

Life Experiences and Aspirations of Police Criminal Investigators

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the experiences of the informants as criminal investigators in the province of Bohol. Specifically, it determined the following: experiences of the informants as criminal investigators, the contribution of criminal investigation to the criminal justice process, and aspirations of the informants in their professional and personal lives. This study employed a qualitative method of research employing a phenomenological approach in delving into the experiences of the informants. This study was conducted in the province of Bohol. The informants of this study were ten (10) police investigators who were assigned as police investigators for at least five (5) years and have attended the criminal investigation and detection course or training of any equivalent courses. Six (6) emergent themes were derived from the responses of the informants. For the experiences of the informants in criminal investigation in the positive and negative aspects, four (4) themes were created namely: Together for the Better; Yes, as Achiever, Never Surrender; Work over Family; and lastly, When Obstacles Hinder Justice. For the contribution of criminal investigation to the criminal justice process, two themes were created: Cautious Step Towards Development; Hand in Hand, We Stand. Lastly, for the aspiration of the informants in their professional and personal lives, two themes were created: Inspired to Serve; and Once an Officer, Forever and Influence. Awareness programs from the Philippine National Police under Police Community Relations have to double the efforts in making the community knowledgeable of the programs and of the importance of police-community relations as a step in making the community open-minded during the implementation of any programs that involve their participation in the maintenance of peace and order and as members of the pillars of the criminal justice system. Refresher courses, training, and other related seminar workshops should be conducted for the personnel assigned as an investigator to uplift their knowledge and exposure to the different criminal cases, and techniques comprising the three phases of investigation.

Keywords: Criminal Justice, Experiences of criminal investigator, phenomenological approach, Bohol Province, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

A police criminal investigator is a type of law enforcement professional who assists in the solution of criminal cases, investigates crimes, and gathers information to capture offenders. Police criminal investigators also collect testimony and evidence through specific inquiry, interrogation, or both to reveal the truth. Fedorenko et al. (2023) express that the most important thing in professional activities within the internal affairs bodies is establishing relations influenced by circumstances and all possible situations. Therefore, it is necessary to form the communication abilities of law enforcement. This need is identified by Kleygrewe et al. (2022) that police training, being a very complex and multifaceted topic and ruled by organizational guidelines, plays a very important role in police officers' development, as they are formed by a variety of educational elements.

Republic Act No. 8551 entitled "Philippine National Police Reform and Reorganization Act of 1998" intends to enhance and reestablish the PNP capability. Its efforts on creating highly well-organized and competent law enforcers with a national scope and civilian character. This particular act directs the administration and oversight of the PNP to a police commission, for guaranteeing efficient measures to sustain peace and order.

Consequently, Republic Act No. 8551 influences how the Philippine National Police is structured and functions, playing a vital part in maintaining peace and safety, across the country.

Law enforcement officers, as mentioned by Agunos and Diaz (2019), see themselves as skilled in a variety of investigative activities, including skills in investigation, legal knowledge, law enforcement, organizational awareness, research and analysis, oral communication, and influencing and negotiating. According to Harter's competence motivation theory (1978), people are driven to participate in activities that showcase or improve their skills. Completing challenging tasks and gaining recognition from peers reinforces their belief in their abilities across physical, cognitive, or social domains (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022). Law enforcement professionals need to have this inner motivation to become proficient in their skills and pursue greatness as they manage the challenges of their investigative positions.

Furthermore, Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory (1985) suggests that individuals can achieve self-determination when their needs for competence, connection, and autonomy are fulfilled (Cherry, 2022). This theory aligns with Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1978), which underscores an individual's confidence in their capability to perform behaviors necessary to achieve specific outcomes (Lopez-Garrido, 2023). Officers who possess a strong sense of investigative competence and have undergone specialized training often demonstrate higher proficiency in oral communication, building partnerships, team cohesion, written communication, and negotiation. Integrating these theories emphasizes the significance of inner motivation and self-confidence in cultivating highly skilled and effective law enforcement professionals.

Expanding on this, PNP Circular No. 2005-001 sets out guidelines for Philippine National Police (PNP) personnel, both uniformed and non-uniformed, to engage in limited private practice of their licensed professions. This directive aims to foster the professional growth, advancement, and competence of PNP officers by enabling them to apply and enhance their skills in external environments. Through private practice, officers can stay updated on current developments in their fields, ensuring their expertise remains relevant. Additionally, the circular promotes building connections with professionals from other sectors, which can lead to collaborations that support the PNP's mission. This strategy aligns with the organization's objective of upholding a highly skilled and adaptable police force, balancing officers' professional development with their primary law enforcement responsibilities.

Aporbo (2023) emphasizes the crucial role of alignment, user-friendly tools, and active engagement in improving organizational performance management systems. This claim aligns with the necessity of competence in law enforcement tasks, where effective alignment with critical success factors and the use of accessible tools facilitates efficient crime investigation and the administration of justice. Moreover, the active involvement of managers and employees in performance planning and feedback loops reinforces the importance of competency development within law enforcement agencies. In contrast, Edvardsen and Hoel (2022) argue that police organizations' efforts to cultivate competence among patrols are inconsistent and lack cohesive organization. They advocate for a training approach that prioritizes understanding the 'window of opportunity' and highlights a holistic learning approach to cultivate interpretive-relational competence. Incorporating these insights underscores the intersection between organizational success strategies and the pursuit of excellence in law enforcement endeavors.

