
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Violence Against Women and their Children (VAWC) Cases During Pandemic: Experiences of Women and Children Protection Desk (WCPD) Officers in Cebu City

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| ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the life experiences of the Women and Children Desk (WCPD) handling Violence against Women and their Children (VAWC) cases during the pandemic in Cebu City. Specifically, sought to address the following specific problems: the experiences of the informants in handling VAWC cases during the Covid-19 pandemic, addressing the problems encountered by the informants, and aspirations of the informants to improve the quality of service to the victims of VAWC. The phenomenological and qualitative approach in this study was utilized through interviews as the key process in the gathering of data. There were ten (10) selected police officers handling Violence against Women and their Children (VAWC) during the Covid-19 pandemic in Cebu City. Five (5) of them were individually interviewed, while the other five (5) were included in the Focused Group Discussion (FGD). They were selected randomly but met the qualifications and have broad experience in the subject matter. The research locations are the top five (5) police stations in Cebu City with a high number of VAWC cases is Cebu City namely: Police Station (PS) 4- Mabolo; PS5- Carbon; PS7- Pardo; PS9- Guadalupe and PS10- Punta. A validated interview guide was aided by the voice recorder for the basis of transcribing the responses of the informants. Utilization of Colaizzi's method, a phenomenological analysis procedure, was used to analyze the responses of the informants during the interview. For the experiences of the informants in handling VAWC cases in Cebu City during a pandemic, themes created were Satisfaction with Desired Result, Attained Productivity, and Embracing Limitations of Official Functions in addressing the problems encountered in handling (VAWC) cases during pandemic, the following themes created were: Intensified Implementation of Restrictions, Established Online Presence, and Maintaining Effective Collaboration and for the aspirations of the informants to improve the quality of service to the victims of VAWC, the following theme were created: New Normal Retooling and Equipment for Stabilization. The Philippine National Police (PNP)- Women and Children Protection Desk (WCPD) officers, as a specialized unit in enforcing laws related to the protection of women and children and regarded as the "quick-response-unit," must maintain dynamic and standardized public service. It is suggested that the Performance Standards and Assessment Tool for police service addressing cases of violence against women be amended where the assessment tool should not be done as "Self-administered" to identify committed officers who are working diligently to end violence against women and children. The retooling of PNP-WCPD should not only cover policy-related attitudes, habits, and work ethics but should also investigate an array of services that can be extended during a crisis. The provision of additional facilities and personnel to attend VAWC cases will expedite the acquisition of relevant documents for filing legal actions and will be timely in the recent health crisis. This will enable the Department of Health to provide prompt intervention on the outbreak of mental health problems aggravated by the pandemic. PNP-WCPD and other linkages should develop process-based alternatives and act on the research of shared resources from the Covid-19 experiences because health protocols altered policing strategies and are not conducive to problem-oriented crime prevention and innovation.

| KEYWORDS

Violence against women and their children, PNP-WCPD, pandemic, Phenomenology, Cebu City Police Office, Cebu City, Philippines.

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1. Introduction

The pandemic has impacted the criminal justice system process (McLay, 2021). The police operation unit is facing unprecedented challenges in terms of keeping everything in balance between their regular duties as police officers and performing other national emergency functions. The random lockdown causes a backlog of walk-in complaints, such as violence against women and their children. During the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis, factors such as limitations on economic activity, school closures, reduced

access to police assistance services and physical distancing increase the likelihood of children becoming vulnerable to violence and other violations of their rights. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) annual report 2020 highlighted that the struggles of those victims before the pandemic have doubled.

Culver and Lachman (2020) emphasized that during a pandemic, police should also look at strategies to prepare their response to better position themselves and enhance their service to the population. The efforts, in general, addressing this pandemic should also include how to raise awareness in the communities and become advocates for women and their children's rights to ensure monitoring, reporting, and prosecution of abusers. They should consider the windows of opportunities that can be opened during a crisis at the political and social levels to introduce some critical reforms, such as the digital transformation of police management and innovation in investigation procedures, that can sustainably and positively impact the development of the police, once the pandemic is over.

