

Evaluation of the Peace and Order and Public Safety Plan: Its Relation to the Crime Prevention Priority Issues of the Province of Albay

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ABSTRACT

Peace is described as an environment where individuals and communities are able to develop their potentials fully and attain progress and freely exercise their rights with due regard for the others while being equally mindful of their responsibilities. The Peace and Order and Public Safety Plan is a three-year plan consisting of programs and activities to promote peace and order and public safety in a particular locality and consolidated Integrated Area/Community Public Safety Plan of the cities and municipalities within the province as specified in DILGMC no. 2015-128. A quantitative descriptive approach was used to examine the relevance and effectiveness of the POPS Plan in addressing the problems of criminality in the province of Albay. Members of the community, police officers of the province, and barangay officials were the respondents. Results revealed that the peace and order councils' action on the efforts of the government to address the crime problems is relevant. With this belief, the respondents participate in the effective implementation of the POC's POPS Plan to address

the problems of criminality. Hence, it is recommended that the policy planners of the government should seek criminological knowledge from criminologists in formulating dependable peace and order and public safety plan.

Keywords — peace and order, public safety, operational plan, crime prevention, social control, Quantitative descriptive approach, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The quality of nations upon which peace must be founded if it is to last must be an equality of rights; the guarantees exchanged must neither recognize nor imply a difference between big and small nations, between those that are powerful and those that are weak. Right must be based on a common strength, not upon the individual strength of the nations upon whose concert peace will depend. Equality of resources, of course, cannot be, nor any other sort of equality, not gained in the ordinary peaceful and legitimate development of the people themselves. But no one asks or expects anything more than an equality of right. Mankind is looking for freedom of life, not for equipoises of power.

And there is a deeper thing involved than even equality of right among the organized nation. No peace can last, or ought to last, which do not recognize and accept the principle that governments derive all their just powers from the consent of the governed, and that no right anywhere exists to hand people about from sovereignty as if they were property.

Former U.S. President Woodrow Wilson (1917) declared that any peace which does not recognize and accept this principle would inevitably be upset. It will not rest upon the affections or the convictions of mankind. The ferment of spirit of whole populations will fight subtly and consistently against it, and all the world will emphasize. The world can be at peace only if its life is stable, and there can be no stability where the will is rebellion, where there is no tranquility of spirit and sense of justice, of freedom, and of right” (Knock, 2019).

Merez (2018) reported that around 1.5 million families were victims of common crimes during the first quarter of 2018, Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey revealed. The survey conducted on March 23 to 27, 2018, showed that 6.6 percent of Filipino families reported victimization by crimes such as robbery, break-ins, carnapping or car theft, and physical violence within the past six months. The majority of the incidents resulted in the loss of property such as street robbery, burglary or break-ins, and carnapping. In December 2017, around

1.1 million families, or 4.6 percent, were victimized by street robbery.

The Philippines comparatively has a high crime rate among its neighbors in Asia. Illegal weapons are widespread; as a result, violent crime is common; its capital was once regarded as the kidnapping capital of the said region. Most of the vulnerable targets were Foreigners, which commonly involve prostitution, victimized by gangsters, money changing tricks, and credit card fraud. Volunteer workers, missionaries, and tourists have been the favorite targets of kidnappers (Merez, 2018).

Ordinary break-ins are also a problem. In fact, some foreigners have had their house broken into the very first night they stayed there. Another common crime is murder, which often is committed, especially when under the influence of alcohol. Guns can be purchased anywhere—the majority of the population in Mindanao own guns. Meanwhile, Police statistics indicate an average of 130 auto thefts in the nation's capital every month. One of the primary reasons for the spread of this social disorganization was due to the culture of distrust of authorities because of the belief that they were behind the crimes and possible reprisal (Merez, 2018).

Bicol Region, particularly in Albay Province, the Albay Police Provincial office, suffered a long-time struggle to curtail the operation of the most notorious criminal group that is responsible for several cases of extortion, robbery, murder, and rape in the locality. The Concepcion Criminal Group is the tarnished gun-for-hire group involved in various crimes in Albay and some parts of the Bicol Region. The said group is armed with high powered firearms and of several calibers.

