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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## Sentry of the Cyberspace during Covid-19 Pandemic: Experiences of Philippine National Police Cyber Cops

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the life experiences of cyber cops as sentries in cyberspace during the COVID-19 pandemic in RACU 7. Specifically, this sought to answer the following specific problems: experiences of the informants as cyber cops during the COVID-19 pandemic, coping with the challenges they encountered, and how they tried to solve the situation and aspirations of the informants to improve quality service. The phenomenological and qualitative approach in this study was utilized through interviews as the critical process in gathering data. There were ten (10) selected police officers with a cyber cop badge. They were chosen randomly, but they met the minimum qualifications. The research location is at Cebu PPO Compound, Cebu City, where RACU 7 holds the office. A validated interview guide aided by the voice recorder to transcribe the informants' responses was used. Utilization of Colaizzi's method, a phenomenological analysis procedure, was used to analyze the responses of the informants during the interview. Results revealed that in the informants' experiences as cyber cops during the COVID-19 pandemic, the themes generated were Performing Duties Amidst the Pandemic, Maintaining a Good Image, and Encountering Insufficiency of Personnel and Supplies. In coping with the challenges encountered and how they try to solve the situation, the following themes were created: Expanding Cyber Cops Strategies and Having the Cyber Cops Initiative. For the aspirations of the informants, themes identified were the adaptation of advanced technology and the expansion of organizational support. It was recommended that PNP-ACG design a program that would address issues in times of crisis like the pandemic and extend services prospective complainants could easily access. Moreover, the PNP organization should produce more well-trained cyber cops.

### KEYWORDS

Cyber cop, racu 7, pnp-acg, covid-19 pandemic, phenomenology, cebu ppo compound.

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### 1. Introduction

The digital age has made the life of an individual more convenient. This era has eroded the traditional barriers to communication, beaten our concepts of time and space, and changed how a large part of the world does business. The emergence of digital technology has brought colossal benefits, but with these new benefits come more significant risks both domestically and across borders (Broadhurst, 2006). The vulnerabilities within the so-called new economy, which thrives within the realm of globalization, have become opportunities for cybercriminals and criminal networks to exploit. With the comprehensive adoption of digital technologies, many aspects of society have moved online, from shopping and social interactions to business, industry, and, unfortunately, crime (Lallie et al., 2021).

Policies had been made, and programs had been set at both local and international levels to combat cybercrimes by developing the capacity of our law enforcers to respond to cybercrime and providing technical know-how to carry out the mandate effectively. Some proactive approaches to strengthening cyber security and combating cybercrime include international cooperation and

partnerships, active private-public partnerships, and enforcement of effective laws. The unrelenting technological change and the adaptability of the cyber-criminals will continue to pose challenges for law enforcement.

The predominance of cybercrime occurrences means that the cyber cops had to work day and night to track, monitor, and prosecute cybercriminals in the country. In 2019, statistics had been recorded that in Region 7 Philippines, approximately 1.4 million were victims of fraudulent SMS or text scams (Statista Research Department, 2021). Just recently, RACU 7 recorded rampant cybercrime cases for the first quarter of 2022, with the top 3 prevalent cases based on statistics being cyber libel, online scams, and identity theft (Mascardo, 2022).

In 2012, the Congress of the Philippines enacted a law to prevent and combat the proliferating cybercrime cases. This legislation is called Republic Act No. 10175, also recognized as the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012. Section 10 of the said Act allows law enforcement authorities, including the NBI and the PNP, to organize a cybercrime unit or center staffed by special investigators to handle any cybercrime violations exclusively. On February 27, 2013, the PNP created a PNP Anti-Cybercrime Group (PNP-ACG) unit. It is a national operational support unit primarily responsible for implementing pertinent Philippine cybercrime laws and advocating the PNP's anti-cybercrime campaign. Each regional area in the Philippines has a Regional Anti-CyberCrime Unit.

Since cybercrime is a broad area, the PNP-ACG employed techniques that might cover the vastness of cyberspace. The PNP-ACG divided its capabilities into three (3) divisions, namely: Cyber Response (Cybercrime et al. of Cybercriminals, and Seizure of electronic evidence); Cyber Security (Conduct vulnerable assessment, conduct penetration testing, publish cyber security bulletins, and conduct cyber security lectures); Digital Forensic (Conduct of computer forensic examination, Conduct of cellphone forensic examination, and Conduct of video forensic examination).

