A Correlational Study on the Police Omnipresence in the Community Perception Towards Crime Rates and Public Safety

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ABSTRACT

A visible police presence serves as a powerful deterrent to crime and a vital factor in strengthening public confidence in law enforcement. This study aimed to determine the relationship between police omnipresence and the community's perception of public safety and crime rates. This was conducted in one of the municipalities of Misamis Occidental, where police omnipresence is actively implemented through routine patrols and law enforcement visibility, the study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. A total of 293 residents were purposively selected as respondents. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to measure the levels of perception, and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to determine the strength and direction of relationships among variables. Findings revealed that police omnipresence had a strong positive impact on community perceptions of reduced crime rates and heightened public safety, fostering trust, confidence, and cooperation between the police and the public. Moreover, a significant positive correlation was found between police omnipresence and both public safety and perceived crime reduction. It was concluded that visible and consistent police presence effectively deter criminal activity and promotes a safer and more cohesive community. It is recommended that the Philippine National Police (PNP) intensify visible patrol operations and strengthen community-oriented policing programs to sustain public trust, enhance perceptions of safety, and further support crime prevention efforts.

Keywords: police omnipresence, community perception, crime rates, public safety, law enforcement visibility

INTRODUCTION

Rationale of the Study

Crime remains a persistent societal concern, with far-reaching implications for economic stability, social cohesion, and overall quality of life (Ohuche et al., 2025; Cysek-Pawlak et al., 2025). Ensuring public safety is therefore a fundamental responsibility of the state, as it enables communities to function in an environment free from fear and insecurity. Among the key strategies employed in crime prevention is police omnipresence, which refers to the visible and sustained presence of law enforcement officers within a community (Mamasalagat et al., 2025). This visibility may take various forms, including foot patrols, mobile patrols, and active participation in community-based activities.

Over time, policing has evolved from a predominantly reactive model toward more proactive approaches that emphasize visibility, prevention, and partnership with the public (Carroll, 2025). Empirical evidence suggests that police presence plays a critical role not only in deterring criminal activity but also in fostering public trust, which is shaped by community perceptions, institutional policies, and historical relationships between law enforcement and citizens (Yesberg et al., 2023). Recognizing the role of police omnipresence in crime prevention is therefore essential in developing policing strategies that balance public safety, legitimacy, and community welfare (Corlett, 2025).

Scholarly inquiry into police omnipresence is particularly important in understanding its contribution to crime control and public safety outcomes (Maboa & Horne, 2025). Within deterrence-based frameworks, visible policing is understood to discourage criminal behavior by increasing the perceived risk of detection and apprehension (Modise, 2025). Previous studies have shown that increased patrol activity can reduce certain categories of crime, although the effectiveness of such measures is often contingent upon local community dynamics and the manner in which policing strategies are implemented. Moreover, perceptions of safety play a crucial role in shaping public trust and cooperation with law enforcement. When residents feel secure due to a visible police presence, they are more likely to engage with officers, report suspicious activities, and participate in crime prevention initiatives, thereby contributing to a safer and more cohesive community (George-Marius, 2025).

Despite the breadth of literature on policing strategies, there remains a limited number of studies that simultaneously examine police omnipresence, crime rates, and public perceptions of safety. Much of the existing research has focused either on crime statistics or on community trust in isolation, with relatively few studies integrating both dimensions alongside measurable indicators of police visibility. Furthermore, findings across jurisdictions are often inconsistent due to variations in crime patterns, policing policies, and community characteristics, making it difficult to draw broadly applicable conclusions. Addressing these limitations requires quantitative approaches capable of systematically examining the relationships among police presence, crime, and public perception. Such evidence is vital for informing policy decisions and guiding law enforcement agencies in designing effective and context-responsive crime prevention strategies.

This study is grounded in the assumption that increased police omnipresence is inversely related to crime rates, such that greater visibility of law enforcement is associated with lower levels of criminal activity (Weisburd, 2021). This assumption is based on the premise that visible policing functions as a deterrent by heightening offenders' perceptions of risk. In addition, the study posits that police omnipresence positively influences perceptions of public safety, with individuals feeling more secure in environments where police patrols are frequent and noticeable (Rai & Patel, 2025). Enhanced perceptions of safety may, in turn, strengthen public confidence in law enforcement and encourage civic engagement in crime prevention efforts. By empirically testing these assumptions, the study seeks to contribute evidence on the effectiveness of police visibility in both deterring crime and reassuring the public (Gul & Uludağ, 2023).