Another crime that made a shock in the local news was the incident of a murdered public-school teacher in the municipality of Pio Duran in Albay. The incident happened in the elementary school where the victim is teaching. The suspect is a grade 12 student whom they called “the teen killer.” The teacher suffered 21 stab wounds, which caused her instantaneous death. The gruesome killing shook the different agencies of the government responsible for the maintenance of peace and order.

Another incident was the killing of two radio announcers in the same month when the Victim, Joey Llana, was shot dead while on his way to catch his early morning radio program. According to the reports by the Albay Police Provincial Office, unidentified gunmen ambushed the broadcaster around 4:45 am along the alternate road in Daraga of the same province. Police said Llana, 43, was shot 14 times with a .45-caliber gun and a 9mm pistol as he was maneuvering his

car out of his garage in Brgy. Peñafrancia when he was attacked. Another is the stabbing to death of the Philippine Star correspondent, Celso Amo. The incidents coincided with a police report that the nationwide crime rate has dropped and the most recent that shuddered the peaceful living of the province was the left and right killings that involved politicians and a former police provincial director who was linked to an illegal activity during his term and ties between the organized crime groups in the province.

This study was formulated to evaluate the relevance the Peace and Order and Public Safety Plan and its relation to the crime prevention priority issues of the province of Albay. The Philippine Constitution emphasized the prime duty of the government. Article 2, Section 5 states that the maintenance of peace and order, protection of life, liberty, and property, and promotion of the general welfare are essential for the enjoyment by all people of the blessings of democracy (Leong, 2013).

The above provision of the 1987 Constitution mandates that State shall pursue the maintenance of peace and order, the promotion of life, liberty, and property, and the promotion of general welfare of the common good. Another reason why this study was conducted was to assess whether this mandate is observed effectively by government officials at the provincial level. The political stability and economic prosperity become attainable, and the people truly enjoy the “blessings of independence and democracy only when peace and order, security and a life of dignity are established and maintained. President Wilson (1917) added that it will be absolutely necessary that a force is created as a guarantor of the permanency of the settlement so much greater than the force of any nation now engaged or any alliance thereto formed or projected, that no nation, no probable combination of nations, could face or withstand it. Peace should be made secure by the organized major force of mankind (Wilson, 1917).

Politicians and elected government officials who are in power have a great role to be played in the maintenance of peace and order. Article II, Section 11 of the Philippine Constitution, Declaration of Principles and State Policies, provides that “the State values the dignity of every human person and guarantees full respect of human rights.” These include civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights as enumerated in other provisions of the Constitution like Article III (Bill of Rights) and Article XIII (Social Justice and Human Rights) (Leong, 2013).

The effectiveness of an organization such as the local government is determined by the competence of its officials and volunteers in knowing the law.

The Local Government Code of 1991 (RA 7160) developed the power to the local government units and provided much of the legal basis for what provinces and their official do.

However, they must follow the correct laws, rules, and procedures and respect the human rights of suspected offenders. True enough, the maintenance of peace and order and promotion of public safety in every corner of the society rests primarily not with the national government but on the local government with the help of the local police. In this aspect, the Peace and Order Council of every province like Albay and the local police offices come into one action.

Pursuant to Section 116 of Republic Act No. 7160, otherwise known as the Local Government Code of the Philippines, the Peace and Order Council (POC) is a government platform for stronger collaboration between the local government unit, law enforcement, and community to fight against criminality, illegal drugs, insurgency, and violent extremism. It institutionalizes harmony and enabling environment among its members to effectively implement peace and order and public safety activities that promote volunteerism in the community and intensifies advocacy and preventive education.

According to the Department of Interior and Local Government, the POPS plan is comprised of: assessment of local strategic tracks or the mission and vision of the LGU; peace and order situation of the LGU; significant community safety challenges defying laws of the LGU; objectives, strategies, targets, indicators, and baseline data; and policies, programs, projects, services and activities recommended for the LGU. It is required by the DILG to strengthen peace and order in all LGUs amid the all-out war against illegal drugs in the country and to ensure the sustained and focused protection of villagers from crimes, emergencies, and natural and manmade disasters.