From the traditional mode of combating crimes, such as conducting beat patrols where police officers had to be present in the area of responsibility, to a modern way of crime prevention and detection where the internet and computers are indispensable tools to combat cybercriminals, this unique mode of crime prevention and detection sparks the interest of many researchers; however, little research on the life experiences of cyber cops currently exists.

A literature search revealed that there are studies conducted about the perceived workplace fairness, transformational leadership, and motivation (Adebayo, 2005), and perceived organizational support and police performance (Armeli et al., 1998; Boateng, 2014); Currie & Dollery, 2006). Additionally, research has been carried out on the work ethics of police officers and how it correlates with job burnout and engagement in their roles (Basinska & Daderman, 2019; Brown & Campbell, 1990). However, the researcher needs help finding a study about the experiences of police cybercops during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, there is no study about the positive and negative experiences and challenges police cybercops encounter during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the discussion and foreseen problem above, the researcher, being a criminologist, has in mind to explore the experiences of the cyber cops who are assigned in the Regional Anti-Cybercrime Unit 7 during Covid – 19 pandemic with the hopes of proposing recommendations to sustain the cyber cops' effectiveness and efficiency amidst crises.

## 2. Literature Review

This research is primarily anchored on the Competence Motivation theory by Harter (1978), supported by the Self-Determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and the Organizational Support theory of Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002). Furthermore, related literatures are presented herein.

Competence Motivation theory by Harter (1978) is a conceptual framework that explains an individual's motivation to participate, persist, and work hard in any particular achievement context. The central thesis of the theory is that individuals are attracted to participation in activities in which they feel competent. This theory was initially utilized in sports and exercise psychology to identify why and how children and adults can be encouraged to participate and exert effort in these achievement contexts. However, this theory also applies to some work-related professions, specifically in the police force. People enter a profession for different reasons. For the police profession, research shows that the motivations include the opportunity to serve women and children (Moradian & Karimarie, 2012), help others, job benefits, and security (Raganella & White, 2004). In her study, Aquino (2014) reveals that the primary motivation of police officers to stay on the job is the appeal and authority projected by the police uniform and for the service of their fellow citizens.

Central to Harter's (1978) perspective on motivation are the individual's perceptions of competence and affect in a particular achievement domain. Harter hypothesized that positive reinforcement from significant others for mastery attempts could enhance competence perceptions. Rather than suggesting an actual amount of reinforcement adults should give, Harter (1978) proposed that more positive and less negative responses from socializing agents for independent mastery attempts would reinforce an intrinsic motivational orientation. This orientation would lead to feelings of increased perceived competence and control, positive

affect, and motivated behavior. In contrast, perception of failure and negative responses from significant others should decrease perceived competence and perception of control, increase anxiety, and decrease the likelihood of the individual engaging in further mastery attempts.

The fundamental thesis of the theory is that individuals are attracted to participation in activities in which they feel competent or capable (Dweck & Elliot, 2005). Competence is an ability to carry out or perform a job or tasks based on skills and knowledge and supported by the attitude of work required by the work. According to (Spencer & Spencer, 2008), competency comes into different forms: Intellectual, Emotional, and Social Competence. Competence motivation in creative problem-solving insight describes problem-solving processes where solutions typically come suddenly (the —aha! experience) and after restructuring the understanding of the problem. The phenomenon has been studied for more than 100 years and has been associated with essential processes like creativity and scientific discovery (Finke, 1995).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Deci & Ryan (1985) is a metatheory of human motivation and personality that addresses autonomous behaviors and the conditions and processes that support such high-quality forms of volitional engagement. In the past decade, there has been a burgeoning growth of basic, experimental, and applied research within sports and exercise settings designed to test the theoretical tenets advanced within SDT. This entry outlines the central components and motivational phenomena proposed within SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2017). This theory focuses on personality development and self-motivated behavior change. Fundamental to the principle is that people have an innate organizational tendency towards growth, integration of the self, and psychological inconsistency. SDT was initially developed from experimental and field investigations of the effects of environmental events such as rewards, praise, or directives on intrinsic motivation (Markland et al., 2005).

