

The Philippine National Police Behind Controversies

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.808041>

Received: 06 July 2024; Revised: 17 July 2024; Accepted: 22 July 2024; Published: 29 August 2024

ABSTRACT

The Philippine National Police is part of the tri-bureaus created under the Department of the Interior and Local Government Act of 1990, which are mandated to enforce the law, prevent crimes, maintain peace, and ensure public safety. This study aims to investigate the different controversies faced by the Philippine National Police, their effect on the participants' work, and how they handle these kinds of controversies. This study used a case study of descriptive-qualitative research to investigate the Philippine National Police (PNP) behind controversies conducted at Jones, Isabela, particularly at Jones Police Station. The eight (8) participants in the study were selected through purposive sampling. This study used an unstructured interview to gather the necessary data. The study utilized thematic analysis in interpreting the data following the six (6) steps by Braun and Clarke. The study revealed that the different controversies faced by the Philippine National Police are involvement in illegal drugs, police corruption, abuse of power, and stereotyping, which affect their work as police officers. Although it is painful for them to hear those statements, they remain steadfast and stand to face the allegations thrown by the community, as reflected on the following themes; positive, practice self-discipline, and maintain professionalism. Furthermore, programs or activities to heighten the morale of the police officers and enhance the police community relations program were suggested and recommended.

Keywords: Philippine National Police, PNP Controversies, Controversies, Qualitative, Police Officer

INTRODUCTION

The Philippine National Police is part of the tri-bureaus created under the Department of the Interior and Local Government, as stated under Republic Act 6975, otherwise known as the Department of the Interior and Local Government Act of 1990. It is mandated to enforce the law, prevent and control crimes, maintain peace and order, and ensure public safety and internal security with the active support of the community. The Philippine National Police Organization was created to provide good services. It presupposes to live its best to achieve the purpose for which it was created through its people by utilizing skills, knowledge, and techniques in the performance of their duties and responsibilities.

The success of the Philippine National Police has seen various salient programs for police professional development. But it can't be denied that the Philippine National Police Organization has been suffering from criticism for a long time because of the misconduct committed by some police officers, which has threatened their organization as a whole several times. This criticism can affect their job performance as their job is not easy, which results in hurting the police officers who belong to the organization. The organization had to work in progress to transform the Philippine National Police Organization in order to reclaim that they are the people's protectors.

Metro Manila (CNN Philippines)—Calilung said that the PNP’s reputation among the general public and the morale of other law enforcement officers were eventually impacted by the 6.7 billion shabu scandal, which resulted in a senate investigation, a criminal complaint against 50 top officers, and other integrity issues. “When you see a policeman, the image of them doing these illegal activities is rubbed on you,” Calilung continued. The degree of honesty and deference to authority is unquestionably lower. There is only one way for the PNP to improve, and that is due to the low morale among its officers, who are meant to “serve and protect” the public, whose perception has now changed negatively.

Creating sustainable solutions to address these controversies can lessen the stress experienced by police officers, which would definitely minimize the potential risk of committing misconduct and build a healthier workplace.

The main goal of this study is to investigate the effects of controversies on the members of the Philippine National Police specifically, to determine the different controversies they faced, what are the effects of these on their work, and how they deal with the effects of these controversies. In addition, this study is conducted to help the PNP members voice out their feelings to the public about the different controversies faced by their organizations.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aimed to investigate the effects of controversies to the members of Philippine National Police. Also, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the different controversies faced by the PNP Organization as perceived by the participants?
2. What are the effects of these controversies to the participants’ work?
3. How do the participants deal with the effects of these controversies?

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive-qualitative research was used in this study, particularly a case study, because it explores the views of the Philippine National Police (PNP) behind controversies. The participants of the study are the eight (8) police members who give permission to be interviewed and are qualified based on the following criteria: (1) must be a police officer; (2) must have at least three (3) years of service at Jones, Isabela; and (3) those who did not meet the criteria were removed as participants. The study used an unstructured interview guide to gather the data needed, and thematic analysis was used in analyzing the data to familiarize and create a code for the gathered data, generate themes from the code, review themes, define the themes, and write up the results of the themes created.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The different controversies faced by the PNP organization as perceived by the participants.

Some police officers were engaged in various illegal activities that are not aligned with their jobs. Consequently, their entire organization was affected, which led people to doubt and to think that all police officers are committing misconduct.

Involvement of Illegal Drugs. This refers to the engagement of any individuals or group of people to the illegal activities related to any substance that are prohibited by law. This controversy refers to concerns regarding the involvement of some police officers in illegal drug activities such as drug recycling and the

most controversial issue of extrajudicial killing during the time of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte. In this controversy, the Philippine National Police organization is struggling with this issue because the community believes that police officers are protectors of drug traffickers. This controversy affects the relationships of police officers and the community, which leads the community to distrust the police officers. This is supported by the following statement of Key Informants.

