| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Guardians of Public Safety, Governors of Peace and Order: Insights of Members of Peace and Order Council of Quad Cities of Cebu, Philippines

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| ABSTRACT

The City Peace and Order Council (CPOC) serves as a vital mechanism in promoting peace and maintaining public safety at the local government level. This study employed a transcendental phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of CPOC members in the Quad Cities of Cebu, Philippines, in the performance of their roles and responsibilities. Data were gathered from twelve (12) key informants, representing various government and community sectors, through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Analysis revealed eight (8) emergent themes. For positive experiences: Peace is Our Song, But Not Ours Alone and Every Step A Lesson, Every Rise A Legacy. For negative experiences: Paper Shields, Plastic Swords and Broken Seals, Silent Oaths. Coping mechanisms generated two (2) themes: The Power of Few, The Strength of Many and Motion. As to aspirations for improving peace and order programs, two (2) themes were identified: Lead with Fire, Train with Soul and Innovation is the New Armor. The findings highlight the crucial role of inter-agency collaboration, the challenges posed by political dynamics and resource constraints, and the resilience of CPOC members in fulfilling their mandate. The study recommends strengthening institutional support, ensuring adequate funding, enhancing training and capacity-building, and depoliticizing peace and order initiatives to sustain effective governance in public safety and community peacebuilding.

1. Introduction

Peace must be built on a foundation of equal rights among nations, without distinctions between large and small, powerful and weak. The guarantees exchanged must uphold this equality, ensuring no nation is placed above another. True peace should rest on collective strength rather than the individual power of any single nation. While equality of resources or other advantages cannot be imposed, since they arise naturally from a nation's development, what is essential is equality of rights. Humanity seeks the freedom to live, not merely a balance of power. There is an even deeper principle at stake beyond the equality of rights among nations. No peace can endure, nor should it, unless it upholds the fundamental truth that governments derive their legitimate authority from the consent of the people they govern. No authority has the right to treat people as mere property, transferring them between sovereignty without their will.

Ensuring peace and order is a universal concern as it directly impacts economic growth, social stability, and human rights. International organizations such as the United Nations (UN) emphasize the importance of peace and security in fostering sustainable development. The UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 highlights the need for strong institutions that promote peace, justice, and effective governance (United Nations, 2015). Various countries have established local peace councils or community policing programs to address crime, violence, and political instability. Studying the role of the City Peace and

Order Council (CPOC) contributes to a broader understanding of how localized governance structures enhance global peace and security initiatives.

The Philippines comparatively has a high crime rate among its neighbors in Asia. Illegal weapons are widespread; as a result, violent crime is common; its capital was once regarded as the kidnapping capital of the said region. Most of the vulnerable targets were Foreigners, who were commonly involved in prostitution, victimized by gangsters, money changing tricks, and credit card fraud. Volunteer workers, missionaries, and tourists have been the favorite targets of kidnappers (Merez, 2018).

In Cebu City, Philippines, armed men ransacked pawnshops in the middle of the busy city in broad daylight, the discovery of two Philippine Offshore Gaming Operators (Pogo) hubs, and the "gang rape" of a minor. These were among the biggest crime stories in Cebu that got the public talking in 2024. Each month, local authorities dealt with all kinds of criminal activities from the mundane to the most severe. Another crime that made a shock in the local news was the incident of A 14-year-old student from Brgy. Cansojong in Talisay City was answering her school modules inside her room when she was shot on April 26, 2024. The girl died and the investigation later revealed that it was an accidental firing of a gun caused by the victim's older brother, who was previously involved with illegal drugs. Another incident was in downtown Cebu City on January 30, 2023, particularly along C. Padilla Street, when a jealous man slashed the neck of her live-in partner after an altercation. The gruesome attack was caught in a closed-circuit television (CCTV) camera where the footage showed when the assailant, Edwin Lumacad, slashed the neck of his live-in partner, Bernadeta Zamora using a knife.