Meyer and Gagne (2008) suggested that self-determination theory is more appropriate for investigating the influence of motivation on engagement in the field of work. Self-determination comes in two forms: self-determined motivation and controlled motivation. Self-determined motivation refers to engaging in an activity out of pleasure, that is, volition or choice. Controlled motivation is about internal pressure, such as a sense of obligation, shame, or punishment. Accordingly, self-determined motivation generates the most favorable outcomes, while controlled motivation and motivation create the most negative outcomes.

According to SDT, individuals have an innate propensity for growth and integration. One visible and spontaneously explores one's environment, is curious, and pursues activities that inherently provide challenge and satisfaction. Not all human activities are inherently enjoyable and exciting, however. Still, even nonintrinsically motivated activities can have a sense of autonomy and volition if internalized. Much like other developmental theories on socialization, SDT assumes that internalization is central to personality development and individuals' adjustment (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994; Hoffman, 1970). In SDT, internalization is defined as a process in which children progressively integrate societal values and proscriptions into a coherent sense of self (Grolnick et al., 1997). The ideal outcome of the internalization process is not just that children have swallowed or taken in parental and societal regulations and values but that they have fully endorsed those regulations and values such that they experience them as their own (Grolnick et al., 1997; Joussemet, Landry & Koestner, 2008). In SDT, both intrinsically motivated and well-internalized activities are autonomously regulated. In contrast, activities that have been partially internalized or not internalized at all are said to be regulated by controlled motives. The central distinction between autonomous and controlled behavioral regulation (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and the hypothesized impact of socialization (including psychological control) on these types of regulation is outlined in the following paragraphs.

Organizational Support Theory by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) holds that to meet socio-emotional needs and assess the benefits of increased work effort, employees generally perceive the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their wellbeing. This theory argues that when employees feel that they have received good treatment from the organization regarding management support, fairness and procedural justice, incentives, and working conditions, the sense of organizational support will increase. Employees perceive their organization as supportive when they are rewarded beyond their contractual agreements. Perceived organization support (POS) would increase employees' obligation to help the organization reach its objectives, their affective commitment to the organization, and their expectation that improved performance would be rewarded. POS as a concept was first introduced by Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) to investigate employees' inferences concerning the organization's commitment to them and the contribution of such perceived organizational support to employees' commitment to the organization. The authors noted that commitment is the sense of being bound emotionally or intellectually to some course of action, individual, group, or organization. Behavioral outcomes of perceived organizational support would include increased in-role and extra-role performance and decreased stress and withdrawal behaviors such as absenteeism and turnover.

Relating to the influence of employees' perception of organizational support, a substantial body of research has found that it has positive effects on employees' work outcomes, such as reduced absenteeism, turnover intentions, increased affective commitment,

innovations and pro-social behaviors, performance, and compliance with organizational safety management policies (Armeli et al., 1998). Employees perceive the organization as providing them with essential incentives apart from what is defined in their contracts; they tend to tailor their behavior toward the fulfillment of organizational goals: that is, a perception of organizational support among employees is reciprocated with high-quality service. For example, Bowling and Mitchel (2011) observed a strong effect of abusive supervision on counterproductive work behavior directed toward the organization. This study suggests that a perceived lack of organizational support among employees results in the belief that the organization cares little about their wellbeing. Hence, it leads to adverse work outcomes such as low or ineffective performance, absenteeism, and noncompliance with organization policies. Organizational support theory argues that when employees feel that they have received good treatment from the organization regarding management support, fairness and procedural justice, incentives, and working conditions, the sense of organizational support will increase.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative method of research and utilized the phenomenological approach in this study. In our comprehensive study, we employed an interview guide, took field notes, and used a voice recorder to highlight the personal experiences of the Cyber Cops from the Philippine National Police Anti-Cybercrime Unit 7 (PNP-RACU 7) throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Qualitative research emphasizes the fullness of experience rather than just its components or objects. It seeks to understand the meanings and essential nature of experiences rather than quantifying or explaining them. This approach aims to gather descriptive accounts of experiences, considering the experiential data as its core focus. Essential for grasping human behavior and serving as proof in scientific research is the development of questions and issues that mirror the curiosity, engagement, and personal dedication of the investigators, according to Moustakas (1994).