In response, the Philippine Commission on Women provides a list of Violence Against Women (VAW) Service Providers (hotlines) in all regions of the country aside from the "Philippine National Police (PNP) Aleng Pulis Hotline" to support the mandate of the Republic Act No. 9262 regarding the utilization of the Barangay Violence Against Women (VAW) desk. This aided in raising awareness, proactively responding to the problem of VAW in the communities, and becoming advocates for women's rights and gender equality. Reports from different countries showed a significant increase in domestic violence cases. According to the 2017 Philippine National Demographic and Health survey, one in four women ranging between 15-49 years of age experienced physical, emotional, or sexual abuse at home, while data from World Health Organization (WHO) in the year 2020 revealed several countries affected by COVID-19, have seen increases in levels of violence occurring at home, including violence against children, intimate partner, and violence against older people.

Although the national emergency caused unattended help desks, some victims reached authorities online. In Quezon City, from 5 cases per week before the pandemic, WCPD receives at least 12 complaints of domestic abuse, as mentioned by Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte in an interview published last October 2020. Secretary General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, said in a report published last April 2020 that the government should include the prevention of domestic violence as an essential part of the national response plans as we beat Covid-19. Meanwhile, in a proposed resolution, Cebu City Councilor Alvin Dizon emphasized the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic linked to the increased rate of women and their children being abused.

The Department of Social Welfare and Services (DSWS) is called to act on close monitoring of cases of Violence Against Women and their Children (VAWC) in Cebu City by strengthening the existing barangay help desks facilitated by PNP-WCPD officers. Hence, the obligation of both moral and legal perspectives rests on the government to provide services to the most vulnerable, who have nowhere to go. According to Cebu City Police Office, eleven stations have recorded a total of 2,736 VAWC cases from the year 2016 up to 2020, regarded as "live-in" partners of the victim as the most common abuser/suspect with a total of 593 cases, followed by 507 cases with the husband of the victim is the abuser/suspect. The total number of cases from 2019 to 2020 was 972, but only 762 were successfully solved, 101 are still under investigation, and a total of 109 cases were cleared the same year because victims filed desistance. With the discussion and foreseen problem above, the researcher, being a Criminologist, has in mind to explore the life experiences of Women and Children Desk Officers in handling VAWC cases during the Covid-19 pandemic with the hopes to propose recommendations to sustain PNP-WCPD effectiveness and efficiency amidst crises.

2. Literature Review

This research is primarily anchored on the Self-efficacy Theory of (Bandura, 1986), supported by the Team Performance Theory (Tuckman, 1965) and the Organizational Support Theory of (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002).

Self-efficacy theory is a subset of Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory. According to this approach, the two key determinants of behavior are perceived self-efficacy and outcome expectancies. Self-efficacy theory emphasizes the importance of the individual and the individual's perceptions of his/her personal capabilities as key determinants of successful outcomes. Self-efficacy theory endorses a democratic ideal that suggests that all individuals are competent and capable of being successful, provided they have the opportunities and self-efficacy necessary to pursue their goals.

This self-efficacy theory explains that professional role confidence is significantly associated with positive self-appraisal. In relation, female police officers handling cases of violence against women and their children believed that they are effective the same patrol officers on the street and that women can be as good as male officers in doing police work. Policewomen who are confident about their work and those with longer tenure in the police force are more likely to favor the same assignment as policemen (Hoffart, 2017).

According to Framer & Teirney (2017), self-efficacy theory suggests that individuals who are currently struggling may not have been provided with opportunities to obtain mastery experiences or modeling necessary to develop high levels of self-efficacy. More recently, Bandura extended the self-efficacy theory by stating that phobic anxiety derives from both low self-efficacy for performing overtly and from low self-efficacy for exercising control over scary thoughts. At present, it is not only civilians who are affected by covid-19; every member of the community, even police officers, has been impaired by the majority of their usual crime suppression operations. The worries of police officers in the fight against covid-19 are the same level of worries as those of ordinary citizens.

Self-efficacy theory, therefore, suggests that it is the responsibility of society to report abuse and to give opportunities to law enforcers to respond to violence in a timely manner. In this way, a strong sense of self-efficacy among police officers handling cases of violence against women and their children will be developed.

