



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### UNHERALDED FRONTLINERS; WORK WORLD OF BARANGAY PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS

**\*Grace A. Empinado, Apple Rose Ledesma, Roel Goc-ong and Dr. Paulino V. Pioquinto**

University of Cebu Lapu-Lapu and Mandaue, Mandaue City, Cebu, Philippines

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#### ABSTRACT

The study explored the work experiences of the Barangay Public Safety Officers (BPSO) in Barangay Paknaan, Mandaue City. It specifically looked into the experiences and aspirations by the informants in the performance of their duties and responsibilities in the community. In order to answer the objective of this study, phenomenological is utilized in order to discover the problems encountered by the BPSO. This study utilized an interview guide with structured questions to stimulate discussion with the participants. The interview guide also had an informed consent to formally invite the subjects and for them to voluntarily and freely provide information needed to attain the objectives of this research. The first part of the questionnaire was composed of preliminary questions to know better the informant and to establish rapport. The second part was composed of questions that sought to determine the positive and negative experiences of the informants. The last part included questions about the aspirations of the informants. Total of ten informants and the interview will be classified into two sets. The first set is for the in-depth interview and for the focus group discussions. Each informant was afforded with an interview transcript. The reduced statement of the exhaustive description was presented to the study's informants in order to have conclusions and development of the essence statement. There were six emergent themes had generated coming from the responses of the informants. The positive responses can be summarized in terms of serving others is happiness, responsibility is a joy helpful changes. However, they also experienced downside of being a BPSO. Sometimes they could not help but get frustrated because resources are limited and that they get disheartening backlash. Lastly for the aspiration of the informants, the researcher formulated emergent theme namely, hoping for the best.

#### INTRODUCTION

Community safety is a concept that is concerned with achieving a positive state of well-being among people within social and physical environments. Not only is it about reducing and preventing injury and crime, it is about building strong, cohesive, vibrant, participatory communities. This means the perception of safety is as important as measuring injury and crime rates. Community is a formed society of individuals with shared commonalities and differences with their values, beliefs, culture, traditions and etc., being part of a community creates connection and communication, builds relationships, forms a kind of social system and provides basic essentials for everyday life. The DILG recognizes Barangay Police Safety Officers (BPSOs) as the agents of persons in authority to respond to any type of atrocity and public disorder at the barangay level. Furthermore, they serve as front-line responders during emergencies, disasters, and calamities and any threat to the barangays' peace and order and public safety. The DILG also recognizes them as the primary contributors and major stakeholders in the implementation of the government's peace and order programs, projects, and initiatives.

Regardless of the BPSOs' involvement, they serve their barangays on a purely voluntary basis for minimal or negligible financial remuneration. The researcher decided to conduct a study on the experiences of BPSO, exploring the challenges they faced in the implementation of the certain law in the barangay and how they dealt with the problems that they have encountered. It is important to understand the experiences and consequences to the law implementers. The BPSO in Barangay Paknaan are also the beneficiaries of the community extension program in UCLM, College of Criminology. The researcher, who is the current College CARES Coordinator and a Faculty of the said department would like to put and look into appropriate interventions that would help improve and develop the capabilities of the law implementers as well as to give them adequate support to the needs that will be discovered during the conduct of the study; providing them appropriate training to best perform their duties and provide them with materials or equipment to be used for the performance of their tasks. Furthermore, the researcher discovered that there are only a few studies focusing on the experiences of the BPSOs in the implementation of the ordinances which the researcher believes that this topic is somehow relevant because BPSOs are the basic police unit that is actively engaged in the community daily. Finally, the researcher believes that through this study which focuses on the various experiences that challenge law enforcers,

**\*Corresponding author: Grace A. Empinado**

University of Cebu Lapu-Lapu and Mandaue, Mandaue City, Cebu, Philippines.