Phenomenology is about understanding the significance of personal experiences for people going through a specific phenomenon or idea. In a phenomenological context, experience encompasses the somewhat passive experiences related to sensory perception and imagination, as well as thinking, feeling, wanting, choosing, and acting. In essence, it encompasses all that we experience or do. Consequently, while we can observe and interact with various elements in the world, we do not undergo these experiences from a first-person perspective. What makes an experience conscious is its particular awareness of the experience while living through or performing it (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

#### **3.2 Research Participants**

The Research participants are the cyber cops from the PNP Regional AntiCybercrime Unit 7. The participants' selections were based on the set requirements of the study, such as the participants must be cyber cops, which means that the participants had undergone mandatory training and possessed a cybercop badge. Four (4) of them were interviewed individually, and six (6) of them were included in Focused Group Discussion, making a total of ten (10) participants.

#### **3.3 Research Instrument**

We utilized an interview guide for the qualified participants. This consisted of open-ended questions aimed to determine the following aspects: preliminary questions, where the participants responded to some questions such as their circumstances, years of service in the PNP and PNP RACU 7, current designation and overall situation in the line of work; part I is on the experiences of the participants, most of the questions propounded are the overall functions and experiences (both positive and negative) of a cyber cop; part II are coping with the challenges encountered by the participants; while part III are on the aspirations of the participants, where the participants make suggestions and recommendations of various programs that will aid and improve their competence in order to deliver quality service. The panel members validated and duly approved the interview guide (IG). The interview was conducted and supplemented with field notes and a voice recorder to document the participants' responses.

#### **3.4 Data Collection**

The transmittal letter was submitted for approval to the Chief of RACU 7. After the request was granted, the researchers brought the approved letter and presented it to the respondents as proof of approval from the Chief of RACU 7. An informed consent form was also presented to each respondent before the interview. As the researchers, we conducted individual interviews and Focused Group Discussions (FGD).

Interviewing was central to this research, where it will create opportunities to pause and reflect with participants about what they remembered, valued, liked, disliked, and aspired about the program. The interviewing allowed the participants to express certain feelings, beliefs, and opinions that might otherwise be left unsaid. Colaizzi's descriptive method allows researchers to better understand the individual's intended meaning (Edward & Welch, 2011).

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

The information gathered from the participants' interviews was in the local dialect. Thus, it was translated into English for general understanding. We utilized Colaizzi's method, a phenomenological and established procedure for analyzing the transcript information gathered from the respondents during the interview.

The following steps were used to analyze the data. The recorded interview was translated into a paper script. Responses were read, re-read, analyzed, and interpreted to develop the best conclusion. Significant statements were obtained from each transcript, and meanings were formulated from significant statements extracted. All formulated meanings were clustered and themed. The investigation results were compiled into a comprehensive account, and ultimately, the outcomes were confirmed through feedback from the study participants to align the researchers' narrative conclusions with their actual experiences (Sosha, 2012).

### **3.6 Ethical Consideration**

The researchers solicited significant individuals' cooperation to explore the life experiences of the Philippine National Police Cyber Cop. After the informants accepted the invitation, they signed the informed consent. They ensured they understood the rules and limitations, including the need to record the proceeding. Confidentiality and privacy were the prime ethical considerations in the conduct of this study. The documented information was treated according to the Data Privacy Act of 2012 provisions.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

Consistent with the methodology of this study, the researchers transcribed and translated the responses, and the significant statements were extracted. The researchers formulated core meanings out of the significant statement and classified them into cluster themes from where they created the emergent themes.

Each informant's experience was primarily taken in a dialect known to them so that they could express their thoughts liberally. We ardently aim to outline and explicate the emergent themes in every subproblem. Each item reflects both positive and negative experiences and the upholding of duties and responsibilities of the participants in performing their functions as cyber cops during the pandemic, which affect their lives as individuals and as collective members of the PNP Anti-Cybercrime Unit.

### **4.1 Experiences of the Informants as Cyber Cops during COVID-19 Pandemic**

The show must go on for the cyber cops in Region 7 despite the continued threat brought forth by the COVID-19 pandemic. Their positive experiences helped to maintain the image of the police. In contrast, those experiences that made them sad became their basis for improving their services, thus making handling cybercrime cases during the pandemic still a success.