The primary gap addressed by this research lies in both the empirical and literature domains. While substantial scholarship has examined the individual effects of police presence on crime rates and community trust, relatively few studies have quantitatively explored the combined relationship between police omnipresence, crime rates, and public perceptions of safety. Existing studies often treat these variables separately, limiting understanding of how police visibility simultaneously influences crime deterrence and public reassurance.

Accordingly, this study aims to determine the relationship between police omnipresence and community perceptions of crime rates and public safety (Bürger, 2024). Specifically, it seeks to assess the influence of police visibility on perceived safety, examine whether increased police presence functions as an effective deterrent to crime, and analyze how police omnipresence shapes community trust and a sense of security. The findings are intended to provide evidence-based insights that may assist policymakers and law enforcement practitioners in strengthening crime prevention efforts through balanced visibility and meaningful community engagem

This study employed a descriptive–correlational research design to examine the relationship between police omnipresence and community perceptions of public safety and crime rates. The research was conducted in Barangay Poblacion 2, Misamis Occidental, a community where police omnipresence is actively implemented through regular patrols and sustained law enforcement visibility. A total of 293 residents were purposively selected as respondents. Inclusion criteria required respondents to have a sufficient length of residency in the barangay and direct exposure to police presence and crime-related incidents within the community. This sampling approach ensured that participants possessed adequate familiarity with local policing practices, prevailing safety conditions, and crime-related experiences.

Data were collected using researcher-developed survey questionnaires consisting of three instruments. The first questionnaire measured police omnipresence and contained 15 items grouped into three dimensions, with five statements per dimension capturing police visibility, accessibility, and engagement. The second questionnaire assessed perceptions of public safety and comprised 15 items organized into three sections reflecting residents' sense of safety and security. The third questionnaire evaluated perceptions of crime rates in relation to police omnipresence and followed the same structure of 15 items across three dimensions. All items were measured using a Likert-type scale to capture respondents' levels of agreement.

The validity of the instruments was established through expert review. Three experts in criminology and social research evaluated the questionnaires for content relevance, clarity, and alignment with the study constructs. Their recommendations were incorporated to refine item wording and improve conceptual consistency, thereby establishing content validity. Prior to the main data collection, a pilot test was conducted among respondents with similar characteristics to the target population but who were not included in the final sample. The reliability of the instruments was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded coefficients of at least 0.70 for all three questionnaires, indicating acceptable internal consistency and suitability for research use.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation, were employed to determine the level and variability of respondents' perceptions regarding police omnipresence, public safety, and crime rates in Barangay Poblacion 2. To examine the relationships among the variables, the Pearson Product–Moment Correlation Coefficient was utilized to assess the strength and direction of the associations between police omnipresence and public safety, as well as between police omnipresence and perceived crime rates. This analysis provided empirical evidence on the role of visible policing in enhancing community reassurance and influencing perceptions of crime within the barangay.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Impact of Police Omnipresent on Community Perception towards Crime Rates

Table 1 Impact of Police Omnipresence on Community Perception towards Crime Rate

Statements	Mean	Description
A. Perceived Reduction in Crime Rates	4.19	Highly Effective
B. Sense of Security and Safety	4.36	Extremely Effective
C. Trust and Confidence in Law Enforcement	4.23	Highly Effective

The results indicate that community members largely perceive police omnipresence as an effective approach to crime reduction, increased personal safety, and strengthened trust in law enforcement institutions. Elevated mean scores across the measured dimensions reflect a shared view that a visible and consistent police presence discourages criminal behavior, reassures residents about their safety, and encourages cooperation with police authorities. These findings are supported by existing empirical research showing that police visibility contributes to greater public trust, collective efficacy, and perceived safety, particularly when policing practices are characterized by procedural fairness, transparency, and sustained community engagement (Yesberg et al., 2021; Wachyono, 2025).

The findings suggest that visible policing functions not only as a crime deterrence mechanism but also as a relational and symbolic strategy that reinforces police legitimacy and public reassurance. From a policy and practice perspective, the results underscore the importance of maintaining consistent, accessible, and equitable police visibility—such as through strategic foot patrols and community-based initiatives—while recognizing that enduring trust and cooperation are dependent on accountability, respectful conduct, and meaningful interaction between law enforcement officers and the communities they serve.

