

Bantay Dagat Program and Practices: Worklife of the Police Officers In-Charge of Bantay Dagat Programs in the Northeastern Bohol

Jun Stephen B. Enoc

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of University of Cebu Cebu City

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ABSTRACT

This study addressed the Bantay Dagat program and practices: the work life of the police officers in charge of the Bantay Dagat program in Northeastern Bohol. Specifically, the study sought answers on the following experiences of the informants as police officers in charge of Bantay Dagat, how the informants addressed the challenges in the performances of their duty, and the aspirations of the informants as Bantay Dagat police officers.

This study utilized a qualitative method of research using a phenomenological approach to describe the experiences of the police officer in charge of Bantay Dagat, employing the interview as the key to data gathering. Ten (10) informants were assigned as police officers in charge in Bantay Dagat of the police station in the municipalities of Anda, Bien Unido, Buenavista, Clarin, Getafe, Inabanga, Mabini, President Carlos P. Garcia, Talibon, and Ubay. All of them were interviewed individually. The researcher made an interview guide containing open-ended questions, and a tape recorder was used to ensure the accuracy of the responses of each informant. The researcher utilized Collaizzi's method, a phenomenological analysis procedure used to analyze transcripts during the conduct of the interviews.

For the sub-problem on the informant's experiences as police officers in charge of Bantay Dagat, the researcher created the following themes based on their positive experiences: *Meaningful Service through Environmental and Community Protection and Personal Growth and Purpose through Professional Commitment*. For the negative experiences as police officers, the researcher created the following themes: *Operational Challenges and Resource Limitations, and Moral Dilemmas and Emotional Burden in Law Enforcement*. For the sub-problem of how the informants address the challenges they encountered in implementing Bantay Dagat programs in their area, the researcher created the following themes: *Proactive and Strategic Enforcement and Compassionate and Communicative Policing*. The informant aspirations as police officers to implement Bantay Dagat programs: Resource Mobilization and Capacity Building, and Community Engagement and Environmental Protection.

Keywords: Criminal Justice, Police Community Relations, bantay dagat, Phenomenological research, Bohol,

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

Overfishing and coastal resource depletion have led to international concern regarding ocean ecosystems and coastal populations. In addressing this concern, national and international efforts are being made to promote sustainable development of the seas and coastal areas. In most cases, this has necessitated a reevaluation of resource management, more specifically, how fishery resources are allocated among competing interests. The strain on coastal fishery and aquatic resources due to habitat degradation and overfishing is particularly debilitating in the Philippines (Shannon, 2002).

The Bantay Dagat (BD) is a community-based law enforcement institution of the Philippines that engages fisherfolk in coastal villages or barangays on a volunteer basis to support the detection and enforcement of illegal

fishing in coastal waters. The BD draws on the participation of communities in the management and protection of coastal and marine ecosystems and supplements the capacity in terms of limited personnel and resources to patrol vast coastlines of Local Government Units (LGUs) in conducting law enforcement activities. However, while the basic objectives of the program are the same across the Philippines, different national agencies and local government units (LGUs) have taken different approaches to integrating the BD into local law enforcement activities (Maderazo & SSG Advisors, 2016).

The Bantay Dagat draws on communities' participation in the management and protection of coastal and marine ecosystems. It supplements the limited personnel and resources available to patrol the vast coastlines of LGUs in conducting law enforcement activities (Maderazo, 2016).

The National Plan of Action (NPoA) was established to address illegal unregulated fishing. The plan broadly sketched out the country's priority initiative of dealing with various ecological, biological, and socio-economic problems associated with illegal, unregulated fishing (Espenilla, 2019). It was done to allocate the fishery resources, a critical concern for the Philippines' municipal fishing sector where the global problem of aquatic life is. The dependency of coastal Filipino communities on fishery resources for nutrition and livelihood necessitates regulations to facilitate effective marine resource allocation at the municipal level (Shannon, 2002).

Many studies show that Bantay Dagat has evolved over the years. Their main roles are safeguarding the marine ecosystem from illegal fishing activities, conserving it, and preserving it.

This study explores the role of Bantay Dagat, the challenges and difficulties encountered in their line of duty, and the strategies for implementing the Bantay Dagat programs in every municipality. The PNP tasking the implementation of Bantay Dagat in the municipality is duty-bound to function as on the perspective of the community people within the jurisdiction in the second enforcers of marine related-laws within the coastal towns of Bohol needed to develop positive innovation within the PNP organization anchored on public service and trust.

As a Criminology Instructor, I have noticed that having good insights into the fisherfolks in coastal villages is very important in every coastal municipality. It helps to deter illegal fishing activities and protect threatened marine and aquatic resources, particularly the endangered species in the municipal waters, by capacitating subsistence fishers.

Theoretical Background

This study is anchored mainly on Situational Crime Prevention (SCP) Theory of Clarke (1980), and supported by the Routine Activity Theory of Cohen and Felson (1979) and the Systems Theory of Von Bertalanffy (1968).

Situational Crime Prevention (SCP) Theory of Clarke (1980) centers on preventing crime by modifying the immediate environment to make offenses more difficult, risky, and less rewarding. In law enforcement settings, officers apply this theory by increasing visibility, patrolling vulnerable areas, and reducing opportunities for violations through surveillance and physical presence (Clarke, 1980).

The theory also draws from the rational choice model, which assumes that individuals make decisions by weighing risks and rewards. Police officers reflect this by implementing deterrent strategies such as regular patrols, checkpoints, and public warnings. These actions create a perception among potential violators that they are likely to be caught, which increases the psychological cost of committing an offense (Clarke, 1997).

SCP outlines specific strategies such as increasing the effort required to offend, enhancing the risk of detection, and minimizing the potential benefits of crime. These are evident in the officers' practices such as restricting access to protected areas, confiscating illegal materials, and promoting citizen reporting. These practical measures reduce the appeal of committing offenses by restructuring the environment and limiting criminal opportunities (Cornish & Clarke, 2003).

Another key aspect of SCP is its emphasis on coordinated efforts. When officers collaborate with local communities and organizations, enforcement becomes more effective and sustainable. This shared responsibility helps maintain order, increases situational control, and fosters an environment less conducive to unlawful behavior. It also eases the burden on officers by creating a broader system of crime prevention (Guerette & Bowers, 2009).

Routine Activity Theory, introduced by Cohen and Felson (1979), explains that crimes occur when three elements converge in time and space: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian. In environmental enforcement work, officers serve as the capable guardians "whose presence disrupts this convergence, reducing the likelihood of unlawful acts (Cohen & Felson, 1979).

The presence of law enforcement alters routine activities by increasing surveillance and control in areas prone to violations. In being regularly visible and engaged in local operations, officers deter potential offenders and make targets less accessible. Their role modifies the environment to prevent crimes before they occur, emphasizing the importance of routine policing as a protective factor in vulnerable areas (Felson, 2002).

Moreover, Routine Activity Theory suggests that crime patterns are influenced by social and economic routines. When enforcement personnel adapt their patrols based on known schedules of illegal activity such as times of day or specific areas frequently targeted they effectively interrupt offenders' routines. This strategic alignment of patrols with risk-prone routines strengthens the preventive function of the officers (Cohen & Felson, 1979).

The theory also implies that crime prevention doesn't always require changing the offender, but rather adjusting environmental and social conditions. Officers contribute to this by enhancing community involvement, encouraging local reporting systems, and maintaining consistent visibility. These actions reinforce guardianship and discourage offenders by ensuring that criminal opportunities are minimized through routine oversight (Felson & Clarke, 1998).

Systems Theory of Von Bertalanffy (1968) explains that an organization or structure is composed of multiple interrelated components that work together as a unified whole. In law enforcement and environmental protection efforts, police officers function within a larger system that includes institutional policies, community stakeholders, operational tools, and environmental factors. Their worklife is not determined solely by individual tasks, but by how effectively all these elements interact to support their role and responsibilities (Von Bertalanffy, 1968).

A central idea in Systems Theory is that the performance of the whole depends on the efficiency and harmony of its subsystems. When there is a lack of coordination between agencies, insufficient resources, or unclear communication lines, the burden often falls on police officers. These issues can lead to decreased motivation, increased stress, and lower job satisfaction, showing how flaws in one part of the system can directly affect the people working within it (Von Bertalanffy, 1950).

ST also emphasized that systems are open and constantly influenced by external factors. Police officers engaged in coastal protection or community-based enforcement must adapt to evolving conditions, such as environmental changes, shifting local policies, or public cooperation. Their ability to respond effectively depends on the system's openness to feedback and change, which directly impacts their efficiency and well-being in the workplace (Von Bertalanffy, 1971).

Feedback loops are essential to the improvement and survival of systems. For officers involved in multi-sectoral initiatives, regular feedback from supervisors, colleagues, and the communities they serve allows them to refine strategies, identify challenges, and improve performance. A responsive system that values learning and development contributes to a more supportive work environment and enhances the quality of service delivery (Von Bertalanffy, 1962).

The aforementioned theories provide insights into the complex concepts of organization and management of Bantay Dagat in the selected location under study.

As a community-based institution that enforces coastal and fisheries laws, the Bantay Dagat operates within the various regulatory frameworks that define its nature, functions, and limitations.

National laws and local ordinances serve as the basis for marine protection, which works to conserve the Philippines' coastal and marine resources such as 1987 Philippine Constitution, Republic Act 8550 amended by Republic Act 10654, or the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998, Republic Act 7160 Local Government Code of 1991 and Provincial Ordinance No. 98-01, Series 1998)

The 1987 Philippine Constitution declares that all natural resources, including fisheries, are owned by the State, and mandates their protection (1987 Philippine Constitution, Art. XII, Sec. 2). From a sectoral perspective, fisheries encompass all activities related to fishing, preserving, processing, marketing, developing, and managing aquatic resources, which are regulated by the State through national and local laws. The participation of Bantay Dagat in coastal and fisheries law enforcement is grounded in constitutional policy encouraging the involvement of non-governmental, community-based, and sectoral organizations in promoting the nation's welfare (1987 Philippine Constitution, Art. XII, Sec. 23).

The Philippine Constitution also has a specific provision for social justice. Republic Act 8550 mandates the state to protect the rights of subsistence fishermen to the preferential use of communal marine and fishing resources, both inland and offshore. This constitutional mandate directs the State to protect, develop, and conserve such resources, adding that such protection shall extend to protecting offshore fishing grounds of subsistence fishermen against foreign intrusion (1987 Philippine Constitution, Art. XIII, Sec. 7).

The act, as amended by Republic Act 10654, or the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998, is a special law governing the fisheries sector. It codifies all laws relating to the utilization, management, and protection of coastal and fisheries resources, guided by the policy objectives of addressing widespread poverty in coastal areas, ensuring food security, and curbing and preventing fisheries resource degradation, among others (Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998).

The Bantay Dagat (BD) finds legal justification in the Philippine Fisheries Code, as provided in this Code, persons and deputies authorized to enforce this Code and Order Fishery Laws, Rules and Regulations, the law enforcement officers of the Department of Agriculture, the Philippine Navy, Philippine Coast Guard, Philippine National Police (PNP), PNP-Maritime Command, law enforcement officers of the LGUs and other government enforcement agencies, are hereby authorized to enforce this Code and other fishery laws, rules and regulations. Other competent government officials and employees, punong barangays and officers and members of fisherfolk associations who have undergone training on law enforcement may be designated in writing by the Department as deputy fish wardens in the enforcement of this Code and other fishery laws, rules, and regulations (Republic Act No. 8550, 2015, series 158).

To become law enforcers for the LGUs, BD members must first undergo the required training. Such delegation of governmental law enforcement is within the powers of LGUs, including cities and municipalities, as provided under the Local Government Code of 1991 (Republic Act 7160).

The Bantay Dagat functions at the local level under the authority of city and municipal mayors, working in coordination with local and national enforcement agencies. The Local Government Code grants LGUs the power and responsibility to enforce fishery laws, protect mangroves, and maintain ecological balance within their jurisdictions. This authority, derived from the general welfare clause and the delegation of police power, allows mayors to issue executive orders, formulate and implement peace and order plans, and supervise local police operations as deputized representatives of the National Police Commission.