Aligned with Aporbo's emphasis on competence and alignment, practical skills in defensive tactics are equally crucial for law enforcement. During the official opening of the five-day competition at the Cebu Wonderland Shooters Club firing range in Barangay Agus, Lapu-Lapu City, Police Regional Office (PRO)-Central Visayas Director BGen Ronnie Montejo emphasized the importance of proficiency and competence in shooting to effectively defend against aggression and violence. Montejo highlighted the significance of continuous training and practice to attain such capabilities (Villaruel, 2021). This focus on practical skill growth complements the broader organizational strategies discussed by Aporbo, demonstrating the complex approach essential for effective law enforcement.

In addition, Northup (2020) highlights the importance of providing new BCI officers with opportunities for practical skill application, particularly through simulated settings. Engaging in these scenarios not only enhances their proficiency but also fosters a deeper understanding of criminal investigations. Similarly,

Mendoza et al. (2020) emphasize the significance of integrating training and mentoring initiatives. Advocating for a comprehensive approach to professional development, these efforts prepare officers for the challenges they will face in their careers and contribute to the cultivation of a highly skilled law enforcement workforce.

Donque (2023) underscores the remarkable competence and dedication exhibited by police investigators in accessing information, utilizing resources efficiently, and seizing opportunities within their investigative roles. Their high levels of striving, participation, and willingness to work highlight their commitment to their responsibilities, reflecting the importance of competence in law enforcement tasks. Moreover, their maintenance of good work standards and leadership qualities further emphasize the significance of competence in ensuring effective law enforcement operations. Additionally, the acknowledgment of their technical, moral, and behavioral competence underscores the multifaceted nature of the skills required in law enforcement tasks, emphasizing the critical role of competence in achieving success and upholding integrity within the profession.

Criminal investigators are vital in the field of the criminal justice system. Criminal investigators are vital in the field of the criminal justice system. Heinous crimes have been presented on television and in films, and the investigators' work is often portrayed as noble and commendable. While it is a mystery how crimes can be solved in less than a week on TV shows and movies, in real life, an investigator is not a profession that someone can easily have. More so, a lot of time is to be spent observing, analyzing, and focusing on the crime incident since the duty of an investigator is to solve the crime at hand and provide justice for the victim to bring peace and order to the community. According to Rillera-Laroya et al. (2022), law enforcement is seen to have a central role in the administration of justice, it involves arrest, investigation, and filing of cases. Law enforcement's experience in the administration of justice is attributed to following protocols.

Investigating a crime is a tedious and arduous task. In discharging their functions and duties, crime investigators must be sufficiently skilled in their work so that their efforts are not nullified by a violation of the fundamental rights of individuals. Romadhon and Soeling (2024) argue that to meet the demands of the Society 5.0 era, police officers must possess competencies encompassing a blend of hard skills, soft skills, ICT processing skills, and knowledge, including digital competence in technology-driven work settings, collaboration with cyber systems, adaptable work processes tailored to stakeholder requirements, a competitive mindset, and strong teamwork abilities. In essence, this suggests a shift in the skill set required from law enforcement professionals, from traditional investigation skills to proficiency in maneuvering increasingly complex technological landscapes and fostering collaborative relationships both inside and outside the law enforcement community. So, as policing changes to match the demands of current technology and society, developing these multifaceted competencies is becoming increasingly important for effective law enforcement.

In the process of rendering their services, many criminal investigation risks must be accounted for and managed by criminal investigators. Some risk factors involve legal concerns, while others involve financial matters, and there is also a substantial risk of injury from violence or accidents. These various experiences, when recognized, can be prepared for and controlled while hazardous surprises may be expected at all times. In this field, investigators should strive to be brave, patient, objective, and result-oriented.

Building upon the existing literature, this study aims to deeply explore the experiences and viewpoints of police criminal investigators. Its main goal is to gain a better understanding of the difficulties and complexities they face in their work. By thoroughly examining the real-life experiences and hopes of these investigators, the study hopes to uncover useful insights that can help improve policies, training methods, and how law enforcement agencies operate. Ultimately, the end goal is to make police criminal investigators more competent and effective, leading to a betterment of criminal investigation and improvements in the justice system as a whole. Specifically focused on understanding the various aspects of the personal and professional lives of police criminal investigators in the Province of Bohol, CY 2024, will address some of the important questions regarding their experiences, how their work contributes to the justice system, and how they aspire to accomplish something in their career. By paying attention to these questions, the research aims to provide valuable insights concerning the challenges, motivations, and goals of police criminal investigators, which are of help in adding to the continuous discourse on law enforcement practices and in the development of personnel.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the research has been to explore the lived experiences of police investigators from the Philippine National Police in Bohol in 2024. The qualitative phenomenological design has been chosen for the current study to obtain data on the perceptions, perspectives, and understandings of the investigators, both in the professional context and personal encounters. Given the overall research design and the particular emphasis on phenomenology, the goal of this overall methodological choice has been to reveal the essence of the common experiences of the participants to examine human experiences through the investigators' language and meaning. In this way, the current qualitative research design enables an exploration of the lived experiences of the police investigators in Bohol and how they understand them, which can provide the necessary insights into their world.

