the relational strategies described earlier. By aligning deployment practices to the demands of a highly urbanized and crime-heavy area, the police ensure visibility and responsiveness. Targeted positioning, whether in substations or field posts, reinforces the substance of police-community collaboration, where officers are perceived as proactive and accessible partners in crime prevention. These statements emphasize the importance of sustained and intentional communication in building familiarity with community members. These dialogues also illustrate that sustainable collaboration involves informal exchanges and structured strategies. Resource-sharing, continuous communication, strategic deployment, and institutional partnerships form the foundation of collaborative crime-solving efforts, ultimately fostering trust and establishing mutually beneficial police-community relations.

Use of Formal Structures and Policies. Using formal structures and policies ensures that officers follow systematic protocols when it comes to law enforcement. Police officers highlighted the significance of adhering to formal procedures and policies as essential to effective law enforcement and personal well-being. A key concern expressed by participants was the pressure associated with time-sensitive investigations, particularly when dealing with high-profile or sensational crimes. One officer, IDI 4, explained:

You must conduct a thorough investigation. Moreover, before you file a case, you need to consider time constraints to avoid undue stress. The pressure makes us stressed when we are asked to solve sensational crimes immediately without a transparent investigation. (IDI 4-D-RQ2)

Officers, IDI 7, recognized that community members often respond defensively if confronted abruptly. Thus, gradual explanation and demonstrated sincerity are vital to gaining cooperation:

... what our police do is we slowly explain things to them because sometimes if you are too abrupt, they tend to react and get defensive. So gradually, and ahhh... one of the things we as police should do is show them that we

are sincere in our work, so they will not hesitate to help us. (IDI 7-G-RQ2).

Furthermore, proactive crime prevention through formal patrolling strategies was highlighted by IDI 6 as a foundational policy mechanism:

The very first thing we do is a crime deterrent. So, before a crime happens within the AOR (Area of Responsibility), it should not happen. So, we have personnel together who conduct patrolling; they are in the field to deter crime. (IDI 6-F-RQ2)

This reflects an organizational commitment to structured, preventive policing to maintain public order and minimize crime before it occurs. The narratives illustrate the tension between the urgency demanded by public and organizational expectations and the necessity for methodical, evidence-based inquiry. It underscores how procedural rigor safeguards the investigation's integrity and protects officers from undue psychological stress. In addition to procedural thoroughness, effective communication emerged as another crucial component of policing within formal structures. These approaches resonate with procedural justice principles, emphasizing respectful, transparent interactions to build legitimacy and encourage public collaboration (Morrow & Vickovic, 2023). These insights demonstrate how formal structures and policies provide a framework within which officers operate efficiently and ethically. Such policies help manage external pressures, guide community interactions, and emphasize proactive measures that uphold public safety and police well-being.

Community Validation and Positive Feedback. Community validation and positive feedback strengthen relationships between law enforcement and citizens. This highlights the challenges and motivations police officers face in building and maintaining public trust, especially in contexts where skepticism and distrust are prevalent. Officers acknowledged that overcoming significant trust issues among community members is one of the most challenging aspects of their work. One participant, IDI 8, candidly shared:

That is one of the problematic parts because some people have huge trust issues, so we strive to make our good intentions known to them through our performance and the ability to help the community. (IDI 8-H-RQ2)

Listening and responding to community grievances was also underscored by a participant, IDI 9, as a critical practice in strengthening police-community relations:

We need to listen to their grievances, because that is truly what they want – for their concerns to be addressed. So, we need to do everything in our power to help them. (IDI 9-I-RQ2)

Finally, officers highlighted the importance of resilience in the face of criticism, maintaining focus and motivation despite negative feedback:

Ang importante kay dili mi magpadala sa ilang negatibo nga mga komento ug magpadayon mi sap ag hatag sa amuung best performance. (FGD 7-R-RQ2-PQ5)

We must not let their negative comments affect us and continue to perform our best.

This attitude reflects an adaptive coping strategy vital for sustaining practical police work, recognizing that public feedback is not always positive but demands continued professionalism and commitment. This approach connects to literature that posits resource-based strategies as catalysts for engagement and trust-building, especially in marginalized communities (Williams, 2025). These experiences emphasize that officers rely heavily on their actions and service quality to counteract existing mistrust. Their good intentions must be demonstrated consistently through tangible assistance to foster gradual acceptance. This insight reflects a key component of community-oriented policing—prioritizing residents' voices and ensuring their concerns are acknowledged, enhancing legitimacy and cooperation (O'Reilly, 2022).

