

Work World of the Philippine National Police Scene of the Crime Operatives (PNP-SOCO): A Qualitative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the work world of the Philippine National Police Scene of the Crime Operatives (PNP-SOCO). Specifically, this study sought to answer the following: the positive and negative experiences of the informants, addressing the challenges encountered during the performance of their duties and the aspiration of the informants to improve the quality of RFU7-SOCO. This study employs a qualitative research design, utilizing a phenomenological approach. This inquiry utilizes ten (10) informants from the Regional Forensic 7 and members of the SOCO with at least 5 years of experience. Using a validated interview guide with open-ended questions prepared by the researcher, the informants were all interviewed individually. Colaizzi's thematic analysis was employed to analyze the collected data.

Three themes summarized the positive experiences of the informants. These were: Preparedness and Role Clarity Boost Confidence and Effectiveness, Team Coordination and Communication Enhance Operational Success and Evidence Recovery Skills Directly Impact Investigation Outcomes. As to the negative experiences, the themes revealed were: Inadequate Crime Scene Management and Logistics, Evidence Contamination and Improper Collection and Need for Enhanced Availability of Standard Comparison Materials for Forensic Examination. To address the challenges encountered as SOCO Members in the performance of their duties three themes were created: Professionalism, Integrity, and Faith in Handling, Effective Communication, Collaboration and Coordination and Adaptive Coping and Problem-Solving Strategies. And three emergent theme to express the aspiration of the informants to improve their performance as SOCO member, to wit: Strengthening Workforce and Resource Capacity, Enhancing Training Programs and Standards, and Upholding and Improving Standards of Practices.

The researcher advocates a qualitative exploration of the lived realities of Scene of the Crime Operatives (SOCOs) deployed to Regional Forensic Unit 7. This study aims to deliver a comprehensive examination of the distinct obstacles encountered in crime scene processing, evidence retrieval, and meticulous documentation. By closely analyzing these experiences, the study may provide actionable recommendations addressing the operational, structural, and psychological dimensions of their roles. Recognizing these obstacles could improve investigative protocols, safeguard the authenticity of evidence, and ultimately facilitate the effective prosecution of cases.

Keywords: Work World, Scene of the Crime Operatives, Phenomenology, Experiences, Addressing Challenges Encountered, Aspirations, Forensic Unit, Police Investigators.

INTRODUCTION

Forensic science plays a crucial role in modern criminal justice systems by applying scientific methods to the investigation and analysis of crimes. Across the world, law enforcement agencies increasingly rely on forensic evidence to ensure that investigations are grounded in objective and scientifically verifiable findings. Through

systematic processes of evidence identification, collection, preservation, and analysis, forensic science allows investigators to reconstruct crime scenes, identify suspects, and establish factual narratives that support judicial decision-making. Reliable forensic evidence not only strengthens criminal investigations but also protects individual rights and promotes fairness in judicial proceedings.

Several countries have developed highly advanced forensic systems that serve as models for effective investigative practices. Nations such as the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia operate sophisticated forensic units equipped with modern laboratories, specialized personnel, and standardized investigative protocols. These systems emphasize scientific accuracy, comprehensive documentation, and strict adherence to chain-of-custody procedures to ensure that evidence remains credible and admissible in court. In these jurisdictions, technological innovations such as rapid DNA profiling, automated fingerprint identification systems, advanced trace-evidence analysis, and digital forensics have significantly improved investigative efficiency and the reliability of criminal case resolution.

These global developments highlight the growing importance of integrating science and technology into law enforcement operations. Advances in forensic techniques have enabled investigators to obtain critical results within shorter timeframes, thereby accelerating investigations and improving suspect identification. As a result, many countries continue to invest in forensic infrastructure, professional training, and research to enhance the effectiveness of criminal investigations and strengthen the integrity of their justice systems.

In the Philippines, forensic science is institutionalized through the Philippine National Police, particularly through its specialized investigative unit known as the Philippine National Police Forensic Group. This unit provides scientific and technical support to police investigators, prosecutors, and other government agencies by conducting forensic examinations, laboratory analyses, and crime scene processing. Through these services, the Forensic Group plays an essential role in ensuring that criminal investigations are supported by reliable scientific evidence.