Key Informant A said that:

“Perhaps the biggest challenge our organization is facing right now is the alleged involvement of the PNP (Philippine National Police) in illegal drugs, with claims that the PNP serves as protectors to major syndicates and that drugs confiscated by the police are being recycled and sold again for profit.”

Similarly, Key Informant B stated that:

“The controversies I’m hearing now that seem unavoidable are suspicions among people that the PNP is a protector of drug traffickers.”

This also supported by Key Informant C, who said that:

“The controversy I heard from people is about the alleged involvement of police in extrajudicial killings during the implementation of the war on drugs.”

During the interview, the researchers observed that police officers continue to struggle with these controversies due to still-going reports of the involvement of many police officers in illegal activities. In connection, Metro Manila (CNN Philippines)—Calilung said that the PNP’s reputation among the general public and the morale of other law enforcement officers were eventually impacted by the 6.7 billion shabu scandal, which resulted in a senate investigation, a criminal complaint against 50 top officers, and other integrity issues. “When you see a policeman, the image of them doing these illegal activities is rubbed on you,” Calilung continued. The degree of honesty and deference to authority is unquestionably lower. There is only one way for the PNP to improve, and that is due to the low morale among its officers, who are meant to “serve and protect” the public, whose perception has now changed negatively.

Police Corruption and Abuse of Power. Police corruption refers to the immoral actions of an officer wherein they collect some money for their financial gain, while abuse of power refers to the misuse of authority that he may violate the rights of an individual in the community. Police officers usually engage in corruption, taking advantage of their authority for personal gain. This includes collecting something valuable from the civilian, whether money, goods, or favors, through the means of extortion, accepting bribes, or receiving gratuities. In this situation, police officers abuse their power to engage in unlawful activities in exchange for payment. This could be shown in the following statement of Key Informants.

Key Informant D stated that

“The police are allegedly involved in extortion.”

In support of this statement, Key Informant E mentioned that:

“I heard that police are corrupting because people say that we are using our authority for extortion.”

In addition, Key Informant H said that:

“Mostly, the controversy that I heard coming from the people is that police are corrupt”.

Key Informant G stated that:

“Some people say that the police are corrupt. That’s what I always hear.”

The researchers discovered that encountering this kind of controversy destructs their focus in their work.

According to the special report of Rimban (2006), filtered by Topstories with the headline, “The officers who say no,” the public sees the police force as a corrupt organization and a policeman as an officer making easy money extorting a few hundred pesos from motorists on the streets.

Stereotyping. This refers to the unfair treatment of an individual or group based on their characteristics or behavior. Police womanizers are one of the controversies thrown by the community at police officers, which may cause a negative image for the PNP organization. Additionally, the community also stereotyped the physical appearance of some police officers due to their stout bodies and big stomachs. In addition, it was determined as stereotyping based on the statement of Key Informants below.

In support with this statement, Key Informant E said that:

“There are times that I hear people say that police are womanizers, that police are fat, and that they have a big stomach.”

Similarly, Key Informant F stated that:

“People are saying that policemen are womanizers.”

The police officers do not approve of the people’s judgement t-because of their physical appearance. They feel hurt because people make conclusions about how they describe police officers because of one’s mistakes. As discussed in Labeling Theory by Howard S. Becker, it explains that once police officers involve in unethical behavior and has been labeled by society, there is a possibility that it will affect the whole organization. This criticism associated with some police officers will extend beyond other officers, which can ruin the reputation of the whole organization.

The effects of the controversies to the participants’ work.

Serving the community is one of the hardest tasks for a police officer because it directly affects their image as law enforcers. Negative judgments made by people are incontrollable, which may affect both their emotions and their job as a police officer.

Low Morale. The police officers become too emotional due to the criticism thrown at them by the community. Police officers feel frustrated despite their hard work and dedication to fulfilling their duties and responsibilities because they struggle to overcome the negative. This has a significant impact on their morale because they were unfairly blamed for the mistake committed by others. This could be shown in the following statement of Key Informants below.

Key Informant A shared that:

“Of course, there is low morale among us police officers, especially in our local police force, because we are implicated in the actions of other police officers. There are times that our work is affected, especially in implementing our ordinances, because we can’t control people’s minds.”

A similar statement was mentioned by Key Informant B:

“Of course, low morale; it’s painful for us police officers because we are the ones implementing the war on drugs, yet people are starting to think that we are involved; it’s like we’re being turned upside down; we’re just doing our job.”