particularly the local task force, policymakers will be lightened and informed about the factors that cause problems for enforcers and potentially impede the effective implementation of protocols and ordinances. This study is anchored on the Frederick Herzberg Motivational Hygiene Theory, 1959 and supported by Vrooms Expectancy Theory, 1964 and Weiner Attribution Theory, 1974. Frederick Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation, 1959 is one of the most used theories in explaining motivation and job satisfaction. According to Herzberg, there are job factors that cause satisfaction and dissatisfaction. These job factors are dichotomized to hygiene factors and motivational factors. The hygiene factors are also known as dissatisfiers or maintenance factors and these mainly depend in the organization. These include company policy and administration, supervision, relationship with supervisor, work conditions, salary, relationship with peers, personal life, relationship with subordinates, and security that are expected to avert dissatisfaction. It may not lead to long-term satisfaction but is essential to keep motivation at work. On the other hand, the motivational factors are also called as satisfiers and are integral in work. These refer to sense of achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, and advancement and growth opportunities. It produces satisfaction and motivate employees to work well. In hygiene factors, employees expect the fulfillment of their physiological needs and these are controlled by the supervisors or other than the employee while motivational factors consider the psychological needs and these are up to the employees themselves. When the motivational factors are fulfilled, it results to satisfaction but when hygiene factors are deficient, it results to dissatisfaction (Deshields, Kara & Kaynak, 2005). Expectancy Theory studied people's motivation and concluded it depends on three factors: expectancy, instrumentality and valence.

Helping behavior may include such charitable actions as donations of time, money, blood, and so on; and the individuals that donate time and effort are referred to as volunteers Parijat, D. P., & Bagga, S. (2014). Expectancy is about what employees expect from their own efforts and the relation to good performance. Part of this expectation is the level of difficulty he experiences. An organization can respond to that by finding out which factors can motivate the employee to deliver his best possible performance. Those factors can be facilities, training or support from a supervisor who builds his employees' confidence. Victor Vroom indicates that, in general, more effort leads to better performance. Employees can be stimulated to make an effort by offering them a juicy carrot if they complete their task properly and quickly. Of course, it's also important that they have the right resources at their disposal that the employees have the necessary skills and that management provides the right level of support. Expectancy is the subjective belief of the probability of an outcome occurring based on the effort an individual puts forth. It is a cognitive evaluation that is influenced by the individual's own experiences and personal attributes. Vroom asserted that individual choices and external events influence specific outcomes (Vroom 1964). Attribution theory is concerned with how individuals interpret events and how this relates to their thinking and behavior. Heider (1958) was the first to propose a psychological theory of attribution, but Weiner and colleagues (e.g., Jones et al, 1972; Weiner, 1974, 1986) developed a theoretical framework that has become a major research paradigm of social psychology. Attribution theory assumes that people try to determine why people do

what they do, i.e., attribute causes to behavior. A person seeking to understand why another person did something may attribute one or more causes to that behavior. A three-stage process underlies an attribution: (1) the person must perceive or observe the behavior, (2) then the person must believe that the behavior was intentionally performed, and (3) then the person must determine if they believe the other person was forced to perform the behavior (in which case the cause is attributed to the situation) or not (in which case the cause is attributed to the other person). Attribution theory has been used to explain the difference in motivation between high and low achievers. According to attribution theory, high achievers will approach rather than avoid tasks related to succeeding because they believe success is due to high ability and effort which they are confident of. Failure is thought to be caused by bad luck or a poor exam, i.e. not their fault. Thus, failure doesn't affect their self-esteem but success builds pride and confidence. On the other hand, low achievers avoid success-related chores because they tend to (a) doubt their ability and/or (b) assume success is related to luck or to "who you know" or to other factors beyond their control. Thus, even when successful, it isn't as rewarding to the low achiever because he/she doesn't feel responsible, i.e., it doesn't increase his/her pride and confidence.

## METHODOLOGY

The qualitative phenomenological design is the method that the researcher utilized in the study entitled "Unheralded Frontliners; Work World of Barangay Public Safety Officers" in Barangay Paknaan Mandaue City: Plights and Aspirations, digging into the individual lived experiences of BPSO in their daily lives. The study was conducted at the highly urbanized city in the province of Cebu, which is Mandaue City. Barangay Paknaan is one of the largest barangays in Mandaue City. Its land area stretches 168.72 hectares and is divided into 24 zones. The total population as per the 2018 census is 43,500. The estimated number of families is at 10,000. Currently Barangay Paknaan has twenty (20) BPSO and then ten (10) volunteers for risk reduction management. The informants of the study were the Barangay Public Safety Officers in Barangay Paknaan, Mandaue City. The researcher had a total of ten (10) informants for the qualitative study and the interview will be classified into two (2) sets. The first set is for the in-depth interview which will be participated by four (4) informants and the second set is for the focus group discussions which will be participated by the remaining six (6) informants. This study utilized an interview guide with structured questions to stimulate discussion with the study participants carefully. The researcher constructed the interview guide questions in a manner that will utilized both in depth interviews and focus group discussion which were composed of three (3) research questions. The interview guide will be submitted first to the panelists for content validation and approval prior to the actual conduct of interviews. The data gathered was collated using Colaizzi's, 1978 approach. Colaizzi's method is the process used to aid in extracting, organizing, and analyzing such narrative datasets. Also, descriptive phenomenology is concerned with revealing the "essence" or "essential structure" of any phenomenon under investigation – that is, those features that make it what it is, rather than something else (Morrow, Rodriguez, and King, 2015). Studies exploring the experiences of the participants can also be considered a sensitive issue. The researcher must consider the oral damages that might happen during the