Like the other studies conducted, there is a need to focus primarily on the evaluation of the effectiveness, implementation, enforcement, etc. of the agencies tasked to implement the operational plans of the government to lessen or to eradicate the crime incidence in the community. It is necessary to evaluate the parliamentary body created through the mandate of the Constitution and organized by the efforts of the executive branch to formulate local peace and order and public safety plan that will serve as the pipeline of the enforcement action of the linked agencies to the POC. Hence, the key question in this study is how relevant the action plan of the Provincial Peace and Order Council is to control criminality. Although peace and order have received significant attention from scholars, little research exists that examines the relevance of the Peace and

Order Council to address the anti-criminality efforts of the government.

Although Bicol Region recorded more than 30 percent decline in index crime based on the available data given to the researcher from 1st to 2nd quarter this year, the result is still far different from the target of the organization and the expectation of the community. The index Crime rate in Albay province is down by 24% in the same period that year. According to Senior Insp. Ma. Luisa Calubaquib, PRO 5 spokesperson, the result was through the intensified police presence in the community.

In the study of Ríos (2015), they revealed that increases in the criminal presence and violent crime reduce economic diversification, increase sector concentration, and diminish economic complexity. Albay Province is the home of the ongoing most scenic airport in the country's background by the majestic Mt. Mayon Volcano, the world's most perfect cone of its kind. It started during the Aquino Administration, and until today, it has not yet been operational based on the target year of operation due to several factors. One event that was most appalling happened in 2018 when suspected members of the New People's Army (NPA) burned at least 11 heavy equipment used in the construction of the Bicol International Airport in Daraga town in Albay Province. Local economists projected that the construction of the said airport would produce and attract investors to boost the local economy. The negative effects of violence in economic growth are not only explained by reductions in investments, outflows of human capital, or increased production costs but by changes in the productive composition of an area (Ríos, 2015).

The Province of Albay is strategically located at the center of the Bicol Region. Legazpi City, also in Albay, is called the gateway city of Bicol and the regional center. In the province, there are three cities, namely: Lagazpi City, Ligao, and Tabaco. It has fifteen (15) municipalities as follows: Bacacay, Camalig, Daraga, Guinobatan, Jovellar, Libon, Malilipot, Malinao, Manito, Oas, Pio Duran, Polangui, Rapu-Rapu, Sto. Domingo, and Tiwi. The study evaluated the Peace and Order and Public Safety Plan and its relation to the crime prevention priority issues of the province of Albay to develop a proposed bill for the institutionalization and reorganization of the Peace and Order Council in the Philippines by utilizing the synergy of partnerships involving the Philippine National Police, the people, the local government leaders, and all other concerned sectors to create a security umbrella with the internal and external environment as the target. This aimed to establish a highly competent Peace and Order Council to ensure accountability and to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of its members and units in the

performance of their function and reorganization of the peace and order council.

The study aimed to evaluate the Peace and Order and Public Safety Plan and its relation to the crime prevention priority issues of the province of Albay. This served as the basis for writing a bill for the institutionalization and reorganization of the Peace and Order Council in the Philippines.

Specifically, it sought answers to the following objectives: To assess the relevance of the Peace and Order Council's Action against criminality as perceived by community, police officers, and barangay officials along with the issue on drug abuse; crimes against property; and crimes against persons; to evaluate the level of participation of the three groups of respondents in the implementation of Peace and Order Council's action against criminality along with the issue on drug abuse; crimes against property; crimes against persons; and to assess the effectiveness of the POC's Peace and Order and Public Safety Plan in addressing the problems of criminality as perceived by the three groups of respondents along with the issue on drug abuse; crimes against property; crimes against persons.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey method of research was utilized. This research design was preferred in gathering the significant data from the respondents since it provides a systematic description, measurement, and analysis of the data, situation, or phenomenon, particularly on the Peace and Order and Public Safety Plan and its relation to the crime prevention priority issues of the province of Albay.