The local legislative councils of cities and municipalities are vested with delegated legislative power, including the power to enact municipal ordinances penalizing the use of explosives, noxious or poisonous substances, electricity, muro-ami, and other deleterious fishing methods and to prosecute any violation of the provisions of applicable fishery laws (Local Government Code, sec. 149(b)(3)).

Municipal waters are the area of responsibility for local law enforcers, including the Bantay Dagat. They are the portion of the sea extending 1.5 kilometers from the coastline and include inland bodies of water such as lakes, rivers, and streams in their territories. The Philippine Fisheries Code supports the jurisdiction of the LGU over municipal waters (Local Government Code, sec. 149(b) (3)).

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) is a line bureau under the Department of Agriculture. Its function, among other things, is to enforce all laws and regulations governing the conservation and management of fishery resources except in municipal waters, the latter being the sole and exclusive jurisdiction of the LGUs.

The Philippine Fishery Code, as amended, recognizes the risk and hazard of conducting law enforcement activities at sea and the difficulty of apprehending violators and obtaining evidence against them. It provides that assaulting, resisting, intimidating, harassing, seriously interfering with, or unduly authorizing government officer is a serious violation of the Code (Republic Act No. 10654 Philippine Fisheries Code, as amended, sec. 16). Before the amendment of the Philippine Fishery Code, the provision had applied only to BD deputized by BFAR. However, the law now includes the deputized wardens of the LGUs to protect them against any obstruction to their law enforcement duties (Republic Act No. 10654 Philippine Fisheries Code, as amended, sec. 115)

The Province of Bohol's Environment Code (Provincial Ordinance No. 98-01, Series 1998) is a seminal piece of legislation that creates a thorough legislative framework for sustainable development and environmental protection in the province. For both current and future generations, it demonstrates Bohol's dedication to protecting its abundant natural resources and guaranteeing their fair and sustainable usage.

The role of the bantay dagat has evolved over the years. In the past, their primary role was safeguarding the marine ecosystem from illegal fishing activities, including marine environment conservation and preservation. Aside from patrolling the seas, some bantay dagat also serve as conduits in disaster response and have expanded to solid waste management in the seascapes (DLSU Research Congress, 2022). The bantay dagat proved a successful enforcement strategy, providing swift action to stop destructive fishing practices and illegal commercial fishing in municipal waters. The strategy provides direct benefit and equity to many fishers and coastal stakeholders employing legal and sustainable methods. It serves as a deterrent to those national and local laws.

The Bantay Dagat program, a community-based initiative, plays a crucial role in protecting coastal and marine resources in the Philippines. It engages local volunteers and law enforcement to monitor and guard municipal waters from illegal activities such as dynamite fishing, overfishing, and intrusion by commercial fishing vessels (Cruz-Trinidad, 2020).

According to Caballero & Magno (2021), Bantay Dagat members, including police officers, face multidimensional work challenges ranging from lack of proper equipment to threats from violators, yet remain committed to their duty of ensuring marine sustainability.

The worklife of police officers assigned to coastal protection is often compounded by limited logistical support and unpredictable working conditions at sea, adding physical and psychological stress to their role (Delos Reyes, 2019).

In addition, the inter-agency coordination between local government units (LGUs), the Philippine National Police (PNP), and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) directly impacts the effectiveness of Bantay Dagat operations (Alano, 2020).

Despite the importance of their roles, Bantay Dagat volunteers and assigned officers often receive minimal compensation, if any, which affects motivation and job satisfaction (Sumagaysay, 2021).

Moreover, Bautista & Reyes (2020) emphasized that training and capacity building are necessary for enhancing the efficiency and safety of Bantay Dagat operatives, especially for police officers unfamiliar with maritime laws and coastal environments.

The marine ecosystem in Bohol is a biodiversity hotspot, and the local government's reliance on Bantay Dagat personnel, including police forces, has become an essential component in environmental preservation strategies (Department of Environment and Natural Resources, 2021).

Challenges such as overlapping jurisdiction and inconsistent implementation of fisheries laws, however, continue to hinder the overall effectiveness of the Bantay Dagat program in various regions, including northeastern Bohol (Ocampo, 2020).

The professional lives of police officers in coastal duty are also shaped by factors such as organizational support, recognition, and perceived purpose of their mission in protecting marine resources (Garcia, 2018).

Integrated Coastal Resource Management (ICRM) frameworks suggest that the role of law enforcement should be coupled with community education and policy reforms for long-term success of programs like Bantay Dagat (Campos & Rivera, 2020).

In the context of environmental governance, the involvement of the police in the Bantay Dagat program aligns with the principles of co-management, where authority is shared between state and local actors to foster accountability and resource stewardship (Gonzales, 2022).

Espiritu & Malabanan (2023) argue that assessing the worklife of Bantay Dagat police officers is critical not only for welfare enhancement but also for improving enforcement outcomes in coastal law enforcement operations.

Panganiban (2020) found that increased law enforcement presence reduced illegal fishing by 40%, highlighting the value of consistent police participation in maritime protection.

Ramos & Dela Peña (2019) revealed that police officers assigned to Bantay Dagat duties experience role conflict, especially when marine protection tasks are added on top of traditional police responsibilities.

In a study conducted in Cebu, it was noted that active Bantay Dagat teams with police involvement experienced improved inter-agency collaboration and community trust, leading to better compliance with local ordinances (Agustin, 2021).

Francisco et al. (2022) found that consistent monitoring and law enforcement activities by Bantay Dagat members have led to a reduction in illegal fishing practices in areas where programs are active and well-supported.

Rural coastal communities in Bohol report positive perceptions of Bantay Dagat efforts, recognizing the role of law enforcement in promoting sustainable fishing practices and marine resource conservation (Lopez & Javier, 2023).

The findings of Santos (2020) emphasized that the psychological well-being of police officers in coastal enforcement roles is affected by lack of support, poor equipment, and unpredictable weather conditions at sea.

According to Villanueva (2018), the majority of Bantay Dagat operatives, including police officers, report low morale due to minimal allowances, exposure to danger, and lack of formal recognition from their departments.

A study in Leyte showed that effective training programs for police officers engaged in Bantay Dagat duties significantly increased operational efficiency and confidence in handling maritime law violations (Del Rosario & Jimenez, 2021).

Gomez (2022) examined coastal enforcement in Negros and found that officers who received regular maritime training and welfare support had lower stress levels and better job performance.

Navarro (2023) pointed out that the integration of technology, such as GPS and maritime surveillance tools, helps Bantay Dagat police units respond faster to violations and boosts their work productivity.

In their study on Bantay Dagat volunteers in Palawan, Toring & Almazan (2020) found that sustained community involvement is heavily dependent on the visible commitment and leadership of police officers in joint patrols.

A study of Catapang (2022) revealed that police officers involved in marine protection build stronger community relationships, which enhances intelligence gathering and reduces confrontational incidents during enforcement.

Hernandez & Medina (2019) showed that the presence of female police officers in coastal operations led to improved communication with fisherfolk communities and encouraged more inclusive practices in the Bantay Dagat program.

A study in Surigao showed that police officers who perceive their work as meaningful and aligned with environmental protection values are more likely to exhibit job satisfaction and resilience (Bañares, 2021).

Studies have shown that burnout is a common issue among officers exposed to high-risk, low-reward coastal enforcement jobs, often due to understaffing and resource constraints (Mateo, 2019).

De Leon (2023) emphasized that clear role definition and structured schedules are key to improving the worklife of police officers assigned to Bantay Dagat tasks.

The study of Macaraeg (2022) on community-based marine enforcement programs indicated that high-performing Bantay Dagat teams often included motivated police officers who viewed their work as both a civic duty and a personal mission.

The study highlighted the vital role of local government units and civil society organizations in effectively implementing the Bantay Dagat program. Their partnership provides logistical support, training, and community engagement that help police officers perform their coastal law enforcement duties more effectively. These joint efforts also improve patrol operations and build public trust in marine protection efforts. It was concluded that a community-based approach is essential to the success of the Bantay Dagat program. Addressing social, environmental, and institutional factors improves police officers' worklife in coastal areas. Promoting public cooperation, offering proper training and equipment, and tackling illegal fishing are key elements. Strong LGU-CSO collaboration ensures inclusive and sustainable law enforcement.

Theories, legal bases, related literature, and studies are important in understanding the Bantay Dagat program. Theories explain the dynamics of coastal enforcement roles. Legal foundations define officers' authority and responsibilities. Literature and studies offer insights into challenges and strategies used in similar programs across different regions.

Using these components in research allows for a deeper understanding of the worklife of police officers in coastal law enforcement. It also helps develop practical recommendations to improve their well-being, strengthen marine law enforcement, and support cooperation among key stakeholders in northeastern Bohol.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to explore the experiences of police officers in-charge of the Bantay Dagat Programs in Northeastern Bohol, Philippines.

Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of the informants in implementing the Bantay Dagat Programs?

2. How do the informants address the challenges encountered in the Bantay Dagat Programs?
3. What are the aspirations of the informants to improve the Implementation of the Bantay Dagat Programs?

Significance of the Study

This study is timely and relevant because its findings benefit the following stakeholders:

Bantay Dagat Police Officers. A Police Officer deputized as Bantay Dagat could develop policies that support Bantay Dagat practices or strategies in the locality to manage the marine life in their jurisdiction.

Philippine National Police (PNP). This study can provide police officers with insights into their colleagues' experiences in implementing Bantay Dagat practices in the locality. This understanding can help develop effective strategies for implementing laws, rules, and regulations pertinent to fisheries laws.

Philippine Coast Guard (PCG). The result of this study could benefit the Philippine Coast Guard from the Bantay Dagat as a partner in performing maritime law enforcement and maritime safety. In addition, the Bantay Dagat can assist the PCG in maritime environmental protection and maritime security.

Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG). The findings of the study can help the public understand the challenges and ways of implementing and enhancing community relations, which can improve trust and cooperation between the police and the community.

Local Government Unit (LGUs). Findings from this study can contribute to policy improvements with the LGUs. Understanding the experiences of police officers in handling community relations could lead to developing more effective strategies applicable to unique community settings.

Barangay Officials. It helps barangay officials to promote community empowerment, active participation, and shared responsibility for maintaining security within the barangay, contributing to safer and more cohesive communities.

Community. This study facilitates harmonious relationships with municipal and commercial fishers and active participation in Bantay Dagat activities. It empowers fisher folks by providing insights into effective strategies, enabling them to engage with law enforcement and local leaders in shaping initiatives that address their specific problems regarding the protection of marine life.

The Researcher. The researcher could gain advanced knowledge by providing valuable experience in formulating feasible strategies for managing Bantay Dagat.

Future Researchers. The findings of the study could serve as a framework of reference for future researchers interested in Bantay Dagat.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenal approach as the research design to explore the experiences of police officers handling the complex and interrelated Bantay Dagat implementation and practices in their respective jurisdictions. Phenomenological study is a philosophical and methodological tradition investigating consciousness's structure and the meaning of lived experiences. It concerns how we experience the world, from our perception of objects and events to our understanding of ourselves and others.

Transcendental phenomenology refers to reducing and bracketing biases and focusing on the pure essence of experiences, independent of specific objects or situations. It hoped to build a rigorous a priori science by accessing these fundamental structures of consciousness, revealing the very bedrock of knowledge. This

ambitious attempt to bypass traditional empirical methods and ground knowledge itself, however, sparks debate and raises questions about its feasibility and potential limitations (Heotis, 2020).

This phenomenological research sets aside their preconceptions and biases and instead seeks to understand the world from the participants' perspective. This research is done through in-depth interviews, observations, and other methods that allow the researcher to gather rich data about the participant's experiences (Churchill & Wertz, 2015).

Research design is a valuable tool for understanding the human experience. It can help us develop a deeper understanding of ourselves and others and inform our practices in various fields.