Within this structure operates the PNP Scene of the Crime Operatives (PNP-SOCO), a specialized team responsible for the systematic documentation and processing of crime scenes. SOCO personnel perform critical tasks such as forensic photography, fingerprint lifting, DNA sampling, trace-evidence collection, and the preservation of the chain of custody. These procedures are fundamental to maintaining the integrity of evidence presented during criminal investigations and court proceedings. As crime patterns become more complex—ranging from violent crimes and drug offenses to cybercrime and terrorism the need for highly trained forensic investigators and well-supported forensic systems has become increasingly important.

Despite these developments, significant challenges continue to affect the effectiveness of forensic operations in the Philippines. Issues such as limited resources, uneven distribution of personnel, aging equipment, logistical constraints, and the demanding nature of forensic work can influence the efficiency of crime scene investigations. Moreover, while forensic science is widely recognized as a vital component of modern policing, there remains limited scholarly research examining the operational realities and professional experiences of PNP-SOCO personnel. Existing studies often focus on forensic techniques and technologies rather than on the human and organizational factors that shape forensic investigative practices.

Understanding these human and organizational dimensions is critical because SOCO operatives frequently work under highly demanding conditions. Crime scene investigations often involve exposure to traumatic environments, strict investigative timelines, and the constant responsibility of ensuring that evidence is processed accurately. Any lapse in documentation or evidence handling can compromise an investigation and affect judicial outcomes. Additionally, factors such as organizational culture, resource limitations, work-related stress, and institutional expectations may influence the performance and well-being of forensic personnel.

At the regional level, the Regional Forensic Unit 7 serves as the primary forensic service provider for Central Visayas. The unit supports investigative operations by conducting forensic photography, fingerprint examination, DNA sampling, and trace-evidence recovery while maintaining strict adherence to chain-of-

custody procedures. Through these services, RFU 7 contributes significantly to the investigation and resolution of criminal cases within the region.

Recent developments in Central Visayas highlight the importance of effective law enforcement strategies supported by forensic capabilities. Reports indicated that crime incidents in the region declined significantly in early 2025, with a reduction of approximately 66 percent in January compared with the same period in the previous year, and a continued downward trend of about 31 percent during the early months of the year (Cebu Daily News, 2025). While these improvements reflect successful policing initiatives, they also underscore the need to sustain and strengthen forensic investigative support systems.

Despite the contributions of the Regional Forensic Unit 7, operational challenges related to resources, logistics, and institutional support remain present. Furthermore, limited academic research has explored the lived experiences, operational challenges, and professional coping strategies of PNP-SOCO personnel working in the region. Understanding these experiences is essential for identifying areas where institutional support, training, and policy improvements may enhance forensic investigative performance.

In response to these gaps, this study seeks to explore the lived experiences of PNP-SOCO personnel assigned to the Regional Forensic Unit 7. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, the research examines the operational realities, challenges, coping mechanisms, and support systems that shape the work of forensic investigators. By examining these experiences, the study aims to generate insights that may inform improvements in forensic procedures, resource allocation, and institutional support within the Philippine National Police.

As an insider-researcher and active member of the PNP-SOCO, the researcher brings firsthand understanding of the operational context of crime scene investigations. However, to maintain scholarly rigor and objectivity, the study adopts a reflexive approach in which the researcher continuously examines personal assumptions and potential biases throughout the research process. This reflexive practice ensures that interpretations remain grounded in the authentic perspectives and experiences of the study participants.