The researcher used a closed- structured questionnaire as the main data gathering instrument. Parts I to III of the survey questionnaire were patterned from the Department of Interior and Local Government Peace and Order and Public Safety Planning Guidebook and to the three-year POPS PLAN (CY 2015-2018). The questionnaire was divided into four (4) parts. The first part assessed the relevance of the Peace and Order Council's Action against criminality as perceived by community, police officers, and barangay officials. The second part evaluated the level of participation of the three groups of respondents in the implementation of the Peace and Order Council's action against criminality. Part III assessed the effectiveness of the POC's Peace and Order and Public Safety Plan in addressing the problems of criminality as perceived by the three groups of respondents. Meanwhile, the fourth and last parts examined the hindrances encountered by the implementing agencies on the effective implementation of the Peace and Order and Public Safety Plan.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research instrument, the researcher looked for four (4) persons not included in the respondents of the study. One of them is from the provincial officer who is familiar with POPS PLAN, a police officer from a municipality who was not included in the research environment, a research professor, and someone who has knowledge in statistics. These people somehow helped the researcher established the face validity of the research instrument. Then to further ensure the reliability and validity of the instrument, the researcher distributed sample questionnaires to individuals who can validate the content. Six samples were distributed to the key persons of the units of the Public Safety and Emergency Management Office in Albay. Nine were distributed to the Albay Provincial Police Office, and ten to the members of the community. These people were not included as the respondents of the study. This helped the researcher to further improve the research instrument.

Before the actual administration of the survey questionnaire, the researcher asked permission from the governor, provincial director of the Albay Police Provincial Office, chiefs of police of the cities, and selected municipalities. After permission was secured, the researcher personally contacted the identified respondents and distributed the questionnaire. Respondents who were not available have made the researcher returned on the date scheduled by the head of the office.

The researcher guaranteed the confidentiality and privacy of the respondents through the informed consent and Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) following the pattern issued by the Institute of Graduate Studies and Research. Likewise, the researcher sought approval from the governor, police provincial director, and chief of police of the different municipalities to conduct research. Voluntariness of the respondents was considered in this research. Before soliciting their necessary answers using the survey questionnaire, the researcher secured first their consent to determine the respondents' willingness, cooperation, and voluntariness to provide appropriate answers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After the said processes and protocols, the researcher distributed the instrument to the respondents, and all the data were retrieved, tallied, and interpreted accordingly.

Table 1. The Relevance of the Peace and Order Council’s Action against Criminality in Terms of the Issue on Drug Abuse

Issue on Drug Abuse	Barangay Officials		Police		Community Members		Total	
	WM	QD	WM	QD	WM	QD	WM	QD
Conduct of Anti-Illegal Drug Operation	3.65	Relevant	4.51	Very Relevant	4.20	Relevant	4.12	Relevant
Development of community-based surveillance and monitoring system of drug personalities	3.91	Relevant	4.31	Very Relevant	3.96	Relevant	4.06	Relevant
Identification of drug personalities	3.85	Relevant	4.49	Very Relevant	4.41	Very Relevant	4.25	Very Relevant
Strengthening of anti-illegal drug advocacy	3.68	Relevant	4.55	Very Relevant	4.15	Relevant	4.13	Relevant
Conduct of “Oplan Tokhang” on Low Value Target	2.80	Moderately Relevant	4.31	Very Relevant	2.33	Slightly Relevant	3.15	Moderately Relevant
Conduct of “Oplan Tokhang” on High Value Target	4.24	Very Relevant	4.68	Very Relevant	4.53	Very Relevant	4.48	Very Relevant
Conduct of Barangay Drug Clearing Operation	3.57	Relevant	4.59	Very Relevant	3.70	Relevant	3.95	Relevant
House to house visitation	4.08	Relevant	4.64	Very Relevant	4.07	Relevant	4.26	Very Relevant
Conduct of Anti-Dangerous Drug Summit	4.84	Very Relevant	4.56	Very Relevant	4.00	Relevant	4.47	Very Relevant
School Symposium	4.00	Relevant	4.72	Very Relevant	4.08	Relevant	4.27	Very Relevant
Implementation of Oplan Tambuli (Police Service on Wheels)	3.69	Relevant	4.48	Very Relevant	3.78	Relevant	3.99	Relevant
Average Mean	3.85	Relevant	4.53	Very Relevant	3.93	Relevant	4.10	Relevant