#### **4.1.1 Performing Duties Amidst Pandemic.**

This theme depicts that despite the pandemic, cyber cops still perform their duties and responsibilities.

*During the pandemic, only a few came into our office; since only a few people will personally report their complaints, we can quickly solve their cases. (Participant 4).*

*Response teams can access remote places easily due to less traffic congestion during the pandemic. (Participant 4).*

*Regarding filing cases during the pandemic, it is more convenient for us police officers because all the documents needed in the filing were scanned, and inquest proceedings were done online via Zoom. Participant 2).*

This theme was engendered to describe the experiences of the cyber cops who continuously performed their duties and responsibilities in enforcing the law during the pandemic. During the pandemic, the number of complainants allowed visitation to the office was controlled, with a maximum of five (5) complainants daily. Since only a few were allowed visitation, our cyber cops can immediately attend to their respective complaints. Moreover, less traffic congestion helped them access remote places with ease. The unit also adopted the new usual ' way of filing cases, which is online.

It is supported by one of the supporting theories, the Self-Determination theory. This theory of Deci and Ryan (1985) posits that fulfillment of three basic innate human psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) is necessary for optimal human functioning. This theory connects with the cyber cops' determination, notwithstanding the challenges they face daily. Considering the significant role self-determination plays in attaining independence, it is crucial for an individual's general welfare and mental health. By empowering the individual to take control, self-determination assigns accountability and potential blame for the outcomes to the person.

#### **4.1.2 Maintaining the Good Image.**

This theme postulates how the participants efficiently performed their duties despite the pandemic and maintained organizational productivity.

*Despite the pandemic, we could still perform duties and functions properly; thus, our unit ranked number 1 in accomplishing the required deliverables. (Participant 3).*

*During the pandemic, we were able to rescue minor victims of human trafficking in Carmen and Bohol. Luckily, we could file a case against the perpetrator, and he was successfully arrested. (Participant 2).*

*We will listen to our clients as much as possible by giving them our personal number so they can directly communicate with us to solve their complaints. (Participant 3).*

This theme illustrated the positive experiences that despite the continued threat of the pandemic and with all the restrictions on lockdowns, the cyber cops could still uphold the image of what is expected from them. In this case, the cyber cops delivered successful cases that led to prosecuting criminals. The flooded cases of cybercrimes may have caused a chaotic scenario in their office, but on the other side of the coin, the threat became a new gain knowledge of current trends of modus operandi of the suspects.

The study's leading theory supports this theme, the Competence Motivation theory. This theory suggests that people will move toward activities they feel more competent in and shun more challenging subjects. Fundamental needs drive individuals, yet their motivation to succeed in any endeavor tends to be stronger. Cyber cops could still perform their functions despite the restrictions imposed during the pandemic. Their office ranked number 1 as to the accomplishment of deliverables required by their office. The ability to rescue minor victims of human trafficking and successfully arrest and prosecute the suspects only proves that cyber cops are good at their work no matter what the circumstances.

#### **4.1.3 Encountering Insufficiency of Personnel and Supplies.**

This theme describes the sad experiences of the participants in performing their duties. These include flooded cybercrime cases, some of which were difficult to solve due to the office's lack of personnel, supplies, and equipment.

*Cybercrime cases were increasing during the COVID-19 pandemic because people were quarantined in their homes, so the only way to communicate or access work, school, entertainment, and other activities was through their gadgets. Online scams and hacking were the common complaints we received in our office. (Participant 2).*

*During the pandemic, there was a lack of personnel, and most of them were investigators who were Covid-19 infected. It was challenging; sometimes, only one person would do all the work in the office. (Participant 6).*

*It is frustrating because we wanted to fast-track our job. However, we need logistics and personnel. (Participant 4).*

This theme emphasized the negative experiences of the participants. Cybercrime cases spread like wildfire, causing a domino effect in almost every aspect of cyber cop's duties, from lack of personnel to logistical support.

This theme relates to the Administrative theory propounded by Henry Fayol (1916). He was among the first to recognize that management is a continuous process. His philosophy emphasizes collaboration and collective effort for shared gains, highlighting the importance of enhancing management efficiency as a first step. This approach aims to standardize processes before addressing the operational level, where workers are encouraged to understand and incorporate these improvements into their daily tasks. He believed that organizational managerial practices are essential for driving predictability and efficiency in organizations.