Research Environment

This study was conducted in the Northeastern part of Bohol, which has an active and functional Bantay Dagat organization comprising ten (10) municipalities, such as Anda, Bien Unido, Buenavista, Clarin, Getafe, Inabanga, Mabini, President Carlos P. Garcia, Talibon, and Ubay.

Anda is a coastal municipality in the island province of Bohol. Its land area is 61.89 square kilometers or 23.90 square miles, constituting 1.30% of Bohol's total area. The 2020 Census determined that its population was 17,778.

Bien Unido is a coastal municipality in the island province of Bohol. Its land area is 27.39 square kilometers or 10.58 square miles, which constitutes 0.57% of Bohol's total area. The 2020 Census determined that its population was 26,666.

Buenavista is a coastal municipality in the island province of Bohol. Its land area is 96.00 square kilometers or 37.07 square miles, which constitutes 2.01% of Bohol's total area. Buenavista's population, as determined by the 2020 Census, was 29,711.

Clarin is a coastal municipality in the island province of Bohol. Its land area is 52.12 square kilometers or 20.12 square miles, which constitutes 1.09% of Bohol's total area. The population, as determined by the 2020 Census, was 21,158.

Getafe is a coastal municipality in the island province of Bohol. Its land area is 179.17 square kilometers or 69.18 square miles, which constitutes 3.75% of Bohol's total area. The 2020 Census determined that its population was 33,422.

Inabanga is a coastal municipality in the island province of Bohol. Its land area is 168.49 square kilometers or 65.05 square miles, which constitutes 3.53% of Bohol's total area. The population, as determined by the 2020 Census, was 48,534.

Mabini is a coastal municipality in the island province of Bohol. Its land area is 104.57 square kilometers or 40.37 square miles, which constitutes 2.19% of Bohol's total area. The 2020 Census determined that its population was 28,701.

President Carlos P. Garcia, formerly known as Pitogo, is a coastal municipality in the island province of Bohol. Its land area is 54.82 square kilometers or 21.17 square miles, which constitutes 1.15% of Bohol's total area. The 2020 Census determined that its population was 23,625.

Talibon is a coastal municipality in the island province of Bohol. Its land area is 140.46 square kilometers or 54.23 square miles, which constitutes 2.94% of Bohol's total area. The 2020 Census determined that its population was 71,272.

Ubay is a coastal municipality in the island province of Bohol. Its land area is 335.06 square kilometers or 129.37 square miles, which constitutes 7.02% of Bohol's total area. The 2020 Census determined that its population was 81,799 (*Refer to Appendix E for the Location Map*).

Research Informants

The informants of the study were ten (10) police officers in charge of the Bantay Dagat Program, who handle sea patrol in different coastal municipalities in Northeastern Bohol. These informants were engaged in individual interviews. The informants were police officers deputized as Bantay Dagat by the DA-BFAR or the municipal mayor.

The researcher employed the purposive sampling technique to choose the informants. This technique, characterized as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, is a non-probability sampling method that relies on the researcher's judgment in selecting the appropriate units to study. This approach ensured the chosen informants had relevant experiences and insights to contribute to the research.

Research Instrument

The researcher utilized an interview guide with open-ended questions through face-to-face interviews. The interview guide consists of three parts. Part I deals with the experience of the informants in the implementation of Bantay Dagat Practices. Part II pertains to how the Bantay Dagat address their challenges in implementing Bantay Dagat activities. Part III delves into the aspirations of the informants to improve the implementation of Bantay Dagat in their area of jurisdiction.

The panel experts validated the interview guide questionnaire to which the informants were required to respond. The researcher used notes and a voice recorder to record the responses of the informants (*Refer to Appendix C for the Interview Guide*).

Research Procedures

After the research proposal, the researcher submitted the requirements to the ethics committee for research protocol. Then he prepared for data collection, analysis, ethical considerations, and trustworthiness of research.

Data Collection. The researcher obtained permission from the office of the Municipal Mayor and the Philippine National Police (PNP), with endorsements from the Dean of the University of Cebu Graduate School, before conducting in-depth interviews using a constructed interview guide. Data was collected through in-depth interviews (IDI) held at the municipal police station, accompanied by an introductory letter outlining the purpose and significance of the study and an Informed Consent Form (ICF) detailing confidentiality measures. A timetable was devised to keep a proper record of the statements. During the interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD), the researcher established a pleasant environment for the informants to feel at ease, inspiring honest responses in-depth interviews of the informants and focus group discussions that followed the indicated processes. There were follow-up questions that were asked. The responses of the informants were recorded, transcribed, and categorized to generate common themes.

Data Analysis. The data were analyzed by classifying, categorizing, and determining the critical meaning of the responses. The researcher extracted key statements and developed vital meanings. The primary meanings were cluster, a cluster themes were read, re-read, and assessed to address the study's sub-problems.

Thematic analysis detects analyses and interprets meaning patterns in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). This recorded interview responses of the study were deductively evaluated to obtain key themes relevant and specific to individual categories. The statements of the respondents were attained through interviews and focus group discussions. Code analysis was used to determine the frequency of themes that emerged during interviews.

Ethical Considerations

In this study, the identities of the informants were kept private, and consent was requested from them before the interviews took place. The researcher also followed the research guidelines, namely the informed consent form of the police officers who freely engaged in the conduct of the study.

Data was collected precisely, and interview sessions were held at the appropriate time and location. To preserve anonymity, only the researcher possesses a list of the informants' real names. Their responses were put into transcripts to maintain maximum confidentiality and stored exclusively in the researcher's file folder. As a general rule, audio recordings and transcripts will be deleted three years after the completion of the entire study.

The ways these ethical difficulties are handled substantially impact the credibility of the research project. It may influence whether or not this study receives financing from commercial or public organizations. Furthermore, ethical concerns are critical in research. Professional organizations and government bodies have created codes and regulations that specify ethical behavior and guide researchers. These norms cover honesty, objectivity, intellectual property protection, social responsibility, confidentiality, and non-discrimination. These codes and policies serve as general recommendations.

Beneficence. The ethical principle of doing good and promoting the well-being of others is fundamental to this research. By investigating the work life of police officers involved in the Bantay Dagat program, the study aims to uncover challenges and areas for improvement that may lead to better working conditions, increased job satisfaction, and more effective marine protection. The intention is to use the findings to advocate for the welfare of the officers and the communities they serve.

The research also contributes to environmental beneficence. By highlighting effective practices and exposing gaps in marine law enforcement, it can influence policy changes that help protect coastal ecosystems from destructive fishing activities. In doing so, the research benefits the officers and contributes to the broader ecological and economic health of Northeastern Bohol.

Additionally, the research design ensures that all data gathered will be used for constructive purposes. Participants are treated as data sources and key stakeholders whose insights can shape better programs. It fulfills the principle of beneficence by striving to create tangible, positive outcomes for those involved in marine protection efforts.

Non-Maleficence. Non-maleficence is the obligation not to harm. In this research, it is crucial that the collection and reporting of data do not expose Bantay Dagat officers to personal, professional, or legal risks. Confidentiality measures must be in place to protect their identities, especially if they share sensitive information about program weaknesses, lack of support, or internal conflicts.

The research also avoids psychological harm by ensuring the interview process is respectful and non-intrusive. Officers are not pressured into disclosing personal matters they are uncomfortable with during the interview. Participation is voluntary, and they are fully informed of their right to withdraw without any negative consequence.

Furthermore, care must be taken in how the findings are presented. The report should not cast blame or discredit any institution or individual but instead focus on systemic improvements. In this way, the study upholds non-maleficence by avoiding reputational harm while still advocating for reform.

Justice. Justice in research refers to fairness in participant selection, benefit distribution, and treatment. The study ensures that a fair representation of Bantay Dagat officers across different barangays or towns in Northeastern Bohol is included, preventing bias toward more accessible or vocal groups. Every perspective of the officers, regardless of rank or status, is considered valuable.

This principle also demands that the benefits of the research to be distributed fairly. The findings informed improvements not only in favored municipalities but across the region. Justice means ensuring that all involved in coastal protection have an equal chance to benefit from program reforms or support that may result from the study.

Additionally, justice implies respect for institutional equity. The research should not favor one agency or stakeholder over another, and all contributions from LGUs, barangay officials, and community volunteers should

be acknowledged. The research outcomes must help reduce resource access, training, and operational support gaps for all enforcement participants.

Autonomy. Autonomy emphasizes the participants' right to make informed decisions about their involvement. In this research, police officers must be given clear information about the study's purpose, methods, and how their data will be used. Informed consent is obtained without coercion, allowing participants to decide whether to participate freely.

Respecting autonomy also means giving participants control over their narratives. Officers are encouraged to express their views openly, and their responses are not manipulated to fit pre-existing assumptions. They can review, clarify, or withhold any information they share during interviews or focus group discussions.

Finally, autonomy extends beyond participation—it includes post-research transparency. Officers should be informed of the study's findings and how these will be used to influence policy or institutional practices. This ongoing communication respects them as co-owners of the knowledge produced, reinforcing their agency in shaping solutions for their work environment.

Trustworthiness of Research This qualitative study's trustworthiness comprised four main components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and comfortability. It has become essential since it allows the researcher to express the virtues of qualitative terms outside the parameters generally used in this study regarding their experiences implementing community relation practices in a specific locality. The goal of the study is to communicate with the interviewees adequately.

Credibility. The informants were trustworthy sources of information for this study since they were the deputized Bantay Dagat officers who would discuss their experiences with the BD programs and the challenges they encountered in implementing Bantay Dagat.

Transferability. The researcher improved transferability by thoroughly outlining the study's background, significance, and assumptions. The interviews could be carried out and recorded. The researcher is concerned about the internal validity of this study, which is concerned with the research findings matching reality. It would give random evidence that the findings may be applied to other studies' findings and utilized by other researchers.

Dependability. It refers to the consistency and dependability of research findings, the extent to which the research technique is documented, and the recording-keeping that can be reliable. Data transcription is found to be recorded. It is an approach to increasing trustworthiness in data generation.

Confirmability. The researcher documented the techniques by examining and rechecking the data. Triangulation of interviews through interviews with other contact tracers and observation aided in this process and improved the internal validity of this research.

Bracketing and Reflexivity

Bracketing. A fundamental component of qualitative research methodology is recognizing an individual's preconceived assumptions and biases throughout the research process. Before data collection begins, the researcher will identify, document, and explicitly disclose any personal prejudices or assumptions about Bantay dagat, coastal municipalities, and police officers in charge. This deliberate bracketing practice allows the researcher to approach interviews and observations with an open mind, free from unnecessary pressure. Throughout the study process, the researcher will maintain reflective practice, regularly reviewing the established assumptions and critically reviewing their potential impact on data interpretation. By incorporating bracketing into the study process, the researcher strives to maintain the report's objectivity, rigor, and credibility, resulting in a more authentic investigation of police officers and community members' lives in coastal municipalities.

Reflexivity. As a vital research technique, reflexivity refers to the ongoing critical examination of one's position, biases, and perspectives throughout the research process. The researcher practiced reflexivity by consistently

reflecting on the assumptions, values, and positionalities of the researchers that may influence the research process and outcomes. This self-awareness guided the researcher's interactions with participants during data collection, allowing for a more sensitive and open approach to interviews and observations. Furthermore, reflexivity guides the researcher's data analysis collection, as the researcher scrutinizes how the researcher's background and perspectives influence the researcher's conclusions. By incorporating reflexivity into the study process, the researcher hopes to foster honesty, rigor, and appreciation for diverse viewpoints, ultimately enriching the researcher's knowledge of bantay dagat programs' dynamics in coastal municipalities.

Definition Of Terms

They are defined operationally to promote understanding of the terminologies used in this study.

Addressing the Challenges of the Informants in the Implementation of Bantay Dagat Programs. The term refers to the way the police BD officers manage, handle, and face the challenges that they meet while implementing community relations practices.

Aspirations of the Informants to Improve the Implementation of Bantay Dagat Programs. The term is used to mean the desired goals, improvements, or enhancement of the status of Bantay Dagat in the locality. It epitomizes their vision for a more effective and collaborative form of fisheries laws applicable to specific coastal municipal and commercial fishers.