In police parlance, police officers are grouped in a team under the supervision of higher rank personnel. This is for the purpose of monitoring individual and team performance. Team-performance theory, also known as Tuckman's Teamwork theory, is best illustrated as a link between group relationships and task focus. The optimal or "performing" position is reached when relationships have developed within the group, and the delivery has started with a clear focus on the task. A basic understanding of team performance theory can help the police organization to develop a high-performing project team. Team performance theory suggests that experienced teams develop a shared understanding or shared mental model utilized to coordinate behaviors by anticipating and predicting each other's needs and adapting to task demands. Further, for such teams, both tacit and explicit coordination strategies are important in facilitating teamwork processes (Baran, Shanock and Miller, 2012).

Heart, Colombat & Fouquereau (2013) explained that explicit coordination occurs through externalized verbal and non-verbal communications, whereas tacit coordination is thought to occur through the meta-cognitive activities of team members who have shared mental models of what should be done, when, and by whom. A team's shared mental models thus allow the team members to coordinate their behavior and better communicate depending upon situational demands.

Sun (2019) argues that another important key to team performance is congruence of team cognition. Common cognition among team members is associated with higher team effectiveness and is an important element of military or police training teams. The input from each officer can result in new ideas through the decision-making process that will lead to a higher accomplishment and reduced mission fails.

Team Performance theory supports a participatory approach within the unit of an organization. However, in pandemic settings, this approach can take on different meanings depending on the context. In general, the participatory approach refers to activities conducted by the Woman and Children Protection Desk unit of every police station that aim to involve and empower every woman in their respective jurisdiction (Gumbo, 2013). Team performance theory explains that police officers and their organization are placed under significant stress because of dealing with the new situation (pandemic), with potentially significant implications for the well-being of the former and the ability of the latter to function effectively and appropriately (Crest, 2020).

Organizational Support theory by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) holds that to meet socio-emotional needs and assess the benefits of increased work effort; employees form a general perception concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. PNP-WCPD acting on behalf of the police organization are often perceived as acting on the organization's intentions rather than their personal motives (Levinson, 1965). Special courses are provided to equip WCPD officers to deal with specific sensitive cases effectively and make valuable contributions to crime suppression.

Organization Support theory argues that when employees feel that they have received good treatment from the organization in terms of management support, incentives, and working conditions, the sense of organizational support will increase (Johnson, 2015). The provision of a better salary scheme among officers increases the sense of commitment to function effectively. Separate rooms for WCPD are provided by law for interviewing victims of abuse privately. This facility contributes to many cases solved since victims become cooperative.

The quality of organization support for police personnel would also have a significantly different organizational work context for police officers doing the same tasks. Organizational support encourages improvement of the performance among its employees, who view such aid as being genuinely valued and respected by the organization (Cotterell, Eisenberger, & Speicher, 1992).

At present, the Philippine National Police - Women and Children Protection Desk (PNP-WCPD) units are still in the process of adopting a new normal protocol to exercise their function. They are expected to coordinate local shutdowns, encourage social

distancing, and enforce stay-at-home mandates, all while completing the responsibilities for which they are already understaffed and underfunded (Miller & Blumstein, 2020). The Philippine National Police Directorate for Investigation and Detective Management emphasized the functions of law enforcers through the Investigative Order 2016-09 in the administration of cases involving crimes against chastity, sexual harassment, abuses committed against women and children and similar offenses. The police response has been critical for women and children as victims of violence for not drawing a clear line between law and guidance during the coronavirus crisis. These fast-changing and unclear frameworks may also have been an important influence on officers' ability to do their jobs in socially and ethically desirable ways (Short, 2021).

The police officers' experiences with Violence Against Women and their Children (VAWC) during the first months of the pandemic should serve as a basis for improving services, which include but are not limited to providing psycho-social counseling and intervention programs as well as temporary shelter services for the victims and how to widen public awareness on VAWC cases during the crisis. From the beginning of the pandemic, when basically every country agreed to act on the crisis, experts and health advocates called governments to protect people from contamination, but more than a year later, potential risks have become a reality, particularly for women and children. The COVID-19 pandemic and related quarantine have created additional problems for survivors of interpersonal violence (Nnawulezi & Hacskaylo, 2021).

Fitzmaurice (2019) mentioned that knowledge and understanding of every victim's situation is considered power, and this power gives them strength to take control back into their lives. A clear definition of what violence is and its effects will help victims to decide what safety plan they can make. Plans to build self-confidence will teach how to apply coping mechanisms, become more aware of what is happening, and prepare oneself.