Legend: 4.21-5.00 Very Relevant 1.81-2.60 Slightly Relevant
 3.41-4.20 Relevant 1.00-1.80 Not Relevant
 2.61-3.40 Moderately Relevant

The findings revealed that the POC’s actions relative to the issue of drug abuse are relevant, which obtained an average weighted mean of 4.10. In line with

this, the nationwide survey conducted last quarter of 2018 by the Social Weather Station (2018) regarding the satisfaction with the campaign of the government against illegal drugs unsurprisingly garnered an excellent rating.

Meanwhile, the conduct of “Oplan Tokhang” on a high-value target is very relevant as well as the conduct of the anti-dangerous drug summit. The conduct of the school symposium on the issue of drug abuse is also a very relevant program. These findings are somehow supported by the statements of Fed et al. (2019) that prevention programs and awareness campaigns can play a vital role in reducing substance abuse. Symposia are crucial in the dissemination of cannabis information to staff at social services, treatment facilities, schools, health care, correctional facilities, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

Apparently, youths are depicted as a central category in every anti-illegal drug symposium material, so it is paramount for every forum to involve all youths being the most susceptible to this problem (Sear & Fraser, 2014). On the relentless anti-illegal drug campaign of the Duterte administration and as experienced and observed by the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, symposia on the dangers of illegal drugs in schools can be taxing and irregular and not enough. The best way to educate the youth about illegal drugs is to include it in the school curriculum (MENA, 2015).

Corollary to this, the Department of Education of the Philippines structured a National Drug Education Program or (NDEP) that aims a holistic approach in preventing and eliminating the menace of drugs by means of incorporating the drug education program to the present curriculum of the learners under the department (MENA, 2017). Similar to this, Senate Bill No. 1149 or the Youth Drug Abuse Resistance Education and Prevention Program (Y-DARE) Act filed by Villanueva targets to educate the youth on the personal and social consequences of substance abuse and drug dependency. This a similar program adopted by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) in coordination with the Department of Education (DepEd) and other concerned agencies.

The integration of illegal drug lessons in every curriculum will surely make a difference in how the youths react on the use of drugs being on the neophyte stage, whose curiosity makes them tries everything on the trend that needs to be experienced. Furthermore, as suggested in the study of Mansson and Ekendahl (2015), symposia should have an overall scientific framing. It was concluded that there is proof of the negative effects of illegal drugs to make it more interesting on the part of the intended audience and to have an impact on their perception of drugs.

On the other hand, they perceived the conduct of “Oplan Tokhang” on low-value targets as the least relevant. The findings imply that targeting big-time criminals or suspects should be given much focus rather than targeting small-time suspects only. It is a sad fact, however, that many suspects who belong to the lowest social class have been the target of tokhang operations and have actually been killed while big-time syndicates are still free and continue to operate in the country (Philippines: Lacson to PNP, PDEA: Let street pushers lead to big-time drug suppliers, 2018).

This finding implies and calls for attention to the policymakers and implementers to focus on the grassroots level of social problems in the country to attain the objective of a drug-free Philippines. Based on the law of UNODC (2019) suggested that the stakeholders should practice active and effective cooperation and a joint approach in taking action against drug production and cross-border trafficking of drugs or the supply suppression.

Table 2 presents the respondents’ perceptions of the relevance of the Peace and Order Council’s action against criminality in terms of the issue of crime against property.

As revealed by the data, the actions regarding the issue of crimes against property are perceived to be very relevant, which got an average weighted mean of 4.31.