Experiences of the Informants in the Implementation of Bantay Dagat Programs. It pertains to the first-hand encounters, observations, and insights of individuals involved in or affected by implementing strategies employed in community relations. These experiences encompass a range of interactions, activities, challenges, successes, and failures encountered by the informant while participating in or witnessing the implementation of community relations practices.

Presentation And Analysis of Data

This chapter deals with the presentation and analysis of data.

Presentation of Data

The researcher read all the transcriptions for many times to acquire the descriptions of experiences of the informants. The significant statements were extracted from the informant's pertaining directly to the research phenomena (see Appendix F for sample of significant statements).

Formulated meanings were constructed from the significant statements and arranged them into cluster themes (See Appendix F1 for sample of formulated meanings). Cluster themes were then regrouped and which evolved into emergent themes (See Appendix F2 for sample of cluster themes which evolved into emergent themes).

From the formulated core meanings, 21 cluster themes were identified and regrouped and categorized to form eight (8) emergent themes. Two (2) emergent themes described the positive experiences of the informants in the implementation of their programs. Two (2) emergent themes described the negative experiences of the informants in the implementation of their programs. Two (2) emergent themes were derived on how they address the challenges encountered and the remaining two (2) would give details on the aspirations of the informants.

The following are the emergent themes:

I. Experiences of the Informants in Implementing the Bantay Dagat Programs

A. Positive Experiences

1. Meaningful Service through Environmental and Community Protection
2. Personal Growth and Purpose through Professional Commitment

B. Negative Experiences

1. Operational Challenges and Resource Limitations
2. Moral Dilemmas and Emotional Burden in Law Enforcement

II. Addressing the Challenges Encountered by the Informants in Implementing the Bantay Dagat Programs

1. Proactive and Strategic Enforcement
2. Compassionate and Communicative Policing

III. Aspirations of the Informants to Improve the Implementation of the Bantay Dagat Programs

1. Resource Mobilization and Capacity Building
2. Community Engagement and Environmental Protection

I. Experiences of the Informants in implementing the Bantay Dagat Programs

A. Positive Experiences

1. Meaningful Service through Environmental and Community Protection. This deals with the feelings of happiness or satisfaction of the bantay dagat officers when they are able to protect marine resources, support legal fishing practices, enforce laws, and serve their communities during the implementation of bantay dagat programs.

By the objectives of my inquiry, the researcher asked Informant 2 pertaining to his experiences where he felt happy, satisfied or contented in the implementation of bantay dagat programs, he has the following response:

Na kontento ra pod kos ahong pagka bantay dagat ron kay kanang makatabang ra pod ko sa mga mananagat bitaw nga nanarbahog tarung niya naay mangbinaung nga mga managat. Kontento ra pod ko noon nga makatabang ko (IDI2:SS2). (I am also content with my role as a Bantay Dagat because I am able to help the fishermen who are working honestly, and there are also fishermen who engage in illegal activities. I am satisfied knowing that I am able to help).

The researcher also asked the same question to Informant 3 and he expressed his happiness in helping the fishermen through their programs when he replied that:

Para nako sir dako kaayong kalipay sir kay na satisfy ko sir kay nakatabang ko sa mga managatay nakahatag ko arun mapapas ag ilang pangita bitaw, ang uban mamasulay ra nga kanang legal bitaw nga paagi nga pagpanagat, niya karon makig batok pod mi sa mga illegal nga panagat sama sa mga kana bitawng compressor, mga uban sa mata sa mga illegal nga panagat, ug kana pog paggamit ug mga pukot nga mga gagmay mata, kay bawal manang panakop ug mga gagmayng isda, kana pong panghilo (IDI3:SS1). (For me, sir, it's a great source of joy because I am satisfied knowing that I have helped the fishermen by providing support for their livelihood. Some of them resort to legal ways of fishing, and now we are also fighting against illegal fishing practices like the use of compressors and illegal fishing nets with small mesh sizes, as it's prohibited to catch small fish. We are also addressing the use of poison to catch fish).

Informant 7 also gives his reply on his positive experiences in the implementation of Bantay Dagat programs as he said:

Elaborate nako sa akong trabaho, bag-o pa ko sa, mostly mga gidah naho ani sir mga civilian, gipang training ra pod sila namo, gitraining sa LGU kay kami sa amua sa PNP gi training nami daan sa BFAR mao nang, nay opisina sa Dao, mao nay nagtraining namo apil ang uban sa DENR kay ang mostly sa amo dili ra sa dagat, apil

ang environmental general, mao nang covered namo ang BFAR ug kining DENR (IDI7: SS1). (I'll elaborate on my job. I'm still new, and most of the people I handle are civilians. We're the ones training them, trained by the LGU because we, from the PNP, were already trained by BFAR. That's why there's an office in Dao that provided training for us, along with others from DENR. Most of us aren't just focused on the sea, we also cover environmental concerns, which is why we're connected with both BFAR and DENR).

2. Personal Growth and Purpose through Professional Commitment. This theme explores the profound satisfaction and positive influence that Bantay Dagat officers experience in their roles and the beneficial effects on the communities they serve.

The researcher asked Informant 1 about their fulfillment as an individuals and the community and he responded:

In lign sa among pagpanirbisyo karon, like me I am trained escuba diver, so kanang ang sa PNP man gud is once nga, naa man gyuy proper nga kanang staffing bah, kung unsay naa kay schooling ana in lign ana so dapat ikaw joy ibutang ana. So, I am motivated pod nga kanang grab mo ibutang sa akong hepe kay tungod kay naa koy experience, ah experience and skills nga applicable, magamit oh (IDI1:SS1). (In line with our current service, like me, I am a trained scuba diver, so what the Philippine National Police (PNP) does is, once there's proper staffing, like if you have the right schooling for it, you should be the one placed in that position. So, I am also motivated to be assigned by my superior because I have experience and skills that are applicable and can be used).

Also, Informant 4 was asked with the same question and he responded:

As a police officer sa akuang pagka kuan nako, usahay maka feel comfort ko, smooth akoang flow sa akong trabaho, tinabangay ra mi sa community, as a sea borne patroller, satisfied pod ang akuang mga sakop in lign sa akong trabaho (IDI4:SS1). (As a police officer, sometimes I feel comfort and that my work flows smoothly. We help each other in the community, and as a sea-borne patroller, my team is also satisfied with the work I do).

Lastly, Informant 10 expressed also his fulfillment as a Bantay Dagat based on his positive personal experience which says:

Satisfied sir kay kining, ang kusog gyud diri sa among bantayanan diris Anda kay kining mga buso, fullfilling ning makadakop mi, maka arrest mi kay ma minimize namo ag kining mga kadaot diris kadagatan (IDI10:SS2). (I am satisfied, sir, because the strength of our patrol here in Anda is focused on the illegal fishing activities, particularly the buso (illegal fishers). It's fulfilling when we are able to apprehend and arrest them, as it helps minimize the damage to our seas).

B. Negative Experiences

1. Operational Challenges and Resource Limitations. This refers to the responses of the informants which unravel their experiences on how they rose despite uncomfortable situations that came along their way. This theme explains that bantay dagat officers are dedicated to their duties despite the limited resources and challenges that they encountered in implementing their programs.

Some informants stated that they felt bad about their experiences but are still determined to continue their duties. This theme is supported by the statement of Informant 5 which says:

Kaning usahay sir, mga mag operation mi naa gyuy usahay mapalya ang makina sa Bangka. Mga makina dali ma pawng bah mao nay maka unhappy (IDI5:SS3). (Sometimes, sir, when we conduct operations, the boat engines often fail. The engines break down easily, and that's what makes us unhappy).

Informants are also encourage to do their best to sustain the implementation of their programs. Informant 6 had said:

Kuan kanang nagdakop namo, niya nay dynamite fishing kusog mana siya. Unsaon pagdakop namo nga kusog man mana dagan, aw wa na. Naay ka isa among gi gukod namo, wa gyud mi kaapas. Mao lagi na kanang

kinahanglan gyud mi kuan ug seryoso nga support ug pangtagaan tag mga machines, man power pod, budget pod kay unsaon pagdagan ug walay garsolina (IDI6:SS3). (Sometimes, when we catch people, like those involved in dynamite fishing, they're really fast. How can we catch them when they're so quick? We couldn't catch one person we chased, we just couldn't catch up. That's true, we really need serious support. We should be provided with machines, manpower, and a budget because how can we chase them if we don't have gasoline?).

Another Informant shared his experience on how his negative experience affected him as bantay dagat Officer. Informant 8 had said:

Ako usahay naay dili ko, medyo discontented labi na sa akong trabaho kung wala kaayoy enough budget labi na sa fuel bitaw kay ang area man gyud sa dagat dako kayo need mi ug support sa labi na sa fuel, then kuan rain coat, kay mostly ang mga mananagat man gyud nga illegal fishing malipay sila kung maglain ang panahon gyud, mao gyud nay ilang ipenetrante nila ug maglain ang panahon (IDI8:SS3). (Sometimes, I feel a bit discontented, especially with my job, when there's not enough budget, especially for fuel. The sea area is really vast, and we need support, especially for fuel. Also, things like raincoats are important because most of the fishermen involved in illegal fishing are actually happy when the weather turns bad. That's when they usually take the opportunity to penetrate the area when the weather worsens).

2. Moral Dilemmas and Emotional Burden in Law Enforcement. This theme focuses on the specific challenges faced by bantay dagat officers working on the island. Here's how the quotes of the respondents support this theme:

In the statement of Informant 2, he stated:

Kanang nay maka encounter tag mga illegal fishing nga kana bitawng saktos budget bitaw imbis atong dakpon kita nooy daoton (IDI2:SS4). (When we encounter illegal fishing activities and, despite having a proper budget, instead of us being able to apprehend them, we end up being blamed or criticized).

Informant 3 also expressed his negative experience to continue his tasks. He has the following response:

Mag conduct tag roving unya madakpan nato niya kasagaran magpakilooy ang uban kay pobre, di jud na malikayan, pero saon ta man pinak ubos nga ato jud nang sampahan ug kaso sir. Una sa tanan sir, diri sa Municipal naa man tay Municipal ordinance, ato gyud na silang paningkamutan nga ma file lan na sila madakpan, pamultahan na sila sa kastigon sa pinaka penalty sa atong ordinansa (IDI3:SS4). (When we conduct roving and catch violators, most of them plead with us because they are poor. That's something we can't avoid, but what can we do? The lowest option we have is to file a case against them, sir. First of all, here in the municipality, we have a municipal ordinance, and we really make an effort to ensure that they are filed, caught, and fined according to the penalties set in our ordinance).

Another informant shared his experience on how his negative experience affect him as Police Officer. Informant 10 says:

Kanang nanarbaho ra pud sila niya unya trabaho man niya naa poy balaod nag enforce ra pod mi, sa humanitarian consideration lain pod sakit pod (IDI10:SS4). (They are just doing their work, and it's their job, and there are also laws that we enforce. However, from a humanitarian perspective, it's also painful).

II. Addressing the Challenges Encountered by the Informants in Implementing the Bantay Dagat Programs

1. Proactive and Strategic Enforcement. This deals on how the PCR officers addressed the challenges encountered in the implementation of the bantay dagat programs. Based on my interview, inadequate equipment, manpower, lack of budget, lack of mobility service of the officers in roving the area of responsibility and heavy workloads are the common challenges of the bantay dagat officers during the implementation of their bantay dagat programs. This theme explains that many problems can be solved through proactive and strategic enforcement.