The research was conducted across various urban and growth centers of Bohol, including Tagbilaran City, Tubigon, Inabanga, Talibon, Ubay, Jagna, Carmen, Loboc, Panglao, and Dauis. Bohol, renowned for its natural beauty, provided a diverse and dynamic setting for the research, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of police investigators operating in different environments. Purposive convenient sampling was used to select a total of ten police investigators for the study. Each investigator had a minimum of five years of experience and relevant training in criminal investigation, ensuring they possessed substantial experience and insight relevant to the study's focus.

Data collection involved using a custom interview guide comprising open-ended questions, which were validated by a panel to ensure their adequacy and comprehensiveness. During the interviews, both individual and focus group settings were utilized, incorporating follow-up questions as necessary. To ensure accuracy, a voice recorder and field notes were employed throughout the interview process. Ethical considerations were given the utmost importance during the research, with participants' rights and confidentiality safeguarded by international and national regulations. All data were anonymized and securely stored, with necessary measures taken to protect the individuals involved in the study.

The collected data was analyzed using the Colaizzi phenomenological approach. This involved extracting significant statements from the interviews, identifying core meanings, and developing cluster themes. The emergent themes that emerged captured the essence of the investigators' experiences, unveiling patterns, similarities, and differences in their perceptions and encounters. Overall, this study provides an in-depth exploration of the experiences of police investigators in Bohol, shedding light on both the challenges they face professionally and the personal journeys they undergo. By employing a rigorous phenomenological qualitative design and upholding ethical standards, this research significantly contributes to understanding the complexities encountered by police investigators in the region.

Presentation of Data

After carefully reviewing all transcriptions multiple times to capture the essence of the informants' experiences, significant statements were extracted directly related to the research phenomenon (refer to Appendix A for sample significant statements). From these statements, formulated meanings were constructed, leading to the emergence of eight themes. These themes represent the life experiences of criminal investigators, offering a comprehensive narrative of their journey.

Additionally, cluster themes (see Appendix A1 for a sample) were identified and further evolved into emergent themes, enriching the depth of understanding. The resulting themes provide a detailed and exhaustive account of the informants' experiences, encompassing both positive and negative aspects.

These emergent themes are presented in three main sections: experiences of criminal investigation, contributions to the criminal justice process, and aspirations of the informants for their personal and professional lives.

1) Experiences of the informants as Criminal Investigators:

The experiences of criminal investigators encompass a range of positive and negative aspects as they perform their duties. These insights provide a nuanced understanding of their professional lives.

Positive Experiences

This section highlights the fulfilling and joyful moments experienced by the informants in their roles as criminal investigators.

1. Together for the Better

Informants felt pride and fulfillment in helping victims find justice through teamwork. They believed that collaboration among investigators significantly enhanced the effectiveness of their work.

Informant 2: Actually, I feel proud being an investigator because investigation is very challenging for me, kay ma inspired ko if magtinabangay mi ang investigator is naa man jud poy kuan nga dili jud engun nga makahibaw sa tanan sa proseso so ang uban maka contribute jud pod ug knowledge regarding sa investigation maong ma inspired pud ko nga atong kauban mo cooperate (IDI2:SS5) (Actually, I feel proud being an investigator because investigation is very challenging for me. I'll be more inspired if we help each other. Sometimes the investigator doesn't know the whole process, so it could be a big help if others can contribute knowledge regarding the investigation. That's why I am inspired when our comrades cooperate).

Collaboration among investigators was emphasized as crucial for achieving successful outcomes in cases. Working together allows them to pool their knowledge and skills, increasing the likelihood of solving complex cases.

Informant 1: I believe that two heads are better than one, while conducting an investigation, mag tibangay jud mi in terms of ideas ug mag tinabangay pud ug solve labina kanang mga heinous case like shooting incident. Para mangita ug witness aron ma identify ang suspect (IDI1:SS1). (I believe that two heads are better than one. While conducting an investigation, we help each other in terms of ideas on how to solve crimes, especially heinous cases like shooting incidents, to look for witnesses and identify the suspect).

Informant 7 also experienced immense pride and happiness during his early years as an investigator, finding great joy in his work. In addition to personal growth, he valued the opportunity to engage with and serve the community. This sense of fulfillment motivated him to continue his efforts and strive for excellence in his role.

Informant 7: In my experience, the good contributions I made as a researcher were transferred to the Department of Investigation in just two years. What gives me the greatest satisfaction is the trust placed on me by my colleagues, especially novices looking for guidance. They often approach me, acknowledge my expertise, and seek my advice, saying things like, 'How to do this Tol, I think you are good on this.' It's truly fulfilling for me to offer insights and guidance, knowing that I'm able to assist and positively influence others in their work (FGD7:SS53).

These narratives tell of the very theme that investigation is not only about the skill and knowledge of the person undertaking it but an effort about collaboration and support. By working together, sharing ideas, and helping one another, investigators can not only improve their skills but also enhance the effectiveness of their work and serve their community more effectively.

2. Yes, as Achiever, Never Surrender

This theme encapsulates how ideology and commitment to the law generate a sense of ethical enrichment in those who can live up to their image by making the suspect accountable. Informant 3 said

Yes, kadtong nga Sensational Rape with Homicide, menor de edad ang victim, Pagka received namo gitawag sayo pa mga alas syete within 15 minutes na solve namu o buot pasabot nako maam na arrested namo ang suspect ug nadakpan namo, mura nato syag score namuky sensational case mngdsiya (IDI3:SS13). (Yes, the victim in that high-profile rape and homicide case was a 15-year-old grade 8 student. We received the call at 7

o'clock, and within 15 minutes, we managed to solve the case by arresting the suspect. This quick resolution was a significant achievement for our team.")