Another gruesome incident occurred which shook the different agencies of the government responsible for maintenance of peace and order when A 27-year-old woman, who works as a saleslady, was found dead inside her rented house in Sitio Laguna, Barangay Bulacao, Cebu City, on August 2, 2024. The body of the dead Charina Relativo was discovered by her partner's friends who came to check on her. One of these individuals, Darren Cui, was later identified as the suspect. Cui confessed to dragging Relativo, who was taking a bath out of the bathroom, to try to have sex with her. He also admitted to strangling the young woman until she stopped breathing and then he started a fire to conceal his crime (Ares, 2025).

A partnership between the community and law enforcement is a critical component in the fight against crime, serving as a fundamental strategy in modern crime prevention efforts. The Philippine National Police (PNP) alone, regardless of its organizational capacity, resources, or motivation, cannot effectively address the complex and evolving nature of criminality. Successful crime control requires the active involvement and cooperation of the community, as collaborative efforts between law enforcement and citizens are essential for the identification, prevention, and resolution of security challenges (Etcuban et al., 2018).

Meanwhile, there is a significant lack of empirical studies systematically assessing the lived experiences and views associated with City Peace and Order Council Members. This oversight is particularly critical given the demanding nature of handling sensitive information and managing stakeholder conflicts, which necessitate a deeper understanding of the work involved. This study aims to bridge the gap in comprehensive research on the perspectives of City Peace and Order Council members in the peace and order programs and practices that they are implementing. This will also include research on the following: challenges and stressors of being a CPOC member, the physical and psychological impacts of being a CPOC member, the coping mechanisms that a member use to deal with the challenges of their job, and the aspirations of CPOC members in the improvement of their functions. The study's findings can guide the policymakers and the local government in creating more effective interventions in curbing criminality at the grassroots level.

As a Registered Criminologist and an instructor of future agents of persons in authority, the researcher feels the need to conduct an in-depth study centered on the experiences of City Peace and Order Council members of the Quad city. Given that this is a relevant topic that has limited studies and needs more emphasis to improve the programs and services already offered. This initiative will prove advantageous not only for police officers, but also for local government administrators, legislators, and, more broadly, the Filipino citizenry.

2. Literature Review
This study is primarily anchored on Safety Culture Theory by Reason (1997) and supported by the Routine Activity Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979) and Broken Windows Theory (Wilson & Kelling, 1982). Safety Culture Theory emphasizes that organizational safety is not merely the result of individual actions but is deeply rooted in shared values, beliefs, and practices that shape how risks are managed and decisions are made (Reason, 1997). A strong safety culture is characterized by informed decision-making, open communication, mutual trust, and collective commitment to safety across organizational levels. Reason (1997) identifies key cultural components—namely, reporting, just, flexible, and learning cultures—that collectively reduce systemic risks by promoting transparency, fairness, adaptability, and institutional learning. In this framework, organizational failures are traced not

to isolated human errors but to deeper systemic issues, making proactive risk management essential. Although initially developed for high-risk industries, the theory has also been widely applied in governance and public administration contexts where coordinated action and accountability are central to maintaining public safety.

Reason (1997) further asserts that effective safety management emerges from the interaction between formal safety systems—rules, procedures, and designated roles—and the informal safety culture, which consists of unwritten norms, local adaptations, and shared practices embedded in daily work. Alignment between these dimensions fosters robust and resilient safety practices, whereas gaps or inconsistencies signal deeper organizational vulnerabilities. Such misalignments may generate distrust, normalization of deviance, or widespread non-compliance—phenomena that compromise risk management and may lead to systemic failure.

Safety culture is therefore conceptualized as a system of shared cognitive and relational structures through which individuals interpret, communicate, and enact safety-related behaviors (Reason, 1997). The cognitive dimension comprises shared beliefs and assumptions about risk and responsibility, while the relational dimension involves norms and expectations governing interaction and communication. Improving safety culture thus requires transforming not only procedures but also meaning-making processes and relational dynamics within organizations.