conduct of the study. So, the researcher must make sure that the pieces of information gathered from the participants must remain confidential. The researcher must also assure the anonymity of the subject for the protection and security of the course of the participants. As to the issue of trustworthiness and credibility which is much needed in this phenomenological research, the researcher will make sure that all information gathered from the informants is recorded and transcribed in accordance with the standard ruling.

## RESULTS

**The data that are presented were divided into three (3) parts:**

(1) The positive experiences of the informants. (2) The negative experiences of the informants. (3) The aspiration of the informants to improve quality service. The researcher in this unique study appropriately gathered all the data or information that was generated from the informants through the processes of In-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions. In order to build a befitting description of the experiences of the informant, the information they provided were transcribed, read and analyzed to provide description of their experiences. The responses of the informants contained significant statements and formulated meanings were determined. Cluster themes were developed until six (6) emergent themes were unfolded.

**These six (6) emerging themes are considered as answers to the sub-problems of this study. The following are:**

### Experiences of the Informants

- Positive Experiences
- Serving Others is Happiness
- Responsibility is a Joy
- Helpful Changes.
- Negative Experiences of the Informants
- Limited Resources
- Disheartening Backlash

### Aspirations of the Informants to Improve Quality Service

**Hoping for the Best:** Positive Experiences of the Informants. Barangay Public Safety Officer (BPSO) is a group of civilian volunteers who protects the community from lawless forces and exhibit their interest in preventing crime, they are at the frontline of maintaining peace and order in every barangay. Their spirit of volunteerism and unwavering concern for the community deserves to be recognized and honored. These are the positive responses of the informants.

Serving Others Is Happiness. The BPSO served their barangays on a purely voluntary basis, risking their lives and limbs to preserve peace and order in their locality, for minimal or negligible financial remuneration. The BPSO are considered to be the agents of persons in authority who act as the front liners in the preparation and response to any type of atrocities, public disorders, emergencies and even disasters or man-made calamities that threaten peace and order and public safety. For them, they felt happy because they were able to serve the community. Serving is their lives, their body language shows that they felt happy because they were regarded as important persons in their place.

They do not mind if their job is a BPSO, as long as people they are happy of their services, this is enough for them to be happy and contented despite the meager salary they were receiving as a BPSO.

Responsibility is a Joy. BPSO are in the vanguard of the effort to maintain peace and order in every barangays, they were supervised by the barangay captain and performs a variety of police functions. Responsibility brings meaning to their lives. Responsibility, in its most basic essence, is one of the main things that gives life meaning. Responsibilities are things that we have to do. With no responsibilities, we could do (or not do) whatever we wanted. But in the absence of duty, it is difficult, if not impossible, to find any real purpose for our actions. The informants accept their respective responsibilities wholeheartedly and it gives them great happiness. Big or small responsibility they accept and will do their best just for the people of Brgy Paknaan.

Helpful Changes. Changes were helpful to them such as the element of discipline in the performance of duties and responsibilities which they were also able to apply personally in their families. Discipline is an essential in law enforcement career. Many people would agree that discipline consist of training, correcting, or helping citizens and oneself to obey the laws and codes of behavior. Discipline brings good leadership and courage when dealing with issues in the community and country.

Negative Experiences. But they also experienced downside of being a BPSO. sometimes they could not help but get frustrated because (1) resources are limited and that they get (2) disheartening backlash.