Seconding this feeling of satisfaction, a positive experience was shared by Focus Group Discussant 8, who said:

Like theirs, I also went through a very long-drawn investigation wherein nobody seemed to have witnessed the crime, but as days went by, the community started cooperating. This made things much more comfortable and the case could run much more smoothly. The cooperation by the community facilitated the process of solving the case. As of now, the suspect is in the custody of the police and has been charged with his crime (FGD8:SS72).

Both cases show how teamwork, efficiency, and community involvement in trying to nab the criminals contribute to the moral inspiration and fulfillment involved.

Negative Experiences

It reveals the bitter experience the informants undergo in the course of executing their criminal investigation assignments. These experiences often have a bearing on their morale and job satisfaction, and thus very challenging.

3. Work Over Family

The theme of prioritizing work over family is a significant aspect of the life of an investigator, as highlighted by several informants in the study. Family often becomes a secondary priority because of the demands of the job. Informant 2 shared the seeming inevitability of the constant pressure and demands of the job, admitting that, since they are human, there are a lot of times they feel a sense of regret:

Similar Ok. Naa jud, kay naa may gitawag nga taw raman gyod tah no hilabi na sa akong side. So, saa hung status karon, nay panahon nga mag mahay pod tah kahibaw naman pud ta nga ug imbestigador naa jud kaso nga emung humanon unya dili nata kauli sa atong pamilya (IDI2:SS8). (Yes Ma'am, there are times I feel regret, after all we are human beings. Based on my current situation, it is most regrettable sometimes since we are the investigators that must accomplish the critical tasks; therefore, we will hardly be allowed to return home and reunite with our families.)

The same informant went on to expound on what he meant; this informant described the kind of logistical and emotional challenges that confront investigators, especially those working in remote or challenging locations:

Ang imbestigador imbes makauli ka enag off nemu dili ka kauli kay naa pay kaso nganahitabo emung tiwason, unya naa poy panahon nga mura pud kag ma pasagdan sa ere, labina ang among area nga isla man ug mulabang pa ug dagat, ikaw pay mubayad sa sakyanan sa biktima ug witness (IDI2:SS9). As an investigator there are some instances that even if it's time for you to go home, you can't go because you have to finish the case. There are also times that I can feel that I was left hanging in the air alone, especially since our area is located on an island and we'll have to cross the sea. Additionally, you also have to pay for the transportation of the suspect and victim.

Discussant 7 from the focus group discussion supported this perception, explaining that there are sacrifices made in terms of personal and family life so that investigators can do their work effectively:

Yes, if you are efficient or not, as an investigator what we aim for is to become effective in our investigations. Ma'am, you have to sacrifice your time, time for yourself, and time for your family, especially if you handle ases. We have to sacrifice, ma'am, because this is our work and we are in service (FGD7:SS63).

These accounts bring to light the tremendous sacrifices investigators make to always prioritize their professional duties over personal and family time to effectively perform their functions.

4. When Obstacles Hinder Justice

In the process of seeking justice, participants in the judicial system are met with many challenges that leave them very disappointed and frustrated. This was well expressed in the experiences shared by the informants, which pointed to the systemic and procedural challenges faced by informants that adversely affect the conviction and settlement of cases.

The case personally handled by Informant 3 was the most frustrating. A police officer created a scene at the Loboc Cockpit Arena, and the same police officer faced a charge of Alarm and scandal. The private complainant, however, declined to issue a sworn statement, and thus the court dismissed the case summarily. Informant 3 lamented:

When a particular case which I handled was dismissed by the Court due to technicality. The case involved a police personality who went wild and became unruly inside the Loboc Cockpit Arena wherein he was arrested and charged with Alarm and scandal. The private complainant of the crime refused to execute a sworn statement thus, the court was forced to issue an outright dismissal of the case (IDI3:SS15).

Another big challenge, as elaborated by Informant 1, is collecting witnesses. Investigations may be thoroughly conducted, but without witnesses, things might come to a standstill, especially in serious cases like homicides. This is how Informant 1 phrased this emotional burden:

Bali there was a time nga mag investigate nga murag maguol ta kay may ubang kaso for example Homicide case nga wala tay ma provide nga witnesses, walay probable cause, walay motive nganong gipatay ug karon under investigation, maoy kasagaran nga mahitabo. The main problem is walay tay makuha nga suspect bisag naa pay mga ebidensya nga makuha tungod kay walay witness, mao nay murag maka feel sad despite sa atong gi conduct nga investigation regarding that matter (ID1:SS2). (Sometimes, we can feel loneliness because in some cases, for example, a shooting incident for which we cannot provide a witness. Sometimes, we can encounter a situation where there's no probable cause and no motive, but why he killed the victim. The main problem, ma'am, is we cannot pinpoint a suspect even though evidence is available because we don't have any witnesses who can personally identify the suspect or the person of interest.)

During a focus group discussion, it was noted that a filed case was suddenly stopped because the affiant decided to file an affidavit of desistance. It was disheartening because the effort and resources used on the case became meaningless and this deeply frustrated the investigators:

It is hard on the investigator because everything is prepared, but then the complainant will file an affidavit of desistance. It feels like you have made an effort so that you can file a case against the suspect, but we can do nothing if that is their decision, so you feel like you are dismayed (FGD10:SS99).