When the informants were asked how they addressed the challenges they encountered during their program implementation, they responded. Informant 1 replied saying:

So, ang among gibuhat ani is more on police visibility sa mga kadagatan kay naa man tay employed nga mga bantay dagat officers or personnel diri sa lungsod sa Clarin, Kani by shifting pod ni sila, morning ug gbaei. Wala mi laing paagi unsaon mga illegal fishing kundi more on visibility, police visibility ug mga personnel and roving sa among area ug jurisdiction kay dili man mi pwede mo cross country mi, sa area ra gyud pero, once nga ikaw kay lahi naman jud ang style ron sa bantay dagat kay ang area nato sa dagat ron kay by cluster. Cluster 3 man ta ang atong sakop ani is from inabangga to tubigon or Calape ni siyay cluster 3. Authorize ka musud anang areaha (IDI1:SS6). (So, what we're doing now is focusing more on police visibility in the seas because we have employed sea patrol officers or personnel here in the town of Clarin. This is done through shifting, both in the morning and evening. We don't have any other way to deal with illegal fishing except through visibility, police presence, and roving in our area and jurisdiction. We can't cross to other countries, it's just within our area. However, the style of sea patrol is different now because our sea area is divided into clusters. We're in Cluster 3, and our jurisdiction covers from Inabangga to Tubigon or Calape, and that's Cluster 3. You are authorized to enter that area).

Informant 8 also added his experience on how they addressed the illegal activities. Informant 8 had said:

Sa akua, kay ako may direct supervisor sa task force kalipukan, kalipukan nga maoy operator, nga dili gyud sila pwede manghilabot sa akong mga dinakpan, nga mandaran ko nila nga maoy buhaton, ako gyud silang controlon ilabi nga dili sila mag mind nga nay madasmagan nga nay ma injury, syempre mananagat ra biya sila basin niyang madisgrasya, masamad or maunsa ba sila, mangabali dira. Ang akua lang, challenge gyud kaayo kanang maginukdanay na gyud kay once nga ma paralyzed or makub ang ilang sakyanan kay dili na sila manakay sa pambot, manglangoy gyud na sila. Niya di man sa ingon sa liba-liba lang ang amoang gi pokusan diri naa moy mga compressor. Mostly man gyud compressor, sa Pitogo wala may liba-liba ug compressor, tagalain lugar, ang musud diri taga Nuknukan, Hingotanan, Leyte Ubay (IDI8:SS5). (For me, since I'm the direct supervisor of the Task Force Kalipukan, which is responsible for operations, they are not allowed to interfere with the suspects I apprehend. I control them, especially ensuring they don't ignore the risk of accidents, like someone getting injured. After all, they're just fishermen, and they might get into an accident, get hurt, or worse, and break something. The real challenge for me is when they try to escape, because once their vehicle is disabled or their boat is damaged, they can't continue using it, so they'll swim instead. It's not just illegal fishing that we focus on; we also monitor the use of compressors. Mostly, it's compressors. In Pitogo, there are no issues with illegal fishing or compressors; it's mostly from other places, such as Nuknukan, Hingotanan, Leyte, and Ubay that come here).

Another informant expressed the need of teamwork to address the challenge. Informant 10 stated that:

Huna hunaon lang gyud namo permi sir nga before mi mo cooperate nga safety first gyud namo, nga before mi mo approach amo gyud nga isiguro nga walay danger sa among part. Tarungan lang pod sila ug estorya, pasabton lang pod nga ga enforce rami nay balaod nga gabawal sa kaning mga illegal fishing, buso, compressor (IDI10:SS5). (We always keep in mind, sir, that before we cooperate, our safety comes first. Before we approach them, we make sure there is no danger on our part. We talk to them properly and explain that we are just enforcing the law, which prohibits illegal fishing, the use of buso, and compressors).

2. Compassionate and Communicative Policing. This refers to the responses of the informants which emphasizes on how they cope with their problem on poor awareness, conflicts and sometimes non-cooperating fishers and community during the implementation of Bantay Dagat programs and activities especially during the arrest of illegal fishers. This theme highlights the complexities of policing beyond just strategic challenges. It emphasizes the importance of addressing socio-economic issues, building trust with fishermen, and even overcoming personal fears to effectively communicate with compassion. This theme is supported by the statement of Informant 2 which says:

Ang ahuang kuan challenge encounter, ahung gi accept nga mga encounter tas mga busayner nga na encounter nga nag lalis mi kay kuan nga sakto kuno, bisan nisud sila sa jurisdiction sa Inabangga, niya ang ilaha di kuno

pero amo gipakuan ug pamaagi, nga pareha anang mga compressor nga mga tag iya. Pero ma settle gihapon (IDI2:SS5). (The challenge I encountered and accepted was dealing with violators who argued with us. They claimed they were right, even though they entered the jurisdiction of Inabangga. They insisted that they were not doing anything wrong, but we managed to handle the situation by applying the proper approach, similar to how we deal with owners of compressors. But in the end, it was settled).

Informants also do their best to gain the cooperation of the fishermen on the implementation of their programs. Informant 3 had said:

Kana jud ato jud nang, para namo, kinahanglan naa jud mi igo nga pasensya bitaw kay naa man gyoy ubang atoang kusog mo resisting bitaw nga mga taw kinahanglan nga kamao ta musabot nila ug unsay naka violent ana, nakasupak silas balaod ana, naa gyud tay deep talking bitaw nga gibuhat sir, ug mag negosyo silag tarung (IDI3: SS5). (For us, we really need to have enough patience because there are some people who resist, and we need to understand them and recognize what's violent in their actions, especially when they violate the law. We make sure to have a deep conversation with them, sir, so they can understand, and encourage them to engage in legitimate business).

Informant 9 also shared his experience and he has the following response:

Sa ako pahibaw on naho nga kining among gibuhat trabaho ra gyud mi, kaning amua trabaho ang inyuha illegal, among pasabton bah (IDI9: SS4). (What I want to make clear is that what we're doing is just our job. What you are doing is illegal, and we want to make you understand that).

III. Aspirations of the Informants to Improve the Implementation of the Bantay Dagat Programs

1. Resources Mobilization and Capacity Building. This deals with the aspirations of the informants as Bantay Dagat officers. This theme emphasizes the need for sufficient personnel, equipment, and financial resources to improve marine protection efforts. It also highlights the importance of training to enhance the skills and effectiveness of enforcement officers.

When the informants were asked about their aspirations being the bantay dagat Officers in their area, Informant 4 has said:

Ang number one gyud ani kinhangln nga ug gusto silag ma proteksyunan sila sa mga bantay dagat sa mga panagat, sa atong dagat area diri sa atong area syempre area kinahanglan daghanon jud nila ug kanang atong giingon nga man power, daghanon nilag bantay dagat kay aron dako biya ni atong area. Usa ra mura rata anig amaw, daghanon gyud natug man power kay ug nay daotan di ka lahos ba. Saktog mga equipment, pwede pod ta ug mananom tag mga pang gather diris sanctuary, para labi na, kanang takubo, pwede tag ma nguan ug mga takubo para musamot ug kadaghan ang mga isda sa atong tuburan (IDI2:SS7). (The number one thing that needs to be addressed, if they want to be protected by the Bantay Dagat in our sea area, is that we need more personnel. They should increase the number of Bantay Dagat officers because our area is vast. With just a few of us, it's like we're not doing enough. We really need more manpower, especially if there are violators, as it's hard to handle them on our own. We also need the right equipment. Additionally, we can plant things like mangroves in the sanctuary to help increase the fish population in our waters. By planting mangroves, it can enhance the breeding grounds and help the fish thrive).

Informant 6 also shared his aspirations by saying:

Sa amua sir, mostly kami pa lang gyud sir mas lami gyud ug pun an pa ang bantay dagat tungod sa kadako sa area sa ubay, kuwang jud ug taw. Ug labi na sir ug mga sakyanan, mga patroller sa atong area (IDI6:SS6). (For us, sir, it's mostly just us. It would be better if we could add more personnel to the Bantay Dagat team due to the large area we cover, especially in Ubay. We really lack manpower. And also, sir, we need more vehicles, especially for patrolling our area).

When the researcher asked the same question to Informant 10, his response goes this way:

Murag kani lang awareness gyud sir, ug kaning LGU nga mo suporta sa mga equipments, mga resources jud (IDI10:SS6). (I think it's really about awareness, sir, and the LGU providing support for the equipment and resources).

2. Community Engagement and Environmental Protection. This theme focuses on the importance of community involvement, strong communication with local officials, and public awareness campaigns. It also addresses the need for protecting marine sanctuaries and supporting sustainable practices to increase fish populations.

When the researcher asked Informant 4 on his plans or ways to achieve his aspirations for himself and his organization, he replied saying:

Ang amua diri kay mag implement mig strong communication sa community, amuang roving rovingon didto, estorya-estoryahan unsay problema, mo touch mis mga barangay official aron sila poy mangitag taw nga muahom sa ilahang duty (IDI4:SS6). (Here, we implement strong communication with the community. We do regular roving, talk to people to understand the issues, and reach out to the barangay officials so they can find people who will help with their duties).

Other informants were also asked with the same question. Informant 8 shared his thoughts by saying:

Sa man power, wala koy problema sa man power kay bisan ako naa koy mga kauban nga daghan man mi naa may mga taw sa kalipukan nga gi create ni mayor unya, ma inspire pod ko nga iimprove namo ang nga lami man pod paminawon nga ang among dagat bah nga peaceful very peaceful lang ang panginabuhi sa taw bah nga ang uban namasaol, pamukot lang walay involve nga tiro, way compressor, way liba-liba, kuan lang naay minor nga mga legal ginagmay nga not necessary nga kanang desctructive siya. Kay ako sa wala pako na pulis mananagat biya ko, niya na experience gyud nako unsa ka sakit or init nga ang imong panagat maligsan sa mga mga illegalista bah, mga putol mga wah tungod sa ilahang panagat nga namintaha bah. Mao nang gusto naho nga iimprove nako nga minimize or ma control namo ang illegal fishing, happy ko pero sa pagkakaron na times lisud kayo ang pag control namo sa dagat ron labi na sa malingin, brgy. Malingin tungod sa ilang panagat ngay liba-liba daghang nangreklamo sa mga managat diri sa Tugas, Tilmobo tungod sa kanang panagat nilang liba-liba unya lisud man gyud silang dakpon gyud kay ilahang mga pambot kay triple engine (IDI8:SS6). (As for manpower, I don't have any problem because I have many colleagues, and we have people from Kalipukan, which was created by the mayor. I'm also inspired to improve things, and it feels good to know that our seas are peaceful, with the livelihoods of the people being calm. Some of them just do small-scale fishing with no involvement in illegal activities, no compressors, no illegal fishing methods. There are only minor legal activities that aren't destructive. Before I became a police officer, I was a fisherman myself, and I really felt how painful and frustrating it was when your fishing was disrupted by illegal fishers breaking nets and damaging gear because of their illegal practices. That's why I want to improve things and minimize or control illegal fishing. I'm happy, but right now, it's really difficult to control the sea, especially in Malingin. In Barangay Malingin, they have illegal fishing methods, and many fishermen from Tugas and Tilmobo have complained about their illegal activities. It's really hard to catch them because their boats have triple engines).

Another informant was asked the same question on what are his plans and ways to achieve his aspirations. Informant 9 has given his response saying:

Kaning mag patrolling sa atong kadagatan, ma protektahan ning atong mga sanctuary (IDI9:SS6). (By patrolling our seas, we can protect our sanctuaries).

Analysis of Data

The researcher utilized Colaizzi's (1978) method in phenomenological tradition to extract the following emergent themes from the regrouping of clusters through the formulated meanings. Thus, these themes describe the lived experiences of police officers designated as Bantay Dagat Officers in Coastal Municipality in the Municipalities of Anda, Bien Unido, Buenavista, Clarin, Getafe, Inabanga, Mabini, President Carlos P. Garcia, Talibon and the Municipality of Ubay in the Province of Bohol.

This was anchored by Situational Crime Prevention (SCP) theory, which emphasizes reducing opportunities for crime by altering the immediate environment in which it occurs. It posits that crimes can be prevented not only through social reforms but also through situational interventions such as increasing the risks of being caught, reducing rewards, and removing excuses. In the context of the Bantay Dagat program, police officers implement Situational Crime Prevention (SCP) by increasing patrol visibility, strengthening surveillance in marine areas, and restricting access to protected fishing zones. These measures directly reduce the likelihood of illegal fishing by making it more difficult or riskier to commit. As such, Situational Crime Prevention (SCP) aligns with the operational focus of Bantay Dagat officers who modify the conditions that permit marine-related crimes to occur (Clarke, 1980).