- Limited Resources. One of the most inconvenient situations they usually encounter being Barangay Public Safety Officer is providing help to the community with limited resources. There is a very limited supply of raincoats, first aid kits and boots. They cannot respond immediately because they need first to secure for themselves these basic gears as part of survival. But they were dismayed that despite the local government officials knew these perennial problems, yet the supply they needed seldom reached their barangay.
- Disheartening Backlash. Many public servants have put their lives at risk in order to continue serving the public but despite of the situation they still received backlash from rumor-mongers, people whose happiness is on someone else misfortunes. Feedback, as they say, is a gift. It's a key driver of performance and leadership effectiveness. But if the feedback is not constructive, it becomes a burden that is disheartening to the receiver.

Aspirations of the Informants. It describes the ambitions of the informants for the progress of community relations, upscale their knowledge and skills in enforcing the laws. Hoping for the Best. Many workers demonstrate some weaknesses in their capacity to do work. A training program allows you to hone those skills that each employee needs to improve. A development program brings all worker to a higher level, so they all have similar expertise and wisdom. The Barangay Public Safety Officer should be eternally accepting the importance of training, and development of programs in the barangay. Like in post-evaluation of response, Barangay Public Safety Officer (BPSO) discovered that they lack the

knowledge on how to handle a crisis. During the follow up question in the interview, some informants said that attending the seminar on how to respond to a crime or accident is in demand.

## DISCUSSION

This study is anchored on the Frederick Herzberg Motivational Hygiene Theory, 1959 and supported by Vrooms Expectancy Theory, 1964 and Weiner Attribution Theory, 1974.

Serving others is Happiness. Serving the people is the most important and top priority of the BPSO in Brgy Paknaan. All of them wanted to give quality service to the best of their ability in order to give safety to their community. Serving others is characterized as showing love and kindness to everyone. Even to those who are unkind to us (Ellis, 2021). Work engagement is typically defined as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). As such, engaged employees appear to be hardworking (vigor), are more involved in their work (dedication), and are more immersed in their work (absorption) (see also Bakker et al., 2008; Chughtai and Buckley, 2011; Taris et al., 2015). Job engagement was initially proposed as a positive construct (Kahn, 1990), and empirical studies revealed that a high level of job engagement leads to positive work outcomes. For example, recent studies exhibited its positive effect on individual job performance and adverse effect on turnover intention (Breevaart et al., 2016; Owens et al., 2016; Shahpouri et al., 2016; Kumar et al., 2018). Therefore, job engagement has been regarded as one of the performance indicators of human resource management.

Responsibility is a Joy. Responsibility is the great happiness of the informants. In a happy, vibrant community, there are strong social connections that create a sense of belonging and along with belonging comes a sense of responsibility to support your fellow members. With a strong sense of belonging and knowing other community members will take care of each other comes a sense of peace, security, and meaning. Communities provide a soul nurturing experience when you have the opportunity to contribute and know others are there for you. According to Trottier, et al., 2008 Relatedness and commitment these concepts as inspiring factors that support the feeling of being part of something and pushes an employee to take action in the best interest of the team or organization although no personal advantage is gained. Furthermore, he states that encouraging feelings of relatedness and commitment will satisfy the higher needs of a person.

Helpful Changes. There must be a saying Constant Changes, the informants receives a lot of positive changes that really improves their lives. It was beneficial to them since the local government giving those training's, workshops to enhance their skills and knowledge in minimal basis. The applying and embracing the learning they have were very beneficial for them. Training is regarded as a highly intrinsic motivational factor and the implementation of training strategies is essential to offer employees an opportunity to develop and broaden their skills and also to gain an organizational competitive advantage. It is claimed that there is a large difference gap in the level of motivation between trained and untrained employees (Abdulla, et al., 2011).

Furthermore, a trained employee is more likely to progress in his/her career and think positively about his/her organization (Parvin & Kabir, 2011).

Limited Resources. It is undeniable that the informants face and overcome challenges in carrying out their duties responsibilities since they are responsible for upholding peace and order in each barangay. As evidence, they mentioned some of the common problems they encounter frequently when interviewed. Lack of personal equipment, like as communication devices and raincoats, which are essential for performing patrol, was another issue addressed by the barangay enforcers during the interview. This theme anchored on the Conservation of Resources Theory asserts that individuals use various resources for completing work tasks such as time, cognitive attention, physical energy, but they have to replenish those resources during breaks in order to avoid stress (Kim, Park, & Niu, 2017). COR theory is a motivational theory that rests firstly on the basic tenet that individuals strive to obtain, retain, foster, and protect resources. According to COR theory, stress occurs under three conditions: 1) When individuals' key resources are threatened with loss, 2) When resources are lost, or 3) When individuals fail to gain resources following significant resource investment. Burnout is one such stress outcome and typically follows from a process of slow bleed out of resources without counterbalancing resource gain or replenishment.