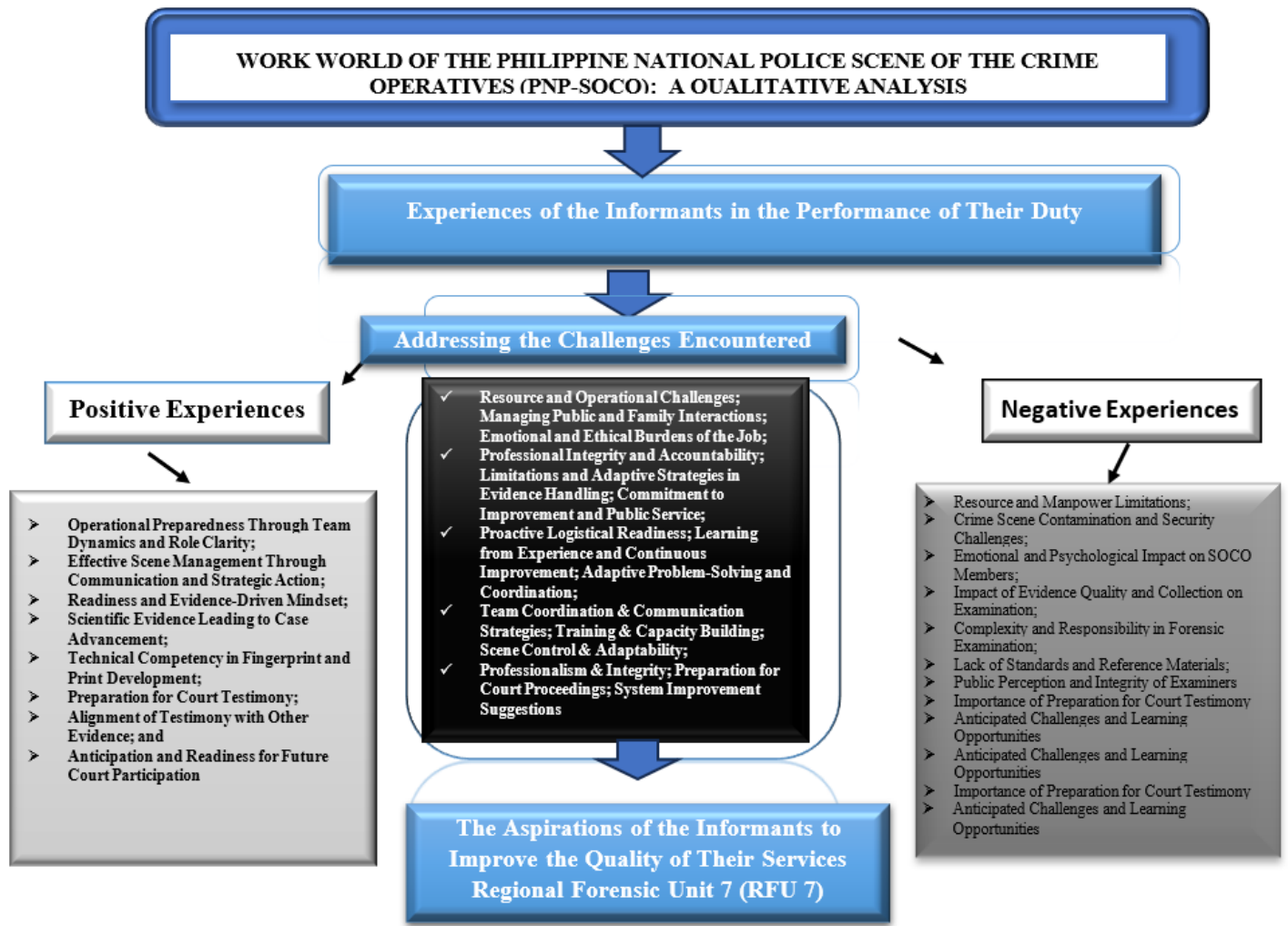
Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to the strengthening of forensic investigative practices and institutional support systems within the Philippine law enforcement structure. By providing a deeper understanding of the experiences and operational realities of SOCO personnel, the study may help inform policy development, professional training, and organizational improvements that enhance the effectiveness of forensic services. Strengthening forensic capabilities not only improves investigative outcomes but also reinforces public trust in law enforcement institutions and the overall credibility of the justice system.

Statement of the Problem

This study explored the work world of the Scene of the Crime Operatives (SOCO) of the Philippine National Police Regional Forensic Unit 7 (PNP RFU 7), Cebu, Philippines.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of the informants in the performance of their duties?
2. How do the informants address the challenges encountered in performance of their duties?
3. What are the aspirations of the informants to improve the quality of their services?