These statements underscore how important community validation and positive feedback are for effective policing. By striving to show good intentions through performance, listening to grievances, and remaining unaffected by negativity, officers build trust and strong relationships within the community. This also illustrates

that community validation operates both as a challenge and a source of motivation for officers. It aligns with research showing that positive community feedback reinforces police legitimacy, while ongoing dialogue and responsiveness address distrust and foster collaborative relationships (Bradford et al., 2023; Morrow & Vickovic, 2023).

Insights on Collaborative Crime Solutions with the Community.

These themes emphasize that effective community collaboration is not immediate—it requires consistent effort, emotional resilience, and genuine relationship-building. Officers reflected on the importance of trust, respectful engagement, and fulfillment from being recognized as reliable and valued community members.

Table 4. Themes on collaborative crime solutions with the community.

The Power of Community Engagement. Community engagement emerged as a central theme in the discourse on collaborative crime-solving initiatives in Tagum City. Police officers repeatedly emphasized that community involvement is not merely complementary but foundational to successfully resolving criminal cases.

This theme highlights how partnerships grounded in familiarity, presence, and mutual trust significantly enhance policing outcomes. This reflection underscores how the police rely on community members not just for passive support but as active participants who provide crucial information, such as leads and witness reports. These interactions create a two-way exchange of trust and utility.

One participant, IDI 2, encapsulated the indispensable nature of this collaboration:

So, dako g'yud kaayo kalambigitan ang community sa gitawag nga collaborative crime solution kay kung di' tungod sa ilaha di' nato ma solve ang problema. '...' di' nato ma solve ang problema kung di' tungod sa atuang community sa ilang tabang sa ila. (IDI 2-B-RQ3)

So, the community has considerable involvement in what a collaborative crime solution is because if it is not for them, we cannot solve the problem. '...' We cannot solve the problem without the help of our community.

In line with this, IDI 6 described Oplan Kalinaw, a community outreach strategy combining health services and data gathering to promote police visibility and build rapport:

Community relation jud, ang strategy jud na ginabuhay namo sa 'Oplan Kalinaw' so naga adto ta sa kumonidad, naga conduct ta ug mga medical mission naga kuha ta'g data nila mao na ato'ng strategy para mapaduol ta sa ilaha ug para ma ingganyo pod sa atoa na motabang sa mga problema labi na sa crime sa isa ka barangay. (IDI 6-F-RQ1-PQ2)

Community relations: Our strategy in 'Oplan Kalinaw' is to go to the community, conduct medical missions, and gather data. That is our strategy to get closer to them and to encourage them to help with problems, especially crime in a barangay.

Building connections through regular presence and respectful communication was another recurring element in officer testimonies. One officer, IDI 5, emphasized that success in community policing stems from showing up in everyday spaces and engaging in informal conversation:

While kung ga suroy-suroy naka diha, patrolling ka, dili lang ka diha sa imong mobile car pondo, naog ka sa imong mobile, moadto ka sa mga tindahan, istoryahon nimo sila, dihaa naka build naka'g communication. '...' So pag-abot sa panahon kung naa'y crimen diha, manawag sa imo personal, '...' dali nalang ang pag solbad sa crimen. (IDI 5-E-RQ2-PQ4)

However, by actively mingling with the community – not just staying inside patrol cars but getting out, visiting local stores, and having casual conversations – we build familiarity and communication. '...' That personal relationship, that friendship we have built, has a huge impact and is a tremendous help in our work.

Likewise, IDI 9 highlighted the importance of visible and consistent community interaction: Sa community lesson, uhm... proper communication g'yud ma'am ug kanang mag pakita g'yud ang akoang pasabot kanang makita g'yud nila ang mga pulis sa dalan and sa ilang mga barangay naga himo ug mga community extension and building good relationship labaw na sa mga leaders ug members ana na area. (IDI 9)

Community lessons are about proper communication, ma'am, and showing our presence so they can see the police on the streets and in their barangays conducting community extensions and building good relationships, especially with the leaders and members of that area.