Key Informant D also supported that:

“Sometimes I feel low morale because I’m also human. When morale is low, there are times when even work is affected, like not being able to focus on paperwork sometimes, but I fight against it. It serves as a challenge for me that I should not get involved in wrongful actions.”

Key Informant E stated that:

“Officers really experience low morale sometimes, and the low morale I feel affects my work, like during patrols. Sometimes I’d rather do paperwork because there are people outside who even pick fights with us. We’re just doing our duty, yet they’re the ones angry.”

The researchers determined that the participants suffer from low morale because of the people’s perceptions about them. As mentioned in General Strain Theory by Robert Agnew, if a police officer experiences criticism from the community, it makes them more emotional, leading to feelings of low morale. This emotion not only affects their personal feelings but also their ability to effectively carry out their duties and responsibilities.

Pressure of Perfection. It is a situation in which an individual acts limitedly to avoid making mistakes to meet the expectations of others. Due to the high expectations of the people in the community, police officers are under pressure every time they perform their work, and they are afraid to commit mistakes. This fear of making mistakes can be a hindrance to police officers’ ability to carry out their duties and responsibilities effectively. This is supported by the following statement below of Key Informants.

According to Key Informant F:

“There are times when I feel pressured by what other people say, but when it comes to work, I just do what needs to be done. However, there are times when I think that I shouldn’t make mistakes.”

In addition, Key Informant G mentioned that:

“Of course, as a police officer, I feel pressure in my job, especially when there are instances of making mistakes. Everyone makes mistakes. People have high expectations of police officers, so when one makes a mistake, they generalize it to all.”

The researchers found out that police officers feel pressured every time they do their work due to public demand for flawless execution. Consequently, this instills in them the fear of making mistakes, which becomes a barrier to fulfilling their duties as public servants. However, Calin, et al. (2021) revealed that the greater the pressure the stress at work is generated by the idea of becoming the perfect employee.

Incompetence. It refers to the ineffectiveness of police officers when it comes to work. The effectiveness of police officers in upholding their duties and responsibilities is decreasing due to the controversies faced by their organization. Their work has been affected, which has led the community to lose trust in police officers. As a result, people will not really cooperate with or follow the implemented ordinances, activities, or programs of the Philippine National Police. With this, their ability to maintain a safer community will be

affected. This could be shown in the statement of Key Informants below.

Key Informant H stated that:

“When it comes to work, our job as police officers is affected because there are times that we are not effective in implementing ordinances, perhaps because some people are losing trust in us.”

This is supported by Key Informant C:

“In the work of a public servant, you can’t avoid being judged because we work based on what people see. Sometimes, because of those judgments, we see people who no longer listen to our policies or cooperate with the programs we have in our organization.”

The controversies faced by police officers overshadow the reputation of their organization. As a consequence, the relationship between the Philippine National Police and the community weakened, which undermined the effectiveness of police officers. According to Melkamu & Teshome (2023), reveals that lower trust in the local police, less effective in reducing crime, and residents’ unfavorable perceptions of police procedural fairness, accompanied by poor relationships with the community. Moreover, perceptions of police effectiveness, procedural justice, and police-community relations were significant predictors of citizens’ trust in the police.

How do the participants deal with the effects of these controversies?

Despite the controversies faced by the police officers, they continue to work diligently to uphold the law. Hence, this is proof that not all police officers are committing misconduct; there are still many police officers who continue to serve with integrity and dedication.

Continues Growth and Learning. This is the process by which an individual is willing to learn new knowledge that will help him or her grow as a person. It highlights the importance of the mindset of police officers to continue learning. The police officers value continues learning and growth within their organization. It features the idea that police officers embrace the challenges experienced, whether positive or negative, which provides them an opportunity to reflect and learn about personal and professional growth. They acknowledge those mistakes as not a failure but a challenge in order for them to learn and grow as police officers. This could be shown in the following statement of Key Informant A.

Key Informant A mentioned that:

“The mistakes made by some policemen serve as a lesson learned for us not to follow them.”

The PNP is not a flawless institution, like any other, but continues and persists in seeking to change the culture and image of the police organization in the face of ongoing challenges. Afroilan (n.d.) added that reengineering the Philippine National Police also prescribes a new model of police leadership. According to him, it compels leadership; it compels public transparency. The police officer must learn to relate actively to and distinguish himself as a servant of the community. Reengineering the Philippine National Police peels the onion of police leadership in order to reveal its heart seed and its splendor. It also affords an existing journey to self-exploration by the men in uniform. Due to this, the Philippine National Police has made a firm commitment to leave no stone unturned in dealing with their principal responsibility of maintaining peace, order, and internal security, despite the many obstacles.