- ✓ Workforce & Resource Enhancement; Technological & Logistical Support; Capacity Building Through Training;
- ✓ Continuous Program Development; Periodic Refresher Training; Qualified & Experienced Trainers;
- ✓ Commitment to Quality Through Standards; Evidence Handling and Process Improvement; Resource Enhancement (Logistics & Personnel);
- ✓ Modernization of Forensic Equipment; Logistics and Mobility Support; Strategic Investment in Equipment and Manpower;
- ✓ Teamwork and Communication for Efficiency; Discipline, Readiness, and Role Awareness; Professional Values and Work Ethic

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a phenomenological qualitative research approach to explore and understand the lived experiences of members of the Philippine National Police Scene of the Crime Operatives from the Philippine National Police assigned to the Regional Forensic Unit 7. Phenomenology was selected because it enables researchers to examine how individuals interpret and make meaning of their professional experiences within their natural work environments. This approach allowed the researcher to capture the depth and complexity of the participants' experiences, particularly in relation to their operational roles, professional challenges, coping mechanisms, and institutional support systems within forensic investigation settings.

Data were gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, enabling participants to openly describe their experiences while allowing the researcher to probe deeper into significant themes emerging from the discussions. Thematic analysis with iterative coding was employed to systematically analyze the narratives. Through repeated reading, coding, and categorization of the transcripts, patterns and recurring meanings were identified and grouped into emerging themes. This analytic process allowed for a richer interpretation of the participants lived realities while maintaining fidelity to their original statements and experiences. The use of thematic analysis further ensured that the findings reflected both individual perspectives and shared experiences among SOCO members.

The research informants consisted of ten (10) senior PNP-SOCO members from the Regional Forensic Unit 7 who had at least five years of professional experience in forensic investigation and crime scene processing. Their extensive field exposure made them particularly suitable informants for the study because they possessed substantial operational knowledge and professional insights. Among the participants, four (4) informants participated in individual in-depth interviews, while six (6) informants participated in a focus group discussion to facilitate the sharing of collective experiences and interactive reflection among investigators. Informants were selected regardless of age or gender to promote inclusivity and diversity of perspectives. The participants were drawn from multiple forensic units across Cebu Province to ensure a broader representation of operational contexts. Specifically, six (6) informants were from the RFU 7 Headquarters, while one (1) informant each came from the Cebu City, Cebu Provincial, Lapu-Lapu City, and Mandaue City Forensic Units. This distribution allowed the study to capture forensic investigative practices across urban, provincial, industrial, and tourism-driven jurisdictions, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the varying challenges and operational environments encountered by forensic investigators in the region.

The study utilized a validated semi-structured interview guide composed of open-ended questions designed to encourage participants to elaborate on their experiences and perceptions. The interview guide underwent content validation by the research adviser and a panel of three research experts, who evaluated the instrument using a validation sheet to assess its clarity, relevance, and alignment with the objectives of the study. Their recommendations led to revisions that improved the structure, wording, and logical sequencing of the questions, ensuring that the instrument effectively elicited meaningful and reliable qualitative data. The final interview guide consisted of three major sections, focusing on: (1) the informants' positive and negative work experiences in forensic investigation, (2) the strategies they employed in addressing work-related challenges and occupational stressors, and (3) their perspectives and aspirations for improving forensic services and public safety.

During the data collection process, the researcher utilized audio recording devices and detailed field notes to ensure the accurate documentation of participants' responses and contextual observations. The recordings enabled the researcher to capture verbatim statements, tone, and nuances in the participants' narratives, while field notes provided supplementary descriptions of non-verbal cues, situational context, and key reflections during the interviews and discussions. All collected data were securely stored and handled with strict adherence to ethical research standards. Participants were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation, and pseudonyms were used during transcription and reporting to protect their identities. Verbatim statements obtained from both individual interviews and focus group discussions were treated with the utmost confidentiality and were used solely for academic research purposes.

Given the qualitative and interpretive nature of phenomenological research, researcher reflexivity was carefully considered throughout the entire research process. The researcher acknowledged that personal experiences, professional background, and prior knowledge related to forensic investigation could potentially influence data interpretation. To mitigate this possibility, the researcher engaged in reflexive practices, including maintaining a reflexive journal to document personal assumptions, reactions, and potential biases during data collection and analysis. This process allowed the researcher to consciously reflect on how personal perspectives might shape the interpretation of participants' narratives and to intentionally bracket or set aside these preconceptions during analysis.