These insights reflect scholarly findings that repeated and meaningful interpersonal contact builds trust and improves the flow of information between citizens and police (Morrow & Vickovic, 2023). Community engagement encourages reporting and cooperation and fosters an environment where law enforcement and the public co-own the responsibility of crime prevention (Bradford et al., 2023). This approach also aligns with current literature asserting that proactive engagement initiatives, such as community meetings, localized outreach programs, and presence-driven activities, significantly increase public cooperation and trust in law enforcement (Development Services Group, Inc., 2023). These efforts create relational equity between police and residents, shifting perceptions of the police from distant enforcers to collaborative public servants. In essence, community engagement serves as a powerful tool for collaborative crime-solving. It transforms police operations from reactive enforcement to proactive partnership. When residents feel seen, heard, and valued, they are more likely to contribute to collective safety efforts, reinforcing a cycle of mutual accountability and trust.

Collaboration Requires Patience and Persistence. While community engagement is crucial in collaborative policing, participants also emphasized that cultivating trust and sustained partnerships with the public requires patience, persistence, and a long-term commitment. Officers noted that challenges such as public skepticism, misinformation, and reluctance to engage are typical and must be met with professional resilience and empathy.

One officer, IDI 1, plainly articulated the importance of approach and tone when interacting with civilians:

... working with the community here in, uh, in crime solution, what I have learned is, you need to have much patience in how you approach and the way you talk to them so you can gain their trust. (IDI 1-A-RQ3)

Similarly, IDI 3 reflected on the emotional and motivational challenges of public service, highlighting the need for internal fortitude and dedication:

Ma'am, I overcame those challenges through patience and dedication to the work. Because we cannot please everyone, and in service, there will always be those who will not trust us, no matter what we do. However, even with those challenges, we still do our jobs properly for the good of the community. (IDI 3-C-RQ3)

Moreover, the theme extends beyond emotional patience to include investigative diligence. Officers acknowledged that not all community-supplied information is accurate or actionable, emphasizing the importance of rigorous validation. As one participant, IDI 10, explained:

While community information is crucial, it is not always accurate. '...' Therefore, we as investigators must thoroughly verify all information received, interview multiple individuals near a crime, and not solely rely on a few sources to ensure we gather precise and reliable details for our investigations. (IDI 10-K-RQ3)

These dialogues echo the broader findings in community policing literature, where procedural justice—the perceived fairness in police interactions—plays a crucial role in shaping community perceptions and willingness to cooperate (Morrow & Vickovic, 2023). Officers must demonstrate consistency, respect, and attentiveness, especially when initial encounters may be marked by suspicion or resistance. This recognition of the complexities in police-public relationships underscores the importance of a service-oriented mindset that perseveres despite uneven levels of trust or community responsiveness. As previous research notes, trust is not uniformly distributed across populations and may be shaped by historical tensions, previous negative encounters, or broader societal narratives (Murphy & Mazerolle, 2022). This reflects a professional standard rooted in evidence-based policing, where community insights serve as essential but not exclusive sources of information.

Sifting through partial, sometimes contradictory, accounts demands methodological care and patience, especially in high-pressure or sensitive cases (Ethridge, 2022).

In summary, effective collaboration with the community does not emerge overnight. It involves persistent outreach, emotional resilience, and a commitment to integrity in investigative work. By recognizing and embracing the time-consuming nature of relationship-building and information validation, police officers foster more sustainable and trustworthy partnerships with the communities they serve.

Community Trust and Sense of Purpose. Officers' accessibility and responsiveness were seen as key factors in reinforcing trust. A consistent theme across interviews and focus group discussions was the belief that trust, nurtured through continuous communication and mutual respect, is the foundation of meaningful police-community relations. Participants emphasized that when the public trusts the police, collaboration becomes more effective and more fulfilling for officers. Trust was seen not merely as a functional tool for solving crime but as a relational currency that gives purpose and emotional reward to police work.