The stories of the informants highlight the multi-leveled barriers to justice. From technical dismissals and the lack of important witnesses to the filing of affidavits of desistance, these hurdles combine to instill a general sense of disillusionment in the people who take great pains to make the judicial system work. Yet all too often, despite their best efforts, those barriers lead to unconvicted cases and a feeling of futility in their quest for justice.

2) Contribution of Criminal Investigation to the Criminal Justice Process:

Criminal investigation constitutes the very essence of the criminal justice process. It underlies and forms the basis for the rest of the process. Criminal investigation is the very heartbeat of justice, for unless there is a proper investigation to determine the truth, the prosecution can never be effective. Proper and meticulous work in investigation facilitates evidence gathering and validation, it identifies suspects and provides the prosecutor with the pertinent data or information needed to prosecute. This step is important because it is at this stage that a determination is made as to whether or not the case may be sent to prosecution, then hopefully to the court. The succeeding sections expound on the role of criminal investigation in the criminal justice process with the support of the documented insights of informants directly involved in investigative work.

1. Cautious Step Towards Development

This theme explicates the fundamental importance of criminal investigations as the launching pad of the criminal justice process. Due diligence is necessary in the conduction of investigations to ensure that justice is followed and pursued accordingly. As such, according to the informants, their role as investigators is of the essence since they are the beginning of the whole process of criminal justice. The expression reflects their responses, with a great emphasis on how weighty their responsibilities are.

Informant 10 says that the first step in ensuring a case may proceed effectively is investigation. According to the informant:

Kuan gud siya ma'am kita man gud ang mo ahm.. frontliner ma'am ang mo enforce saa kuan, ang investigation throughout anang investigation, kita may mo kanang mo hatud sa prosecutor ma'am anah kanang mag identify sa suspect ug ma identify dayun nimo mag validate sa ebidensya, aron ma file'lan nimog kaso ug makuha nana nimu tanan ebidensya ana, ang witness so ikuan nimo sa prosecution. Mao na importante gyod ang investigation sa Law Enforcement ma'am (FGD10: SS80). (We are the frontliners, Ma'am, enforcing the investigation. Throughout the investigation, we deliver the information to the prosecutor to identify the suspect. Once you can identify the suspect and validate the evidence to file a case, you will have all the pieces of evidence needed, including the witness for the prosecution. That is why investigation is important in law enforcement, Ma'am)

This is further justified by the other informants when they recognize the importance of their contribution to the case's development. Informant 4 emphasizes this by stating:

Importante gyud kaayo maam ang investigation kay dire man ta magsugod nga muabot sa ilaha sa court ang kaso.kung way investigator walay criminal investigation wa man kasong e.prosecute so naa diha ang main ang importance naa diha ang vital part namo ang investigation, kuan maam, seminars sa mga investigator mao nay importante maam continuous education kay nana may mga bag-ong balaod dapat sa atong taas dapat gyud e.cascading ta sa bag-ong balaod (IDI4:SS66). (It is very important, Ma'am because it is where it all begins before the case will prosper to the court. If there is no investigator, there is also no criminal investigation. There's no case to be prosecuted. That is why the most vital part is the investigation. Seminars for investigators are also important, as continuous education is essential, especially with new laws that need to be cascaded)

The focus group discussions found a consensus on the fact that much of the criminal justice process was reliant on the findings of the criminal investigations. Informant 9 noted that:

Oh ana. maong big factor jud siya sa CJS, Investigation is an art maam, naa ra na sa investigator ba. Ikaw mismo mo find ug ways bitaw sa imong kaugalingon ba nga kamao ka mo are dung..dung diha..unya mo apply pud siguro ta sa kuan.sama karun nga grabe na kayo ang technology (IDI3:SS37). (Yes, Investigation is a big factor in the CJS. It is an art, and it all depends on how the investigator will act on it. Ways will be searched for by you yourself. Means that are applicable for the investigation have to be applied if so. In this modern present age, the way of technology has evolved.)

Taken together, these findings illustrate the essential role those criminal investigations play within the criminal justice process and their role in providing information used for evidence, suspect identification, and building a case toward the ultimate objective of prosecution.

2. Hand in Hand We Stand.

It is in this respect that this theme is giving the primary collaboration of criminal investigators and the criminal justice in the delivery of justice to the victim. However, the two parties must be in joint efforts to prosecute the wrongdoers effectively. If one of the elements fails to play the role, the criminal justice process becomes hopeless.

Informant 3 elaborates on the importance of a well-done investigation in criminal prosecution. This informant believes that the quality of an investigation is the most important thing when it comes to conviction. An

investigator has to be skillful and fully dedicated to making sure he has enough evidence that will prove its burden of proof beyond a reasonable doubt. He believes the main objective of doing an investigation should be to bring the case to a conviction, not just to file or close it:

Personally, investigation is very vital in a criminal prosecution; thus, it needs a superb and extra skill that a police officer should have. Why? Because investigation should lead to conviction and must prove its burden of proof way beyond a reasonable doubt. It depends on the investigative capacity of the investigator who conducts the investigation. His aim should be for conviction, not just for filing the case and not only to close it but to deliberately impose his quantum of evidence through investigation (IDI3:SS17).