Practitioners and policymakers to situate existing evaluation research and highlights the need for better data to understand and assess efforts to reduce domestic violence revictimization. There is a significant review of research on domestic violence, which focused on interventions aimed at reducing revictimization among individuals known to have been abused (Pearce, 2014).

The above-cited theories and related works of literature and studies have contributed to the understanding of this research on the life experiences of WCPD officers handling VAWC cases during the pandemic in Cebu City.

They support the findings as well as the implications of the study.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The researchers employed a qualitative method of research and utilized the phenomenological approach in this study. In the conduct of the in-depth investigation, we used an interview guide, field notes and a voice recorder to emphasize the life experiences of Women and Children Desk Officers in Cebu City in handling VAWC cases during the Covid-19 pandemic. Qualitative research focused on the wholeness of experience rather than solely on its objects or parts; searching for meanings and essences of experience rather than measurements and explanations; obtaining descriptions of experience; regarding the data of experience as imperative in understanding human behavior and as evidence for scientific investigations; formulating questions and problems that reflect the interest, involvement, and personal commitment of the researcher (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology describes the meaning of lived experiences for individuals experiencing a particular phenomenon or concept. Experience, in a phenomenological sense, includes not only the relatively passive experiences of sensory perception but also imagination, thought, emotion, desire, volition and action. In short, it includes everything that we live through or perform.

Phenomenology aims to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of people's everyday experiences (Polit & Beck, 2008) and direct the understanding of phenomena which is consciously experienced by people themselves (Polifroni & Welch, 1999).

The research process for qualitative researchers is emergent. This means that the initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed and that all phases of the process may change or shift after the researchers enter the field and begin to collect data (Creswell, 2013).

Qualitative research is thought to be fluid and ever changing (Lichtman, 2013). Thus, the qualitative phenomenological approach is suitable for my study, as it will help me understand the life experiences of Women and Children Desk Officers in handling VAWC cases during the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.2 Research Participants

The research informants were ten (10) selected officers assigned to five (5) selected police stations in Cebu City. As required, the informants were at least three (3) years in the PNP service and had undergone a series of WCPD specialized courses, gender-sensitivity

training, and other training related to criminal investigation. They are currently assigned as WCPD investigators. Five (5) of them were interviewed individually, and the remaining five (5) were included in Focused Group Discussion (FGD). The City Director approved the conduct of the study among the five selected stations in Cebu City : (Police Station 4 - CPPO is located at Mabolo Cebu City; Police Station 5- CCPO is located at M. C. Briones St, Cebu City; Police Station 9- CCPO is located at V Rama Avenue Guadalupe, Cebu City Cebu, Police station 10-CCPO is located at GF, Punta Princesa Multi-Purpose Bldg., Tres de Abril St, Cebu)

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: part 1 deals with the experiences of the informants handling VAWC cases during the Covid-19 pandemic, part 2 inquiries into the means of the informants to address the problems encountered, and part 3 focuses on the aspirations of the informants to improve the quality of service to the victims of VAWC. The interview guide (IG) was validated and duly approved by the panel members. The interview was conducted and supplemented with field notes and a voice recorder to document the responses of the informants.

3.4 Data Collection

The transmittal letter was submitted for approval to the City Director of the Cebu City Police Office. After the request was granted, the researcher brought with her the approved letter and presented it to the respondents as proof of approval from the City Director. An informed consent form was also presented to each respondent before the interview was conducted. She conducted individual interviews and Focused Group Discussions (FGD).

Interviewing was vital to her research. It created opportunities to pause and reflect with informants about what they remembered, valued, liked, and disliked and aspired about the program. Among other things, interviewing allowed the informants to express certain feelings, beliefs, and opinions that might otherwise be left unsaid. As was discussed, Colaizzi's descriptive method offers an opportunity for the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the individual's intended meaning (Edward & Welch, 2011).

3.5 Data Analysis

The information gathered from the informants' interview was in the local dialect; thus, it was translated into English for general understanding. The researcher utilized Colaizzi's method, which was a phenomenological and established procedure for analyzing the transcript information that was 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 come up with the best conclusion. Significant statements were obtained from each transcript, and meanings were formulated out of significant statements extracted. All formulated meanings were clustered and themed. The findings of the study were integrated into an exhaustive description, and lastly, the findings were validated by the research participants to compare the researcher's descriptive results with their experiences (Sosha, 2012).