To them, the conduct of regular checkpoints and encouraging community crime reporting are significant actions that are being conducted by the POC. This means patrolling in the community helps in preventing the commission of crimes against property. True enough, theft, robbery, larceny, burglary, or other criminal intent could be minimized when would-be suspects are aware of the regular checkpoint. Likewise, the participation of the community through crime reporting would give a signal to the would-be suspects or criminals that it will not be easy to carry out their plan.

Table 2. Relevance of the Peace and Order Council's Action against Criminality in Terms of Issue on Crime against Property

Issue on Crime against property	Barangay Officials		Police		Community Members		Total	
	WM	QD	WM	QD	WM	QD	WM	QD
Enhancement of police presence	3.93	Relevant	4.64	Very Relevant	4.53	Very Relevant	4.37	Very Relevant
Conduct of regular checkpoint	4.51	Very Relevant	4.73	Very Relevant	4.56	Very Relevant	4.60	Very Relevant
Forging partnership with the Local Civil Security Units	3.90	Relevant	4.72	Very Relevant	4.28	Very Relevant	4.30	Very Relevant
Strengthening of advocacy on reduction of crimes against property	3.55	Relevant	4.61	Very Relevant	4.35	Very Relevant	4.17	Relevant
Encouraging community crime reporting	4.34	Very Relevant	4.72	Very Relevant	4.69	Very Relevant	4.59	Very Relevant
Information dissemination on the latest modus operandi	3.88	Relevant	4.70	Very Relevant	3.46	Relevant	4.01	Relevant
Intensification of crime solving effort to make an impact to crime reduction	3.74	Relevant	4.58	Very Relevant	4.26	Very Relevant	4.19	Relevant
Inspection of junk-shops	3.72	Relevant	4.72	Very Relevant	4.58	Very Relevant	4.34	Very Relevant
Inspection of business offering pre-owned items	4.26	Very Relevant	4.69	Very Relevant	4.45	Very Relevant	4.47	Very Relevant
Implementation of Oplan Tambuli (Police Service Wheels)	3.69	Relevant	4.65	Very Relevant	3.82	Relevant	4.05	Relevant
Average Mean	3.95	Relevant	4.68	Very Relevant	4.30	Very Relevant	4.31	Very Relevant

Legend: 4.21-5.00 Very Relevant
3.41-4.20 Relevant
2.61-3.40 Moderately Relevant
1.81-2.60 Slightly Relevant
1.00-1.80 Not Relevant

This is embedded in the principle of pro-active policing, which includes police surveillance of an area where crimes have been occurring in the effort to catch perpetrators in the act. Proactive policing is distinguished from reactive policing, wherein the government authorities move into action after crimes have already occurred, and the perpetrators are sought (Lippke, 2017). This study reflects the sentiments of the respondents with regard to how relevant the actions of the government are to prevent the commission of a crime. They prefer and feel safer to see police in every corner of the streets who are actively doing their job to prevent crime from happening. This means, based on their observation, substantial increases in police patrol and presence can indeed cause modest reductions in crime and more impressive reductions in disorder within high crime locations. The study conducted by TK (2014) revealed that community policing had had a great impact on police service delivery. Its popularity is reflected in demand for community policing programs among the people and the importance accorded to it by political leaders and policymakers.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data gathered from the three sets of respondents, the following conclusions are arrived at:

The Peace and Order Council's action against criminality in terms of the issue of drug abuse was found relevant, which includes the conduct of "Oplan Tokhang" on high-value target, anti-dangerous drug summit, and school symposium. Very relevant actions to address the issue of crimes against property are the conduct of regular checkpoints and community crime reporting. In terms of the issue of the increasing number of crimes against persons, an increase of police presence, promotion of the spirit of volunteerism to encourage people to become agents of positive change, and enhancement of police productivity are the most relevant.

Therefore, the relevance of every anti-criminality program should be based on the actual situation of the community. All stakeholders should be consulted before, during, and after the formulation of anti-criminality policy. Any program will not come into success without the full cooperation and inclusion of the members of the community.

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