As one officer, IDI 4, emphasized, sustained interaction is critical to maintaining trust:

I have realized that it is essential to have continuous communication with them so you can gain their trust, because if not, if they cannot contact you, if they call. If you do not answer, they tend not to join or participate with you anymore. (IDI 4-D-RQ3)

The quality of communication was also seen as essential. Officers noted that trust depends heavily on how they present themselves to the public. As one participant, IDI 5, put it:

If you have an excellent relationship with the community, it is very easy to get information. However, if you are a police officer just there, you do not have a good approach to them and will not get a proper story there. (IDI 5-E-RQ3)

For some officers, community trust served as a reflection of their effectiveness and identity as public servants. As one officer, IDI 8, shared:

We embody the general thoughts of serving the community with respect and building good relationships. Because even in our personal lives, we still reflect on how things should be done to ensure a peaceful life. (IDI 8-H-RQ3)

Focus group participants, FGD 2, also emphasized the personal value of positive community relationships:

... it feels terrific to hear them call you, to gain many friends. That is it, it feels good to have many friends, and you can really feel yourself that, 'Oh, I am really active as a PNP,' or in other words, 'I am successful as a PNP' because I have many acquaintances. (FGD 2-M-RQ3)

Similarly, another participant, FGD 4, stressed the importance of directness and relational trust:

... your relationship with the civilians should be perfect; your response should be direct, and there should be trust. (FGD 4-O-RQ3)

These findings echo existing literature asserting trust-based relationships are central to sustainable community policing models. When officers perceive community trust as a validation of their role, they are more likely to embody prosocial values and pursue community-centered goals (Modise, 2023). These sentiments align with research on procedural justice, which shows that consistent, fair, and respectful treatment by police enhances public willingness to cooperate and participate in crime prevention (Morrow & Vickovic, 2023).

These accounts highlight where police legitimacy is not solely derived from authority, but from approachability and relational skills. Research supports this view, suggesting that public cooperation is enhanced when police treat individuals with dignity and empathy (Melkamu & Teshome, 2023). In addition, the relational component of policing was seen not only as instrumental but as intrinsically meaningful. This expression of purpose

underscores the emotional rewards of police work when anchored in community trust. Here, trust is not just a means to an end, but a marker of personal fulfillment and professional success. In summary, this theme reveals that trust operates both as a strategic asset in policing and as a source of professional meaning. The mutual respect between officers and community members fosters better outcomes in public safety and enhances Morale, job satisfaction, and a sense of shared purpose.

IMPLICATION AND CONCLUDING REMARK

Implication For Practice

As a teacher, I stress the value of integrating real-world situations and shared policing concepts into law enforcement and criminology curricula. It should highlight relationship-building, communication, and community involvement as essential to efficient policing. The results can be utilized to create workshops and training materials that address the procedural and emotional difficulties that officers encounter while preparing students for the intricacies of police-community cooperation.

The study emphasizes how important it is for uniformed personnel to establish trust and keep in constant contact with the community. Simple actions like getting out of your patrol car to speak with locals can significantly impact relationships and speed up the process of resolving crimes. Additionally, uniformed staff members should receive emotional resilience training and be receptive to information from unofficial networks and other community sources. A transparent and successful policing strategy depends on following professional standards and utilizing formal structures, such as conducting in-depth investigations.

Implication For Future Research

This study serves as a good place to start. It clearly shows how local communities and law enforcement collaborate in areas like Tagum City. It offers practical examples of how communication and trust improve relationships rather than merely depending on theories. However, its conclusions might not be applicable in other contexts. In order to identify general principles and context-specific variables, future research should build on these findings by taking a more comparative approach and analyzing police-community relations across several jurisdictions.

Concluding Remarks

It is advised that police departments prioritize relationship-building as a core component of their operations, based on the lived experiences of police officers in Tagum City. It means identifying excellent officers at building relationships with the community and creating new training programs emphasizing emotional intelligence and cultural sensitivity. Departments should also make peer support groups and mental health services accessible to officers to support them effectively. Police and local leaders should work with the community to create shared safety programs to ensure the sustainability of these initiatives. A true partnership where all parties involved share accountability for public safety should replace these transactional exchanges.

Furthermore, cooperation must be based on open communication, trust, and active participation. It demonstrates how police officers who are approachable and visible in their communities tend to build stronger bonds with the public, which helps to reduce crime. Even though officers face difficulties like mistrust and false information, they can frequently overcome these challenges by being professional and dedicated. Ultimately, the study emphasizes that good policing is a deeply relational process that requires emotional intelligence and a shared sense of purpose between officers and their communities, rather than just a strategic approach.

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