3.6 Ethical Consideration

The researchers solicited the cooperation of significant individuals to explore the life experiences of the respondents in handling WCPD cases during the pandemic in Cebu City. After the informants accepted the invitation, they signed the informed consent and were made sure that they understood the rules and their 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 in accordance with the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 or the Republic Act No. 10173 (RA 10173).

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 PNP-WCPD Officers during the pandemic, which affect their lives as individuals.

4.1 Experiences of the Informants as Cyber Cops During COVID-19 Pandemic

PNP-WCPD officers in Cebu City continuously strive to provide services despite the pandemic. Their positive experiences helped maintain the image of the police, while those experiences that made them feel sad became their basis on how to improve their services, thus making handling VAWC cases during the pandemic still a success.

4.1.1 Satisfaction of Desired Results.

This theme depicts that despite the pandemic, PNP-WCPD officers still perform their duties and responsibilities.

To ensure that the abuse will not happen again to the victim. As an investigator, it makes me very happy if suspects are arrested and sentenced). (Participant 7).

I feel contented when cases are filed against abuser, specially in rape cases, That we were able to extend help to stop the abuse. Putting smile to their faces and how they expressed their gratitude is satisfying). Participant 1).

It is satisfying when I can get victim's cooperation because it will make my work easier, specially in case build up). (Participant 9).

This theme was generated to describe the positive experiences in which they felt satisfied as PNP-WCPD. Enforcing laws, locating perpetrators, bringing them before the court, and making sure the abuse is suppressed are what define their purpose. Quality results would not be possible without the cooperation of the victim. Informants always ensure ethical and professional dealings to make victims comfortable and decide to pursue justice. Gaining gratitude from the offended party made valuable contributions to the informants' lives, which made them more determined to keep up their purpose.

This theme can be related to the situational occurrences theory that job satisfaction depends on a combination of situational characteristics and situational occurrences (Quarstein, McAfee, & Glassman, 1992). Situational characteristics are characteristics that an individual considers before accepting a job offer (wages, working conditions, supervision, promotion, and organizational policies). Other situations that an individual considers while on the job are called situational occurrences. Situational occurrences can be positive or negative. Situational factors that influence job satisfaction, and such factors result from the job's characteristics. The assumption is that people have similar needs and, therefore, can be satisfied by the same job characteristics.

4.1.2 Attained Productivity.

This theme describes how the informants dispensed their duties efficiently despite the pandemic and how they maintained productivity as an organization. The restrictions of face-to-face filling of case and inquest proceedings made the informants' work easier and faster, for it eliminates leg work.

During a pandemic, all transactions as to filling cases are done via online, which, for me, made our work easier and faster. We monitor clients by calling them about their scheduled court hearings. (Participant 10).

Despite pandemic, PNP image was established through accessible helplines posted on Facebook that, in cases of emergency, they can contact for help. (Participant 8).

The decreasing crime rate is making a great impact on PNP organization. We urged families to pursue legal actions to stop the abuse and for children to have a better environment. (Participant 1).

This describes the experiences of the informants who continuously performed their duties to safekeep the vulnerable, and crime suppression became possible during the pandemic. The provision of emergency response services and their contact details enjoined the community to take part in busting crime amidst the altered police services. The need to stay at the station of the informants has paved the way for a paperless transaction, which surprisingly made timely remarks. Crime prevention strategies are channeled through social media platforms to disseminate information.

This theme relates to the Home-Rule theory, which explains that police officers are regarded as servants of the community rather than the higher authorities. The effectiveness of the police in performing their functions is dependent on the demands of a difficult situation. It is important for police officers to be in close contact with citizens to gain their trust. People feel safer because they know with whom they are communicating, and they know that they can rely. In this way, the community will be motivated to participate in solving crimes by providing potential information. Considering less social interaction during a pandemic, domestic violence and child abuse become more difficult to identify and intervene without community involvement (Alders, 2020).

4.1.3 Embracing Limitations of Official Functions.

This theme describes the informants' sad experiences in performing her duties. This includes the different challenges while handling unwilling victims because of their worsened financial dependency on their abusers and the delay of the proceedings brought about by the pandemic.