Complementing this institutional perspective, Routine Activity Theory (RAT) offers a situational explanation of crime. Cohen and Felson (1979) posit that crime occurs when three elements converge in time and space: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of capable guardianship. This framework highlights how daily routines, workforce participation, mobility patterns, and technological developments shape opportunities for crime. Shifts in routine activities alter target availability and guardianship levels, explaining changes in crime rates independent of offender motivation. RAT underscores the importance of modifying environmental conditions—through measures such as improved lighting, secure locks, and natural surveillance (CPTED principles)—to disrupt the convergence of the three elements and reduce crime opportunities (Cohen & Felson, 1979).

Similarly, Broken Windows Theory argues that visible signs of disorder—such as vandalism, graffiti, and public disturbances—signal the breakdown of social control and invite more serious crimes (Wilson & Kelling, 1982). Maintaining order and addressing minor offenses prevents escalation by reinforcing social norms and community cohesion. This theoretical framework has influenced policing models emphasizing proactive maintenance of public order, community engagement, and the remediation of environmental cues that contribute to fear and disorder.

Within the Philippine context, these theoretical perspectives intersect with statutory frameworks governing local peace and order mechanisms. The Local Government Code of 1991 (RA 7160) devolves significant authority to local government units (LGUs) in maintaining peace, order, and public safety. It mandates the establishment of Peace and Order Councils (POCs)—institutional platforms for collaboration among LGUs, law enforcement, and community sectors (Breva, 2020). These councils operationalize safety governance at multiple levels, from barangays to cities and provinces, consistent with the principle that peace and order are shared responsibilities among government entities and the citizenry.

Executive Orders No. 309 (1987) and 773 (2009) reinforced the organizational structure and functions of these councils. Under E.O. 773, City and Municipal Peace and Order Councils (CPOCs/MPOCs) are composed of local executives, law enforcement representatives, and designated civil society members, highlighting the institutionalization of multisectoral engagement. These bodies coordinate crime prevention programs, anti-drug campaigns, security operations, and public safety initiatives, reflecting an integrated approach to peace and order management (Habiatan, 2019).

Research highlights the socio-economic value of peace and order, noting that stable environments foster investment, employment, and improved standards of living (Buted et al., 2014). Peacebuilding scholarship likewise recognizes the importance of proactive, inclusive, and multisectoral approaches. Sandole (2010) emphasizes peacebuilding as a dynamic, preventive framework; Gawerc (2006) stresses the integration of conflict resolution and social justice; while Tongeren (2013) underscores the foundational role of local peace infrastructures in enabling grassroots peace processes.

Studies on peace, security, and local governance also highlight that peace is not merely the absence of violence but the presence of justice, equity, and harmonious social relations (Nwolise, 2003; Oyeshola, 2005). Community participation is therefore crucial. Mantiri and Siwi (2020) emphasize that effective peace and order maintenance requires active public engagement, constructive communication, and collaborative decision-making between government and communities. Historical accounts further reveal that community-based policing in the Philippines predates modern institutions, with early tribal societies organizing security

patrols to protect communal resources—an arrangement rooted in collective responsibility and social cohesion (McCoy, 2009; Gupta, 2013). Such traditions underscore the long-standing cultural foundations of citizen participation in maintaining safety.

Legal and institutional frameworks likewise affirm the centrality of collaborative security arrangements. Republic Act No. 6975 and related legislation promote coordination between law enforcement agencies and communities (Sanidad-Leones, 2006; Slaughter, 2004; Broadhurst, 2006). The Philippine National Police (PNP) explicitly incorporates community involvement into its peace and order strategies, framing policing as a shared undertaking with citizens (Domingo-Almase, 2013). This orientation is consistent with constitutional mandates. The 1987 Constitution declares that the State's foremost duty is to serve and protect the people, thereby grounding peace and order efforts within a normative framework emphasizing human security, welfare, and participatory governance (Desierto, 2010).