This was also supported by Routine Activity Theory (RAT). This theory suggests that crime occurs when three elements converge in time and space: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian. Applied to the Bantay Dagat program, this theory helps explain how illegal fishing thrives in areas where patrols are absent or inconsistent. Bantay Dagat officers, as capable guardians, play a vital role in disrupting this convergence by being physically present in vulnerable marine zones, thereby deterring potential offenders. Their work schedules, patrol routines, and community engagements are crucial in creating structured guardianship. RAT thus supports the study by highlighting the importance of presence and predictability in enforcement practices to prevent marine crimes (Cohen & Felson, 1979).

Also, it is supported by Systems Theory which views any organization or process as an interconnected system of parts working toward a common goal. In the Bantay Dagat context, police officers function within a broader system that includes local government units, barangay councils, community volunteers, and environmental agencies. Their worklife is affected by how well these subsystems communicate and coordinate. For instance, effective marine protection depends on synchronized efforts such as timely reporting, logistical support, and shared responsibilities. When one part of the system fails, such as a lack of fuel support or equipment, the entire enforcement mechanism suffers. Systems Theory thus explains the complexity and interdependence involved in the officers' daily operations and responsibilities (Von Bertalanffy, 1968).

Therefore, emergent themes are used to describe the experiences of PCR officers in implementing Bantay Dagat programs in coastal municipalities.

The following is the analysis of each emergent theme:

I. Experiences of the Informants in Implementing the Bantay Dagat Programs

The informants' experiences implementing the Bantay Dagat program in the coastal municipalities as Bantay Dagat officers were gathered from an in-depth interview. Most informants agreed that accomplishing their target and helping the community improve gives them a sense of happiness. It gives them the idea that their purpose is attained if the community feels safe and secure in the community.

The duration of the interviews with the researcher drew specific ideas and gathered information on the directions of the positive experiences in implementing Bantay Dagat programs. The majority of the informants considered these to be their fulfilment.

A. Positive Experiences

1. Meaningful Service through Environmental and Community Protection. This theme emerged from the respondents' deep duty toward preserving marine ecosystems while supporting their local communities. Many Bantay Dagat officers expressed that their work goes beyond law enforcement; it is a commitment to safeguarding the environment, particularly the seas, which serve as a vital source of livelihood for coastal residents. Respondents said they were motivated by the need to secure the seas and enforce laws to protect fisherfolk and that being designated as PDO helps them protect marine life and coral reefs. It illustrates how respondents see themselves as environmental stewards working for the greater good.

This theme also highlights the social dimension of their roles. Officers take pride in helping honest fishermen and protecting small-scale fishers from the harmful effects of illegal operations. Their motivation is often rooted in empathy and firsthand experience, as seen in one respondent's statement to protect small-scale fishers from being harmed by large operations. These roles foster a sense of connection with their community, reinforcing a purpose-driven approach that blends law enforcement with compassion, justice, and social responsibility.

Furthermore, the engagement of the respondents with community members and local leaders strengthens this theme. Cooperation with barangay officials and open communication with the public are essential strategies for promoting marine protection and sustainable practices. This shared effort to protect both the environment and the people who depend on it reveals how Bantay Dagat officers view their work as a profession and a form of meaningful service grounded in environmental ethics and communal care.

This theme is supported by the Systems Theory, which explains that meaningful service emerges when all parts of the system, Bantay Dagat officers, community members, and local government units work cohesively to protect environmental resources. Officers see their roles as essential parts of a larger environmental protection mechanism, highlighting the interconnectedness between human effort and ecological preservation.

Routine Activity Theory supports this theme by emphasizing that environmental protection depends on effective guardianship. Bantay Dagat officers act as capable guardians, whose visible presence and patrolling routines help deter illegal fishing activities and promote community responsibility for shared marine resources.

The role of Community-Based Coastal Resource Management (CBCRM) is a sustainable and participatory approach to environmental protection and how local communities when actively involved in marine resource management, show higher compliance and long-term commitment to the conservation goals of the marine resources available. It supports the idea that Bantay Dagat officers derive purpose from their authority and involvement with the community and its ecological well-being. Their meaningful service stems from a shared sense of ownership and responsibility over coastal resources (Alcala & Russ, 2006).

The success of self-organized groups in managing common-pool resources without central authority shows that the respondents' emphasis on empathy, communication, and community coordination aligns with Ostrom's principle that rules developed and enforced by resource users tend to be more respected. It reflects how Bantay Dagat officers' enforcement is not merely legalistic but rooted in social norms and mutual accountability within the fishing communities they serve (Ostrom, 1990).

The Philippines' coastal resource management programs found that community enforcement groups like Bantay Dagat significantly increased compliance with fishing regulations and improved local fishery conditions. The study emphasized that when enforcement is embedded in local culture and identity, as with Bantay Dagat, it becomes more than a job—a form of service to both people and nature (Pomeroy et al., 2007).

The co-management of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the Philippines led to stronger community engagement and conservation outcomes. It revealed that officers and local stakeholders who viewed themselves as caretakers of the sea were more effective in managing resources. It aligns with the theme as Bantay Dagat officers expressed satisfaction and meaning in their environmental protection roles, driven by personal investment in community well-being (Lowry et al., 2005).

2. Personal Growth and Purpose through Professional Commitment. The experiences of the informants and motivations vividly illustrated this theme. Many respondents highlight a deep sense of personal fulfilment derived from their roles as Bantay Dagat officers.

This fulfilment is not just professional but also profoundly personal. The respondents shared that their roles provided employment and a profound sense of fulfilment, identity, and development. Many expressed that their daily challenges, responsibilities, and interactions allowed them to grow in patience, discipline, empathy, and leadership. This growth was especially evident in their motivations to support their families, serve their communities, and uphold marine laws with integrity. Their work was described not as a mere job but as a calling that fostered inner satisfaction and moral purpose.

This theme was supported well by Systems Theory, which stresses that individuals within a system, such as Bantay Dagat officers, experience personal growth when their roles are aligned with organizational goals. As officers engage deeply with their work protecting marine environments, they develop a stronger sense of purpose and professionalism, realizing their significance within a dynamic system.

Also, Routine Activity Theory further relates by showing how consistent participation in patrol routines strengthens professional commitment. Through repeated engagement with guardianship duties, officers internalize their roles, cultivating personal pride and dedication toward maintaining safety and environmental protection.

According to Pretty & Smith (2004), when individuals are involved in grassroots environmental governance, they often develop greater self-esteem, civic pride, and leadership skills. These outcomes reflect the sentiments Bantay Dagat officers expressed, who view their roles as transformative, allowing them to contribute meaningfully to society while also growing personally. Such growth is nurtured by their continued exposure to fieldwork, community interaction, and problem-solving.

In the context of law enforcement and community service, Brunton-Smith & McCarthy (2016) argue that when individuals feel their work aligns with a broader purpose, they are more committed and experience a more profound sense of personal identity. It supports the idea that Bantay Dagat officers, many of whom emphasized how their role helped them support their families and protect their home waters, derive purpose from the overlap of personal values and professional responsibilities. Their testimonies highlight how sustained involvement in community-based enforcement fosters maturity, ethical grounding, and emotional fulfillment.

Additionally, community-based coastal resource management in the Philippines found that local enforcement officers reported increased self-confidence, civic responsibility, and pride in their roles. Participants in the study echoed similar experiences as Bantay Dagat informants, stating that their engagement led to personal transformation and community respect. It supports the theme, showing how professional commitment to marine protection leads to individual growth and social recognition (Rivera-Guieb et al., 2004).

Moreover, community marine enforcement members expressed how their roles allowed them to gain new skills, assert leadership, and gain public trust. The authors concluded that participation in co-managed marine programs improved resource management outcomes and enhanced individual capacities and personal fulfillment. It aligns closely with the theme as Bantay Dagat officers develop professionally through their continued commitment to protecting coastal areas (White et al., 2002).

B. Negative Experiences

1. Operational Challenges and Resource Limitations. This theme reflected the lived experiences of Bantay Dagat officers who consistently face logistical, financial, and technological constraints in their duties. Many informants expressed frustration over the lack of basic patrol equipment, insufficient fuel, outdated boats, and inadequate workforce. These limitations hinder their ability to monitor vast marine areas effectively, respond quickly to violations, or sustain regular patrols. Officers often find themselves under-resourced and unsupported despite their strong commitment, affecting morale and enforcement effectiveness.

These operational struggles are compounded by the persistence of illegal fishing, the harsh realities of open-sea patrolling, and external pressures from violators and legal systems. Respondents reported that violators exploit poor weather or surveillance gaps while the officers are forced to operate with limited protection, minimal training, and budgetary constraints. The inability to deliver consistent results due to these limitations undermines their credibility and weakens enforcement outcomes, highlighting the need for systemic support and institutional strengthening.

The above theme supports the Systems Theory. It recognizes that operational challenges arise when certain components of the system, such as funding, equipment, and manpower are deficient. For Bantay Dagat officers, gaps in fuel, patrol boats, or staffing disrupt the system's equilibrium, making enforcement efforts less effective and increasing officer stress.

Situational Crime Prevention Theory aligns by stressing that resource limitations undermine the ability to modify environments to prevent crime. Without adequate patrol boats or communication devices, Bantay Dagat officers cannot properly harden targets or increase surveillance, thus increasing opportunities for illegal fishing.

According to Christie & White (2007), the success of coastal resource management depends heavily on logistical support, consistent funding, and well-trained personnel. Where these are lacking, even the most well-designed marine programs fail to deliver intended outcomes. It supports the Bantay Dagat respondents' frustration, as scarce operational resources severely limit their capacity to patrol and enforce marine protection laws.

Pomeroy & Andrew (2011) also emphasized that enforcement units in community-based fisheries often suffer from fragmented responsibilities, weak inter-agency coordination, and chronic underfunding. It leads to sporadic enforcement, delayed response to violations, and eventual loss of community trust. The respondents' accounts of outdated boats, lack of fuel, and workforce shortages are vivid manifestations of these systemic challenges, directly affecting their ability to protect the seas and manage fisheries effectively.

They evaluated marine enforcement effectiveness in the Philippines and found that local patrol units were often poorly equipped, underfunded, and overstretched. The study concluded that patrol efforts become inconsistent and reactive without stable support systems and clear operational frameworks. It mirrors the Bantay Dagat experiences, where, despite strong commitment, their operational capacity is limited by a lack of essential resources (White et al., 2006).

Similarly, Mangahas (2004) studied Bantay Dagat operations and found that many volunteers and deputized officers had to use personal funds and endure dangerous conditions due to inadequate logistical support. The study emphasized that long-term equipment, training, and institutional backing investments can only achieve sustainable enforcement. These findings reinforce the cluster theme by directly connecting operational gaps to the systemic lack of investment in grassroots enforcement.

2. Moral Dilemmas and Emotional Burden in Law Enforcement. This theme highlighted the reflections of the informants on the emotional conflict they experience while enforcing marine laws. Many Bantay Dagat officers expressed the difficulty of apprehending poor or small-scale violators who are merely trying to survive. Despite being mandated to uphold the law, they often feel compassion for these individuals and struggle with guilt or sadness when enforcement leads to fines, legal cases, or the confiscation of fishing gear. This internal conflict between duty and empathy leads to emotional stress and sometimes hesitation in fully executing their responsibilities, especially when dealing with fellow community members.

Furthermore, respondents highlighted how enforcement is physically demanding and psychologically taxing due to the blurred lines between legality and livelihood. Officers must often weigh humanitarian considerations against legal obligations, particularly when encountering economically disadvantaged fishers using banned methods. The sense of being misunderstood or judged by the community and those they apprehend intensifies the burden. This theme captures the tension between maintaining environmental order and upholding social justice in coastal communities, where law enforcement deeply intersects poverty and survival.