Despite of all the assistance provided, perpetrators are already arrested, but victim choses to file desistance because pandemic hits and they have no one to help them in providing for the needs of their children). (Participant 1).

The delayed in acquiring schedules for medical and psychological evaluation for clients affects their determination to file the case. The longer the period, the weaker it gets their hatred to the abuser, leaving us no choice but to follow their decision). (Participant 5).

House visitation was affected by the pandemic. We only conduct once a week. It would be better if we can visit them more often to ensure that they are fine due to the absence of written report from the barangay). (Participant 2).

This is created to describe the negative experiences of the informants brought by their altered routines in accordance with the health and safety protocols given by the AITF. Several studies show that the Philippine justice system was extremely affected by the restrictions since the focus shifted to keeping people from contamination. Informants perhaps made rescue operations and pursuing justice but with utmost limitations, but this caused delays in the proceedings, which discouraged victims from considering their sufferings. These challenges identify the weak areas of the unit that the government needs to improve.

This theme relates to the administrative theory propounded by (Fayol, 2002). He was one of the first people to recognize that management is a continuous process. His principles advocate teamwork and working together for mutual benefit, which focuses on improving the efficiency of management first so that the processes can be standardized and then move to the operational level where the individual workers are made to learn the changes and implement those in their routine jobs. He believed that organizational managerial practices are important for driving predictability and efficiency in organizations. He outlined functions that remain universal to all organizations. Administration, which calls for the application of wide knowledge and many personal qualities, is, above all, the art of handling men, and in this art, as in many others, it is practice that makes perfect.

4.2 Addressing the Problems Encountered in Handling Violence against Women and Children (VAWC) Cases during Pandemic.

Three (3) themes are used to describe the strategies of informants in handling Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) cases during a pandemic. This will highlight how informants collaborate and utilize available resources to respond to the changing world.

4.2.1 Intensified Implementation of Restrictions.

This theme was generated to reflect the experiences of the informants employing different approaches adhering to the PNP-WCPD Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) as well as the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) guidelines in response to the national health risk to continuously perform different programs and duties as PNP-WCPD.

Safety is our priority. Here at the station, we wear health protection gear to protect ourselves and our clients from any Covid-19 contamination. The same thing happened during the giving of flyers. During checkpoints, we make sure to put contact numbers where anyone can contact us in case of abuse without the need to go to the station. (Participant 1).

Due to the pandemic, there are no walk-in allowed in the pink room except those serious cases like rape. After rescue operation, we immediately prepare pertaining documents and referrals to the pink room are done via online. The client shall be contacted directly by pink room personnel for their schedule of evaluation, which will be done also via online. (Participant 4).

Case folders are submitted via online; once fiscal is assigned, video conferencing (online inquest) shall be done, and all other communication related to the case shall be done through online. (Participant 3).

This theme describes how the informants balance the PNP standard operating procedures along with the health protocols of AITF. Intensified cleanliness and mandatory wearing of safety gear like face masks and face shields are strictly observed. Informants made sure that stations, especially detention cells, were decongested. Working safely, informants endorsed clients to the pink room online, and the filing of cases was also made possible without going to court. Online inquests and emails were exchanged in lieu of traditional proceedings.

This theme is related to the Diffusion of Innovation theory (Rogers, 1976). The result of this diffusion is that people, as part of a social system, adopt a new idea and behavior. Adoption means that a person does something differently than what they had

previously. The key to adoption is that the person must perceive the idea, behavior, or product as new or innovative. In handling uncooperative victims, for example, a WCPD officer who has been in longer service will become the innovator who sees the new ideas from her constant engagement with victims. That new idea, when applied and effective, will attract others to accept. The same is true for the current situation, as described in these themes; the need to innovate emerges during the time when WCPD officers encountered challenges that is not favorable to their efficiency, and particular ideas shall soon be diffused to barangay VAW to effectively respond to cases of violence.

In connection to innovation, policy learning refers to 'relatively enduring alterations of thought or behavioral intentions which result from experience, and which are concerned with the attainment or revision of policy objectives' (Heclo, 1974). Therefore, problem solving must be infused into all police operations and guide decision-making efforts.

4.2.2 Established Online Presence.

This theme describes how the informants maximize digital platforms in cracking down on abusers and provide access to victims of abuse at their convenience. Pieces of information on different laws protecting women and children, services, and hotlines available at all WCPD units are purposely posted on the internet. Electronic gadgets and internet connectivity have become essential tools for continuing the programs intended for their clients.