The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) further articulates that peace and order are essential to sustainable development, highlighting the need for strengthened partnerships among law enforcement, LGUs, and communities (NEDA, 2022). Capacity-building at the barangay level, technology-enhanced crime monitoring, and periodic crime victimization surveys are identified as key strategies.

Peacebuilding efforts in the Philippines often adopt bottom-up approaches rooted in citizen involvement and multisectoral collaboration. These initiatives recognize that durable peace must address cultural, economic, political, and social factors shaping local security landscapes (Ekid, 2010). Nevertheless, gaps remain, including limited youth participation in peace and order structures. Decentralization reforms have also empowered LGUs to design context-sensitive peace and security initiatives. However, political interference poses challenges to institutional integrity and program sustainability (Brillantes & Fernandez, 2011).

3. Methodology
3.1 Research Design
This qualitative method of research employed a transcendental phenomenological approach. The philosophical approach chosen for this study is transcendental phenomenology, developed by Husserl (1931). Moustakas' (1994) variation of transcendental phenomenology emphasizes describing participants' experiences with less focus on researcher interpretations. Transcendental phenomenology, in general, seeks to uncover the essential structures of human consciousness and experience by focusing on lived experiences.

Exploring the structures of human experiences and consciousness in a variety of circumstances is the focus of the field of transcendental phenomenology. The fundamental characteristics of human life are revealed through the investigation of how individuals make meaning of the experiences they have had. Transcendental phenomenology involves suspending assumptions and biases to delve deeply into the experiences of individuals, aiming to reveal the essence of their subjective reality (Husserl, 1931).

Transcendental phenomenology has had a profound influence on philosophy and beyond. It offers a unique approach to investigating the depths of human experience, prioritizing the lived world and the phenomenon's essence. While facing challenges regarding subjectivity and generalizability, its emphasis on empathy and unveiling the core of consciousness remain valuable contributions to our understanding of ourselves and the world around us. (Husserl, 1931).

Qualitative research is defined by its emphasis on the entirety of experience, rather than its individual components or objects. It seeks to understand the meanings and essences of experience, rather than relying on measurements and explanations. Qualitative research involves the acquisition of experience descriptions, the recognition of experience data as essential for scientific investigations and the comprehension of human behavior. It also involves the formulation of questions and problems that reflect the researcher's personal commitment, involvement, and interest (Moustakas, 1994).

The meaning of lived experiences for individuals who are experiencing a specific phenomenon or concept is described by phenomenology. In the context of phenomenology, experience encompasses not only the relatively passive experiences of sensory perception, but also imagination, thought, emotion, desire, volition, and action. Simply stated, it encompasses all of the experiences and actions we undergo. Therefore, while we may observe and interact with other objects in the world, we do not really experience them in a first-person sense. An experience is conscious when one is aware of it while living through or performing it (Creswell, 1998).

Thus, transcendental phenomenological approach is suitable for this study, as it will help the researcher to understand the subjective experiences, challenges, and perspectives of City Peace and Order Council Members (CPOC).

3.2 Research Participants

This study employed purposive-convenience sampling in the selection of informants. The participants consisted of twelve (12) members of the City Peace and Order Councils from four cities in Cebu: Cebu, Mandaue, Lapu-Lapu, and Talisay, each of whom had served for at least three years as council members and were individually interviewed through in-depth interviews (IDI). These informants had their experiences and firsthand knowledge of peace and order and had encountered various situations related to the study. The informants were asked to share their experiences, their strategies in addressing the problems encountered in the implementation of peace and order programs, and their aspirations to improve the implementation of peace and order policies.

3.3 Research Instrument

In gathering of data, the researcher utilized self-made panel-approached interview guide consisting of the following parts: part I is on Experiences of the informants in implementing the peace and order programs; part II How the informants cope with the challenges encountered in implementing peace and order programs; part III Aspirations of the informants to improve the implementation of peace and order programs.