The theme was supported by Systems Theory, which acknowledged that conflicting demands and role ambiguities within complex systems lead to moral dilemmas and emotional strain among individuals. Bantay Dagat officers often find themselves torn between enforcing the law and sympathizing with economically struggling fishermen, creating systemic stress that burdens their emotional well-being.

Furthermore, Routine Activity Theory highlights that constant exposure to offenders and risky environments over time wears down the emotional resilience of guardians. Bantay Dagat officers regularly confronting illegal fishers, some of whom may be their neighbors, experience emotional exhaustion and moral conflict, complicating their law enforcement roles.

According to Bennett & Robinson (2003), enforcers in close-knit communities experience role conflict when their duties clash with personal relationships and local social norms. This role conflict generates psychological stress and can lead to burnout, guilt, or moral disengagement. The situation becomes even more difficult when

laws are perceived as punitive against people with low incomes, making officers feel like agents of injustice rather than protectors.

Kooiman et al. (2005) also discuss the governance of fisheries and how frontline implementers must navigate the social realities of poverty, culture, and tradition while enforcing rules. The authors argue that enforcement in resource-dependent communities requires a blend of compassion, discretion, and firmness, an emotionally demanding balancing act. These findings align with Bantay Dagat officers' expressions of internal struggle when forced to penalize violators simply trying to survive, revealing an apparent moral tension between governance and ground realities.

Furthermore, they explored enforcement practices in Philippine fishing communities and found that officers frequently hesitated to penalize violators due to social and emotional connections. The study emphasized how community-based enforcers often modify their actions based on relationships and humanitarian reasoning, resulting in inconsistent enforcement. It supports the theme by showing that moral considerations and emotional strain deeply influence the daily work of marine officers (Fabinyi & Dalabajan, 2011).

The co-management arrangements can place undue emotional pressure on local enforcers when legal mandates do not align with community expectations. In these cases, local fish wardens and enforcement officers reported feeling isolated and morally conflicted, especially when they received little support from government agencies. These findings mirror the experience of Bantay Dagat officers who must bear the emotional weight of reconciling law enforcement with the humanitarian needs of their communities (Sievanen et al., 2005).

II. Addressing the Challenges Encountered by the Informants in Implementing the Bantay Dagat Programs

There were many hindrances to the implementation of Bantay Dagat programs by the Philippine National Police. The following themes were created to depict the factors affecting the implementation of Bantay Dagat programs.

1. Proactive and Strategic Enforcement. This theme encapsulated the respondents' emphasis on consistent presence, organized patrol systems, and professional conduct in monitoring marine resources. Bantay Dagat officers shared that maintaining visibility at sea, shifting personnel schedules, and following structured roving within their jurisdiction served as effective deterrents against illegal fishing activities. Their commitment to enforcing laws with discipline and order, even with limited resources, reflects a strategic mindset grounded in preventive action rather than reactive force. This theme highlights how frontline officers adapt their methods to maximize their enforcement reach and effectiveness.

Moreover, the respondents consistently pointed out that proactive measures such as clear communication, calm confrontation techniques, and professional responsibility improve cooperation with violators and minimize conflict. This form of enforcement is physical and psychological, rooted in establishing authority, trust, and credibility within the community. Officers enforce rules responsibly and predictably, maintain marine order and set behavioural standards. This theme showcases how professional integrity, structure, and foresight guide Bantay Dagat officers in managing their maritime duties.

Situational Crime Prevention Theory supported the theme by encouraging proactive strategies by focusing on reducing crime opportunities before offenses occur. Bantay Dagat officers apply this by planning patrols based on intelligence, improving surveillance efforts, and using visible presence to deter illegal activities in strategic coastal areas.

Routine Activity Theory also emphasizes the need for strategic enforcement. It explains that by anticipating the patterns and routines of potential offenders, Bantay Dagat officers can better position their patrols at high-risk times and locations, thereby preventing crimes before they happen.

According to Pomeroy et al. (2005), marine resource enforcement becomes more effective when patrols are systematic, officers are visible, and protocols are well-established. Proactive measures deter illegal activities before they escalate and foster voluntary compliance. This literature aligns with Bantay Dagat respondents'

efforts to establish routine monitoring, local coordination, and professional conduct to achieve long-term protection goals.

In another work, Chuenpagdee & Jentoft (2009) argue that enforcement in small-scale fisheries should go beyond punishment and adopt a strategic governance model that combines presence, negotiation, and planning. Their study emphasizes that sustainable fisheries require preventive rather than merely reactive interventions. It supports the theme by reinforcing that structure and planning, as demonstrated by Bantay Dagat patrol strategies, are crucial to building community trust and ensuring compliance.

However, another study examined enforcement mechanisms in Southeast Asia and found that consistent patrol schedules, visible personnel, and coordination with local governance significantly reduced illegal fishing incidents. These results parallel the strategies employed by Bantay Dagat officers, confirming that structured and proactive enforcement leads to better outcomes in marine protection (Crawford & Agardy, 2010).

Similarly, Philippine community-based fisheries enforcement showed that strategic planning, including area-specific patrolling and shift-based workforce deployment, greatly improved monitoring effectiveness and fisher compliance. Officers in that study echoed similar practices mentioned by the respondents, proving that proactive strategies rooted in professionalism are practical tools for managing coastal resources (Buhat & Rivera, 2014).

2. Compassionate and Communicative Policing. This theme captured the respondents' emphasis on empathy, dialogue, and non-violent approaches in their law enforcement duties. Bantay Dagat officers consistently shared that they prioritize respectful communication, peaceful negotiation, and emotional understanding before making arrests or confronting violators. They avoid force unless necessary and engage in meaningful conversations to explain the laws, build rapport, and promote voluntary compliance. Many respondents noted that effective community policing requires not just authority but humanity, especially when dealing with individuals committing violations out of poverty or lack of awareness.

Additionally, this policing approach reflects a deeper understanding of the social and economic conditions influencing illegal fishing. Officers see themselves as enforcers, educators, and mediators who bridge the gap between the law and the local people. Their efforts to explain legal processes and maintain trust within their communities are rooted in care and moral responsibility. The theme reflects a form of law enforcement grounded in community engagement, shared understanding, and mutual respect, ultimately fostering more sustainable compliance and reducing conflict.

The Systems Theory supported the theme by asserting that open communication is vital for system survival. Bantay Dagat officers who communicate effectively with local communities and barangay officials build trust, foster cooperation, and enhance the legitimacy of marine law enforcement, strengthening the entire protective system (Skyttner, 2005).

Also, Routine Activity Theory supports compassionate policing by suggesting that when strong social ties exist between guardians and the community, informal social control strengthens. Bantay Dagat officers who build personal relationships with fishermen and residents are better able to gain cooperation and voluntary compliance, reducing the need for force.

Community-based policing and participatory governance underscore the effectiveness of communication and empathy in law enforcement. According to Tyler (2006), procedural justice, where people perceive the process of law enforcement as fair, respectful, and transparent, leads to higher legitimacy and voluntary compliance. It aligns with the strategies of Bantay Dagat officers who seek to explain their roles and the reasons behind enforcement actions, fostering trust rather than fear among community members.

In the fisheries context, Jentoft (2005) argues that successful resource management depends not only on legal instruments but also on the ability of enforcers to cultivate social relationships, mediate conflicts, and understand community values. He emphasizes that communication and mutual respect are critical to compliance, especially in small-scale fisheries. It reflects the values shared by respondents who rely on dialogue and compassion to enforce laws without alienating the very communities they are there to protect.

Co-management practices in small-scale fisheries found that trust-building through communication significantly improved enforcement outcomes. They observed compliance increased even without strict punitive measures when local officers engaged in dialogue with violators and explained the rationale behind marine policies. It supports the idea that communication is a key tool for effective and compassionate enforcement (Pomeroy & Berkes, 1997).

A Philippine study reported that community trust in Bantay Dagat officers was higher in areas where enforcers prioritized educational outreach and respectful interactions. Communities were more likely to cooperate and report violations when officers were approachable and understanding rather than punitive. It affirms that compassion and communication are central to long-term success in community-based marine law enforcement (Alcala & Russ, 2006).

III. Aspirations of the Informants to Improve the Implementation of the Bantay Dagat Programs

The idea of the Directorate for Bantay Dagat is to bridge the police and the fisherfolk. This study also asked the informants about their aspirations of being Bantay Dagat Officers. The following themes were derived from their responses:

1. Resources Mobilization and Capacity Building. This theme underscored the respondents' calls for increased support in the workforce, equipment, financial resources, training, and inter-agency collaboration. Bantay Dagat officers expressed the need for fuel, patrol boats, communication tools, and personnel to efficiently monitor vast marine areas and respond to illegal fishing activities.

Moreover, respondents highlighted the importance of continuous training in maritime law, first aid, and technical operations, emphasizing that enforcement effectiveness is tied to tools, knowledge and skills. These responses reflect a desire for temporary fixes and long-term institutional strengthening.

This theme also underscores the respondents' awareness of their limitations and eagerness to grow professionally. They articulated how better coordination with local government units, community leaders, and national agencies could enhance their operational capacity and sustainability. The demand for structured support through funding, strategic planning, and skill development demonstrates that resource mobilization and capacity building are essential for fulfilling their roles effectively. This theme reflects an understanding that empowered, well-equipped, and trained officers are better positioned to protect marine ecosystems and promote lawful, sustainable fishing practices.

This theme is supported by the Systems Theory, which highlights that the ability of a system to adapt and survive depends on effective resource mobilization. For Bantay Dagat officers, obtaining adequate training, equipment, and funding is essential to maintaining operational efficiency and meeting the system's goals of marine protection.

Situational Crime Prevention Theory also supports the importance of resource mobilization, as having appropriate tools such as patrol vehicles, surveillance equipment, and protective gear enhances the officers' ability to alter environments and minimize opportunities for illegal fishing.

The coastal and community-based resource management consistently identifies capacity building as a pillar of effective marine governance. Pomeroy et al. (2001) assert that community enforcement groups must be provided with continuous training and logistical resources to ensure consistent law enforcement and conservation results. The lack of proper tools, funding, and skills can lead to enforcement fatigue, inefficiency, and community disengagement. It aligns with the expressed needs of Bantay Dagat officers who recognize the critical role of resources and training in sustaining their effectiveness in the field.

Similarly, Berkes (2009) emphasizes that successful community-based management systems are based on strong institutional support and adaptive learning. He points out that local enforcers thrive when equipped with the knowledge, funding, and legal frameworks necessary to operate independently yet cohesively within larger governance networks. Respondents' repeated requests for workshops, first-aid training, and support from local

authorities reflect this need for structured, long-term capacity-building efforts to ensure both ecological protection and organizational resilience.

In a study by Lowry et al. (2009), it was found that the effectiveness of marine protected area enforcement in the Philippines significantly improved when local patrol units received capacity development, such as technical training and material support. Their research demonstrated that increased capacity directly led to reduced violations, better patrol coverage, and more empowered personnel, closely aligning with the needs identified by Bantay Dagat officers in this study.

Another study examined the impact of LGU-supported training and resource mobilization programs on Bantay Dagat teams in Central Visayas. The study concluded that resource allocation, equipment distribution, and skills development created a more professional, efficient, and motivated force. Officers who received regular training and logistical support performed better and showed a more substantial commitment to marine protection and community engagement (White & Cañares, 2006).

2. Community Engagement and Environmental Protection. This theme emerged from the participants' emphasis on working closely with local communities, barangay officials, and fellow fishers to protect marine resources. Respondents shared that strong communication with stakeholders and awareness-building activities are essential for the success of marine law enforcement.

They highlighted the importance of involving the community in reporting violations, supporting patrol efforts, and promoting shared responsibility for marine conservation. The officers' efforts to foster trust and cooperation reflect a belief that sustainable environmental protection must come from grassroots participation, not just top-down enforcement.

This theme also emerged from recognizing that local support is crucial for preventing illegal activities and cultivating long-term stewardship. Respondents expressed that engaging communities' increases compliance, builds trust, and encourages collective action in protecting marine sanctuaries and coastal ecosystems. Residents' involvement in conservation practices such as mangrove planting, monitoring, and advocacy reflects a growing culture of shared environmental guardianship. These findings underscore how adequate marine protection is deeply tied to civic participation and localized ownership of ecological sustainability.