During the pandemic, we implemented online information dissemination since people are directed to stay at home. It is through our social media platform (Facebook) that we keep posting different WCPD activities, existing anti-violence laws, what to do when experiencing abuse, and hotlines so the police can let the community know that they are protected. (Participant 9).

Information dissemination to reach victims who are reluctant to pursue legal actions so that they will know more about laws that are protecting them because our target is to file charges against abusers. Mostly, Facebook pages are being accessed to seek for advice and tips from those who are experiencing abuse at home. (Participant 2).

For children, we have "Project Vibes" or "Pulis mo, Teacher mo." Through GAD focal, we gathered 58 children to conduct lectures via online (messenger, zoom) about different laws protecting them and different tips on what to do when experiencing abuse and tips to avoid abuse. (Participant 1).

This theme describes how informants adhere to the digital world to address the challenges brought by the Covid-19 pandemic in the law enforcement field. Traditional police presence is replaced with online presence, in which stations create their Facebook page with the intention of establishing that they are striving to live continuously with their sworn duties and responsibilities. Public posts contain proofs of accomplishments, information about existing laws that prohibit and punish violence against women and children and details on how to reach out to authorities if needed. Informants considered online platforms as their vehicle in all aspects of their endeavors. The new normal settings drive their focus on moving forward and influence others to maintain a high level of functioning.

This theme can be best explained with the supporting theory of this study which is Team Performance theory (Tuckman, 1965). The pandemic impacted policing strategies in criminal justice settings. Taking the view of resilience, WCPD officers were able to capacitate positive adaptation through innovating from their usual routine.

Resilience is a dynamic process. 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, enabling their focus on moving forward as a team (Morgan, Fletcher & Sarkar, 2015).

4.2.3 Maintaining Effective Collaboration

This theme describes how informants maintained effective collaboration with barangay focal persons in handling violence during a pandemic.

Coordinate with barangay since they know better their constituents, they can easily locate the reported household where abuse took place. (Participant 7).

Due to implementation of health protocols, clients refrain from coming here at the station except those with serious cases. Barangay personnel are made available to minor cases and to give advice; if cases where settlement is not possible, they will be the ones to forward them (clients) to us (WCPD). (Participant 3).

Due to the pandemic, upon the arrival of victim's location, we give them time to decide; if she is not determined to file legal action, we will refer them to barangay for settlement to avoid additional temporary detainee since detention cell capacity was reduced in adherence to the AITF protocol. (Participant 1).

This theme describes the informant's utilization of the functionality of the Barangay Violence Against Women (VAW) desk during a pandemic. Barangay cooperation is one of the factors that made numerous successful operations. Their support system has been important to informants in keeping the community safe from abusers and the Covid-19 virus.

This theme can be related to the Collaborative Learning theory. It is a process whereby a group of individuals learn from each other by working together to solve a problem, complete a task, create a product, or share one's thinking. This theory is rooted in the work of Vygotsky (1934) that, the social development theory considered the importance of communication and social interaction in learning.

In collaborative learning, there is a significant increase in knowledge among members through responding to an alarm. The clear definition of responsibility in a team helps to understand the reason for maintaining effective collaboration to curb violence, especially during a pandemic (Badaracco, 2002).

4.3 Aspirations of the Informants to Improve the Quality of Service to the Victims of Violence Against Women and their Children

Two (2) themes were created to describe the different programs aspired by the informants that will improve anti-violence programs against women and children in times of crisis and how these will improve the productivity of PNP-WCPD in general.

4.3.1. New Normal Retooling.

This theme describes the informants' desire to innovate by undergoing capability-building training to acquire new skills that are effective in the new normal setup.

Provision of face-to-face training since online training is less effective since there is less to zero interaction and practical assessments worsened by poor internet connection. (Participant 6).

Mandatory submission of reports from barangay to PNP-WCPD To enhance their knowledge and standard monitoring. This will strengthen the relationship between barangay and PNP-WCPD. (Participant 9).

Continuity plan for livelihood program to help women to become financially independent from their abuser, especially in times of crisis. (Participant 4).