In addition, several strategies were implemented to minimize researcher bias and strengthen the credibility of the findings. These strategies included bracketing, wherein the researcher consciously suspended personal judgments and prior beliefs to focus on the authentic accounts of the participants. Peer debriefing was also conducted with the research adviser to review emerging themes and interpretations, ensuring that the analysis remained grounded in the actual data. Furthermore, member checking was employed by confirming selected interpretations and summaries with participants to verify the accuracy and authenticity of their statements. The use of multiple data collection methods, such as individual interviews and focus group discussions, also facilitated data triangulation, allowing the researcher to compare perspectives and identify consistent patterns across different sources of information.

Through the integration of reflexive practices and rigorous qualitative procedures, the study ensured that the findings remained credible, transparent, and reflective of the genuine lived experiences of PNP-SOCO investigators. These methodological safeguards strengthened the trustworthiness of the research and provided a reliable basis for developing insights and recommendations aimed at improving institutional support mechanisms, operational practices, and professional well-being among forensic investigators.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study adopted a qualitative research design grounded in transcendental phenomenology, which seeks to capture the essence of lived experiences from the perspectives of those who directly encounter the phenomenon under investigation. Through the analytical framework of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), the researcher systematically examined the interview transcripts to identify recurring patterns and meaningful insights emerging from the narratives of the informants.

Data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide consisting of open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed reflections on the professional experiences of the informants. The interview guide was organized into three major domains: (1) the informants' work experiences as Scene of the Crime Operatives, (2) the strategies they employ to address operational challenges, and (3) their aspirations for improving forensic services. To ensure methodological rigor, the instrument underwent expert validation involving the research adviser and a panel of subject specialists. Their feedback enhanced the clarity, relevance, and reliability of the questions.

The phenomenological analysis generated one hundred sixty (160) core meanings extracted from the significant statements of the participants. These meanings were clustered into one hundred forty-two (142) thematic groupings, which were subsequently distilled into twelve (12) emergent themes. These themes were organized into three overarching analytical categories aligned with the study's sub-problems: The positive and negative experiences of Philippine National Police Scene of the Crime Operatives (PNP-SOCO) assigned to Regional Forensic Unit 7; The strategies they employ in addressing occupational challenges; and; Their aspirations for enhancing forensic service quality.

Collectively, these findings illuminate the complex work environment of forensic practitioners, demonstrating how technical competence, organizational culture, teamwork, resilience, and institutional resources interact to shape crime scene investigation practices. Similar patterns have been identified in international forensic research, where effective crime scene investigation is influenced by the interplay between professional expertise, organizational structures, and psychological preparedness (Fisher & Fisher, 2012; Horswell, 2016; Saferstein, 2020).

The positive professional experiences of PNP-SOCO personnel were reflected in three emergent themes: Preparedness and Role Clarity Boost Confidence and Effectiveness, Team Coordination and Communication Enhance Operational Success, and Evidence Recovery Skills Directly Impact Investigation Outcomes.

Informants emphasized that adequate training, familiarity with standard operating procedures, and clearly defined roles significantly enhanced their confidence and operational efficiency during crime scene investigations. Viewed through the perspective of Self-Efficacy Theory, these experiences strengthened the investigators' belief in their capability to perform complex forensic tasks under demanding conditions. Research in forensic science similarly demonstrates that continuous training and clearly defined operational responsibilities significantly improve investigator performance and decision-making accuracy (Fisher & Fisher, 2012).

International forensic literature also highlights the importance of role clarity and structured procedures in crime scene investigations. According to Horswell (2016), clearly defined responsibilities among crime scene investigators reduce procedural errors and enhance evidence integrity. When forensic personnel possess strong procedural knowledge and technical confidence, they are more capable of preserving evidence and maintaining chain-of-custody standards required in criminal proceedings.