Table 2 Level of Public Safety as Influenced by Police Omnipresence

Statements	Mean	Description
A. Perceived Safety in Public Spaces	4.31	Very High
B. Fear of Crime and Victimization	4.26	Very High
C. Community Engagement and Cooperation	4.30	Very High

The findings reveal that community members generally regard police omnipresence as an effective means of curbing crime, enhancing perceptions of safety, and reinforcing trust in law enforcement. Elevated mean scores across the three assessed dimensions indicate broad agreement that sustained and visible police presence discourages criminal behavior, provides reassurance regarding both individual and collective security, and promotes cooperation between residents and police authorities. These perceptions are consistent with empirical evidence demonstrating that police visibility strengthens public trust, collective efficacy, and perceived safety, particularly when policing practices are grounded in procedural fairness, transparency, and community-oriented engagement (Yesberg et al., 2021; Ezikeudu et al., 2024).

Moreover, the results suggest that visible policing operates not only as a deterrence mechanism but also as a relational and symbolic strategy that enhances police legitimacy and public reassurance (Yesufu & Bhengu, 2021). From a policy and practice standpoint, the findings highlight the need for sustained, accessible, and equitable police visibility—such as focused foot patrols and community engagement programs—while underscoring that enduring trust and cooperation are contingent upon accountability, respectful conduct, and meaningful interaction between law enforcement officers and the communities they serve.

Table 3 Level of Crime Rates as Perceived by the Community in Relation to Police Omnipresence

Statements	Mean	Description
A. Awareness of Crime Prevention Measures	4.23	Very High
B. Adoption of Safety Practices	4.24	Very High
C. Community Vigilance and Reporting	4.23	Very High

The results show that community assessments of crime-related conditions in relation to police omnipresence are consistently high across key areas, including awareness of crime prevention efforts, engagement in personal and collective safety practices, and levels of community vigilance and reporting. The elevated mean scores indicate that a sustained and visible police presence contributes to greater public awareness of preventive initiatives, encourages residents to adopt proactive safety behaviors, and strengthens attentiveness to and reporting of suspicious activities. These findings are supported by prior empirical research demonstrating that police visibility—when reinforced through clear communication, procedural fairness, and community-oriented approaches—promotes informed, participatory, and preventive behavior among community members (Savka, 2025; Masterson et al., 2020; Papp, 2025).

The findings suggest that police omnipresence functions not only as a mechanism for crime deterrence but also as a means of fostering shared responsibility between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. From a policy and practice perspective, the results emphasize the importance of sustaining visible, approachable, and communicative policing strategies, complemented by public education initiatives and accessible reporting channels, as essential components for strengthening collective vigilance and supporting long-term crime prevention efforts.

Table 4   Significant Relationship Between Police Omnipresence and Public Safety

Variables	r value / p value	Remark
Perceived Reduction in Crime Rates and Perceived Safety in Public Spaces	0.785 0.000	High Correlation Significant
Perceived Reduction in Crime Rates and Fear of Crime and Victimization	0.826 0.000	Very High Correlation Significant
Perceived Reduction in Crime Rates and Community Engagement and Cooperation	0.769 0.000	High Correlation Significant
Sense of Security and Safety and Perceived Safety in Public Spaces	0.833 0.000	Very High Correlation Significant
Sense of Security and Safety and Fear of Crime and Victimization	0.828 0.000	Very High Correlation Significant
Sense of Security and Safety and Community Engagement and Cooperation	0.743 0.000	High Correlation Significant
Trust and Confidence in Law Enforcement and Perceived Safety in Public Spaces	0.865 0.000	Very High Correlation Significant
Trust and Confidence in Law Enforcement and Fear of Crime and Victimization	0.858 0.000	Very High Correlation Significant
Trust and Confidence in Law Enforcement and Community Engagement and Cooperation	0.815 0.000	Very High Correlation Significant

The analysis reveals a statistically significant and strong positive relationship between police omnipresence and perceived public safety, with correlation coefficients ranging from high to very high ($r = 0.743$–0.865, $p = 0.000$). The most pronounced associations emerged between trust and confidence in law enforcement and perceived safety in public spaces, as well as between fear of crime and experiences or perceptions of victimization. These patterns indicate that public trust in the police plays a central role in strengthening feelings of safety and mitigating fear of crime.