Positivity. Regardless of the controversies faced by the PNP organization and the low morale experienced, the police officers still remain positive and focused on carrying out their duties and responsibilities. With this optimism, it helps the police officers deal with the effects of those controversies and remain positive to

their work. It was determined as positivity based on the statement of Key Informants.

According to Key Informant A:

“It’s really difficult, but we just understand that in an organization, there are many ups and downs. Not all police officers commit wrongdoing.”

Key Informant B also mentioned that:

“Be positive despite of those controversies so that I can perform my job well.”

Similarly, Key Informant C said that:

“We should always stay positive so we can fulfill our duties. If we dwell on challenges, we won’t get anywhere. So, always be positive.”

According to Bajo (2023), Marcos tasked Acorda to ensure that the police force would be open to public scrutiny under his leadership “Serve the People with integrity with accountability and genuine justice. Always be open to public scrutiny and practice restraints and maximum tolerance in the face of harsh criticism” Marcos said.

Self-discipline. It is the ability of a person to control his or her emotions to restrain temptations. Police officers must remain disciplined at all times and adhere to the rules and regulations of the organization, regardless of the challenges and temptations in their surroundings. There are situations in which police officers test their integrity and commitment to their work. By having self-discipline, police officers may resist those temptations and be a good example to the public, as well as to their co-officers. This is supported by the following statement of Key Informants below.

In support of this statement, Key Informant D said that:

“As a police officer, I need to maintain self-discipline in order for me not to be involve in any issue”

Key Informant G also mentioned that:

“This is a challenge for me because I should not be involved in what our colleagues do at work. That’s why I always discipline myself every time I make decisions or take actions.”

During the interview, the researchers noticed that the participant really possessed this kind of trait, not only in the way he talks but also in his decision-making process and actions. There are situations where the dedication and integrity of a police officer are tested, but they remain disciplined and adhere to the rules and regulations. On the other hand, Sasson (2022) stated that a person who possesses self-discipline has the ability to avoid unhealthy or stop negative habits that could lead to negative consequences.

Work Commitment. This refers to the unwavering commitment of police officers, to remain focused on upholding their duties and responsibilities to serve the community despite the issues faced by their organization. They prioritize the needs and protections of the people in the community. This could be shown in the following statement of Key Informant E.

Key Informant E stated that:

“Simply by being committed to my work in accordance with the mission of our organization.”

In their daily endeavor, police officers show their commitment to serve the community, prioritizing the

needs and safety of every individual before their personal concerns. Police officers continue working even in a tireless day to fulfill their duties and responsibilities. Furthermore, Mowday et al. (1979) argued that employee commitment has three main components which are “Strong Acceptance”, “Participation” and “Loyalty”.

Professionalism. This involves the behavior a person towards a particular profession that shows a commitment in their work. Regardless of the complexities of police work, they remain professionals when it comes to work in order to perform their job effectively. They set aside their personal emotions to continue with their mission to serve and protect the community. Police officers continue to work professionally with respect and integrity. It was determined as professionalism based on the statement of Key Informants.

According to Key Informant F:

“As a public servant, I need to maintain professionalism because, by the end of the day, I am still a public servant.”

A similar statement was mentioned by Key Informant H:

“Let’s remain professional and do not show that we’re affected by what people say. Let’s just do our job and do what’s right.”

Being a public servant is indeed difficult as expressed by the informants because police officers set aside their own personal feelings to prioritize the needs of the community and ensure that they are performing their job effectively, regardless of the controversies encountered. In addition, as stated in the article by McKee (2023), police professionalism is a set of expectations and standards for law enforcement personnel, encompassing qualities, conduct, ethics, and skills that define reliability, effectiveness, and respect in interactions with the community and the legal system. It goes beyond basic duties like wearing uniforms and driving a police car, aiming to build trust, ensure fair law enforcement, and contribute to safer societies.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and findings of the study, it is concluded that the police officers struggle in facing the different controversies done by some police officers, which the community labeled them. Based on these controversies, police officers experience emotional distress, which has a significant effect on their work as police officers. Even though it is painful for them, they cope with these controversies by taking it as a lesson, remaining positive, practicing their discipline, and maintaining their professionalism.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The Police Community Relation Program should be continued to build up the trust of the community and to improve the current image of the organization.
2. Police officers who are suffering from low morale should be given the chance to attend counseling through the squad’s weekly interactive meeting program (SWIM) to become better servants and protectors of the community.
3. Police officers are encouraged to exert more effort to reach out to the community through community services to strengthen their ties with the community.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

To address the gap in this study, other researchers are encouraged to conduct a study entitled "The Live Experiences of Police Officer Charge with Administrative Cases" to know the reasons behind its misconduct.

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