Fayol (1916) states that outlined functions remain universal to all organizations. Administration, which calls for applying vast knowledge and many personal qualities, is the art of handling men. As in many others, this art is a practice that makes perfect. Adequate supervision and motivation of workers are crucial in determining the most preferable method of utilizing the workforce within an organization. This increases the responsibility and accountability of individuals to essential roles (Wren & Bedeian, 2009).

#### **4.2 Coping with the Challenges Encountered in the Performance of their Duties During Covid-19 Pandemic**

In this segment, two (2) themes were developed, identifying the challenges encountered and how the cyber cops tried to solve challenging situations during the pandemic. These will highlight the participant's initiative, how resources are utilized, and what other means are employed to continue performing their functions and duties as cyber cops.

#### **4.2.1 Expanding Cyber Cops Strategies**

This theme depicts the strategies employed by the informants that despite the absence or lack of essential tools/equipment, they can still look for whatever resources they could use to pursue the investigation.

*One of our unit's challenges is the expiration of software used in digital forensics, which will cause our investigators to be confronted with difficulties in extracting information. We utilized open-source platforms, such as Facebook and other social media websites, which are accessible for searching, and any information we collected will be used as evidence provided it meets the criteria of the crime under investigation. (Participant 4).*

*We had no concrete strategy when performing cybercrime investigations simply because there was a lack of equipment (computers and any related forensic software). If there is equipment, is it the old version, or has it yet to be updated? To keep the pace going, we mixed the traditional form of investigation with the technical one. (Participant 2).*

*Sometimes, we advise our clients/complainants on whether to pursue the case or not because it might cost them a lot of money. Considering the circumstances of the case, it might also be dismissed by the court. (Participant 4).*

This theme describes how cyber cops cope with the challenges encountered in cybercrime investigation, where they advise the complainants whether to pursue the case or not to prevent filing futile cases. Investigators employed open sources and other means available on the internet to remain on track with the investigation. They also used what they termed a 'mixture' strategy in the investigation. Mixture means a combination of traditional and technological inquiry.

This theme is related to the Diffusion of Innovation theory. The result of this diffusion is that people adopt a new idea and behavior as part of a social system. Adoption means that a person does something differently than what they had previously. For adoption to occur, the individual must view the concept, action, or item as either novel or innovative. In handling difficult situations, cyber cops created new ideas and options to avoid reaching a dead end. That new idea will attract others to accept it when applied and practical. It is true to the current situation; the informant's excellent idea to combine traditional investigation and technological investigation and use open sources on the internet brought forth success in their work.

About innovation, policy learning is defined as the lasting changes in thoughts or intentions to act that arise from experience and are aimed at achieving or modifying policy goals, as described by Hecló in 1974. Therefore, problem-solving must be infused into all police operations and guide decision-making.

#### **4.2.2 Having the Cyber Cops Initiative.**

This theme describes how the informants managed to fill in the deficiencies in logistical support where informants will use their laptops, computers, backup storage devices, financial resources, and whatever they could utilize to keep pace in the investigation, which makes their job still successful.

*Sometimes, we used our own storage devices to back up existing storage equipment in the office. (Participant 3).*

*Sometimes, we used our phones or our senior officer's laptop. (Participant 4).*

*We need more funds for the logistics supplies. Sometimes, personnel will use their own money to sustain the operations. (Participant 2).*

This theme describes how the cyber cops fill in the lack of what is being aforementioned. Despite the lack, informants will try to cover the inadequacy by using their gadgets like phones, laptops, storage devices, and the like. Sometimes, the informants use their financial resources to avoid hindering their daily work.

This theme can be best explained with the Team Performance theory by Tuckman (1965). The pandemic impacted policing strategies in criminal justice settings.

According to Morgan et al. (2015), resilience is dynamic. The team's ability to sustain performance is one of the foundations of the longevity of organizational success. There may be days when a team is not as effective under stress, resilience emerges, and changes in response to specific circumstances and challenges enable them to focus on moving forward as a team.

### **4.3 Aspirations of the Informants to Improve the Quality of their Performance**

Two (2) themes were created to describe the aspiration of the informants to improve the quality of services offered by the RACU 7 in times of crisis and how these will enhance the productivity of the PNP anti-cybercrime group in general.