The interview guide was validated by the research panel to make sure that the contents reflect the statement of the problem and sub-problems. The researcher arranged an interview with the informants, explained the matters of confidentiality, prepared consent forms, and asked open-ended questions to the informants. The first part of the questionnaire was composed of biographical and initial questions for the researcher to better understand the informant. This part also aimed to set a friendly atmosphere between the researcher and the informant.

According to Creswell (2012), an interview typically involves a direct, in-person dialogue between the participant and the researcher, where the participant shares information. Qualitative research often relies on interviews to gather data, with researchers posing general, open-ended questions to document responses. Audiotapes may be used for accurate transcription, and the researcher often transcribes the data into a digital format for analysis. Interviews are particularly effective for obtaining in-depth information and understanding the narratives behind participants' experiences.

A voice recorder was used to capture the interview dialogue accurately, and I will also take notes to assist with follow-up inquiries. Following the interviews, all transcripts will be encoded and compiled, undergoing rigorous analysis to ensure that the recorded responses authentically reflect the informants' words.

3.4 Data Collection

Before the interview, the researcher furnished a transmittal letter duly signed by the adviser and the Dean of the graduate school. The data were gathered through interview and with an aid of the voice recorder. The informants were asked to answer the questions honestly and completely and were given the letter and informed consent form stating that the person was informed of the study. The primary method for data collection in this research involved semi structured interviews used to refine and develop an understanding of the work-life of the informants. Data collection refers to the survey method that is developed and utilized to obtain information. The methods utilized in this study are structured interviews employing close-ended and open-ended questions. Observations conducted by the researcher during interview and visits on the areas. To keep a proper record of the observation, a schedule with the following columns were used, time (days, weeks, and months), place type of event, and subjects.

3.5 Data Analysis

The researcher employed a thematic analysis to systematically analyze the extensive data that has been gathered from interviews, detailed notes, and observations. Several stages are involved in this process. To begin, the researcher familiarized themselves with the data by thoroughly reviewing the transcripts and notes. Codes were generated to organize data segments that are pertinent to the research questions. These codes can be either descriptive or interpretive, capturing the main ideas, experiences, and emotions that the participants have expressed. Afterward, the researcher group and designate related codes into overarching themes and sub-themes, ensuring that these themes accurately reflect the depth and richness of the participants' narratives (Moustakas, 1994).

The researcher consistently revisits the data to refine the identified themes, considering their relationships and any discrepancies that may emerge, as the analysis is iterative. The researcher analyzed these themes concerning the research objectives, theoretical frameworks, and relevant literature. This analysis examined the importance of each theme in comprehending police officers' perspectives on the Moral Recovery Program and Practices, with attention to theoretical, practical, and policy implications.

3.5 Ethical Consideration
The identities of the informants were treated with confidentiality, and prior permission was obtained from the participants before the interview was conducted. The researcher complied with the policy on research, namely the informed consent form, before conducting the research. Ethical standard prevented the fabrication or falsifying of data and therefore, promote the pursuit of knowledge and truth which is the primary goal of research. Ethical behavior is also critical for collaborative work because it encourages an environment of trust, accountability and mutual respect among researcher. This is especially important when considering issues related to data sharing, co-authorship, copyright guidelines, confidentiality, and many other issues. The researcher also adhered to ethical standards in order for the public to support and believe in the research. The public wants to be assured that researcher followed the appropriate guidelines for issues such as human rights, animal welfare, compliance with the law, conflict of interest, safety, health standard and so on.

The handling of the ethical issues greatly impacted the integrity of the research project and can affect whether or not the project receives funding. Because ethical considerations are so important in research, many professional associations and agencies have adopted codes and policies that outline ethical behavior and guide researcher.