Disheartening Backlash. Discrimination, bad judgments and Community members of being uncooperative as one of their problems. As they are expected to follow the rules implemented by the barangay, cooperating together with the BPSO may serve as an indication of support that leads to a significant role in preserving peace and order at the barangay that may result in the betterment of the community. Considering the respondent's answers, most of them wanted to emphasize to do good even in a simple way. It may not always seem practical to perform a service in our hectic lives, but your service does not have to be monumental. Your service can be as simple as opening a door for someone, striking up a conversation with someone you don't know, writing a thank you note, or letting someone in. Always serve the people in all honesty no matter what happens. We believe that we can all make a difference by taking action, making a comment, or making a thoughtful gesture of any kind. We believe that if we took the time to perform a small act of service just once a day, not only would the people around us enjoy being around us, but we would benefit as well (Gagne 2005).

Hoping for the best. This theme reflects the aspirations of the BPSO in terms of foreseeing the continuous development of their knowledge and expertise on their duties responsibilities as one of the front liners in the community. This theme is anchored on transformational leaders which focuses on “transforming” others to support each other and the organization as a whole. Followers of a transformational leader responds by feeling trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect for the leader and are more willing to work harder than originally expected. Another researcher, Bass (1999), added to the work of Burns by explaining the psychological mechanisms that underlie transformational and transactional leadership. Bass' work established that transformational leaders demonstrate four factors: individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. Transformational leaders do one thing transactional leaders

don't, which is going beyond self-actualization. The importance of transcending self-interests is something lost sight of by those who see that the ultimate in maturity of development is self-actualization (Bass, 1999). The researcher would like to emphasize that an individual might set their aspirations in relation to what they know they can achieve or they might set aspirations more ambitiously to strive for ways of being and doing they are not sure of realizing. Some individuals might aspire in a non-specified way in terms of wanting "a better life," whereas others might strive for specific transformative social change, such as a change in the law.

### Implications for Practices

First, the Local Government should be able to implement programs, projects and activities which will not only enhance and strengthen the capabilities of barangays as instruments for development, but also promote community well-being and upliftment. Second, the Local Government should provide technical assistance and guidance in developing and enhancing knowledge and skills of the BPSO on different areas of governance and also provision of information, education and communication to all barangays on national development efforts and issues in order for them to participate more meaningfully in community building. Third, the government should provide a necessary equipment to the BPSO for them to have quick and efficient service. Most of the informants experienced difficulties and had inaccurate services due to the insufficiency and sometimes no equipment in performing their duties and functions. Fourth, the government administration should stress out efforts on providing the personnel with the necessary skills and knowledge through relevant training and seminars and these all things should be provided to all officers in the organization not just for the selected individuals. In connection with the study, some of the informants have difficulties in dealing with the law enforcement officer due to lack of experience and essential knowledge in the field of their duties and responsibilities. Lastly, to increase the BPSO knowledge and expertise in the areas that have been identified as needing of improvement, specifically in self-defense techniques a training that will help them to learn how to protect themselves and the community performing their duties. This is to prepare them to be physically and emotionally fit as they may face risk. They must execute safety protocols and legal actions that is advised in responding to any circumstances.

### Implication for Future Studies

First, is to conduct quantitative research entitled the Performance of Barangay Public Safety Officer of Barangay Paknaan this study aims to evaluate the performance of BPSO the factors influencing the extent of implementation of the duties and responsibilities of BPSO and their participation in disaster risk reduction management. Second, is to conduct a qualitative research entitled Experiences in the Enforcement of Minimum Health and Security Protocols: The Case of BPSO in Brgy. Paknaan, Mandaue City. This study pertains to the experiences of the Barangay Police Safety Officers in enforcing the Minimum Health and Safety Protocols in Paknaan, Mandaue City. This study aims to explore the experiences, problems encountered, and coping mechanisms of the participants of the study. Lastly, is to conduct a quantitative research about Empowerment on the Capability of the Barangay Tanods of Brgy. Paknaan, Mandaue City.

This study aims to determine their level of familiarity on the policing strategies as to Gender-sensitivity and Child-friendly approaches.

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