This theme is supported by Systems Theory, which explains that for marine protection systems like Bantay Dagat to thrive, community engagement must be strong. When community members are involved in environmental protection, they become active parts of the system, reporting violations, participating in education campaigns, and reinforcing the efforts of enforcement officers. .

Routine Activity Theory complements this theme by suggesting that empowered and vigilant communities act as an extended network of capable guardians. As residents become more aware and protective of their marine resources, the overall opportunity for environmental crime diminishes significantly.

Community-based coastal management frequently underscores the centrality of community engagement in effective environmental governance. According to White et al. (2002), empowering communities to participate in marine protection leads to better ecological outcomes and stronger local support. When community members are educated about conservation and given roles in enforcement, they become active stewards of their environment. It aligns with the respondents' emphasis on environmental education, local cooperation, and participatory enforcement as pillars of their patrol work.

Similarly, Agrawal & Gibson (1999) argue that decentralized, participatory approaches are essential in managing common-pool resources effectively. They highlight that resource users often have deep ecological knowledge and social networks that can be leveraged for better conservation outcomes. It supports the idea that involving communities in marine protection through joint patrols, sanctuary maintenance, and legal advocacy can enhance enforcement legitimacy and foster sustainable behaviour at the grassroots level.

No take marine reserves in the Philippines revealed that community involvement was key to their long-term success. Residents who were educated and actively engaged in marine protection were likelier to comply with regulations and assist in monitoring efforts. It aligns with the experiences of Bantay Dagat officers, who stressed that public participation strengthens enforcement and reduces violations (Alcala & Russ, 2006).

Community-based marine protected areas and found that those with high levels of local engagement showed significantly better ecological and compliance outcomes. The study emphasized that conservation becomes a shared responsibility when communities are mobilized through awareness campaigns and included in decision-making. It directly supports the theme that environmental protection is most effective when rooted in community action and participation (Pollnac et al., 2001).

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter deals with the study's summary, findings, and implications.

Summary

This study explored the bantay dagat programs and practices: worklife of the police officers in-charge of bantay dagat programs in the northeastern Bohol.

Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of the informants in implementing bantay dagat programs?
2. How do the informants address their challenges in implementing bantay dagat programs?
3. What are the aspirations of the informants to improve the implementation of the bantay dagat programs?

This study employed a qualitative method of research and a phenomenological approach to delving into the experiences of police officers in the implementation of bantay programs. Phenomenology is recognized as the appropriate approach to the present study as it focuses on the human phenomenon and its importance, especially to criminology as a field of discipline.

The research was conducted in the Municipalities of Anda, Bien Unido, Buenavista, Clarin, Getafe, Inabanga, Mabini, President Carlos P. Garcia, Talibon, and Ubay Bohol.

The study involved ten informants. The respondents were from Anda Municipal Police Station, Bien Unido Municipal Police Station, Buenavista Municipal Police Station, Clarin Municipal Police Station, Getafe Municipal Police Station, Inabanga Municipal Police Station, Mabini Municipal Police Station, President Carlos P. Garcia Municipal Police Station, Talibon Municipal Police Station, and Ubay Municipal Police Station and were interviewed individually.

Police officers assigned as Bantay Dagat officers in their respective stations were selected as participants.

Findings

From the formulated core meanings, twenty-one (21) cluster themes were identified, regrouped, and categorized to form eight (8) emergent themes.

For the sub-problem on the informants' experiences as Bantay Dagat officers, the positive experiences of Bantay Dagat officers the following themes the researcher created: *Meaningful Service through Environmental and Community Protection, and Personal Growth and Purpose through Professional Commitment*.

For the negative experiences as Bantay Dagat officers, the following themes the researcher created: *Operational Challenges and Resource Limitations, and Moral Dilemmas and Emotional Burden in Law Enforcement*.

For the sub-problem of how the informants address the challenges that they encountered in implementing bantay dagat programs in Coastal Municipalities, the researcher created the following themes: *Proactive and Strategic Enforcement, and Compassionate and Communicative Policing*.

The researcher has constructed the themes based on the informants' aspirations as Bantay Dagat officers to implement bantay dagat programs: *Resource Mobilization and Capacity Building, and Community Engagement and Environmental Protection*.

Implications

After a thorough discussion of the preceding chapter, the following recommendations and measures for implementation were reflected in the informants' significant statements, which were meaningfully formulated into common themes. These themes were also derived to foster more vital program concerns for the effective implementation of the PNP's Bantay Dagat programs.

Implication for Practice

From the inquiry's findings, the following are recommendations, suggestions, and measures for implementation.

Bantay Dagat Police Officers must continue embracing their dual role as law enforcers and community educators, balancing compassion and professionalism. Their daily engagement in patrols, community interaction, and conflict resolution highlights the importance of developing their communication skills, legal knowledge, and environmental understanding. They should also advocate for their capacity development by actively documenting operational challenges and requesting appropriate support from authorities. It will ensure that their role remains effective, sustainable, and aligned with marine conservation and community protection goals.

The Philippine National Police (PNP) should recognize the unique responsibilities of Bantay Dagat officers and institutionalize their support through policy, resources, and training. PNPs must provide standardized training modules, operational guidelines, and logistical support for these officers as they are placed at the forefront of environmental enforcement in coastal areas. Moreover, the PNP must strengthen its partnerships with maritime agencies and ensure that marine enforcement is integrated into broader national policing frameworks, ensuring consistency, safety, and strategic coordination.

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) is critical in maritime security and must further collaborate with Bantay Dagat and local police units. By sharing technical expertise, conducting joint patrols, and offering advanced maritime safety and surveillance training, the PCG can enhance the operational effectiveness of community-based sea patrols. It should also provide technical resources or support in high-risk or hard-to-reach areas where local units may lack the equipment or training to respond to complex violations, promoting a united front in marine law enforcement.

Furthermore, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) is in a prime position to institutionalize support for Bantay Dagat officers by issuing policies that formalize their roles, responsibilities, and protections. DILG can mandate budget allocations for Bantay Dagat operations, ensure enforcement structures are in place locally, and facilitate training and evaluation programs. By integrating community-based enforcers into formal governance frameworks, DILG can strengthen local capacity for environmental protection and reinforce a culture of accountability and coordination.

Local Government Units (LGUs) must take the lead in ensuring that Bantay Dagat programs are well-funded, well-coordinated, and strategically implemented. As the primary implementers of coastal management at the grassroots level, LGUs should prioritize investments in patrol boats, fuel, safety gear, and training for enforcers. Additionally, LGUs should work closely with barangay leaders and the Community to create policies and activities that foster collective responsibility over marine resources while institutionalizing monitoring and evaluation systems for better program impact.

Barangay officials play a frontline role in supporting Bantay Dagat's efforts and must actively mobilize community participation in marine protection. Their close ties with residents position them as effective intermediaries between enforcement officers and the public. They should assist in reporting illegal activities, help in conflict mediation, and lead information drives about fishing regulations. Barangay officials are also instrumental in endorsing localized ordinances and policies that reinforce marine sanctuary protection and support the work of Bantay Dagat personnel.

The Community must be recognized as beneficiaries and co-managers of marine resources. Community members are responsible for reporting illegal activities, participating in conservation programs, and supporting the lawful activities of Bantay Dagat officers. Public trust and cooperation are essential for the effectiveness of community-based enforcement. Therefore, the Community should participate in environmental education initiatives and adopt sustainable practices, ensuring that marine conservation is a shared value and collective goal.

The researcher is responsible for communicating the study's insights to stakeholders who can act on them. The findings should inform local and national policy, training programs, and resource allocation strategies. The researcher must also advocate for recognizing the complex challenges Bantay Dagat officers face, ranging from operational limitations to emotional burdens, so meaningful changes in governance and support systems can be made. Research dissemination should reach policymakers, academic institutions, and the communities studied to close the feedback loop.

For future researchers, this study offers several implications for practice by exploring other dimensions of the Bantay Dagat experience, such as the psychological well-being of officers, community perceptions of enforcement, and the long-term effectiveness of marine protection strategies. Comparative studies across different regions could identify best practices and inform national policy. Future research may also adopt interdisciplinary and mixed-method approaches to capture the full complexity of coastal law enforcement and its relationship with social, ecological, and governance systems.

In order to achieve a diverse workforce within law enforcement agencies, the gap of mistrust must be bridged. This may take time, given recent incidents in which the police were involved in wrongdoings. However, investing in positive community relations will always and will indeed have its returns.

Implications for Future Studies

The researcher recommends conducting an in-depth inquiry into the following study:

This study provides valuable insights into the lived experiences of police officers assigned to Bantay Dagat programs. However, it also allows future researchers to delve deeper into other dimensions of community-based marine law enforcement. Future studies could explore the psychosocial impact of long-term involvement in marine enforcement, particularly the stress, burnout, and emotional dilemmas officers face in balancing compassion with legal responsibility. Additionally, further research may examine the perception of the Community toward Bantay Dagat officers, assessing how trust, legitimacy, and cooperation influence the effectiveness of environmental protection initiatives.

Future researchers are also encouraged to conduct comparative or longitudinal studies across different provinces or regions to identify best practices and scalable models of marine resource management. Investigating how geographic, cultural, and institutional differences affect the outcomes of Bantay Dagat programs can contribute to a more holistic understanding of what makes these programs successful or challenging. Mixed-method or interdisciplinary approaches combining qualitative narratives with quantitative impact assessments could help measure the socioeconomic and ecological outcomes of Bantay Dagat operations, further enriching the literature on sustainable coastal governance.

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Jun Stephen B. Enoc

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Curriculum Vitae



Jun Stephen B. Enoc

Faculty, College of Criminal Justice

Colegio de Getafe

Contact Number:

Email Addresses:

Date of Birth : October 13, 1994

Place of Birth: Cuya, Ubay, Bohol

Education:

1. Graduated, Elementary at Juagdan Elementary School, SY 2007-2008
2. Graduated, High School at Biabas Trade High School, SY 2012-2013
3. Graduated, Bachelor of Science in Criminology at Trinidad Municipal College
4. At present, taking Master of Science in Criminal Justice with Specialization in Criminology at University of Cebu Main Campus

Teaching Experiences:

1. Instructor of Colegio de Getafe at present
2. Former Instructor, College of Criminal Justice at Trinidad Municipal College from 2021 until 2022

Trainings and Seminars Attended:

1. Attended Seminar on Fraud Prevention, Detection and Investigation at Tagbilaran City, bohol
2. Attended Seminar Workshop on the Implementation of the 2022 Table of Specification (TOS) for the Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE) at Cebu City

APPROVAL SHEET

This Thesis entitled **BANTAY DAGAT PROGRAM AND PRACTICES: WORKLIFE OF THE POLICE OFFICERS IN-CHARGE OF BANTAY DAGAT PROGRAMS IN THE NORTHEASTERN BOHOL** prepared and submitted by Jun Stephen B. Enoc, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Science in Criminal Justice with specialization in Criminology** has been examined and is recommended for acceptance and approval for Proposal Hearing.



Dissertation Committee

ATTY. DODELON F. SABIJON, Ph.D.

Adviser

ESMERALDO E. DAMUAG, Ph.D.

Member

VANZIEL ROVER A. NILLAMA, Ph.D.

Member

YOLANDA C. SAYSON, Ed.D.

Chairman

Panel Of Examiners

Approved by Committee on Oral Examination with grade of **PASSED**.

ATTY. DODELON F. SABIJON, Ph.D.

Adviser

ESMERALDO E. DAMUAG, Ph.D.

Member

VANZIEL ROVER A. NILLAMA, Ph.D.

Member

YOLANDA C. SAYSON, Ed.D.

Chairman

Accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Science in Criminal Justice with Specialization in Criminology.

Comprehensive Exam : **Passed**

Date of Oral Examination : **June 19, 2024**

YOLANDA C. SAYSON, Ed.D

Dean, Graduate School