4. Results and Discussion
The data gathered was thoroughly read to obtain a feeling for the description of experiences of the informants. Significant statements were extracted from the informants' transcripts about the research phenomena. Formulated meanings were constructed from the significant statements and arranged them into cluster. Cluster themes were then re-grouped and which evolved into emergent themes.

There were two emergent themes for each of the sub- problems of the study. The researcher have created emergent themes out from the common responses of the informants. The following section presents the themes derived from the informants' accounts, encompassing their positive and negative experiences, coping strategies in addressing challenges encountered in the implementation of peace and order programs, and their aspirations for improving the enforcement of peace and order.

Analysis revealed eight (8) emergent themes. For positive experiences: Peace is Our Song, But Not Ours Alone and Every Step A Lesson, Every Rise A Legacy. For negative experiences: Paper Shields, Plastic Swords and Broken Seals, Silent Oaths. Coping mechanisms generated two (2) themes: The Power of Few, The Strength of Many and Motion. As to aspirations for improving peace and order programs, two (2) themes were identified: Lead with Fire, Train with Soul and Innovation is the New Armor.

4.1.1 Peace is Our Song, But Not Ours Alone.
This theme reflects the shared sense of accomplishment among informants who experienced success in implementing peace and order programs. Their accounts highlight that these achievements were not the result of individual efforts, but rather the outcome of coordinated collaboration among institutions, the support of local government leadership, and active community involvement. The theme was derived from the informants' consistent reflections on how these collective efforts led to meaningful results.

4.1.2 Every Step A Lesson, Every Rise A Legacy.
The theme reflects the informants' deep commitment to leadership shaped by experience, continuous learning, and purposeful service. Each stage of their journey, whether marked by difficulty or success, served as a valuable lesson that enhanced their skills, strengthened their motivation, and guided their development as competent and conscientious public servants. Their growth was not just professional but also personal, rooted in reflection and resilience. Their achievements stand as a legacy built through dedication, values-driven service, and lasting contributions to community peace and order.

4.1.3 Paper Shields, Plastic Swords.
This theme symbolizes the vulnerability of local peace and order mechanisms that, while structurally present, often lack the necessary resources and operational strength to be truly effective. It highlights the disconnect between formal institutional frameworks and their practical functionality, where chronic deficiencies in manpower, logistics, funding, and inter-agency coordination significantly hinder the implementation of public safety initiatives. As a result, City Peace and Order Council (CPOC) members frequently experience emotional exhaustion, reduced motivation, and a sense of powerlessness in the face of persistent security challenges. The inadequacy of systemic support not only compromises enforcement capacity but also erodes the resilience and responsiveness of frontline actors, making it difficult to achieve sustained peace and order outcomes.

4.1.4 Broken Seals and Silent Oaths.
This theme reflects the informants' deep sense of frustration over leadership failures in fulfilling their duties to uphold peace and order. Despite frontline workers' commitment, the presence of political interference and unkept promises weakens institutional

integrity and undermines collaborative governance. This theme highlights how breached responsibilities and the absence of accountability erode trust, diminish morale, and ultimately hinder the effectiveness and sustainability of peace and order programs.

4.1.5 The Power of Few, The Strength of Many.

This theme encapsulates how informants confronted and managed the challenges associated with implementing peace and order programs, particularly in the face of constrained resources and limited manpower. It highlights their collective dedication to public service and their capacity to adapt and lead effectively despite institutional and logistical limitations. Informants emphasized that success in maintaining peace and order did not rely solely on the number of personnel or available resources, but on the ability to strategically maximize what was at hand. By adopting innovative approaches, fostering inter-agency collaboration, and optimizing the deployment of human and material assets, they demonstrated that even small teams could make a significant impact.