This theme depicts the desire of the informants to upskill to meet the demands of the present situation. This theme describes the informant's self-motivation to be better in her career. Informants aspired programs are based on their weak points during the pandemic with the hopes of providing an innovative approach: skillful officers in protecting women and children and utilization of the potential of all women and children.

This theme relates to self-determination theory, which focuses on how social and cultural factors facilitate or undermine people's sense of volition and initiative, as well as their well-being and the quality of their performance. People are often moved by external factors such as reward systems, grades, evaluations, or the opinions they fear others might have of them. A need for growth as a human being drives behavior and also produces internal sources of motivation, such as learning to gain independence and wanting to prove oneself. This natural inclination toward assimilation, mastery, spontaneous interest, and exploration is essential to cognitive and social development and represents a principal source of enjoyment and vitality throughout life (Ryan, 1995). According to Lepper, Greene, and Nisbett (1973), if the behavior is purely self-determined, there is a very high chance that it will be both intrinsically driven and that the behavior is done not for the reward or the prize but rather for self-satisfaction, interest, and enjoyment for the behavior itself.

4.3.2. Equipment for Stabilization.

This theme was created to describe the aspired program on how it will aid the informants to keep pace with adversities. These are specifically designed to provide uninterrupted services and stabilize officers in protecting women and children upon their realization.

Only limited cases are catered at the pink room to give priority to serious cases during pandemic. Cases not covered are endorsed to private centers, which hampers justice to those who cannot afford. (Participant 5).

Additional women and children protection center facilities to cater enough clients promptly from region 7 for psychological evaluation, vital in legal proceedings. (Participant 4).

Availability of service vehicles affects the monitoring activities, time element in responding, the safety of WCPD officers because they prompted to use their personal vehicles. Sometimes, during rescue, they will just wait for barangay service vehicle to fetch them. (Participant 2).

This theme was created to describe the effect of the aspired program of the informants and how it will aid in providing the stability of every community to prepare for national emergency. It is specifically designed to provide uninterrupted services upon its realization.

This theme can be explained by the Expectancy Motivation theory, which is considered a cognitive model of motivation and performance based on perceptions of the situation (Vroom, 1964). Major elements of expectancy theory were estimated by the police officer's capability, opportunity to enforce and resources or government support provided. Locating the perpetrator is just a piece of the puzzle; the availability of other services implies productivity and organizational development.

The pandemic has opened doors to those informants who have been in their comfort zones. If officers successfully demonstrate their intelligence and are awarded with gratitude, motivation may increase. If there are a lot of motivated officers, then the available facilities and uninterrupted services will complete the puzzle to stabilize communities against violence and the likelihood of obtaining desired outcomes contingent on performance (Mitchell, 1982).

5. Conclusion

From the gathered data, through the recorded response of the ten (10) informants, eight (8) substantial emergent themes were created. The study was conducted in Cebu City, specifically in the following five (5) police stations (PS): PS4, PS5, PS7, PS9 and PS10, selected based on the number of VAWC cases. All informants were qualified as they were at least three (3) years in the PNP service and have undergone a series of WCPD specialized courses, gender-sensitivity training and other training related to Criminal Investigation and are presently designated as WCPD investigators in their respective stations. Five (5) of them were interviewed individually, and five (5) were included in the Focused Group Discussion (FGD).

The Philippine National Police (PNP)- Women and Children Protection Desk (WCPD) officers, as a specialized unit in enforcing laws related to the protection of women and children and regarded as the "quick- response-unit," must maintain dynamic and standardized public service. This is to identify committed officers who are working diligently to end violence against women and children, maintaining high performance against difficult circumstances like those challenges experienced during a pandemic. The provision of additional facilities and personnel to attend Violence Against Women and their Children (VAWC) cases will expediate the acquisition of relevant documents for filling legal actions and is timely in the recent health crisis.

Philippine National Police - Women and Children Protection Desk (PNP-WCPD) and other linkages should develop process-based alternatives and act on research of shared resources from the Covid-19 experiences because health protocols altered policing strategies and are not conducive to problem- oriented, crime-prevention and innovation. Increasing the mobility in every unit will also enable them to monitor secluded areas. This will contribute to crime prevention and solutions. It is also important to maintain strong linkages between civic organizations, churches and other NGOs that enable financial resources, facilities, and equipment necessary for the realization of activities related to the anti-violence campaign by the Philippine National Police (PNP).

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