#### **4.3.1. Adaptation of Advanced Technology.**

This theme envisioned a more advanced state-of-the-art facility and technology that would best offer quality service to the cyber cops.

*There should be an upgraded technology that we must adopt because even if our investigators are well-trained internationally, it will become futile and cannot be applied here because we are still using old versions of technologies. (Participant 4).*

*We need an updated PC, software for forensics, and other related equipment to speed up the investigation. (Participant 3).*

*Our enforcement strategies are primarily depending on the existing laws. The exasperating part is that our existing laws need to be updated, which requires amendments to be upgraded to keep up with the current trend in cybercrime investigation. Another thing is logistical support; delays and insufficient support can cause delays in the investigation. We use traditional and open sources to gather data and evidence to pursue the investigation. (Participant 4).*

This theme depicts the participants' desires to upskill to meet the demands of the present situation: innovation, new knowledge, advanced technology, and state-of-the-art facilities equal quality service. Participants aspired to participate in programs based on their weak points during the pandemic to provide more effective and efficient service to the community.

This theme is supported by Piaget's Adaptation theory (1928), given the informant's desire to advance technologically. Adaptation is the ability to adjust to new information and experiences. Learning is essentially adapting to our constantly changing environment. Through adaptation, we can adopt new behaviors that allow us to cope with the change.

#### **4.3.2. Expanding Organizational Support.**

This theme describes the participant's desire for extended organizational Support regarding personnel, logistics, and other Support from other units and entities.

*Our office has its budget so that when the equipment stops working, we can immediately purchase backup equipment. (Participant 1).*

*In this digital era, most of the crimes committed are online. We felt that cyber criminals outnumbered us. (Participant 2).*

*LGUs support (i.e., gasoline and allowances) is vital in the investigation, especially when the place of operation reaches far-flung areas and provinces in Cebu. (Participant 2).*

This theme was created to describe the significance of the organization's Support in delivering quality service. This Support should be broadened and widened to cover what has been identified as obstacles to adequately performing the duties and responsibilities of cyber cops.

This theme is best supported by the theory of the study itself, the Organizational Support theory. This concept suggests that employees gauge how much the organization appreciates their work and shows concern for their welfare to satisfy socioemotional needs. They also evaluate the advantages of putting in more effort at work. Organizational Support is believed to increase an employee's obligation to contribute towards the organization's objectives, their emotional connection to the company, and their expectation that improved performance will be acknowledged and rewarded.

## **5. Conclusion**

From the gathered data, through the recorded response of the ten (10) informants, seven (7) substantial emergent themes were created. The following recommendations and suggestions may be helpful based on the study's findings. The study is focused on the PNP Regional Anti-Cybercrime Unit (RACU 7) officers. The researchers chose the place of implementation because, as a national supporting unit, its primary function is to safeguard cyberspace from unwanted and illegal activities that would detriment national security and safety of the citizenry, and it must maintain dynamic and standardized public service. This is to secure public trust and confidence and show that our cyber cops are committed officers working diligently and remain vigilant against the cunning tactics of cybercriminals preying for the next victim. Further, the PNP-ACG's support in terms of logistics should be expanded.



Moreover, the organization should produce more well-trained cybercops. For example, consider hiring IT professionals as non-uniformed personnel whose job is exclusively to extract necessary information stationed steadily on their chairs. IT professional knows his thing, so he is a plus asset to the organization. Another thing is moving cops, whose job is to conduct entrapment operations and file cases, should also be a different set of officers. Lastly, a team leader who knows the rule of law and the rule of evidence with relevant experience is mandatory. The scalar principle ensures that all the responsibilities will be carried out with minimal error as he knows what is and is not the law.

PNP-ACG shall design a program to address issues in times of crisis like the pandemic and extend services that prospective complainants would easily access. The researchers investigate the potential of creating an App as its own social media platform focusing on cyberspace; since its Area of Responsibility (AOR) is in cyberspace, an application is the most practicable way to strengthen police-community relations, conduct cyber patrolling, and encourage the citizenry to report cybercrime-related cases—also, the adaptation of advanced technologies that would best address the current demands of time. Likewise, creating solid linkages with civic organizations, churches, and other NGOs will enable financial resources, facilities, and equipment necessary to realize activities related to the PNP's anti-cybercrime campaign.

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