4.1.6 Synergy in Action, Security in Motion.

This theme captures the power of collaboration in enhancing peace and order initiatives through the coordinated efforts of local government units, law enforcement agencies, community stakeholders, and civil society. This theme highlights how open communication, inter-agency cooperation, and data-driven planning lead to more adaptive, targeted, and effective crime prevention and response strategies. By leveraging each partner's strengths and fostering shared accountability, these collaborative frameworks enable quicker responses to local security issues and promote community engagement. Residents play an active role in maintaining safety, contributing through reporting, participation in local patrols, and dialogue, thereby creating a security system that is inclusive, responsive, and resilient.

4.1.7 Lead with Fire, Train with Soul.

This theme underscores the importance of passionate, principled leadership combined with ongoing training and capacity-building to strengthen peace and order initiatives. It highlights that effective leadership is rooted in integrity, competence, and a deep commitment to public service. By fostering collaboration, ethical governance, and professional development, leaders can inspire trust, mobilize resources, and empower communities to actively participate in sustaining security and social harmony.

4.1.8 Innovation is the New Armor.

This theme underscores the growing importance of technology and modern tools in strengthening peace and order management. This theme highlights how digital systems, data analytics, and advanced communication platforms enhance operational efficiency, responsiveness, and strategic decision-making. It reflects a shift toward evidence-based and technology-driven practices that improve coordination, resource allocation, and crime prevention. By integrating innovation into everyday operations, institutions increase their capacity to address complex security challenges and ensure more sustainable and adaptive governance.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the role of City Peace and Order Councils is central to sustaining community safety, strengthening inter-agency coordination, and advancing localized governance of peace and order. Guided by Safety Culture Theory, the findings underscore that effective peace and order mechanisms rely not only on formal structures and mandated procedures but also on the informal norms, shared values, and collaborative practices cultivated among CPOC members. The integration of Routine Activity Theory and the Broken Windows Theory further illustrates that local peace and order outcomes are shaped by community routines, environmental conditions, and the presence or absence of capable guardianship at the grassroots level. These theoretical perspectives collectively reaffirm that crime prevention and public safety are context-driven processes that require continuous adaptation and the intentional involvement of multiple stakeholders.

The legal frameworks that mandate the establishment and functioning of CPOCs, including the Local Government Code of 1991 and relevant executive orders, clearly situate local governments as frontline actors in promoting peace, order, and public safety. The findings reinforce that the effectiveness of peace and order programs is enhanced when these formal mandates are supported by a culture of cooperation among local officials, law enforcement agencies, civil society, and community members. The commitment of CPOC members to their roles, as well as their active participation in coordination, policymaking, and program implementation, highlights the significance of localized governance in addressing crime, social disorder, and emerging community threats.

Furthermore, the study affirms that peace and order initiatives have broader developmental implications. Insights from related literature highlight that stability, safety, and good governance are essential precursors to economic growth, social cohesion, and

community well-being. The CPOC, as a local institution, contributes to these development goals by fostering responsive and people-centered strategies that address both immediate safety concerns and underlying social conditions that may lead to conflict or criminality. This emphasizes the need to strengthen not only technical capacities but also participatory mechanisms that promote trust, transparency, and mutual accountability.

The findings of this study also reveal that peace and order work must be grounded in sustained community engagement. Local experiences demonstrate that crime prevention and public safety become more effective when residents are empowered to participate in identifying problems, reporting incidents, and collaborating with authorities. Such involvement transforms peace and order from a government-led function into a shared responsibility, thereby enhancing the legitimacy and long-term sustainability of local safety initiatives. This aligns with contemporary peacebuilding literature which asserts that inclusive community participation is essential to achieving lasting and meaningful peace.

Overall, this research contributes to the growing recognition of the critical role of local peace infrastructures in cultivating secure, resilient, and empowered communities. By examining the experiences of CPOC members, the study provides deeper insight into the operational realities, challenges, and potentials of local peace and order governance. The findings underscore the need for continuous policy refinement, improved inter-agency coordination, capacity-building interventions, and stronger community engagement. These recommendations can help ensure that CPOCs effectively fulfill their mandates and continue to serve as vital pillars for peace, public safety, and local development.

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