Team coordination likewise emerged as a critical factor influencing successful crime scene operations. Informants emphasized that effective communication, cooperation, and mutual trust among team members minimized operational mistakes and enhanced the overall quality of forensic documentation. These findings support Team Performance Theory, which emphasizes that high-performing teams rely on shared goals, coordinated actions, and open communication to accomplish complex tasks (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993).

Studies conducted among crime scene investigators internationally reinforce the importance of collaborative teamwork in forensic operations. Salas, Sims, and Burke (2005) argue that communication and coordination among investigative teams significantly enhance situational awareness and reduce operational errors in high-risk environments. Similarly, research by Houck and Siegel (2015) highlights that coordinated team-based approaches in crime scene investigation improve evidence recovery and contribute to more accurate crime reconstruction.

Another important positive experience identified by the informants was the impact of technical competence in evidence recovery. Participants emphasized that proper evidence collection, preservation, and documentation directly influenced the reliability of forensic findings and the credibility of criminal investigations. This observation aligns with global forensic standards emphasizing the importance of meticulous evidence handling to ensure admissibility in court proceedings (Saferstein, 2020).

Despite these positive experiences, the informants also identified persistent operational challenges that hinder effective forensic practice. These challenges were summarized in three emergent themes: Inadequate Crime Scene Management and Logistics, Evidence Contamination and Improper Collection, and Lack of Standard Comparison Materials for Forensic Examination.

Participants reported that delays in securing crime scenes, inadequate perimeter control, and limited logistical support sometimes compromised investigative efficiency. These findings reflect the principles of Resource Dependency Theory, which suggests that organizational effectiveness is strongly influenced by access to necessary resources and institutional support systems (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Similar challenges have been reported in forensic units across developing jurisdictions where resource constraints limit investigative capacity (James, Nordby, & Bell, 2014).

Concerns regarding evidence contamination were also highlighted by several informants. Participants noted that improper evidence handling may occur when investigators lack adequate tools, standardized procedures, or advanced training opportunities. Such weaknesses threaten the reliability of forensic evidence and may jeopardize legal proceedings. International forensic literature emphasizes that even minor procedural lapses in evidence collection may compromise case integrity and lead to wrongful conclusions (Houck & Siegel, 2015).

Another significant challenge identified by informants was the limited availability of standard comparison materials and forensic databases, which are necessary for accurate forensic identification. According to James et al. (2014), forensic laboratories rely heavily on validated reference samples and comparative databases to perform reliable scientific analysis. In resource-limited forensic systems, the absence of these materials may delay analysis and reduce the evidentiary value of forensic examinations.

The second research objective examined the strategies employed by PNP-SOCO personnel in addressing operational challenges. Three themes emerged: Professionalism, Integrity, and Faith in Handling Crime Scene Challenges, Effective Communication, Collaboration, and Coordination, and Adaptive Coping and Problem-Solving Strategies.

Informants emphasized that professionalism and integrity remain fundamental values guiding their work despite resource constraints and operational difficulties. These values reflect a deeply embedded organizational culture, where ethical responsibility and professional commitment serve as guiding principles in forensic practice. Organizational culture research suggests that strong professional values enhance accountability, ethical decision-making, and institutional trust within law enforcement agencies (Garcia & Reyes, 2018).

Interestingly, several informants also identified faith and spiritual grounding as important sources of emotional resilience. Participants explained that spiritual beliefs helped them manage stress, maintain composure, and

remain focused during emotionally challenging investigations. This observation aligns with the Psychological Resilience Framework, which highlights how internal belief systems, coping strategies, and meaning-making processes contribute to psychological stability in high-stress occupations (Papazoglou & Andersen, 2014).

Effective communication and collaboration were also highlighted as essential coping mechanisms. Informants reported that open communication among SOCO members and coordination with other investigative units allowed them to compensate for limited resources and avoid procedural errors. These findings correspond with research indicating that collaborative inter-agency communication significantly improves operational efficiency in criminal investigations (Cortez & Javier, 2021).

Furthermore, participants demonstrated strong adaptive coping and problem-solving strategies. These included remaining calm during high-pressure situations, applying critical thinking during crime scene analysis, and drawing upon past investigative experiences to resolve operational difficulties. Such behaviors reflect both self-efficacy and resilience, which are widely recognized as essential traits among forensic professionals and law enforcement personnel exposed to stressful working environments (Violanti et al., 2017).