Informant 6 underscores the importance of the police force working hand in hand with the community. The strength of most criminal investigations, for that matter, and during court trials, rests on the community's participation. It is hard to identify suspects and solve cases with the lack of community support:

Matod bitaw ni Chief sauna, nga ang Criminal Investigation magsugod ug build-up sa kaso maam para mo prosper sa Court. So vital gyod kaayo siya sa Criminal Justice, participation sa community ug law enforcer maam, kay mag-uban man gyod na maam. Unsaon pag solbad sa kaso ug di pod mo participates ang community, di sila mohatag, dili sila mutug-an ug kinsa nang mga suspek. Importante man gyod nang participation sa community sa law enforcement (FGD6:SS19). (As what Chief said before, the criminal investigation should start to build-up the case to prosper in court. That is why it is very vital in Criminal Justice. The Law Enforcement and Community participation must collaborate with each other. How can we solve the case if the community won't participate, if they do not give information or identify suspects? Community participation is very important in Law Enforcement)

Similarly, Informant 2 firmly held the view that there should exist a strong connection between the police and the criminal justice system. Proper communication and cooperation with prosecutors are a way of knowing the mistakes made in a particular case and correcting the same before being filed in court; this saves a lot of potential courtroom problems. According to him:

Yes ma'am, kanang nindot ang kuan ang connection sa prosecution ug sah investigator, kay kuan ma'am mangutana jud pod me ma'am ug unsay mga kuan sa prosecutor, ohh mag tinabangay ma'am, niya tabangan me ug unsay mga sayop namu ineg file namog kaso ana ug unsay sayop tambagan me sa prosecutor (IDI2:SS78). (Yes Ma'am, if ever there is a good coordination between the prosecutor and the investigator we will definitely question to the prosecutor, and we will help to solve each other's errors in order to submit the case. The prosecutor will be there to help.)

The collective information of the informants signifies the theme "Hand in Hand, We Stand," which indicates the unity of investigators, the criminal justice system, and the community. It is through collaboration that a strong case is prepared, evidence submitted, and culminated in a conviction and dispensation of justice. Failure by one of the parties engaged in this collaboration may mean failure of the entire process and, therefore, it necessitates faultless cooperation and communication.

3) Aspirations of the informants for their Personal and Professional life:

Aspersions of criminal investigators, personally and professionally, are driven by a strong sense of service, satisfaction, and resilience. Here are the specific themes from their responses:

1. Inspired To Serve

This theme encompasses the great sense of pride and fulfillment informants receive from their roles as investigators within the criminal justice system. No matter the challenges they face, they are motivated by their ability to assist those seeking justice and contribute to maintaining peace and order in their communities.

Interviewee 1 is proud to be an investigator, and they draw their motivation from the teamwork spirit involved in the work. They believe that to achieve their objectives, they need to work hand in hand with other

colleagues, who, in most cases, may have a more profound understanding of the issue at hand. This teamwork spirit keeps them motivated in the line of their duty. Interviewee 1 proudly said:

Actually, I feel proud being an investigator because investigation is very challenging for me, kay ma inspired ko if magtinabangay mi as I've said two heads are better than one. ang investigator is naa man jud poy kuan nga dili jud engun nga makahibaw sa tanan sa proseso so ang uban maka contribute jud pod ug knowledge regarding sa investigation maong ma inspired pud ko nga atong kauban mo cooperate (IDI1: SS5). (I feel proud to be an investigator because investigation poses significant challenges for me. It inspires me even more when we collaborate and help each other. As the saying goes, 'two heads are better than one.' Sometimes, as an investigator, I may not have a complete understanding of the entire process. In such cases, it greatly benefits us if others can contribute their knowledge and expertise to the investigation. That's why I find it inspiring when our comrades cooperate.)

Other informants also stated that despite the many struggles of their job, they believe that their work is meaningful and spiritually fulfilling. Informant 3 shared:

As an investigator, I find it fulfilling to assist the community in resolving issues related to peace and order. However, what is even more fulfilling for me is when I become an instrument of God to serve His people through police work.

Informant 3 regards work as a calling from God and a reflection of the journey of an investigator. They shared that there are mentors and people who guided and inspired them and whom they learned from during their journey. He said:

In 2012, I became an investigator by chance. During that time, I just started to remember the basic skills of being an investigator, and only the '5 W's and 1 H' existed in my mind. Luckily, I consulted with a friend I had not seen for quite a long time. He is a prosecutor and helped me with most of the cases that I am involved in. In this, I felt the spiritual calling of God as though he has already been preparing people who are of value to aid me in my new profession. The role of a police investigator is one of the unique designations among the operational procedures within the legal setting of a police organization. This is because the role proposes a variety of challenges that it imposes, but also carries a deep sense of fulfillment and value.

Likewise, Informant 9 is not discouraged by threats from the said suspects in various drug cases but considers satisfaction from helping others much more important than any threat to their safety because such threats are basic. He then stated:

Proud and happy nga nakatabang ta sa atong isig ka taw nga nanginahanglan ug tabang unya sometimes ang atong kahadlok gamay, kay niagi naman ko ug mga threat sa kanang drugs gane kay daghan-daghan pud nas Inabanga murag tulo. Oh, birahan lage kuno ko.. unya kanang mao ra to maam.. pero nagpalabi gyud akong kalipay as investigator kay nakatabang ko (FGD8:SS56). (Proud and happy that we were able to help our fellow human beings in need. Sometimes we feel scare most especially if we received a warning from them about drugs, because it is widespread in Inabanga. I think it happened three times that I was warned that I will be hit. But what's very important is the fulfillment of being an investigator because I will be able to help others.)