Moreover, the strong linkage between individuals' sense of security and their perceptions of safety in public environments underscores the importance of visible, accessible, and approachable policing in providing reassurance and protection. These findings are consistent with prior research demonstrating that regular, community-oriented police presence enhances public trust, reinforces perceptions of social order, and contributes to reduced fear of crime (Benjamin, 2025; Procter & Ware, 2025). The results suggest that police omnipresence functions not only as a crime deterrent but also as a critical mechanism for building public trust, encouraging community cooperation, and fostering collective resilience, thereby substantially improving perceived public safety.

Table 5.   Significant Relationship Between Police Omnipresence and Crime Rates

Variables	*r* value	Remark
Perceived Reduction in Crime Rates and Awareness of Crime Prevention Measures	0.762 0.000	High Correlation Significant
Perceived Reduction in Crime Rates and Adoption of Safety and Practices	0.677 0.000	High Correlation Significant
Perceived Reduction in Crime Rates and Community Vigilance and Reporting	0.711 0.000	High Correlation Significant
Sense of Security and Safety and Awareness of Crime Prevention Measures	0.776 0.000	High Correlation Significant
Sense of Security and Safety and Adoption of Safety and Practices	0.695 0.000	High Correlation Significant
Sense of Security and Safety and Community Vigilance and Reporting	0.732 0.000	High Correlation Significant
Trust and Confidence in Law Enforcement and Awareness of Crime Prevention Measures	0.849 0.000	Very High Correlation Significant
Trust and Confidence in Law Enforcement and Adoption of Safety and Practices	0.770 0.000	High Correlation Significant
Trust and Confidence in Law Enforcement and Community Vigilance and Reporting	0.784 0.000	High Correlation Significant

The results indicate a significant and positive correlation between police omnipresence and crime rates as perceived by the community, with correlation coefficients ranging from 0.677 to 0.849 (p = 0.000). The strongest relationship observed between trust and confidence in law enforcement and awareness of crime prevention measures underscores the essential role of public trust in promoting informed and participatory crime prevention. Strong correlations with feelings of security, community vigilance, and reporting further suggest that visible and approachable policing enhances public awareness, encourages the adoption of safety practices, and fosters cooperative behavior, all of which contribute to the perceived reduction of crime (Ifeanyichukwu et al., 2025; Singh, & Yadav, 2025). These findings align with previous research that highlights how police visibility, procedural justice, and community-oriented strategies collectively enhance legitimacy, deter criminal activity, and increase citizen engagement in safety initiatives (Tankebe & Yesberg, 2023;). Overall, the results imply that police omnipresence serves not only as a deterrent to crime but also as a catalyst for community-driven prevention, emphasizing the importance of sustained visibility, transparency, and trust-building in effective policing strategies.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings confirm that the omnipresence of police is crucial in enhancing community safety and fostering positive perceptions of crime and public order. Visible police deter crime. They cut fear of attack. They build safety, trust, and teamwork between police and residents. More police in sight also spread knowledge of crime prevention. They push safety habits. They strengthen watch groups and reports of problems. The clear

link between police presence, safety, and lower crime views proves good policing covers crime stops plus trust, shared duties, and citizen action. This creates safer communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, it is recommended that the Philippine National Police (PNP) maintain and enhance visible, community-oriented patrols in both urban and rural areas to bolster public trust and perceptions of safety. Local Government Units are encouraged to complement police visibility by prioritizing investments in safety-supportive infrastructure, including adequate street lighting, closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems, and efficient emergency response facilities. Barangay councils, in partnership with community-based organizations, should implement regular crime prevention and personal safety education initiatives—such as neighborhood watch programs—to promote collective responsibility for community security.

Additionally, the PNP is advised to expand and refine public information and consultation channels to improve transparency, communication, and citizen engagement. At the institutional level, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) should reinforce inter-agency collaboration through evidence-based planning, capacity-building programs, and systematic monitoring and evaluation. These coordinated efforts are essential to ensuring that police omnipresence translates into meaningful crime reduction, improved public safety, and sustained community resilience.

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