The third research objective explored the informants' aspirations for improving forensic service delivery. Three themes emerged: Strengthening Workforce and Resource Capacity, Enhancing Training Programs and Standards, and Upholding and Improving Standards of Practice.

Informants expressed a strong desire for increased manpower, improved logistical support, and access to modern forensic equipment. These aspirations are consistent with findings from international forensic management research, which emphasize that adequate institutional resources are essential for maintaining high-quality investigative standards (Saferstein, 2020). From the perspective of Resource Dependency Theory, organizations must maintain sufficient access to personnel, technology, and financial resources to achieve operational effectiveness.

Participants also emphasized the importance of continuous professional training. Informants recognized that forensic science is a rapidly evolving discipline requiring investigators to regularly update their technical knowledge and investigative skills. Research on forensic training highlights that competency-based education and scenario-based simulations significantly enhance investigator preparedness and decision-making ability (Chen, Wang, & Zhao, 2023).

Finally, the informants underscored the need to uphold strict ethical and procedural standards in forensic practice. Participants advocated for clearer operational guidelines, regular performance evaluations, and stronger accountability mechanisms. Such measures align with international forensic quality assurance standards, including those established under ISO/IEC 17020, which emphasize the importance of standardized procedures and professional oversight in forensic investigations.

Overall, the findings indicate that while PNP-SOCO personnel demonstrate strong professionalism, adaptability, and dedication to service, systemic challenges related to resources, training, and institutional support continue to influence forensic practice. Addressing these issues through targeted institutional reforms will be essential to strengthening forensic capacity, improving investigative outcomes, and enhancing public trust in the Philippine criminal justice system.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This qualitative inquiry, grounded in Edmund Husserl's transcendental phenomenology and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, provided a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of Philippine National Police Scene of the Crime Operatives (PNP-SOCO) assigned to Regional Forensic Unit 7. Phenomenological research emphasizes understanding how individuals construct meaning from their lived experiences, making it particularly appropriate for examining the work realities of forensic practitioners (Husserl, 1970; Creswell & Poth, 2018). By examining SOCO personnel's professional experiences, coping mechanisms, and service improvement aspirations, the study illuminated the complex and demanding nature of forensic work within the Philippine law enforcement context.

The findings revealed that preparedness, role clarity, teamwork, effective communication, and technical competence in evidence recovery are central to the confidence, efficiency, and investigative effectiveness of SOCO personnel. These findings are consistent with forensic science literature, which underscores that continuous training, clear operational roles, and strong coordination among forensic teams significantly improve crime scene performance and reduce procedural errors (Fisher & Fisher, 2012; Horswell, 2016; Saferstein, 2020). Studies on team performance further support the conclusion that effective communication and collaboration enhance situational awareness, minimize oversight, and contribute to accurate and reliable investigative outcomes (Salas et al., 2015).

Conversely, the study identified persistent structural and operational challenges, including inadequate crime scene management, logistical constraints, evidence contamination risks, and the lack of standard comparison materials. These challenges align with previous research indicating that poor perimeter control, limited equipment, and insufficient logistical support undermine evidence integrity and compromise the admissibility of forensic findings in court (Inman & Rudin, 2001; Houck & Siegel, 2015). Additionally, the absence of standardized reference materials and forensic databases has been identified as a critical barrier to accurate forensic analysis, particularly in resource-limited settings (James et al., 2014).

Despite these constraints, SOCO personnel demonstrated strong professionalism, integrity, faith, adaptability, and resilience, enabling them to cope with the physical, emotional, and psychological demands of their work. This finding is supported by literature on police and forensic resilience, which emphasizes that ethical commitment, moral responsibility, spirituality, and adaptive coping strategies serve as protective factors against occupational stress, burnout, and secondary traumatic exposure (Papazoglou & Andersen, 2014; Violanti et al., 2017). Research on psychological resilience further suggests that meaning-making and social support play a vital role in sustaining performance in high-risk and trauma-exposed professions (McFarlane & Bryant, 2007).