The theme "Inspired to Serve" is echoed through the narratives of these informants as they exhibit their deep passion and commitment to be investigators working in the criminal justice system. Although it is fraught with numerous challenges, they take pride and are fulfilled by the opportunity to be of service to those in need and contribute to maintaining peace and order in their respective communities. Whether it be through their interactions with co-workers, how they frame their work as a spiritual calling, or by prioritizing the satisfaction of helping others over personal safety concerns, these informants live out the ethos of service and dedication to their profession.

2. Once an Officer, Forever an Influencer

This theme reflects the consistently strong commitment of investigators in criminal cases to their mission of serving justice and safeguarding their community, even when faced with obstacles or setbacks.

The first informant further elaborates on community involvement and cooperation in the investigation, thus bringing the value of the constituents volunteering in the process. They also stress the need for intervention rather than turning a blind eye to the situation; there is a great sense of responsibility in justice. Informant 1 said that:

Also, kanang inspired nga kanang naa joy mo volunteer or constituents ug mutabang nga maka dali ug maka contribute ug daku sa investigation, nga kanang mangilabot jud ba, di lang magpakabuta bungol sa panghitabo (IDI1: SS6). (It is even more inspiring when constituents volunteer to assist, as their contribution can significantly expedite our investigation. They should be actively concerned and not turn a blind eye or a deaf ear to the situation.)

Informant 3 echoed this and concurred that they are usually discouraged from the results of what they do, but never from their passion for community service. Their role in community service is beyond a job: they find satisfaction when granted an opportunity to make a difference, thereby bringing honor to their work through service.

Despite the good and bad experiences that I have had as an investigator, I am still inspired to work on my job since I indeed love it. It makes me happy to meet people from all walks of life, and I am happy doing my work and knowing that I do it for God's greater glory (IDI3: SS19).

Satisfaction and contentment are real factors that can be attained by investigators to solve crimes, as emphasized by the informants. Frustrations have been pointed out by the informants, but the hassles do not stand as obstacles in the way of the challenges.

The feeling of satisfaction was reiterated by one informant, stating that one has to find contentment in what one does. He believes that once his team is happy and passionate about what they do, things just keep going and working out fine. This implication simply recognizes that satisfaction drives effective job performance and success in the accomplishment of their work. He says:

Yes, contented ma'am, mao jud nay importante ma'am kay matapol man ka ug di nimo love emung trabaho, Mas maayo manang malipayon ka niya e love nimo emung trabaho para nindot ang dagan sa emung trabaho, mao nay importante gyod ma'am (FGD10:SS86). (Yes, ma'am, being content is crucial because if you don't love your work, you'll feel lazy. It's better to be happy and love your work so that it runs smoothly. That's what's important, ma'am.)

The theme "Once an Officer, Forever an Influencer" brings out the aspect that criminal investigators do not just work; they are committed to serving justice and the community, come what may. These investigators derive full gratification and honor from work thanks to their passion for it and a tough commitment to service. Their emphasis is on satisfaction and contentment which gives them intrinsic motivation to be effective and successful in the discharge of their duties.

B. Analysis of Data

The data presented reflects the experiences, contributions, and aspirations of criminal investigators within the criminal justice system. Through qualitative analysis, several key themes emerged, shedding light on the challenges, motivations, and significance of their work. Let's analyze these themes in detail:

1) Experiences of the Informants as Criminal Investigators:

- Together for the Better

This theme highlights the importance of teamwork and collaboration among criminal investigators. By combining their knowledge, skills, and resources, investigators maximize the efficiency of their work, especially in 'hot case' scenarios. The narratives manifest a sense of honor and satisfaction drawn from assisting victims to gain justice through the collective process. Investigators, through collaboration, not only sharpen their skills but also play a crucial part in keeping peace and order in their respective regions. This notion of collaboration corresponds with the description set by Ajakaye and Ogunniyi (2021) as the skill sets that people utilize to 'set goals, allocate resources, fulfill group roles, plan, manage time, make group decisions, negotiate, resolve conflicts, and build teams.' These accounts further elaborate the role of teamwork as the force of all successful criminal investigations while highlighting it to be the axis through which justice is gained.

- Yes, as an Achiever, Never Surrender

This theme shows the resilience and dedication of criminal investigators, which they possess in the face of any form of challenge and setback. Resilient officers are better placed to confront high-pressure situations, maintain clear decision-making abilities, and communicate effectively with other team members (Editorial Team, 2023). Despite obstacles, the investigators remain dedicated to the cause of justice and holding accountable the wrongdoers. The narratives depict moments of success and fulfillment when cases are successfully solved, showing the deep impact of their work on the lives of people and in communities. Investigators draw on their inspiration, derived from an enthusiasm for community service and a faith in their purpose, to persevere and stay determined. As Parker (2023) further delineates, such perseverance is a sure way of signifying the goal-driven effort required to overcome obstacles, challenges, and setbacks. Such qualities demonstrate how investigators remain resilient, navigate their work's complexities, yet remain steadfast in their commitment to justice.

- Work Over Family

This theme brings out the personal sacrifices and challenges the criminal investigators go through as they have to balance their professional responsibilities and family life. Sometimes, investigators end up placing their work priorities ahead of spending quality time with their families, making them live with feelings of regret and guilt. In Price's (2024) view, establishing the boundaries between professional life and personal life is important in enhancing efficiency in the workplace and for stress reduction in personal life. It details in a gripping emotional and logistical way the problems of being on call all the time and away from home in far, away, or difficult places. Yet, despite all the enormous sacrifices, investigators hold strong with a deep sense of their commitment and sense of duty to serve their communities. The theme underscores the personal cost of doing investigative work and the continued struggle to find a harmonious balance between work dedication and personal well-being.

- When Obstacles Hinder Justice

This theme explores the systemic and procedural challenges that criminal investigators face in the course of seeking justice. Technical dismissals, and the lack of key witnesses, among many others, are some of the hurdles that the investigators face that limit their success in solving cases and catching criminals. Witness cooperation is not compulsory in police investigations making the matter more complex (Vilar, 2020). The narratives bring to life the frustration and disillusionment that emerge when cases are thrown out or delayed because of the same hindrances. For their sincere efforts, the result for the investigators is to be lost in a battle with bureaucratic barriers and legal complexities. In addition, truthfully wrong witnesses may in a paradoxical sense create deceptive investigations that end up in either wrongfully letting go of guilty suspects or the wrongful arrest of innocent suspects (Gehl & Plecas, 2017). This theme highlights the need for systemic changes and better support for the investigator to overcome these challenges and maintain the rule of law.

2) Contribution of Criminal Investigation to the Criminal Justice Process:

- Cautious Step Towards Development

This theme underlines the centrality of criminal investigations in the criminal justice process; it is the backbone of case prosecution. Investigators play a great role in collecting evidence, identifying suspects, and making watertight cases for prosecution. It is their responsibility to prevent and investigate crimes, apprehend the offenders, and enforce laws and regulations (Pinoy Attorney, 2023). The narratives emphasize that investigation is a very difficult, delicate process that requires meticulous care for justice to be served. They are under a lot of pressure for desired results and, in doing so, they must adhere to legal requirements, which underline the challenges within their profession. The most important message in the theme is how important the investigator's role is to the rule of law and ensuring that perpetrators are answerable for their acts.

- Hand in Hand We Stand

This theme highlights the critical role of collaboration and cooperation among criminal investigators, the criminal justice system, and the community. Effective partnerships between law enforcement agencies are essential for dismantling crime rings, as noted by FasterCapital (2024), emphasizing the necessity of working together to gather evidence, identify suspects, and secure successful prosecutions. Myrick (2023) also underscores the importance of interagency cooperation in prosecuting criminal cases, noting that investigators rely heavily on community support to solve cases and ensure public safety. These narratives emphasize the need for robust alliances between law enforcement, prosecutors, and community members, illustrating how the interconnectedness of these stakeholders is vital for achieving justice and maintaining societal security.

3) Aspirations of the Informants for Their Personal and Professional Lives:

- Inspired To Serve

It is this theme, this deep sense of pride, fulfillment, and purpose that fills the experiences of criminal investigators. In the face of these challenges and personal sacrifices, however, criminal investigators are driven by the mission of service to their communities and dedication to upholding the rule of law. In reading through their stories, it became quite evident that the investigators were especially satisfied with the tangible difference they were making in the lives of other people and the overall good of society. This becomes the foundation of their resilience in moving on, and facing adversities and challenges. Their work is not merely a job but a calling—a source of spiritual fulfillment that ignites their passion and fuels their resolve to overcome any challenges they encounter (Merlin, Hunter & Associates, 2024). As such, the theme represents the internal motivation and sense of obligation that drives investigators in their pursuit of justice.

- Once an Officer, Forever an Influencer

This theme reflects the long-term dedication that criminal investigators have to their mission of serving justice and protecting their communities. Through adversity and challenge, they prevail with their commitment to duty and continue to make their contributions to the difference they hope to make in the lives of the communities and people they serve. The stories emphasize the life-changing effects that investigative work has on individuals and communities, and the ability of true investigators to leave a legacy of service and influence. Gehl and Plecas (2017) correctly stated that the police investigator is entrusted with the responsibility and authority, under the law, to make decisions that may ultimately have a significant impact on the lives of those investigated and the victims of crime. In this way, criminal justice is a life-changing and enduring influence for those who make it their calling.

CONCLUSIONS

The data reveals a criminal investigator's varied portrait but shows the impact of their work on the justice system and community well-being. Teamwork and collaboration prove to be essential in a way that makes investigators manage complex cases effectively, bringing a sense of collective honor and satisfaction. The determination and dedication through which they work show how they are persevering in the face of challenges, thus promising immense community benefits through their work. Personal sacrifices, especially the tension between work and family life, are underscored in the emotional and logistical costs of their

commitment. Systemic and procedural obstacles depict how there can be better support and systemic reforms for their effective performance.

On a more general note, criminal investigations are a core part of the criminal justice process, where the attention to detail of investigators represents the backbone of successful prosecution. Teamwork and collaboration are part of the broader scheme, not only inside the office but also with other cops and with the community, thereby stressing the interconnectedness of potent justice. The narratives of investigators are filled with deep pride and fulfillment, showing that their work has transcended the mere line of professional duty to be a vocation. This never-failing enthusiasm, on the one hand, directs them toward taking all adversities into their stride but, on the other hand, also cements the fact that they have a lasting impact on the communities they serve, showcasing the transformable power of justice maintained by profound investigators.

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