The informants' aspirations highlighted the need for strengthened workforce capacity, enhanced and standardized training programs, improved logistical and technological support, and the consistent enforcement of ethical and procedural standards. These aspirations are supported by organizational and forensic management literature, which advocates for competency-based training, modernization of forensic infrastructure, and the institutionalization of clear professional standards to ensure investigative reliability and public confidence (Saferstein, 2020; ISO/IEC 17020). From an organizational perspective, Resource Dependency Theory explains that the effectiveness of forensic units is contingent upon access to sufficient manpower, funding, and material resources, reinforcing the need for sustained institutional and inter-agency support (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

Taken together, the findings affirm that the work world of PNP-SOCO is shaped by the interaction of individual competence, team dynamics, organizational culture, resource availability, and psychological resilience. This conclusion is consistent with systems-based and human factors approaches to forensic and law enforcement performance, which posit that effective crime scene investigation emerges from the alignment of human capability, organizational structures, and environmental support systems (Reason, 2000; Senge, 2006). Addressing these interrelated factors is therefore essential to improving forensic service delivery, safeguarding personnel well-being, and strengthening public trust in the Philippine criminal justice system.

Drawing directly from the study's themes and supported by existing forensic and organizational literature, the following actionable recommendations are proposed:

1. **Preparedness, Role Clarity, and Evidence Recovery Competence.** The Philippine National Police (PNP) and the PNP Forensic Group should institutionalize regular, competency-based, and simulation-driven training focused on crime scene processing, evidence handling, and role delineation. Clear operational manuals and refresher courses must be consistently enforced to reduce errors, strengthen confidence, and improve investigative outcomes.
2. **Team Coordination and Communication.** Regional Forensic Units should strengthen inter- and intra-team coordination through joint briefings, after-action reviews, and cross-unit collaboration exercises. Establishing standardized communication protocols with investigators, prosecutors, and local officials will minimize operational gaps and enhance crime scene efficiency.

2. **Crime Scene Management, Logistics, and Evidence Integrity.** To address identified challenges, the PNP, DILG, and Local Government Units (LGUs) should prioritize logistical support, including transportation, protective equipment, forensic tools, and secure evidence storage. Strict enforcement of crime scene perimeter control and standardized procedures is necessary to prevent evidence contamination and preserve evidentiary value.
3. **Resource Capacity and Standard Comparison Materials.** The PNP Forensic Group, in coordination with national agencies, should invest in forensic databases, reference materials, and modern laboratory resources. Strengthening access to comparison standards will enhance the accuracy, reliability, and conclusiveness of forensic examinations.
4. **Professionalism, Integrity, and Psychological Resilience.** Institutionalize mental health and wellness programs, including structured debriefings, peer support systems, and resilience training, to address occupational stress and secondary trauma. Leadership should reinforce ethical practice, integrity, and value-based policing to sustain morale and professional commitment.
5. **Training Standards and Continuous Professional Development.** Training programs should be standardized, specialized, and continuously updated to keep pace with evolving forensic technologies and methodologies. Collaboration with academic institutions and forensic experts is recommended to ensure evidence-based and globally aligned training content.
6. **Policy, Oversight, and Organizational Support.** NAPOLCOM should strengthen certification systems, performance monitoring, and evidence-based policy reviews to ensure accountability and professional standards. The DILG should reinforce funding mechanisms and policy alignment to support localized forensic operations.
7. **Criminal Justice System and Community Engagement.** Judicial actors and prosecutors should undergo regular forensic orientation to enhance evidence appreciation and chain-of-custody enforcement. Barangay officials and communities should be trained in basic crime scene preservation to support early evidence protection and investigative integrity.
8. **Academic and Research Development.** Academic institutions are encouraged to update forensic curricula, expand field immersion programs, and promote research on SOCO operations. Future researchers may explore burnout and resilience, gender and inclusion, technological integration, and organizational culture using longitudinal and mixed-method approaches.

In sum, strengthening the work world of PNP-SOCO requires a human-centered, system-responsive, and evidence-informed approach. Translating these recommendations into practice offers a clear pathway toward enhancing forensic effectiveness, safeguarding personnel well-being, and reinforcing public trust in law enforcement and the justice system in the Philippines.

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